



DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND PUBLIC POLICY

GENDER, SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND SECURITIZATION IN TWO (WESTERN)  
MEDIA DISCOURSES ON DRC

ANASTASIA MARIA OPREA

Dissertation submitted as partial requirement to obtain the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN AFRICAN STUDIES

Supervisor:

Doctor Ana Catarina Larcher das Neves Santos Carvalho, Guest Assistant Professor  
ISCTE – University Institute of Lisbon

Co-Supervisor:

MA Sílvia Andreia Mateus Roque, Permanent Researcher  
University of Coimbra

JUNE 2013



## ABSTRACT

In the last few years, media discourses concerning the ongoing instability in the Democratic Republic of Congo have come to focus substantially on the question of sexual violence against women. Absolute statements qualifying the DRC as “the worst place to be a mother”, “the worst place on earth to be a woman”, and rape as “the greatest silence” seem to unquestionably label the country as *the* contemporary locus of sexual violence against women.

The purpose of this dissertation is to explain on which grounds these depictions are based, and how they are related to diverse cultural, social and political perceptions. The analysis conducted focuses on the documentary “The Greatest Silence: Rape in the Congo”, counterpointing the view chosen for the film “War Witch”. The objective is to investigate how sexual violence in the DRC is depicted within the (Western) media discourses. Sexual violence will be analyzed in relation to violence in general, and in particular, in relation with the gender constructs. The hypothesis that securitization can be manifested within media discourses will also be explored.

**Key words:** Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), conflict, gender, sexual violence, media.

## RESUMO

Nos últimos anos, os discursos dos média relativos à contínua instabilidade registada na República Democrática do Congo têm vindo a concentrar-se substancialmente na questão da violência sobre as mulheres. Declarações absolutas que classificam a RDC como “o pior sítio para ser mãe”, “o pior sítio no mundo para ser mulher”, e ainda a violação como “o grande silêncio” parecem rotular inquestionavelmente o país como sendo o actual epicentro da violência sexual sobre as mulheres.

O objectivo desta dissertação passa por explicar em que se baseiam estas representações e como se relacionam com diferentes percepções culturais, sociais e políticas. A análise aqui efectuada concentra-se no documentário “The Greatest Silence: Rape in the Congo”, contrapondo-o com a perspectiva apresentada no filme “War Witch”. Pretende-se investigar como a violência sexual na RDC é representada nos discursos dos média (Ocidentais). A violência sexual será analisada em relação com a violência em geral, e, particularmente, em relação com os constructos de género. Será considerada também a hipótese da securitização enquanto força motriz por detrás dos discursos média.

**Palavras chave:** República Democrática do Congo (RDC), conflito, género, violência sexual, média.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract - Resumo.....	1
Introduction.....	3
Problem statement.....	4
Objectives and methodology.....	5
1. Theoretical debates on women/gender and conflict/securitization in the African context.....	9
Introduction.....	9
1.1 Gender, conflict and violence.....	10
1.1.1. The category of “women” and the concept of “gender”.....	10
1.1.2. Conflict, violence and sexual violence.....	15
1.1.3. Representations of masculinity and femininity and roles that women and men play in armed conflicts.....	27
1. 2. Gender, security(zation) and intervention in Africa.....	36
2. Analysis of media discourses: “The Greatest Silence: Rape in the Congo” and “War Witch” ..	53
Introduction.....	53
2.1. The documentary: “The Greatest Silence: Rape in the Congo” ..	54
2.2. “War Witch” film – an analysis.....	56
2.3. Gender on film: how Western directors describe gender in the Congolese context.....	57
2.4. Depicting sexual violence in media discourses: connotation, documentation or voyeurism?.....	61
2.5. Representing femininities and masculinities in media discourses: when women equal victims, men equal rapists and other givens.....	71
2.6. Media discourses: from presenting reality to following securitization agendas.....	79
2.7. Media discourses and international intervention - local effects.....	86
Conclusion.....	95
Bibliography.....	99
Curriculum Vitae.....	105

## INTRODUCTION

After the Second Congo War (or the Great African War, which started in 1998), the continued state of conflict and instability in the Democratic Republic of Congo has been associated in the media discourses, as well as by the international community, with the issue of sexual violence against women. This perspective was adopted in online and printed press, but also in cinematography. The consequences of this particular depiction stem from its limited understanding of the complexity of the conflict and the local and international context involving DRC and other actors.

In order to understand how this particular perspective is constructed, and which are its implications, I have chosen to analyze two media discourses, namely a documentary and a film. The documentary “The Greatest Silence: Rape in the Congo”, produced, directed and filmed by Lisa. F. Jackson, was a natural option from my point of view.

I first saw the documentary in my native city Bucharest, Romania, at the ONE World documentaries festival in 2008, during my bachelor studies. My memories from the screening, and from after the screening of the documentary, are still vivid: I remember feeling baffled, outraged and incredulous. The (female) friends I was with all had the same reaction.

The initial shock of seeing the depiction of sexual violence against Congolese women gradually subsided. However, the impact of seeing the documentary was indelible. The documentary “The Greatest Silence” was for me the turning point and decisive contributor for my studies path choice. The reason I chose to focus on the DRC, the conflict context, the situation of women and the way they are represented, was to finally be able to understand why the documentary had had such an emotional impact on me. Equally, my purpose was to find explanations for the acts presented in the documentary, which lead me inevitably to focus on the local Congolese context and international reality involving DRC.

This dissertation can thus be considered the outcome of my persistent interest in this topic. The counterpoising of the film “War Witch” was used as a means to highlight how the media discourses can vary in their approach of the same, or similar issues. However, given that both the documentary and the film are Western productions depicting African realities, I have sought to include theoretical consideration originating in the two geographical areas. The intention was to show how the onlooker’s own mental constructs and belonging to a particular collective imaginary, as well as personal agenda, can influence the perspective chosen to depict reality in a cinematographic production. On the other hand, the depictions of reality employed in media discourses can have, in turn, their own local and pragmatic consequences, creating thus

a circle of creation and re-creation of reality, based on the perceptions and interests of the involved entities.

In order to achieve my purpose, I discuss theoretical hypotheses originating in various areas of research, namely African and development studies, gender studies, linguistics, international relations and conflict resolution studies. The sometimes diverging theories presented originate mainly in feminism, Womanism, constructivism, post-structuralism and post-colonialism.

For pragmatic reasons, three of the terms widely used throughout the dissertation require disambiguation, as they galvanize vivid scholarly debates. As such, when referring to “the West”, it is to be understood the European and North-American geographical space, as well as their areas of cultural and political influence. The term “Africa” is used, from practical considerations, when referring to the Sub-Saharan geographical area. Also, when referring to the international community various types of entities are included. Amongst them the international development organizations, as well as other international organizations (such as the United Nations, World Bank, etc.), states and other international actors. However, by using international community with its most encompassing meaning, international corporations, the academic community, media, and also celebrities and other opinion makers are also included.

### **Problem statement**

Media discourses concerning the Democratic Republic of Congo have come to focus substantially on the question of sexual violence against women in the last few years, as it can be noticed within the news sections of online press, celebrities’ statements (Robbins, 2013) and also within the production of films or documentaries. Absolute statements qualifying the DRC as “world's worst place to be a mother” (Agence France-Presse, 2013) or “the worst place on earth to be a woman” (Daily Mail Reporter, 2012), and rape as “the greatest silence” seem to unquestionably label the country as the worst existing case from the perspective of the sexual violence against women. This trend also derives from an enhanced scholarly interest in the subject of contemporary use of sexual violence against women as a weapon of war in Africa in particular.

However, without questioning the interest of the media and of the international community to expose, document and tackle this problem, a few questions arise:

1. How are these discourses constructed, and more specifically which gender perceptions inform these discourses?

2. How is sexual violence being represented, in the larger context of violence? And how is violence, and sexual violence particularly, being communicated to the wider public?

3. Which are the parts played by the constructs of femininity and masculinity when women and men are depicted in a conflict context? How do these constructs influence how women and men are represented in a conflict context?

4. To what extent do media discourse use specific representations of women and men in order to comply with certain agendas such as the securitization of violence against women?

And finally, 5. How do these representations change, or, on the contrary, enhance the stereotyped perception of Africa as a tragic continuum of violence and failure?

While trying to answer the above questions, constant attention is paid to the socio-cultural framework of the selected theoretical support texts. Thus, the dissertation is also a dialogue between Western conceptualizations and perspectives, engaging actively African research and scholarly investigation. Although one cannot leave aside and uproot the mental frame acquired during a particular studies itinerary, a critical lens is used in order to present diverse perspectives and research studies.

### **Objectives and methodology**

The objective of this dissertation is to analyze how women and sexual violence against women are presented in the media discourses produced about the ongoing conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and how these discourses enhance (or not) the stereotype perception of Africa as a tragic continuum of violence and failure.

This documentary “The Greatest Silence: Rape in the Congo” was chosen as a means to analyze the construction of media discourses in terms of gender, sexual violence and securitization agenda. The documentary focuses on the issue of sexual violence against women in the DRC. The drama “War Witch” was chosen for analysis as a counterpoint for the documentary selected. The two will be analyzed in parallel, in order to better highlight the differences and similarities between the two.

This dissertation aims at shedding light on the theoretical and conceptual basis upon which the two media discourses are constructed. The objective is to assess whether gender preconception – although highly contested in the academic environment – is still a constitutive part of media discourse, and thus reinforced in the collective imaginary. Additionally, the theoretical grounds and empirical analysis are focusing on explaining and interpreting the perspective employed in the two selected discourses in regards to the Democratic Republic of Congo, and, more generally, Africa as a whole.



In order to achieve these objectives, the present dissertation is structured in two main parts. The theoretical debates on the concept of gender, in relation with the category of women, constitute the opening section of the first chapter. In order to further ground the theoretical framework, a brief overview of particularities of the African conflicts is given and included in the wider discussion on violence and sexual violence. Further on, the representations of masculinity and femininity, and the deriving gendered roles that women and men play in armed conflicts are approached from a theoretical perspective. The final section of the theoretical chapter focuses on the concept of securitization, particularly in relation to gender, from the perspective of international intervention in Africa.

The empirical analysis of the two (Western) media discourses constitutes the second part of the dissertation. After a brief presentation, an analysis of the two media discourses based on the theoretical preamble is conducted with the aim of answering the questions formulated in the problem statement.

The analysis conducted on the media discourses focuses on the representations of gender and the resulting power relations, as they are transmitted through language, sound (or silence) and image. From the methodological point of view, the qualitative analysis conducted intends to describe, interpret, comprehend, explain and criticize the content of the two media discourses. The analysis consists in an analytical description of the content of the media discourses, from the perspective of the language and discourse analysis.

The analysis of the media discourses was organized in seven stages (Marshall e Rossman, 2011:209), starting with the acquisition of the documentary and the film. This stage was complemented by the exploration and immersion in other media discourses concerning the Democratic Republic of Congo, but presenting other aspects of the Congolese realities (such as historical aspects, sexual violence against men, Congolese justice system, etc). The second stage consisted in immersing in, and exploring the two media discourses selected for analysis, while keeping in mind the questions that constitute the problem statement. For the third stage, an analysis grid was applied to the data gathered, focusing on the selection of relevant data from the analyzed media discourses. This consisted in transcribing all the potentially relevant scenes from the two media discourses into two separate grids, organized in distinct sections for the identification of the scene (minute, speaker, function/position of the speaker in the discourse context, and location), the description of relevant images and verbal interactions, other relevant aspects and a preliminary relevance of the scene. The fourth stage of analysis consisted in comparison and transversal analysis of the gathered data: after the initial vertical readings, the horizontal reading focused on comparing both discourses from the point of view of initial problem

statement. The scenes were registered on the charts chronologically, and subsequently organized according to the analysis categories (gender, sexual violence, gender roles, etc.). The data was then organized by deconstructing the scenes into the relevant elements, grouping the analogue situation from the two discourses in order to facilitate the comparison (Paillé & Muchielli, 2010:108). This led to exploring possible interpretations of the scenes. The sixth stage of analysis focused on searching alternative meanings by confronting the extracted data with the theoretical literature and initial problem statement, while at the same time new hypotheses arose. Finally, the writing of the analysis in the form of the second part of this dissertation constituted the seventh stage of the analysis.

The relevance of the analysis of media discourses when investigating gendered representations, sexual violence and securitization ensues from the impact that the production and reception of mass mediated meanings have on the everyday life and the daily symbolic interactions between individuals (Zoonen, 1994:6). Through a process of encoding meanings when producing a media discourse, and decoding when the media discourse is viewed by audiences, meanings are reinforced, challenged or newly created. The analysis of the language and representations that are employed in media discourses is relevant for understanding how different individuals, groups and entities in general (like for example states, NGOs, etc.) are situated, and how is their positioning used for different purposes. Using common language and familiar representations, the media discourses take over reality and structure the public's perception of it, by naturalizing the social inequalities and legitimizing the current circumstances and power relations. Throughout this process, the most impacting voices are the privileged media actors, and the discourses who propose representations more intelligible than the rest (Jiwany, 2009:2).

Media discourses enclose the contradictions of the production processes, the meanings they transmit being the result of constant negotiation amongst the different available meanings. These contradictions reverberate into the reception of the media discourses, in the ways they are received, interpreted and used by audiences, who produce their own meanings of the discourses. Thus, focusing on discourses which are constituted on gender representations implies analyzing the negotiations which construct the media meanings of gender (Zoonen, 1994:9). By producing symbols of reality, media discourses express, in a simplified form, the nature of gender reality. At the same time, the symbols employed in media discourses construct and reconstruct reality while concurrently representing it. This implies that if a particular gendered perspective is used to describe reality, this perspective will also recreate and reinforce the gender meanings in day to day reality (idem). The relevance of analyzing gendered

representations in media discourses stems from these concurrent processes of describing and producing a certain reality based on specific meanings of gender.

## **1. THEORETICAL DEBATES ON WOMEN/GENDER AND CONFLICT/SECURITIZATION IN THE AFRICAN CONTEXT**

### **Introduction**

The aim of this section is delimitate the theoretical framework which will be further used as grounds for the empirical analysis. In order to fundament the theoretical debates and present the basis for the empirical analysis, the concept of gender is examined from the perspective of its meaning in different social and cultural contexts. From a Western perspective, gender is understood as a social tool used to differentiate social categories, as well as for attributing them specific gender roles (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004: 510), deriving from the biological characteristics of each gender (Amâncio, 1994: 17). This perspective on gender as been criticized both by African and Afro-American scholars, as well as by post-colonialists (Tickner 2001, Butler 1999, Sudarkasa 2005) and contemporary Western feminists (Butler, 1999: 4), on the grounds that it assumes a homogenous category of women, at the same time failing to integrate non-Western identities.

To further deepen the analysis, the concept of conflict is discussed from an African perspective. Several scholars contend that, within the global post-Cold War context, the dominating form of conflict is the inter-group one, which occurs mostly within state borders, or despite state borders, thus making the inter-state conflicts secondary to the inter-group conflict (Crocker, 1996, Nkudabagenzi, 1999, Kriesberg, 2006, von Lipsey, 1997). This has particular political and economical consequences which impact on local social structures, further providing the conditions for protracted and intractable conflicts.

Violence is a common feature of conflicts, although forms of violence, such as structural violence or sexual violence are widespread in a variety of contexts. Given the reproductive character of violence, a continuum of violence is created (Scheper-Hughes & Bourgois ed., 2004: 1). The idea of continuum of violence can also be applied to sexual violence, which only subsides in peace time (Meintjes, Pillay & Turshen, 2010, Leatherman, 2011: 9). Also, scholars pointed out that sexual violence has a series of enablers (Eriksson Baaz & Stern, 2009), and can be used as a means to achieve economical, political or other strategic purposes (Leatherman, 2011: 9).

There is consensus amongst scholars regarding the varies of roles of individuals, women and men alike, play in a conflict context (Turshen & Twagiramariya, 1998), both from the perspective of being victims of violence, or of, perpetrators of violence. The perceptions of gender roles influence, however, the interpretation of the involvement in conflict of individuals of

each gender, and can be in turn used in order to devise survival strategies (Utas, 2005). As indicated by Sjoberg (2010a), the “beautiful soul” reasoning can be used to explain gender representations in the context of conflict and militarization.

The field of study focusing on the analysis of the concept of security, International Security Studies, has been, in the last decades, enhanced with contributions from the area of feminist studies, as well as post-colonial studies, and other fields (Booth, 2007, Buzan & Hansen, 2011, Sjoberg, 2010b, Tickner, 2001). These contributions have both challenged, as well as enhanced the concept of security, especially by bringing into focus the security threats that can affect disproportionately the individuals belonging to each gender, such as the impact of structural violence on women, but also the need to address the continuum of sexual violence. The concept of securitization, introduced by the “Copenhagen School”, has stirred intense debate from the perspective of its usefulness and theoretical implications.

Securitization agendas can imply international intervention on a state’s territory. When discussing international intervention in Africa, scholars point out that the relation between Africa and the West is an unequal one. The negative perception of Africa, as opposed to the positive construct of the West, still strongly influences the logic of international intervention (Mbembe, 2001, Ferguson, 2006). This perception is further reflected and reinforced by the media discourses, which allow for it to be propagated and strongly embedded in the collective imaginary. The ways in which this can be done will be further exposed in the second section, when analyzing the two media discourses from the perspective of the concepts presented in this theoretical chapter.

## **1.1. Gender, conflict and violence**

### **1.1.1. The category of “women” and the concept of “gender”**

From a sociological point of view, especially from a Western perspective, gender is a social phenomenon intervening in the interpersonal contexts in any situation in which the individuals define themselves in relation to others in order to interact. The concept of gender is considered to be an “institutionalized system of social practices for constituting people as two significantly different categories, men and women, and organizing social relations of inequality on the basis of that difference” (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004: 510). Hence, sociologically speaking, gender is a tool both for differentiating social categories, as well as for limiting them to their specific gender roles, while also imposing a hierarchical categorization of the binary gender categories. The main argument for the hierarchical categorization was, historically, the “natural” one, namely that the differences between the two categories derive from the biological characteristics of each of

the two biological sexes (Amâncio, 1994: 17). However, in order to make gender intelligible, the gender categories have to be “universal depictions of women and men defined by a narrow set of features” (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004: 513), also intimately intertwined or deriving from the biological ones. This also allows gender to regulate and limit the social expressions of individuals so that the gendered meanings of their identities do not derive too much from the hegemonic cultural beliefs. In this way they could still be intelligible in the socially stereotypical gender meanings matrix.

Drawing partly from the sociological theories, the feminist movements also assumed that there was a universally identifiable category of women which needed representation, especially given the unequal social relations between the two genders. This assumption has been largely criticized in the later years and, especially after the end of the colonial period, arguments against it coming not only from Western feminists at a conceptual level, but also from non-Western feminists that interpret the universality of the category of women – largely based on Western perspectives and concepts – as being neo-colonial for failing to integrate non-Western identities (Tickner 2001, Butler 1999, Sudarkasa 2005).

Some contemporary Western feminists question not only the universality of the depictions of women and men, but also the category of “women” itself (part of the discussion could be applied to the category of “men” also). One of the most prominent scholars embracing this approach is Judith Butler, who bases her analysis of the concept of gender on the theoretical approach of Michel Foucault. In the author’s view, the feminist theory was based all along on the assumption that there is a coherent and homogeneous category of “women” that need to be represented in the public (or political) sphere. However, Butler defines representation as a “normative function of a language which is said either to reveal or to distort what is assumed to be true about the category of women” (Butler, 1999: 4). Since language itself is pre-existent to the notion of “representation”, this means that it is beforehand charged with meanings for the category men/women, which cannot exist in a vacuum of significance. Thus the representation of women will be discursively constituted by the same political/meaning system that is supposed to facilitate their inclusion. In the author’s words: “juridical power inevitably «produces» what it claims merely to represent; hence, politics must be concerned with this dual function of power: the juridical and the productive” (Butler, 1999: 5).

Similarly to the African scholars and the post-colonial approach (Sudarkasa 2005: 26), Butler also questions whether there is a common identity that all women possess, or even associate with. Given the variety of socio-cultural contexts in which women lead their lives, it is rather problematic to think that their perceptions, interests and experiences are the same in

every place and throughout their lives, regardless of other variables besides their biological sex. Butler (1999) concludes therefore that the “representation” of women will make sense for feminism only if the subject of “women” is not assumed beforehand – which is a theoretical impossibility given that we have previously established that gendered categories of women and men are already produced along a differential axis of domination through the language (Idem).

From the perspective of some of the African scholars, both the category of gender, as well as the category of race emerged “as two fundamental axes along which people were exploited and societies stratified” (Oyewumi, 2004: 1). Acknowledging the current hegemonic position of the Western world, African scholars point out that the perceived cultural hegemony also influences the way in which knowledge is produced, namely according to the Western concepts and interests. This is an argument that has to be kept in mind and that should raise the level of criticism and questioning when consulting different scholarly sources, as well as when producing scholarly content.

Another point made by African scholars is that the “feminist researchers use gender as the explanatory model to account for women's subordination and oppression worldwide” (Oyewumi, 2004: 1). In the same line, they question the universality of the category “women” as well as their subordination. Although the idea of subordination of women is not necessarily contradicted, Afro-American scholars have challenged the idea that gender can be considered the sole axis of subordination, separately from race and class.

While acknowledging the importance of Western feminism, Oyewumi considers that the concept of “gender” as it is used today derives from the specific Western social structures, namely from the centrality of the nuclear family – which is not necessarily the reality of other geographical areas. Considering the nuclear family to be an institutional and spatial configuration, Oyewumi argues that it is gendered by excellence given it is consisting in a subordinate wife and a patriarchal husband, and children. According the author:

The structure of the family conceived as having a conjugal unit at the center lends itself to the promotion of gender as a natural and inevitable category because within this family there are no crosscutting categories devoid of it. In a gendered, male-headed two-parent household, the male head is conceived as the breadwinner and the female is associated with home and nurture. (Oyewumi, 2004: 2)

Given the fact that a nuclear family is constituted only by two adults, and that there is no other adult-presence supposed by the nuclear family type, nor any other type of socially constituted network connecting the nuclear families, this leads to the wife’s identity becoming the comprehensive definition of women, while all other social interactions are secondary. This also allows women to be conscribed to the family environment, and further entrenches the distinction

between the private and the public sphere, also offering an argument for women not being present in the public space: since they can supposedly fulfill themselves as wives and mothers within their nuclear families, there is no need for them to be also present in the public sphere.

The asymmetry of the one-dimensional social construction of the meaning of being a woman is also acknowledged within the Western feminism as deriving from the association of the inexorable biological determination of women, which does not apply to men. The biological determination conditions the existence as having only one possible specific social function – the one of wife/mother, which manifests solely constrained within the private sphere. Again, this does not apply to the men category, which is perceived as multidimensional, transcending various social fields and independent of constraints, which enables the existence of an “individual essence” allowed to interpret multiple social functions (Amâncio, 1994: 197).

The limitations deriving from dominant Western perspectives can be observed within its methodological consequence – if the unit of analysis is considered to be the nuclear family household, then women are theoretically reduced to the role of wife (hence the predominance of the “feminine” attributes of dependence, frailty and victimacy); and since race and class are not generally variable in the family, Western feminism, focusing on the immutable perception of the nuclear family, does not perceive race or class as intersecting gender (Oyewumi, 2004: 2). However, an even more acute criticism of Western feminism was articulated by interpreting the hegemony of the Western feminism model as an expression of neo-colonialism which not only colonizes and appropriates “non-Western cultures to support highly Western notions of oppression, but because they tend as well to construct a «Third World» or even an «Orient» in which gender oppression is subtly explained as symptomatic of an essential, non-Western barbarism” (Butler, 1999: 6).

In order to argue that the nuclear family is being wrongly perceived as universal, Oyewumi (2004) presents the result of her investigation within the Yoruba society, and more specifically explains how a “non-gendered” Yoruba family is organized. What takes primacy within the Yoruba social structures are kinship roles and categories which do not derive from gender, like seniority based on the individual’s age, as compared to the age of the rest of the members of the family. As a result, gender is not central in the hierarchical organization of the Yoruba family, nor in the way that power is distributed. The main difference would be that, while the gender category is rigid and static, the principle of seniority is dynamic and fluid (Oyewumi, 2004: 3), thus allowing more individuals – regardless of the gender – to come into the power/decision making position within the family. It could also be argued that the principle of seniority is also based on more pragmatic considerations: individuals, regardless of their



biological sex, generally tend to accumulated knowledge with the passing of time, and subsequently respect and recognition from their peers as they grow in age, while the gender distinction is based on immutable perceived biological differences.

Furthermore, since the traditional Yoruba family is not a single household family, the family relations have to provide a more complex hierarchy amongst the individuals comprising it, hence new categories are needed in order to establish primacy and power: lineage, married-in-women, etc. As an example, Oyewumi details some of the interrelations:

Within the Yoruba family, *omo* the nomenclature for child is best translated as offspring. There are no single words denoting girl or boy in the first instance. With regard to the categories husband and wife, within the family the category *oko*, which is usually glossed as the English husband, is non-gender-specific because it encompasses both males and females. *Iyawo* glossed as wife, in English refers to in-marrying females. The distinction between *oko* and *iyawo* is not one of gender but a distinction between those who are by birth members of the family and those who enter by marriage. The distinction expresses a hierarchy in which the *oko* position is superior to the *iyawo*. This hierarchy is not a gender hierarchy because even female *oko* are superior to the female *iyawo*. In the society at large even the category of *iyawo* includes both men and women in that devotees of the Orisa (deities) are called *iyawo Orisa*. Thus relationships are fluid and social roles are situational continuously placing individuals in context-dependent hierarchical and non-hierarchical changing roles that are. (Oyewumi, 2004: 3)

Other similar examples of different family structures are common in West Africa and not only, like the kingdom of Dahomey, the Akan and the Igbo societies – also based on seniority, consanguinity and lineage. The motivation behind analyzing these societies is to challenge the universalization of the feminist gender discourse, especially in order to point out that social categories can be, and are fluid in non-Western geographical spaces, while also not necessarily resting on body type, resulting in a social positioning of the individuals which is highly situational (Oyewumi, 2004: 4). Another reading is that, although well intentioned, feminists studies have tended to reproduce a neo-colonialist approach by not analyzing and including into their agenda the specific experiences of the women belonging to other societies than the Western one, or not relating to the non-White women experiences within the Western space. Thus, a higher sensibility toward the specific socio-cultural context is needed, given that the notion of gender itself makes sense or not depending on the society to which it is applied.

The identity of women cannot be perceived only from the perspective of gender identity – as describing oneself as being a woman does not imply or describe the rest of the social interactions and belonging to social groups. Amongst the intersections that discursively come to constitute the whole of an individual identity we can find race, ethnicity, national belonging,

political ideology, level of education, religious orientation, economical class and sexual preference. Also, since “gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts”, it becomes impossible to separate gender from the “political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained” (Butler, 1999: 6).

Some scholars also note that, in most contexts, “gender” refers to women. Particularly when used with negative connotation, in order to point to gender issues, gender inequality and gendered violence, the concept is used to point to women specific issues and needs. This understanding of gender leaves out the gender-specific needs of men, which are only very rarely presented or tackled (Stemple, 2009:628).

In conclusion, although the concept of gender has proved to be useful in the historical framework of the feminist movement, it should be cautiously used in the contemporary era, and especially when analyzing non-Western contexts, as it might limit the understanding of those contexts. Special attention is also needed when using the plural “women”, since we have seen that it is very liable of conscribing inaccurate generalization regarding the persons it is supposed to name, being used rather as a normative, restrictive and leveling term, than a descriptive one denoting a plural of individualities.

#### 1.1.2. Conflict, violence and sexual violence

Conflict is understood to be an inherent human process, being found in all the sectors of the social systems, like the political sector, and at all levels: from personal to interpersonal, from the group/social level to international level (Kriesberg, 2006: 1). Conflict is a process that can manifest in various forms, can vary in intensity, and can have results with different degrees destructiveness on various levels. As various authors note, within the global post-Cold War context, the dominating form of conflict is the inter-group one, which occurs mostly within the state, thus making the inter-state conflicts secondary to the “social” one (Crocker, 1996, Nkudabagenzi, 1999, Kriesberg, 2006, von Lipsey, 1997).

The conflict, as it was defined by Louis Kriesberg, has been frequently cited by authors from various research areas, including gender security studies, like Irantzu Azkue and others, as being “the relation between two or more parties that have, or believe they have, incompatible objectives” (Azkue, 2010: 15). However, Kriesberg’s definition of conflicts rests on the assumption that conflict is a social phenomenon, thus the interacting parties can be either individuals or groups, who necessarily delimitate themselves from the counterpart, conceiving themselves as being completely separate and having opposed intentions. Supposing that the conflict occurs between groups, their opposition derives from manifesting the conviction that

their objectives are, at least in part, different or incompatible with the objectives of their adversaries. From a different perspective, this implies that the groups perceive that what stops them from reaching their goal is precisely the existence or expression of the opponent group. Frequently, as Kriesberg points out, the factions directly involved in the conflict are, or claim to be, representative of larger groups (constituted on ethnical, political, religious lines, etc.) in order to be perceived as having more legitimacy, and have various ways of interacting and engaging the adversary group during the conflict (Kriesberg, 2006: 2).

In order to be able to use the concept of conflict efficiently when analyzing the African context, it should be said that, although it is present in various forms, when conflict situations arise, armed conflict is the most common manifestation and it is in general associated with a high degree of violence (which reaches atrocity levels), inflicted primarily not on the armed groups, but on the civilian population, resulting in a significant refugee crisis in Sub-Saharan Africa, and particularly in Western and Central Africa (Nkundabagenzi, 1999: 285). The refugee crisis caused by conflicts can then further transform into “violence-generating refugee flows”, enabling a cycle of conflict and population displacement, as in the case of the subject area of this thesis, the Great Lakes, where subsequent waves of displacement and violence between Tutsi and Hutu (starting in the early sixties in Rwanda) culminated after the 1994 Rwandan genocide with the armed refugees, amongst the non-armed ones, overflowing into the Democratic Republic of Congo (Lemarchand, 2001: 15).

The African conflicts have significant impact at various levels, but the political consequences have directly affected the way that the African states are perceived both by their subjects, as well as from the outside. Thus it can be considered that (since most of the conflicts are occurring within the states) this indicates that the individual loyalties towards an ethnic group, clan, war-lord, or even a different state prevail and defy the central state authority. When political contestation is transformed into armed opposition, the difficulty of “political dialogue and the loss of the monopoly over armed force lead to the progressive disappearance of the State” (Nkundabagenzi, 1999: 285).

Concerning the situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the loss of legitimacy and control on the state’s part offers unmatched economic opportunities for a few privileged individuals, frequently from the ruling elite or those who are able to exert violence and coercion (Rotberg, 2003:7). As pointed out by researchers, there seems to be a direct relation between the ability to impose economic sanctions and the violence exerted by military organizations or rebel groups. As the state loses control over parts of its territory as well as the capacity to centrally reinforce the bureaucratic and economical system, informality transforms into norm and

the state's control becomes symbolic (Mbembe, 1999: 105). According to Mbembe, armed conflicts and the intensive use of violence that they entail can lead to the restoration of authoritarianism and the deregulation of economy, thus creating the auspicious conditions for the progressive privatization of power.

One of the central economical issues that arise in this situation is the impossibility to pay salaries as the state is no longer able to finance itself. It is a core question as it deprives the population of a steady income, giving thus place to subsistence, precariousness and austerity, while also leading to the imposition of informal taxation, either in goods or money. Other mechanisms grounded within the warring environment to augment the economical benefits of the informal power holders include production based on forced labor, and in general population and work force control (Mbembe, 1988: 108). This further creates new dependence and servitude structures, working to the benefit of the ones who arrogate themselves authority and, over time put in place productive servitude network: Mbembe coined this particular economic system as "novel/unprecedented capitalism"<sup>1</sup> (Mbembe, 1999: 109).

By using a more comprehensive term than "war economy", the author is emphasizing a tendency for the structures maintaining this "novel capitalism" in place to create new institutions that hold the privilege to administer violence, like the armed forces or other armed group controlling a certain territory. Over time, this implies institutionalizing a new economical dynamic and a privatization of sovereignty (Mbembe, 1999: 111). This in turn can lead from questioning the legitimacy of the state to the actual change of the state structures as the situation becomes more entrenched and territory inclusive.

A common feature of armed conflicts is violence. However, the concept of violence covers a broad range of instances and acts, from directly induced physical violence, to symbolic violence, to structural violence, and from an interpersonal level to extreme collective violence, such as genocides and mass murders. An important aspect regarding violence is its reproductive character, meaning that violence generates violence, thus we can speak of a continuum of violence. Violence draws its power and significance from its social and cultural dimension affecting "the personhood, dignity, sense of worth or value of the victim" (Scheper-Hughes & Bourgois ed., 2004: 1).

Structural violence manifests within the institutional structures at various levels, employing the unequal power and/or resources distribution in order to marginalize and exclude individuals, or groups of individuals (Galtung, 1969:171). Although one of the most common forms of manifestation of violence, structural violence is rarely perceived as such. In terms of gender,

---

<sup>1</sup> In the original text in French: "Capitalisme inédit" (Mbembe, 1999: 109)

structural violence manifests when girls and women are discriminated against, having, for example, restricted, or no access to education, economical resources and/or juridical protection. However, the forms in which structural violence manifests, such as poverty, lack of employment, decaying state infrastructure, lack of basic health and education access, can come to affect all individuals alike (Roque, 2011:47).

Scholars note that, when presenting and representing violence within a discourse, there is a voyeuristic impulse towards violence itself, and its results such as suffering, physical harm, mutilation, which undermines the critique towards violence itself. In the African context, various scholars observe that the journalistic accounts on violence are strongly biased by a stereotypic view on Africa:

[...] journalistic writing focuses precisely on this aspect of the genocide. Its peculiar characteristic is to write a pornography of violence. As in pornography, the nakedness is of others, not us. The exposure of the other goes alongside the unstated claim that we are not like them. It is pornography where senseless violence is a feature of other people's cultures: where they are violent, but we are pacific, and where a focus on their debasedness easily turns into another way of celebrating and confirming our exalted status. In the process, journalistic accounts also tend to reinforce larger claims: that the world is indeed divided into the modern and the premodern, whereby moderns make culture, but those who are premodern live by a timeless culture. (Mamdani, 2002: 12)

The same critique is made by some Western scholars, which note how the historic centrality of imperialism and colonialism are still determining the current patterns of violence globally. By using and inculcating the colonial ideas and principles, based primarily on dichotomous hierarching categories such civilization versus savagery, progress in opposition to underdevelopment, and modernity as contrary to the indigenous backwardness, it can be argued that "the colonial and imperialist violence «produced» the very subjects (...) – the so-called primitive, indigenous, traditional, non-industrialized peoples of the world" (Scheper-Hughes&Bourgois ed., 2004: 5), the people without history, except the one of violent oppression.

This politicized perspective can also be found at the journalistic and media level. By presenting a "simple moral world" (Finnström, 2012), the categories of perpetrators and victims are at the same time given – not deriving from any internal logic, nor from motivation or background, fixed and immutable. By using this journalistic approach, violence, and extreme violence such as genocide, is placed outside history and context and appears to bear no meaning (Mamdani, 2002: 13), further fueling, from a media point of view, the voyeurism towards violence and the stereotyping of Africa in general as having an essentialized proclivity to violence.

The following section will focus on sexual violence, with special emphasis on the armed conflict context, while also relying on studies conducted in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Most scholars agree on the fact that, from a temporal point of view, sexual violence against women, as well as violence against women in general, is a constant and it can be identified from the pre-conflict stage, throughout the conflict – usually growing in intensity and brutality, and also in the post-conflict stage – thus eluding the idea that there is a conflict aftermath in which a drop in violence against women can be noticed (Meintjes, Pillay & Turshen, 2010, Leatherman, 2011: 9).

Sexual violence can be defined in the larger context of violence as being a direct “intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation” (Definition by the World Health Organization). This implies that the violent act can be clearly identified as physical, psychological, sexual, verbal aggression, while the perpetrator/s and the victim/s being also clearly delimited. The direct violence can be exerted either towards individuals, thus being considered inter-personal, or against groups. The most common form of direct collective violence can be identified during armed conflict, when direct violence peaks, including but not limited to sexual violence, and it is used in large scale (Roque, 2011: 103 – 104).

The reason why inter-personal and collective sexual violence is considered to be an important phenomenon, receiving attention both in the scholarly environment, as well as in the media, is tightly connected not only to the important consequences for victims themselves (ranging from health issues to loss of the reproducing capacity or even loss of life) but also to the social consequences of sexual violence. When analyzing sexual violence from a sociological point of view, we find that it has a significant impact due to the way it interacts with the social norms: “it causes the subversion of traditional sexual hierarchies and social order through its political economy of violence”, thus breaking the taboos related to sexual relations, reproduction and accepted social behavior in general (Leatherman, 2011: 9).

Probably the most frequent type of sexual violence during armed conflict is rape, either direct, inflicted by penetration using a body or another object – most often inflicted on women and girls of any age, but also men and boys, or indirect, when male victims are forced to commit sexual violence against individuals from their own family or other individuals. Sexual violence is thus a threat for both men and women, although women and girls are more frequently the targets of aggression (Leatherman, 2011: 9).

Sexual violence targeting male victims – manifested preponderantly by rape – has been largely ignored. The prevailing approach to sexual violence in the international human rights field, as in general on the part of international community and local entities, has focused almost entirely on the abuse of female victims. Despite the invisibility, sexual violence against boys and men continues to occur and flourish, most often in detention centers or in armed conflict contexts (Stemple, 2009:605).

The World Health Organization “World Report on Violence and Health” presented the percentage of reported male victims of sexual abuse range from 3.6% in Namibia, 13.4% in the United Republic of Tanzania, to 20% in Peru. However, the report advises that there are not many reliable statistical studies on the number of boys and men raped in general and in particular for context such as prisons and refugee camps. Also, the report stresses that the number of male victims is probably under-represented, as men are even less likely than women to report sexual violence instances, due to the prejudices and stigma associated to it (WHO, World Report on Violence and Health, 2002:154).

Rape has been used within the context of armed conflict either as directed toward an individual, but also a strategy of ethnic cleansing or genocide, through mass rape campaigns. During armed conflicts, sexual violence can also take the form of torture, mutilation, cannibalism, forced incest, forced “marriage”, intended HIV transmission, and others. As a weapon and strategy of war it proves domination by humiliating the victims and can cause their expulsion (either from a family or a community due to ostracism, or from a geographical area), while ultimately being used as a way to exterminate a targeted group (Leatherman, 2011: 32). Used as a means of attaining this purpose, rape can lead to victims losing their physical assets and being displaced from contested lands, which can then be controlled by the group of perpetrators. In the context of the “virtue taboo” concerning women, the political consequences of rape can lead to the victims losing their socially perceived virtue and reputation, resulting in the loss of protection and acceptance of the family and of the community at large, thus leading ultimately to the ostracism of the victim/s (Meintjes, Pillay & Turshen, 2001: 12).

Sexual violence targeting male individuals has been documented in the Democratic Republic of Congo by the Human Rights Watch organization, through accounts of survivors (HRW, Seeking Justice: The Prosecution of Sexual Violence in the Congo War:20-21). Discussing sexual violence and rape from the perspective of the male victims, Stemple argues that:

The sexual abuse of men during armed conflict frequently touches on issues of shame and degradation. The public, performative nature of many of these instances of abuse, for example

when a Bosnian Serb police chief forced two detainees to perform sexual acts on one another in front of other detainees, indicates a concerted attempt to humiliate the victims. Other wartime acts such as humiliating nude poses, the use of women's underwear, and castration seem designed as a direct affront to the victims' masculine identity. Indeed the use of a camera to record the abuse at Abu Ghraib has been described as a "shame multiplier," extending the humiliation beyond the time and place in which it occurred.<sup>100</sup> (Stemple, 2009:615)

From the perspective of the political economy of rape resulting in female victims, it can be observed that rape is not only directed to those women constituting "the Other", but by perpetrating sexual violence upon women from a certain group, there is also a significant message transmitted to the men in the group, and to the group as a whole: namely that they are not able to guard their women, that they are not "men enough" to protect what is theirs and should be under their control. This is a direct message sent out by the perpetrators, given that many societies are characterized by a patriarchal structure, which translates into considering the women's productive and reproductive labour as being under the control of the men (Meintjes, Pillay & Turshen, 2001: 12). Thus, women that are victims of sexual violence are stripped both of their physical goods which would allow them to subsist, but they also lose control over their reproductive capacity (for example by the means of pregnancies resulting from rape or otherwise as a result of mutilation). The reproductive function is seen as their primary role within their community, both from the biological point of view, but also because women are perceived to be the symbolic upholders of the group identity and also bearers of the cultural and social. At the same time, women are perceived as being under the protection and control of the men. In this way, the survival of the whole community is threatened when the monopoly over the reproductive capacity of the women in the community is lost to a different group, and, in general: when women are threatened, the very social fabric of the group is at stake (Eriksson Baaz&Stern, 2009: 500).

Even having the background of the conflict situation, when regular social norms are not in place anymore, explaining why such atrocious acts of mass rape or mass mutilation can occur and be inflicted upon very vulnerable individuals, is not an easy task especially because these acts come against the taboo that they are even unspeakable acts, so atrocious that they cannot even be mentioned. So why is such brutal sexual violence inflicted on women of all ages? When trying to answer this question, scholars note that one of the first reactions is to dismiss the perpetrators of such cruel acts as being "mad, crazy or demonic alienates (...), rendering the perpetrator a «monster, inhuman, *unlike me*»" (Leatherman, 2011: 3). In the specific case of the Democratic Republic of Congo, scholars consider that the accounts concerning sexual violence (especially in the media), tend to recycle and reinforce the colonial perspective and the



racialized imaginary, by *a priori* dehumanizing the perpetrators to the point of considering them beastlike (Eriksson Baaz&Stern, 2009: 496). This dissociation does not explain though what makes it possible for sexual violence to become acceptable and, instead of taboo, be perceived as a tolerable war strategy, nor does it explain the conditions that allow for the brutal acts to occur.

The explanations behind what makes it possible for women to be targeted by the sexual violence perpetrated by men (although women also commit or organize acts of sexual violence against women, and men can also be victims of sexual violence) are found within the different theoretical approaches regarding the gender system, and within their consequences. One of the main consequences of the current gender relations is the inequality of power, which implies the superiority of men and the inferiority of women. Thus, according to the unequal power relation, women are considered to fulfill the fixed role of nurturer, while men are the protectors. So when sexual violence is directed against women who are perceived as property of men, their violation is actually a violation of the male possession. In this way, the purpose of the sexual violence is to threaten male superiority and domination (Meintjes, Pillay & Turshen, 2002: 40).

Maintaining the grounds of the inequality of power and using the theoretical lens of constructivism, it can be argued that the same power relation can be interpreted within the dimension center – periphery (Wallerstein, 2004). Assuming that the current type of armed conflict amplifies gender injustice in the context of globalized militarism and weak states, then power inequality can be read in economical terms as well. While the productive economy is considered to be the formal one occurring in the public space, based on monetary compensation, regulated by the economical norms, reproduction is still considered to belong to the informal, occurring in the unregulated private space, and is uncompensated. It can be argued that the capitalist organization of labor based on the regulated monetary economy does not recognize the reproductive economy, and thus wrongly considers women as non-contributors, although they most likely are involved in both economic scenarios. In the context of globalization, the lack of responsibility towards the reproductive economy has been kept in place by the dominance of the Western powers in order for them to maintain and augment their economic benefits generated precisely by these unequal power relations. In practical terms, this can be noticed looking into the position of the corporations towards the marginalized people in armed conflict areas or countries, “whose exploitation is the function of the global networks of profit making in diamonds, gold, tin, coltan and other valuable commodities” (Leatherman, 2011: 6). This perspective directly connects certain corporations with the armed groups on the ground. These groups use sexual violence against the reproductive economy in general, but more

pragmatically target women as a profit-making strategy to gain access and control the natural resources (UN Final report of the Panel of Experts S/2002/1146). Since the end beneficiaries of the natural resources are the corporations, it can be said that the global political economy is currently working on the basis of on the ground militarization and violent misappropriation of goods and resources .

Another condition that allows sexual violence to be used as war strategy, also deriving from the current gender relations, is the construction of the masculinity. From a social constructivist perspective, the main dynamic when constructing social identities involves the agent performing the action and how this action interferes with, changes or reinforces the social structure already in place. In this context the rules, norms, beliefs and principles are thought to have a fundamental role in influencing social behavior. However, the constant of male dominance by having primary access to power and privilege is still rephrased as “hegemonic masculinity” (Leatherman, 2011: 17). A particularity would be that the access to the hegemonic masculinity is neither guaranteed for, nor restricted to male bodies. It is rather based on the compliance with the rules, norms and beliefs that define masculinity. What derives from this is that there are different instances of “masculinity”, or in different words, there are individuals that are more “masculine” than others depending on the degree of compliance with the definition of masculinity, which can vary according to the historical, social and political contexts.

Peer pressure can be considered a direct result of this type of identity construction and hierarchy of masculinities: since solidarity with the (men) group is considered to be a typical masculine feature, alimented by various institutions and especially the military, it is rated above other features considered “less” masculine, or even feminine, such as responsibility, empathy, respect for physical integrity and other similar ones. This mental frame makes it possible for men partaking in a gang rape to consider that subduing to the group’s (or group’s leader’s) plan/strategy of raping women is not only acceptable, but preferable and desirable to denouncing the violation of the social norms or even the brutality of the act (Meintjes, Pillay & Turshen, 2002: 41). The act of sexual violence can thus be seen as a “masculinity test”: if choosing not to perform the part that is attributed to a man from the peers point of view, or worse – if choosing to denounce and question the acts of the rest of the group, then the individual would be stripped of his “masculinity”. This is possible since the dominating “masculinity” is synonymous to strength, brutality and, in general, lack of any sentiments like empathy, consideration, pity, respect, and so on. Failing the test is not just a question of asserting one’s identity: by failing to comply with the masculinity model dictated by the group, the individual is

automatically feminized, and can suffer important consequences since being part of the group is conditioned precisely by how “manly”/“masculine” one is.

We therefore see that there is also an internal hierarchy of the masculinities, which are in permanent competition with each other by changing or reinforcing the norms and beliefs that define masculinity as a concept over the changing historical contexts. Given the history of colonization by the European powers, and Western hegemony in many fields, it was possible that the concept of masculinity was influenced and changed from outside a geographical area. The case of the former European colonies in Africa is a very relevant example: not only that the empires sought to “educate”, “emancipate” and “civilize” the natives, but they also exported and imposed various existing social structures, like the Western gender system, further entrenched with the imposition of Christian religions as the “righteous” ones. Thus, the Western model of masculinity was also introduced in the pool of competing masculinities, and is still present there today, together with the traditional, locally produced and culturally specific masculine identities (Leatherman, 2011: 19). By appropriating the Western masculinity identity – as it was defined by the bourgeois ideology in the XIXth century, based on aggression, negation of feelings and so on, differences of class and race could be mitigated in the African context. However, the dominance structures based on race and class were so rigid in subjugating the native individuals and placing them in second place, thus feminizing them, that in order for even the gender dominance to be maintained the hegemonic masculinity identity had to be exacerbated, reaching a “hyper-masculinity” level or what is also called the “macho model”. As scholars note, this phenomenon could be observed in South Africa, where many men took onto the very aggressive model of masculinity in order to try to avoid racial abuse from other men, which would make them lose their hegemonic male status (Meintjes, Pillay & Turshen, 2002: 41).

Another very important consequence in this setting of the hyper-masculinity model within the African space (but not only) is that, since force is perceived as the main masculine characteristic and brutality is not sanctioned, than violence is socially constructed as the main means for men to reestablish lost hegemony. The reasons why women are chosen as the victims of this behavior, and why the violence is perpetrated through sexual violence is to assure that the reassertion of the dominant masculine status is secured: instead of challenging a competing masculinity (by for example, engaging another men group, or competing at discourse level) that might still win the “game” and further “feminize” the already feminized male individuals, they need to have a target that will allow them to express their utmost masculinity without much resistance so that their gain, and assertion of masculinity is secured (Leatherman, 2011, Meintjes, Pillay & Turshen, 2002).

Investigation in the Democratic Republic of Congo, consisting in interviews applied to the soldiers and officials within the regular army (as they are, together with other armed groups, perpetrators of sexual violence) found that this discourse of a somewhat rigid masculine identity has been fully internalized and directly affects the way that rape is perceived. The study found that soldiers and officials alike distinguish between two types of rape: one that is “acceptable”, and one that is condemnable. According to the discourses of the interviewees, what differentiates the two situations of rape is the reason why men choose to do it – rape as motivated by sexual needs, driven by the male libido, in opposition with the rape that is not about sexual desires but is instead an expression of anger and rage (Eriksson Baaz & Stern, 2009).

This type of reasoning/justifying rape is made possible by the dominant masculinity identity that is valued by society as a whole – thus being appropriated by male, but also accepted and “understood” by women. When analysing the interviews, the investigators’ conclusions were that adopted masculinity model was without a doubt the “(hetero) sexually potent male fighter”, implying thus that bravery and virility are the two “natural” driving forces that create masculinity. The sexual needs of men “emerge as a given, known, natural driving force which required «satisfaction» from women whose role it is to satisfy these needs”, or in other words “brave fighting necessitated, then, sexual relief”, given that the men’s sexual desire is considered to be barely controllable (Eriksson Baaz & Stern, 2009: 505 – 507).

Another strong relation can be made between economic power and sexual violence, with basis in the work distinction that keeps women out of the productive economy, while considering men to be the main economic providers. This means that, when men are not able anymore to sustain their families, they perceive this impossibility as emasculating (Meintjes, Pillay & Turshen, 2002: 42). Similar to the social constructivist analysis on why men perpetrate sexual violence against women, this background also allows us to switch the focal point to what men lack that enables them to commit such acts, or in general, what makes them vulnerable in an armed conflict context.

The second condition rendering rape “acceptable” according to the investigation conducted in the Democratic Republic of Congo consists precisely of the relation between manhood and economic power, or simply put money and material wealth. The interviews collected by the two investigators clearly pointed out that being the provider is a sine qua non condition for attaining manhood for the Congolese soldiers and officials. Statements further pointed out that not only being considered a man, or man enough, is related to the capacity to sustain economically a family/lover, but it directly influences holding the decision-making monopoly within the family

unit, and in consequence being able to demand submission from his wife/lover (thus entitling them to “demand” and receive the needed sexual satisfaction/relief). So this normative ideal of heterosexual masculinity that emerges as the economical provider is strongly contradicted by a precarious masculinity that is thus entitled to “compensate” and use sexual violence in order to still salvage their manhood/virility by raping women (Eriksson Baaz & Stern, 2009: 507 – 508). Here is an excerpt from an interview with a female Major expressing this idea, and strengthening the perceived normality of this situation:

Female Major A: If they want the work of soldiers to work / be good / end indiscipline [soki balingi mosala ya soldat ebonga], they have to give the [financial] possibilities. If a soldier has his money, he will think “let’s go and look for a woman and give her money so that I can be satisfied.” The normal way, the official way.. But if he does not have money, he will look for an easier road, to get it for free. Then he has to wear a uniform to get a woman. Because, if you are to have a woman, what do you need? You need money.

Female Major B: Amen

Female Major A: If you like a woman you give her, her 1000 FC [2 USD]. Just look at the Zimbabweans when they were here, all the women were following them, because they had money—dollars. So, the way our soldiers are raping, it is because of lack of money. Maybe he has not been with a woman for 3–4 months and has no money on his pockets. What is he supposed to do? (Quoted in Eriksson Baaz & Stern, 2009: 510)

The consequences of sexual violence being inflicted constantly within the armed conflict context leads to a “normalization” of the most extreme forms of violence, made possible by a weakening of the social norms regulating the sexual relations within that society, and delimitating right from wrong in general, which further results in diluting the taboos. In a downward spiral, the use of atrocious sexual violence for a long period of time as war strategy leads to a discontinuity of the social norms themselves, which associated with a discourse of hate toward the alterity - the group perceived as “the Other”, the opposed, can lead to the depersonalization of the victims, which further entrenches sexual violence as a profitable and acceptable practice (Leatherman, 2011: 34).

When explaining the “wrong rape”, the soldiers and officials interviewed in the Democratic Republic of Congo indicated that the armed conflict context brought a sense of “moral disengagement”, directly affecting them since they were submerged in a warring and violence climate. So given the out of the ordinary situation, out of the ordinary behaviour also becomes not only conceivable, but normal. The process of depersonalization of “the Other” – consisting in adversary rebel groups, but also the civilian population, together with the normalization of violence and brutality, create their “own momentum” and construct their “own moral economy”

(Eriksson Baaz & Stern, 2009: 510). Thus, according to the interviewed Congolese soldiers and officials, sexual violence, rape, all violence and brutality in general are not to be understood as the acts of moral people, but unavoidable products of the armed conflict situation, and should not be judged under the “normal” moral code, and in general not be attributed to a person/perpetrator.

The fact that women are still generally considered to be the predilect and only rape victims excludes the male victims from being taken into consideration. In conclusion, sexual violence should be comprehensively analysed as the motivations leading to it could point to the social structures that make it possible, while also being an indicator of social imbalances and contextual enablers. The implications of rape, including from the economical point of view, can compellingly explain some of the conflict dynamics. Also, as it was pointed out, it is important to critically analyse how violence is presented and with what purpose, as it can be used to reinforce the stereotype of brutal, savage Africans.

### **1. 1. 3. Representations of masculinity and femininity and roles that women and men play in armed conflicts**

Women and men, when actors in a conflict, perform simultaneously or over a period of time multiple roles, as in the remaining social contexts, according to their social-economic position, the family situation and other factors (Turshen & Twagiramariya, 1998). Despite this, the representations of the roles that women and men perform are strongly influenced, and even conditioned by what is considered as defining of femininity/masculinity and by how they are represented. As will be shown ahead, the dichotomy masculine-feminine, as the main constitution of Western feminism, limits and predefines the adequate roles that represent femininity, and masculinity for that matter.

Consequently, when analyzing the roles that women perform during a conflict, the first challenge is to deconstruct the representations of femininity: in order to do this, it is essential to understand the theoretical perspective that calls for further analysis. As demonstrated above, some of the Western perspectives regarding the relation between the gender system and the conflict explain that the social paradigm is constructed precisely based on an unequal relation between masculinity and femininity. This is at the same time auspicious for the prevalence of the conflict. However, there are other perspectives. African feminism, or the Womanism movement, among others, explains the gender relations as stemming from different principles, which are not intrinsically connected to phalocracy or the masculine/feminine dichotomy (Oyewumi, 2004). Starting the analysis from a different paradigm, the understanding of the roles of women is again

subject to the de-codifications of their representations, according to what constitutes them in the social and cultural universe of meanings.

Current mental constructs, based preponderantly on the hegemonic Western paradigm that was introduced within the African space during colonialism, obstruct the conceptualization of women as combatants, soldiers, perpetrators of violence in general. It supposes a conscious effort of escaping the accepted rigid meanings of femininity, always opposing masculinity (Elsthain, 1995:3). It would seem that, associating any of these attributes with women would affect and weaken directly the masculine identity since the idea of masculinity is based on strength, heroism, domination, force, logic and the dominance over emotions. This “sum 0” perception of the gender identities assumes that as soon as any given attribute is found in the other gender, said attribute can no longer constitute a characteristic of the gender which it was originally attributed to. However, the level of rooting of these perceptions demonstrates how important and fundamental the construction of gender identity is, in Western societies especially, as one of the main axis of social organization and axis of meaning.

One theory that tries to explain this conceptualization, from the same starting point of the dichotomous pair femininity/masculinity as constructed upon attributes exclusive to each gender, is the narrative of the “beautiful soul”. Contrary to the (supposed) masculine characteristics of the “just warrior”, like strength, rationality, the expression “beautiful soul”, designates precisely the opposite of the “masculine attributes”, being used to designate women and to explain their relation with conflict, as Jean Bethke Elshtain coined the term. She drew on Hegel’s definition of the beautiful soul as “the appearance of purity by cultivating innocence about the historical course of the world” (Hegel in Elshtain, 1995:4) and used it to describe the relation between women, the construction of femininity/masculinity, and war. The theory of the “beautiful soul” finds its grounds in essentialism and in the “traditional” intrinsic differences between men and women, especially considering women to be inherently pacifists and nurturers (Sjoberg, 2010a: 57).

“Cultivating innocence about the historical course of the world” (in Elsthain, 1995:4) is to be translated as the separation between public and private spheres. In this sense women are confined to the private sphere, they are in fact excluded from any participative or decisional process at any level other than of the household level – including from the conflict and armed conflict situations, since they are not considered to be proper for the “beautiful souls”, but are on the contrary considered an exclusive field of action for the “just warriors”.

The “beautiful soul” theory has, according to Sjoberg, a third component, which assumes that women themselves are the reason and justification for the existence of wars and conflicts. It

can be argued that not only women, because of their assumed innate frailty, need protection from men when faced with the threat of violence, as the idea of protecting “the weaker ones” is being frequently used with the purpose to legitimize military interventions (Wadley in Sjoberg, 2010b:51).

In order to understand how masculinity is perceived in the Congolese context, researchers Maria Stern and Maria Eriksson Baaz have focused on investigating how manhood is understood in relation to womanhood by the men working for the Armed forces. The implications of including women in the military were used as motive for investigation, which occurred at grassroots level in the Democratic Republic of Congo in the context of the ongoing Security Sector Reform (SSR). SSR aims at reducing the sexual violence perpetrated by soldiers by including more women within its structures. This measure was integrated within the SSR for the regulated Congolese army FARDC (Forces Armées de la Republique Democratique de Congo). The reason is that they are increasingly becoming the main perpetrator of sexual violence and human rights abuses (Trefon, 2011:67). The investigation described below was carried out by Maria Stern and Maria Eriksson Baaz between 2006 and 2009. It is based on interviews with both women and men, soldiers or officials, currently employed within the FARDC.

The underlining global idea behind having more women within the armies is to reconfigure the violent articulations of masculinity by inducing the responsible notion of the disciplined (male) protector of the civilian population, with particular attention to women and children, thus reinforcing the need to respect human rights, as well as the military regulations (Eriksson Baaz & Stern, 2011:564). However, the narratives of the male soldiers and officials stressed, by including or excluding shifting masculinities and femininities, the toil to maintain the military as a particularly masculine sphere where women do not belong. The discourses of the interviewees also place women outside the zone of combat and violence associated with warring, both identified as clearly masculine areas. Hence, the actual and supposed inclusion of women within the FARDC triggered discursive strategies aimed at mitigating or eliminating the intrusion of women within this (perceived) exclusively male organization, by resisting “feminization” and maintaining the masculine identity of the army and of the warring violence. The researchers identified 4 main strategies, which will be presented below.

One of this strategies identified by the researchers is closely related to the ideal of masculine militarized identity as opposed to the feminine “Other”, which is a permanent impossibility. By constructing this ideal on characteristics attributed to masculinity such as courage, aggressiveness, physical strength, lack of fear and willingness to kill, the women as a homogenous category are perceived to be what is left. By including (assumptions) descriptions



of women on the combat front in their discourse and emphasizing the qualities associated to femininity, like fear and weakness, the soldiers actually pointed to what soldiers are not in the battlefield. The need to stress, yet again, the masculine militarized ideal features, by attributing the negative traits to the women, comes on the background of a “sum 0” perception of the genders and their “natural” characteristics. It also comes as a response to the threat that is the possibility to be “contaminated” with this femininity. Although the “feminization” by contamination with “feminine” attitudes and behaviors could be seen as a permanent threat, it is perceived as being much more acute when women are included in the army as it is the only space where the militarized masculine ideal can be pursued. The soldiers themselves however describe this phenomenon as the inaptness of women to fight due to their believed physical and psychological limitations:

Colonel A: Women are not able to fight. Because me, I am already used to hearing the sounds of guns, I am no longer afraid. But women never stop being afraid. Even today, if somebody fires a gun here now, we men would not panic. But women will panic. Women also can do like if she is to run, then all of you will think that something happened and start to run. That is dangerous.

Colonel B: I have been in many wars, as a commander, but to put women at the front, honestly, no.

Maria: Why?

Colonel B: She will not make it. When the bullets...when there is gun fire, she will not take it. She will be afraid. She might even start to menstruate on the spot out of fear. (Quoted in Eriksson Baaz & Stern, 2011: 574).

Contrary to the main goal of the inclusion of women within the armed forces, this narrative points out the fact that Congolese military men apparently did not interiorize the need for protectiveness towards women, and responsibility in general. Although considering women to be weak, the interviews revealed that for the Congolese soldiers this did not mean that, based on the general argument of weakness, women and children would require special protection from the military men (Eriksson Baaz & Stern, 2011: 576).

The repercussion of the “beautiful soul” perspective, Sjoberg argues, is that the capacity of women to exert violence in the same way that men do is not only not accepted as possible and voluntary, it is always described as a flaw associated to femininity, motherhood, physiology or sexuality (Sjoberg, 2010a: 58). This perspective is frequently used within the media and in the public discourse in general when presenting situations in which women resorted to violence. It doesn’t only demonstrate the limitation of the predefined roles that individuals belonging to each gender are assumed to undertake, it also does not recognize the capacity of free will in women. On the contrary, it reverts to the historic perspective of the unwise, hysteric woman or desperate

mother who becomes a victim to her own feminine essence, ultimately determined at the physiologic level. So, even if women appear as perpetrators of violence, this type of account normally also includes a justification of this “deviant” behavior, usually found within the pool of “womanly flaws” – such as irrationality, over-sensitivity, over-emotionalism (Sjoberg, 2010a:64-65).

Amongst the four strategies used at the discursive level by the Congolese soldiers in order to resist the “feminization” is the denial of femininity of the women that joined the armed forces. The soldiers express the conviction that no “real” woman could attain it unless transforming into a man. Or, at least, without being masculinized and no longer a “real” woman, since the army mentality is considered to be an exclusively male construct. Thus by suppressing the femininity of the military women, the threat of “feminization” is also eluded (Eriksson Baaz & Stern, 2011: 580-582).

In the field of conflict and violence analysis reverberations from the “beautiful soul” theory lead to, the interpretation of a female perpetrator of violence as an exception, an isolated occurrence and an unnatural being. In this theory she is first and foremost a victim of her own femininity (Sjoberg, 2010a: 64), or is at least straying from the norms that delimit the traditional concept womanhood.

The same directive ideas apply when transposing this theory to the military world and when analyzing the perceptions of the existence of female soldiers. With women being traditionally associated to the private sphere, and dissociated from the idea of propensity to violence, the simple existence of female soldiers constitutes a notable threat to men in the military. Even from the linguistic point of view, the expression used by journalists to describe women that integrate the armed forces is always “female soldier” (Euronews, 2012, Dumitru, 2012, McKelvey, 2007). First, the term “soldier” evidently is not applicable to both genders because, as explained above, the concept of “soldier” does not include persons of the female gender as it is perceived to embody features that pertain exclusively to the masculinity sphere. Thus associating the term “soldier” to a woman might, from some perspectives, be perceived as directly reducing the “femininity” of the woman to whom it is applied. Also, the attribute “female” precedes the word “soldier”, hence indicating that the gender category precedes the condition of “soldier”, almost like a warning that the subject referred to is not a regular soldier, but firstly a woman and only secondarily a soldier. It is as if, at the perception level, the existence of women in the armed forces would always be an exception to the rule, a temporary intrusion in a deeply masculine territory (Sjoberg, 2010a: 61).

Another strategy to resist “feminization” identified following the investigation conducted within the Congolese armed forces is based on the undervaluation of the Congolese women, by assuming that, in a linear evolutionary axis of skills and competences, they rate lower than their Western counterparts, and thus they are not yet “ready” to be part of the FARDC. Most of the soldiers and officials expressing this idea were in favor of the restricted inclusion of the women in the military, which should be limited only to “exceptional” women. The presence of women in the army would thus still be an exception, present rather to enforce the dominance of the masculinity within the armed forces. The opposed rationale, grounded on the generalization of the African women as docile and submissive, assumes that the military is not a place for Congolese women as they would not only lose their “honor”, but also undermine African culture itself as the army is not a place where “honorable” women belong (Eriksson Baaz & Stern, 2011:571-573).

The fourth strategy identified was resumed by the researchers as “women as unreliable whore”, pointing to the sexualized image of the woman temptress. The argumentation provided by the interviewees in order to support this logic relied on the idea that the presence of the women within the armed forces leads to destruction from within, through distraction and fraternization. While relying on the time-worn imagery of the fallen women leading men into damnation and ruin, this discourse also casts masculinity as ambivalent and contradictory. Even though masculinity is perceived to embody strength, reliability and stoicism, it would also seem to maintain the “vulnerability to the cunning seductive nature of the feminine Other” (Eriksson Baaz & Stern, 2011: 578). The researchers concluded that the idea of women’s duplicity and unreliability was particularly strong within the discourses of the Congolese military men, translating into a demilitarization of women through sexualization.

In their concluding remarks, the researchers underlined that, given the Congolese context, the simple inclusion of women within the armed forces might not have had the intended effect of rendering the men less violent and more focused on respecting human rights. The main reason is that the strategy raised instead important questions regarding men and women’s roles in the framework of the masculinity/femininity representations, as well as the perceived threat of “feminization”. The threat is understood as such given the conceptualization of the military space and military violence as the exclusive domain of men. Even more importantly, it is perceived to be the only available space where the idealized masculinity can be reached by complying with the dominant “masculine” identity (constructed upon the militarized ideal of men as good, strong soldier) (Eriksson Baaz & Stern, 2011: 582-585). Thus, by removing this exclusive “masculine” arena, or by “feminizing” it, this idealized masculine identity can no longer

be pursued. This results in a need to adapt to a new environment with challenging and transformative gender identities and ultimately to an identity crisis affecting the construction of “masculinity” itself.

Another very interesting conclusion of the research was that Congolese military men do not hold in high regard the violent heroic masculinity. On the contrary, the desires expressed in relation to the future indicated that the ideal position would be an administrative one, performing desk work or holding a clerk position. This indicates that the prevailing masculine ideal is the one of provider, a strong indicator of the reconfiguration of the gender relations in the Democratic Republic of Congo, having armed conflict as background (Eriksson Baaz & Stern, 2011: 577, 584). This contradiction between the current roles as soldiers, as opposed to the desired one, of men that provide through administrative work, could also indicate significant tension arising from the current, fixed roles that men have within the army, and their actual desired roles. The frustration arising from the incongruence between available masculine roles and desired masculine roles can be perceived as further enhancing the perceived threat of “feminization” because the desired roles are not only not available, but the current ones are also threatened by “de-masculinization”. An additional important aspect that needs further exploration but is out of the scope of the current thesis is the reason why Congolese military men do not have access to the roles that they desire, and the relation between the impossibility to attain the idealized role of economic provider and the way the local political and socio-economical context is intervening in constructing and representing masculinity.

Returning to the disassociation of women from free will implied by the “beautiful soul” theory, in conjunction with the perspective conscribing women within the private sphere, it can be noted that women’s access to the public sphere as actors is still limited. Also, women’s interest in the public sphere, including at the military level, is still being questioned, as well as the capacity of developing a personal strategy that implies a performance at a military/combat level. As presented by Sjoberg, the women, instead of being individuals that act according to their own strategies in order to attain their objectives, are pressured, largely by the press and the media, but also by the narrative of the “beautiful soul” to continue to adjust and frame themselves within the traditional “natural” definition of their gender.

Empirical observation of the adaptation and survival strategies of women in conflict situations, for instance as Utas’s analysis of the Liberian war, show precisely the opposite by presenting the real case of a protagonist called Bintu. Firstly, despite the victim’s position being perceived as normal, natural for women – deriving from innate weakness, at least at the discursive level, it also serves the men’s necessity of exerting protection towards the “weak”.

The referred analysis starts by establishing that “victimization” can be understood and used as a survival strategy, which can be a form of self-reflection that positions the subject in a role that allows her to navigate in a context of war (Utas, 2005: 403). The author analyses the way that Bintu’s choices, as manifestations of her survival strategy, demonstrate agency tactics that allow her to adapt to the various threatening circumstances that appear during a conflict. Quoting various authors, Utas explains that the idea of “agency” should not be perceived as an immutable attribute, but in relation with a social context, as an answer to a social structure inhabited at the same time by other agents, with different objectives (Utas, 2005: 409).

By presenting the social interactions that Bintu is involved in it becomes clear that, in the armed conflict context, survival is the primary objective. This implies that, given the momentary circumstances young women like Bintu might find themselves in, they would need to secure themselves as individual agents by being aware and actively manage their relations with the rebel or military commanders, co-wives, boyfriends, NGO staff and other categories of civilians. Since the circumstances of the conflict are dynamic, women might find themselves in disadvantaged positions, but might come to make use of it by representing themselves as such, as victims, and thus through a tactics of “victimacy” gain humanitarian aid or other types of support from the actors engaged in the conflict (Utas, 2005: 419). On the other hand, the conflict wasteland may also become the source of goods that might otherwise not have been accessible to the women: as presented in Bintu’s account, women would also try to maximize their gains by looting goods when they are in a more favorable position, or even take up guns and proactively participate on the battlefields with the objective of gaining material benefits that were denied or above their previous possibilities. In the author’s words, this could be seen as a “looting euphoria merged with the seduction of consumer society” (Utas, 2005: 416).

In the author’s perspective, the “victimization” (understanding herself as a victim, or projecting this image of herself) in conjunction with other tactics, can assure survival in certain situations, specific to armed conflict or war context. This woman’s survival strategy can be seen as a kind of individual “economy”: the options of each individual are being analyzed, taking into account the desired and possible outcomes. Far from being a decisional process based on principal theoretical question, the decision making in these contexts has very immediate and pragmatic objectives, as assuring that survival and physical integrity, the access to basic resources, or minimizing the negative impacts of an unfavorable situation, for instance assuring the protection of their dependents (children, family, etc). A common practice between the rebel or armed groups, whether in Liberia or in the Democratic Republic of Congo, as in other countries, is the kidnapping of children and the youngsters, regardless of them being girls or

boys, to integrate the rebel armed groups, as combatants or, frequently in the case of women, to ensure the support and running of the bases.

Despite women's active participation in the rebel armed forces, as referred by Utas, in Liberia, Uganda and in the Congo, the representation in the media of the women choosing to play, or forced to play violent roles, is still largely based on the essentialist gender definition, thus focusing on the characteristics considered to be inherently feminine. The example offered



Fig. 1.1. – Black Diamond

by the author is Black Diamond (Fig. 1.1.), a rebel woman who has actively participated in the armed groups opposing Charles Taylor. Utas notes that, by presenting Black Diamond's story in the press<sup>2</sup> (Carroll, 2003), her feminine characteristics are seen as incongruent with the active role that she performs, thus underlining the limitation posed by the one-dimensional femininity

definition. As a consequence, the accounts of her combat bravery seem to actually be accounts of a bizarre, almost "freak" personage: she looks like a woman but her behavior is hardly recognizable as feminine. When presenting rebel men, the description of their aspect is not essential and in most of the articles it is omitted, when describing Black Diamond, many of the articles, as the ones quoted in the notes, do make reference to the rebel's physical aspect, garments and clothes. This could seem as an effort to "prove" that she is actually a woman, and also to enhance the contradiction and peculiarity of the personage.

Although distantly related, the two instances of femininity and masculinity presented above – the Congolese military men and the Liberian women/rebels – provide interesting insight into how the representations of masculinity and femininity influence and condition the socially constructed roles of men and women. For the Congolese military men masculinity appears as constructed both global discourses, such as the representation of the soldier, army command chain, military discipline and the army itself, but also through the argumentation of "women as

---

<sup>2</sup>For example, the quoted article: "Her look is Black Panther-turned-movie star: mirror sunglasses, frizzy wig beneath the beret, silver ear-rings, red-painted nails."

Fig. 1.1. - [news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3181529.stm](https://www.bbc.com/news/africa-3181529), accessed 15.03.2013

whore”, based on the Christian duality Madonna/whore concerning women. At the same time though, other aspects of masculinity seemed to derive from the local context, like the preference for the “provider” ideal instead of the “heroic” one (Eriksson Baaz & Stern, 2011: 583-584). The masculine roles derived from these conceptualizations prove to be rather fixed in the particular conflict situation, and rigidly constructed as opposed to femininity. This is the source of an identity crisis as it forces to reconsider masculinity given the local conflict context and the socio-economic limitations that derive from it. The inclusion of women in the armed forces is just an example of how masculinities are affected by changing circumstances. When it is impossible to attain the ideal of being the provider, at least the soldier role must be maintained at all costs as exclusively masculine in order to assure that masculinity itself is not dented by “feminization”.

Concerning the representations of femininity in relation with the roles that women play in the conflict context, considering the Liberian example above, it appears that the local and immediate circumstances take over the question of feminine identity. Reproducing or reinforcing a certain representation of femininity does not seem to be the main focus of women as social actors within the conflict context, but rather survival or maximization of benefits. Femininity appears to be more fluidly constructed, and more adaptable to the specific environment in which it navigates, thus less restricted to an ideal imposing certain “feminine” roles. This might be seen as a consequence of women historically not being active partners in the public sphere and in the decision making processes, which impregnates femininity with a strong need to adapt to situations created by the masculine Otherness. On the other hand, it seems like a more pragmatic view on femininity as being driven not by the representations, which still strongly influence the perception of the womanly roles at a discourse level, but shifting according to the specific context and immediate necessities.

## **1. 2. Gender, security(zation) and intervention in Africa**

The field of International Security Studies (ISS) has come to rely more and more on the contribution of feminist analysis in the last decades, especially after the shift that occurred in the 1980s within the peace studies field, which changed the focus to “security” as it was considered to be a more inclusive concept (Sjoberg, 2010b). The end of the Cold War was also a key moment in re-conceptualizing security, especially from the perspective of the “referent objects”. International relations studies, as well as peace studies, focused primarily on the states as actors, thus analyzing security from the point of view of the national security. The theoretical shift that occurred pointed out that people are the irreducible fundamental entity to which the concept of security can be applied. This new perspective allowed security studies to extend the analysis

to new levels, starting from the traditional international and national one, and going further to an individual level analysis, thus permitting the concept of security to be a more encompassing one (Buzan & Hansen, 2011: 135-136).

The feminist contribution to the security studies drew particularly on the tensions between the collective security and the concept of individual security, especially from the perspective of integrating the women's views on security as the perspective of a cohesive group. This approach argued that women and gender should be included as referent objects of security, from the viewpoint of the way they are affected by state practices that maintain the gendered distinctions between the insecurities that the state-centric system understands to address or not. Also, by analyzing the insecurities that affect women, scholars noted that some of them like malnutrition, economic deprivation, lack of healthcare and others were not encompassed by the military state-centric security principle (Buzan & Hansen, 2011: 138-140).

Contributions of the feminist scholars to the International Security Studies were based on the empirical and theoretical analysis of the multiple roles that gender and women play in conflict, but also in conflict resolution. Scientific areas within the International Relations, previously thought to be gender neutral, like debates on the use of nuclear weapons, the principle of the civil immunity, peacekeeping, militarization, soldiering, were proved to be based on a gendered language, that asserted the dominance of men in the field of study, but also as main decision making actors regarding these topics (Tickner, 2001, Sjoberg, 2010b).

One of the issues that raise ample debates concerning the state-centric system from the gender point of view is the anthropomorphic conceptualization of State. The majority of human characteristics are attributed to the State, from interests and intentions, to death – which would translate, for example, into a failed State. However, researchers note that despite the anthropomorphic perspective about State, it does not encompass a gender perspective; therefore the analysis of the State from this view also ignores the entire dimension related to femininity and masculinity. Eluding the dimension of gender leads to “the elevation of the masculine subject to a universal status” (Wadley in Sjoberg, 2010b: 38). By eliminating the feminine perspectives, albeit in a disguised fashion, the masculine element is promoted as universal, while excluding its feminine complement.

Considering these assumptions, Jonathan Wadley raises the question of the performance and protection in the international security system. The author supports his theory on the concept of performance, which, as explained by Judith Butler, involves the creation of an identity through the expressions of itself, in other words the identity as being constructed actively from its own expressed attitudes and behavior (Butler, 2009). By applying this theory to the international



system, the reproduction of the asymmetrical gender relations can be noted: a protective State adopts an attitude attributed to the sphere of the masculine, which (as for example the association with rationality) constitutes the state as a masculine actor, whose responsibility is to ensure the security of the subjects it embodies (Wadley in Sjoberg, 2010b: 41).

Traditional Western gender studies assume that the gender system is based on dichotomous pairs, consequently generating a hierarchy of the elements to which this system applies to. Such examples of pairs are probably innumerable, from irrationality versus rationality, to dependant versus autonomous, or active versus passive, but the subordinate element is always associated to the concept of femininity (Wadley in Sjoberg, 2010b: 49). As a consequence of this conceptualization, a State that positions or affirms itself as a protector not only embodies the masculine ideal and the position of superiority, as it projects the subjects of its protection to an inferior position, dependant and vulnerable, while also reproducing the asymmetrical gender system. Hence, the dominance of the masculinity, by assuming the protector role, represents yet another possible perspective to explain the logic of conflict starting from the gender analysis. As an individual, the State, as long as it expresses itself as the protector of its citizens (or part of them), takes a dominant position, which allows it to have control over the subordinated element. The subordinated element is frequently feminized, ascertained as being the weaker one, less capable of protecting itself, and in general less capable of agency. The power attributed to the dominant position can either be used to keep the integrity of the state and the control over the subjects, or to maximize the number of dominated elements or the associated benefits, in which case the resort to war, armed conflict and violence is easy to justify from the perspective of the masculine ideal of the "hero".

Transposing the same logic in the international relations theater, researchers like Catherine MacKinnon point to the feminization of the State, as well as to the feminization of other entities in need of protection from other international actors. Similarly to the anthropomorphic representation of the State, scholars consider that the public - private distinction, where the private is associated to femininity, to the domestic, to the taboo, can be also applied to the conflict theories. The consequence of this logic would be that the closer to "home" - a civil war for instance - the more feminized are the victims perceived to be, regardless of their gender, which leads to the dispute being considered "domestic", therefore being less subjected to the international legal frame (MacKinnon, 1994: 7). Similar to the case of domestic disputes, considering a matter to be private, although it impacts negatively the parties involved, and in spite of evidences of violence, can be used as reason not to intervene. The international

interventions and sanctions are less probable to be applied due to the taboo of the “intimate” that derives from the association between femininity and the untouchable, the taboo.

Considering both positions, MacKinnon’s and Wadley’s, it can be concluded that, as long as the ideal of masculinity is based on “heroism”, translated into soldiering, dominance and force, in a situation of armed conflict requiring international intervention, said intervention would be conditioned by the perception of the conflict as “domestic” and private, thus out of reach for the external entities. The symbolic meanings in the framework of international relations are still firmly grounded on the hierarchizing gender dichotomies femininity/masculinity, which valorizes especially the hegemonic masculinity as privileged and dominating. Thus, international intervention can also be read through the gender lens, in the sense that when the intervening actor takes action, it is also an act of reinforcing its masculinity by efficiently expressing domination over the actor who is incapable of defending itself (not lastly, its women), thus positioning the interacting entities into an unequal binary of masculine/dominating – feminine/dominated.

Another dimension can be noticed, namely the manipulation of the gender ideology in order to justify external intervention by assuming that women are being oppressed by the men from the same group, thus they need saving, which gives place to the argument of “civilizing mission”. It was a discourse frequently used by European colonizers in order to legitimate the domination of the “barbaric” and “backward” peoples from the colonized territories and impose the symbolic gender order. In this way, foreign intervention or foreign domination is not only justified morally from a Western perspective, but it can be elevated to the level of “liberation project” (Peterson, 1999: 50).

Conversely, studies of the post-conflict period in Sierra Leone have concluded that, from an opposite perspective, sustainable peace is more effectively built counting on the grassroots solutions, including from the security perspective. In spite of attributing an important role to the international community that contributes with assistance and resources, researchers like Mazurana and Carlson consider that the difficulty of designing conflict exit strategies in the case of protracted and/or intractable conflicts is the major reason why the local actors, directly affected in the conflict, should also be involved in the conflict resolution efforts. The local actors are also the ones who would benefit the most from attaining and maintaining peace. They are as well the most likely victims, should the armed conflict continue, being the direct targets of violence, thus finding themselves in the most insecure position. Simultaneously, the local actors have a deep knowledge and understanding of the grassroots situation and specific social dynamics. In this panorama, the women’s position and the contribution to the local communities

are profoundly affected by the dominant association of femininity with the idea of the “passive victims” (Mazurana & Carlson, 2004: 3). This idea also has a significant influence in the drawing of post-conflict rebuilding strategies and programs, leading to the agency of women in the local communities being undervalued, despite their experiences, necessities and knowledge. Consequently, the rebuilding strategies leave women aside since they are not associated with the idea of active participation in a conflict, which leads to their contributions being marginal and insignificant (Turshen & Twagiramariya, 1998), hence not in need of special attention in the post-conflict period. However, the exclusion of women from the rebuilding programs, as Mazurana and Carlson noted in Sierra Leone in 2002, leads to women having less choices in order to subsist. Some of the women may opt in this situation to actively take part in the conflict, since the context of the rebel groups is one than can assure (some) security, and also allow them to subsist.

Placing the discussion regarding security in the international relations frame within a dichotomous West/East (or North/South) relationship, researchers have pointed out that, since the end of the Cold War there has been a surge of conflicts in the Southern periphery. The international actors often intervene, but the Western powers are also having an important contribution by supplying the warring factions with advanced weapons, which are in turn used principally for internal security purposes. Despite this type of engagement in alien armed conflict not denting the image of the West as the “locus of stability and democracy”, it does project the idea that militarization itself is becoming the most important threat to security (Tickner, 2001: 42).

Authors like Cynthia Cockburn defend that the prevalence of militarism and militarization can be interpreted as a reinforcing base for the patriarchal system (Cockburn, 2010: 144). As such, war, and by extension armed conflict, is another method to maintain the primacy of the masculine element towards the feminine principle which is kept in second place, therefore maintaining and reinforcing the phalocratic system. The author considers that, in a general, transversal, way, militarization, war and armed conflict are perverse manifestations of the men’s necessity of supremacy. The explanation rest on the separation entailed by the dichotomous pair public/private space, with the public space being associated to masculinity, and thus with power and authority. This can be translated in practice by militarization being perceived as an exclusive masculine rite of passage, allowing men to aspire to the idealized militarized heroic identity, by protecting their “own” women, while also being entitled to use rape against the women or men of the enemy (Peterson, 1999: 43).

Feminists pointed out that militarization is a progressive process, “by which a person or a thing gradually comes to be controlled by the military *or* comes to depend for its well-being on militaristic ideas” (Enloe, 2000: 3). Also, it has been shown that, the more militarization alters the individual or the society, the more inculcated is the militaristic view and the militaristic presuppositions start to be regarded as normal. Since militarization engages cultural as well as institutional, ideological, and economic transformations, it can become perilous as it offers a one-dimensional vision depending on the Western dominating fixed notions of how men and women are to relate and engage in war/armed conflict. Such images as men/warriors/heroes, in opposition to women/pacifists/victims, become entrenched and limit the identities available for femininity and masculinity, while also conditioning the acts of the individuals and their interpretation (Elshtain, 1995: 4). An important aspect is to be noted: while basing the analysis mostly on Western examples, scholars investigating militarization from the feminist point of view have highlighted that, although militarization privileges masculinity, in order for the militarization process to succeed, it requires “both women’s and men’s acquiescence” (Enloe, 2000: 4). In consequence of this observation, one possible measure to counteract militarization proposed by the Western feminist would be to have women organizations rallying against war and armed conflict. On a more comprehensive scale, denouncing militarization and advocating for peace would also be useful in dismantling the asymmetrical gender order, affecting in a negative way the condition of women in general, but also having immediate effects as result of the violence associated with the armed conflict and war (Cockburn, 2010: 152).

The broadening and deepening of the concept of security can be analyzed from various perspectives, not solely from the gender perspective or from the inclusion of the individuals as referent objects. One of the important contributions was made from the linguistics and poststructuralist perspective, by focusing the security conceptualization at the language and discourse level. The contribution to the security studies is based on the assumption that language, as a structuring and influencing system, has a social power as the understanding of reality is mediated by discourse. From the poststructuralist perspective, if security, or peace, is to be understood by decoding the discourse that “tells” them, then security itself cannot be considered to be an objective concept, but rather “a practice through which subjects are constituted” (Buzan & Hansen, 2011: 142).

This can be considered one of the basic assumptions on which the theory of securitization, elaborated by the Copenhagen School, draws upon: that an issue becomes a security issue if and only when formulated as such at a discourse level. In this context, security is understood as a negative value, as the incapacity to deal with and resolve issues within the regular politics and

using the regular political tools. The concept of securitization comes to explain how the issue has to be dealt with: by bring it into the discourse and then addressing it using extraordinary measures. When introducing an issue into the public discourse with the objective to securitize it, there is a need for a specific audience to accept the claims of the securitizing actor (Booth, 2007, 162-168). If these conditions are met, then security has the power to “act”, by means of the discursive and political force, and thus securitize – presenting an issue in security terms.

However, given the framework within which the Copenhagen School introduces the concept of securitization, the theory has been widely adopted, as well as widely criticized. One of the traditional security studies elements within the securitization theory is that the political system is still largely assumed to be state-centric, thus the involved entities, whether the actors emitting a securitizing discourse, the audience that validates the issue as a security issue, and the decision-making actors in general are limited to the ones belonging to the state structures. Also in order to delimitate the securitization theory, the promoters have focused solely on the social and stately referent objects (Buzan & Hansen, 2011: 213).

Within the framework of empirical research, the concepts of securitization, and subsequently the de-securitization, have been used to relevantly describe, amongst other instances, the situation of the female soldiers in the post-conflict context in Sierra Leone. Grounding the analysis on the idea that removing the guns from the combatants is not sufficient in order to move towards a secure state, it is argued that a structured process of rehabilitation and reconstruction at a social level is an indispensable condition. A gendered vertical hierarchy can be observed within this framework, as women are much less represented at the level of the securitizing actors, or “high politics”, being still associated, and constrained to the private space, the one of the “low politics” (MacKenzie, 2010: 204).

Scholars noted that, in such cases as the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) programs applied in Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo, as well as Sierra Leone, although including women on the agenda, the way that women were portrayed was one-dimensional and homogenous, and consequently the measures supposed to rehabilitate them and reintegrate them in the society also took into consideration only one scenario, that of the women as victims, regardless of their active roles in combat and their presence as soldiers (Mazurana & Carlson, 2004, MacKenzie, 2010). By designing the DDR programs from this perspective, the referent object for securitization was mainly considered to be the male subject, accordingly assuming that the female soldiers were not a security concern. Contributing to this limited view on the securitization subject was also the prevalence and attention given to the widespread use of sexual violence against women in the context of Sierra Leone, which further

helped generalize the perception that women were only victims of the conflict while leaving the rest of the roles women actually played in a cone of shadow. These assumptions lead to a process of de-securitization of the women soldiers, as they were not primary beneficiaries for the DDR programs, being assumed that they would “naturally” take on the normal lives after the end of the conflict. Thus, women did not take part in the policy discourses, being once more marginalized and associated with the private sphere (MacKenzie, in Sjoberg 2010b: 161).

As shown with this note on the DDR programs in Africa, securitization is a concept that reflects and re-creates reality: the discourse introducing a security issue is defining the way that the security issue will be dealt with, and who is considered or not a referent object, thus being included in the securitization or excluded from it. Another observation is that, since discourse is a reflection of the language structure, concepts, beliefs and ideas of the actors emitting it, it will also reproduce the social system, and the inequalities that were shown to derive from it. Hence, the gender asymmetry was clearly reproduced, and at the same time reinforced since the stereotyped perceptions of womanhood did not allow a full, unbiased grassroots analysis of the situation and of the securitization needs. An important note should be made: rather common for international intervention in Africa, given the frailty of the Sierra Leonean state, many of the actors involved in drawing the DDR were international, non-African entities, generally associated with development agencies. This means that several very different agendas can come into the frame when security issues are securitized, and these agendas do not necessarily have the best interest of the referent object as main focus, or can come to compete amongst them, and are definitely at risk of employing a securitization discourse that does not reflect the local context and the local social system. (Booth, 2007: 167-168)

Moreover, critics of the securitization theory remarked that, given that securitization implies that the security issue cannot be resolved in the regular political field, in order to securitize it extraordinary measures are needed – which can entail “ways that may violate normal legal and social rules” (Buzan & Hansen, 2011: 214). As critics have pointed out, this can mean militarization and in general a confrontational approach when dealing with the security issue, while also limiting the securitization to the traditional state level (Booth, 2007:165).

One of the critical observations concerning the securitization concept pointed to the fact that, given the political system and communication channels a state normally presumes, it is also possible that there were actors that did not have access to the discourse sphere, thus being disenfranchised and unable to securitize the issues that threaten them. This indicates that access to discourse in order to assert an issue as being a security threat, and subsequently have it securitized, is limited to the individuals or entities with discourse-making power. Since the

securitization theory states that in order for an issue to be securitized, it has to be both brought into the discourse, as well as validated by a specific audience, this means that if a certain audience does not have an agenda-making power, it cannot validate the issue as a security issue that has to be securitized. It means at the same time that, if an audience has the power to decide if an issue does not have to be securitized, it might do so, even if this might come against the needs of the groups affected by the security issue – one of the most relevant examples being the genocide in Rwanda in 1994, which was not validated as a security threat by the audiences that could have intervened for the securitization (Booth 2007: 166-168).

In close connection with the observations above concerning the Copenhagen School theory of securitization is the issue of “security as silence”, meaning that in certain contexts, like for example some of the Muslim countries, certain issues, like rape, cannot be brought into the discourse as the uttering of the offence that the woman/girl was subject to would be against the rigid religious traditions, thus putting the victim, or simply the whistleblower, into an even less secure position. When analyzing the securitization concept from this point of view, it is rather clear that both the state model and the discourse arena were conceived as being based on the Western principles and structures, starting from the conception of the state (and subsequently the concept of failed state), and continuing with the assumptions considering free speech and the social and individual protection as a given (Buzan & Hansen, 2011: 216).

This theoretical critique of the conceptualization and theoretic approach of security as based on the Western definition and idea of state can be enlarged to the field of Security Studies in general, as the definition of state itself is deeply rooted within the formation of the Western world. Given that the “state” as it is defined within the political theory field is a universalizing idealized fiction, scholars argue that the diversity of state organization should also be taken into consideration when discussing security (Booth, 2007: 76). Post-colonialism also draws on this argument when addressing the security question: the traditional realist approach is considered to be based on the particular European history of the state formation, thus grounding the analysis and theories on this assumption does not reflect the specificities of the other geographical areas (Buzan & Hansen, 2011: 201).

Engaged in discourse with post-structuralism, post-colonialism also questions the traditional security studies from the point of view of the material structures, considered to be less relevant than the discursive constitution of identities. Post-colonial scholars consider that the hegemony of the West manifests itself within the political and academic construction of “the South”, “the Oriental”, the “underdeveloped” or the “failed one” – this Otherness, different and non-compliant with Western structures, standards and ideals, is projected to have an inferior

identity. Moreover, this inferior identity is also implicitly immutable, and assuming a pre-colonial essence, thus needing to be mobilized by the West in all important fields. What Post-colonialism proposes is an alternative to the Western dominated theories, and especially to the generalization based on Western principles: applied to security, this perspective suggests that the concept of “security” cannot be assumed to have a universal, globally shared meaning. The alternative would be to consider the local contexts and the specific meanings that security might have when constructed in contexts different from the Western one (Buzan & Hansen, 2011: 200-202). Meeting feminism in this theoretical posture, it can be further argued that through this very way of conceptualizing security, and the world, as divided into spaces that are considered to be detached from each other and classified in a vertical hierarchy, not only that the Western identity is maintained, as it becomes possible to ontological disengage from the “Other” and thus not take into consideration their views on security, while at the same time creating an ideologically auspicious terrain for more insecurities to surface (Sjoberg, 2010b: 78).

However, the need for securitization has been widely used as a reason for international intervention in African and not only, The relations that the independent African states have with the other states of the world have been influenced, and conditioned, by how Africa as a whole is seen and understood in the popular imagination, and more specifically on the international relations theater. As noted by African scholars, but not only, the general understanding of Africa is being done through a negative interpretation of its elementariness and primitiveness, in correlation to a “natural” state of “beast” or “animal” like of its people, pointing to the apparently eluding “strange and the monstrous” within them (Mbembe, 2001: 1). Moreover, in spite of the geographical characteristics, the histories of the African peoples, the diversity of state contexts, and the ethnical and religious variety found on the African continent, it seems like a “generic Africanness” is still presumed to be imbedded, even if only in the Sub-Saharan region. This generic way of understanding Africa is however negatively marked at discourse level, Africa being associated with crisis, problems, failure, underdevelopment, and so on (Ferguson, 2006:2).

From an identity and meanings point of view, Mbembe argues that Africa has served the West in its quest to declare its difference from the rest of the world, and represents an original space for its norms and self-imaginary, necessary in order to integrate this image into what is constituted and affirmed as the Western identity. It is argued that this particular way of projecting the Otherness serves to constitute ideologically and justify West’s remorseful preoccupations and exclusionary and cruel practices towards states and people (Mbembe, 2001: 3). However, the content projected as the African Otherness, or the absolute Otherness as some might argue,



is permanently being seen through a lens of the deficit, of a continent that is underdeveloped and “traditional”, unlike the developed and modern West. Therefore, its quest of development and modernity has been doubted from the perspective of the “authenticity of the copy” (Ferguson, 2006: 16). At the same time, this denies both the possibility for Africa to aspire to development in its own terms, and equates both “modernity” and “development” with the West. In Mbembe’s words: “More than any other region, Africa thus stands out as the supreme receptacle of the West’s obsession with, and circular discourse about, the facts of “absence,” “lack,” and “non-being,” of identity and difference, of negativeness—in short, of nothingness.” (Mbembe, 2001:4).

As a result, the relations that independent African states have with the rest of the states of the World, but mostly the Western states, has been marked by these asymmetrical meanings given to Africa as Otherness for the West, with direct and measurable consequences. One of these consequences is the marginality of the African states in terms of global economy, understood in terms of political-economic inequalities (Ferguson, 2006: 33). Since modernity and development, in Western terms, are being seen as the desirable objectives to attain, and are also presumed to assure the eradication of this type of inequalities, but not lastly because Western powers have been the main stakeholders within the international relations field, Africa has thus found itself on the strenuous “path to development” since the independences. Thus development has been, together with military intervention and humanitarian aid, one of the main motors of international intervention in Africa.

Intervention can be conceived as an ancient and ingrained tool used in foreign policy, just like diplomatic pressure, negotiation or war, as states have found it advantageous to intervene one-sidedly in the affairs of other states on behalf of their own interests (Morgenthau, 1967:426). Given that this definition implies a coercive direct involvement into the internal affairs of a different state in order to pursue one state’s own interests, it proved to be limitative. Also considering the relatively recent transformations of the international relations arena, like for example in terms of actors (the apparition and weight of international organizations such as the United Nations, regional organizations, etc.) and the diversification of the interactions, a more encompassing definition was sought by scholars. More comprehensive definitions can be given taking into consideration both the reason why an intervention occurs, which then defines the type of intervention, and how is the intervention performed. Considering the acceptance of the intervention on the state intervened upon, coercive or non-coercive interventions can be delimited. Also, coercive governmental humanitarian intervention can have both military and non-military forms. Correspondingly, non-coercive governmental humanitarian intervention has

military and non-military forms. As exemplified above, given that the actors that can intervene are not just the states, more types of intervention can be identified according to the entities involved, which can be transnational, intergovernmental and non-governmental (Ramuhala, 2010: 20).

The legitimacy of international interventions has been questioned from the stand of the right to auto-determination of the peoples, and subsequently of the states, in the nation-state system. On the other hand, the lack of international reaction, and subsequently of intervention in such cases as the Rwandan genocide in 1994, have also raised the opposite question, of the responsibility of the international community vis-à-vis the genocide, and in the general human rights abuses occurring within a state's frontiers (Miall, Ramsbotham & Woodhouse, 1999: 161, Chandler, 2004).

International military interventions have occurred in Africa since the independences in the 1960s, having as background the decolonization process, but also the Cold War, thus being shaped and conditioned by the opposition USA versus the Soviet Union, with a more neutral intervener in the UN. The reasons why the great powers would intervene in the African states at that time, much like in later years, was the limited governing will and/or capacity of the new leaders of the independent states, exacerbated by the social, ethnical economical and infrastructure legacy of colonialism. Armed violence seemed to be one of the predilect expressions of contestation and confrontations in the new states. Under the influence of external contributions, such as the Belgian-CIA involvement in the elimination of Patrice Lumumba (Asante, 2007:313), or the steady military and political presence of the Soviet Union, to the growing in importance of the military leaders, and subsequently to maintaining the control by militarizing the new independent African states (Falcão Escorrega, 2010: 148-149).

After the end of the Cold War, a new political-strategic paradigm emerges, contributing to a relative liberalization of the governing regimes. The localization of the emerging conflicts mainly within the frontiers of the states, or at a regional level, together with a shift of the power balance given the end of the Cold War, but also significantly because of the failure in military interventions such as the UN standstill in the Rwandan case, or the American-lead intervention in Somalia, triggered an estrangement of the great powers from the conflict resolution strategy based on direct military intervention. Two tendencies can be noticed: one would be that of shifting from direct military intervention to military cooperation between the great powers or international entities and the African states and organizations. The objective is to enhance the military capacity and effectiveness of the African military forces, while at the same time reinforcing the idea of "African solutions to African problems" (Falcão Escorrega, 2010: 148).

The second shift in the approach is that direct foreign intervention has come to focus primarily on humanitarian issues, within the framework of development, the paradigm change being also reflected within the vocabulary used to describe this type of foreign involvement rather as cooperation than intervention. Cooperation implies the existence of two, or more, equal partners – instead of the one-sided intervention, engaged in the pursuit of common objectives, thus transmitting the idea of common views, shared strategies and equal involvement from the donor and receiver.

International cooperation in Africa started with the independences, and was based on a deficit development model assuming that the newly independent African states needed guidance and assistance in reaching the same development level as the West, which served as ideal for political, social and economic organization and functioning. However, this development paradigm has lately been largely criticized, given that 50 years after the implementation of this international cooperation model, the situation in the targeted countries has not improved significantly, and it can be argued that the situation in certain countries that were the focus of international cooperation is equally dire, if not worse, than when the international cooperation entered the scene (Roque, 2010: 173).

One of the arguments against the international development cooperation model is related to how the results of the cooperation are evaluated: as some projects fail to meet their objectives, the blame is commonly placed on the aid receivers, by invoking their laziness, lack of professionalism, corruption, insufficient cultural insight, and in general their unreliability and lack of commitment (Eriksson Baaz, 2005:2). The criticism towards the international cooperation has pointed out that there does not seem to be a direct relation between the external aid and development, as the living conditions in most African countries have not improved significantly overall (Roque, 2010: 173), as the human development reports, based on the Human Development Index, show (UNDP, 2013).

Another very important criticism highlights the fact that international cooperation has been transformed into an industry or a business, both by some donor entities, as by some of the aid recipients. Besides being a tool used for establishing hierarchies and classifications amongst the states present on the international stage, the idea of development has maintained a strong presence within the predominating discourses and practices, being also significantly embedded within the collective imaginary due to its perceived absolute verity and certainty (Roque, 2010: 174). The legitimacy that is consequently attributed to the development paradigm serves, in practice, to various diverging purposes, both on the donor side as well as on the recipient side.

It is argued that there can be noted a “radicalization of development” (Duffield, 2001), based on the relationship between development and security/insecurity. In strong connection to the idea of human security on the one hand, and with the structural violence on the other, development in terms of more equalitarian resources distribution, access to services, and overall improvement of the living conditions is seen as being conditioned by the presence of a secure environment at individual and societal level. In the same way however, it can also be argued that as long as security is not a reality, the development aid and effort cannot be deployed effectively. This leads to development being considered equivalent to security, while underdevelopment is considered to be dangerous, hence a threat to security (Duffield, 2001:22).

Conjugating these two approaches, strong criticism has been produced regarding certain media campaigns – such as “Kony2012” – especially from the point of view of the main discourse used to call for humanitarian military intervention through civil society engagement. According to Finnström’s opinion (Finnström, 2012:127), the campaign run by the non-governmental organization Invisible Children was based on a depoliticized and dehistoricized discourse, that used, once more, the stereotype of primitiveness in spite of the actual complex conflict context. While the author notes that this seems to be “a mainstream media trend” (Finnström, 2012:128), other scholars noted that the complexity of power relations, contextual conditionality and social and cultural specificities of the African states, just like confidence in the African political and civic capacities of self-governing and political and economical transformation in general, are not seriously taken into consideration when designing international development strategies (Roque, 2010: 174).

To conclude, it is important to stress that the way Africa is perceived, depicted and recreated within the Western collective imaginary also conditions and enables the discourse of international cooperation and military interventions. The apparent chronic need for external aid is also reinforced by the, often, one-sided depiction of the actual context and circumstances in Africa – stressing the deficit in development compared to the West, thus reinforcing the idea of the ongoing “African tragedy”<sup>3</sup>. This in turn leads to the international development programs bearing the same scar of too little adaptation and engagement with the specific local circumstances, including from political, social and cultural points of view, while also lacking confidence in the African partners.

These aspects are also found reflected within the various types of discourses that have Africa as subject or discuss situations occurring in Africa, such as the news and the media in

---

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Dseagu (1984) - *A definition of African tragedy*, and Leys (1994) - "Confronting the African tragedy"

general, and even the strategies and the policies of the international community. The discourses cannot, however, be analyzed only from this perspective because, as suggested previously, they usually are multidimensional, encompassing a gender dimension which underlines language and perception, and tend to present and represent certain femininities and masculinities models. The discourse construction and reception are further influenced by the perception and understanding of violence and human behavior in general, culminating with the intention behind the discourse itself, which can be reflexive or a call to action, like for example in the case of securitization discourses.

As suggested by post-colonialist studies, it is also important to be able to acknowledge and identify how the Western and African perceptions of specific events can differ, or to the contrary, can draw together to the same perceptions and interpretations due to the particular historic interactions. The following section will present two such discourses, namely two media productions, a film and a documentary, which will subsequently be analyzed from the perspective of the previously mentioned dimensions of the discourse.

### **Conclusion**

The limitations deriving from dominant Western concept of gender can be observed within its methodological consequences, such as the predominance of the “feminine” attributes of dependence, frailty and victimacy. Also, another limitation of Western feminism is that it does not perceive race or class as intersecting gender (Oyewumi, 2004: 2). Considering the identity of women as deriving from the Western concept of gender implies that the perspective of gender identity – describing oneself as being a woman – fails to explain the intersections that discursively come to constitute the whole of an individual. The considerations on gender, and the perception of the category of women become more acute in situations when social structures are challenged, or are in transformation.

Given the current context in the DRC, conflict is one of the main contributors to the current shifts in social structures. The particularities of the African conflicts, which enable them to become intractable and protracted, have significant political and economical consequences, both internally and internationally. Entrenched conflict permits that the institutional structures are altered, giving space for new institutions to emerge, over time, implying the institutionalization of a new economical dynamic and a privatization of sovereignty (Mbembe, 1999: 111).

Sexual violence, frequent in conflict contexts and widely documented within the ongoing conflict in the DRC, has various enablers, both at the individual, moral level, as well as in the area of gender perception and social structures. However, media accounts tend to offer

politicized perspectives on violence in Africa, which occurs in a “simple moral world” (Finnström, 2012). By using a journalistic approach focusing on the “pornography of violence”, violence is placed outside history and context and appears to bear no social, political or economical meaning (Mamdani, 2002: 13), helping to aliment the stereotype of intrinsically violent Africa.

Also, sexual violence is presented and explained in relation with the gender roles that women and men are perceived to play during conflict periods. This implies that the perceptions of femininity and masculinity play a central part in defining and delimitating the victim/perpetrator positions. As it resulted following empirical investigation in the DRC, masculinity, in the military context, emerges as constructed both on global discourses, such as militarized ideal, but also deriving from the local social context (Eriksson Baaz & Stern, 2011: 583-584). Hence, the conflict context in the DRC is also the stage for a gender identity crisis as it forces to reconsider masculinities and femininities given the local conflict context and the socio-economic limitations that it entails.

From the perspective of International Security Studies, situations such as conflict or sexual violence constitute security issues, which can call for securitization. Although contested, the concept of securitization can be practically used in order to reduce insecurities. However, in order to securitize an issue, the question of privileged actors that can call for securitization emerges. In correlation with the Western dominant influence in the international relations arena, securitization can be used both as a reason, as well as a pretext, for international intervention in African or non-African states.

This attitude is further supported by the media discourses which reinforce the stereotype of African underdevelopment, in contrast with the Western responsibility to intervene and stimulate development. When considering development as equivalent to security (Duffield, 2001), the West is capacitated as both the progress and securitization model. In this manner, the West grounds its legitimacy to intervene in the international public support, fomented by the simplistic, stereotyped media discourses presenting the African realities of scarcity and lack of capacity to find African solutions to African problems.



## 2. ANALYSIS OF MEDIA DISCOURSES: “THE GREATEST SILENCE: RAPE IN THE CONGO” AND “WAR WITCH”

### Introduction

The second part of the dissertation focuses on analyzing two media discourses from the perspective of the theoretical framework delimited in the first chapter. The purpose is to answer the questions formulated within the introduction. Thus, the analysis concentrates on how sexual violence is presented, in relation with the gender perceptions underlying it. Secondly, the study will focus on the representations of sexual violence, in the larger context of violence, with particular emphasis on how sexual violence is depicted in the discourses and presented to the public. The third point connects the social construction of femininities and masculinities with the representations of women and men in the media discourses, together with the roles they play in the ongoing conflict situation in the DRC. The possibility that the media discourses used certain representations of femininity and masculinity in order to comply with an agenda, such as the securitization of sexual violence against women agenda, is also explored. The fifth point of the analysis is to assess how the gender representations in the conflict context, included in the media discourses, interact with collective perceptions on gender and the perception of Africa within the global collective imaginary.

Scholarly investigation in the area of gender representations has focused lately on the impact that discourse has in policy shaping, both from the perspective of the discourse content, as well as considering its form (Shepherd, 2010). The depiction of gendered violence in the media has been the subject of investigation for Sánchez Rodríguez, her study focusing on the informative processing of offences related with violence against women (Sánchez Rodríguez, 2008). In the Canadian context, Jiwani investigated the symbolic and discursive violence in media representations of Aboriginal women who were victims of murder or kidnapping (Jiwani, 2009). The article authored by Garraio (Garraio, 2010), tackles the issue of the representations of cases of sexual violence, denounced during the war in Libya, as they were presented by leading Western media.

Resuming the feminist approach to media discourse analysis, Zoonen's perspective is revelatory and will be applied throughout the analysis:

The reception of media should be understood against the background of individual and collective life histories which render current events and meaning intelligible; mass media use and effects should be seen in contingency with other influences, not as an isolated phenomena; the process of interpretation of meanings by audiences precedes and modifies any possible media effect. (Zoonen, 1994:132)



The two media discourses selected for analysis are the documentary “The Greatest Silence: Rape in the Congo”, and the drama film “War Witch”. The cinematographic productions referring to the Democratic Republic of Congo present historical accounts, such as the documentary “White King, Red Rubber, Black Death” (released in 2003, directed by Peter Bate), which focuses on the rule of King Leopold II, or “Mobutu, roi du Zaïre” (released in 1999, directed by Thierry Michel), which introduces the viewer to the Mobutu era, and the long lasting effect on the country. Increasingly though, documentary focusing on the DRC tend to concentrate on the ongoing crisis as a main topic, while also highlighting the need to address certain issues. Amongst them counts the documentary “Crisis In The Congo: Uncovering The Truth” (released in 2011, produced by the organization Friends of the Congo) which calls for international, and in particular American intervention, in order to sanction the illegal trafficking of natural resources, “L’Affaire Chebeya (un crime d’Etat ?)” (released in 2012, directed by Thierry Michel) which highlights the fragility of the Congolese judicial system in regards to the assassination of the human rights activist Floribert Chebeya.

The documentary “The Greatest Silence: Rape in the Congo” belongs to the latter category, focusing on the issue of sexual violence against women in the DRC. This media discourse was chosen in order to analyze the construction of the discourse in terms of gender, sexual violence and securitization agenda. Other media discourses, such as the documentary “Gender against Men” (released in 2009, produced by the Refugee Law Project) explores, on the other hand, the world of sexual and gender-based violence against men in the conflicts of the Great Lakes Region. However, some of the documentaries highlighting Congolese issues (although shared with its neighbors, such as Uganda) needing to be addressed, while also implying that the solution would be international military intervention, have been subject to international community scrutiny and scholarly criticism due to its oversimplified content and mercantile feature (Finnström, 2012). This was the case of the documentary “Kony 2012”, which was the core pillar of the humanitarian and interventionist campaign with the same title.

The drama “War Witch” was chosen for analysis as a counterpoint for the documentary selected. The two will be analyzed in parallel, in order to better highlight the differences and similarities between the two.

### **2.1. The documentary: “The Greatest Silence: Rape in the Congo”**

The documentary The Greatest Silence: Rape in the Congo was produced, directed, filmed and edited by Lisa F. Jackson, a filmmaker with more than 30 years of experience. She was also a gang rape victim in her native USA (thegreatestsilence.org). As indicated by the director in an

interview, the title of the documentary was inspired by the 2002 UNIFEM report “Women, War and Peace”, which opened with the phrase: “Violence against women in conflict is one of history's great silences.” (Winship, 2008).

The documentary was released in 2008, being produce in collaboration with HBO, currently distributed by the organization Women Make Films ([www.wmm.com](http://www.wmm.com)). The official synopsis, as it can be found on the official page of the documentary is the following:

Since 1998 a brutal war has been raging in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Over 4 million people have died. And there are the uncountable casualties: the many tens of thousands of women and girls who have been systematically kidnapped, raped, mutilated and tortured by soldiers from both foreign militias and the Congolese army.

The world knows nothing of these women. Their stories have never been told. They suffer and die in silence. In *The Greatest Silence: Rape in the Congo* these brave women finally speak.

Emmy Award winning producer/director Lisa F. Jackson spent 2006 in the war zones of eastern DRC documenting the tragic plight of women and girls in that country's intractable conflict. She was afforded privileged access to not only the grotesque realities of life in Congo (including interviews with self-confessed rapists) but also to examples of resiliency, resistance, courage and grace.

Jackson was herself gang raped in 1976 and shared her experience with the survivors she interviewed. These women in turn recount their stories with an honesty and immediacy pulverizing in its intimacy and detail. The film is a journey into a literal heart of darkness, a search for survivors who pay witness to their own experiences, and break the silence.

Background, context and opinion are provided by interviews with peacekeepers, politicians, activists, doctors and priests. But above all there is the wrenching testimony from dozens of survivors of sexual violence who recount stories of chilling barbarity. This film gives them dignity, a face and a voice that will finally break the silence that surrounds their plight. ([thegreatestsilence.org/about](http://thegreatestsilence.org/about))

Highly praised both by film critics as well as by activists, the documentary was distinguished with various prizes, amongst which the Special Jury Prize at the 2008 Sundance Film Festival in the Documentary category.

The documentary was filmed in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, in the province of South Kivu, most of the interviews and filming taking place in the cities of Bukavu and Bunyakiri, as well as in the surroundings. The people depicted in the documentary are mostly Congolese women who have been victims of rape and are sharing their stories, local and international activists, local professionals that deal with rape victims, self-declared rapists and UN personnel. The producer and director, Lisa F. Jackson, contributes in voice-over with

information concerning the Congolese context and the issue of rape, but also shares her personal views and feelings towards the situations presented.

## **2.2. “War Witch” film – an analysis**

The drama film War Witch – the original title in French being “Rebelle” – is a 2012 Canadian production, written and directed by Kim Nguyen. The film revolves around a young girl called Komona, played by Congolese non-professional actress Rachel Mwanza, who was abducted by rebels from her home when she was 12 years old. Although the film does not disclose the country where the story unravels, the scenes were shot in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and no details of the screenplay indicate that the action is not taking place in the same country. The official synopsis is the following:

Komona, a 14 year old girl, tells her unborn child the story of how she became a rebel. It all began when she was 12; kidnapped by the rebel army, she was forced to carry an AK 47 and kill. Her only escape and friend is Magician, a 15 year old boy who wants to marry her. Despite the horrors and daily grind of war, Komona and Magician fall in love.

They thought they had escaped the war, but fate decided otherwise. In order to survive, Komona will need to return to where she came from and make amends with her past.

Around them, war rages on....

A tale set in Sub-Saharan Africa, WAR WITCH is a love story between two young souls caught in a violent world yet filled with beauty and magic.

WAR WITCH is a life lesson, a story of human resilience. ([www.rebelle-lefilm.ca](http://www.rebelle-lefilm.ca))

The fact that the drama does not make any mention regarding the country where the action is occurring is a conscious effort of the director not to associate the occurrences in the film with a certain state, so that no judgments or statements about Africa are cast, while the spectators focused solely on the narration. On the other hand, the fact that he does not relate the story to a specific national environment, could also indicated that the story could be happening in a variety of conflict contexts, like the Democratic Republic of Congo, as well as other African countries, but not only. In the director’s own words, his reasoning behind the decision not to disclose the location where the action in the film is taking place:

Because the film is a fiction. It’s not Congo’s reality, it’s a construction of several different realities. Most of the things you see in the film are things I have read about, that are slightly twisted but are true in their principles. But since I transformed so many of these things, I couldn’t give a name to the place where I was filming. It wouldn’t have been responsible to do so. (Rohter, 2013)

The choice not to indicate a state, however, while placing the events in “Sub-Saharan Africa”, does come in line with the stereotype of Africa as composed of war-thorn dysfunctional societies, a place of irrational violence and utter atrocities.

As the director/screen-writer disclosed in his dialogue with the press, he took the inspiration for the story from “the case of Johnny and Luther Htoo, the nine-year-old, chain-smoking twin brothers who led the God’s Army guerrilla group in Burma in the 1990s and whose followers believed they were divine.” (Taylor, 2013). Nonetheless, during his subsequent almost 10 years long research, he met with ex-child soldiers in Burundi and spent two months in Congo ahead of filming in Kinshasa, which he called “one of the most difficult, most challenging cities to be living in right now in the world ...I think at least 25 per cent of the script was modified by just being in the Congo and seeing stuff” (Ahearn, 2012). In the same interview, Kim Nguyen pointed to the paradoxes and idiosyncrasies which marked his perception of the Democratic Republic of Congo, such as “despair and resilience” and “madness and humanity” (Idem), contradictions which, in turn, are also poignant throughout his film.

### **2.3. Gender on film: how Western directors describe gender in the Congolese context**

Before going on to the content analysis of the media discourses, it is important to note that both producers, Lisa F. Jackson and Kim Nguyen, originate from Western backgrounds: Lisa F. Jackson is American, while Kim Nguyen, of Canadian-Vietnamese descent, was born and raised in Canada. Hence, both discourses can be perceived as external perspectives from an onlooker stand of the African context, and in particular the context in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Gendered representations and the homogenizing use of the category of women are frequently employed within the documentary “The Greatest Silence: Rape in the Congo”. A first indicator is that Jackson, as she states, uses sharing her own personal experience as a woman rape survivor in the American context as a common ground for relating with, and obtaining the stories of the Congolese women that also survived rape. This can also be seen, though, as establishing the foundation for interpersonal interaction as based on mutual ground and shared experiences.

The accounts of Congolese rape survivors presented in the documentary – all those included being women or girls – tell harrowing stories of extreme brutality, rape of children, gang rape done by various factions such as the Congolese Armed Forces, the Interahamwe, but also the Congolese Police officers. Most of the victims also talk about the post-rape stigma and ostracization from the family and/or community. Permanent physical impairments are also

mentioned as affecting many of them, as well as contracting HIV, the pregnancies and children resulted from the rapes. The stories are nonetheless told in local languages, thus the version presented to the public (the documentary has English subtitles for the conversations in French or other Congolese languages, such as Lingala) being the translated one, giving space to the translator's personal interpretation.

The category of women is largely understood through the entire documentary as resting on the essentialist central leveling feature of motherhood. The second generalizing feature perceived as natural for women is the symbolic upholding of the Congolese identity and bearing of the cultural and social. Close to the end, the documentary includes an appeal against sexual violence against women, Congolese contributors share their definition of women, putting it in relation with the impact of large scale rape: "And, after all, what is a woman? The woman is the mother of the nation. He who rapes a woman, rapes an entire nation. When a woman is exposed to that kind of violence, it is the entire country that is affected by it" ("The Greatest Silence", 71'). Activist Christine Schuler Deschryver also considers that: "More than coltan, more than gold, more than diamonds, the women in this country are the greatest resource and they will, it will stay like this." (Idem, 74') Dr. Denis Mukwege gives, as well, his account on the position of women and the meaning of sexual violence in connection to the roles women play in the society, urging that the violence is stopped:

What I see when I walk down the streets of Bukavu, you see that in Bukavu there is no life without women. It is the woman who carries everything, it is the woman who nurtures, it is the woman who works so that her whole family can live. It is the woman who takes care of the ill. All sick men are cared for by their women, but all the sick women are always alone. We have known 10 years of war. But I think this is a war that men have provoked, but the women have paid the hardest price for it. Because, in the end, everything falls on the woman. I believe that if we destroy her, the rest is easy. (Idem, 71')

STOP [sic] the sexual violence done to women, STOP to the violence as a tactic of war, STOP to the savage rape that is destroying our society, that is destroying us. (Idem, 73')

This perspective is further consolidated by presenting the work rationale of Major Honorine Mungole, a woman "Police officer in charge of child protection, and focal point in the struggle against sexual violence in the National Police" (Idem, 25'). As she frequently deals with such cases, she shares some of her experience and her views with Lisa F. Jackson, pointing to the life long consequences of brutal rape, which further add to the stigma associated to the rape survivors. She shows significant empathy to the victims, as she puts it, because she is a woman and a mother herself. Explaining how she relates to her work, Honorine says that she works "with the heart of a mother. So when I see a child exploited or sexually abused, it is the maternal

love that is touched.” (Idem, 53’), expressing thus, and finding her work motivation, within maternal empathy for the victims of the cases she handles.

All the (self-declared) perpetrators whose testimonies are presented, as well as all the other sexual violence perpetrators mentioned in the documentary are men. It therefore becomes clear that gender, together with deriving fixed category of women, is an underlining axis of reference for the documentary.

The film “War Witch”, as the synopsis also indicates, presents a personal perspective of the events, Komona herself being the narrator of the notable scenes. As the actress’ voice can be heard in voice-over, the film can be interpreted as a confession of the young mother to be to her unborn child, or, at the same time, a self-justification, a dialog with herself, in which the unborn baby can be seen as her alter ego, as equivalent to the innocent person she was before being abducted by the rebels. This technique of presenting the story in the first person gives it a feeling of authenticity and intimacy, while also avoiding the trap of moralizing exterior judgment. The category of gender is not used as explanatory or directive, neither regarding the narrated events, nor from an analysis perspective.

A turning point for Komona’s destiny is when the rebels become certain she is a witch, her status changing from being just another child-soldier to being the official sorceress of the Grand Royal Tiger – the rebel leader. As they acknowledge she has the power to foresee where the army troops are hiding or where they would attack from, she starts being considered necessary in order for the rebels to win any armed confrontation, which in turn means that within the rebel groups she gains a favorable, protected position as she is considered to be sacred. The translation from French and the adaptation to English of the film title are however debatable: “witch<sup>4</sup>” is a term most frequently associated to a woman practicing black magic, while the film shows that the rebels had various sorcerers, boys and men, practicing magic, mostly in order to consecrate the weapons and soldiers before battles in order to protect them from the enemies, and from any evil in general, and grant them added powers. As Komona is called in the film “sorcière” (Fr.), the term “sorceress” will be preferred as more neutral and bearing a grammatical gender distinction, rather than an intrinsic one as it is the case with “witch”.

The main character’s quality of “official rebel sorceress” becomes defining for the events that follow, and especially for her positioning when relating to the rest of the characters: rather than presenting gender as a defining concept when narrating, the hierarchical relations between the characters are based on situational elements, as well as on their perceived abilities to serve the rebel cause.

---

<sup>4</sup> As it is defined by the World English Dictionary (online), accessed 20.04.2013

A generalizing assumption on women, as part of the social reality, and particularly the conflict context, is though presented when Komona becomes a rebel Commander's "wife". As Komona prepares her revenge but struggles not to reveal her plans to physically hurt the Commander, he interprets this as her reluctance to acknowledge her sexual desire, in the character's perception, a feature shared by all the women: "Do you want to make love? Is this it? You are all the same." ("War Witch", 62'). Although said in an affectionate, or mocking affectionate tone, it appears to imply that all women share the common inability to control their sexual urges, as a weakness particular to their gender. The director points out in this scene the implicit violence of the sexual subjugation of the young rebel girls by the rebel commanders.

Explaining his reason for choosing as main character a young female soldier, the director based however his argumentation on a somewhat gendered perspective, while also relating to a particular Western perspective depicted in most films:

...as I started doing the research, I realized the importance of telling a story about this girl and giving a voice to people who hadn't been given a voice before. At least in Canada or in the United States, the films I saw that were addressing Africa – I don't know if it's because of the pressures of the industry to have a white A-listed character, or something like that – but the savior always ended up being symbolic of North America, that white guy going into Sub-Saharan Africa and saving everything. So I thought that we had to give a voice to the real heroes of these tragedies, which was in this case a girl who's abducted by rebels and tries to find a way to create a new life for herself. (Hanna, 2013)

Although possibly not intended as such, the above affirmation still positions the Western director in the shoes of the "savior", from the perspective that it is him who gives voice to the voiceless. This can be counteracted by the argument that, while his intention was to provide a channel for "the real heroes of these tragedies" to speak up, he indeed managed to accomplish this in relation to the girl playing the main character. Rachel Mwanza, the young non-professional actress playing the protagonist of the story and previously a homeless child in Kinshasa, was awarded the prestigious 2012 Silver Bear at the Berlin International Film Festival for her performance. Talking about this extraordinary accomplishment of the 14 year old (at the time of the filming), director Kim Nguyen further enhanced the relevance of her performance referring to her troubled past: "We found this amazing kid living in the streets of Kinshasa— Rachel Mwanza, who went on to become the first African woman to ever win the Silver Bear for Best Actress at the Berlin Film Festival" (Kaelan, 2013).

It is interesting to note that, within the documentary "The Greatest Silence", the gendered perspective - considering gender *a priori* relevant for the discourse that is being articulated – is also complemented by a selection of strongly gendered statements from the contributors. This

allows the analysis to follow two axes: how the Western perspective of the woman producer influences the way the facts are documented and presented, namely highly infused with (Western) gender preconceptions. It then leads to, as shown within the theoretical debates, gender being actively used as a tool both for differentiating social categories, as well as for limiting them to their specific gender roles. Gender is presented as being completely intelligible and unproblematic, assuming the “universal depictions of women and men defined by a narrow set of features” (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004: 513), also intimately intertwined or deriving from the biological ones, such as motherhood. The regulatory and limitative functions of the social expressions of gender are thus not questioned, gender being understood as equivalent to the hegemonic cultural beliefs, other alternative gendered identities not being taken into consideration.

Considering the Congolese contributors and their statements, a pattern can be easily identified: if we were to assume that their positions towards gender are relevant for the whole Democratic Republic of Congo, it would appear that there is a total equivalence between women and motherhood from the Congolese perspective. Although this argument in advocating against sexual violence against women is a valid one, amongst a multitude of other possible arguments, it is also a reducing perspective that limits Congolese women to their reproductive function.

Regarding gender and the approach of the category of women, it can be resumed that, both media discourses are marked to some degree by the (mainly Western) generalizing assumptions on gender. Gender constitutes the main axes of meaning and expression within in the documentary “The Greatest Silence”. The universalizing restraining equivalence between womanhood and motherhood is not questioned; on the contrary, it is reinforced by the Congolese contributors, suggesting that the local perspective on gender shares this view with the Western one.

#### **2.4. Depicting sexual violence in media discourses: connotation, documentation or voyeurism?**

The issue of sexual violence, and in particular rape of women and girls is central to the documentary “The Greatest Silence: Rape in the Congo”, as the title also suggests. The opening line of the documentary consists in the director’s statement that “Rape has always been used as a weapon of war”, following with considerations regarding rape victims as “invisible, shamed, silent”. Hence, with basis in these general assumptions, Lisa F. Jackson uses as a leitmotif her own experience as a rape victim, which she trades with the Congolese rape victims, so that in



turn they would then share their stories with her, and implicitly with the public of the documentary.

One of the Congolese officials interviewed for the documentary is Faïda Mwamgilwa, the Minister of Women's Affairs in the Democratic Republic of Congo at the time when the documentary was filmed. She discusses the issue of sexual violence against women in the Congolese context, indicating that it is still considered to be a taboo, thus resulting in the exclusion of the rape victims from the communal life, their repudiation by their husbands, as a result increasing their sense of shame, rejection and isolation ("The Greatest Silence", 9').

An interesting input is given by the UN mission MONUSCO (United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DR Congo) chief for the Eastern Division, Colonel Roddy Winser. In his opinion, rape was used to "create continued instability, dominance", he also considers the Eastern DRC as "the worst environment I have seen" (Idem, 13'). Lisa F. Jackson further informs that there were at the time 17.000 UN troops stationed in the DRC, but this did not seem to have any influence in decreasing the level of violence.

A central witness of, and also international activist against, sexual violence is Doctor Denis Mukwege, the founder and director of the Panzi Hospital in Bukavu, specialized in gynecology. Most rape victims in the Eastern DRC are treated here, since this is the only specialized hospital in the area. His observation regarding the proliferation and extreme aggressiveness of sexual violence against women in the DRC is the following:

I have been working in this region for more than 20 years, so I know pretty well the gynecological pathology of the region. But starting in 1999 I began to consult women who had unusual lesions of mutilation and when I tried to find out how they had been mutilated, that was when I realized how widespread rape was followed by mutilation and humiliation. (Idem, 21')

These accounts on sexual violence against women in the DRC stress that there might have already occurred a transformation in the traditional sexual hierarchies and the Congolese social order, due to the political economy of violence. Subduing the victims by humiliating them does not only put the perpetrators on a dominant position, but also enables them to attain more immediate and pragmatic purposes, from sexual discharge to control over lands and natural resources. This also has more profound effects such as the destabilization of the targeted communities. From a bigger perspective, considering the links of the rebel groups with international actors, such as global corporations (see the UN Final report of the Panel of Experts S/2002/1146), it can be argued that the rebel groups use sexual violence against the reproductive economy in general, but more pragmatically target women as a profit-making strategy to gain access and control the natural resources (Leatherman, 2011:6). This

perspective is also highlighted in the documentary, through the account of Christine Schuler Deschryver, who labels the current situation in the DRC as “economic war”.

Christine Schuler Deschryver is one of the Congolese women activists interviewed for the documentary, described as a “women’s advocate”, nowadays Christine being the Director of V-Day Congo and City of Joy. She explains that the massive rapes started in 1999, Lisa F. Jackson linking this situation with the genocide in Rwanda and the subsequent movement of rebels across the border into the Democratic Republic of Congo, indicating that the Interwahame fighters were the perpetrators of the genocide, and many of them have not returned to Rwanda but remained in the DRC instead. As the director explains next, the chaos created by the rebels is necessary for the foreign powers to continue looting the natural resources of the Congo, in particular coltan (Idem, 12’).

The film “War Witch” also points at the economical motivations of the rebels as central for their endeavors. In a scene presenting the rebel camp, Komona explains in a monologue why they were there. In an ingenuous manner, she describes that they need to gather and carry some black stones called “colta”, which are very precious to the rebels since they have explained to the child-soldiers that they are indispensable for the war. The mentioning of coltan exploitation by rebels, and the use of abducted children to gather the mineral is a hint to the complex war economy, strongly based on the exploitation of natural resources in order to finance and arm the rebel movements, which in turn protect the exploitation sites, thus completing the cycle.

Possibly one of the most relevant rape survivor accounts presented within the documentary “The Greatest Silence” is that of Marie Jeanne, as 42 years old, mother of 7 children. As Jackson collects rape stories of married women whose husbands were either not present or managed to escape the attack, Marie Jeanne’s story is quite different. Her story, as it was presented in the documentary, is the following:

My husband tried to give them the \$15 that he had. They said they didn't want the money of a poor man. They started to beat him and killed him. They cut him into three parts, the head, the chest and the bottom part. They took the head, the chest and his sex and gave me the bottom part which was his legs. Then they turned to me and said: "Let's kill the wife, too!". They beat me on my head with a machete and broke 5 of my teeth. And then they raped me and abandoned me there. I passed out next to my husband's legs. (“The Greatest Silence”, 32’)

After describing what had happened to her and her husband during the attack, the conversation Jackson has with Marie Jeanne focuses on her difficulties as a rape survivor, and also on her day to day burdens as her new husband is very aged and cannot help her with the chores. The fact that her husband was killed, while Marie Jeanne was also close to having the

same fate, but survived, does not seem to be relevant as it is not discussed or even mentioned again. This suggests an invisibility of the male victims of violence, even if not necessarily of sexual violence. Also, it becomes obvious that sexual violence is the sole type of violence presented and analyzed in the documentary. However, violence resulting in loss of life has a definitive impact and comes against the fundamental right to life of all individuals.

One of the compounds Lisa F. Jackson visits during her stay in the DRC had been attacked by the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (Hutu armed group originating in Rwanda), during the attack all six women in the family having been raped, including an elderly woman and a woman apparently suffering from a thyroid related illness. The houses that Sister Clothilde visited, accompanied by Jackson, were not connected to any roads, nor did they have any amenities such as electricity or running water, giving also the impression that the people living in the area did not have access to basic medical care. Jackson notes, during a subsequent trip in the area a few months later, that the state of the elderly woman had critically degraded, while the sick woman had died. This is not contemplated in the documentary as a possible effect of structural violence, such as being deprived of basic commodities, transport infrastructure and medical assistance. In this particular case, the lack of access to healthcare and transport infrastructure probably also played a decisive role in the lives of the Congolese women that Jackson met.

It is also interesting to note that, although the documentary presents various accounts of rape, occurring in very different circumstances – from gang rapes perpetrated by foreign rebel groups to a Congolese police officer raping a toddler – the documentary treats all the rapes monolithically and analyses them in the same way. The circumstantial details of the rape accounts, such as who are the perpetrators, why do they rape, how do they choose the victim/s, when do they rape and so on, are not taken into consideration or given additional attention in order to understand and explain the rape phenomenon in the DRC.

The film “War Witch”, although a fictional story, offers a different perspective on violence, presenting various possible manifestations. As an example, the opening scene shows Komona in her lacustrine village, right before the rebels are seen coming heavily armed in their canoes. As the rebels raid the village, they also search for children they could kidnap in order to use them as child-soldiers. When they get to Komona, she is put in an impossible, extremely violent situation. The rebel Commander, after catching her parents and having them kneel down, demands that Komona killed them. He threatens that if she does not shoot them with the rifle he put in her arms, he will kill them with a machete, which would cause them much more pain. This can be seen as indoctrination through brutalization, or a rebel initiation ritual intended to test the

youngsters and force them to commit their first murder. The fact that the first killing is that of their proxies and loved ones is also not coincidental, as it is much easier to manipulate their emotions and emotionally blackmailing them into believing that their only options are either to kill their kin in a “humane” way or watch them being atrociously murdered. From a morally and emotional point of view, this is a strategy based on fear and shock. The strategy is employed by rebel Commander in order to start the moral transformation (or destruction) of the child soldiers, which would be then left with no one to care for them or for them to care for, while at the same time will carry forever the immense guilt of killing their parents – a taboo in all cultures. Violence is inflicted upon the children by kidnapping them and taking them away from their familiar environment, but the children are at the same time forced to inflict extreme violence themselves. It can also be seen as a conscious effort to completely reverse the moral benchmark induced to the children by their parents and their community. In a more general way, it is a strategy that is being used, as it is documented by the press (Greste, 2008) and international organizations (Amnesty International USA, 2013), in order to eliminate the taboos and make the child soldiers unable to act according to the common social and moral norms that they had been educated in.

The documentary does simulate an interest in analyzing the perpetrators’ motivations for raping. . As Jackson formulates her interest in meeting with the perpetrators, without any benefit of a doubt or intent for a more comprehensive analysis of motivations, “I wanted to find rapists who would talk to me” (“The Greatest Silence”, 28’). She then sets off into the bushes, where her interpreter Bernard had “found” rapists. There is no information given regarding how the perpetrators were identified or located, or how were they convinced to appear in the documentary. Jackson’s interviewing of the soldiers consists (as it appears in the documentary) in bluntly interrogating them regarding their acts of rape and the reasons behind their actions (for example, “Tell me what you have done”, “Does it make him feel more like a man when he rapes”, “He has to make the women suffer because he is suffering”). Actually, in her own words, “I have asked them questions that have plagued me for years” (Idem, 29’), giving the possibility to interpret her posture as a personal quest to unwind and deal with her own, personal, baggage.

The answers given to her questions by the alleged perpetrators are somewhat in range with the findings of the previously quoted scholar investigation conducted by Maria Stern and Maria Eriksson Baaz (Stern & Baaz, 2009). They revolve around the idea that men have strong physical needs, the (Christian) religious reasoning which considers the man superior and the woman his inferior. The perpetrators’ answers also pointed to peer pressure, as well as circumstantial constraints such as not having “time to negotiate, no time to love her”.

Circumstantial remarks of the soldiers, such as “but we have been suffering in the forest, that is why we rape women”, are not considered valid for further exploration – not because they could offer justification or mitigation for the acts of rape, but in order to create a more complete picture of the situation in the Eastern DRC, and to maintain the neutrality by unbiased presenting both points of views, of victims and perpetrators. Even the more elaborate answers, although paradoxical, pointing to the particular conflict circumstances as being out of the ordinary circumstances, are not given any follow up or in depth analysis:

Here you have educated people who have gone to university (with diplomas, bachelors), construction workers, carpenters, all kinds of workers. We could all make a good living if there was no war. Bu the problem is that we do it without condoms. We have an antidote, some roots we take from the bush. When we take that medicine we can't get AIDS. (Idem, 31')

Commenting on the scene in the press, the producer stated: “It was the feeblest excuse possible. Basically, he was blaming their behaviors on the deprivations of living in The Bush, and so he didn't really show a great deal of insight into what was happening in this country.” (Kharakh, 2008)

The sequence of interviews with the perpetrators is concluded after the soldiers are questioned regarding how many women had each raped. Again, the purpose of asking this question or the relevance of the responses is not explicit, the answers varying from 2 women to 25 (“The Greatest Silence”, 64'), amongst a total of 7 soldiers interviewed in total during the two sequences.

In an interview published online, the reporter asks Jackson what she could understand directly from the perpetrators, also from their non-verbal communication, her answer being:

I got incredible arrogance - a sense that this was their right. There was a pridefulness and a preening sense of self-regard, and a sort of malevolence. They tried to intimidate me, but ultimately I knew that they very much wanted their 15 seconds of fame and that if anything were to happen to me or my camera, they wouldn't get that, so I actually felt that the camera, while it wasn't the equivalent of their guns, it was my protection. It definitely was my protection. And the fact that they truly did want to brag about what they had done was evident in just their posture and the way they spoke. (Kharakh, 2008)

At no point is there any further attention given to the way that the interviewed soldiers relate to the conflict environment, to their socio-economical position, or to their identity as men. Although their posture is clearly not shared by other Congolese men – like Doctor Denis Mukwege, or Bernard, the translator – there is no intention to situate the soldiers and their rationale within the Congolese context, nor to question their affirmations and relate them with circumstantial or theoretical considerations. Even if Lisa F. Jackson briefly narrates the recent

history of the DRC, the construction of the identities of the soldiers, in the broader perspective of construction of masculinities, is not linked to historical facts or contemporary events.

From a theoretical perspective, given Congo's early history of commercial and diplomatic relations with European states, and the later colonization by Leopold II, and later Belgium, it was possible that the concept of masculinity was influenced and changed from outside the geographical area. The DRC, as the rest of the European colonies in Africa, is a very relevant example: not only that the European powers sought to "educate", "emancipate" and "civilize" the natives, but they also exported and imposed various existing social structures, like the Western gender system, further entrenched with the imposition of Christian religions as the righteous ones. Thus, the Western model of masculinity was also introduced in the pool of competing masculinities, and, as showed by the documentary and by the research presented by Maria Eriksson-Baaz and Maria Stern, is still present there today, together with the traditional, locally produced and culturally specific masculine identities (Leatherman, 2011: 19). The European model of masculinity gained hegemony for practical considerations. By appropriating the Western masculinity identity – as it was defined by the bourgeois ideology in the XIXth century, based on aggression, negation of feelings and power – differences of class and race could be mitigated in the colonial Congolese context, as explained in the first part.

Rape justifications provided by the soldiers, such as that they rape "because God said that man is superior to women. The man must command, must give the orders and must do whatever he wants to a woman", although not further explored within the documentary, could be, to some extent, linked to the implantation of Christianity in the DRC. The first contact of the Kongo Kingdom with the European sailors occurred in 1482, when the Portuguese sailor Diogo Cão reached the mouth of the Congo River while on the search of a passage to the Indian Ocean (Asante, 2007:83, Hoskyns & Whiteman in Legum, 1969:222). While the rest of the Congo basin remained virtually unknown to the Europeans until Stanley's expedition in 1874-7 (Idem:222), the Kongo people, and mainly the ruling elite, established, right away, diplomatic, commercial and religious relations with the Portuguese.

It is little known that, already after the first contact, the Portuguese expedition returned to Lisbon in 1484 bringing back several people from the Kongo Kingdom, who were taught in the Christian faith and the "civilized" manners of wearing garments. The Kongo King, Nzinga a Nkuwu was baptized in the Catholic faith in 1491, early diplomatic documents regarding the Kongo Kingdom (Manicongo in the original documents) showing that during the Kingdom of Dom João II (1481-1495), various payments were made by the Crown to the Saint Eloy Congregation in Lisbon, corresponding to the education expenses for the Kongolese, the first of the recorded

payments dating from the 5th of April 1492 (Paiva Manso, 1877:1). An intense diplomatic exchange of gifts and correspondence followed, and in 1512 King Dom Affonso of Kongo addressed a letter directly to the Pope Julius the II (Idem:12).

The first missionaries sent to the Kongo Kingdom by the Portuguese king were Franciscans and Capuchins, who focused primarily on converting the King and of the upper classes. The converted rulers of the Kingdom of Kongo used, in turn, the missionaries and the Christian religion as means of reinforcing their authority, opting for including the cross among the royal symbols in order to further emphasize their judicial power (Thompson & Adloff in Legum, 1966: 368). It thus can be argued that Christian religions have been a present and influential in the area for a significant period of time. Also, the idea that converting to a Christian religion is a way to gain benefits and aspire to a higher social position has been present since the early encounters with the Europeans, only to intensify during the colonial period. This could explain why Christian beliefs, such as the one expressed by the soldiers that the man is superior to woman, are still accepted and interiorized, and also used to justify certain behaviors.

A striking difference between the two media discourses can be noted regarding how the two directors chose to depict violence. The film "War Witch" depicts various types of violence, both physical when Komona is beaten with a stick, emotional, and sexual. However, the scenes that are extremely violent, such as when she has to kill her parents or when her young husband is killed with a machete, are not descriptive. Flesh, mutilated bodies and blood are not shown within the drama, nor mentioned. Even when recounting what has happened to Le Magicien's uncle's family, Komona does not explicitly describe the violence:

The uncle was the butcher in the village and he would always have a bucket by his side while he worked because whenever he would cut the meat he would remember what had happened to his family and that made him want to vomit. I am not going to tell you what happened to his family as you will no longer want to hear me and you would cover your ears. ("War Witch", 52')

This sequence shows, from the character's perspective, a deep and profound understanding and knowledge of the horrors of the war, while also grasping that such acts are taboo, they cannot even be said: because even the words describing them would be unbearable. It is also perceivable the director's intention to rather use connotation instead of having the character tell a gruesome story. The implication that simply seeing the red bloody animal flesh made the butcher remember the atrocities he had seen done to his family, which would in turn cause an almost unavoidable physical reaction of spew, forcefully transmits the message that extreme violence had been committed. It allows the viewer to understand what had happened without need for it to be expressed in words or shown in images.

Similar to the opening scene, after Le Magicien is killed while Komona is taken back at the rebel camp, the background sound stops. This technique marks her second abduction by the rebels. It is also the moment of rupture from reality as a reaction to the situation she had been put in. The regular, common social and moral norms that Komona knew could not explain the violence, or why was she subjected to it. As the film is a first person story, this would mean that all signs of exterior world, or reality even, become very distant in Komona's mind. The lack of background sound suggests Komona's rupture from the immediate reality, her dissociation from a world that, due to its atrocity and brutality, no longer makes sense to the young girl. She needs to find a coping mechanism, like a buffer-space where amorality, contrary to morality, is the norm. The main character needs to break with the "normal" moral world, because in that world, the guilt of killing her own parents would have probably been too much for her to take and to live with. Hence, violence and its effects are also suggested efficiently using cinematography techniques related to sound.

Discussing his approach toward the depiction of violence with the press, the director stated:

The idea that I tried to convey is the sense of giving a subjective point of view. I wanted to show the violence through the filters of the character's psyche. And I wanted to try to bring the spectator to this kind of emotional state where the violence is tamed by her beliefs and her hallucinations; before you see the red blood leaking on the floor, you see the ghosts. It's not necessarily the hallucinations that I'd read about, but it came close to what I could imagine is the work of your own psyche trying to tame violence. It puts this kind of veil in front of the violence that you're facing. It's kind of a symbol, building this idea that vengeance makes you blind to the violence that you see before you. (Williams, 2013)

The authenticity of the film is enhanced by the fact that the director chose not to rely on melodramatic depictions or shocking images, opting instead for suggestion as a powerful stimulus for what is not shown, such as nakedness and blood (which does not apply to other film depicting African conflicts, including the documentary). Violence is rather described using connotation, which proves to have a very strong effect on the viewers and to transmit the message efficiently.

The documentary "The Greatest Silence", on the other hand, does include descriptive rape victims' accounts and still images of naked female bodies and mutilation, both ample shots and close-ups. The black and white photograph of a yard with naked women corpses piled up is simply interposed between two interviews, without any description or information being given regarding where and when was taken. During the sequence in which rape is discussed, yet a second still frame is interposed. This time the chosen image is a shocking photograph of a dead



half-naked girl having a wood branch inserted into her vagina. Another graphic image follows, showing a naked young woman being held by her hands and feet by soldiers, while one of them is touching her pubic area with an object. To further reinforce the message of the photograph, a close-up of the pubic area of the young women is shown, while Lisa F. Jackson continues to speak in general about rape in the Congo.

Documentation of the actual rape occurrences could have been the purpose behind showing the shocking still frames. However, this hypothesis can easily be discarded given that the still images are not put in connection with the situation in the DRC: neither the author of the pictures is named, nor any other information is given regarding the time and place where they were taken. It thus appears that the photographs were included in order to enhance the effect of the rape survivors' stories on the viewer. By graphically presenting the effects of sexual violence, the director intends to shock the audience, ceding to a voyeuristic impulse towards it.

As shown within the theoretical section of the present thesis, this can, in turn, limit the critique towards violence itself. Instead of actually analyzing the circumstances which made it possible, violence is presented as "too brutal" to even be comprehensible. The perpetrators are depicted as belonging to a simple moral world – their acts apparently don't derive from any internal logic, motivation or background. The perpetrators themselves are to be perceived only as perpetrators, thus cast in a fixed and immutable role, not affected by social circumstances or history. This journalistic approach towards extreme sexual violence in the DRC places the facts outside history and context. Hence, the extreme sexual violence appears to bear no meaning (Mamdami, 2002: 13), further fueling, from a media point of view, the voyeurism towards violence and the stereotyping of Africa in general as having an essentialized proclivity to violence.

Following in the same line, it can be argued that the way that sexual violence is presented within the documentary – as being perpetrated by savage amoral rapists from the heart of Africa that give no value to life – further entrenches the idea that senseless violence is a feature of other peoples' cultures, but not of the onlooker. It is difficult not to read in this a dichotomy between the violent Congolese, and the pacific, involved American director, who is single-handedly trying to stop them. Lisa F. Jackson holds the position of the exponent of the modern, civilized, humanitarian values, which places the Congolese on the disfavored position of being products of a timeless culture of savagery and backwardness (Mamdami, 2002:12).

Within the documentary "The Greatest Silence", violence is reduced to sexual violence perpetrated by men against women, although, as shown within the film "War Witch", the types of violence that occur in a conflict context are more diverse and complex. Sexual violence is

described as being linked to the political economy of conflict, since it can be a means to seize land and natural resources. However, the analysis of sexual violence presented within the documentary is a simplistic one, not taking into consideration the internal reasoning of the perpetrators, nor the circumstances in which they act. Furthermore, by choosing to include shocking images of sexual violence, the documentary alimnts the voyeurism towards it. This further places the onlooker and the subject on dichotomial positions reinforced by the colonialist rationale of the civilized versus the savage, thus reinforcing the stereotyping of Africa, and subsequently the DRC, as having an intrinsic inclination to violence.

### **2.5. Representing femininities and masculinities in media discourses: when women equal victims, men equal rapists and other givens**

Both women and men perform simultaneously various social, economical, political, religious or other types of roles, according to the social context, economic status and other circumstantial variables. The media discourses, however, have a tendency to accentuate and reinforce the gendered perspective. This means that the representations of men and women in the media do not always reflect the complexity of their real life interactions with other individuals and entities, but rather are shaped according to the perceived gender specific roles. We shall further analyze how the perceived feminine/masculine roles affect how women (and men) are represented in the media discourses selected.

As previously stated, the documentary “The Greatest Silence” focuses exclusively on sexual violence against Congolese women. The selection of the accounts presented was such that all the interviewed victims were women, while all the perpetrators are men. This goes inline with the preconceived notion of women as weak, thus unable to protect themselves. At the same times, it casts the men as dominators, ready to use force and violence, regardless of the consequences, in order to attain their purposes. Considering the “beautiful soul theory”, the Congolese rape perpetrators are presented in the documentary as degenerated “just warriors” that no longer wish to protect their frail women, but are set to destroy them.

The documentary further arguments that women are not only victims of rape, but also can come to suffer because they are expelled by their husbands and communities. The women are further cast as victims by some of the Congolese contributors, such as Christine Karumba, the Country Director of Women for Women International's DRC chapter. She talks about how women are further limited in their options, as rape survivors, due to the fact that most of them are uneducated and lack professional skills.

While visiting the hospital and meeting patients and personnel, Lisa F. Jackson offers the patients small gifts such as perfume samples. Speaking about this occurrence, she shares with the public her thought that the gifts are “meager and pathetic” compared to what the women need, which is “their lives back” (“The Greatest Silence”, 24’). This implies that being a rape survivor equals the loss of life: many of the survivors interviewed did indeed suffer permanent consequences following the attack, but they were alive to tell their stories. Interestingly, contrasting with how the Congolese rape survivors were described – permanently scared, disabled, diminished, ostracized – Lisa F. Jackson, also a rape survivor, projects a different image of herself.

The opening scene of the film “War Witch” shows Komona in her lacustrine village, right before the rebels are seen coming heavily armed in their canoes. Almost simultaneously, Komona starts talking, saying that she needed to explain how and why she became a rebel because she does not have the certainty that she will be able to love her unborn baby, as he was the fruit of rape by a rebel Commander. The expression she uses when referring to her part in the rebel movement, “I have started to make the war” [“J’ai commence a fair la guerre”] (“War Witch”, 2’), is non-judgmental, neither towards herself, as to show guilt, nor towards the idea of war itself, showing the inevitability of her faith under those particular circumstances, where she had to serve the rebels in order to hope to keep her life.

The perspective shown by the two media discourses are fundamentally opposite. The documentary presents Lisa F. Jackson’s voyage to the DRC, with the almost explicit purpose to find women rape survivors and men perpetrators, revealing thus *a priori* considerations on the role of those involved. The film “War Witch”, on the other hand, lets the main character tell her story, and thus leads the public into the mind of a child and her ways of coping with the events around her. The film is also more realistic in that it presents Komona fulfilling different roles in the different situations she goes through. Also, being an account on child soldiers, it presents them both as victims of the rebels. At the same time, they are young adults who make their own choices, although the choices they have are very limited, and include the option to perpetrate violence, as it was also highlighted by Utas’ investigation in context of the Liberian war (Utas, 2005).

Throughout the film, Komona’s resilience and survival instinct are underlining of her posture and actions. One of the first moments that show that the character has the ability to position herself in relation to the context so that she had a less endangered position is when she is named by the Great Tiger his official sorceress. Komona shows a tacit understanding that this position will guarantee not only that she keeps her life as she is considered indispensable in

order to win confrontations, but also that the rebels will protect her in battle and even give her some relative privileges as compared to other child soldiers. She is still an abduction victim, but the fact that she manages to negotiate her position within the rebel group gives her the possibility to, at least momentarily, secure her personal safety. At the same time, while fighting for the rebels, she is a victim of abduction, but also a perpetrator of armed violence.

After the child-soldiers are attacked by numerous army troops which they hardly repel in order to save their lives, Komona is taken aside by Le Magicien (Fr., "The Magician" Eng.), a rebel boy a little older than her. He convinces her that sooner or later they will lose their lives if they continue to live and fight for the rebels, and persuades her to escape telling her that the Grand Royal Tiger had already had 3 sorcerers he had killed when they stopped doing their sorcery right ("War Witch", 36'). This decision is again taken by Komona with the main purpose of saving her life. The fact that Le Magicien needs to convince her to run away from the rebels can somewhat be interpreted from the perspective that Komona, as a sorceress, had a relatively privileged position within the rebel group, thus not being apparently in immediate danger. Also, as investigation into the child soldiers' identity has shown, the indoctrination through brutalization can affect directly the sense of identity of the abducted youngsters, the relative security and power of having a gun in their hands sometimes being preferred to going back to being a civilian (Honwana, 2002).

Soon after they leave the rebels, Le Magicien asks Komona to marry him, Komona's character narrating the episode and saying that after being proposed she told him about the only test her father told her that any men wanting to marry her should pass: bring her a white rooster. The condition is that the bird was entirely white, which made this test to be the most difficult. Le Magicien takes her seriously and they start searching for the white rooster. This scene does point to the perceived roles that women and men have in the Congolese society: the young men willing to marry must prove that he deserves being married to his chosen one, that he is man enough to get married, thus he has to complete the quest of finding the bird.

The film "War Witch" also points out another perceived role that the two adolescents play. The fact that, when they decide to leave the rebel group, they both keep their clothes and guns makes the people around them perceive them still as rebels, and react to their presence as such. Still carrying their rifles, Komona and Le Magicien search for the white bird in the villages, while the villagers mock them saying it is impossible to find one. When interacting with the villagers in their improbable quest, even when pointing the guns at them, it appears that the adolescents are no longer taken seriously as rebels, the adults treating them almost as if they

were regular children: they are mocked and laughed at. On the other hand, they are also followed by an old lady with a gun after they steal the clothes she had put to dry in her yard.

Once they reach the uncle's house, he greets them by asking if they are done with doing the war, and takes their weapons away from them. They are then slowly integrated in the household life and communal palm oil production, working side by side with the family and the rest of the villagers. The stigma associated by the community with the rebel groups' members, and the trauma provoked by the fighting fueled by rebels are obvious. For the family however, as this scene shows, not all hope is lost as they try to redeem the adolescents by reintegrating them into the community.

After scenes of apparent normality at the butcher's household, Komona and Le Magicien take to the palm grove in order to gather more seeds for the oil making. While they are alone away from the village, the rebels, headed by a Commander, find them and proclaim that they came in order to get Komona back, for she is the Grand Royal's Tiger sorceress. As Le Magicien confronts them saying that she is now his wife, the rebels make him kneel down while grabbing Komona. She is again asked, by the same Commander, to shoot and kill her husband. However, this time she refuses to do so, and manages to free herself and kneel by the boy's side. As opposed to the initial scene in which she had killed her parents, this time Komona has the notion that she can make a choice of her own, even in that oppressive situation, although her decision will not influence the outcome. It seems to be a decision based rather on her own moral judgment towards her own actions, than related to the external factors. She chooses not to be who the Commander wants to make her be by asking to kill her husband. This is a telling example of how the director manages to transmit and explain the internal logic of the main character when taking some of the most difficult choices.

A black screen appears indicating that Komona is now 14 years old. Back at the rebel camp, Komona has to fulfill her duty as sorceress and participate in combat, but she is also taken as wife by the Commander. While appearing to speak to her unborn baby in voice-over, she explains how she had been living with the rebels in the past couple of years, as the Commander's wife: "It was him who planted you in my belly so that I would vomit. I am wondering if you my baby are full of poison and this is the reason why I am puking." The ingenuity of her line, together with the way she relates to the continuous sexual exploitation she is subject to by the Commander – which she formulates as "coucher obligée" (Fr., translated as forcefully sleeping/laying) could suggest that she still has an infantile perception of the world, but also that she needs to mitigate, even when addressing her unborn child or herself, the brutality and horrors she has to live through, and her choice of words is a strong indicator in that

direction. This is yet again an example of how does someone in her situation reason, which is the position she has towards herself, and most relevantly, how is she coping with the situation she finds herself in.

As she keeps seeing her parents' ghosts, they tell her that she will have no rest until she goes back to the village in order to bury them. Furthermore, she states: "Before I can go back to my village and bury my parents, I must become a «poisoned flower» in order to kill my Commander because I do not want that the craziness in his head entered yours." This is her justification for planning and succeeding in killing the Commander, although by means maybe unfamiliar to Western audiences (the practice seems to be/to have been somewhat spread in other geographical areas, as the film "La Teta Asustada", directed by Peruvian Claudia Llosa also suggests). Thus, she resorts to using a mango kernel with a blade so that when the Commander tries to have sex with her, he is first shocked and starts bleeding, and she has the chance to deliver the final blow. Her survival instinct together with her strategy are proof that her decisions are based on her current circumstances. The guilt of having killed her parents is a strong moral incentive for her to try to break free from her captivity, but also her child prompts her to take pragmatic decisions towards their future.

Having escaped the rebels for a second time and wandering the roads, she is still carrying her weapon and the rebel uniform, while at the same time being in obvious pain. The resentment of the local villagers' communities is even more obvious when she tries to stop a truck in order to get to a safe place. Not only the truck passes her by on the road without stopping, but none of the people on the truck seem to take any notice of her. As if, for being a rebel, she is shunned, she is no longer perceived as a part of the community. When she reaches the medical post in the village, the nurse tells her that she cannot use the gun inside the building, however Komona refuses – almost seems unable – to give her gun away, which ensues in her shooting the gun randomly at the ceiling. Although not explicitly stated, while she is dressed as a rebel and has her gun, she does not receive medical care, instead she is locked into what seems to be a police prison-van. It appears as though, because she is seen as a rebel by the community, she is perceived as a threat, regardless of the fact that she is a girl. The fact that she did not voluntarily join the rebel group is not taken into consideration also: this radical attitude is yet another indicator of the moral and social pressure that the child soldiers are faced with.

As she is on her way to her parents' village, she tells her unborn child of her internal struggles: "Everyday I ask good Lord to help me so that I did not detest you. So that I did not throw you into the river when you come out." ("War Witch", 75'). Since she is by herself in the canoe when she starts feeling the labor pains, she rows to the bank and has her baby there.

She then washes the baby with river water, continues her voyage until reaching her village, now deserted. The return to her home is not easy, especially since that was the place where she was told by the rebels to shoot her parents. Looking at the bullet holes and meditating on the events, she says: "Inside my head, there are things that not even the magic sap can take away." (Idem, 79'). The consciousness of the abhorrence of the life she was subjected to, comes in sharp contrast with her previously apparent ingenuity – the perception of the deviance from normality she was subjected to, in emotional, moral, social way, overwhelms her but does not overcome her. Before being a girl, a mother, and an ex-rebel, she is in the first place herself and has to deal foremost with her own conscience.

The ending sequence shows her walking on the road – after explaining to the baby that she will name him "Le Magicien" so that one day he will be as strong and as brave as he was (Idem, 82'). This time, since she is dressed normally and with a baby in arms, a truck pulls over right away, and the driver offers to take her in even if she does not have any money to pay him. She gives the baby to the people in the truck and then she gets on the truck herself, while a mature lady assures her that she can rest since she will look after the baby, while the truck rolls away in the distance in the afternoon light. The scene contrasts profoundly with the scene in which she was dressed as a rebel and in pain, but the truck would not stop. It appears as if the community, the people had sanctioned her for a behavior that was not accepted (although also not voluntary). When she no longer appears to play the rebel role, she is also treated as any other member of the community, receiving their attention and their support. In a very optimistic note, this could imply that she had a second chance to integrate the community and try to rebuild her life, as well as provide a more or less normal experience for her child, regardless of her past as a child-soldier, sorceress, killer, commander wife.

It can be concluded that the film focuses especially on the idiosyncrasies arising from the unnatural position of the main character as a child-soldier. Given that the story is structured as a first person account, a confession, it leads the public into the mind of a child and her ways of coping with the events around her, helping understand why child soldiers are capable of violence and atrocities, and in a more general way, how a human being can be turned to commit inhumane crimes and break taboos. During the film, Komona is radically changed by the violence that invades and threatens her life – the transformations she suffers being, conversely, showed from her perspective, through her own account, and not from an exterior perspective. Consequently, the film does not emit moral or other type of judgment, focusing solely on an incisive study of character in the particular context of an African conflict torn society. The film should be seen primarily as a story of survival, Komona clinging to a naive view of the world,

whilst in the midst of violence and deviation, ultimately navigating the circumstances she is put in, with the purpose of finding security, and social and moral normalcy.

The documentary “The Greatest Silence” presents a different account on the soldiers, by uniquely presenting them as rape perpetrators without focusing also on explaining their internal logic. When meeting with former Mai Mai rebels integrated into the regular armed forces, their mentioning of “magic potion” is simply accepted as such, under the assumption that the “Mai Mai are also very superstitious” (“The Greatest Silence”, 62’). One of the affirmations made by Jackson, without indicating the source of information, and not sustained by the answers given by the soldiers, is the following “Thinking that it will protect them in battle, soldiers are often ordered to rape”. As it is a serious accusation against the Democratic Republic of Congo Armed Forces, it probably should have been sustained with arguments or evidence, in order to assure it is credible and prove it is also veracious. By using this approach, the soldier and rebels are cast unquestionably in the role of amoral rape perpetrators.

As the soldiers further argument that the magic potion helps overcome their enemies in battle if they rape women, Jackson lets a conceited comment slip. The comment is not removed while editing, proving to be not only extremely biased, but also not professional (due particularly to the extremely arrogant tone of superiority, and the somewhat colloquial language): “So it is like patriotic to get raped...”. By not removing the commentary, Jackson intertwines her own perspective of the perpetrators and of the situation, thus leading the viewer to believe that her take on the facts is not only an acceptable one, but also the one that the documentary as a whole is transmitting. Furthermore, the commentary points to a superficial understanding of the social context, as well as the conflict context in the Congo in general, as the soldier’s declaration is not further explored or sustained, the uttered words being accepted as the whole truth, without investigating more profound levels of reasoning behind the soldiers’ affirmation. Their explanations for their violent behavior would not provide justification for their acts, but would present them as individuals fulfilling various roles at the same time, and would show how do they manage their roles in the particular context of conflict, and in general in the Congolese socio-economic setting.

The director also seems not to wish to explore the non-verbal components of the interviews with the soldiers – some of them do seem to feel guilty, others seem constrained by the camera, while others are defiant, or simply indifferent. It also seems that there is a difficulty in recognizing irony, even when the soldiers she interviews almost grin at the camera, affirmations such as the following being accepted as true and not being questioned, possibly wanting to underline to the lack of reasoning of the soldiers:



If I knew that she was raped for a good cause, I wouldn't do anything because I know it is for the sake of helping the Congo. [Translator: But what if you walked in on them?] If I knew that my sister or wife was raped for the sake of the Congo, of course. I wouldn't do anything to stop it. ("The Greatest Silence", 63')

The hypothesis that soldiers can at the same time be patriots, husbands, brothers and rape perpetrators is discarded, thus the way they navigate between their roles, how they explain the way their postures are related (or not) is simply not taken into consideration. Further commenting on the encounter with the perpetrators, and on the perpetrators' attitudes and answers to her questions in an interview for the press, Jackson's position was the following:

I don't think that they tend to be very self-reflective individuals, but it's kind of understood that it is about power. These soldiers, they may have guns, but in a very real sense, they are powerless. The army is a pragmatic mess: There's no chain of command; there's no discipline. They don't get paid, so they take out their frustrations on the population. They claim it's about sex, but I think it's more about power. That's an interesting question that I really can't answer. I've had men in screenings ask me about the soldiers, "Why do they do it? Why do men do these things?" and I say, "You're a guy. You tell me." But I can't answer this, and I don't think that they could either. (Kharakh, 2008)

The same rigid perception is also applied when discussing the situation of the women that had been victims of rape. Their position as victims is addressed exclusively, they are not presented from the perspective of their social interactions in which they might hold advantages over other individuals. Using again the example of Marie Jeanne's testimony, the tendency to victimize women is even more evident. As previously mentioned, Marie Jeanne's husband, killed during the attack, is never acknowledged as a victim of violence, thus being denied any further mention in the documentary. Also, after describing what had happened to her and her husband during the attack, the conversation Jackson has with Marie Jeanne focuses on her difficulties as a rape survivor, and on her day to day burdens as her new husband is very aged and cannot help her with the chores. While Marie Jeanne's first husband is not considered a victim, thus the violence he suffered is not mentioned or analyzed, Marie Jeanne herself is victimized twice. She is a victim of rape, but also a victim of her precarious situation as a wife of an elderly man. Given that it is stated in the documentary that many of the rape survivors are shunned by their husbands and communities, the fact that Marie Jeanne managed to marry again could have been presented from a different perspective, the perspective of someone who is knowingly making the best available choice in a confining context.

The fact that the documentary casts beforehand the individuals into predefined roles of perpetrators and victims according to their gender is simplistic and reducing. Moreover, while

reinforcing the stereotype of women as victims, men as rapists, it does not show insight and does not present any explanations that the individuals might have for their acts. The Congolese context is presented merely as a background, not actually influencing or conditioning the individuals' choices, while the individuals themselves are presented as static entities that do not necessarily embody reason or logic. The Congolese women are presented as having little personal choice, as being disconnected from most social structures except the rape support groups. The Congolese soldiers, and men from a more general perspective, are presented as fulfilling their inexorable destiny of (violent) rapists. The fact that even the positive examples of Dr. Denis Mukwege and Bernard are not put in relation with the perpetrators' experiences further casts them as exceptions, fueling the one-dimensional perspective on the roles that Congolese women and men play in this setting. Furthermore, even when presenting Congolese rape survivors turned activists against sexual violence, like for example Drocele Mugomoka, there is no mention of the actual recovery process of overcoming the trauma.

The oversimplification of the gender roles during conflict is evident within the documentary "The Greatest Silence", this perspective stripping Congolese women of agency, overlooking the Congolese women that support conflict and the Congolese female combatants, contrary to the film "War Witch". The essentializing assumption on gender roles and focus on sexual violence also fails to acknowledge the male victims of the conflict. Masculinity is thus conscribed to the perpetrator class, while victimization is presented as intrinsically feminine. This can be actually seen as a reinforcement of the portrayal of Congolese women as defenseless victims in need of protection.

## **2.6. Media discourses: from presenting reality to following securitization agendas**

As stated in the theoretical section, discourses in general, and media discourses in particular, through language, have a significant social impact in both constituting reality, as well as in mediating it (Shepherd, 2010:2). This hypothesis will be used in order to analyze how the two selected discourses depict reality or constitute alternative readings to actual facts. Particular attention will be given to the documentary "The Greatest Silence" from the perspective of it being a securitization discourse.

The documentary presents numerous arguments that can support the need of considering sexual violence against women in the DRC a security issue. As Jackson follows Honorine, she describes the limitations and difficulties of performing her job as "the one woman "Special Victims Unit", mostly stemming from infrastructural restraint and Government neglect:

When there is sexual violence committed against women or children, we intervene. But we have a problem, as you have noticed. First of all, we don't have any infrastructure - our offices are not even adequate to allow us to accomplish our mission. In order to get a statement from a victim, total confidentiality is required. Our offices are, first of all, very small, the walls are made of wooden board. We have no means to ensure the victim's confidentiality. We don't even have paper. We get by with an old typewriter. ("The Greatest Silence", 35')

While she investigates the case of a minor raped by a policeman, as the young girl decides to press charges, the issue of impunity is also exposed: although the perpetrator is caught and arrested, he escaped 3 days later, without ever being caught again. In Honorine's opinion, the prevalence of impunity is the main problem when dealing with sexual violence, because, she argues "when an assailant is prosecuted and condemned, the others will be afraid and won't commit the same type of crime." (Idem, 39')

The issue of impunity and of the consequences for the victims who come forward identifying their rapists is also highlighted by Christine Schuler Deschryver, who considers that ending impunity would be "a beginning of a solution", activist Christine Karumba expressing a similar opinion. The Congolese activist Annie Atibu Faray points out that the problem is more entrenched: "The rapists of yesterday have become the authorities of today, and they encourage sexual violence because for them it has become a lifestyle. This is why the violence doesn't end" (Idem, 39').

Together with Honorine, Lisa F. Jackson visits a shelter for babies and children resulted from rape, which were either orphans or abandoned due to the stigma they carried, just like their mothers. As both Honorine and Dr. Mukwege stress, the trauma that these children had lived through would permanently mark them, preventing them from leading normal lives. Christine Schuler Deschryver considers the situation to be even more dramatic: "Can you imagine now, the war started in 1994, so since 13 years, 80% of the children didn't go to school. They just know, since they were born, violence and war. So what will be the next generation?" (Idem, 60'). Activist Annie Atibu Faray also considers the issue of abandoned and traumatized children to be a serious one: "These are children who will revolt, will rebel, who, tomorrow, if there isn't profound work undertaken, will become thieves and bandits and will be a menace to the Congolese society."

The ending scenes of the documentary present the moving story of Lisa Jackson's translator - Bernard B. Kalume, who had been married with a Tutsi Rwandan and was living in Rwanda at the time of the genocide, but had to move back to DRC after his wife was killed in order to bring himself and their children to safety. He is shown singing and playing with his children at his home, together with his current wife. He shares his worries and disbelief

concerning the current situation in the DRC, especially from the point of view of the sexual violence: “Who can imagine such a society, where people are not secure? Where people are not sure of what will be tomorrow...I don't know what kind of name you can give to such a society.” (Idem, 73’) And in a more elaborate comment:

If a society can't protect women and kids, what kind of society is that? Because I think that that is the first responsibility of men, to protect women and kids. If men themselves start to kill, to kidnap, to rape women and teenagers, really, how can you say this is a normal, a society of human beings? It becomes just like real jungle, that is what we are living in. It is a real jungle. (Idem, 70’)

The scenes described above are indicators that the documentary was created with the intention of highlighting the issue of sexual violence in the DRC as a security issue. Presenting the current limitations in dealing with sexual violence cases is reinforcing this perspective. Also, the fact that child abandonment is presented as an effect of sexual violence against women, without being correlated with the wider conflict context (implying economical and social constraints) is yet another way of stressing the threat posed by this behavior. To further enhance the appeal for securitizing the issue of sexual violence for the public of the documentary, the ending scene is a family scene, punctuated with emotional considerations of a father on the security of his children. Together with comments quoted earlier directly urging the ending of sexual violence, it can be concluded that the documentary “The Greatest Silence” was intended as a discourse that intends to securitize the issue of sexual violence against Congolese women.

The film “War Witch”, as the director himself indicated, aims only at presenting the story of the main character. Chronologically, the film is divided into an introduction and 3 parts, each of them preceded by a black background containing, in white letters, “12 years”, “13 years”, “14 years”, thus indicating Komona’s age at the time certain events occur. This is a manner of putting the central focus onto Komona’s view of what she goes through, instead of opting for the sensationalist and emotional effect of violence against of young children. The information about her age is given to the viewers, but without the girl’s age becoming in itself a focal point and shadowing her story.

After being taken to the rebel camp, Komona and the rest of the children abducted from her village are forced to perform difficult chores for the camp, and are physically punished if they don’t comply with the standards – Komona is beaten with a stick for not carrying efficiently heavy bags with goods. Before taking part in their first armed combat, the child-soldiers are taught how to hold the guns and are told that from that point on, their guns will be their mothers and their fathers – another effort by the commanding rebels to eradicate and recreate the emotional connections the children would have had in a normal environment with their parents. On the

other hand, the film also depicts the scarcity in which the child-soldiers were forced to live, as they would seldom have food while leaving at the forest base.

In the quest for the white rooster, Komona and Le Magicien manage to find a man with a motorbike who knows about a place where they could find a white rooster: an albino village (Le Magicien himself being an albino). The media regarded the white rooster story line enlightening in respect to the plight of the Albinos in Central Africa, Albinos being relegated to living in dedicated Albino villages, as it is depicted in the film. Furthermore, Albinos are not regarded as wholly human and yet are considered magical, which leaves them open to predatory activities in central Africa. In the director's view: "There are villages that are created to protect the Albino. There is horrible tragedy happening around the Albinos. They are considered throw away kids. Paradoxically, they are given magical powers." (Bennight, 2013)

Contrary to the documentary, which focuses solely on the issue of sexual violence in the DRC, the only victims considered being the Congolese women, the film presents a much wider range of perils that adolescents, and child soldiers in particular, may come to face during conflict periods. Starting from the danger of being kidnapped by rebels, the scarcity of food, the physical harm they are subjected to after abduction, but also more general themes such as the Albinos conditions are all presented. By not focus exclusively on one of them, nor on transmitting a securitization message regarding a particular one, the film is also not presenting them as a hierarchy of security threats. As the presence of more than one kind of threats is common to conflict contexts, this also means that the film is a more authentic image of reality.

The scene of Komona being officially recognized and invested as official sorceress is filmed at the decrepit jungle palace of the Grand Royal Tiger ("War Witch", 21"). The palace chosen for the shooting of this scene is actually a palace built by Mobutu in the 80s, or as the director himself describes it: "[Mobutu] had visited the Forbidden City in China and brought 200 architects into the middle of the jungle and had himself his own private Asian palace where he would receive his dignitaries from Europe, America and China. When we got there it was completely abandoned, it was just mesmerizing" (Williams, 2013). Further discussing the significance of his choice for shooting the scene at the Mobutu's abandoned palace, within the panorama of the film, Nguyen states:

When you watch the film and you see these abandoned Chinese buildings in the middle of the jungle, your reaction, like mine, is that this is completely irrational and doesn't make sense. And that's why it does make sense for an irrational story like the one we tell in War Witch. We couldn't have imagined this. We had to discover it and let the unthinkable reality transform the script (Kaelan, 2013).

The particular attention given by the director to the local details, local context and their consequences, is particularly relevant. This also shows that the Congolese reality impacted the story, and the media discourse in its totality, rather than the other way around. Although a fictional account, the film leaves a strong sensation of authenticity, partly because of the extensive research undertaken by the director and screen player Kim Nguyen, but also because of the actors' performances. In his opinion, "there is that strange feeling that by transgressing reality you're being truer to the emotional scope of a child soldier or a character... Sometimes fiction brings you closer to truth in many ways than trying to be historically accurate." (Wyatt, 2013).

In a different interview, the director further arguments on the idea of the film being realistic:

"There's something paradoxical that came up when we started designing the film, it's a completely subjective film, told through the eyes of Komona. I felt in a way that being subjective empirically, visually, makes it more objective in a psychological way; we were closer to her inner emotional space. We're more objective to how child soldiers twist reality through their beliefs, through the use of drugs, through the indoctrination process. (Williams, 2013)

The documentary, on the other hand, uses the shocking details of the rape acts in order to further stress the need to securitize the issue of sexual violence. As stated within "The Greatest Silence", one of the most common outcomes of brutal rape in the patients consulted at the Panzi Hospital, which ranged from 2 year old children to 80 year old women, is fistula, which is the tear of the wall between the vagina, bladder and rectum, leaving the person chronically incontinent, thus affecting directly their quality of life and their ability to continue their lives normally.

After interviewing the self-declared perpetrators, whose acts lead to the health problems described above, the unilateral and definitive conclusion Jackson reaches is that "this is what sexual terrorism looks like" ("The Greatest Silence", 39'). By associating rape with the much invoked discourse of terrorism, she casts it as the utmost threat and supreme form of violence. Terrorism serves as a catch-word: the association of sexual violence with terrorism is supposed to give rise to the same emotions and impulses as other notorious terror acts have (with the help of the media), and thus engage the public in taking a stand against sexual violence targeting Congolese women.

Considering the documentary a securitization discourse, theoretical criticism towards the securitization theory can be applied. For example, that indeed it takes a privileged actor in order for the discourse to be emitted: although various Congolese activists are presented in the documentary, it still takes a white American female to be able to produce and distribute this media discourse. Of course, many factors can influence this, such as the financial capacity, experience in producing documentaries, an international distribution network (so that the

documentary was available for the wide public and could have impact at the international community level). It is also questionable how the referent objects were identified to be only the Congolese women and girls, given that male victims of sexual violence have also been documented in the DRC (WHO, 2002:154). Focusing solely on sexual violence is also very limiting, since no other type of violence is considered an issue that has to be securitized. This securitization approach can be seen as implying that, if sexual violence against Congolese women is constrained and eliminated, the rest of the security issues will be also consequently eradicated. It is, of course, not realistic to assume that in a complex conflict context, such as the one in the DRC, eliminating violence against women would have a definitive impact in securing all population. Moreover, it was previously stated that violence against women is actually a continuum, being rather intensified during conflict (Meintjes, Pillay & Turshen, 2010, Leatherman, 2011: 9), than suppressed in the aftermath.

Furthermore, the decision to securitize exclusively the Congolese women, victims of sexual violence, reinforced the stereotyped perception of women as victims, and of womanhood as frail and defenseless. This discourse leaves aside the women that are victims of other types of violence, such as structural violence due to the lack of infrastructure in the DRC, or the women who suffer from domestic abuse. These issues are not considered worthy enough to be securitized. Also, men that are victims of sexual violence don't seem to qualify as "worthy victims" either. This implies that there is a sort of a "hierarchy of victim sympathy" (Stemple, 2009:630), on which Congolese men rate very low – possibly because of the reinforcement of the stereotype of men as aggressors, or simply because vulnerability and being a victim are not associated with the ideal of masculinity. Or, not last, because the Congolese men are still perceived as backward barbarians (as Jackson herself is not shy to imply). Hence, the purpose of the documentary, as a securitization discourse, is to save the Congolese women from the Congolese men, giving it also a "civilizing" allure (Peterson, 1999).

It can be argued that this oversimplified documentation of the Congolese reality was chosen in order to assure that the audience of the securitization discourse would accept it as such. Awareness of Congolese realities is not a given for the wide public, thus the "The Greatest Silence", as a media discourse, is documenting facts (while also leaving aside many others) that are made available to a significant audience – by presenting the documentary to various festivals ([thegreatestsilence.org/screenings](http://thegreatestsilence.org/screenings)), making it available for ordering online ([www.wmm.com/filmcatalog/pages/c709.shtml](http://www.wmm.com/filmcatalog/pages/c709.shtml)), etc.. However, the intention does not seem to be simply to present part of the facts, but to get the audience to react. And, in the most desirable outcome, have a specific audience accept the securitization discourse, and proceed to

securitizing the issue of sexual violence against women in the Congo. It is at this point that the reductionist approach plays its part: a simple message, highlighting a taboo issue, appealing to emotion, stereotyped gender and Otherness depictions, and shocking the audience with the still frames of naked bodies, while also using “terrorism” as a catch-word is the formula for an effective call to action. This was identified by the scholars as a mainstream media trend, which conveniently reduces a very complex conflict to a stereotype of primitive violence (Finnström, 2008). However, scholars also imply that these socio-cultural abstractions involve active decision *not* to understand the complex local context, creating rather a “global fiction” than describing contemporary African realities (Idem). The documentary can thus be perceived as constantly creating and re-creating an oversimplified master discourse, in which Congolese politics, Congolese history and Congolese people as a whole are devoid of their significance. The discourse focuses rather on presenting an absolute, essentialized narrative, reinforcing the categorical differences between Congolese men as aggressors, and Congolese women as their victims, with the West, dominating the international community, apparently being the only entity able to break this circle (thus the appeal is made to the Western audiences).

After the release of the documentary, Lisa F. Jackson continued to actively campaign against sexual violence in the Congo, as one of the press articles states:

The rape of Congo is the cover under which smugglers steal a million dollars worth of coltan every day. When I talked to Lisa this week she was in Washington screening "The Greatest Silence" for staff members of the Senate judiciary and foreign relations committees and getting ready to testify the next day before the Senate Subcommittee on Human Rights and the Law. She was prepared to tell them that because of the coltan trade, "the blood of Congolese women is on your laptops and in your cell phones." (Winship, 2008).

Although this statement clearly points to the complex conflict circumstances, the documentary mentions only briefly the connection between the plunder of Congolese natural resources, violence against women and the international actors. The documentary was intended not only to “break the greatest silence” surrounding the rape victims in the DRC, but also to engage the international community in order for concrete action to be taken so that the rape occurrences were reduced, by having the victims speak up and ending the impunity towards the rape perpetrators.

The official screenings of the documentary included the U.S. Senate, the U.K. House of Commons, and in the Congolese National Assembly, the advocacy campaign around the documentary leading to the voting of the U.N. Security Council Resolution 1820, classifying rape as a war weapon, as the media and the international organizations recorded:



Little did Lisa know how much of an impact her commitment would have. Her resulting film “The Greatest Silence” inspired the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations to vigorously support U.N. Security Council Resolution 1820, which finally recognized rape during conflict as a crime of war and as a destabilizing force for families, societies, and nations. The U.N. passed Resolution 1820 unanimously in May 2008. The film aired on HBO, and it has been screened in the U.S. Senate, the U.K. House of Commons, and in the Congolese National Assembly, and it has also spurred hundreds of grassroots awareness and fundraising efforts by individuals and college campuses around the world. (Enough Project, 2011)

Seen as a securitization discourse, the documentary can be perceived as successfully leading to new international legislation considering rape as a war crime (U.N. Security Council Resolution 1820), thus attaining at least partly its purpose. The long term effects of the documentary and of the UN resolution subsequently adopted do not seem obvious, however, since in April 2010, the Secretary General's Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Margot Wallström, still described DR Congo as the “rape capital of the world” (UN News Center 2010).

## **2.7. Media discourses and international intervention - local effects**

As previously argued, the documentary “The Greatest Silence”, as a securitization discourse, presents an oversimplified perspective of the Congolese context. Lisa F. Jackson gives a brief presentation of the country, from the perspective of the natural resources and richness, stating that “this wealth has also become a curse” (“The Greatest Silence”, 9’). She then gives a very brief overview of the history of the country, choosing as a starting point the reign of the Belgian king Leopold II, and the subsequent massacre of half of the native population, mentioning also the independence moment and the political turmoil that followed, resulting in the 30 years dictatorship of Mobutu, and concluding with the ignition of the war in 1997. In a different scene, Lisa F. Jackson continues to give a historical account of the conflict in the Congo, mentioning the 2002 truce, and labeling the conflict as the “deadliest conflict since WWII” (Idem, 13’), indicating that in 10 years more than 4 million people were left dead, and an estimated 200.000 women and girls had been raped.

This brief overview of the Congolese history leaves aside many relevant aspects, including the interaction of the state on the international stage, and their implications. A turning point in the history of the people of the Congo, was the moment when King Leopold II not only claimed the totality of the territory that the Democratic Republic of Congo covers today, which he had never visited, but the great Western powers recognized the International African Association’s right over the territory, meaning that Leopold was personally in charge of the territory and could

administer it as his private domain under the name of Congo Free State (Asante, 2007:217-219, Hoskyns & Whiteman in Legum, 1969:222, M'Bokolo, 2011:311-316).

Leopold ruled the Congo Free State with the sole purpose of augmenting his private financial gains through the exploitation of rubber, ivory and other natural resources. Under diplomatic and public pressure, Leopold yielded the Congo Free State, which became Belgian territory in 1908. After becoming Belgian colony, the Congo Free State knew a period of infrastructure development, especially in the primary education and basic health care. Nevertheless, the primary objective of the Belgian colonizers was still the exploitation of natural resources, which continued its positive trend, while the oppressive legislation was also maintained (Hoskyns & Whiteman in Legum, 1969:222-223). This colonial policy discouraged the forming of a Congolese elite, which hindered the awakening of the national consciousness in the years of germination of the African independencies.

Following its independence, the country was faced with internal political turmoil, fueled by external involvement. The case of Patrice Lumumba, the first Prime Minister of the new state, is relevant in this matter, and also a significant episode of the Cold War. Following the elections in May 1960, the Mouvement National Congolais (MNC), headed by Patrice Lumumba, came out as the victorious party and established the first Congolese independent Government, with Joseph Kasavubu as Head of State and Lumumba as Prime Minister (Hoskyns & Whiteman in Legum, 1969:223-225). Independence came on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 1960, with the Katanga province declaring its independence shortly after, with Belgian support. This was widely considered a plot of the Belgians to continue to ensure their control over the richest province of the country (Asante, 2007: 311, M'Bokolo, 2011:550).

Lumumba asked for support from the United Nations, who sent troops which arrived in Katanga on the 15<sup>th</sup> of July. As the situation was still concerning Lumumba, he required further assistance from the UN, which was denied, the Congolese Prime Minister started receiving logistic support from the Soviet Union. Besides being the moment when Africa becomes the new theater of operations for the Cold War, this alliance will also prove decisive for the future of the new independent state, as well as for Lumumba himself. By September 1960, Lumumba is deposed as Prime Minister by the Head of State (Hoskyns & Whiteman in Legum, 1969:224-226, M'Bokolo, 2011:550).

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of September of 1960, a coup d'état lead by Colonel Joseph Mobutu, the former secretary of Patrice Lumumba, who had also appointed him as Chief of Staff of the Armée Nationale Congolaise, and supported by the Head of Estate, was well concluded. Mobutu arrested Lumumba on December 1<sup>st</sup> 1960, and the UN later declined the formed PM's appeal to

protection, while the Soviet Union denounced the Western powers for holding the responsibility over the arrest. While he was being transported on January 17 1961 to Katanga, after being beaten by Belgian and Katangese soldiers, he was executed by a firing squad lead by a Belgian commander, together with two comrades, with the tacit approval of the Central Intelligence Agency of the United States (Asante, 2007:312-313).

The news concerning Lumumba's death were not made public until 3 weeks after his assassination, the confusion and political instability in the country deepening in the following months and years. By 1964, extremely violent confrontation erupted again in Katanga, with American aid and involvement of French, Belgian, and African volunteers. On 24 November 1965, General Mobutu - the Army High Commander (former Chief of Staff), seized power, announcing his intention to organize elections in 1970. During his early days in power, he showed interest in reinforcing the diplomatic ties with his neighbors and Belgium, as well as associating himself with the revolutionary figure of Patrice Lumumba, by proclaiming him as a national hero (Hoskyns & Whiteman in Legum, 1969:230-232).

Shortly after seizing power, Mobutu renamed the country Zaire, as well as the Congo River, in an effort of implementing a nationalistic ideology. His rule lasted until 1997 and is considered to be authoritarian and patrimonial, the individual accumulation of fortune by flaying the countries resources being a common practice. The mechanism he put in place was based on trading rent seeking for political loyalty, by transforming the economic assets into political resources, which were strategically distributed to his supporters and the ruling elite in order to assure the stability of his regime and prevent the formation of opposition centers. This particular form of rule was coined as "institutionalized kleptocracy", doubled by his transformation of his personal rule into a personality cult and political clientelism into cronyism (Lemarchand, 2001:5).

The longevity of the Mobutu regime, even after the accelerated collapse of Zaire's industrial economy during the 1980s, can be attributed to the foreign backing of Western and Communist powers he acquired in part through the export of raw resources and strategic positioning during the Cold War. Having as background the increasing poverty and lack of state control, the increase of autonomous armed actors became clear in the early 1990s, when a democratization process was announced by President Mobutu (Vlassenroot & Raeymaekers, 2008:41). The shift on the international scene after the end of the Cold War resulting in the withdrawal of international support once granted to Mobutu, and particularly the change of attitude of the countries neighboring Zaire, left Mobutu exposed to armed opposition, originating in one of the adversary centers of authority that had been able to secure the control over local resources through the informal trade networks and started to challenge the legitimacy of the

Zairian state as the only actor entitled to the use of force. Laurent-Désire Kabila auto-proclaims himself the leader of the Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo, and organizes his political take over with the support of Rwanda and Uganda, marching triumphantly into Kinshasha on May 17 1997, in an environment of civil unrest and generalized scarcity of basic goods (Lemarchand, 2001:16).

Scholars assert that, during the last decade of Mobutist rules, the Zairian borderland areas had been strongly influenced by the informal and illegal trading activities, which became so widespread that not only weakened the state effectiveness and control over the areas, but also caused important changes in the social, political, and power structures. A decisive role was played, in the Eastern border area, by the events in Rwanda in 1994, which resulted in significant waves of refugees crossing the border to Zaire, by some estimates some 1.2 million Hutu refugees entering the provinces of North and South Kivu in the aftermath of the events. Amongst them were also disguised interahamwe militias and members of the Forces Armées Rwandaises, trying to escape the repercussions of the extreme violence they had casted upon the Rwandese Tutsi during the horrific genocide (Lemarchand, 2001:15). Rwanda retaliated in the following period, by attacking refugee camps in October 1996 on Zairian territory, further contributing to the instability in the region. Kabila's decision in 1998 to turn against his allies Rwanda and Uganda further lead to the appearance of externally sponsored rebel factions on Congolese territory (Lemarchand, 2001:7).

It can be argued that within the logic of violent economic misappropriation instituted by Mobutu and successfully continued by Kabila, the wars that involved the Congo in 1996-1997 and 1998-2002 can be described as a prolongation of violence by different means, namely by exchanging the patronage networks for military networks, various rebel movements, ethnic militias and military "entrepreneurs of insecurity" challenging the role of the state as the only beneficiary of the natural resources (Vlassenroot & Raeymaekers, 2008:42). The same situation was maintained after Laurent Kabila's assassination on January 16 2001 by a child soldier apparently acting on Angolan orders, when his son Joseph Kabila took power as President of the country, being voted President following the elections held in 2006 (Lemarchand, 2001:4, 39).

By presenting these additional historic facts, it becomes clear that the DRC, although generally portrayed in the media as a peripheral, underdeveloped state, has had a significant role on the international political, economical and military scene. At the same time, international actors have been constantly intervening in the DRC for the past century in order to fulfill their own objectives and agendas. The ongoing conflict can be argued to have been made possible

by the particular historic itinerary of the country. Since it is considered to be a protracted conflict, the causes and enablers should not be superficially associated with very recent developments, but rather a more comprehensive analysis of the historical occurrences and their relation to the social, economical and political transformations of the country should be sought.

While being escorted by the UN Pakistan Battalion into the conflict zone, the director of "The Greatest Silence" films an incident that is rather telling concerning the capacity to act and ameliorate the situation of the UN troops: at a check point on the road, controlled by the Congolese Armed Forces, Congolese travelers are asked by the soldiers to pay a "protection" tax, an extortion tentative on the soldiers' side. As one of the Congolese men refuses or is unable to pay, he starts being bullied and pushed by the soldiers – under the eyes of the UN troops, including the Pakistani Battalion Chief. As the interpreter and guide, Bernard Kalomé, explains that the local population gives money to the soldiers because they have no alternative, the Battalion Chief refuses to comment on the incident ("The Greatest Silence", 16"). Discussing on the situation of the Congolese Armed Forces, Colonel Roddy Winser acknowledges that the organization "is in its infancy", lacking discipline, but also proper infrastructures and funds, leading to the soldiers not being fed or paid. In this situation, he considers the taking – including in terms of rape and goods – as a natural consequence (Idem, 17'). However, sexual exploitation is not perpetrated exclusively by the Congolese soldiers or other rebels, but also by UN personnel, Lisa F. Jackson recounted that 19 of them had been "accused of exchanging milk and eggs for sex with girls as young as 10" (Idem, 18').

This scene is particularly relevant within the military international intervention in the DRC, mostly to stress its inefficiency. The presence of the UN peace keeping contingents has been continuous since the independence in 1960. However, the UN mission seems to be very limited in its capacity to actually intervene in the local Congolese context, and thus to have a positive impact either in reducing violence, or in contributing to the end of the conflict. The ability to act of the UN forces in the Congolese context is limited institutionally and from the infrastructural point of view.

Besides the efficiency of international intervention in the Congo being questioned, the presence of international aid organization also has an impact on the lives of the Congolese. This aspect of international aid is starting to be noticed and analyzed, although it is not yet part of the collective Western imaginary on development. The film "War Witch" presents a provoking scene which entails reflection on this subject.

While Komona and Le Magicien, wander around, the boy spots on the road a car displaying the acronym of a development or aid agency. He starts running towards the car, when

the car gets closer he throws himself onto the car, starting to moan and simulate fierce pain in his leg, apparently caused by the impact with the vehicle ("War Witch", 44'). The agency worker – a middle aged white man, and the driver – a black man, come out of the car and start quarrelling with boy as they know he is faking his injury in order to get money from them. As he sees his position weaken in front of the obvious constatation, he starts to scream as if he was in pain, drawing the attention of the villagers near by, who seem rather angry and inimical towards the development agency worker. In order to avoid the angry mob, the white man throws some money at the boy, and then he runs to the car, driving off apprehensively.

The fact is that international intervention, and external aid, can have this type of impact on the strategies that the Congolese people (and other aid receivers) employ in their day to day lives in order to assure money, medical assistance and other benefits. It has been documented by the press that Congolese communities concertedly chose to present the women as rape victims in order to get benefits from donors and foreign aid providers. One such situation was reported in Luvungi where, according to the journalist's investigation:

...after the rebels left the village, elders decided that the community would say that many women had been raped to avoid ostracizing those who were. It was for the sake of community cohesion, she said. Once aid groups came it was important to protect this story so that everyone could benefit from the assistance that would surely flow. (Heaton, 2013)

As explained by scholars, these behavioral changes are shortcomings originating in the particular focus on sexual violence as disconnect and remote from other forms of violence. In particular, sexual violence, or the allegation of sexual violence, became progressively more entwined in survival strategies, to compensate for the less appealing, or the lack of local alternatives. The immense attention paid to sexual violence in the DRC is reflected in the media as mentioned, but also in the interventions of various international actors (Eriksson Baaz & Stern, 2010:51). The documentary "The Greatest Silence" is one such discourse as it only presents the reality through the limitative perspective of sexual violence against women, further entrenching the exclusive association of the DRC with this peril.

Considering possible criticism regarding this view, the scholars argue that:

Acknowledging the commercialization of rape, including the involvement of the justice processes relating to sexual violence, does not imply minimization of the problem of sexual violence or the suffering of its survivors. Moreover, we do not aim to discredit the people implicated in this. The problem rather lies in the characteristics of the interventions (Eriksson Baaz & Stern, 2010: 55)

The documentary "The Greatest Silence" does not take into consideration the local effects that international intervention can have. Though it presents local responses to the rape phenomenon. At the Bunyakiri Parish, Lisa F. Jackson meets Sister Clothilde Bikafuleeka, who

had organized a support group for women who had survived rape, called “Mothers of the Parish”, that held meetings every Sunday. The director was invited to speak at the meeting, where she also filmed some of the survival stories shared by the participants (“The Greatest Silence”, 50’). In an effort to compensate for the lack of action of the authorities, Sister Clothilde regularly visited the rape survivors in the neighboring villages, thus giving Jackson the possibility to meet more rape survivors.

Together with the media activism of Dr. Denis Mukwege (Mukwege, 2013), the local initiatives seem to be the first mechanism in dealing with the issue of sexual violence, and in assisting the rape victims. Although the Congolese grassroots initiatives are presented in the documentary, as well as Congolese activists, they are not pinpointed as part of the solution. The focus is rather on the victims, on further enhancing the victimizing effect of sexual violence, rather than analyzing the mechanism, although limited, that the Congolese people already have in place to cope with this phenomena.

The documentary also presents a conversation in French between the Congolese activist Drocele Mugomoka and two UN mission members in Bukavu, Ann Makome from Kenya and Phyllis Grobl from Ghana. As their conversation is being filmed, Drocele is showing pictures of raped women in Bukavu, saying that many female members of her family had been raped, some of them subsequently dying from AIDS. She also recounts how she identified her rapist, who was imprisoned but freed after paying a small bribe. She then explains how this was the first time that sexual violence appeared in the Democratic Republic of Congo, explaining that, of course, in the past “a man would rape a woman, but that would go away [ça passé]” (“The Greatest Silence”, 55’), considering that it was “strange” when gang rape started to occur.

However, this affirmation is not exactly accurate from a historical perspective. During the personal rule of King Leopold II in the beginning of the XX<sup>th</sup> century, his gruesome regime had no consideration for the Congolese, who were mutilated, tortured and killed (Asante, 2007:317-318). It would not be misleading to assume that the violence also included sexual violence. The private rule of Leopold over the Congo Free State came to an end in 1908, only after an intense public campaign lead by the Congo Reform Association (headed by Henry Guinness, Edmund Morel, and Roger Casement, with the contribution of Joseph Conrad). The purpose of the press and diplomatic campaign was precisely to show to the Western powers the realities and crimes committed in the Congo Free State (Hawkins, 1982). Leopold gave up his personal rule, ceding Congo to Belgium in 1908, due precisely to the diplomatic and public pressure that the campaign exerted. This means that DRC is definitely not facing brutality and violence for the first

time in its history, but most importantly that the history of the Congo should be considered in itself a valuable contributor in better dealing with the present situation.

During the same scene, Mugomoka brings to the table the issue of the Congolese women's involvement in raising awareness and actively militating for the end of rape and impunity, considering that most of them, due to a specific Congolese attitude, are not showing solidarity towards the victims, but are rather more interested in their own financial privileges. The Ghanaian speaker, Phyllis Grobl says "I am seeing the same thing with the non-governmental organizations nowadays", affirmation that is not translated into English, and not included within the subtitles. Drocele then concludes it is a question of egoism, while the two other women, somewhat rhetorically, ask where is the Congolese pride in all of this ("The Greatest Silence", 56').

The reason why the phrase criticizing the NGOs is not translated is debatable. Of course, it could be just an editing error. However, it seems too relevant to have just been left aside. One possible reason, if we keep in mind the securitization purpose of the documentary, is that the phrase was not relevant for the securitization agenda. Since the focus is on the Congolese female victims of sexual violence, and the intent of the documentary is to provoke a reaction in the international community, then discourse is meant to induce that action needs to be taken so that this issue was securitized. Most of the entities that are able to securitize an issue, besides governments, are ONG. Thus, since the commentary did not fit the purpose, it was simply not translated so that it did not affect the discourse, tailored according to a particular agenda.

Contrary to the documentary, the film "War Witch" presents international intervention from the perspective of the impact it may have on local population in terms of survival strategies and pursuit of benefits. Also, although it is a fictional story, it depicts various conflict-related situations from a non-categorizing perspective, as it is mostly structured as a first person account. However, both the film and the documentary "The Greatest Silence" present the Congolese setting from a deficit perspective. For example, none of the two media discourses includes images of urban landscape (with few exception in the documentary), but rather the scene are filmed in the bushes, isolated compounds and villages, and decaying towns and their suburbs. This further enhances the perception of Africa in general as a rural and underdeveloped. This perception of Africa however can also serve a different purpose: that of re-creating the West as the urbanized, developed locus. The fact that both media discourses focus on the ongoing issues in the Congo and the failure to locally respond to them reinforces the stereotype of the "African tragedy", and its inexorability.



It can be resumed that, the particular ideology behind humanitarian intervention in the Congo reflect the West's privileged position towards Africa. This perspective is further enhanced by the two media discourses. By employing oversimplification and not analyzing comprehensively the Congolese context, the documentary also seems rather to fit an agenda.

## CONCLUSION

The present dissertation investigated how media discourses concerning the Democratic Republic of Congo reflect and reinforce the substantial attention given in mass media in general to the topic of sexual violence against Congolese women. In order to be able to reach this conclusion, the construction of the discourses was analyzed from the perspective of the gender perceptions informing them, based on Western (Amâncio, 1994, Butler, 1999, Ridgeway&Correll, 2004) and African (Oyewumi, 2004) theoretical literature on gender. The second topic of investigation was related to the representations of sexual violence employed within the two media discourses, in the larger context of the complexity of violence (Scheper-Hughes& Bourgois ed., 2004). Particular interest was given to how violence, and sexual violence especially, are communicated to the wider public through the media discourses, from the perspective of the interpretations of the pornography of violence when presenting African contexts (Mbembe, 1999, Mamdami, 2002).

Grounding on these initial considerations, the dissertation further explored the representations of the roles played by the constructs of femininity and masculinity when depicting women and men in the Congolese conflict context within the two media discourses. It was analyzed how these constructs influence the representations of women and men in a conflict context, based on the explanatory theories of the “beautiful soul” (Elshtain, 1995, Sjoberg, 2010a), victimization as tactics (Utas, 2005) and the empirical studies conducted in the Democratic Republic of Congo (Eriksson Baaz & Stern, 2009, 2011). The relation between the particular representations of the gender roles employed within the two media discourses selected and a securitization agenda was further explored. The concept of securitization itself was introduced as debatable from a theoretical perspective (Booth, 2007, Buzan & Hansen, 2011), and was put in relation with the contemporary logic of international intervention in Africa (Peterson, 1999, Tickner, 2001, Roque, 2010).

The final question proposed as axis of analysis related to the effects that the particular representation employed within the two media discourses have on the stereotyped perception of Africa as a tragic continuum of violence and failure. Considering the representations of gender and sexual violence within the Congolese context, and particularly the conflict circumstances, parallels were drawn, from a theoretical perspective, with other studies regarding securitization discourses regarding Africa (Finnström, 2012).

Following the analysis of the documentary the “Greatest Silence: Rape in the Congo” and the film “War Witch”, grounding on the theoretical framework, the questions formulated within the problem statement can be answered. It can thus be concluded that the Western perception on

gender and the category of women was entwined, to different degrees, within the construction of the two the media discourses. Gender is the main axis on which meaning is constructed within in the documentary “The Greatest Silence”, being considered an *a priori* determinant for the reality presented. The universalizing restraining analogy of womanhood and motherhood is also assumed to be irrefutable. The fact that some of the Congolese interviewees further reinforced this presumption is an indicator that Western and Congolese contributors share the common mental construct of gender.

Concerning the representations of violence and of sexual violence, it is clear that within the documentary “The Greatest Silence” violence is reduced to sexual violence, perpetrated by Congolese men against Congolese women. The film “War Witch” on the other hand, depicts various types of violence that are associated with the conflict context. The documentary describes sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo as being associated with the political economy of conflict, since it can be a means to attain the reallocation of goods and resources. The documentary also presents a one-dimensional analysis of sexual violence in the Congolese context: the internal reasoning of the perpetrators, the social-economical factors, as well as the circumstances in which sexual violence is committed are not taken into consideration. Furthermore, by incorporating shocking images of victims, without including relevant descriptions, the documentary alimments voyeurism towards sexual violence, at the same time placing the privileged spectator in a binary relation with the subject. This positioning stems from the colonialist rationale of the civilized versus the savage, and is reinforcing the stereotyping of African people, and subsequently the Congolese people, particularly men, as having an inherent propensity for violence.

The third question formulated within the problem statement was related to the roles played by the constructs of femininity and masculinity when women and men are depicted in a conflict context, particularly from the point of view of the influences that these constructs have when informing the representations of gender roles. The analysis points out that, contrary to the film “War Witch”, the oversimplification of the gender roles during conflict is evident within the documentary “The Greatest Silence”. This perspective strips Congolese women of agency, ignores Congolese female combatants, and neglects the male victims of violence. Men are thus conscribed to the perpetrator class, while victimization is presented as intrinsically feminine. This perspective is yet again underpinning the portrayal of Congolese women as vulnerable victims.

The documentary “The Greatest Silence” also mentions the relation between the pillage of the Congolese natural resources by internal and foreign factions, and violence against women. The major internal impediment in addressing sexual violence identified by the documentary is

the issue of impunity towards the perpetrators, due to the incapacity/lack of will to act on the part of the Congolese authorities. Hence, it can be assumed that the documentary was intended to engage the international community and stress the need for action, both from the local responsible actors in order to stop impunity, as well as from the stand of the international community. However, the fact that the focus was only on the issue of sexual violence perpetrated by men against Congolese women is rather relevant from the perspective that the media discourse used this particular representation of Congolese women as victims in order to comply with a securitization agenda. Instead, it could have comprehensively analyzed the Congolese context and pointed out the various issues that would require securitization, and their interrelations.

Considering the securitization intention of the media discourse “The Greatest Silence”, it was argued that the oversimplified documentation of the Congolese reality was employed so that the audience of the securitization discourse would accept it as such. This media discourse documented facts, while also leaving aside significant aspects of the Congolese context. Since the documentary was viewed by a significant audience, it raised awareness about the few aspects of Congolese reality which were chosen to constitute its subject. However, the intention does not seem to be to partly present the Congolese context, but rather to get the audience to react, and act upon the issue that is raised for securitization. The reductionist approach adopted in the documentary transmits a simple message. The focus on the taboo nature of sexual violence, the appeal to emotion and the use of stereotyped depictions of gender and of Otherness construct an effective call to action, rather than a call to further analyze the contexts and the facts. The scholars (Finnström, 2012, Mbembe, 2001) have identified that this is as a mainstream media tendency, which opportunely reduces a very complex conflict to a stereotype of primitive violence. These socio-cultural abstractions involve, however, an active decision *not* to understand the complex local context, creating rather a “global fiction” than describing contemporary African realities. The documentary “The Greatest Silence” is a means for continuously creating and re-creating an oversimplified master discourse, in which Congolese politics and Congolese history are devoid of their significance, while the Congolese people are stripped of their reasoning and agency. The discourse focuses on presenting an absolute, essentialized narrative, reinforcing the categorical differences between Congolese men as aggressors, and Congolese women as their victims. Since the appeal for securitization is mostly made to Western audiences, the West is reinforced both as dominating stakeholder, and also as *the* entity able to break the cycle of underdevelopment and meaningless violence for the Congolese people.

The documentary was, to some extent, an efficient securitization discourse, directly leading to new international legislation regarding rape as a war crime (U.N. Security Council Resolution 1820, 2008). The long term effects of the documentary, and of the UN resolution subsequently adopted, do not seem obvious, however, since in April 2010, the Secretary General's Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Margot Wallström, still described DR Congo as the "rape capital of the world" (UN News Center, 2010).

Both the film "War Witch" and the documentary "The Greatest Silence" present the Democratic Republic of Congo from the deficit standpoint. This perspective additionally enhances the perception of Africa as rural and underdeveloped. This particular ideology behind the call for humanitarian intervention in the Congo reflects the West's perceived privileged position in relation to Africa.

This perception of Africa, projected by Westerners, re-creates the West as the locus of urbanization, development and security. The ongoing conflict context in the DRC, as well as the rest of the issues presented in the two media discourses, are associated with the implication of not having been efficiently addressed locally. This ingrains the stereotype of the unavailability of the African catastrophe. Also, the perspective adopted regarding gender, sexual violence and conflict entrenches the normativeness of the fixed gender roles, without analyzing the individuals in relation to the Congolese context. It can be concluded, thus, that the representations employed by the two media discourses do not change, but rather enhance the stereotyped perception of Africa as a tragic continuum of violence and failure.

The comprehensive analysis of the documentary "The Greatest Silence: Rape in the Congo", in comparison with the film "War Witch", based on the theoretical concepts and hypotheses presented in the first part, allowed for this study to provide an extensive description, interpretation and explanation for the gender and sexual violence representations employed to describe the reality of the Congolese context. It also permitted criticizing the perspective that the two media discourses adopted, from the perspective of securitization agenda, and more deeply, from the impact that these two media discourses have in reinforcing gender preconception and the negative stereotyping of Africa and Africans. Although the two media discourses selected for analysis represent only a small sample of the mass media productions depicting the contemporary African contexts, further investigation could confirm that this is (still) the general representation of Africa in the Western media. Additional research could also focus on how the representation of Africa and Africans in the Western media impact the Africans themselves, and the construction of the African identities in relation to the Western representations.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Agence France-Presse (2013), "DRC is the world's worst place to be a mother: Save the Children" (online). Available at [www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/afp/130507/drc-named-worst-place-be-mother](http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/afp/130507/drc-named-worst-place-be-mother) (accessed 17.04.2013).
- Ahearn, Victoria (2012), "'Rebelle' film filled with paradoxes", (online). Available at [entertainment.ca.msn.com/celebs/rebelle-film-filled-with-paradoxes-2entertainment.ca.msn.com](http://entertainment.ca.msn.com/celebs/rebelle-film-filled-with-paradoxes-2entertainment.ca.msn.com) (accessed 19.05.2013).
- Amâncio, Lúcia (1994), *Masculino e Feminino. A construção social da diferença*, Porto, Edições Afrontamento.
- Amnesty International (n/d), "Stories from children associated with fighting forces", (online). Available at [www.amnestyusa.org/our-work/issues/children-s-rights/child-soldiers/stories-from-children-associated-with-fighting-forces](http://www.amnestyusa.org/our-work/issues/children-s-rights/child-soldiers/stories-from-children-associated-with-fighting-forces) (accessed 12.05.2013).
- Asante, Molefi Kete (2007), *The history of Africa: the quest for eternal harmony*, London/New York, Routledge.
- Azkue, Irantzu Mendiola, (2010), *Género, rehabilitación posbélica y construcción de la paz. Aspectos teóricos y aproximación a la experiencia en El Salvador*, Bilbao, Hegoa.
- Bennight, Billy (2013), "War Witch: Rachel Mwanza and Kim Nguyen Talk About Making the Film", (online). Available at [thelosangelesbeat.com/2013/03/war-witch-rachel-mwanza-and-kim-nguyen-talk-about-making-the-film/](http://thelosangelesbeat.com/2013/03/war-witch-rachel-mwanza-and-kim-nguyen-talk-about-making-the-film/) (accessed 27.04.2013).
- Booth, Ken (2007), *Theory of World Security*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Butler, Judith (1999), *Gender trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, New York and London, Routledge.
- Buzan, Barry and Lene Hansen (2011) [2009], *The Evolution of International Security Studies*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Carroll, Rory (2003), "Everyone's afraid of her", (online). Available at [www.guardian.co.uk/world/2003/aug/25/gender.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2003/aug/25/gender.uk) (accessed 22.03.2013).
- Chandler, David (2004), "The Responsibility to Protect? Imposing the 'Liberal Peace'", *International Peacekeeping*, 11 (1), pp. 59-81.
- Cockburn, Cynthia (2010), "Gender Relations as Causal in Militarization and War", *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 12 (2), pp. 139-157.
- Crocker, Chester (1996), "The Varieties of Intervention. Conditions for Success", in Chester Crocker et al., *Global Chaos: Sources and Responses to International Conflict*, Washington, Institute of Peace, pp. 183-196.
- Daily Mail Reporter (2011), "Congo named 'worst place on earth' to be a woman with more than 400,000 rapes reported in just one year" (online). Available at [www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1386338/Congo-named-worst-place-earth-woman-huge-rate-rapes-revealed.html](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1386338/Congo-named-worst-place-earth-woman-huge-rate-rapes-revealed.html) (accessed 1.03.2013).
- Dseagu, Amanor (1984), *A Definition of African Tragedy*, Legon, University of Ghana.

- Duffield, Mark (2001), *Global Governance and the New Wars - The Merging of Development and Security*, London/New York, Zed Books.
- Dumitru, Elena (2012), "Pentagonul a dezvăluit planurile prin care va aduce femeile-soldat în linia întâi" (online). Available at [adevarul.ro/international/statele-unite/pentagonul-dezvaluit-planurile-duce-femeile-soldat-linia-intai-1\\_51c162cdc7b855ff56a7574d/index.html](http://adevarul.ro/international/statele-unite/pentagonul-dezvaluit-planurile-duce-femeile-soldat-linia-intai-1_51c162cdc7b855ff56a7574d/index.html) (accessed 20.06.2013).
- Durkheim, Emile (1897) [1992], *O suicídio*, Lisboa, Editorial Presença.
- Elshtain, Jean Bethke (1995), *Women and war with a new epilogue*, Chicago/London, University of Chicago Press Edition.
- Enloe, Cynthia (2000), *Maneuvers – the International Politics of Militarizing Women's Lives*, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, University of California Press.
- Enough Team (2011), "Lisa F. Jackson: Breaking the Greatest Silence", (online). Available at [www.enoughproject.org/blogs/lisa-f-jackson-breaking-greatest-silence](http://www.enoughproject.org/blogs/lisa-f-jackson-breaking-greatest-silence) (accessed 19.04.2013).
- Eriksson Baaz, Maria (2005), *The Paternalism of Partnership*, London/New York, Zed Books.
- Eriksson Baaz, Maria and Maria Stern (2009), "Why Do Soldiers Rape? Masculinity, Violence, and Sexuality in the Armed Forces in the Congo (DRC)", *International Studies Quarterly*, (53), pp. 495-518.
- Eriksson Baaz, Maria and Maria Stern (2010), *The Complexity of Violence: A critical analysis of sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)*, Working Paper, SIDA.
- Eriksson Baaz, Maria and Maria Stern (2011), "Whores, Men, and Other Misfits: Undoing 'Feminization' in the Armed Forces in the DRC", *African Affairs*, 100 (441), pp. 563-585.
- Euronews (2012), "Mulheres soldado pela paz" (online). Available at [pt.euronews.com/2012/06/20/mulheres-soldado-pela-paz/](http://pt.euronews.com/2012/06/20/mulheres-soldado-pela-paz/) (accessed 2.02.2013).
- Falcão Escorrega, Luis (2010), "Intervenções militares e presença militar estrangeira", *Janus*, (13), pp.148-149.
- Ferguson, James (2006), *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order*, Durham/London, Duke University Press.
- Finnström, Sverker (2012), "KONY 2012, Military Humanitarianism, and the Magic of Occult Economies", *African Spectrum*, 47 (2-3), pp. 127-135.
- Garraio, Júlia (2012), "«Arresting Gaddafi will be the most effective way to stop these rapes» Sexual Violence in the Western Media's coverage of the War in Libya", *e-cadernos CES*, 16, pp: 111-142.
- Greste, Peter (2008), "Congolese children forced to fight", (online). Available at [news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7724088.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7724088.stm) (accessed 12.05.2013).
- Hanna, Beth (2013), "Interview: Canadian Director Kim Nguyen Talks Foreign Oscar Nominee 'War Witch'", (online). Available at [blogs.indiewire.com/thompsonhollywood/canadian-director-kim-nguyen-talks-oscar-nominated-foreign-language-film-war-witch](http://blogs.indiewire.com/thompsonhollywood/canadian-director-kim-nguyen-talks-oscar-nominated-foreign-language-film-war-witch) (accessed 17.05.2013).
- Hawkins, Hunt (1982), "Joseph Conrad, Roger Casement, and the Congo Reform Movement", *Journal of Modern Literature*, 9 (1), pp. 65-80.
- Heaton, Laura (2013), "What Happened in Luvungi? On rape and truth in Congo", (online). Available at [www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/03/04/what\\_happened\\_in\\_luvungi?page=full&wp\\_login\\_redirect=0](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/03/04/what_happened_in_luvungi?page=full&wp_login_redirect=0) (accessed 22.04.2013).

- Honwana, Alcinda (2002), "Negotiating Postwar Identities: Child Soldiers in Mozambique and Angola", in George Bond et al., *Contested Terrains and Constructed Categories*, Colorado, Westview Press.
- Human Rights Watch (2005), "Seeking Justice: The Prosecution of Sexual Violence in the Congo War", *Human Rights Watch*, 17 (1A), (online). Available at [www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/drc0305.pdf](http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/drc0305.pdf) (accessed 3.04.2013).
- Jiwani, Yasmin (2009), "Symbolic and discursive violence in media representations of Aboriginal missing and murdered women" in David Weir & Marika Guggisberg (eds.), *Understanding violence: Contexts and portrayals*, Oxford, Inter-Disciplinary Press.
- Kaelan, James (2013), "War Is a Witch: The Academy Award-nominated director of War Witch, Kim Nguyen, finds an AK47 and a light saber in the jungle", (online). Available at [www.moviemaker.com/articles-how-they-did-it/war-witch-academy-award-nominated-director-war-witch-kim-nguyen-finds-ak47-light-saber-jungle-by-kim-nguyen/](http://www.moviemaker.com/articles-how-they-did-it/war-witch-academy-award-nominated-director-war-witch-kim-nguyen-finds-ak47-light-saber-jungle-by-kim-nguyen/) (accessed 12.05.2013).
- Kete Asante, Molefi (2007), *The history of Africa: the quest for eternal harmony*, London/New York, Routledge.
- Kharakh, Ben (2008), "HBO Writer-Director Tells Harrowing Tale, Breaks The Silence For Women Of The Congo", (online). Available at [buzzinefilm.com/interviews/film-interview-lisa-f-jackson-greatest-silence-rape-congo-12132008](http://buzzinefilm.com/interviews/film-interview-lisa-f-jackson-greatest-silence-rape-congo-12132008) (accessed 13.04.2013).
- Kriesberg, Louis (2006), *Constructive Conflicts: From Escalation to Resolution*, Plymouth, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Leatherman, Janie (2011), *Sexual Violence and Armed Conflict*, Malden/Cambridge, Polity Press.
- Legum, Colin (1969) (ed.), *Africa handbook*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books.
- Lemarchand, René (2001), *The Democratic Republic of Congo: From Collapse to Potential Reconstruction*, Occasional Paper – Center of African Studies University of Copenhagen.
- Leys, Colin (1994), "Confronting the African Tragedy", *New Left Review*, 1 (204), pp. 33-47.
- Mackenzie, Megan (2010), "Securitizing Sex?", *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 12 (2), pp. 202-221.
- MacKinnon, Catharine (1994), "Rape, Genocide, and Women's Human Rights", *Harvard Women's Law Journal*, 17 (5).
- Mamdani, Mahmood (2002), "Making Sense of Political Violence in Postcolonial Africa", *Identity, Culture and Politics*, 3 (2), pp. 1-24.
- Marshal, Catherine; Rossaman, Gretchen (2011), *Designing qualitative research*, Thousand Oaks, Sage.
- Mazurana, Dyan and Khristopher Carlson (2004), *From Combat to Community: Women and Girls of Sierra Leone*, Cambridge, Hunt Alternatives Fund.
- Mbembe, Achille, Jean-François Bayart, C. Toulabor (1988), *Afriques indociles. Christianisme, pouvoir et État en société postcoloniale*, Paris, Karthala.
- Mbembe, Achille (1999), "Du Gouvernement Privé Indirect", *Politique africaine*, (73), 103-121.
- Mbembe, Achille (2001), *On the Postcolony*, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, University of California Press.



- M'Bokolo, Elikia (2011) [2004], *África Negra. História e Civilizações. Do século XIX aos nossos dias*, Lisboa, Edições Colibri.
- McEwan, P. J. M. (1968) (ed.), *Africa from early times to 1800*, London, Oxford University Press.
- McKelvey, Tara (2007), "Life as an American Female Soldier" (online). Available at [www.marieclaire.com/world-reports/news/female-soldier-war](http://www.marieclaire.com/world-reports/news/female-soldier-war) (accessed 13.04.2013).
- Meintjes, Sheila, Anu Pillay, Meredith Turshen (2002) (eds.), *The Aftermath - Women in Post-conflict Transformation*, London/New York, Zed Books.
- Miall, Hugh, Oliver Ramsbotham, Tom Woodhouse (1999), *Contemporary Conflict Resolution: The Prevention, Management and Transformation of Deadly Conflict*, Cambridge, Polity Press.
- Morgenthau, Hans (1967), "To Intervene or Not to Intervene", *Foreign Affairs*, 45, pp. 425-436.
- Mukwege, Denis (2013), "Denis Mukwege: The rape surgeon of DR Congo", (online). Available at [www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-21499068](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-21499068) (accessed 15.05.2013).
- Nkundabagenzi, Félix (1999), "Ethnicity and Intra-State Conflict: Types, Causes and Peace Strategies – a Survey of Sub-Saharan Africa", in Wiberg, Hakan et al., *Ethnicity and Intra-State Conflict. Types, Causes and Peace Strategies*, Aldershot, Ashgate, pp. 280-298.
- Okonjo, Kamene (1976), "The Dual-Sex Political System in Operation: Igbo Women and Community Politics in Midwestern Nigeria", in Hafking, Nancy and Edna Bay (eds.), *Women in Africa. Studies in Social and Economic Change*, Stanford, Stanford University Press.
- Oyewumi, Oyeronke (2004), "Conceptualizing Gender: The Eurocentric Foundations of Feminist Concepts and the Challenge of African Epistemologies", in Signe, Arnfred. et al., *African Gender Scholarship: Concepts, Methodologies and Paradigms. CODESRIA Gender Series*, 1 pp. 1-8.
- Paiva Manso, Visconde de (1877), *Historia do Congo*, Lisboa, Typographia da Academia.
- Paillé, Pierre, Muchielli, Alex (2010), *L'analyse qualitative en sciences humaines et sociales*, Paris, Armand Colin.
- Peterson, Spike (1999), "Political Identities/Nationalism as Heterosexism", *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 1(1), pp. 34-65.
- Ramuhala, Mashudu Godfrey (2010), *Military Intervention in Africa after the Cold War*, Dissertation for Master in Military Science, Stellenbosch, University of Stellenbosch.
- Ridgeway, Cecilia, and Shelley Correll (2004), "Unpacking the Gender System. A Theoretical Perspective on Gender Beliefs and Social Relations", *Gender & Society*, 18 (4), pp. 510-531.
- Rohter, Larry (2013), "Needing an Armed Convoy to Make a Film", (online). Available at [carpetbagger.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/02/07/needing-an-armed-convoy-to-make-a-film/](http://carpetbagger.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/02/07/needing-an-armed-convoy-to-make-a-film/) (accessed 17.03.2013).
- Robbins, James (2013), "Jolie and Hague visit Democratic Republic of Congo rescue camp" (online). Available at [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-21932895](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-21932895) (accessed 4.04.2013).
- Roque, Sílvia (2010), "Paradoxos da cooperação internacional", *Janus*, (13), pp. 172-173.
- Roque, Sílvia (2011) (coord), *Um retrato da violência contra mulheres na Guiné-Bissau*, Bissau, Governo da República da Guiné-Bissau/Nações Unidas Guiné-Bissau.
- Rotberg, Robert (2003) (ed.), *State Failure and State Weakness in a Time of Terror*, Washington, Brookings Institution Press.


- Sánchez Rodríguez, Gabriel (2008), "Violencia machista y medios de comunicación. El tratamiento informativo de los delitos relacionados con el maltrato a mujeres", *Comunicación y Hombre*, (4), pp. 155-167.
- Scheper-Hughes, Nancy and Philippe Bourgois (2004) (eds.), *Violence: An Anthology*, Malden/Oxford/Victoria, Blackwell Publishing.
- Shepherd, Laura (2010), "Women, armed conflict and language/Gender, violence and discourse", *International Review of the Red Cross*, 92 (877), pp. 1-17.
- Sjoberg, Laura (2010a), "Women fighters and the 'beautiful soul' narrative", *International Review of the Red Cross*, 92 (877), pp. 53-68.
- Sjoberg, Laura (2010b) (ed.), *Gender and International Security - Feminist perspectives*, New York, Routledge.
- Stemple, Lara (2009), "Male Rape and Human Rights", *Hastings Law Journal*, 60 (605), pp. 605-647.
- Sudarkasa, Niara (2005), "The 'Status of Women' Indigenous African Societies" in Andrea Cornwall ed., *Readings in Gender in Africa*, London, International African Institute.
- Taylor, Kate (2013), "Rebelle director Kim Nguyen overjoyed but realistic about Oscar nomination", (online). Available at [www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/film/rebelle-director-kim-nguyen-overjoyed-but-realistic-about-oscar-nomination/article7206229/](http://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/film/rebelle-director-kim-nguyen-overjoyed-but-realistic-about-oscar-nomination/article7206229/) (accessed 30.03.2013).
- "The Greatest Silence: Rape in the Congo" (online). Available at [thegreatestsilence.org](http://thegreatestsilence.org) (accessed 14.02.2013).
- "The Greatest Silence: Rape in the Congo", (online). Available at [www.imdb.com/title/tt1157650/awards?ref\\_=tt](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1157650/awards?ref_=tt) (accessed 14.01.2013).
- Tickner, Ann (2001), *Gendering World Politics. Issues and Approaches in the Post-Cold War Era*, New York, Columbia University Press.
- Trefon, Theodore (2004) (ed.), *Reinventing Order in the Congo: How People Respond to State Failure in Kinshasa*, London/New York, Zed Books.
- Trefon, Theodore (2011), *Congo Masquerade – The Political Culture of Aid Inefficiency and Reform Failure*, London/New York, Zed Books.
- Turshen, Meredith and Clotilde Twagiramariya (1998) (eds.), *What Women Do in Wartime: Gender and Conflict in Africa*, London/New York, Zed Books.
- United Nations (2002), *Final report of the Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth of the Democratic Republic of the Congo*, (online). Available at [www.undemocracy.com/S-2002-1146.pdf](http://www.undemocracy.com/S-2002-1146.pdf) (accessed 23.02.2013).
- UNDP (2013), *Human Development Report – The Rise of the South*, (online). Available at [hdr.undp.org/en/statistics](http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics) (18.06.2013).
- UNIFEM (2002), *Women, War and Peace: The Independent Experts' Assessment on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Women's Role in Peace-building*, (online). Available at [pendientedemigracion.ucm.es/cont/descargas/documento7201.pdf?pg=cont/descargas/documento7201.pdf](http://pendientedemigracion.ucm.es/cont/descargas/documento7201.pdf?pg=cont/descargas/documento7201.pdf) (accessed 20.04.2013).



- United Nations News Center (2010), "Tackling sexual violence must include prevention, ending impunity – UN official", (online). Available at [www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=34502#.UeLcydLVCSp](http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=34502#.UeLcydLVCSp), (accessed 20.04.2013).
- United Nations Operation in the Congo, (online). Available at [www.un.org/Depts/DPKO/Missions/onuc.htm](http://www.un.org/Depts/DPKO/Missions/onuc.htm) (accessed 24.05.2013).
- UN Security Council (2008), *Women and peace and security (S/RES/1820 (2008))*, (online). Available at [daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N08/391/44/PDF/N0839144.pdf?OpenElement](http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N08/391/44/PDF/N0839144.pdf?OpenElement) (accessed 3.04.2013).
- Utas, Mats (2005), "Victimcy, Girlfriending, Soldiering: Tactic Agency in a Young Woman's Social Navigation of the Liberian War Zone", *Anthropological Quarterly*, 78 (2), pp 403-430.
- Van Allen, Judith (1976), "'Aba Riots' or Igbo Women's War? Ideology, Stratification, and the Invisibility of Women", in Hafking and Bay ed., *Women in Africa Studies in Social and Economic Change*, Stanford, Stanford University Press.
- Van Zoonen, Liesbet (1994), *Feminist Media Studies*, London, Sage.
- Vlassenroot, Koen and Timothy Raeymaekers (2005), *The Formation of Centers of Profit, Power and Protection. Conflict and Social Transformation in Eastern DR Congo*, Occasional Paper – Center of African Studies University of Copenhagen.
- Vlassenroot, Koen and Timothy Raeymaekers (2008), "New political order in the DR Congo? The Transformation of Regulation", *Afrika Focus*, 21 (2), pp. 39-52.
- von Lipsey, Roderick K. ed. (1997), *Breaking the Cycle: A Framework for Conflict Intervention*, New York, St. Martin's Press.
- Wallerstein, Immanuel (2004), *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction*, Durham, Duke University Press.
- "War Witch", (online). Available at [www.imdb.com/title/tt1820488/?ref\\_=fn\\_al\\_tt\\_1](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1820488/?ref_=fn_al_tt_1) (accessed 14.01.2013).
- "War Witch", (online). Available at [www.rebelle-lefilm.ca](http://www.rebelle-lefilm.ca) (accessed 12.01.2013).
- Williams, Fiona (2013), "Rebelle / War Witch: Kim Nguyen interview", (online). Available at [www.sbs.com.au/films/movie-news/904042/rebelle-war-witch-kim-nguyen-interview](http://www.sbs.com.au/films/movie-news/904042/rebelle-war-witch-kim-nguyen-interview) (accessed 2.05.2013).
- Winship, Michael (2008), "'The Greatest Silence: Rape in the Congo' Illuminates and Devastates", (online). Available at [www.commondreams.org/archive/2008/04/01/8014](http://www.commondreams.org/archive/2008/04/01/8014) (accessed 2.04.2013).
- Women Make Movies, (online). Available at [www.wmm.com](http://www.wmm.com) (accessed 2.03.2013).
- World English Dictionary, (online). Available at [dictionary.reference.com](http://dictionary.reference.com) (accessed 15.03.2013).
- World Health Organization (2002), *World report on violence and health*, (online). Available at [www.who.int/violence\\_injury\\_prevention/violence/global\\_campaign/en/chap6.pdf](http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/global_campaign/en/chap6.pdf) (accessed 12.03.2013).
- Wyatt, Nelson (2013), "Improv and the barrel of an AK-47: how a Canadian Oscar-nominated film came together", (online). Available at [www.timescolonist.com/entertainment/movies/improv-and-the-barrel-of-an-ak-47-how-a-canadian-oscar-nominated-film-came-together-1.74406](http://www.timescolonist.com/entertainment/movies/improv-and-the-barrel-of-an-ak-47-how-a-canadian-oscar-nominated-film-came-together-1.74406) (accessed 23.04.2013).

## CURRICULUM VITAE

### Personal Information

**Anastasia Maria Oprea**

 P1, R/C Esq., 111 Rua Pascoal de Melo, Lisbon, 1000-232, Portugal

 +351 213 940 320  +351 915 400 103

 [Anastasia.oprea@yahoo.es](mailto:Anastasia.oprea@yahoo.es)

DEGREE APPLIED FOR MA degree in African Studies

Sex F | Date of birth 04/05/1986 | Nationality Romanian

### WORK EXPERIENCE

From February 2012 – current	Customer Support Technician FujitsuTechnology Solutions, Lisbon, <a href="http://www.fujitsu.com/fts/">www.fujitsu.com/fts/</a>
From July 2010 to January 2012	IT, Technology Solutions Junior IT Service Technician Logica, R. Particular da EDP (à R. Cidade de Goa), 11, Sacavém – Loures, Portugal
From May 2006 to June 2010	Industry solutions Senior Panel Controller SC Ipsos Interactive Services SRL, Splaiul Independentei No 319, Sector 6, Bucharest, Romania
	Online Market Research

### EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- From February 2011 – ongoing  
**Master of Arts in African Studies**  
ISCTE-IUL, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Lisbon, Portugal
- Comprises the interdisciplinary study of social, economic and political development in contemporary Africa. Specialization: State, Politics and International Relations
- From October 2008 to June 2009  
**Master of Arts in Crisis and Conflict Management** (attendance)  
Babes-Bolyai University, Political, Administrative and Communication Sciences Faculty, Cluj-Napoca, Romania
- By means of interactive courses, topics like negotiations and mediation techniques, decision processes in crisis situation, strategic management, and conflict resolution were studied
- From October 2005 to June 2008  
**Bachelor in International Relations and European Studies**  
University of Bucharest, Faculty of Letters, Romania
- The program was focused on the interdisciplinary study of European history, geography, political science, international relations, law, economy, culture, literature and arts, communication, European studies and foreign languages.

**PERSONAL SKILLS**

Mother tongue

Romanian

Other languages

	UNDERSTANDING		SPEAKING		WRITING
	Listening	Reading	Spoken interaction	Spoken production	
English	C2	C2	C2	C2	C1
Cambridge Certificate in Advanced English (CAE)					
Spanish	C2	C2	C2	C2	C2
Diploma de Español como Lengua Extranjera -Nivel C2 (Superior)					
Portuguese	C2	C2	C2	C2	C2
Diploma Intermédio de Português Língua Estrangeira					
French	B1	B2	B1	B1	A2

- Communication skills
- Excellent communication skills acquired during my work experience in various multinational companies, in multicultural environments and through constant interaction over different mediums while providing IT support to end users from all over the world

- Job-related skills
- Very good organization skills, proactive and able to autonomously identify improvement areas for the service provided to the client
  - New hire trainer, focused on integrating the new team members within the core team during the new hire training, assuring follow up and mentoring for the new team members
  - Professional posture; solution-oriented

- Computer skills
- Proficient operating and support skills: Windows XP/ 7, Lotus Notes, Microsoft Office Pack 2003/2007, Internet (Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, Opera, Google Chrome), Active Directory, SAP, ticketing tools (Remedy, Talisma, Tivole, CA)
  - Excellent troubleshooting skills in Microsoft environments
  - ITIL course attendance

#### Additional Information

- Seminars
- 1<sup>st</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> of December 2008 - attended BIMUN – Bonn International Model of United Nations (certificate)  
As the delegate from Djibouti in the Commission on the Status of Women, the topics I dealt with were: Global Issues, Local Voices: Enhancing the Role of Women in Fighting Climate Change; Conflict Prevention and Resolution: Strengthening the Role of Women as Mediators and Violence Against the Girl Child: Protecting the Defenseless.

- References
- Doctor Ana Catarina Larcher das Neves Santos Carvalho - Guest Assistant Professor, ISCTE-University Institute of Lisbon, supervising Professor (anacatarinalarcher2010@hotmail.com)

Bruno Pinheiro - Team Manager, Fujitsu Technologies solutions, current direct Manager (bruno.pinheiro@ts.fujitsu.com)