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Recognised, but are they Represented?:
Victimhood, Survivorship, and Agency in the WPS Resolutions on Conflict-Related
Sexual Violence

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Abstract

This thesis examines how those affected by conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) are discursively constructed across the United Nations Security Council's Women, Peace and Security (WPS) resolutions (1325-2493), and what these constructions imply for the emergence and limits of survivor-centred approaches (SCAs) within this agenda. Through a feminist critical discourse analysis, with a genealogical orientation, the study traces how CRSV is constructed through legal, human rights, security, technocratic and, more recently, structural frames. It also examines how these overlapping constructions shape which responses are prioritised and which remain marginal. Within these different understandings of CRSV, the analysis examines how victim/survivor terminology, alongside recurring references to “women and girls” and “women and children”, constitute those affected and delimit the subject positions available to them.

The study argues that those affected by CRSV are largely constructed as feminised, vulnerable subjects whose relationship to institutions is one of protection, assistance and redress rather than political agency. In most provisions, they appear as recipients of institutional measures, with very little sustained attention to those affected by CRSV as actors in more substantive roles; the most developed, though still constrained, examples appear in Resolution 2467. The thesis reads the SCA in Resolution 2467 in light of this pattern, arguing that an approach premised on recognising survivors' agency is introduced into a setting where survivors have rarely been constructed as agents. It suggests that, in this context, the SCA is taken up mainly as a managerial framework premised upon organising existing legal, service and participation measures around survivors' needs without redistributing power or centring their knowledge. It concludes that the forms of response imagined across the resolutions keep international and state institutions at the centre of CRSV response, leaving relatively little discursive space for responses defined and driven by those who have been affected by CRSV.

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Abbreviations

CAT	Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CERD	Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CRSV	Conflict-Related Sexual Violence
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
DHA	Discourse-Historical Approach
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ECCC	Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
FCDA	Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis
GA	General Assembly
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICL	International Criminal Law
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICTR	International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
IHRL	International Human Rights Law
JSR	Justice Sector Reform

LGBTQI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
SCA	Survivor-Centred Approach
SCSL	Special Court for Sierra Leone
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-based violence
SPSC	Special Panels for Serious Crimes
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
SRSG-SVC	Special Representative of the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict
SSR	Security Sector Reform
UN	United Nations
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
WPS	Women, Peace, and Security

Chapter 1: Introduction

This dissertation explores how conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) and those affected by it are constructed in the United Nations Security Council's (UNSC) Women, Peace and Security (WPS) resolutions, focusing on how CRSV is defined and addressed, how “victims” and “survivors” are described, and how “survivor-centred” responses are articulated. It focuses on these resolutions as the foundations of the WPS agenda, a key normative and policy framework through which CRSV is addressed in international politics (Davies and True 2019b). As an authoritative and influential site through which CRSV is defined and governed, the Council's discourse around “victims”, “survivors” and “survivor-centred” responses helps shape the wider discursive conditions through which certain harms, subjects, and interventions become intelligible or normalised, whilst others remain pushed to the margins.

With the adoption of Resolution 1325 in 2000, described by many as a “landmark resolution” (Otto 2010; Reilly 2018; Meger 2019), women and women's experiences were officially introduced into the “high politics” of peace and security (Jansson and Eduards 2016). Resolution 1325 was formally organised around four pillars - protection, participation, prevention, and relief and recovery - but, over time, the WPS agenda has tended to frame women to focus its attention on protection and participation (Kirby and Shepherd 2016; Turner and Swaine 2023; Bellou 2025a)

Within the “protection arm” of the agenda, CRSV has increasingly come to dominate how women's security is discussed and represented, even as later resolutions have expanded the agenda's participation language (Aroussi 2017; Reilly 2018; Turner and Swaine 2023). This protection framing is reinforced across the resolutions, where CRSV is repeatedly constructed as both a security concern and a violation of international law, with the Council calling for stronger prevention, accountability, and service provision for those affected. More recently, the Council has explicitly endorsed a ‘survivor-centred approach’ (SCA) as a guiding principle for responding to CRSV, seen in Resolution 2467 (2019), which proposes CRSV interventions be organised around the needs, rights, and safety of those who have experienced such violence.

This uptake of the SCA seems to sit uneasily within the existing institutional structure of the Security Council. Institutional responses to gendered violence have long been criticised for remaining deeply protectionist and closely tied to militarised security agendas. Such responses often individualise harm and selectively recognise particular forms of violence, even as they claim to address gendered inequality (Puechguirbal 2010; Kirby and Shepherd 2016; Innes 2024). These critiques raise questions about what it means in practice for these same institutions to describe their

work as “survivor-centred”, and how survivor-centred rhetoric sits within existing security and legal framings of CRSV in institutions that are often unreceptive to feminist understandings of violence.

The subjects of CRSV, the WPS agenda, and victim/survivor terminology more broadly have all generated a substantial body of research from a wide array of different disciplines (Nordås and Cohen 2021). However, there has been relatively little attention to how the WPS resolutions themselves construct “victims” and “survivors”, what these constructions make possible or foreclose, and how the later development of the SCA relates to them. This study addresses that gap by examining how those affected by CRSV are discursively constructed across the WPS resolutions, how victim/survivor labels and associated subject positions develop over time. It further analyses the ways in which the articulation of a “survivor-centered approach” in Resolution 2467 sits within, and interacts with, existing legal and security framings of CRSV. It does so through a set of related research questions outlined below:

1. How have those affected by CRSV been discursively constructed across the UN Security Council’s WPS resolutions (1325-2493)?
2. What subject positions do victim and survivor terminology, and related labels, make available across the resolutions over time?
3. In what ways does the survivor-centred approach interact with these subject positions?
4. How are responses to CRSV imagined across the WPS resolutions, and with what effects?

Given this dissertation focuses its analysis on the UNSC WPS resolutions I use “conflict-related sexual violence” in line with the UN’s definition, to refer to acts such as “rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, enforced sterilization, forced marriage and any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity...that is directly or indirectly linked to a conflict” (United Nations 2020). However, I approach CRSV as a historically and politically constructed category rather than a fixed or exhaustive list of harms, and recognise this definition cannot fully account for the complexities of sexual violence in armed conflict or post-conflict situations as it manifests, and as it is experienced (Meger 2016b; Dolan et al. 2020).

Throughout the dissertation, I use “victim” and “survivor” to reflect how the terms are used within the WPS resolutions, or in the wider literature under discussion. The study does not aim to provide elaborate definitions or theorisations of “victim” or “survivor”, instead approaching ‘victim’ and ‘survivor’ as shifting and contested labels whose meanings and usage varies across different contexts. Where I use “victim/survivor” I do so as a shorthand for the shifting labels and subject positions attached to those affected by CRSV (O’Shea et al. 2024; Bower 2026). This is not to

endorse one term over the other or to suggest that these are the only, or most appropriate, ways of referring to people who have experienced such violence.

The study draws on a range of feminist theoretical approaches across International Relations, security studies and human rights, and uses feminist critical discourse analysis and a selective, text-focused genealogy of the WPS resolutions. It treats CRSV, ‘victim’, ‘survivor’ and ‘survivor-centred’ as historically and socially constructed concepts, while still recognising the material harms of CRSV and the lived experiences that these concepts seek to address.

The following chapter outlines the historical context through which CRSV came to be framed as a matter of international peace and security, and introduce the main legal frameworks relevant to CRSV. Chapter 3 sets out the study’s theoretical and methodological framework, explaining its feminist critical discourse analytic approach and genealogical orientation. The next chapter presents my analysis of the WPS resolutions, tracing the development of CRSV and victim/survivor subject positions over time, and examining how the SCA interacts with these constructed subjects. The final chapter summarises the key analytical points and reflects on some of the study’s main limitations.

Chapter 2: Conflict-Related Sexual Violence – International Law and the Making of a Security Concern

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses how CRSV moved from a relatively invisible “by-product” of war to a recognised matter of international peace and security receiving sustained international attention. It further outlines the overlapping international legal frameworks through which its prohibition, prosecution, and redress are articulated. Together, these sections establish the legal and political context necessary for the analysis that follows examining how the WPS resolutions construct victims, survivors, and appropriate responses to CRSV.

2.2 How conflict-related sexual violence became an international peace and security concern

Conflict-related sexual violence is not a new phenomenon; historical sources from antiquity to the present document sexual violence as a recurrent feature of war or armed conflict (Heineman 2011; Baaz and Stern 2013; Stachow 2020). This apparent ubiquity reinforced the notion that such violence was an inevitable by-product of war – attributed to “rogue soldiers with insatiable sex drives” – a part of the expected “rapelootpillage” of warfare. It was this framing that led to the relative silence surrounding the issue (Crawford 2017; Meger 2019). Despite the fact that there was knowledge surrounding the scale and prevalence of wartime sexual violence it rarely provoked significant international condemnation, receiving little dedicated legal, political, or scholarly attention until the late twentieth century when conflict related sexual violence began to be recast as a matter of international peace and security (Canning 2010; Henry 2014; Crawford 2017; Nordås and Cohen 2021). This section traces the shift from understandings of sexual violence as an inevitable by-product of war towards its problematisation as a women’s human rights violation and, ultimately, as a weapon of war and a matter of international peace and security (Crawford 2017).

Although CRSV did not receive significant international attention until the 1990s, its recognition within the international plane had begun earlier. From the late 1960s onwards, debates in the General Assembly (GA) and United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) from the late 1960s, culminating in the 1974 *Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict*, marked the first explicit recognition within the UN system that women and children in situations of emergency and armed conflict faced particular forms of harm and required specific

protection. The Declaration condemned “inhuman acts” and “degrading treatment” directed against women and children and called for their protection in armed conflict, but did not explicitly touch on sexual violence or rape (UN General Assembly 1974; UN Division for the Advancement of Women 1998; Alison 2007).

A series of UN World Conferences on Women garnered greater attention to women’s experiences of armed conflict, expanding this brief recognition into a broader women’s human rights agenda (Alison 2007). Feminist and women’s human rights advocates used these conferences to contest the separation of “women’s rights” from “human rights” and to bring gender-based violence, including wartime sexual violence, into international human rights debates (Joachim 2007; Crawford 2017). This culminated in the Beijing Platform for Action whose chapter on “Women and Armed Conflict” addressing women’s protection, explicitly from sexual and gender-based violence. However they did not focus on protection alone, linking their demand to wider calls for women’s participation in conflict resolution, peace negotiations and post-conflict reconstruction (Crawford 2017; Houge and Skjelsbæk 2018).

This emerging women’s human rights agenda converged with the widespread and shocking use of sexual violence in conflicts such as the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, which became central reference points in UN debates and reports on sexual violence in armed conflict (Alison 2007; Joachim 2007). Sexual atrocities in these wars were increasingly represented as methods of ethnic cleansing and, in some accounts, genocide, prompting strong advocacy from women’s civil society organisations and increasing pressure on the UN and states to treat sexual violence during armed conflict as a crime that demanded specific legal and political responses (Niarchos 1995; Buss 2009; Ayiera 2010; Crawford 2013). These developments intensified international concern, challenged earlier assumptions that wartime sexual violence was primarily opportunistic or inevitable, and created a context in which UN mandated tribunals and other legal mechanisms began to engage more directly with sexual violence in armed conflict (Buss 2009; Crawford 2017).

In this context, women’s rights activists were able to successfully lobby for the inclusion of rape and other forms of sexual violence in the statutes of the ad hoc tribunals for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY established 1993) and Rwanda (ICTR, established 1994). Through their subsequent case law, the tribunals developed landmark jurisprudence prosecuting sexual violence as a war crime, a crime against humanity, and as an act of genocide, albeit often through relatively narrow gendered conceptions of victims and perpetrators (Chun and Skjelsbæk 2010; Askin 2013; Nadj 2018). The emerging jurisprudence, along with the continued advocacy of women’s human rights NGOs and intensive lobbying from survivors of sexual violence, fed directly into Rome Statute negotiations in

the establishment of the International Criminal Court (ICC). The Rome Statute codified the “broadest range of sexual and gender-based crimes in the history of international law” (FIDH and Women’s Initiatives for Gender Justice 2021, p.5) explicitly recognising CRSV within the core crimes over which the Court has jurisdiction (Rome Statute 1998) (Hirschauer 2014; Meger 2016a; Crawford 2017). This further cemented CRSV as a legally visible international crime, and also contributed to the conditions under which it could be framed as a matter of international peace and security (Hirschauer 2014; Crawford 2017; Engle 2020).

The emerging legal recognition of conflict-related sexual violence as an international crime took shape within, and contributed to, broader political debates in which two competing framings of wartime sexual violence became prominent – sexual violence as a women’s human rights issue, and sexual violence as a ‘weapon of war’ (linked to international security) (Crawford 2017). When sexual violence in armed conflict is framed primarily as a violation of women’s human rights wartime sexual atrocities are understood in relation to this broader landscape of inequality and everyday violence that women and girls face. From this perspective, effectively addressing sexual violence would require tackling the underlying causes of gender-based violence during and in the absence of active armed conflict. This sat uneasily with dominant norms of state sovereignty and, in some ways, worked to keep these issues within the typically ‘domestic’ realm of women’s rights, at the margins of ‘influential’ politics (Crawford 2017; Houge and Skjelsbæk 2018).

In response, a number of advocates and policy actors strategically employed the “weapon of war” framing, presenting sexual violence as a systematic and deliberate tactic employed by armed groups to achieve certain military and political objectives (Baaz and Stern 2013; Crawford 2017; Engle 2020). This differentiated CRSV from wider patterns of gender inequality, rendering it a cohesive ‘thing’ that fit more comfortably into traditional security paradigms as a form of harm comparable to classical methods of warfare (Baaz and Stern 2013; Meger 2016a; Meger 2016b; Crawford 2017). This security framing resonated more strongly with States and international organisations than the human rights framing alone, generating greater international attention and condemnation, and prompting stronger action in response. It contributed to the successful institutionalisation of CRSV as a matter of international peace and security through the UN Security Council’s (UNSC) WPS resolutions, within which it has become a strong and recurring focus (Hirschauer 2014; Crawford 2017; Dersnah 2019).

The UN Security Council’s adoption of Resolution 1325 (2000) inaugurated the WPS agenda, marking a significant entry of women’s concerns into the ‘high politics’ of international security (Crawford 2017; Meger 2019). Structured around four pillars – participation, protection, prevention,

and relief and recovery – the agenda formally links women’s inclusion and their protection from violence to international peace and security (UN Security Council 2000; Bellou 2025b). Whilst this does, in some respects, position gender-based and sexual violence in armed conflict as an international security issue, Crawford (2017) maintains that, at this point, sexual violence was still largely framed as a matter of women’s human rights.

Resolution 1820 (2008) was the first resolution in which the UNSC explicitly recognised CRSV as a “tactic of war”, recognising such violence can impede international peace and security, therefore firmly locating CRSV within its security mandate. Subsequent resolutions (1888, 1960, 2106 and 2467) further institutionalised this security framing, as discussed in further detail in Chapter four.

2.3 International legal and human rights frameworks

International legal responses to CRSV have progressively developed across International Human Rights Law (IHRL), International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and International Criminal Law (ICL), as well as through the aforementioned practice of the UNSC. What was once met with near silence is now formally recognised, codified and, and sometimes, prosecuted as one of the most serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, also amounting to a crime under international criminal law (Scriven 2025). These distinct, but overlapping, legal frameworks provide a relatively strong framework for the prohibition of CRSV and for the protection of those affected (Gaggioli 2014; Heinrich Böll Foundation 2024) (UN CRSV Handbook 2020)

This section does not provide an exhaustive account of all relevant legal developments. Instead, I outline the key treaty provisions, interpretive developments, and accountability frameworks most relevant to, and most frequently invoked within, the WPS texts analysed in this dissertation (Chinkin 2022a). Thus, the discussion that follows provides the legal background required for understanding the ways in which WPS texts articulate protection, accountability, reparations, and survivor-centred responses to CRSV.

2.3.1 International human rights law

Explicit, self-standing prohibitions of sexual violence are surprisingly rare across both universal and regional human rights treaties. Even CEDAW contains no dedicated provision to this effect, whilst

the CRC stands out as a relatively rare example of a treaty which expressly prohibits sexual abuse and exploitation in its text (Gaggioli 2014). As a result, sexual violence is typically addressed indirectly, as a violation of other protected rights in the core international human rights instruments, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR, 1966); the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979); the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT, 1984); the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1989); and Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD, 2006) (Gaggioli 2014; The Mukwege Foundation 2024). Given IHRL applies at all times, including during armed conflict, it follows CRSV falls within its scope.

Through the interpretation of these core treaties, treaty bodies have developed a substantial body of practice reading rape and other forms of sexual violence mainly as violations of the prohibition of torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment (Davidson 2019; Engle 2020), as well as of rights to health, privacy, equality, and non-discrimination (UN CRSV Handbook 2020). The Human Rights Committee has treated rape and other forms of sexual violence as falling within Article 7 ICCPR and, in some contexts, as engaging Article 17 through violations of privacy and sexual autonomy (The Mukwege Foundation 2024). Similarly, the Committee against Torture has consistently affirmed that rape and other forms of sexual violence can amount to torture where the elements of severe pain or suffering, prohibited purpose, and state involvement (or acquiescence) are present (The Mukwege Foundation 2024) (ICCPR, Article 7).

CEDAW has been especially important in consolidating the understanding of gender-based and sexual violence against women as a form of discrimination under IHRL. Through General Recommendations Nos. 12, 19, 30, and 35, the CEDAW Committee has clarified that gender-based (and sexual) violence, including in conflict and post-conflict settings, constitutes a form of discrimination falling under Article 1, explicitly recognising this kind of violence as rooted in structural gender inequality. They have further affirmed that such violence may, in certain circumstances, amount to torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment (Desai and Mandal 2022; The Mukwege Foundation 2024). There have been comparable developments elsewhere – CERD has acknowledged the intersection of racial and gender-based discrimination in contexts of sexual violence and the CRPD has linked such violence to rights to integrity, freedom from exploitation and protection in situations of risk (Desai and Mandal 2022).

These treaties impose negative duties upon to States to refrain from violating the rights enshrined within them, and also contain positive obligations to prevent, investigate, punish and provide remedies for such violations. Applied to CRSV, this requires states to exercise due diligence to

prevent such violence, including by addressing structural gender inequality and discrimination. These obligations also extend to violence perpetrated by non-state actors (The Mukwege Foundation 2024; FIDH 2026)

Within IHRL, CRSV has gradually become recognised as a serious violation of multiple, overlapping rights; primarily the prohibitions of torture and ill-treatment and the right to non-discrimination. This (re)interpretation of existing human rights treaties has, arguably, strengthened the legal avenues through which individuals can seek protection, accountability, and reparation in reference to sexual or gender-based violence (Gaggioli 2014; Ní Aolain et al. 2015; O'Rourke 2020; Otto 2026; Sellers [no date]). IHRL has also, rather significantly, recognised sexual violence as linked to issues of gender inequality, a move that remains relatively uncommon in other areas of international law (Gardam and Jarvis 2001; O'Rourke 2020). Even as IHRL has begun to pay greater attention to issues sexual and gender-based violence, it remains a framework that was built upon, and largely reflects, male experiences. Because of these origins, harms which disproportionately affect women, including sexual and gender-based violence, continue to occupy a marginal place within IHRL. As related to this, current approaches also often do too little to engage with the wider social and political conditions that allow such gendered violence to persist (Edwards 2010).

2.3.2 International Humanitarian Law

IHL applies in times in armed conflict, governing the conduct of parties in international and non-international armed conflicts, also protecting those not or no longer participating in hostilities. Within this framework, CRSV is both explicitly and implicitly prohibited. The 1949 Geneva Conventions and the 1977 Additional Protocols expressly prohibit rape and other forms of sexual violence. These acts are also subsumed under broader prohibitions on cruel treatment and torture, outrages upon personal dignity, indecent assault, enforced prostitution, and those that require respect for persons and honour (Gaggioli 2014; Desai and Mandal 2022; Scriven 2025) (UN CRSV Handbook 2020).

In international armed conflicts, the Third and Fourth Geneva Conventions (GC IV 1949), together with Additional Protocol I (1977), prohibit sexual violence, with GCIV Article 27 protecting women against attacks on their honour including rape, enforced prostitution, and indecent assault (Gardam and Jarvis 2001; Gaggioli 2014).

In non-international armed conflicts, Common Article 3 (1949) prohibits rape through general prohibitions on cruel treatment and outrages of personal dignity, while Additional Protocol II (1977) notably contains the first IHL provision that expressly prohibits rape in a way that covers all persons, not only women (Gaggioli 2014).

These treaty provisions are further complemented by customary IHL, notably Rule 93 of the ICRC Customary Law Study (2005), which establishes a general prohibition of rape and other forms of sexual violence in all armed conflicts. This is understood to protect all civilians, men and boys as well as women and girls.

Whilst these IHL provisions, and the corresponding customary rules, form an important basis for the prohibition of sexual violence in armed conflict, IHL has been criticised for the way in which it is 'gendered', implicitly presenting the male experience of conflict as the norm, thus often failing to attend adequately to women's experiences and the ways that they might differ. When women do appear, they are cast as mothers and/or victims of sexual violence in need of 'special' protection. In the sexual violence provisions in particular, protection is articulated through the language of honour, modesty, and chastity, a position many feminist scholars consider deeply problematic (Gardam and Jarvis 2001; Durham and O'Byrne 2010).

2.3.3 International Criminal Law

CRSV refers to a range of conduct prohibited under ICL, and gives rise to individual criminal liability for those who are directly or indirectly involved in its commission. It is recognised as a core international crime, and may be charged as a war crime, a crime against humanity and, in certain circumstances, as an act or constitutive element of genocide (Heinrich Böll Foundation 2024) (UN CRSV Handbook 2020). This recognition has been progressively developed through the statutes and jurisprudence of international and hybrid criminal tribunals which explicitly criminalise sexual violence, and prosecute it under more general categories of international crime (Sellers [no date]).

The constitutive instruments of these tribunals reflect the gradual expansion and increasing specification of sexual violence offences within ICL (Sellers [no date]). The Statutes of the ICTY and ICTR and SCSL progressively expanded sexual violence offences, before the Rome Statute (1998) provided the most comprehensive treaty codification of sexual violence, listing rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilisation and "any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity" as crimes against humanity (Article 7(1)(g)) and war crimes (Articles 8(2)(b)(xxii) and 8(2)(e)(vi)). Its residual category of "any other form of sexual violence of

comparable gravity”, also present and in the SCSL, SPSC, ECCC statutes, extends prosecution to unenumerated forms of sexual abuse, that do not fit neatly into these established legal categories (Rome Statute 1998; SPSC Statute 2000; ECCC Statute 2001; SCSL Statute 2002).

The protection afforded under ICL extends beyond those provisions which explicitly prohibit sexual violence. Jurisprudence of the ICTY and ICTR demonstrates sexual violence can be prosecuted under a wide range of offences – such as genocide, torture, persecution, enslavement, other inhumane acts, cruel treatment, inhuman treatment, outrages upon personal dignity, and slavery (Sellers [no date]). The ICTR’s Akayesu judgment provides a significant example of this development, as a landmark case in which rape and other forms of sexual violence were recognised as acts capable of constituting genocide when committed with genocidal intent, thereby positioning sexual violence among the gravest violations of international law (*The Prosecutor v. Jean-Paul Akayesu* 1998; MacKinnon 2008; Gill 2025). Subsequent case law of hybrid tribunals, such as the SCSL, and, more recently, the ICC similarly shows that sexual violence may be prosecuted under specific sexual offence provisions, as well as under broader crime categories including enslavement, persecution and other inhumane acts as crimes against humanity, and outrages upon personal dignity as war crimes (Oosterveld 2009; Sellers [no date]) ICC Policy Paper 2014).

All these developments have expanded the legal recognition and prosecution of CRSV within ICL, bringing greater attention to the gendered and sexual harms in armed conflict. Though this is a significant achievement, feminist critiques of ICL highlight the many fundamental issues in the system and its institutions which constrain its potential for effectively tackling such violence. The international criminal justice system tends to be centred on the individual. In practice, this means that CRSV is seen through the wrongdoing of particular defendants rather than as part of broader organisational and systemic forms of criminality. That individualized model “hides the gender dimension” of CRSV (Campbell and Mlinarević 2022, p.82), both by separating specific incidents of sexual violence from wider gendered patterns of harm and by obscuring the gendered political, military and economic structures that make such violence possible. Within this framework, women tend to appear primarily as victims, and often as victims of sexual violence in particular. ICL’s treatment of CRSV thereby reproduces the gendered hierarchies of the perpetrator by depicting victims as feminised and subordinate, and perpetrators as masculinised and powerful (Campbell and Mlinarević 2022; Jarvis and Gardam 2022). This individualised focus also tends to push other gendered harms, such as socio-economic marginalisation and lack of access to sexual and reproductive health care, out of view (Henry 2014). This, ultimately, constrains more nuanced gender

analysis and risks ICL reproducing the hierarchies that underpin the sexual violence it is purports to address.

2.4 Conclusion

This shows how CRSV has move from an invisible by-product of war to a recognised matter of international law and international peace and security. It has outlined the overlapping IHRL, IHL, and ICL frameworks through which CRSV is prohibited, interpreted, and responded to. These historical and legal developments provide the background within which the WPS agenda took shape, which further inform how the resolutions construct CRSV and those affected by it.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework and Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out the theoretical and methodological framework for this study, and the underlying epistemological and ontological positions. It introduces agency and survivor-centred approaches as key concepts in this analysis of how CRSV and the subjects affected are represented in the WPS resolutions. It further outlines the feminist critical discourse analytic approach, that takes a genealogical orientation, through which these texts are examined. It then describes the WPS corpus and the analytical process.

3.2 Epistemological and ontological position

The dissertation follows a broadly social constructionist epistemology, and also draws on the understandings of discourse and subject positions developed in feminist post-structural scholarship. Social constructionism begins from the understanding social phenomena are not self-evident facts, but are constituted through historically and socially situated practices of meaning-making (Gergen and Gergen 2007; Burr 2015). In this way, what something “is” cannot be separated from the interpretive and classificatory frameworks through which it becomes intelligible and is acted upon. Knowledge of the social world is therefore not neutral or detached, but is always mediated, situated, and partial (Haraway 1988). This constructionist perspective is complemented by feminist post-structural theory, which emphasises the ways in which meaning-making practices are bound up with relations of power. It focuses on how discourses make certain subject positions available, constitute “problems” and make some forms of action intelligible, desirable or necessary while rendering others marginal or unthinkable (Foucault 1972; Butler 2012).

Following this, the research concentrates attention on how concepts such as “conflict-related sexual violence”, “victim”, “survivor” and “survivor-centred” are constructed, linked to particular harms, and attached to specific subjects. These concepts are understood as ways of classifying and interpreting violence that are produced and maintained in particular institutional and discursive contexts, including in UNSC practice. What is considered to be CRSV, who is recognised as a victim or survivor, and what is understood as a survivor-centred response therefore varies across time and place, each construction has implications for how agency, responsibility and appropriate intervention are distributed and defined. Whilst I do focus on concepts and discourse, this is not to assert that sexual violence is purely a matter of language or discourse; it is an experience lived by

bodies, causing material harm. From a social constructionist perspective, however, institutional descriptions of CRSV and those affected by it are not just descriptions of ‘reality’, but part of the process through which that reality is constituted and governed.

3.3 Theoretical framework

This section sets out the main concepts that underpin my analysis of the WPS resolutions. It outlines how I use discourse and subject positions to trace constructions of “victims” and “survivors”, explains the approach to agency that informs this reading, and develops a survivor-centred heuristic for interpreting the later resolutions.

3.3.1 Discourse and subject positions

Building on the epistemological and ontological positions outlined above, discourse is understood to be historically and socially situated systems of meaning-production – encompassing language, narrative, texts, images and practices – through which the world is made intelligible, and through which subjects act (Fairclough and Wodak 1997; Shepherd 2008; Dunn and Neumann 2016). Discourse, in this sense, is more than just language or “a group of signs”; it is a set of practices that “systematically form the objects of which they speak” (Foucault 1972, p. 49) It functions as both a structure and a practice, as socio-cultural resources actors draw on, means by which meanings are assigned and social interactions are framed (Laffey and Weldes 2004). Following post-structural and social constructionist work (Davies and Harré 1990; Burr 2015) subject positions are understood as locations that are made available within discourse that offer particular ways of being seen and acting, with specific implications for subjectivity and experience. They are discursive ‘places’ from which subjects can speak and be spoken about, and are bound up with relations of power.

3.3.2 Agency

Agency is a central organising concept for this project’s analysis, providing an important thread that runs throughout the main issues it examines – the WPS agenda, where women’s agency and positioning are continuously debated (Kirby and Shepherd 2016; Reilly 2018; Ni Aoláin and Valji 2019); the figures of the “victim” and “survivor” whose conceptualisation is closely bound up with questions of agency (Bower 2026); and SCAs, which explicitly foreground agency as a guiding

principle (UNFPA Inter-Agency Minimum Standards for GBV in Emergencies, 2019) (Ribeiro and van der Straten Ponthoz 2017; Tearfund 2022; Redress 2024; Van Lieshout 2024). On this basis, I trace the ways in which agency is configured, circulated, and constrained over time within the WPS discourse on CRSV.

As informed by feminist theory, agency is considered a "situated, embodied, and relational" (McNay 2016, p. 41) capacity to act or intervene in the world, one always mediated by prevailing norms and relations of power. Its specific form and meaning are shaped by the social, cultural, and institutional contexts in which it is exercised. In this way, agency is unevenly and variably realised and thus exists along a continuum, rather than there being any dichotomous distinction between so-called "agentic" and "non-agentic" subjects (Schneider 1993; McNay 2016). As such, even thin or highly circumscribed forms of agency remain analytically significant, registering as action within, rather than being determined by, power and constraint. The analysis distinguishes between relatively thin procedural forms of agency – i.e., opportunities for voice, consent, choice, and participation in pre-existing institutions – and more substantive capacities to influence or shape institutions, norms, and responses. I use this distinction to read how different forms of agency are ascribed to different subjects within the resolutions.

This relational and situated understanding of agency directly implicates discourse. The capacities, roles, and forms of action available to a subject are not pre-given but are produced and constrained, by the discursive positions available to them (Bacchi 2005). Institutions are a particularly consequential sites of this construction, as authoritative spaces in which capacity and roles are allocated. From a feminist perspective, these institutions, and their discourses, are gendered; constructions of masculinity and femininity are embedded within their formal rules and everyday practices, shaping how agency is recognised and distributed (Mackay et al. 2010). In these gendered institutional settings, certain subjects are positioned as capable of acting, whilst other are objects to be acted upon. This positioning is not simply descriptive, as it structures both the spaces subjects are given to act within institutions, and the terms on which they come to understand their own capacity (Bacchi 2005). In this project, I examine how the WPS resolutions construct those affected by CRSV (along gendered lines) and define the terms on which their agency is recognised. I treat the labels and subject positions through which they are named and described, particularly “victim” and “survivor”, as key sites where agency is organised and contested; where discursive framings enable and constrain the roles, responsibilities and forms of action available to them.

Agency is not only a matter of how it is discursively represented in text, it is also lived, negotiated, and contested in everyday interactions. Whilst I recognise these embodied, situated practices of

agency are vital for understanding how those affected by CRSV relate to and rework institutional framings, this project does not analyse these practices directly. Direct engagement with survivors through testimony, interviews, or ethnographic methods would be required to examine these experiences. Such projects would likely be worthwhile, but involve distinct ethical, methodological, and practical considerations and would address different research questions from those pursued here.

3.3.3 Survivor-centred approaches in CRSV and GBV

This section outlines a survivor-centred heuristic device, developed here and applied later in my analysis of the SCA as articulated in Resolution 2467.

There has been increasing focus on SCAs in international responses to CRSV, especially in humanitarian gender-based violence programming and in CRSV policy debates (Dolan et al. 2024; Michelis et al. 2025). This approach was explicitly endorsed in the WPS agenda in Resolution 2467 (2019), as a guiding principle for all CRSV interventions and responses. SCAs are typically described as approaches which place the rights, needs, and wishes of survivors at the centre of interventions, over the institutional priorities of those who design and implement those responses (Michelis et al. 2025). In this thesis, SCAs are treated not just as technical benchmarks for good practice, but examined as discursive and normative constructs through which responses to CRSV are organised within the WPS resolutions and wider CRSV response. Outlined below is a synthesis of the key SCA principles that recur across UN and NGO guidance¹:

1. **Safety** involves ensuring survivors' physical and emotional security, and actively reducing the risk of any further harm in interactions or interventions.
2. **Confidentiality** involves careful control over the collection, storage, and sharing of survivors' information, so any disclosures remain protected unless the survivor decides otherwise.
3. **Respect and dignity** require recognising survivors as rights-holders, and believing their accounts, avoiding blame, and affirming their worth.
4. **Non-discrimination** requires all survivors receive equal and fair treatment regardless of gender, age, disability, race, class, sexuality or migration status.

¹ For example (Inter-Agency Standing Committee 2015; UNFPA 2019). See full list of sources in Appendix. Definitions/principles were synthesised across these sources.

5. **Informed consent** means that survivors' participation in any process or service should be voluntary and based on clear, understandable information about the service, associated risks and benefits, and the implications of disclosure or referral, with consent revisited as circumstances change.
6. **Agency, choice, and participation** capture expectations that survivors are treated as primary actors in decisions affecting them and are meaningfully involved, where possible, in shaping responses and services.
7. **Access to appropriate or multi-sectoral services** refers to timely access to a wide range of services, including medical, psychosocial, legal and socio-economic support, adapted to survivors' diverse needs and contexts.
8. **Accountability, justice, and remedy** refer to the processes through which perpetrators or institutions are held accountable, and through which survivors may seek reparations or other forms of redress.

This broad pattern is taken as the basis for conceptualising SCAs, with particular attention to survivors' agency, which practical guidance and feminist work often identifies this as central to the rationale and definition of "survivor-centred" approaches (Ribeiro and van der Straten Ponthoz 2017; UNFPA 2019; Tearfund 2022; Wyatt 2023; Redress 2024; Van Lieshout 2024). Policy and guidance documents often present these ideas in a simplified or procedural form, and they are frequently applied in fragmented or hierarchical ways (Clark 2021; Dolan et al. 2024; Michelis et al. 2025). Here, I am concerned with how they function together as a framework for understanding survivors' protection, agency, and support, and how this framework informs the conceptualisation of "survivor-centred" responses in CRSV and WPS discourse.

The SCA has its roots in feminist domestic violence advocacy, which treated violence against women as a political and social issue. This advocacy sought to challenge patriarchal norms by building alternative structures grounded in equality and women's self-determination, centred on the belief that survivors are the best experts of their own experience (Wies 2008; Michelis et al. 2025). Feminist and more transformative conceptions of SCAs in CRSV retain this structural focus, understanding the approach in relation to survivor-led initiatives, meaningful participation, and the restructuring of governance arrangements to give survivors greater control over how their harms are addressed (Kenney and Kelmendi 2025; Roestenburg-Morgan 2025a). However, as the approach has been increasingly institutionalised in humanitarian GBV standards, many applications seem to fall short of the original projects' more structurally transformative ambitions (Michelis et al. 2025).

In light of this, I read the key principles outlined above through more ambitious feminist and transformative understandings of SCA, using this as a heuristic device for analysing how 'survivor-centred' language and commitments are articulated in the WPS resolutions. This device informs the analysis of how the resolutions construct survivors' agency, participation, and support, and how they assign responsibility and leadership to different actors in ways that reflect or reproduce wider gendered power relations.

3.3 Methodological approach – *Feminist* critical discourse analysis

Critical discourse analysis is not only a methodological approach, but a political project concerned with examining how discourse constructs, legitimises, and reproduces relations of power, inequality, and domination. In examining these relations, it pursues broader emancipatory goals of contributing to their transformation (Fairclough and Wodak 1997; Lazar 2017). Within this tradition, feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA) develops a distinctly feminist orientation, bringing feminist theory and praxis to the centre of analysis and building on complex feminist theorisations of gender and gender relations (Lazar 2005). Its central aim is to provide nuanced insight into how gendered social orders and power arrangements are (re)produced in and through discourse, and how gendered ideologies sustain asymmetrical or hierarchical relations of power (Lazar 2017).

In this project, I specifically adopt a *feminist* CDA because I start from the premise that CRSV, and sexual violence more broadly, cannot be divorced from the gendered relations of power in which it takes place (Kelly et al. 1996; Baaz and Stern 2009; Davies and True 2015; Boesten 2017). It is enacted on and through bodies that have been sexed and gendered (Zarkov 1997; Baaz and Stern 2013; Drumond 2026) and it takes place within societies organised, at least in part, through gendered categories and hierarchies (Zarkov 1997; Ridgeway 2011; Lazar 2014; Davies and True 2015; Risman 2018). Gender, therefore, affects how sexual violence is patterned, understood, and responded to, regardless of who is the victim or perpetrator or for whatever purpose, if any, it is perceived to serve. A gendered analysis of CRSV attends to how patriarchal power relations and gendered ideologies shape patterns of targeting and the meanings attached to such violence, while avoiding a reduction of CRSV to “violence against women”.

FCDA conceptualises gender as both an ideological structure and a social practice through which people are organised into hierarchically ordered categories based on assumptions about the ‘naturalness’ of sexual difference. It examines how these seemingly self-evident gender binaries are

socially and institutionally produced and reproduced (Lazar 2017). This conceptualisation is directly relevant to my analysis of WPS resolutions, where representations of ‘women’, ‘victims’ and ‘survivors’ frequently rest on common sense assumptions about sexual difference and vulnerability, and in doing so help stabilise particular gendered hierarchies (Ni Aoláin and Valji 2019).

Following this, the dissertation adopts FCDA as the main methodological framework for investigating how the WPS resolutions discursively construct CRSV and those represented as its victims and survivors. It pays particular attention to the evolution of victim/survivor terminology, the subject positions associated with these categories, and the subsequent emergence of survivor-centred language. In doing so, it interrogates how these constructions organise gendered hierarchies of harm, agency, and responsibility, and how they shape the subject positions available to individuals and the range of institutional responses constructed as appropriate within international security governance.

Like CDA more broadly, FCDA foregrounds power, but does so from a specifically feminist standpoint, using patriarchy as a critical concept for naming hegemonic masculinist dominance and systemic gender inequalities. It also draws on Foucauldian understandings of power as diffuse and normalising, operating through disciplinary and prescriptive technologies to produce self-regulating subjects and gendered configurations of power (Lazar 2017). These insights inform how I read WPS texts as contributing to wider patriarchal and normalising relations of power that shape the discursive construction of CRSV, produce particular victim/survivor subjectivities, and encourage self-regulating, gendered forms of conduct, whilst also attend to the limited ways in which they might appropriate and rework feminist ideas.

FCDA draws on feminist and queer theorisations of ‘doing’ gender. This means treating gender not as a fixed attribute but as something iteratively accomplished through linguistic and other semiotic practices within specific contexts (Lazar 2014; Lazar 2017). These perspectives inform my analysis of how WPS resolutions construct victims and survivors of CRSV, as well as related identities, and how these constructions reproduce, or even challenge, gendered hierarchies and ideologies within international security governance.

Whilst the analysis is grounded in FCDA (and CDA) commitments to discourse and language as social practices, to the critique of power and ideology, and to a politically engaged stance (Lazar), it is also informed by feminist post-structural work. Feminist post-structural theories inform my understandings of discourse and subject positions, and also underpin the genealogical interest in the contingent emergence and re articulation of categories such as CRSV, ‘victim’, ‘survivor’ and ‘survivor centred’. Nevertheless, I draw primarily on FCDA rather than feminist post-structural

analysis, as it offers a clear and systematic framework for examining how historically and socially situated texts produce meaning, construct gendered power relations, and shape subject positions (Lazar 2017).

In line with FCDA's politically engaged orientation (Lazar 2005; Lazar 2017), these theoretical resources are mobilised not as an end in themselves, but to support efforts to challenge and transform the oppressive gendered hierarchies – and the UN practices that reproduce them – that the analysis brings into view.

I, therefore, approach WPS resolutions as institutional sites in which gendered power relations are articulated, normalised, and at times contested through the construction of particular “victim” and “survivor” subject positions. FCDA enables in-depth examination of how survivor-centred rhetoric is incorporated within, and potentially constrained by, existing security, legal, and technocratic logics. FCDA is adopted here both as an analytical approach, and a particular political and epistemological positioning (Lazar 2005; Shepherd 2008; Lazar 2017).

3.4.1 A genealogical orientation

To strengthen the FCDA framework outlined above, the study adopts a genealogical orientation to explore how CRSV and those represented as its victims and survivors are constructed over time within the WPS agenda. As detailed by Anaïs (2013), genealogy is “a methodological process concerned with telling the story of how a set of discursive and non-discursive practices come into being and interact to form a set of political, economic, moral, cultural, and social institutions which define the limits of acceptable speaking, knowing, and acting” (p. 125). As a “history of the present” (Garland 2014), genealogy traces the ways in which contemporary ideas and practices arise from specific historical conditions and power relations. It follows the processes through which some forms of knowledge become understood as ‘true’ or authoritative, and others are excluded or delegitimised (Bevir 2008; Orgad 2009). Genealogical analysis, emphasising discontinuities and ruptures, reveals the contingency of what appears given. It seeks to unsettle naturalised assumptions, but also to open space for alternative forms of thought and practice (Bonditti et al. 2014).

Anais (2013) argues that genealogy and CDA are complementary, as genealogy extends CDA's historical depth, while CDA provides the analytic “tools” genealogy otherwise lacks. This argument extends to FCDA in this thesis, where genealogy deepens the historical understandings of CRSV,

victim, survivor and survivor-centredness, while FCDA's feminist commitments specifically sharpen the focus on gendered power relations (Lazar 2017).

The thesis follows this orientation through a selective, text-focused reconstruction of how CRSV is constituted as a specific object of concern, how victim and survivor categories are constructed and with what effects, how the survivor-centred approach emerges, and how WPS resolutions as a whole imagine and prescribe responses to those positioned as affected by CRSV. Following Anaïs (2013), the WPS resolutions from 1325 to 2493 are treated as an archive, rather than a unified or continuous narrative. This means treating them as a set of discourses grouped together in distinct figures and composed in accordance with multiple relations, assembled, revised, and extended by the Council over time. The genealogical approach traces how separate, sometimes contingent developments in WPS discourse come together to constitute CRSV as an object of concern. It attends to moments where existing framings take on new significance, are redeployed toward different ends, or are partially disrupted. There is no neat beginning-middle-end narrative. Instead, CRSV, the subjects affected, and the responses prioritised all emerge, unevenly and discontinuously (Anaïs 2013; Bonditti et al. 2014).

This is not, however, an exhaustive genealogy of CRSV across all international legal, humanitarian, and activist fields, nor a full Foucauldian genealogy in its own right. The genealogical approach is used to examine how WPS discourse surrounding CRSV and those affected shapes the kinds of responses framed as appropriate or effective. It also considers how these framings might travel into practice, prioritising certain harms, experiences, and needs while marginalising others. The aim is not to provide a comprehensive diplomatic or institutional history of the WPS agenda, but to offer a "gray, meticulous, and patiently documentary" (Foucault 1977, p.139; Bonditti et al. 2014) reconstruction of WPS discourse, attentive to how historically emergent discourses produce and naturalise gendered power relations, particularly around the construction of victim and survivor and the forms of protection or response rendered legitimate. Genealogy is used here as a critical, historicising lens, to strengthen and deepen the FCDA approach.

3.4.2 Discourse historical analysis – providing the “tools”

The previous subsection outlined the genealogical approach through which this study traces the constructions of those affected by CRSV across the WPS resolutions, over time. The discourse-historical approach (DHA), following Reisigl and Wodak (2009), provides the analytical

tools through which genealogical concerns are operationalised in systematic close readings of the WPS resolutions. They facilitate the examination of how CRSV, victim/survivor subject positions, and notions of ‘appropriate’ responses are discursively articulated and stabilised within the institutional language of the agenda. In this sense, DHA allows the genealogy to go beyond shifts in broader ideas or concepts, also attending to the textual practices through which meanings are produced and rendered intelligible (Anaïs 2013).

This analysis applies DHA tools selectively, focusing specifically on two of the discursive strategies outlined by Reisigl and Wodak (2009), namely nomination and predication. Nomination focuses on how social actors, objects, phenomena, and actions are named and represented linguistically, while predication concerns the characteristics, attributes, and evaluative meanings attached to them. Together, these strategies provide a basis for examining how subjects are discursively constituted and positioned.

Given the primary focus of my analysis is on how those affected by CRSV are constructed across the WPS resolutions, I pay particular attention to how these groups are labelled – as "women and girls", "women and children", as "victims" or "survivors" – and to the different subject positions made available to these groups over time. These constructions are analysed relationally, alongside the representations of other actors and entities, including perpetrators, states, parties to conflict, UN bodies, and civil society organisations, since these figures shape the distribution of agency, responsibility, authority, and the range of responses constructed as appropriate within the WPS framework.

Through nomination analysis is therefore used to trace how the resolutions refer to those affected by CRSV, as well how broader categories of responsibility and intervention are constituted. Analysis of predication strategies, in turn, examines the qualities, capacities, and vulnerabilities attached to these figures, as well as to how institutional actors are characterised in terms of their roles and responsibilities. Together, these strategies, applied through systematic close readings of the WPS resolutions, enable the analysis to connect micro-level linguistic choices with broader historical shifts in how CRSV and those affected by it are constructed across the agenda (Reisigl 2017).

3.5 Textual corpus – the Women, Peace, and Security resolutions

The primary focus of the study are the UNSC Resolutions, taken to constitute the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda (Davies and True 2019b) – Resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888

(2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), 2242 (2015), 2467 (2019) and 2493 (2019).

Resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888, and 2467 receive particular attention in the analysis. Resolution 1325, as the inaugural resolution, establishes the framings, discourses, and subject positions that all subsequent resolutions reproduce, reconfigure, transform or unsettle. The remaining three resolutions were selected because they directly focus on CRSV and mark a key terminological shift – Resolution 1820 introduces victim terminology; Resolution 1888 introduces survivor terminology; and Resolution 2467 marks the formal endorsement of the SCA. Taken together, these resolutions function as an important arena through which the Security Council, as an important site of institutional power, articulates and consolidates its understandings of CRSV and of those positioned as affected by it (Shepherd 2008; Ní Aoláin et al. 2015).

Grounded in feminist critical discourse analysis and informed by a genealogical orientation, this study undertakes a politically committed, context-sensitive analysis of WPS discourse (Anaïs 2013; Lazar 2014). I focus my analysis on a bounded corpus of UN Security Council WPS resolutions, treated here as a central international normative and policy framework through which CRSV is articulated and governed in conflict and post-conflict settings (Davies and True 2019b). As a relatively small and coherent set of authoritative texts, read in their entirety in their official English versions, this corpus provides a focused site through which to examine how CRSV, victim and survivor subjectivities, and “survivor-centred” responses are constituted and (re)articulated over time within a powerful international security institution.

This bounded corpus reflects deliberate methodological choices that shape the scope and limits of the analysis. GA and Human Rights Council resolutions remain outside the scope of this study, as do other UN policy documents beyond the WPS agenda. The analysis does not provide in-depth examination of victim/survivor testimony, or of civil society and NGO advocacy materials. Whilst these texts form an important part of the wider discursive field surrounding CRSV, in that they shape Security Council constructions and are also shaped by them in turn, I do not attend to them here. The thesis is instead concerned with how the Council, as an authoritative peace and security institution, constructs CRSV, victim/survivor subject positions, and articulates responses to these issues, rather than with mapping all possible discourses related to CRSV, or representing survivors’ own accounts of violence and response.

3.6 Analytical process

Reading and analysis of the WPS resolutions was an iterative and interpretative process. After familiarising myself with literature on CRSV, the WPS agenda and SCAs, I undertook close readings of all the resolutions, informed by this scholarship and the feminist, critical and genealogical commitments outlined in the preceding section. My focus was on how those who have experienced CRSV are represented across the resolutions, paying particular attention to victim/survivor labels, the subject positions attached to these labels and the ways responses to CRSV are imagined. These concerns, which were later formalised as my research questions, shaped my engagement with the texts. Through iterative engagement with literature and resolutions, I developed analytic threads around representation, victim/survivor labelling, survivor-centred principles, responses and allocations of responsibility, and agency which structured my coding process.

These threads were developed into a flexible coding framework organised around several broad families of codes, including subjectivities (for example women, “women and girls”, victim/survivor terminology, other affected groups and perpetrators), elements of the survivor centred approach, different forms of response, roles and responsibilities, and framings of CRSV. This developed with some codes becoming more significant than others in the final analysis; yet this still provided the initial structure through which I organised and interpreted the resolutions. The framework was imported into MAXQDA and all WPS resolutions, were systematically coded, enabling exploration of repeating, varying, or challenging patterns across the corpus. Iterative discourse analysis approaches often emphasise the use of systematic procedures to support reflexive, rigorous engagement with the material (Srivastava and Hopwood 2009; Locke et al. 2022)

From the coded material, I selected particular excerpts for more detailed analysis using strategies from DHA. The selected excerpts were organised into an Excel table, focusing on how actors are named and categorised (nomination) and how attributes, actions and evaluations are attached to them (predication), in order to trace how particular subject positions and distributions of agency are constructed across the resolutions. This shift from broad coding to a closer discourse-analytic reading of the same material mirrors other FCDA approaches, which start with topical coding before returning to the data for a deeper understanding of how language constructs meaning (Molloy et al. 2026).

Alongside this, I wrote analytic memos in MAXQDA on each resolution to trace shifts in my interpretations. Together, these practices of close reading, coding, in-depth DHA analysis and iterative memo-writing operationalised the methodological commitments set out in the preceding section. By combining FCDA with a genealogical orientation, the analysis traced both continuities and shifts over time in the construction of victim/survivor subject positions, imagined responses and survivor-centred rhetoric across the resolutions.

Throughout the analysis and write-up, I moved between the resolutions and relevant scholarship, drawing on historical, social, and feminist and critical literature to inform my methodological decisions and refine my interpretations.

Chapter 4: Genealogy of CRSV and “Those Affected” in the WPS Resolutions

4.1 Introduction

This chapter applies the genealogically oriented FCDA outlined above, to trace how CRSV and those affected by it are constructed across the WPS resolutions, from Resolution 1325 (2000) to 2493

(2019). It examines each resolution, focusing on how CRSV is constructed, how those affected are named and positioned, as well as which responses are positioned as “appropriate”, and who holds responsibilities for their implementation. This chapter focuses particularly on Resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888, and 2467; Resolution 1325 because it inaugurated the WPS agenda, and the latter three because they mark important terminological shifts. Resolution 1820 introduces the term “victim”, Resolution 1888 introduces the “survivor”, and Resolution 2467 represents the first formal endorsement of the “survivor-centered approach”. Resolutions 1960, 2106, 2122 and 2242 are treated together in a single section, as none introduces a new terminological or discursive shift in the construction of CRSV or those affected by it. Each consolidates and extends the constructions and responses established in the preceding resolutions. This analysis traces an uneven trajectory in the WPS agenda’s construction of CRSV, “victims”, and “survivors”, showing how changing discourses have expanded some forms of recognition and response while leaving other possibilities for agency constrained.

4.2 Resolution 1325 – Setting the scene

As discussed in Chapter 2, by the time Resolution 1325 was adopted CRSV was already recognised within UN gender policy and international law as a serious, though contested, focus of international attention (Alison 2007; Crawford 2017; Engle 2020).

Along with these developments in UN gender policy and international law, the Security Council has begun to reassess its institutional goals and capabilities. In this context, it started to move beyond a sole focus on states, paying greater attention to human populations across borders (Basu 2012). This was reflected in the Council’s thematic engagement with the protection of civilians and with children and armed conflict between 1998-99, where violence against civilians was reframed as a threat to international peace and security rather than only a humanitarian concern (Hudson 2010). Resolution 1261 (1999) on children and armed conflict, called for “special measures” (OP 10) to protect girls from rape and sexual abuse, while Resolution 1265 (1999) on the protection of civilians, recognises the “special needs” (OP 10) of women and children in relation to attacks on civilians. Resolution 1325 builds on this emerging thematic framework but, for the first time, centres women as a distinct focus of the peace and security agenda (Chinkin 2019). It extends beyond women’s protection from harm to include women’s participation and the integration of a “gender perspective” In this context, sexual violence is addressed as one among several harms affecting women and girls in armed conflict, rather than as a standalone issue (Basu 2012; Hudson 2017).

Resolution 1325 was unanimously adopted in October 2000 following the first open debate on Women, Peace and Security (True and Wiener 2019; Iileka and Imene-Chanduru 2020). The drafting process was unusually civil society driven, with the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, drawing on the Beijing Platform for Action, producing the initial substantive draft. However, the final text reflects important concessions, retaining broadly normative language while limiting the more detailed and accountable operational provisions envisaged by civil society. This resolution laid the groundwork for how women's participation and protection, as well as from CRSV, were subsequently articulated within later WPS resolutions (Anderlini et al. 2019; Hunt and Nderitu 2019).

4.2.1 How CRSV is constructed

In Resolution 1325, CRSV is not articulated as a stand-alone security issue, but is situated within a broader framework of “gender-based violence” and “sexual and other violence” against “women and girls”. Its explicit engagement with sexual and gender-based violence is limited to two operative paragraphs, OP 10 and OP 11.

OP 10:

“Calls on all parties to armed conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, and all other forms of violence in situations of armed conflict;”

Here, sexual violence in situations of armed conflict is subsumed within the broader category of “gender-based violence” and “all other forms of violence in situations of armed conflict” (OP 10). This suggests that women and girls are subject to multiple kinds of harm beyond rape and sexual abuse, which in principle opens space for recognising a wider range of gendered harms. Positioning sexual violence as a form of “gender-based violence” also ties it to broader issues of gender inequality, insofar as gender-based violence is typically understood as violence rooted in and reinforcing unequal gendered power relations (Campbell et al. 2022). This framing echoes feminist and NGO advocacy in the 1990s, which sought recognition of a wide range of harms against women in conflict and often understood these harms as arising from unequal gendered power relations (Alison 2007; Crawford 2017; Bellou 2025a).

Nevertheless, the wording of OP 10 can be read as privileging sexual violence, insofar as “rape and other forms of sexual abuse” are the only explicitly named harms and thus come to stand as paradigmatic instances of gender-based violence in this context. This can be problematic, as when “gender-based violence” is operationalised primarily through a narrow conception of sexual violence,

other forms of gendered harm – such as evictions from home or work, inadequate access to health and education services, exclusion and structural disadvantage – tend to recede into the background (Dolan 2014b; Henry 2014; Kenney and Kelmendi 2025; Schredl et al. 2025). In this way, the term’s usage here, arguably, narrows the meaning of gender-based violence to sexual violation and reinforces a tendency to read women’s harm in conflict through a sexualised lens. This foreshadows later Security Council practice, in which sexual violence increasingly becomes the key harm through which “gender-based violence” in armed conflict is understood and governed, eclipsing attention to other gendered harms and structural inequality (Kirby and Shepherd 2016; Houge and Lohne 2017).

More broadly, 1325 embeds sexual and other violence against women and girls within a protection-focused frame that foregrounds women’s human rights (PP 6; PP 9; OP 8(c)). The resolution repeatedly links protection in armed conflict to “the rights of women and girls” (PP 6) and to “the human rights of women and children” (PP 9), situating references to sexual violence within a resolution generally concerned with protecting and respecting women’s human rights. OP 9 presents this protection and human rights framework in a distinctly legal register by calling upon all parties to armed conflict to “respect fully international law applicable to the rights and protection of women and girls”, specifically listing a number of international humanitarian and human rights treaties that must be respected. These references to IHL and IHRL frame sexual violence in armed conflict as a violation of women’s rights that falls within an existing web of international legal norms and duties. Whilst the human rights framing can still be critiqued for individualising harm, as elaborated in Chapter 2’s discussion of IHRL and leaving many harmful social structures intact, it does not detach sexual violence from broader questions of gender inequality to quite the same extent as more explicitly security-centred framings, which emerge in subsequent resolutions (Edwards 2010; Crawford 2013).

This legal framing is developed further through the resolution’s engagement with international criminal law. OP 9 finishes by invoking the Rome Statute, while OP 11 emphasises states’ responsibility to “prosecute...genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes, including those relating to sexual and other violence against women and girls” and stresses the exclusion of such crimes from amnesties. By situating sexual violence within the most serious international crimes, the resolution adds an international criminal law dimension to its existing human rights framing. In doing so, it explicitly constructs CRSV as a grave violation of international law across multiple legal frameworks. This human rights-based legal framing of CRSV in 1325 emerges from the preceding decade of feminist human rights campaigning and legal developments around sexual violence in

armed conflict (Crawford 2017; Engle 2020). These developments helped to make such language and legal categories available and authoritative for the Council to draw on.

4.2.2 Those affected – introducing “women and girls”

In Resolution 1325, those most affected by sexual violence are primarily constructed as “women and girls”, implicitly linked to civilian status. This strongly feminises the image of the CRSV victim. Although the resolution does not consistently use ‘victim’ terminology, it repeatedly constructs women and girls as those against whom sexual violence is committed and as subjects requiring protection and prosecution, thus, in line with other feminist analyses of the WPS agenda I use “victim” to attend to this construction (Shepherd 2016; Ni Aoláin and Valji 2019; Turner and Swaine 2023).

In OPs 10 and 11, “women and girls” appear as the only group explicitly named as affected by sexual and gender-based violence. OP 10 calls for protection from “gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse”, locating women in the object position – the grammatical role of those being acted upon – and presenting them as targets of harm. The requirement for “special measures” presupposes they face distinct and heightened risks not adequately addressed by ordinary wartime protections. OP 11 reinforces this construction, referring to “sexual and other violence against women and girls” placing them in the object position inside the prepositional phrase “against women and girls”. Here, “women and girls” are positioned primarily as targets of violence constituting the most serious internationally recognised crimes, on whose behalf “States” should pursue prosecution and punishment. These discursive representations depict “women and girls” as paradigmatic victims of CRSV and thus feminise the figure of the victim, narrowing who can readily be recognised as experiencing this kind of harm. This renders male, non-binary, and other marginalised subjects (such as LGBTQI individuals) less visible and thinkable (Dolan 2014b; Jayakumar 2022).

They also serve to represent femininity as a site of particular vulnerability and victimisation, through positioning “women and girls” as those requiring protection and redress from “all parties to armed conflict”, “States” and legal actors typically theorised as masculine. This reproduces the gendered “myth of protection”, as discussed by Åse (2019), positioning masculinised institutions as rational protectors, while women and other feminised subjects feature only as vulnerable objects of protection or beneficiaries of prosecution. In this sense “women and girls” affected by CRSV are afforded little agency, and are not recognised as active political subjects with any knowledge or authority in relation to CRSV.

Elsewhere in the resolution, however, women are not confined to a vulnerable or victimised position. Many provisions (for example PP 5; OPs 1-4, 8(b) and 15) nominate “women” as capable political actors whose participation and involvement are presented as important for the “maintenance and promotion of peace and security”. This more agentic subject position is notably absent from the CRSV provisions, where, as discussed, women and girls are predominantly constituted as passive, vulnerable, and in need of protection.

The result is a discursive bifurcation in which “woman-as-victim” and “woman-as-peace-actor” emerge as mutually exclusive subject positions; where women are presented as agentic subjects they are not presented as victims of sexual violence, and where they are presented as victims they are not presented as political actors. This delimits the intelligibility of women who have experienced sexual violence in armed conflict as being political actors and agentic subjects in defining and responding to their own harm. The early split between victim and peace-actor subject positions structures a tension between victimisation and agency that later WPS and CRSV resolutions reproduce and, marginally, rework. It also reinforces the “false dichotomy between women's victimization and women's agency” (Schneider 1993 p. 387; see also Kreft and Schulz 2022).

4.2.3 Responses and responsibility

In 1325, responses to conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence are largely constructed through protectionist and legal frameworks. OP 10 stresses protective measures, calling on “all parties to armed conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse”, but offers little detail on what such “special measures” should entail, leaving them under-specified. OP 11 emphasises the responsibility of “all States” to “end impunity and prosecute those responsible” for crimes involving sexual violence, placing the emphasis on state-led criminal law responses to sexual violence.

Taken together, these provisions place responses to sexual and gender-based violence mainly within state-centred accountability and legal frameworks, which later resolutions such as 1820 continue to develop. The resolution places responsibility for responding to CRSV on armed actors and states. In OPs 10 and 11, these collective actors occupy the subject position and are assigned verbs of obligation and action (“end impunity”, “prosecute”, “take special measures”), while “women and girls” appear mainly as objects of protection or as those on whose behalf prosecution should be pursued.

This allocation of responsibility seems to attend to the fact that states and armed groups often hold the power and resources to prevent or respond to sexual violence (Kirby and Shepherd 2016) and are frequently implicated as perpetrators or enablers (Nordås and Cohen 2021). It is also likely an artefact of the Security Council resolution format, in that resolutions are typically drafted as instruments which address and place obligations on its own “Member States”, and less so other collective actors, rather than imposing obligations directly on individuals (Security Council Report 2008).

From a discursive perspective, however, this allocation of responsibility not only identifies states and parties to armed conflict as those who must act, but positions them as best placed to act in response to CRSV. In this way the resolution assumes these actors are the most capable, and most appropriate, agents to manage sexual violence, thus foregrounding their agency. In doing so, it leaves little room for those affected by CRSV to appear as agents in their own right, capable of shaping responses to their harm.

4.3 Resolutions 1820

Resolution 1820 (2008) was adopted unanimously in June 2008, was the first WPS resolution to explicitly recognise sexual violence in armed conflict as a matter of international peace and security (NGO Working Group on Women Peace and Security 2008; United States Department of State. 2009; Crawford 2017). It was co-sponsored by 10 other Council Members, as well as 32 other UN states, signalling a growing political commitment to address CRSV within the WPS agenda. Despite this unanimous adoption, and seemingly wide endorsement, some states questioned whether such issues fell within the Council's mandate, expressing unease about stretching its remit too far beyond traditional interstate threats (Crawford 2017; Dersnah 2019). In this sense, the articulation of CRSV as a matter of international peace and security was a normatively significant, but contested, step.

4.3.2 How CRSV is constructed

Resolution 1820 (2008) builds on 1325's protection (in 1820, PP 3, PP 13, OP 9, OP 10) and legal framings (in 1820, PP 9, PP 12, OP 4) but shifts significantly away from 1325's ‘gender-based violence’ and human rights script. Human rights language does not completely disappear from the resolution, it persists in a general form reiterating State's obligations under human rights law (PPs 5 and 9), but is not specifically linked to sexual violence. The focus instead is on CRSV as a strategic instrument of warfare and that can obstruct international peace and security. OP 1:

“Stresses that sexual violence, when used or commissioned as a tactic of war in order to deliberately target civilians or as a part of a widespread or systematic attack against civilian populations, can significantly exacerbate situations of armed conflict and may impede the restoration of international peace and security, affirms in this regard that effective steps to prevent and respond to such acts of sexual violence can significantly contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security...”

In this paragraph, sexual violence is described as a “tactic of war” and presented as deliberate, strategic and pervasive violence against civilians (“deliberately target[s]”, “widespread and systematic”). By combining the “tactic of war” phrase with UN Charter’s (1945) Chapter VII² language on “threat[s] to peace” and measures “to maintain or restore international peace and security”, the Council embeds sexual violence in its existing security lexicon. In doing so, it positions CRSV as a key security concern, taking up a problem that advocacy and reporting had already made more legible to the Council through its understanding of “rape as a weapon of war”.

PP 6 reinforces this security framing by noting that “women and girls” are particularly targeted by sexual violence used as a “tactic of war” “to humiliate, dominate, instil fear in, disperse and/or forcibly relocate” civilian members of communities or ethnic groups. This language resonates with reports of the armed conflict in DRC which, at the time, were documenting frequent and systematic rape by armed forces, being used for military objectives to control territories, and terrorise communities (Human Rights Watch 2002).

Together, these provisions frame CRSV as a deliberate strategy used by armed groups to achieve certain military or political objectives; thus, it locates the cause of such violence as within the dynamics of armed conflict itself, or within the intentions of specific armed actors. This draws an “artificial line between [sexual] violence perpetrated in war and outside war” (Prügl 2019, n.p) and obscures the wider patriarchal conditions which make such violence possible. Furthermore, within this frame, the significance of sexual violence lies in its capacity to destabilise communities and obstruct international peace and security at the meso- and macro-levels, rather than in its capacity to cause individual (and collective) harm at the micro-level. In this way, the embodied experiences of those affected, as well as their safety and security, are subordinated to the security of the state and the wider stability of the international community. Consequently, recognition and response become

² Article 39

contingent upon the extent to which such violence can be articulated as a matter of peace and security (Meger 2012; Meger 2016a).

4.3.3 Those affected – introducing the “victim”

Similarly to Resolution 1325, Resolution 1820 continues a pattern of naming those affected by CRSV as “women and girls”, alongside “women and children” and “civilians”, now within a security-centred “tactic of war” frame. This serves to feminise the CRSV victim and to construct femininity as a particular site of vulnerability and (sexual) victimisation. “Women and girls” are portrayed as especially vulnerable to sexual harm (“particularly targeted”, “under imminent threat”) and as passive recipients of protection and assistance – parties to armed conflict are instructed to “protect...from all forms of sexual violence” or to “evacuat[e]” to safety, while UN bodies are tasked with “providing protection” and “sustainable assistance”. In this way, they are largely objects of the actions of others, rather than actors or agents in their own right.

Resolution 1820 makes explicit the feminised CRSV “victim” that Resolution 1325 only implied, by directly introducing “victim” terminology. In OP 4 the Council:

“calls upon Member States...to ensure that all victims of sexual violence, particularly women and girls, have equal protection under the law and equal access to justice”

Whilst this appears to extend protection to “all victims of sexual violence”, the immediate specification of “particularly women and girls” subtly feminises the victim subject position, again re-entrenching “women and girls” as the paradigmatic figures of CRSV victimhood. The references to “equal protection under the law” and “equal access to justice” situate feminised victims within a legal framework, positioning them as rights-holding subjects whose harm should, in theory, activate state obligations. This seems to open up a modestly more agentic subject position, insofar as victims are imagined as capable of making claims upon the state rather than merely receiving its protection (Holder and Dearing 2024). However, this sense of agency remains largely unexplored in this text. Action and obligation are consistently attributed to “Member States”, while “victims” are constructed primarily as objects of state protection and justice, rather than as actors in their own right. The use of “victim” in relation to “women and girls” imports not only legal, but also the social connotations attached to victimhood, including associations with passivity, fragility, and dependence that can occlude agency (Raghavan 2020; Kreft and Schulz 2022). Its usage in reference to “women and girls” risks tethering womanhood, or femininity, more generally to a stigmatised and dependent victim identity.

OP 13 adds a service-provision dimension to this construction, urging “Member States, United Nations entities and financial institutions” to strengthen “judicial and health systems” and “local civil society networks in order to provide sustainable assistance to victims of sexual violence in armed conflict and post-conflict situations”. This constructs the “victim” as a subject requiring continued support, primarily a recipient or beneficiary of interventions designed, managed, and delivered by others. They are not articulated as potential actors or architects who could, themselves, shape or rework these interventions. Alongside OP 4, this provision (re)produces a passive and dependent victim subject and reinforces the notion that victims possess little agency (Kreft and Schulz 2022). As a result, the “victim” is not readily intelligible as a political actor capable of addressing their own harm, thereby narrowing the space in which victims can participate in shaping legal, policy and intervention responses.

However, Resolution 1820 does not only construct women as victims, it also contains several references to “women”, and to “women’s organisations”, as participants in peacebuilding, conflict prevention, and post-conflict processes. This seemingly offers a more agentic subject position. PP 11 “reaffirm[s] the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peacebuilding” and “stress[es] the importance of their equal participation and full involvement” in the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. This phrasing echoes the participation provisions of Resolution 1325 and nominates women as political actors whose participation is both necessary and valuable. Even so, these provisions generally position “women” and “women’s organisations” as groups to be consulted within response structures controlled by UN actors and states. Paragraphs that “request” the Secretary-General to encourage dialogue while “taking into account...the views expressed by women of affected local communities”, or to consult “women and women-led organizations as appropriate”, keep formal authority within international institutions and position women as those who may be consulted “where appropriate” and “as appropriate”; their participation is mitigated, conditional, and dependent on others.

Participation and victimisation are also typically located in different figures. Political agency is attached to more abstract or institutionalised figures such as “women”, “women’s organisations” or “women peacekeepers”, while those explicitly identified as affected by or victimised through CRSV are largely passive recipients of protection and assistance. Even where we see participation alongside harm or victimisation, the resolution does not envisage a single subject who is at once a victim of sexual violence and a recognised political actor. For example, PP 11 discusses the Council’s “deep concern” about obstacles to women’s participation “as a result of violence, intimidation and discrimination, which erode women’s capacity and legitimacy to participate in post-conflict public

life”. “Women” are constructed as both harmed subjects and as political subjects, but harm is presented as what prevents them from occupying the peace-actor position. Resolution 1820 therefore complicates, but does not undo, the dichotomy between woman-as-victim and woman-as-peace-actor established in 1325. This limits the scope for victims to be imagined as political subjects, capable of responding to their own harm

These tensions reflect, on the one hand, civil society advocates’ efforts to advance recognition of conflict-related sexual violence alongside women’s agency and participation, and, on the other, a Security Council whose peace and security mandate favours a securitised framing of sexual violence as a weapon and tactic of war (Crawford 2017). Many feminist advocates were wary about the creation of a separate sexual violence resolution in this period. They questioned the need for another resolution when Resolution 1325 was still largely unimplemented, and feared a strong protection focus would dilute the agenda’s emphasis on women’s participation and conflict prevention. From this perspective, the resolution’s focus on sexual violence as a “tactic of war”, on women’s victimisation, and on criminal accountability risks sidelining some of the broader, more transformative aims of Resolution 1325. Sustained civil society lobbying did, however, ensure participation and prevention language still feature in the text, thus these aims are not entirely lost (Crawford 2017; Dersnah 2019; Engle 2020).

4.3.4 Responses and responsibility

Resolution 1820 imagines responses to CRSV primarily through legal and protection measures, but also gives limited attention to services and monitoring. OP 4 recognises rape and other forms of sexual violence as conduct that “can constitute a war crime, a crime against humanity, or a constitutive act with respect to genocide”, stresses the exclusion of sexual violence crimes from amnesty provisions, and calls on Member States to prosecute “persons responsible”, linking the imperative to end impunity to “a comprehensive approach to seeking sustainable peace, justice, truth and national reconciliation”. This foregrounds criminal accountability as the appropriate response to CRSV and treats it as a necessary condition for peace and security. In this framing, states become the main bearers of legal responsibility, while victims appear largely as rights-holders to whom “equal protection under the law and equal access to justice” must be delivered.

Here, Resolution 1820 reinforces a normative expectation that formal legal accountability is the appropriate pathway to redress, individualising responsibility around “persons responsible” rather

than foregrounding the structural and collective dimensions of gendered violence. Elevating criminal justice as a central response to CRSV does not necessarily reflect victims' and survivors' diverse understandings of justice, and can marginalise the wider spectrum of ways in which those who have experienced CRSV might seek recognition, repair, or social transformation (Houge and Lohne 2017; Hester et al. 2025).

OP 3 demands that “all parties to armed conflict” take “appropriate measures to protect civilians, including women and girls”, from sexual violence, listing such measures as “enforcing military disciplinary measures” and “command responsibility”, “training troops on the categorical prohibition of...sexual violence”, “vetting armed and security forces”, “debunking myths” and “evacuate[ing]... women and children under imminent threat of sexual violence to safety”. This constructs response to CRSV predominantly as a technocratic project of military reform, framing sexual violence as a problem to be managed through professional standards and operational procedures within armed forces. Parties to armed conflict are cast as the main subjects of response; both as potential perpetrators to be regulated and as the actors through whom protection is organised. In contrast, civilians, “women and girls”, and “women and children” are positioned as objects of these measures, whose safety is dependent on the compliance of armed actors.

This serves to recentre militaries and militarised understandings of security, and reinforces hierarchies in which armed actors are cast as active protectors, while women appear as passive, feminised subjects in need of protection. Not only does this reinforce gender hierarchies which sustain or enable CRSV, but also sidelines efforts to transform the wider patriarchal structures, political economies, and cultural narratives that sustain gendered violence. Focusing on technocratic fixes to military practice, whilst failing to address the underlying patriarchal structures of the military, risks turning the agenda into a project of “war made safe for women” (Weiss 2011), displacing more transformative efforts to end war and militarised violence (Kapur and Rees 2019).

Resolution 1820 also goes beyond legal and military responses, incorporating service provision, and data and monitoring measure. OP 13 calls for support to “judicial and health systems” and to “local civil society networks...to provide sustainable assistance to victims of sexual violence in armed conflict and post-conflict situations”. It also mandates enhanced data collection, requesting a Secretary-General report on prevalence, trends, strategies for minimising risk, and parties' actions. These provisions begin to sketch an institutional architecture of services and monitoring, but privilege criminal law, medical responses, and the technocratic governance of CRSV through data and indicators. It says little about how those affected by sexual violence might influence what is measured or how remedies are conceived or implemented.

Across the resolution, responsibility for responding to CRSV is allocated primarily to parties to armed conflict, Member States, and different UN bodies. Whilst women's and local civil society organisations are acknowledged as partners in peace processes and CRSV response, they are not positioned as having primary responsibility or significant decision-making power. In this way, agency is concentrated in states, armed actors and UN bodies, while "women and girls" and "victims" affected by sexual violence are largely framed as recipients of protection, support, and services. Again, there is no sense they could be important actors in defining or shaping how CRSV should be addressed.

4.4 Resolution 1888

Resolution 1888, adopted unanimously in 2009, expanded on Resolution 1820, through creating dedicated institutional mechanisms to strengthen its implementation and enforcement. It is widely understood to be the "next step" in responding to persistent sexual violence, particularly in contexts such as the DRC, where earlier condemnation had failed to prevent continued abuses. (NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security 2009; Goetz 2010).

4.4.1 How CRSV is constructed

Resolution 1888 reaffirms the construction of CRSV established in 1820. It treats conflict-related sexual violence as a serious violation of international law that "can constitute a war crime, a crime against humanity or a constitutive act with respect to genocide", for which "all States [must] end impunity...[and] prosecute those responsible", and it reaffirms CRSV as "a tactic of war" that "can significantly exacerbate situations of armed conflict and may impede the restoration of international peace and security".

The resolution further extends this construction by positioning CRSV as a problem requiring dedicated institutional architecture and specialised expertise within the UN system. The appointment of a "Special Representative" on sexual violence in armed conflict (OP 4) and the inclusion of "specific provisions" and "women's protection advisers" in peacekeeping mandates (OP 12) present CRSV as an issue that can be anticipated, planned for and managed through institutional practice. In giving CRSV its own dedicated institutional architecture, the resolution effectively elevates sexual violence above other gendered harms or concerns. Whilst other issues, such as women's participation, are recognised in the resolution they are not backed by equivalent structures or mandate provisions. As a result, CRSV starts to emerge as the defining issue of the WPS agenda, narrowing the scope for

more transformative work on women's participation, structural inequality and other forms of gendered violence that do not attract the same institutional focus.

4.4.2 Those affected – Introducing the “survivor”

Resolution 1888, also, largely reproduces 1820's construction of those affected by CRSV. It shifts its protective language toward “women and children” rather than “women and girls”, with “girls” mentioned only once (“sexual violence in situations of armed conflict in particular against women and children, notably against girls”, PP 2), so that “women and children” becomes the dominant formulation. By pairing “women and children”, the resolution constructs what Enloe (1990) terms “womenandchildren” as a single identity category. This move attributes to women the characteristics usually associated with children, i.e., relative immaturity, limited rational capacity, and a presumed need for care and protection. In turn, it reinforces a depiction of women as inherently vulnerable and infantilises them, obscuring their agency and political subjectivity (Shepherd 2008).

Resolution 1888 is the first WPS resolution to use “victim” and “survivor” terminology in relation to CRSV. In this context, both subject positions are implicitly feminised. The WPS resolutions consistently identify “women and girls/children” as the main group affected by CRSV; thus, the default imagined “victim” or “survivor” is a woman, even where gender is not specified. As discussed previously, this feminised default narrows who can readily be recognised as a “victim” or “survivor” of sexual violence and pushes other affected groups to the margins.

In Resolution 1888, as in Resolution 1820, “victim” terminology is used mainly in relation to legal and justice processes (PP 8, OPs 8(b), 13, 15), service provision (OP 13), and efforts to address stigmatisation and marginalisation in the community (OP 15). Here, “victims” are presented mainly as legal subjects and rights-holders whose harm should trigger state obligations, as well as recipients of services. They are, again, represented as passive; they do not act or speak, but are those to whom institutions should be “responsive[]” and provide “access to...services”. In this way, they are constructed as objects of protection, procedure, and assistance rather than as political actors with recognised agency or voice.

OP 15 introduces a different emphasis by situating “victims” within community relations of marginalisation, stigmatisation, and “social reintegration”. “Victims” remain passive, as they are described as “stigmatized” and to be “reintegrate[ed]” by others not assigned any action themselves. However, this provision does recognise harm can be intensified by community attitudes and assigns national, traditional, and religious leaders responsibility for reshaping those discourses. This

continues to construct victims as objects of institutional or communal intervention, but it also opens up space to consider the social dimensions of victimisation.

The term “survivors” is used only once in the resolution, also in a legal-justice context. In OP 6 States are urged to ensure:

“...that survivors have access to justice, are treated with dignity throughout the justice process and are protected and receive redress for their suffering;”

Here, survivors are portrayed, in a similar manner to the “victims” discussed above, as largely passive figures. They appear only as recipients or beneficiaries of state action, positioned as subjects to whom states should provide “access to justice”, treatment “with dignity” and “redress for their suffering”. Thus, the agency they are afforded is minimal as their role is limited to the (potential) engagement in the legal-institutional frameworks provided to them. The idea survivors should be treated with “dignity” moves beyond the institutional and procedural frame, recognising survivors as subjects whose humanity and lived experiences ought to be considered. This alludes to an idea that survivors’ experiences should inform response in some way, but the power to interpret and implement this remains firmly within states and legal institutions. The requirement that they “receive redress for their suffering” explicitly ties this subject position to harm, which can be reductive; however, the language of “redress” also positions survivors as people whose suffering should be taken seriously and addressed through justice measures not limited to criminal prosecution alone.

One might expect the “survivor” position to be more agentic, given its wider associations with strength, resistance, resilience, and voice in feminist and activist discussions (Laugerud 2022; Ross 2022; Warner 2024). Resolution 1888 does not attend to this distinction in any way. In the text, “victim” and “survivor” both operate as implicitly feminised figures primarily associated with legal and justice systems. Their relationship to these systems is structured primarily through protection, access to services, and redress, rather than through forms of political participation. Both “victims” and “survivors” are thus positioned as subjects to whom institutions respond and upon whom interventions are enacted. They are not imagined as agents who can shape how CRSV is understood, prioritised, or addressed within these frameworks.

This resolution begins a pattern, somewhat reproduced in later WPS texts, of treating the terms “victim” and “survivor” as broadly interchangeable. The interchangeable use of “victim” and “survivor,” without any clear clarification surrounding their meanings or definitions can be problematic. There is a wealth of feminist scholarship which suggests these terms are not simply synonyms; each is associated differently with injury and powerlessness, with resilience and agency,

and with expectations of responsibility (Papendick and Bohner 2017; Roestenburg-Morgan 2025b; Bower 2026). The terms also have their roots in different social and institutional contexts, and interpretations across these contexts can vary (Green et al. 2021; Messamore and Paxton 2021). Treating “victim” and “survivor” as interchangeable can produce a legally and discursively ambiguous subject position. This blurs the boundary between those recognised as victims of violations within legal frameworks and a more idealised “survivor” figure. It is not made clear what the use of “victim” or “survivor” is supposed to indicate - whether they signal different legal statuses, different modes of subjectivity, or if this is simply a matter of stylistic variation. There is little clarification as to how “victim” or “survivor” should be understood, or what their use is intended to mean in practice. Roestenburg-Morgan (2025) similarly notes the problems this can cause – she discusses fact the ICC's inconsistent and unclear use of the two terms risks individuals identifying as survivors unaware of the different legal standing this carries, which leaves them unprotected.

4.4.3 Response and responsibilities

Resolution 1888 builds on 1820 by expanding the institutional response to CRSV. It moves beyond protection, legal and criminal justice, and basic service provision to develop a more extensive UN architecture for preventing, monitoring, and responding to CRSV. In doing so, it responds to concerns about the lack of specificity and weak implementation of 1820 by mandating concrete measures such as dedicated leadership, expert teams, and enhanced monitoring and reporting. These innovations were designed to strengthen coordination and follow-up on CRSV, and to move beyond rhetorical commitments towards a more systematic and institutionalised UN response (Fitzpatrick 2016).

Regarding service provision, the resolution elaborates a wider range of services that should be made available, moving beyond judicial and health systems to include “psychosocial support...and socio economic reintegration services” (OP 13). This at least acknowledges that sexual violence produces social and economic harms that cannot be addressed through criminal proceedings or medical care alone, and, therefore, that experiences of CRSV go beyond legal violation or physical harm. Research and victim/survivor testimony suggests CRSV can have profound and enduring psychological effects and adverse social consequences, including stigma and the disruption of family and community relationships. These harms are also associated with long term erosion of livelihoods and economic security for victims and survivors, their households and wider communities (Rubini 2023). In principle, attending to the psychosocial and socio economic dimensions of CRSV facilitates more

comprehensive responses which engage with the wider social and cultural contexts in which sexual violence occurs. However, this shift does not require any substantial restructuring of those contexts; expanding and strengthening services, even when they address a broader range of harms, does not require a transformation of the gendered hierarchies that underpin sexual violence and shape its effects (Burgess 2023; Rose et al. 2024).

The main innovation of Resolution 1888 lies in the dense institutional architecture it builds around CRSV. OP 4 requests the appointment of a "Special Representative" to address sexual violence in armed conflict, "to provide coherent and strategic leadership" at both headquarters and country level. This ensures the issue receives sustained high-level attention, and assumes it requires it. Operative paragraph 12 further decides that peacekeeping mandates should include "specific provisions for the protection of women and children from rape and other sexual violence," and, where appropriate, include "women's protection advisers (WPAs)". In effect, these provisions present "appropriate" response as a matter of coordinated and sustained leadership, mandate provisions, and dedicated advisory positions. Here, CRSV is a problem to be managed through technocratic processes and specialised expertise.

OP 4's request that the Secretary General appoint a "Special Representative to provide coherent and strategic leadership" on sexual violence was rapidly operationalised. Margot Wallström was appointed as the first SRSR SVC in early 2010, and the Council subsequently welcomed and reaffirmed her mandate in a presidential statement (UN Security Council 2010; United Nations 2010). The swift uptake of these commitments within the UN system further consolidated CRSV as a distinct object of institutional attention requiring dedicated leadership, specialised teams and specific operational guidance with peace processes. This further entrenches a hierarchy of harms in which rape and sexual violence are treated as women's central violation in armed conflict.

The resolution also strengthens monitoring and reporting on sexual violence. It asks the Secretary-General to ensure more systematic reporting on incidents and trends, including emerging patterns of attack and early warning indicators, and it calls for annual implementation reports (OPs 24 and 26). It directs UN bodies to share pertinent information with sanctions committees and requires that peacekeeping mandates include reporting requirements to the Council, so that information on CRSV is built into mission practice rather than left ad hoc. It also asks national governments, regional organisations, NGOs and civil society to contribute "timely, objective, accurate and reliable" information, extending responsibility for knowledge production beyond the UN system itself.

Resolution 1888 distributes responsibility for CRSV across a range of actors, assigning tasks to states and parties to armed conflict, national and local leaders, UN bodies, women's organisations and civil society. Responsibility is constructed as a matter of coordinated institutional action, technical expertise and information sharing. This framing concentrates agency in institutional and state actors, perpetuating a wider pattern across the resolutions, where those who have experienced sexual violence are primarily positioned as objects of institutional care, control, and knowledge production. Again, they do not appear as political agents whose priorities, expertise, and collective organising could itself shape CRSV responses.

4.5 Resolution 1889 – Recentring participation

Resolution 1889 does not focus on CRSV, instead deepening Resolution 1325's emphasis on women's participation and empowerment in post-conflict peacebuilding. It identifies "persistent obstacles" to women's involvement in the "prevention and resolution of conflicts and participation in post-conflict public life", (OP/PP) and explicitly recognises that the marginalisation of women can "delay or undermine the achievement of durable peace, security and reconciliation" (OP/PP). In this way, women's participation is presented as integral to effective and legitimate peacebuilding, rather than an additional or peripheral concern. The resolution further stresses the need to focus "not only on protection of women but also on their empowerment in peacebuilding," signalling a shift in focus towards women as political and institutional actors in post-conflict public life. However, this shift sits on top of, rather than displaces, earlier protectionist language; references to empowerment sit alongside more conventional portrayals of women as vulnerable.

CRSV appears only briefly in this resolution, in operative paragraphs 3 and 12. In OP 3, it is situated within a legal and criminal accountability frame, which characterises CRSV as a violation of international law and "emphasizes the responsibility of all States to put an end to impunity and to prosecute those responsible for all forms of violence committed against women and girls in armed conflicts, including rape and other sexual violence". In OP 12, CRSV is further placed within a broader "protection of civilians" logic in camps and settlements, singling out "women and girls" as particularly in need of protection from "all forms of violence, including rape and other sexual violence". In both cases, CRSV is folded into "all forms of violence", mirroring the formulation in Resolution 1325 ("all other forms of violence", OP/PP). As in Resolution 1325 this can, in principle, accommodate a wider range of harms beyond sexual violence, but it also risks centring rape and

sexual abuse as the only explicitly named "gender-based" violations. This leaves other gendered harms implicit, relegating them to the background.

In the few provisions that reference CRSV (OPs 3 and 12), those affected appear primarily as “women and girls”. Here, they are subjects against whom violations are committed and for whom protection, justice and services are required. Even in a resolution otherwise strongly focused on participation, women affected by CRSV are not afforded the more agentic subject positions that appear elsewhere in the text. They are described primarily as objects of protection and assistance, while “women” in other provisions are cast as political and peace actors. In this sense, agency is extended to “women” as a category of peacebuilders and leaders. However, it is not clearly attributed to those who have experienced CRSV, who feature nowhere as possible as agents in peace processes, or in shaping responses to the harm they have faced. This again reinforces the woman-as-peace-actor/woman-as-victim dichotomy.

There is also a number of provisions in which women are presented as both harmed or victimised and as political participants (PPs 8, 11). For example, the resolution discusses “violence and intimidation” as one of the “persistent obstacles to women’s full involvement” in conflict prevention and resolution, as well as to their “participation in post-conflict public life”. This slightly unsettles the woman-as-victim/woman-as-peace-actor split by explicitly linking experiences of harm to women’s exclusion from, and potential roles within, post-conflict public life, suggesting that those who face violence can also be actors in peacebuilding. However, such references are rare within the resolution. Furthermore, this unsettling does not extend to those victimised by CRSV; the text does not clearly present women affected by CRSV as the same subjects who exercise political agency.

This dichotomy is also complicated by PP 11, as it recognises “women in situations of armed conflict and post-conflict situations are often considered as victims and not as actors in addressing and resolving situations of armed conflict”. This is the only explicit use of “victim” terminology in the resolution and used more generally, rather than being specifically attached to CRSV. It presents being seen as a “victim” as a limiting way of understanding women’s roles, associated with exclusion from decision-making, and contrasts this with a preferred identity of “actors” in addressing conflict and peacebuilding. This signals some discomfort with the victim label, or at least with women being confined to that label. However, elsewhere the resolution continues to depict “women and girls” affected by violence as largely passive recipients of protection and justice rather than as actors. In doing so, it reinforces a familiar association between victimhood, passivity, and a lack of political agency, even as it explicitly calls for (some) “women” to be seen as “actors” in peace and security.

Interestingly, Resolution 1889 does not employ “survivor” terminology at all, though this likely reflects its focus on women's participation in peacebuilding, and its generally limited engagement with issues of CRSV and victimisation.

4.6 Resolutions 1960, 2106, 2122 and 2242

4.6.1 1960

Resolution 1960 (2010) consolidates the CRSV strand of the WPS agenda by building a more formalised enforcement and monitoring architecture around sexual violence. The resolution represents a broader shift toward more technocratic approaches to strengthening the implementation and impact of the WPS agenda.

Resolution 1960 largely reiterates the construction of CRSV established in earlier Resolutions 1820 and 1888, reaffirming sexual violence as a grave violation of international law (“genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and other egregious crimes perpetrated against civilians” PP 6; see also PPs 10 and 12) and a “tactic of war” which can “impede the restoration of international peace and security” (OP 1). It further builds on the 1888 construction of CRSV as a problem that can and should be governed through technocratic institutional measures, through its strong emphasis on developing more robust “monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements” (OP 8) as part of a broader governance and accountability architecture (see also OPs 3, 6, 7, 17, 18).

Those affected by CRSV seem much less present in Resolution 1960; emphasis, instead, shifts to the institutional machinery of UN, and the conduct of States and parties to armed conflict. Subjects affected by CRSV disappear from view, even as their experiences remain the basis for the agenda and function to legitimise the creation of this institutional machinery. This limits the scope for those who have experienced CRSV to be imagined as political actors or agents, actively involved in shaping the design or operation of CRSV responses.

Where they are present, much like Resolution 1888, Resolution 1960 continues to centre “women and children” (PPs 2-3) as the main group affected by sexual violence in armed conflicts, rather than the “women and girls” in 1820 and 1325. This further (re)entrenches the feminised construction of the CRSV subject, and the construction of femininity as a site of vulnerability and victimisation. As discussed previously, this construction significantly constrains the agency afforded to women in the WPS agenda, particularly to those women who have experienced sexual violence.

Like all of the previous resolutions, women's greater agency is discursively represented in some way. In 1960, this is mainly visible in references to women's participation in peace and security efforts. The resolution recognises and encourages efforts "to address the underrepresentation of women in formal peace processes" (PP 15), and "welcome[s] the inclusion of women...in civilian, military and police" peacekeeping functions, justifying their presence as being expected to improve reporting and responsiveness on sexual violence (PP 16, see also OP 15). In this way, women's agency is both mediated and institutional – they are valued as actors within existing UN and state machinery because they are perceived as improving its performance, but substantive control over how CRSV is governed, monitored, and sanctioned remains firmly located within said institutions.

The representation of women's agency in this resolution further entrenches the woman-as-actor/woman-as-victim dichotomy that emerges across the previous resolutions. Where Resolution 1820, tentatively, starts to bring victimisation and agency closer together by gesturing towards a subject who can be both affected by violence and be active in peace processes, Resolutions 1888 and 1960 seem to reverse this move. In Resolution 1960, where there are references to women's protection or victimisation and their participation in a single provision, they are assigned to different figures. The text does not articulate a subject who is at once a victim (particularly a victim of sexual violence) and a political actor. When protection and participation are mentioned together, they are separated and even juxtaposed. For example, PP 16:

"Welcom[es] the inclusion of women in peacekeeping missions in civil, military and police functions, recognizing that their presence may encourage women from local communities to report acts of sexual violence"

The wording of PP 16 itself distinguishes between two groups of women – "women in peacekeeping missions in civil, military and police functions" and "women from local communities." The former are described as part of peacekeeping missions and linked to "civil, military and police functions," which presents them as institutional actors with particular roles and functions, and thus they are afforded a certain level of agency. The latter, however, are situated "in local communities" mentioned only in relation to "report[ing] acts of sexual violence". They appear mainly as potential victims of sexual violence whose agency is limited to the (possible) reporting of their victimisation. In other words, the women who are endowed with institutional agency are not the same women who are portrayed as victims of sexual violence, but are expected to be the protectors of potential or real victims. Women-as-victims (victimisation), and woman-as-actors or agents (agency) sit across from one another, rather than being brought together in a single subject. This reproduces and reinforces the

idea that these two positions are mutually exclusive; one cancels out the other and they cannot be inhabited simultaneously by the same subject.

Much like Resolutions 1820 and 1888, Resolution 1960 employs “victim” terminology, but unlike 1888 does not use the term “survivor”. In this resolution, “victims of sexual violence” are again framed primarily through legal responses and service provision, mirroring the approach taken in Resolution 1888. Victims are linked to criminal accountability, including the promotion of “individual responsibility for serious crimes,” and to “the full range of justice and reconciliation mechanisms” (PP 11), as well as to the provision of “health care, psychosocial support, legal assistance, and socio-economic reintegration services” (PP 13). Following earlier resolutions “victims” again appear as those who need assistance and support, rather than as subjects with any active or political role.

Resolution 1960 further situates this victim figure within a more technocratic frame; its focus on parties to armed conflict, perpetrators, monitoring and reporting arrangements, and listings means “victims” appear mainly as data or evidence. Their experiences of CRSV become the basis for information collection, annexes and potential sanctions, whilst again their political agency remains absent. Thus, victimhood is further consolidated as a status legible to institutional actors (experts, monitoring bodies, the Security Council), rather than an embodied subject position from which people might contest or reshape the ways CRSV is addressed.

Resolution 1960 develops a dense institutional architecture surrounding CRSV, building on the legal-criminal (OP 5), protection and security (OPs 5, 10-11, 15-16), service-provision (PP 13) and monitoring strands established in Resolutions 1820 and 1888. Its most important innovation is the development of dedicated monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements on CRSV (OPs 3-4, 6-8, 10, 17-18). OP 8, for example:

“Requests the Secretary General to establish monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements on conflict-related sexual violence, including rape in situations of armed conflict and post-conflict and other situations relevant to the implementation of resolution 1888 (2009)... [and to] enhance data collection and analysis of incidents, trends, and patterns of rape and other forms of sexual violence to assist the Council’s consideration of appropriate actions, including targeted and graduated measures”

The paragraph uses language characteristic of UN administrative and security governance (“monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements”, “data collection and analysis”, “incidents, trends and patterns”, “targeted and graduated measures”), therefore positioning CRSV as an object of

institutional knowledge and control. Nomination strategies keep institutional actors (“the Secretary-General”, “the Council”) in the subject position, as those who are responsible for CRSV response; they are “requested” to act and to consider “appropriate actions,”. Those who experience sexual violence appear only indirectly, as a (non-agentic) population whose experiences are converted into data and patterns to be analysed.

This provision both assumes and reinforces the idea that these technocratic measures are (one of) the most appropriate ways to respond to CRSV. Establishing monitoring arrangements and producing “timely, objective, accurate and reliable” information (OP 6) is presented as a self-evident good, that enables and supports more effective institutional responses.

However, attempting to reduce complex gendered harms into quantifiable measures, risks privileging that which is most easily observed, recorded, or aggregated. This can flatten lived experiences, and sideline other harms that are difficult to capture through standardised monitoring arrangements (McLeod 2024). Here also, the political and structural aspects of CRSV - its relationship to militarism, patriarchy and the wider political economy of conflict - remain firmly out of sight (Boesten 2017). What matters here is not why sexual violence occurs, or the understandings and experiences of those affected, but whether it can be recorded in ways which fit neatly into existing institutional categories. This ‘technocratic’ way of addressing CRSV also concentrates agency and authority in international institutions. Those who have experienced this harm are positioned only as objects of knowledge and governance, rather than people with their own agency (Nandi 2026). They are not imagined as actors who might participate in, contest, or otherwise shape how CRSV is addressed.

4.6.3 2106

Resolution 2106 restates CRSV a serious violation of international law (PPs 9, 11, OPs 2-3) and a “tactic of war” that can undermine international peace and security (OPs 1 and 12) but extends this construction a bit further through attending to the structural and inequalities that sustain or underlie this violence (PPs 4-5). PP 4, for example:

“Recogniz[es] that consistent and rigorous prosecution of sexual violence crimes as well as national ownership and responsibility in addressing the root causes of sexual violence in armed conflict are central to deterrence and prevention as is challenging the myths that sexual violence in armed conflict is a cultural phenomenon or an inevitable consequence of war or a lesser crime,”

This constructs CRSV not only as a legal violation (requiring “consistent and rigorous prosecution”) but, for the first time in the WPS series, a phenomenon produced and sustained by deeper “root causes” and pervasive myths. This shifts the problem from individualised or strategic acts of sexual violence to the wider social conditions that legitimise and normalise those acts. CRSV appears not simply as a tactic employed by armed parties, as in previous resolutions, but as an expression of entrenched gendered hierarchies and narratives about war, culture, and women’s bodies that have, historically, made such violence seem normal, even inevitable.

Resolution 2106 continues to centre “women and girls”, and “women and children”, as the group most affected by sexual violence in armed conflict and post-conflict situations, but it also broadens the imagined subject of CRSV more than previous resolutions. By the early 2010s, victims’ and survivors’ organisations, NGOs, activists and academics were increasingly pressing for men and boys to be recognised in policy language as victims and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, and initiatives such as the April 2013 G8 declaration on preventing sexual violence in conflict formed part of a wider international push to move beyond an exclusive focus on women and girls in discussions of such violence (Dolan 2014b; Wright 2020). In this context, PP 6:

“Noting with concern that sexual violence in armed conflict and post-conflict situations disproportionately affects women and girls, as well as groups that are particularly vulnerable or may be specifically targeted, while also affecting men and boys and those secondarily traumatized as forced witnesses of sexual violence against family members...”

This provision also marks the first recognition of “men and boys” as affected by CRSV, but it does so within the same clause as “those secondarily traumatized as forced witnesses of sexual violence”. In doing so, it risks portraying “men and boys” as primarily affected by CRSV through their role as secondary witnesses, rather than through their direct experience of sexual harm. The resolution’s reference to “groups that are particularly vulnerable or may be specifically targeted” acknowledges there are other groups beyond “women and girls” who may also be at heightened risk of CRSV. However, these groups are left unnamed and unspecified, with no indication of who falls into this category or what makes them “particularly vulnerable” or “specifically targeted”. In this way, both the subjects and the basis of their vulnerability remain largely invisible.

Whilst there is, to my knowledge, no publicly available negotiating record that explains why PP 6 leaves these “particularly vulnerable” or “specifically targeted” groups unnamed, subsequent WPS and CRSV negotiations indicate that explicit references to particular communities and identities have

often been politically contentious and subject to dilution or deletion (Security Council Report 2019; Hagen and O'Rourke 2023). Given this, these generic formulations in PP 6 can be read as a way to signal broader vulnerability, whilst avoiding the potentially contentious task of naming specific groups. By explicitly including a wider range of groups as potentially affected by CRSV, the resolution broadens who can be readily imagined or recognised as victims of such violence. Yet the tentative and ambiguous ways these other groups are described keeps “women and girls” at the centre as the most clearly articulated subjects targeted by CRSV.

Similarly to resolution 1888, resolution 2106 employs both “victim” and “survivor” terminology, however the resolution privileges “survivor(s)” as the default subject position for those who have experienced CRSV. The term even appears more frequently than “women and girls” and “women and children” combined. “Victim” terminology is used only once, in connection with “programmes that assist victims of sexual violence, such as the Trust Fund for Victims established by the Rome Statute” (OP 19), associating “victim” with institutional assistance and reparations. In contrast, “survivor” is used more extensively, in relation both to justice processes (OPs 2, 16(c), 21) and to the provision of “multi-sectoral services” (OP 19). Survivors also appear in reference to their inclusion in peace processes in OP 12, which:

“...requests the Secretary-General, Member States and regional organizations, where appropriate, to ensure that mediators and envoys...engage on sexual violence issues, including with women, civil society, including women’s organizations and survivors of sexual violence, and ensure that such concerns are reflected in specific provisions of peace agreements...”

This resolution highlights “survivors”, alongside “women, civil society... [and] women’s organizations”, as an important group that “mediators and envoys” must consult with when negotiating peace agreements. This explicitly positions survivors as important interlocutors whose views should inform peace negotiations, going further than earlier resolutions that named “women” but not victims or survivors as such. It therefore offers the clearest depiction so far of someone who has experienced CRSV having some active role, and therefore some (constrained) agency. In this way it, to some extent, unsettles the woman-as-victim/woman-as-peace-actor and related victimisation/agency dichotomies identified in the resolutions by briefly bringing elements of both together in the same subject. However, it does not fundamentally transform the wider pattern that continues to separate women depicted as victims, specifically victims of sexual violence, from women imagined as peace/political actors.

Even with this single depiction of a more agentic survivor, overall the resolution does not portray survivors as actors or agents with an important role in shaping or designing peace processes or responses to CRSV. They are largely framed as recipients or beneficiaries of institutional responses who should be provided with “access to justice” (OP 2), protection (16(c)), “assistance”, and “multi-sectoral services” (OP 19). Where “victims” appear, they are depicted in similar terms, as objects of protection and provision (OP 19).

There appears to be a loose tendency for “survivor” to be used in provisions concerned with assistance and service provision and for “victim” to be employed in references to legal frameworks, which likely reflects their different institutional and discursive origins (Jülich et al. 2020; Messamore and Paxton 2021). However, this association is uneven and internally inconsistent, with both terms being attached to service provision and legal justice alike; there is no clearly differentiated victim or survivor subject. Survivors are afforded a marginally more participatory role than victims insofar as they are named as interlocutors in peace processes, which marks a limited shift in how the agency of the CRSV affected subject is imagined. However, looking at the resolution in its entirety, survivors and victims are still constructed in broadly similar ways; as those who are acted upon rather than as those who meaningfully shape what is done.

More broadly, Resolution 2106 articulates a somewhat stronger vision of women’s agency than earlier CRSV focused resolutions. It presents women’s participation as important not only to peace processes in general but also, more specifically, to responses to CRSV. The resolution stresses that such participation is “essential to any effective prevention and protection response” (OP 1) and calls on the Council to use “all means at its disposal to ensure women’s participation in...mediation, post-conflict recovery and peacebuilding and to address sexual violence in conflict” (OP 5). The resolution further emphasises “the important role that can be played by women, civil society, including women’s organizations, and formal and informal community leaders” in influencing conflict parties with respect to sexual violence (OP 4), and calls for the effective participation of women in integrating sexual violence concerns into disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR), security sector reform (SSR) and justice sector reform (JSR) (OPs 16(a-c)).

Altogether, these provisions offer women comparatively active roles, and greater agency, in both peace processes and CRSV response, making resolution 2106 one of the clearest articulations in the WPS texts of importance of women in responding to sexual violence.

Still, this agency is framed mainly in terms of engagement and participation in existing institutional processes, and does not explicitly extend to decision-making or leadership roles that earlier WPS

resolutions refer to (1325, 1820, 1888 on decision-making; 1889 on both decision-making and leadership). “Women” ultimately depend on institutional actors to permit their participation in the realm of peace and security, as well as in CRSV response.

Fundamentally, power in these spaces – including power over CRSV responses, over decisions about what counts as the ‘best’ or most appropriate way to address sexual violence – remains largely in the hands of institutional actors. Furthermore, on the whole, the politically active “women” invoked here seem not to be the same “survivors”, “victims”, “women and girls” or “women and children” who have experienced sexual violence, apart from the single provision, discussed above, that mentions the survivors’ consultative role in peace agreements. This leaves the broader pattern in which women imagined as peace or political actors are separated from those figured as victims or survivors of sexual violence largely intact, recreating this victim/actor-agent dichotomy.

Resolution 2106 generally consolidates, and somewhat builds on, response measures discussed in earlier resolutions but is specifically highlighted for its emphasis on challenging impunity and strengthening accountability. It reiterates CRSV as an international crime, and calls on states “to continue to fight impunity by investigating and prosecuting” perpetrators and to “include the full range of crimes of sexual violence in national penal legislation” (OP 2). It also, in a slightly stronger way than earlier CRSV resolutions, links accountability to the application of targeted sanctions against “those who perpetrate and direct sexual violence in conflict” (OP 13, see also OP 5) and, for the first time in the resolutions, explicitly highlights transitional justice mechanisms as part of the response to CRSV (OPs 4, 12). It reinforces protection, security, service provision, monitoring, and institutional measures developed in earlier resolutions rather than introducing any new “tools”.

In line with Resolutions 1820, 1888 and 1960, Resolution 2106 continues to frame service provision in terms of strengthening states’ and institutions’ capacity to assist those affected by CRSV. However, it slightly expands the range of provisions, now encompassing “comprehensive health services, including sexual and reproductive health, psychosocial, legal, and livelihood support and other multi-sectoral services for survivors of sexual violence”, and specifies that such services should be “timely” and “non-discriminatory” (OP 19).

Responsibility for implementing these response measures is distributed across states, parties to armed conflict, United Nations entities and, less frequently, civil society and women’s organisations. There is a particular emphasis on national authorities and security institutions as the primary agents tasked with preventing, addressing and remedying CRSV. Survivors and victims are consistently portrayed as recipients of protection, services, and justice and as sources of information and evidence for

monitoring and accountability processes. They are not, however, depicted as actors who design, direct, or evaluate CRSV responses themselves. This distribution of responsibility concentrates agency in institutional and state actors and reinforces a wider pattern across the CRSV resolutions in which CRSV affected subjects appear primarily as objects of institutional care, control, and knowledge production rather than as political agents whose priorities, expertise, and collective organising might shape CRSV response.

4.6.4 2122

Resolution 2122, also adopted in 2013, is not centred on CRSV but functions mainly as an implementation and participation resolution within the wider WPS framework, although it still includes multiple provisions that address protection, violence, and harm. It pushes the Security Council, the UN system, member states and regional organisations towards more systematic implementation of existing WPS commitments, especially by strengthening women's participation and improving access to gender-responsive information and analysis. Where it does attend to CRSV, the resolution treats it as one among several serious violations of international law and links it to wider patterns of gender-based violence, referring to "violations of international law...including those involving rape and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence, killing and maiming, obstructions to humanitarian aid, and mass forced displacement" (PP 9).

This situates CRSV among other grave harms and acknowledges it as a serious concern, but does not single it out or privilege it above other violations in quite the way Resolution 1325 does, or later CRSV resolutions increasingly do. Again, this does not disturb the wider tendency in the WPS resolutions to treat sexual violence as the central (even paradigmatic) harm through which women's experiences of conflict are understood (Ni Aoláin and Valji 2019; Engle 2020).

In one of few provisions that addresses sexual violence directly, those affected are described as "civilians, including women and girls" (PP 9). "Women affected by armed conflict and post-conflict situations" are implicitly portrayed as CRSV affected subjects in PP 8 which notes "...the need for access to the full range of sexual and reproductive health services, including regarding pregnancies resulting from rape...". Taken together, these provisions keep "women and girls" as the main figures presented as subject to CRSV and portrays these women as in need of protection and assistance, as passive recipients of the actions of others.

More broadly, however, Resolution 2122 foregrounds women's participation, decision-making and leadership across conflict resolution and peacebuilding. It does by encouraging and supporting

“women’s full participation” in key post-conflict processes (OP 4, see also OPs 4, 7(b-c), 8 and 14), calling on parties to peace talks to “facilitate the equal and full participation of women at decision-making levels” (OP 7(c), see also PP 4, 7(b)) and encouraging dedicated funding for organisations that support “women’s leadership development” (OP 7(b), see also PP 5, OPs 1, 7(a)).

This strong emphasis on participation and leadership reflects growing frustration within the UN system and civil society that an almost exclusive focus on protection from CRSV had narrowed the Council’s focus to women as victims, overshadowing the participation ambitions foundational to Resolution 1325 (Reilly 2018; Shepherd 2019). Against this background, Resolution 2122 arguably presents the most agentic vision of women thus far and marks an important step towards reorienting the agenda away from the focus on women’s victimisation towards women’s participation and leadership.

Resolution 2122 also offers a partial move towards unsettling the victimisation/agency dichotomy that runs throughout the WPS resolutions. In a couple of provisions, “women” are discussed in ways that suggest they are both harmed or in need of protection (e.g., “violence against women”, “protection from human rights abuses and violations”) and active participants in peace processes and post-conflict governance (“opportunities for women to exercise leadership”) rather than being fixed solely as victims or peace actors (PP 5, see also OP 4). These references bring violence, protection, and harm into closer conceptual proximity with participation, hinting at a figure of a woman who is both affected by violence and involved in shaping peace and post-conflict responses, but this is tentative and ambiguous. The text stops short of clearly presenting women who experience violence as the same subjects who exercise political agency in defining and responding to that violence.

This is even more pronounced in relation to sexual violence, where women affected by CRSV appear only briefly and predominantly in a passive role. They are framed as in need of protection and service provision rather than as political actors, decision-makers or agents in shaping responses to CRSV. In this sense, the resolution advances a more agentic framing of women in the WPS agenda overall, while still reproducing a familiar passive feminised “victim” subject in relation to CRSV.

Resolution 2122’s use of victim terminology is brief and general, and it does not employ “survivor” terminology at all. “Victim” appears once in an invitation to UN-established Commissions of Inquiry to include in their briefings to the Council “recommendations to advance accountability, justice and protection for victims, during armed conflict and in post-conflict and transitional contexts” (OP 2(e)). Here, “victims” are referenced in relation to the differentiated impacts of armed conflict on “women and girls”, and victimhood is associated primarily with legal and protection responses. “Victims” are

presented as a (feminised) group to who are acted upon and for whom “accountability, justice and protection” are to be provided. They are not depicted as actors in their own right, which reinforces a broader construction of “victims” as passive rather than agentic.

Whilst “victim” here is not used specifically in relation to CRSV, the victim subject it constructs is, in many ways, similar to the figure produced in those CRSV focused resolutions. This broader use of “victims” can draw attention to a wider range of violence women may experience in armed conflict beyond sexual violence alone, which, at least in principle, opens up analytical and policy space to address these harms; yet it does so without reconfiguring the underlying victim subject, who remains firmly positioned as passive and in need of protection rather than as a political agent. Through this portrayal of “victims”, and through the absence of “survivors”, Resolution 2122 does little to develop victim or survivor subject positions.

Resolution 2122 does not substantially develop or extend the specific response mechanisms for CRSV introduced in earlier CRSV focused resolutions, likely because of its participatory focus. It prioritises strengthening women’s participation in conflict prevention, resolution, and recovery (PPs 4-5, 12-13, OPs 1, 4, 6-9, 14) and incorporates conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence into a wider set of WPS implementation measures. These include improving the Council’s access to information and analysis on the impact of conflict on women (including sexual and gender-based violence) (OP 2(a)) and expanding the use of technical expertise and training within peacekeeping operations, such as pre-deployment scenario-based training on SGBV (OP 9), and recognising the importance of humanitarian aid that provides a wide range of services for women affected by armed conflict and post-conflict situations, including services responding to sexual violence (PP 8). More generally, it also enhances institutional attention to women’s rights, accountability, and access to justice (PPs 4-5, 7, OP 5; PP 7, OPs 2(e), 10, 12). Significantly, 2122 mandates the Secretary-General to commission a Global Study on the implementation of resolution 1325, underscoring the central role of UN institutions in defining and assessing WPS implementation.

Overall, 2122 follows the same basic pattern as the earlier WPS and CRSV resolutions in its distribution of responsibility where institutional actors (such as Member States, UN entities, regional organisations) are endowed with formal responsibility for implementing the resolution’s measures, however, 2122 has a particularly strong internal UN focus. Again, there is little sense those affected by violence in conflict could have an active role in peace and security processes, and could themselves be agents in shaping responses. The stronger emphasis on civil society and women’s organisations could be read as implying closer involvement of those affected by conflict, but this remains only at the level of implication, since the resolution neither identifies which actors are meant nor clarifies

whether they actually represent or include victims and survivors of violence in armed conflict. This reproduces the same limitations around institutional responsibility, and the way it marginalises the agency of CRSV affected individuals, discussed previously.

4.6.5 2242

Resolution 2242 (2015) is also not a dedicated CRSV text, primarily an implementation and participation resolution. It reiterates earlier constructions of sexual violence as a serious violation of international law, as a “tactic of war” that threatens international peace and security, while extending this construction further positioning sexual violence as a “tactic of terrorism”. PP 14 “express[es] deep concern that acts of sexual and gender-based violence are known to be part of the strategic objectives and ideology of certain terrorist groups, used as a tactic of terrorism”.

Resolution 2242 also reestablishes a clearer connection between CRSV and human rights, as is present in Resolution 1325, if indirectly, but pushed into the background in the intervening resolutions. It briefly connects the two in OP 6 on sanctions, which names “violations and abuses of human rights, including sexual and gender-based violence” (OP6) as grounds for designation. Whilst confined to only one provision, it is the most direct representation of CRSV as a human rights violation so far.

In the CRSV provisions, those affected are still predominantly constructed as “civilian populations,” “women and girls” and “victims,” reproducing the familiar figure of a feminised (civilian) subject affected by CRSV. “Women and girls” affected by CRSV are, again, subjects who acted upon – they are described as being “directly targeted” through terrorist use of sexual violence, as bearing the “differential impact” of terrorism “on [their] human rights”, and as victims of the “most serious crimes”. In this way, they are constructed as exposed and vulnerable recipients of protection, assistance, and justice, rather than as active or agentic subjects. Although elsewhere in the resolution “women” are articulated as participants and leaders in peace and security processes, this more agentic vision of “women” does not extend to those affected by CRSV. Whereas 2122 begins to make tentative links between women’s participation and experiences of harm and victimisation (even if these links fall short of explicitly connecting agency to subjects affected by sexual violence), 2242 keeps them wholly separate. “Woman-as-peace-actor” and “woman-as-victim” do not appear together in the same provision or the same subject. This sustains a dichotomous relationship between

the two constructions, and reinforces the related victim/agency dichotomy that is (re)produced across the resolutions.

2242 mirrors 2122 in its use of “victim”, but here ties the term directly to CRSV. “Victims” appear once in OP 14, which calls on states to “strengthen access to justice for women in conflict and post-conflict situations, including through the prompt investigation, prosecution and punishment of perpetrators of sexual and gender-based violence, as well as reparation for victims as appropriate.” This reinforces the wider WPS construction of “victims” as tied to legal frameworks constructed as passive recipients of justice or redress. Again, as with 2122, “survivor” terminology is absent.

In terms of responses, 2242’s most distinctive moves are, first, to draw the WPS agenda – and therefore CRSV, now explicitly named as a “tactic of terrorism” and as the main harm targeted at women and girls specified in the resolution – more squarely into counter-terrorism and violent extremism work (PP 14, OPs 11-13). It also indicates that sexual and gender-based violence by terrorist groups should inform the activities of the Council’s sanctions committees (OP 6) which “expresses its intention...to consider designating...actors, including those in terrorist groups, engaged in...violations and abuses of human rights, including sexual and gender-based violence”. In addition, it gives more sustained attention to sexual exploitation and abuse in peace operations, with reinforced language on “training”, “vetting”, “investigations”, “zero tolerance” and “greater accountability” within the UN and among troop- and police-contributing countries (OPs 9 and 10). It further reiterates the legal and justice framings of CRSV present across the earlier resolutions, including references to “reparation for victims as appropriate” (OP 14). These developments adjust and extend the governance architecture around CRSV but do not significantly change that architecture.

As in 2122, responsibility for WPS implementation and CRSV response is placed primarily on states, UN bodies and regional organisations, with women’s organisations and civil society involved mainly in implementation and support rather than allocated primary responsibility. Resolution 2242 does modestly strengthen their role, by committing the Council to more regular engagement with representatives of women’s organisations and other civil society actors through briefings (OP 5(b)) and by establishing an Informal Experts Group on WPS to “enable greater oversight and coordination of implementation efforts” (OP 5(a)). Even with an increased standing of civil society and women’s organisations, these provisions leave the underlying, state- and institution-centred pattern of responsibility largely unchanged and do not bring CRSV affected individuals into view as possible or primary agents in shaping responses.

4.7 2467 and 2493 – The survivor-centred turn

This section reads the introduction of the ‘survivor-centered approach’ in 2467 against the survivor-centred heuristic device developed in Chapter 3, examining how the resolution’s construction of survivors, services, and participation aligns with or departs from that approach.

4.7.1 2467 – How CRSV is constructed

In line with earlier resolutions, Resolution 2467 consolidates the construction of CRSV as a serious violation of international law (PP 16, OP 17) as a “tactic of war” and a “tactic of terrorism” (OPs 6, 18-19). While Resolution 2106 had already begun to invoke “root causes”, 2467 gives underlying structural factors a much more central place in its construction of CRSV. It consistently links sexual violence in armed conflict and its “disproportionate impact...on women and girls”, to broader patterns of “structural gender inequality and discrimination”, including “the under-representation of women in decision-making and leadership roles”, “discriminatory laws” and the “gender-biased enforcement” of law (PP 12). It further emphasises “harmful social norms and practices” and “discriminatory views on women or gender roles” (PP 12), and situates CRSV on a “continuum of interrelated and recurring forms of violence against women and girls” (PP 13).

In this way, Resolution 2467 reconfigures CRSV as an expression of wider gendered power relations. In this framing, both sexual violence and its strategic use in armed conflict are “rooted” in the existing gender hierarchies that naturalise male dominance, subordinate and objectify women, and position women not as autonomous subjects, but as extensions of men or as “bearers of cultural identity” (Baaz and Stern 2013; Davies and True 2015; Medawatte 2020). This, in turn, shifts attention from the individual perpetrators or specific instances of abuse to the cultural gender norms and patriarchal arrangements that render sexual violence thinkable and available as a tool of power and domination.

4.7.3 2467 – Those affected

Resolution 2467 considerably expands the categories of those explicitly identified as affected by CRSV, but “women and girls” remain the paradigmatic figures of harm, appearing more often than any other specifically named group. It also attends to “men and boys” as affected, in OP 32 which:

“Notes that sexual violence in armed conflict and post-conflict situations disproportionately affects women and girls, recognizes also that men and boys are also

targets of sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict settings, including in the context of detention settings and those associated with armed groups...”

While this clause does broaden who can be readily recognised as affected by CRSV, it organises these groups, somewhat, hierarchically. It presents CRSV as something that “disproportionately affects women and girls”, positioning feminised victims as the default, general subject of harm in these contexts. “Men and boys” appear later in the sentence as “also targets of sexual violence”, with their victimisation immediately qualified, anchored in specific conflict-related setting (“in the context of detention settings and those associated with armed groups”). “Women and girls” are consistently described as carrying a heightened, patterned vulnerability, whereas “men and boys” are described in more neutral, situational terms introduced through words like “also” or “in the context of”. This makes their inclusion feel more like an afterthought than an actual shift in how CRSV and its victims are understood.

The resolution widens recognition of who can be affected by CRSV without fundamentally disturbing the underlying assumption that the CRSV victim is, at core, a woman. Feminised bodies stay the default site of sexual harm, whilst “men and boys” are pushed to the margins. This is not to suggest that men should be given “equal space,” or women should be displaced in the WPS resolutions. Rather, that any expansion of the recognised subject of CRSV needs to keep the patriarchal structures that make sexual violence possible, and effective, in view, and should not fall back on a narrow, feminised template of victimhood in the process (Grey and Shepherd 2013; Dolan 2014a; Du Toit and Le Roux 2021).

The resolution also names other specific groups as affected by CRSV, highlighting the particular needs of “women and girls who become pregnant as a result of sexual violence in armed conflict”, “children born of sexual violence in armed conflict”, and “displaced persons” who face “heightened risks” of such violence. This acknowledges that risk to CRSV can be shaped by factors beyond “womanhood” alone, and modestly widens the range of groups officially named and recognised as particularly affected. In principle, this creates space to attend more closely to ways harm can be experienced differently across groups, contexts, and identities.

It supplements these concrete categories with more generic references to “groups that are particularly vulnerable or may be specifically targeted” and to “all individuals affected by sexual violence in armed conflict”, which gestures towards a broader set of possible subjects affected by CRSV without clearly articulating who they might be. While such open-ended formulations can be strategically useful, as they allow relevant actors to claim a broader range of people fall within the scope of the

resolution (Chinkin and Rees 2019; Byers 2021), they also have important drawbacks. The absence of explicit naming renders these groups largely invisible in the text and makes it easier for states and institutions to marginalise or ignore them in implementation (Hagen 2016; Jayakumar 2022). This generic language is likely tied to the contentious negotiations over 2467, where naming certain groups explicitly proved politically fraught. Proposals to recognise LGBTI people as vulnerable to CRSV were ultimately dropped to avoid a veto, after several states opposed any explicit reference to LGBTI persons in Security Council outputs (Davies and True 2019a; Security Council Report 2019).

4.7.4 2467 – The “victim”

Resolution 2467 uses both “victim” and “survivor” terminology more frequently than any of the previous resolutions. In Resolution 2467, the “victim” subject is constructed in a way largely continuous with earlier CRSV resolutions, but is now placed within a resolution that foregrounds structural inequalities, stigma, and gendered norms. Whilst victimisation still presents as the result of perpetrator violence, the references to evidentiary requirements that “discriminate against victims” (OP 14), social “stigma” (OP 19) and “cultural assumptions about male invulnerability” (OP 32) situate victims within wider societal and structural conditions. This, in turn, opens up space – even if not directly articulated – to read victimisation as mediated and exacerbated, or possibly even caused, by those conditions.

As in previous resolutions, victims are tethered to legal and justice frameworks as (vulnerable) rights-holders (PP 17; OPs 14-15, 17) and discussed in relation to service provision (OP 28). The resolution also explicitly extends victimhood to “men and boys” (OPs 28, 32), alongside the familiar emphasis on “women and girls” as “victims” of CRSV (OP 15, and, more implicitly, to “women with children born as a result of sexual violence” (OP 28). In this way, the “victim” subject is still largely feminised, but its centrality is partially displaced by a broader, though still gendered, cast of victims.

Resolution 2467 also begins to complicate the construction of victims as solely passive objects of protection and service provision. For example, OP 16(d):

“...recognizes that women’s leadership and participation will increase the likelihood that transitional justice outcomes will constitute effective redress as defined by victims...”

Rather than being presented only as passive recipients of remedy and assistance, victims are positioned as actors whose own understandings should “define[]” what counts as “effective redress”. This moves them beyond the role of mere objects of transitional justice, granting them a degree of epistemic authority, as subjects whose judgements and definitions are meant to shape outcomes rather

than just receive them. In doing so, Resolution 2467 begins to construct victims as capable, active subjects, granting them a limited increase in agency in comparison to other resolutions. However, that agency remains tightly constrained as fundamentally the “transitional justice processes” remain in the control of “Member States”. “Victims” are not even afforded the leadership or decision-making role that “women” are more generally given; they are not constructed as political actors who themselves could have an important role in designing or implementing CRSV response.

The resolution goes one step further in complicating its construction of victims as passive recipients of institutional action in OP 13, where it “expresses its intention to... engage with victims, affected communities and civil society, including women’s organizations” in the “prevention, response and elimination” of CRSV. Whereas OP 16(d) primarily grants victims evaluative authority over transitional justice outcomes, OP 13 additionally positions them as actors to be consulted in the “prevention, response and elimination” of CRSV. Nonetheless, their participation remains institutionally mediated, with decisions about whether, when, and how to engage still firmly controlled by the Council.

These provisions mark a significant complication of the woman-as-victim/woman-as-peace-actor dichotomy that runs across the WPS resolutions, insofar as they offer the most explicitly agentic depictions of victims in the CRSV texts to date. Here, the subject is simultaneously marked as having been victimised - through “victim” terminology - and as active in the response to CRSV, a participant in peace and security practices. This dual positioning directly unsettles the neat separation between “victims” and “women” as peace actors by foregrounding a subject who embodies both harm and agency. Even with this, there are ways in which resolution 2467 somewhat preserves the dichotomy and the broader pattern across the resolutions in which victims are constructed as objects of others’ actions. This can be seen rather clearly in OP 16(d); even as it presents more agentic victim subject, “women” as leaders and decision-makers are still differentiated from, and implicitly elevated above, the (still largely feminised) “victims”.

4.7.5 2467 – Introducing the survivor-centred approach

Resolution 2467 is the first WPS resolution to explicitly endorse a “survivor-centered approach” to “preventing and responding to sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations.” It does not offer a formal definition of this approach, as such, but outlines what the approach involves by specifying that prevention and response should be “non-discriminatory and specific” and should “respect the rights and prioritize needs of survivors, including groups that are particularly vulnerable or may be specifically targeted...notably in the context of their health, education, and participation”.

The resolution further ties a survivor-centred approach to “non-discriminatory access to services such as medical and psychosocial care,” and implicitly associates it with procedural safeguards, such as confidentiality and informed consent, in the documentation and investigation of CRSV. It also links this approach to justice sector measures aimed at removing barriers in access and securing survivors’ meaningful participation, including in decision-making roles.

More broadly, 2467 situates this approach within a resolution that explicitly acknowledges structural gender inequality and discrimination as root causes of sexual violence, and emphasises women’s empowerment and participation as central to prevention and peace. Within the WPS resolutions, this represents a more expansive way of constructing CRSV than earlier texts, implying that a SCA should attend not only to individual needs and services but also to the structural conditions that produce harm. However, the resolution ultimately presents the survivor-centred approach as a way of organising services, procedures, and justice mechanisms around survivors’ needs, and sometimes rights, rather than as a politically transformative reimagining of who governs CRSV and on what terms.

4.7.6 2467 – The “survivor”

Resolution 2467 uses “survivor” terminology more extensively than any previous resolution, consistently referring to “survivors” in relation to services, safety, and justice measures. In this text, “survivor” becomes the primary label for those affected by CRSV, appearing more frequently than “victim” and displacing the previously dominant “women and girls”. Although the survivor subject is implicitly feminised, given the resolution’s emphasis on “women and girls” as being particularly targeted by CRSV, it is also explicitly extended to “men and boys” through references to “male survivors”.

In Resolution 2467, “survivors” are, as in earlier texts, closely linked to legal and justice frameworks, as well service provision. This is now reframed through an explicit survivor-centred logic that presents them as the professed reference point for CRSV responses. This “centering” is expressed mainly through the emphasis on survivors’ “specific needs”, and on organising services and procedures around those needs. The resolution here constructs survivors through a vocabulary of needs and care, casting them as vulnerable recipients of tailored services and procedures organised by others, rather than as political actors with any clearly defined agency over how CRSV is addressed.

Alongside the focus on survivors’ needs, Resolution 2467, in some provisions, grants survivors a more active role, offering the most explicitly agentic survivor subject positions in the resolutions so far. OP 16(d):

“Encourages concerned Member States to ensure the opportunity for the full and meaningful participation of survivors of sexual and gender-based violence at all stages of transitional justice processes, including in decision-making roles...”

OP 16(d) moves beyond constructing survivors as mere recipients of justice measures, instead envisaging them as "full and meaningful" participants in transitional justice processes, "including in decision-making roles." This gives survivors significantly more agency, with a genuine capacity to shape how transitional justice unfolds, instead of only waiting on its outcomes. A similarly agentic subject position appears in OP 20, which "encourages" capacity-building for "survivor-led organizations" and civil society groups to enhance informal, community-level protection mechanisms. Survivors here are imagined not just as participants in institutional processes, but as collective actors in their own right, leading organisations, and shaping protection practices and peace processes. They move from beneficiary, to political actor and organiser.

Altogether, these representations of “victims” and “survivors” complicate the woman-as-victim/woman-as-actor dichotomy identified in the WPS corpus. Although “victim” and “survivor” are not interchangeable terms, WPS resolutions generally ascribe similar subject positions to both, situating them on the “victim” side of the aforementioned dichotomy and depicting “victims” and “survivors” of CRSV primarily as passive, vulnerable recipients of protection rather than political actors. The more agentic survivor roles in OP 16(d) and OP 20 construct a subject who is both harmed or victimised by CRSV and recognised as a political actor with an important role in responding to the violence they have experienced. These provision I have analysed represent the most expansive or agentic examples of the "survivor" present in Resolution 2467. Elsewhere, “survivors” are still predominantly constructed as recipients of protection or services, now within framework more attendant to their needs, rather than actors who shape the CRSV agenda.

Furthermore, both operative paragraphs keep agency somewhat constrained for survivors, given this agency is institutionally mediated. In OP 16(d), “Member States” are positioned as the gatekeepers of participation, such that survivors’ involvement and authority remain contingent on opportunities that states choose to create within pre-existing transitional justice frameworks. Likewise in OP 20, “Member States and United Nations entities” are tasked with building the capacity of survivor-led organisations, locating survivor leadership within organisational forms that depend on state and UN funding, training, and recognition. In both instances, the survivor is imagined as a political actor, but their capacity to act is enabled, channelled and ultimately delimited by institutional architectures over which Member States and UN entities retain control. In this sense, Resolution 2467 imagines survivors as active and even leading within spaces that states and UN entities open to them, but still

survivors do not significantly shape those spaces themselves. The use of "survivor" and survivor-centred vocabulary sits alongside, and even obscures, the continued centrality of institutional actors in deciding what counts as appropriate response, redress, and/or prevention.

4.7.7 Responses and responsibility

Resolution 2467 reiterates many of the response measures seen across previous resolutions, including protection and security, legal and justice frameworks, sanctions, services and multi-sectoral support, monitoring, analysis, and reporting. What shifts here is its emphasis, responses are now filtered through a survivor-centred lens.

Resolution 2467 further elaborates justice sector responses to CRSV by focusing in more detail on victims' and survivors' procedural protection and access to justice. It calls for strengthened legislation and practice, including "victim and witness protection laws", provision of legal aid and "specialized police units and courts to address such crimes", and for the removal of "procedural impediments to justice for victims" such as "restrictive limitation periods for filing claims", discriminatory "corroboration requirements", "exclusion or discrediting of victims testimony" and the "lack of facilities for closed hearings".

Unlike earlier resolutions, which made limited references to justice processes beyond criminal prosecution, Resolution 2467 gives more sustained attention to remedy and reparation, even "encourag[ing] Member States and other relevant actors to give due consideration to the establishment of a survivors' fund". It also places greater emphasis on the role of survivors and victims within justice processes. Still, for the most part, these processes are designed and run by states and institutions. The resolution repeatedly calls on "States to end impunity and to prosecute," on "national authorities...to strengthen legislation," and on "relevant United Nations entities...to support national authorities" and "make...effective remedy and assistance available." States and institutions holding this responsibility is hardly surprising, given their role in making and enforcing law, but it leaves survivors to access justice through frameworks that others design and control, with little room to shape what it means on their own terms.

Resolution 2467 presents services as something which survivors should have "non-discriminatory access to", and slightly expands and refines the service package, referring to "national relief and reparations programmes, as well as health care, psychosocial care, safe shelter, livelihood support and legal aid", and specifying that services should attend to "women with children born as a result of sexual violence" as well as "men and boys" who are CRSV victims. It notably omits the explicit

reference to sexual and reproductive health services that appeared in Resolution 2106 (and 1889), reflecting the political compromise that led to the removal of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) language during negotiations over Resolution 2467, particularly under pressure from the United States (Security Council Report 2019; De Vido 2020; Cerulli 2024; Sapiano and Raghuvanshi 2024). Even as the text expands and develops the range of services available, further linking this service provision to wider social aims ("lifting sociocultural stigma", "rehabilitation efforts") it removes SRHR language. This treats survivors' reproductive autonomy as negotiable, as something that can be sacrificed to preserve consensus on a new CRSV resolution. This seems rather ironic as this omission arguably reinforces the very structural inequalities the resolution, more broadly, claims to address.

Resolution 2467 also provides more detail surrounding how monitoring and investigation of CRSV should be carried out. OP 8:

“...emphasizes...all efforts to document and investigate sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations should take into account the specific needs of survivors, be well-coordinated, and respect safety, confidentiality and informed consent of survivors as well as independence and impartiality, and that monitoring and investigation strategies are connected to specialized multi-sectoral referral pathways to services for survivors”.

By insisting on these conditions (“take into account the...needs”, “respect safety, confidentiality...informed consent”), rather than speaking only about collecting evidence or securing prosecutions, the resolution shifts attention to how monitoring and investigation are conducted with survivors. It sets out a normative expectation that these processes should be judged not only by their outcomes, but how survivors experience them.

Similar to earlier resolutions, in 2467 responsibility for responding to CRSV is distributed primarily among states (PPs 14-16, 24, OPs 3, 14-18, 20-21, 26-27, 31, 35), regional organisations (PPs 7, 24, OPs 5, 33) United Nations bodies (PPs 17, 24, OPs 2, 3, 5-8, 10-14, 18, 20, 22-27, 29, 32, 34-36) with parties to armed conflict tasked mainly with cessation and compliance (OPs 1-2, 5, 30). Civil society and women's and survivor led organisations playing an important, but supporting role (PP 22, OPs 13, 19-21). Much like 2242, women's organisations and civil society are recognised as significant partners, and 2467, for the first time, explicitly highlights survivor-led organisations, even though primary responsibility remains with states and UN actors. The explicit recognition and support of survivor-led organisations marks an advance on earlier resolutions, bringing survivors into view as potential collective agents of response. Even with this survivor-led inclusion, the power to define,

design, and implement responses remains concentrated in states, institutions, and organisations. In this way, Resolution 2467 widens who is recognised as active in CRSV responses but does not fundamentally unsettle the state- and institution-centred model in which survivors remain dependent on systems designed by others.

4.7.8 2493

Resolution 2493, adopted in 2019 just before the twentieth anniversary of 1325, operates primarily as a consolidation of the previous resolutions (UN Meetings Coverage and Press Releases 2019; Sapiano and Raghuvanshi 2024). It reaffirms the Council's commitment to implementing the existing WPS architecture, including Resolution 2467's survivor-centred turn, in its first preambular paragraph. Its focus is on women's "full, equal and meaningful" participation, and on creating safe and enabling environments for women peacebuilders, civil society actors, and human rights defenders in peace and post conflict processes. In contrast to all of the previous resolutions, which at least mention CRSV even when it is not their primary focus, Resolution 2493 does not refer to CRSV at all, nor does it employ "victim" or "survivor" terminology. In this way, it solidifies the survivor centred turn without discussing CRSV or those affected, treating them as part of the already established normative framework.

While 2493 can be read as making some constructive moves – for example, introducing the specific formulation of "full, equal and meaningful" participation, calling for context specific approaches to implementation, and assigning a more concrete role to regional organisations – it also raises some concerns. Feminist analyses of the negotiations point out that securing a unanimous vote depended on avoiding previously accepted SRHR language and on softening explicit references to women human rights defenders. These concessions can be read as part of a wider global backlash against women's rights, one that has played out across the UN system, including the Security Council ((De Vido 2020; Sapiano and Raghuvanshi 2024).

For this study, Resolution 2493 serves as a reminder that introducing SCAs into the WPS agenda does not guarantee their translation into transformative practice. Feminist or progressive ideas, however well-intentioned, rarely make it through the UNSC setting completely intact. Political compromise and the need for consensus often narrow what these commitments can actually achieve.

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter has traced the genealogy of CRSV and the “those affected” across the WPS resolutions, from Resolution 1325's protectionist framing of "women and girls," through the introduction of "victim" terminology in 1820, "survivor" terminology in 1888, and the survivor-centred turn in 2467. Across this trajectory, CRSV's construction shifts from a human rights concern to a securitised "tactic of war," and later to an object of technocratic monitoring and governance. The subjects affected by CRSV are consistently positioned as objects of institutional action, creating a persistent victim/peace-actor dichotomy that later resolutions complicate but do not fully unsettle. The following chapter considers what these findings mean for how the WPS agenda constructs agency, responsibility, and legitimate response to CRSV. It also discusses the wider implications for the field.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

This concluding chapter draws together the genealogical analysis presented in Chapter 4. It begins by discussing the multiple, shifting constructions of CRSV that emerge across the resolutions (legal, human rights, security, technocratic, and structural). It then turns to the subject positions produced within these framings, tracing how "victim" and "survivor" terminology consistently position those affected as passive recipients of protection rather than political actors, sustaining a persistent victim/peace-actor dichotomy. It further evaluates the relationship between the subject positions constructed and the construction of the SCA within the WPS agenda. Finally, there is brief consideration of the study's limitations.

5.2 The constructions of CRSV

There are multiple constructions of CRSV present across the resolutions; it is represented as a legal violation, as a human rights violation, as a "tactic of war", as an institutional problem, and, later, as a matter of structural inequality. These constructions are repeatedly taken up, reconfigured and at times displaced, so CRSV emerges through a layered set of meanings marked by points of tension with no clear linear progression.

In Resolution 1325, CRSV is framed as a violation of international law and also, specifically, as a human rights violation. The resolution invokes international human rights and humanitarian law and addresses women as rights-bearers whose protection from gender-based and sexual violence is required under existing norms. It further links sexual and other violence against women and girls to existing categories of international crime, calling on states to prosecute such offences as "genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes". This legal framing in Resolution 1325 leans more heavily into its human rights element, and whilst the legal framing is strong across the resolutions the criminal law and prosecution focus becomes more pronounced.

The construction of CRSV as a human rights violation, which is closely related to the legal framing but in some ways distinguishable, does also persist throughout the resolutions. However, in some texts (particularly Resolutions 1820, 1888, 1960 and 2106), this is relegated to the background. It appears mainly in general references to state's obligations to respect the human rights of their

populations under international law and is not linked explicitly to CRSV. In Resolution 2242, CRSV is reconnected more explicitly to human rights when OP 6 on sanctions refers to “violations and abuses of human rights, including sexual and gender-based violence”. Resolutions 2467 develops this further more explicitly enumerating sexual violence as a violation of human rights, embedding rights language across multiple provisions and tying it to remedy, redress and to survivors’ own priorities.

Resolution 1820 introduces the “securitised” construction of CRSV as a “tactic of war”. This builds on, rather than displaces, the existing legal framing, but it shifts the emphasis. The security framing moves to the foreground and there is also a greater focus on criminal accountability rather than human rights. The “tactic of war” construction is reaffirmed across subsequent CRSV resolutions, and Resolution 2242 extends this security framing introducing CRSV, not only as a “tactic of war” but also a “a tactic of terrorism”.

CRSV is further constructed as a problem that demands dedicated institutional architecture and specialised expertise. This comes through first in Resolution 1888, which establishes the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict and introduces women’s protection advisers in peacekeeping missions. Resolution 1960 extends this technocratic construction, embedding CRSV in monitoring, analysis, and reporting arrangements that serve to construct it as a governance issue.

More structural constructions of CRSV emerge later, initially only in a limited manner. Resolution 2106 introduces language on “root causes” and the cultural myths that sustain sexual violence, yet this remains rather a marginal addition, confined to two preambular paragraphs. The legal, “tactic of war” and technocratic frames continue to dominate, and structural language appears only briefly, in a more secondary position. Resolution 2467 marks a more substantial reordering. It briefly restates the legal “tactic of war” and “tactic of terrorism” framings – they remain present but are not as central – and gives more sustained attention to structural gender inequality and discrimination, which are positioned as a central frame in the construction of CRSV and its harms.

Overall, the resolutions construct CRSV through legal, human rights, security, technocratic and structural frames, layered across the texts and varying in prominence over time. These constructions matter beyond how CRSV itself is described, as they shape, in different ways, the subject positions available to those affected and the kinds of response that the WPS agenda presents as appropriate and prioritised. These shifting and overlapping framings construct CRSV as a problem with multiple dimensions and, in doing so, shape which responses are foregrounded and which remain marginal. They also condition how those affected by CRSV appear in the resolutions. Legal and security framings cast them as victims of crime and war whose needs are dealt with through criminal justice

and military systems; technocratic framings turn them into cases for expert management; and the later structural language begins to place them within wider patterns of gendered inequality. Across the agenda, those affected by CRSV are constructed in multiple ways, and “victim” and “survivor” terminology opens up particular subject positions within these frames. The following section considers these subject positions in more detail, focusing in particular on the figures of the “victim” and the “survivor”.

5.3 The shifting subject positions of “those affected”

Throughout the WPS resolutions, those affected by CRSV are constructed primarily as “women and girls”, a feminisation of the affected subject first established in Resolution 1325. These “women and girls” are consistently positioned as objects of harm, protection, prosecution or assistance. They are presented primarily as passive; not recognised as political or peace actors with any substantial agency. In Resolutions 1888 and 1960, the construction shifts briefly to “women and children”, invoking Enloe’s (1990) concept of “womenandchildren”, extending assumptions of childlike dependence onto women and intensifying their passive representation (Shepherd 2008).

Other groups are only named intermittently and in limited ways, most substantially in Resolution 2467, where several groups appear as affected, notably men and boys, but also children born of sexual violence, and displaced persons. This pattern likely reflects the political history of the WPS agenda as a project that sought to foreground women’s experiences of gendered violence in armed conflict after a long period of invisibility and relative neglect (Kirby and Shepherd 2016; Ni Aoláin and Valji 2019; Jayakumar 2022). Whilst this focus is understandable, it has particular costs. When CRSV victimisation becomes the dominant way in which women’s experiences of armed conflict are understood, it feeds into a construction of women as passive, victimised and inherently vulnerable, which constrains the space in which their agency can be recognised (Turner and Swaine 2023). This also narrows recognition of other affected groups, and ultimately reinforces the very patriarchal ideologies that underpin CRSV in the first place (Du Toit and Le Roux 2021; Agerberg and Kreft 2023)

This feminised image of the CRSV affected subject shapes how “victim” and “survivor” are subsequently imagined and operates as the underlying subject position to which both terms are attached. “Victim” terminology is introduced explicitly in Resolution 1820 and then appears in almost all subsequent resolutions, consistently tied to legal and justice frameworks. In these texts, “victims” are positioned as objects of protection and services, as well as rights-holders to whom States owe

obligations, but not as agentic subjects capable of acting on the entitlements those rights imply. Much like the “women and girls” the label is attached to, they rarely feature as subjects who act, thus their agency, as represented in the resolutions, remains limited. This construction is in line with Raghavan’s (2024) argument that legal recognition of victims, through appeals to protection and injury, tends to fix the “victim” as an agentless subject to be acted upon. In the WPS resolutions, “victim” terminology is not simply descriptive, but productive. It helps to (re)produce a feminised, agentless victim at the centre of the agenda, reinforcing an understanding of victimhood as passivity, while limiting the space in which the agency of victims can be recognised.

This basic construction holds from Resolution 1820 through to 2242 with only limited variation, with Resolution 2467 representing the most significant departure. OP 16(d) states that transitional justice outcomes should amount to “effective redress as defined by victims”, granting victims limited agency, through their authority to define what an adequate response should. Additionally, OP 13 commits the Council to engaging with “victims, affected communities and civil society” in preventing and responding to CRSV. Even here, “Member States” retain ultimate control over these transitional justice processes; victims are consulted on what redress should mean, but not given any role in designing or delivering it.

“Survivor” terminology is first introduced in Resolution 1888, although it appears only once. In this single reference, the “survivor” is just as passive as the resolutions’ “victim”, positioned only as a recipient of state protection and redress, not a subject who takes action. Its wider feminist and activist associations of resilience, voice, and resistance, and of “survivor” as a more empowered and agentic alternative to “victim” go entirely unacknowledged. The term’s presence across later resolutions is inconsistent rather than steady or linear. It is absent from Resolution 1960, is more dominant in Resolution 2106, absent again from Resolutions 2122 to 2242, and then most extensive in Resolution 2467, where it displaces “women and girls” as the primary label for those affected. The first clear construction of survivors as agentic subjects appears in Resolution 2106, where OP 12 positions them as interlocutors in peace negotiations. Resolution 2467 then offers the strongest recognition of agency attached to either “victim” or “survivor” in OP 16(d), which encourages the “full and meaningful participation of survivors...including in decision making roles”. OP 20 reaffirms this, supporting capacity-building for survivor-led organisations, framing survivors as collective actors who lead and shape practice rather than subjects who merely receive it.

In the WPS agenda, “victim” and “survivor” are neither stable nor clearly differentiated subject positions. Across the resolutions, they are used somewhat interchangeably, both subjects who are feminised and constructed as passive. There seems little recognition that much feminist and legal

scholarship distinguishes between these terms, where they are treated as having different meanings and implications. There is a loose tendency for “victim” to cluster around legal frameworks and for “survivor” around service provision, reflecting their different institutional and discursive origins (Papendick and Bohner 2017; Ross 2022; O’Shea et al. 2024; Bower 2026). Although, this pattern is uneven and internally inconsistent as both terms recur across legal, reparations, and service contexts throughout. The texts offer no clear rationale for why one term is used over the other in particular provisions.

Whatever term is used, “victim” and “survivor” are consistently positioned as recipients of action rather than as actors themselves. This feeds into a wider construction in which women affected by CRSV are positioned as passive objects of institutional response. There are a few provisions where “survivors” are positioned as moderately more agentic subjects (2106’s OP 12 and 2467’s OP 16(d) and OP 20) – where they are assigned responsibilities and capacities not ever attached to “victims” – however, these references are rare and not developed into a wider pattern across the resolutions. On the whole, the texts do not clearly establish “survivors” as holding any meaningfully different position from those named as “victims”.

In this sense, the “survivor” figure remains with the “victim”, on the victim side of the woman-as-peace-actor/woman-as-victim dichotomy that runs through the resolutions, first established in 1325 and varying in strength thereafter. A small number of provisions – such as 1820’s PP 11, 1889’s PPs 9, 12, 2122’s PP 5, 2242 PP 14 – momentarily bring harm or victimisation and political activity together in the same figure. Still, these openings remain too limited and uneven to alter the wider pattern in which subjects affected by CRSV and “peace actors” are almost oppositional figures.

This split is particularly pronounced in relation to women identified as victims of CRSV, who are overwhelmingly imagined as subjects of protection rather than as political actors or participants in peace and security practice, apart from a small number of provisions such as 2106’s OP 12 and 2467’s OPs 13 and 16(d). The resolutions also reproduce this divide through the nomination and predication strategies it employs. The groups most often nominated as political actors are “women” or “women’s organizations”, and are attributed agency, participation, and leadership, whereas those affected by sexual violence are more typically nominated as “women and girls” (or “women and children”), “victims” or “survivors” and positioned as at risk of harm, as vulnerable, and as needing protection and assistance. In this way, the pattern of nomination and predication across the resolutions makes the woman-as-peace-actor/woman-as-victim dichotomy particularly sharp for women affected by CRSV, and forecloses or severely constrains the imagination of a politically active subject affected

by CRSV; a subject who might respond to her own harm, take an active role in shaping institutional responses, or participate in peace and security practice.

The fact that the woman-as-peace-actor/woman-as-victim split is especially sharp for women affected by CRSV can be illuminated by Raghavan's (2020) analysis of how sexual violence is given an exceptional status within dominant discourse. She argues that sexual violence is routinely treated as distinct from other forms of violence, with this distinctiveness located in the sexualised, embodied nature of the harm. This way of framing sexual violence tends to produce an "agentless victim", a subject fused with passivity and positioned as requiring protection; a subject that does not act but is acted upon. In this sense, sexual violence's distinctiveness does not only intensify victimhood, but can reshape the kind of subject the harm is taken to produce. Thus, the resolutions' tendency to position women affected by CRSV primarily as passive victims rather than as political actors can be read as a reproduction, and reinforcement, of this wider discursive pattern.

5.3 The limits of the survivor-centred approach

As the preceding section argues, the WPS resolutions largely construct those affected by CRSV as feminised, passive subjects whose relationship to institutions is one of protection, assistance and redress rather than political agency. Therefore, the SCA as it appears in Resolution 2467 is introduced on precarious ground. Fundamentally, whether in its more procedural or transformative forms, many articulations of the SCA explicitly foreground agency, presenting survivors as primary actors in decisions affecting them and as experts on their own experiences, safety and needs (Dolan et al. 2024; Michelis et al. 2025). This premise is built into the label itself ("survivor-centred") given "survivor" was deliberately adopted in feminist and activist contexts as an alternative to "victim," chosen to emphasise action, resilience, and empowerment³(Jülich et al. 2020; Laugerud 2022; Warner 2024). Importing an approach premised on recognising survivors' agency sits in tension with the resolutions existing treatment of those affected by CRSV who are largely represented as passive recipients of protection, assistance and redress rather than as agents in shaping response.

Those affected by CRSV are rarely represented in the resolutions as subjects capable of shaping responses to their own harm, even though SCAs are premised on (agentic) survivors playing an

³ This, at least in principle, implies that SCAs would be more strongly focused on agency, even if, in practice, they are often conflated with victim-centred approaches, or treated and applied in much the same manner.

active role in decisions about how that harm is addressed. The only example of a more agentic survivor, or victim, before 2467 appears in Resolution 2106's OP12, where survivors are presented as a group who should be engaged with in peace negotiations. This is compatible with a survivor-centred logic, but it is a single, isolated instance within resolutions that otherwise portray those affected as passive, dependent, and in need of protection. The most agentic representations of survivors, and victims, appear with the SCA in Resolution 2467 (OP16(d), OP20), which is consistent with the approach's emphasis on agency. Yet this means the SCA is introduced into a setting where earlier resolutions have provided almost no discursive groundwork for it. Without that groundwork, the SCA risks operating more as a rhetorical gesture towards agency, than as a framework embedded in how the WPS agenda actually imagines and organises responses to CRSV.

Reading the WPS articulation of the SCA against the heuristic outlined in Chapter Three suggests that Resolution 2467 broadly reflects what current UN and NGO guidance would expect of a SCA. It foregrounds survivors' needs and calls for non-discriminatory access to services. It also introduces language on safety, consent and confidentiality in documentation and investigation, while linking survivor-centred responses to justice, remedy and participation. Despite the emphasis on agency in many articulations of SCAs, survivors' agency remains relatively limited in Resolution 2467. Most of what the resolution says about participation belongs to the WPS agenda's wider concern with women's political representation, rather than to the participation of CRSV survivors specifically. Where it does extend agency to survivors, this is brief, most clearly in its encouragement to build the capacity of "survivor-led organisations". The emphasis of the resolution, and of the SCA within it, leans more strongly towards survivor's needs. Survivors are frequently described in terms of "risks" and "needs", and much of the survivor-centred language is organised around how institutions should protect survivors and prioritise and respond to those needs.

In Resolution 2467, some principles of the SCA are given more sustained attention than others. For example, justice and accountability are developed at length, with provisions on evidentiary rules, victim and witness protection, and different forms of redress, including the possibility of a survivors' fund. This is the part of the survivor-centred approach where the resolution is most detailed and ambitious, and it reflects the broader legal and accountability focus of the WPS resolutions on CRSV. In this way, survivor-centred language is carried into, and elaborated through, existing criminal justice and redress frameworks rather than used to rethink responses, how they are governed, and on what terms.

Resolution 2467 offers a survivor-centred approach that is broadly aligned with established guidance and reasonably comprehensive on paper, but its transformative potential is limited. It uses survivor-centred language to refine and extend existing legal, service, and participation measures, rather than to reconfigure who holds authority over CRSV responses or to recognise survivors' agency in designing and implementing interventions. In this sense, the resolution advances a managerial version of the SCA. Institutional practice is organised around survivors, but power is not substantially redistributed, and the survivor subject remains constructed in much the same way as in earlier WPS resolutions. This pattern echoes Michelis et al.'s (2025) analysis of SCA in humanitarian work which shows that SCA is often implemented through provider-led, standardised service models that constrain survivors' choices and leave underlying power relations largely intact.

The way the SCA appears in Resolution 2467 can be understood as a product of the institutional and patriarchal contexts in which the resolution was produced. Michelis et al. (2025). argue SCAs in humanitarian GBV responses are implemented within imperial and sexist power structures that leave authority with service providers, and therefore constrain survivors' agency, even as purport to give greater control to survivors. Feminist analyses of the WPS agenda similarly note that the Council's militarised and gendered conception of security continues to position women and those affected by sexual violence primarily as protected subjects rather than as agents (Scully 2009; Anholt 2016; Kirby and Shepherd 2016; Ni Aoláin and Valji 2019; Turner and Swaine 2023). In this context, the managerial, needs-based construction of the SCA in Resolution 2467 shows how a survivor-centred vocabulary can be adapted to existing institutional structures and practices in ways that dilute its more challenging, feminist, and transformative ambitions.

These institutional and patriarchal conditions are also reflected in the negotiation processes of the resolutions within the Security Council. As Chapter Four's discussion of Resolution 2493 suggests, feminist and more progressive ideas are not just "placed" into the Council and left unchanged; once they enter negotiations, they are worked over through compromise among states with different interests, which tends to pull them in different directions and dilute them (Basu 2016; O'Rourke and Swaine 2019). The SCA follows a similar pattern; in order to secure agreement on Resolution 2467 SRHR language was removed under pressure from the United States. This seems rather contradictory given access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health care is widely understood as an important part of a survivor-centred response to CRSV (De Vido 2020; Clark 2021). In this sense, what emerges from Security Council processes is shaped less by the transformative ambitions of feminist ideas than by the minimum that states are willing to endorse

(Otto 2010; Cook 2018; Chinkin 2022b). It becomes difficult to imagine a more radical SCA that might enter Council negotiations and leave fully intact.

5.4 Discourse to response

In the WPS resolutions, CRSV is described through legal and human rights language, and as a security problem and “tactic of war”. These different ways of talking about it shape how responses are imagined and organised. Over time, the resolutions have consolidated several recurring forms of response (legal, security and protection, service provision, and technocratic governance) which overlap in practice but can be analytically distinguished. Reading these responses together highlights how earlier legal and security framings continue to structure later invocations of SCAs even as the language of agency becomes more prominent.

Legal responses are rooted in the framing of CRSV as a serious violation of international human rights, humanitarian, and criminal law. CRSV is linked to obligations to prohibit sexual violence, prevent its occurrence, investigate cases, prosecute those responsible and provide remedies. In the resolutions this appears in repeated calls to end impunity, strengthen justice systems, support legal reform and ensure access to judicial processes. These measures are presented as essential for accountability, yet they organise agency of subjects affected by CRSV in quite narrow ways. These subjects are largely positioned as complainants and witnesses whose expected contribution to response is to report, testify and seek individual redress within institutional procedures, rather than to shape what forms of justice and repair are pursued or how harms are addressed collectively (Antonsdottir 2020). The emphasis on formal prosecution and individualised remedies can be misaligned with victims or survivors’ own understandings of justice, and legal processes themselves may expose them to secondary traumatisation, disbelief and stigma, constraining how they can act and speak within those responses (Charlesworth 1999; O’Reilly 2016; Clark 2021). Security and protection responses are tied to the framing of CRSV as a tactic of war or terrorism and as a threat to international peace and security. Within this register, responding to sexual violence becomes part of the Council’s wider work of conflict management and security governance. The resolutions repeatedly call for protection measures, military training and discipline, the inclusion of CRSV in peacekeeping mandates, vetting of security forces and the use of sanctions or other coercive tools against perpetrators. Protection of “women and girls” features as a recurrent concern, often linked to the legitimacy and effectiveness of peace operations and security institutions. In doing so, these responses draw on and reproduce a “gendered myth of protection” (Åse 2019) in which militarised, masculinised actors are constructed as rational protectors and women and feminised subjects as

vulnerable populations in need of protection. This protectionist framing foregrounds institutional agency – militaries, police, peacekeepers, sanctions bodies – and positions those affected by CRSV predominantly as people to be safeguarded. It therefore risks reinforcing the very hierarchical, gendered relations of power that underpin conflict-related sexual violence (Agerberg and Kreft 2023).

Service provision responses focus on the practical support offered to those who have experienced CRSV. The resolutions refer to health care, psychosocial support, legal assistance, socio-economic services and reintegration programmes, frequently framed in multi-sectoral terms. Such measures are presented as necessary elements of response and are often mentioned alongside legal obligations and protection measures. Service responses explicitly engage survivors' needs and rights, but do so largely through institutional infrastructures, such as judicial and health systems, humanitarian programmes, and state-led social services. In this context, survivors tend to be constructed as recipients or beneficiaries of programmes designed by others. Less formalised forms of support, such as that organised by local communities or survivors, are acknowledged only intermittently. When they do appear, they are usually folded into the broader institutional picture rather than recognised as autonomous sites of authority and expertise. As a result, the everyday, situated practices through which survivors and communities respond to CRSV are marginal to the agenda, even though they may be central to how responses to CRSV are lived and negotiated on the ground (Kreft 2020; Clark 2022).

Technocratic governance responses centre on monitoring, reporting, analysis and coordination. CRSV is integrated into systems that generate data on incidents, patterns and trends, inform sanctions decisions and track compliance with WPS and CRSV commitments. Mechanisms such as monitoring arrangements, listings, indicators and annual reports transform survivors' experiences into information to be managed, enabling the Council and other institutions to oversee and evaluate responses. These governance tools are framed as necessary for effective action, but they also convert survivors' lives into objects of knowledge and control, reinforcing institutional agency over how CRSV is defined and addressed (Nandi 2026). In this way, technocratic responses not only support legal and security measures, but also further concentrate interpretive and decision-making power in international and state institutions. This leaves little space for survivors to shape the categories and priorities through which their experiences are understood.

These forms of response show that CRSV is addressed in the WPS agenda predominantly through institutional lenses, even as their focus and modalities differ. Legal, security and protection responses remain the most consistently visible, anchoring CRSV in frameworks of rights,

obligations and security threats. Service provision and technocratic responses are often intertwined, with services delivered and overseen through the same institutional frameworks, monitoring and coordination mechanisms. This high-level institutional attention and architecture does make CRSV more visible, helping to secure dedicated resources and operational tools through which responses can be organised. Ultimately, however, this concentrates responsibility and control, and agency, in international and state institutions. Survivors and victims are, at points, positioned as active participants in CRSV response, most substantially in Resolution 2467. Yet, they are still most often addressed as subjects to be protected, assisted, given access to justice and services. They are not often depicted as potential agents or actors who could define and govern responses on their own terms. This sits uneasily with the promise of survivor-centred approaches and survivor expertise. It raises questions about how far the WPS agenda can move beyond institutionalised prosecution, protection and service provision towards responses that genuinely redistribute power and expand survivors' agency.

5.5 Limitations and conclusion

This study has several important limitations. It focuses on the Security Council's WPS resolutions as one institutional site and focuses only on textual data, rather than drawing on survivors' own narratives or embodied practices. It does not trace how these texts are interpreted and operationalised in particular conflict settings, how they travel through UN and state bureaucracies, or how they interact with survivor-led or community-based initiatives. The claims made here are therefore about how CRSV and those affected by it are constructed and governed in WPS discourse, rather than about the full range of responses and forms of agency that are produced in specific contexts.

This dissertation argues that the WPS resolutions construct those affected by CRSV primarily as feminised, vulnerable subjects whose relationship to institutions is one of protection, assistance and redress rather than political agency. It suggests that "victim" and "survivor" terminology, and also the categories of "women and girls" and "women and children", offer very limited openings for agency. In most provisions, these subjects appear as recipients of institutional action, with a small number of references scattered across the resolutions – most extensively Resolution 2467 – attaching more substantive roles to survivors. In this context, the survivor-centred approach in Resolution 2467 seems to be taken up as a way of organising existing legal, service and participation measures more sensitively around survivors' needs. It does not, in line with stronger feminist visions of SCA, seem to redistribute power or centre survivors' knowledge. Finally, the analysis demonstrates that the forms of response imagined across the resolutions, such as legal, security and protection, service provision

and technocratic processes, keep international and state institutions at the centre of response. There is relatively little discursive space for responses defined and governed by subjects who have been affected by CRSV.

This analysis also raises questions about how SCAs are implemented in practice, suggesting they cannot be treated, uncritically, as if they are a self-evident good, given the risk they become standardised, service-led models that keep international and state institutions in control and limit the approach's transformative potential.

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Appendix

This appendix lists the key documents and texts that informed the construction of the SCA heuristic device in Chapter 3. It was derived from a documentary audit of UN policy and guidance, and non-UN/NGO frameworks.

1) UN and intergovernmental sources

- a) UN Secretary-General Annual Reports on CRSV (2013-2025)
- b) IASC Guidelines for Integrating GBV in Humanitarian Action
- c) UNFPA Inter-Agency Minimum Standards for GBV in Emergencies
- d) WHO Clinical management of rape and IPV survivors
- e) UN CRSV Field Missions Handbook and DPPA/DPO/OSRSG-SVC policies
- f) Murad Code and related survivor-centred ethical guidance

2) Non-UN and NGO frameworks

- a) ICRC strategies and programme statements on responding to sexual violence
- b) Interagency GBV Case Management Guidelines (IRC/GBVIMS Steering Committee)
- c) USAID/CARE-GBV guidance on implementing survivor-centred approaches
- d) GBV AoR coordination and tip sheets on survivor-centred programming
- e) Mukwege Foundation holistic care models and survivor networks
- f) Other NGO safeguarding and GBV policies emphasising survivor-centred practice