

NEW PERSPECTIVES FOR MASS ATROCITIES' PREVENTION: REDUCING GENDER INEQUALITY AS A MEANS TO REDUCE THE RISK OF GENOCIDE

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Over the last decades, the United Nations produced a consistent number of policies aiming at reducing both the risk of mass atrocities and gender inequality. However, these issues have been the object of “separate” interventions and, until now, gender policies were directed to the female population with the primary goal of improving women’s condition worldwide. Conversely to this trend, and in line with a wide gender literature that proves the correlation between high gender inequality rates and high levels of violence (both interstate and intrastate), this work argues that reducing gender inequality might be one of the possible means to reduce both levels of violence and the risk of mass atrocities. The paper will analyze the UN policies on these topics, it will present the existent literature on gender inequality and violence and finally it will explore the correlation between gender inequality and the risk of mass atrocities, with a particular focus on genocide. This contribution suggests a new perspective for the prevention of mass atrocities: the elaboration of policies aiming at reducing gender inequality, not as a mere means to improve women’s condition, but also as a possible way to reduce both levels of violence (both intrastate and interstate) and the risk of mass atrocities.

Keywords: Prevention – Gender Equality – Mass Atrocities – United Nations –

1. Gender Inequality and Mass Atrocities: defining the object under analysis

During the 1990s, the international community has witnessed an array of humanitarian crises. Although at that time international law already proscribed specific kinds of state behaviors within national borders, genocide, ethnic cleansing, mass atrocities, and mass internal displacement of citizens were still happening. As a result, in 1999, Kofi Annan challenged the international community to develop a way of reconciling the twin principles of sovereignty and the protection of fundamental human rights. Purposefully, in 2001, the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) produced a report on the new concept of the so-called *Responsibility to Protect* (R2P), which was based on the ‘responsible sovereignty’ principle. R2P imposes a responsibility on states not to harm and also to pro-actively protect their populations, along with placing a responsibility on the wider international community to engage in an appropriately authorized and multilateral action (including coercive force, when needed) to protect those populations if the particular states involved cannot or will not fulfill their responsibility.

On the other hand, the UN has tried for decades to improve gender equality worldwide, through landmark agreements such as the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* and the *Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against women* (CEDAW).

The *CEDAW Convention* (1979) defines discrimination against women as “any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, or any other field”.¹ Women in all parts of the world suffer violence and discrimination. They are under-

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¹ UNGA Resolution 34/180 of 18 December 1979, “Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women” <<http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/cedaw.pdf>>, accessed 12. 08.2015.

represented in political and economic decision-making processes. Women lack access to decent work and face occupational segregation and gender wage gaps and they are too often denied access to basic education and health care. The United Nations are aware that gender equality is not only a basic human right, but its achievement has enormous socio-economic ramifications and empowering women fuels thriving economies, spurring productivity and growth. However, UN policies so far aimed at targeting gender inequalities *per se*. Their purpose is the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and girls, the empowerment of women and the achievement of equality between women and men as partners and beneficiaries of development, human rights, humanitarian action and peace and security just because yet gender inequalities remain deeply entrenched in every society. According to the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* (1995), “equality between men and women is a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice, and it is also necessary and fundamental prerequisite for equality, development and peace”.² However, it is noteworthy that until now, UN has dealt with mass atrocities and gender inequality separately. It is working to improve the *Responsibility to Protect* policy framework to deal with genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing, and on the other hand, it is displaying different tools to reduce gender inequality worldwide. Nevertheless, many scholars have argued that a domestic environment of gender inequality and violence results in greater likelihood of violence both at national and international level and, according to the existing literature, there is a correlation between levels of violence, international violence, intrastate-armed conflicts, civil wars, and gender equality.

2. Gender equality and violence

The R2P report notes that “fair treatment and fair opportunities for all citizens provide a solid basis for conflict prevention” and emphasizes the need to protect human rights and ensure a fair distribution of resources.³ Many scholars have argued that a domestic environment of gender inequality and violence results in greater likelihood of violence both at national and international level. According to the present literature, there is a correlation between levels of violence, international violence, intrastate-armed conflicts, civil wars, and gender equality. Societies that are more equitable are supposed to be more peaceful because women have a say over matters of war and peace and they are generally more averse to war than men are. Alternatively, societies that are more equitable may be more peaceful because the norms of inviolability and respect that define equal relations between women and men are carried over also to wider relations in society. The first explanation is based on the assumption that female aversion to violence is inherent in the essential nature of women (essentialist argument), while the second one emphasizes that gender roles and their accompanying attitudes are socially constructed (constructivist argument). The *Essentialist Argument* argues that the aversion to violence and preference for peaceful methods of dealing with conflicts come together with the unique female ability to give birth and the skills of mothering transmitted from experienced mothers to girls and women. In line with this reasoning, numerous studies show that women tend to express attitudes that are more negative to the use of force in various contexts.⁴ While, according to the *Constructivist Argument*, female aversion and male predisposition to violence have less to do with the biological sexes and more to do with certain socially

² Fourth World Conference on Women, “Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action” (1995), <http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/pfa_e_final_web.pdf> accessed 27.07.2015.

³ Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, *The Responsibility to Protect*, Ottawa: International Development Research Centre, 2001, IX.

⁴ (Frankovic 1982; Smith 1984; Togeby 1994; Tessler and Warriner 1997) quoted in Erik Melander, ‘Gender equality and intrastate armed conflict’, *International Studies Quarterly* 49 (2005), pp. 695–714.

constructed definitions of femininity and masculinity with which people identify.⁵ Two central themes in the construction of gender roles reoccur throughout more or less all known cultures:

- Boys and men are prepared for the potential function as warriors whereas women are assigned the role of caring and nursing;
- Gender roles legitimize the subordination of women.

Regardless to these different starting points (biological determinism and social constructivism), the results are substantial. States with high fertility rates are nearly twice more likely to experience internal conflict than those with low fertility rates. States with 10% women in the labour force are nearly 30 times more likely to experience internal conflict than states with 40% women in the labour force. States characterized by gender discrimination and structural hierarchy are permeated with norms of violence that make internal conflict more likely.⁶ In general, we can say that there is a correlation between gender equality and the presence or absence of armed conflict (both intrastate and interstate), human rights abuses, the likelihood of becoming involved in militarized intrastate disputes and the likelihood of using violence first during militarized interstate disputes. An increase in gender equality leads to a decrease in conflict levels. There is also a correlation between the so-called honour cultures, which are characterized by controlling women, their bodies, and sexuality and restricting their freedom of movement, on the one hand and high levels of interpersonal violence on other.⁷ In addition, gender equality is also correlated with a number of state-level indicators including indices of corruption, child survival/mortality and malnutrition, GDP per capita, Global Competitiveness ranking and economic growth rates. There are also hypotheses that oppression of women provides the template for other types of oppression, including authoritarianism.⁸ It is not merely inequality or diversity that spurs intrastate violence but rather systemic discrimination. Socialization, gender stereotyping, and a constant threat of violence all of which insidiously identify women as inferior, maintain structural violence.⁹ Cultural norms create and sustain structural violence. Norms of cultural violence can be found in religion, ideology, language, and art, and among other aspects of culture. Although women have become active agents with notable success in the struggle for equality, violence remains a component of relations between men and women and enduring aspect of cultural violence that underscores gendered structural violence.¹⁰ Gender is an integral aspect of structural and cultural violence since gender forms the basis of structural inequality in all states. Although the power and the role of women vary across states, women have yet to gain full equality in several states. Gender is multi-factored aspect of discrimination with issues of gender determining roles, power relationships, responsibilities, expectations, and access to resources.¹¹ The intrusion of gender inequality throughout all aspects of human interaction thus creates the foundation for structural inequality. When an environment of structural violence supports and legitimizes societal tolerance of violence, the incidence of both inter and intrastate violence is likely to increase, for violence becomes a way of life and a valid tool for setting disputes. Norms of violence and oppression that maintain gendered structural hierarchies result in higher levels of intrastate violence by inuring people to

⁵ (Tickner 1992, 2001; Goldstein 2001; Fish 2002) quoted in Melander, 'Gender equality and intrastate armed conflict', (n 10).

⁶ Jennifer Bond, Lauren Sherret, 'A Sight for Sore Eyes: Bringing Gender Vision to the Responsibility to Protect Doctrine' (2005), United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (UN-INSTRAW) <http://www.fn.se/Documents/FN-info/R2P/Gender_R2P.pdf> accessed 8.1.2015.

⁷ Åsa Ekval, 'Gender Equality, Attitudes to Gender Equality and Conflict', in Marcia Texler Segal, Vasilikie Demos (ed.), *Gendered Perspectives on Conflict and Violence* (Advances in Gender Research, Volume 18), Emerald Group Publishing Limited, pp.273-295.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ C. Bunch, and R. Carrillo, *Global Violence against Women: The Challenge to Human Rights and Development* in M. T. Klare and Y. Chandrani (ed.), *World Security: Challenges for a New Century*, St. Martins Press New York, 1998, pp. 229-248.

¹⁰ T. Sideris, *Rape in War and Peace: Social Context, Gender, Power, and Identity*, in S. Meintjes, A. Pillay and M. Tursher (eds.), *The Aftermath: Women in Post-Conflict Transformation*, London, UK: Zed Books Ltd (2001), pp. 142-158.

¹¹ Mary Caprioli, "Gender equality and civil wars", CPR Working Papers, Social Development Department, Environmentally and Socially Sustainable Development Network, Paper No. 8, (September 2003).

violence and by providing the framework for justifying violence. The link between equality and violence and more specifically between gendered inequality and violence led UNESCO to conclude that, “Inequality between men and women is an impediment to sustainable peace”.¹² Therefore, the consequence could be that promoting gender equality is a means to lower the use of violence in armed intrastate violence as well as in society in general.

3. Methodology and Research Design

This research aims at discovering what impact, if any, gender inequality has on mass atrocities and gross violations of human rights, in particular on genocide. According to the Article 2 of 1948 *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*, genocide is defined as any of the following acts committed with the intent to destroy in whole or in part a national, ethnical, racial or religious group; i.e. killing members of the group or deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part, causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group, imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group, and forcibly transferring children of the group to another group. The main hypothesis of this research is that the higher gender inequality is, the greater the likelihood that a state will experience genocide stands. Beyond theoretical inquiry, this project will use statistical analysis to test the above mentioned hypothesis, taking Nigeria and Somalia in the period from 2005 to 2014, as Test Cases. Given the limited temporal/special domain, caution about the generalizability of any findings is warranted. This research will analyse the overall gender equality in Nigeria and Somalia using the data provided by the World Bank.

At the same time, the author will use some variables to control other possible influences: prior genocides, ethnic and ideological character of the ruling elite, minorities at risk, polity type, trade openness, and state-led discrimination. The aim of this project is to test whether states characterized by higher levels of gender inequality are more likely to experience genocide. If confirmed, this hypothesis invariably leads us to consider the need of greater commitment to reduce gender inequality as one of the means to reduce the risk of mass atrocities. The negative repercussions that gender inequality has at the societal level namely go beyond the negative impact on women. Specifically, the aim of this work is to analyse what is the social status of women in Nigeria and Somalia, to test whether theories that link gender equality and levels of intrastate violence can be applied in case of genocide, to start considering the elaboration of policies aiming at reducing gender inequality, not just as a means to improve women’s condition, but also as a possible way to reduce both levels of violence (both intrastate and interstate) and the risk of mass atrocities.

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Control Variables
Genocide	Gender Equality	prior genocides, ethnic and ideological character of the ruling elite, minorities at risk, polity type, trade openness, and state-led discrimination

¹² Mary Caprioli, ‘Primed for Violence: The Role of Gender Inequality in Predicting Internal Conflict’, *International Studies Quarterly* Volume 49, Issue 2, pp. 161–178, (2005).

The author will use data on fertility rate, female labour force rate, and the proportion of seats held by women in national parliament elaborated by the World Bank to measure gender equality. The period taken into analysis goes from 2005 to 2014. The author will measure control variables using data from Genocide Watch for prior genocides, the ideological character of the ruling elite and state-led discrimination. She will use data from MAR (Minorities at Risk) Project and data from “People under threat 2014 – Report” for the minorities present in Nigeria and Somalia both at risk and ethnic elite, data from Polity IV Country Report for polity type and data from the World Bank for trade openness measurement. The author will extrapolate control variables from Barbara Harff’s model for genocide prevention. The scholar identified a model to assess risks of genocide. Her structural model identified six causal factors that jointly differentiate with 74% in 2003 (nearly 90% today) the thirty-six serious civil conflicts that led to episodes of genocidal violence between 1995 and 2002 and 93 others that did not.¹³ According to this model, the factors that influence the risk of genocide are prior genocide, the ethnic, and the ideological character of the ruling elite, the type of regime, state-led discrimination, and trade openness. The author will compare these control variables, showing the “usual” causes of genocide according to Barbara Harff’s model, with Nigeria and Somalia gender equality data to test the link between gender equality and violence in these specific cases. The aim is to see if it is possible to extend this theory also to gender equality and genocide, to start considering the elaboration of policies aiming at reducing gender inequality, not just as a means to improve women’s condition, but also as a possible way to reduce both levels of violence (both intrastate and interstate) and the risk of mass atrocities.

4. TEST CASES

4.1 Nigeria

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa. However, the country is divided along religious, ethnic, and socioeconomic fault lines, which split the country into a poor and predominantly Muslim north and a rich predominantly Christian south. Currently, the terrorist insurgency of the radical Islamist movement, Boko Haram, in the North Nigeria started a new wave of genocidal massacres and presents a severe threat to the stability of Nigeria. Boko Haram targets people based on their ethnicity and religion and its declared goal is eradication of Christian and western influence in Nigeria: an exclusionary ideology characteristic of a genocidal group. Its methodology is terror and mass murders. Boko Haram (literally translated, “Western Education is Sin”)¹⁴ is a criminal movement led by an Islamic extremist, Abubakar Shekau, who has vowed to destroy every Christian school in Nigeria and to carry out terrorist attacks on Nigerian Government Police and Government Officials. The attacks have killed hundreds of people and Boko Haram proudly claimed “credit” for these mass murders. The attacks aim at polarizing relations between the Muslim North and the Christian South of Nigeria. Since the resurgence of Boko Haram in 2010, it has perpetrated many genocidal massacres against the civilian population. Levels of violence against Christians remained extremely high, with hundreds of cases of physical aggression, the destruction of nearly 300 churches, and the death of 612 Nigerian Christians. In Borno State, North-eastern Nigeria, Boko Haram has murdered over 1.500 people in the last year, and over 3.000 in the past five years. It kidnapped over 200 girls from a Christian school in April 2014 and despite the Nigerian Government’s efforts, none has been found. The

¹³ Barbara Harff, *Assessing risks of genocide and politicide: a global watch list for 2012*, in Birger Heldt (ed.), *Peace and Conflict 2012*, Center for International Development and Conflict Management - University of Maryland, 2012, p. 21.

¹⁴ Countries at Risk – Recent Alerts, Genocide Watch, <<http://genocidewatch.net/alerts-2/new-alerts/>> accessed 22. 11. 2014.

leader of Boko Haram has taken “credit” for the kidnappings and said they will kidnap more girls that are Christian and will sold them into sex slavery in neighbouring Cameroon. May 2014 marked the beginning of a new wave of kidnappings and bombings. Since the summer 2011, Boko Haram has struck many targets in Nigeria, ranging from government buildings, especially the security sector, schools, and churches. Genocide Watch declared the “genocide emergency alert”. There are three levels of genocide alerts:

- 1: Genocide Watch is declared when early warning signs indicate the danger of mass killing or genocide;
- 2: Genocide Warning is called when politicide or genocide is imminent, often indicated by genocidal massacres;
- 3: Genocide Emergency is declared when genocide is actually underway.

Therefore, one can conclude that what is happening in Nigeria is a real genocide of Christians. Genocide Watch declared a stage 9 (extermination) to define the genocide stage in Nigeria.¹⁵ Boko Haram has kidnapped hundreds of children from villages and boarding schools. Many of the kidnapped girls have been brutally ripped from their families and are used as sex slaves, housekeepers, and “wives” for Boko Haram fighters, and most recently suicide bombers. The kidnapped boys are often forced to fight for Boko Haram as child soldiers. To make the boys loyal to Boko Haram, many boys have been forced to kill their own families, leaving the children with no home to come back to. In addition to its heinous crimes against children, Boko Haram has been raiding and capturing villages and murdering their people. Since 2010, Boko Haram has killed thousands of civilians. The situation in Nigeria is critical. The ongoing campaign of terror by Boko Haram threatens to destabilize all of Nigeria and West and Central Africa. If Boko Haram is not stopped, its genocidal massacres will continue.

4.1.1 Control Variables

- a) *Prior genocide since 1955*: yes, 1967 – 1969. During the civil war (Nigerian-Biafran war), over a million Ibos died because the Federal Government deliberately blocked international aid and basic foodstuff leading to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of civilians.¹⁶ This conflict originated from secessionist claims by Ojukwu, the Ibo leader and other peoples in the oil rich Niger Delta Region, to declare the independence of the Republic of Biafra. Only Cote D’Ivoire, Gabon and few other states recognized Biafra. The Nigerian Army encircled Biafra and starved it into submission. This is an important variable in defining the causes that lead to a genocide because, perpetrators of genocide often are repeat offenders. It is the case because elites and security forces may become habituated to mass killings as a strategic response to challenges to state security and, also, because targeted groups are rarely destroyed in their entirety.¹⁷
- b) *Ethnic and ideological character of the ruling elite*: no. The ruling elite does not represent a minority communal group or adhere to a belief system that identifies some overriding purpose or principle that justifies efforts to restrict, persecute, or eliminate certain categories of people.
- c) *Polity type*: partial democracy. Despite repeated efforts to install democratic institutions in Nigeria, ethnic-based factional tensions, endemic corruption, and the overtly political ambitions of the military worked to weaken the fragile mandate of civilian rulers.
- d) *Trade openness*: medium. This variable serves as a highly sensitive indicator of state and elite willingness to maintain the rules of law and fair practices in the economic sphere.

¹⁵ Countries at Risk – Recent Alerts, Genocide Watch, (n 14), p. 5.

¹⁶ Harff, (n 13), p. 5.

¹⁷ Barbara Harff, ‘No Lessons Learned from the Holocaust? Assessing Risks of Genocide and Political Mass Murder since 1955’, *American Political Science Review* Vol. 97, No. 1, (2003).

- e) *State-led discrimination*: yes. Despite legal safeguards against ethnic discrimination in the Nigerian Constitution, many ethnic minorities experienced discrimination by State governments and other societal groups in areas of employment, education, and housing.¹⁸ Local government and social groups have hardly any space for Christians to live their own lives; many Christian's villages are denied basic facilities, such as wells and schools.¹⁹ Religious freedom is constitutionally and legally protected and the government generally respects by it in practice. Nevertheless, in few instances State and local governments have undermined religious freedom by placing limits on religious activities and endorsing a dominant religion.²⁰
- f) *Minorities at risk*: Ibo, Ijaw, Ogoni, Yoruba, Hausa Muslim, and Christian in the North.

4.1.2 Gender Equality

African women in general and Nigerian women in particular are submerged in extreme poverty; they are still victims of all kinds of abuse, discrimination, and exploitation. Domestic violence and rape continue to affect women, and the practice of female genital mutilation and child marriage are pervasive. Despite the existence of stiff laws against rape, domestic violence, female mutilation, and child marriages there have been low rates of reporting and prosecution of these offenses. "Violence against women" includes any act of gender-biased violence that results in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life as systematic rape.²¹ Violence against women affects many women and girls. Particularly vulnerable are women living in extremely precarious conditions. Those who are discriminated because of race, language, ethnic group, religion, handicap, or membership of a minority group, indigenous and displaced women. Physical, sexual, and psychological violence against women between a couple and in the family consists of battery, marital rape, dowry-related violence, incest, or spousal violence. Violence occurring within the community includes sexual harassment, rape, and sexual assault, intimidation at work, forced treatment, abusive medication, the exploitation, and the commercialization of women's bodies. Violence against women also includes contraception imposed by constraint, forced sterilization or abortions, selective abortion of female fetuses and female infanticide. Illegal human trafficking to, from, and within Nigeria for the purpose of forced labour and prostitution is reported to be on the rise.²² According to Women Consortium of Nigeria, hundreds of Nigerian women and girls are trafficked each year into forcible prostitution. They are made to endure slave-like conditions in foreign countries. Due to many factors including the escalating level of poverty, lack of viable opportunities, fallen family values, the attraction to earn foreign exchange that is more valuable than the local currency and the desire to get rich quickly, many parents use any means to force their children into the trafficking ring. Throughout the country, women experience discrimination in employment and are often relegated to inferior positions. Discrimination against women is especially problematic in Northern States governed by Sharia statutes, where women's rights have suffered particularly serious setbacks. There is a high oppression of women and

¹⁸ Nigeria - Freedom in the World 2014, Freedom house, <<https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2014/nigeria-0#.VHg-urD0xdh>> accessed 15. 11. 2014.

¹⁹ World Watch List 2014 – Nigeria, Open Doors USA, <<http://www.worldwatchlist.us/world-watch-list-countries/nigeria/>> accessed 24. 11. 2014.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ A. A. Jekayinfa, 'The status of female citizens in the Nigerian socio-cultural environments: implications for social studies education' Nigerian Journal of Social Studies (2007).

²² *Ibid.*

a continued female relegation to an inferior status vis-à-vis their male counterpart.²³ The vulnerability of women and girls in Northern Nigeria to radical elements and criminals is partly due to religious convictions/laws, cultural traditions and the socio-economic status of women in the region. “Rigid interpretations of Islam and powerful and cultural traditions interact to produce a pattern of gender stratification so extreme as to literally imprison virtually the entire female population in Northern Nigeria”.²⁴ It is common to find young girls in Northern Nigeria hawking petty goods in the streets, or married off to men at a very young age. Male preference to female is widely practice in Nigeria that robs the girl child of their rights to equal education. “The male child is perceived as an asset, highly treasured in the family name”.²⁵ The female child is treated with disregard because she will be married out to another family, and if given education, she will in the future develop another man’s home at the detriment of her biological home therefore seen as a waste of resources.²⁶ This practice is the beginning of the exclusion of females from the social mainstreaming. They are marginalized and regarded as second class citizens, incapable of developing their God’s given potentials as they are considered inferior and low intelligent capable of making good and rational decisions for themselves and others and therefore they are not expected to perform well in school.²⁷ Poverty in a family discourages parents from educating their female children; rather some of the affected girls go on the streets hawking in order to generate income to alleviate the family’s financial problems. The resultant effect on some of these girls is prostitution, unwanted pregnancy, abortion, and ultimately death. In spite of the constitutional guarantees of equal access to education for all by the federal Government of Nigeria, nationwide campaign for the enrolment of all school-age children and programs for adult and non-formal education, there are still traditional obstacles to female education and curricular insensitive to gender and to civil and political rights. Many girls do not go to school because of the ignorance of their parents. They live in the remotest areas and have no idea and access to western education. Besides, since its re-emergence in 2010, Boko Haram has conducted its campaign against secular education and, in particular, the education of the girl child. It regards women as inferior to men and considers Christian women, in particular, as “members of an infidel outcast”. They call for denying modern education to girls and promise to abduct “infidel women as slaves”. Moreover, some parents perceive that if they send their female children to school, girls will not keep good matrimonial homes. The society looks upon females who go to school as prostitutes, expensive to be maintained, proud and in the end they may not have husbands to settle down in their own homes.²⁸ Many men believe that education is not good for wives because they are in school together with men. Such misconception makes it difficult for uneducated parents to send their female children to school and the vicious cycle continues. For these reasons, in spite of the continued efforts of governments, individuals, groups and organizations to bring about world understanding and commitment to the increase access and participation as a necessary and indispensable condition for over all societal development, women still occupy very low scores in the educational indices of access, participation as well as performance. Moreover, Nigerian women have very limited ownership rights. Civil laws entitles women to have access to

²³ Benjamin Maiangwa and Daniel Agbibo, *Why Boko Haram kidnap girls in Nigeria* in Vasu Gounden (ed.), *Conflict Trend*, Issue 3, 2014, p. 51.

²⁴ Larry Diamond, ‘Muslim Hausa Women in Nigeria: Tradition and Change’, *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 25 (4), (1987), pp. 692–694.

²⁵ B. Ezeli, ‘Emerging Trend in Male and Female Undergraduate Enrolment into Universities. A Case Study of South East Zone of Nigeria’ a Paper Presented At International Conference of Transatlantic Research Group in Association with Echeruo Centre for Public Policy (2005).

²⁶ Grace C. Atama, ‘Girl-child education: a challenge for sustainable development in Nigeria’, *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* Vol. 3 (14) (November 2012).

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Kasin – Oghabor, ‘Culture as Constraint in Women Education. A Study of Ukwuani in Delta State’, *International Journal of Forum for African Women Educationist* 1 (1) (2005), pp. 42-48.

land and a few states have enshrined equal inheritance rights into law, but certain customary laws stipulate that only men have the right to inherit and own lands. Women in Purdah (Muslim communities in the Northern areas) cannot leave their homes without permission from their husbands and must be accompanied by a man at all times when in public. Purdah also restricts women's freedom of dress, i.e. Muslim women must be veiled in public. Widows in these regions face the greatest degree of discrimination; they are confined to the home and must keep their heads shaven and wear mourning dress. More broadly, security officials have restricted freedom of movement by enforcing curfews in area where terrorist activity or ethno-religious violence has taken place. Checkpoints and roadblocks are occasionally reported to have used excessive force or extorted money and good from travellers.²⁹

With "fertility rate", the author means the births per woman. In the given period, the World Bank reports that the fertility rate in Nigeria is of 6.00 (unchanged during the considered years). Parameters go from a minimum of 0.00 to a maximum of 8.00. While the proportion of seats held by women in national parliament is 7% and the labour force participation (rate female % age 15 +) is 42,43 (unchanged during the considered years).³⁰

5.2 Somalia

Complex civil conflicts, along with devastating periods of drought over the past two decades, have left the Republic of Somalia a failed state.³¹ Somalia's instability has led to mass atrocities and human rights violations against the civilian population, being committed by all major parties involved in the conflict, especially by Al-Shabaab insurgents, Transitional Federal Government (TFG) forces, and intervening Ethiopian military forces. The current armed conflict in Somalia began in 1991 with the fall of president Barre and the onset of clan warfare. Since then, Somalia has lacked any stable centralized government control. This power vacuum has given way to protracted clan warfare and lawlessness that continues to wrack the country, with thousands of casualties, periods of famine and large refugee movements into surrounding countries. Al-Shabaab has worsened a famine crisis by imposing severe restrictions on humanitarian aid agencies, banning most western aid agencies from entering territory they control and stopping civilians from fleeing the affected areas. Such intentional starvation constitutes genocide under Article 2 of the Genocide Convention. Al-Shabaab, meaning "the Youth" in Arabic, emerged as the radical wing of Somalia's now defunct Union of Islamic Courts, which controlled Mogadishu in 2006, before being forced out by Ethiopian forces. It seeks to spread the Wahhabi version of Islam, while most Somalis are Sufis. It has imposed a strict version of Sharia in the areas under its control including stoning to death women accused of adultery and amputating the hands of thieves. Al-Shabaab fighters would like to overthrow the internationally supported Somali government. They frequently attack government targets as well as neighbouring countries that provide troops to the African Union (AU) force combating Al-Shabaab. Its leaders raise money through taxes and provide a "form of justice" through strict Sharia courts. They recruited heavily from local clans, they established a powerful secret police (the *Amniyat*), and have fielded commanders with names like *Gaal Dille* (Christian Killers). Al-Shabaab also displayed a talent for creating a powerful propaganda. The group relies on assassinations, roadside bombs, and suicide attacks in their rise

²⁹ Social Institutions and Gender Index – Nigeria Country Profile, < <http://genderindex.org/country/nigeria> > accessed 20. 08.2015.

³⁰ Gender Equality and Data Statistic: Nigeria, World Bank, <<http://datatopics.worldbank.org/gender/country/nigeria>> accessed 23. 11. 2014.

³¹ Genocide Watch – Country Profile Somalia, < <http://genocidewatch.net/2014/07/09/country-profile-somalia/> > accessed 30.04.2015

to power. It embraces terror and irregular warfare as tactics of choice. Although Al-Shabaab was able to hold its own against the forces of the Transitional Federal Government, it was unable to do so against Ethiopian, Kenyan, Ugandan, and African Union military troops. Al-Shabaab consolidated its position as the most powerful insurgent group by driving its main rival, *Hizbul Islam* out of the southern port city of Kismayo in October 2009. However, it was wrong footed by a series of government and African peacekeepers offensive and a Kenyan army incursion in 2011. They withdrew from Mogadishu in August 2011 and lost their last urban stronghold (the major inland port of Kismayo) in October 2012, along with the major inland town of Wanla Weyn. These defeats did not cost only territories to the group, but they also created dissension among the group's leadership, and led to a loss of credibility and defection by clans that were previously loyal. However, Al-Shabaab is resilient. The *Amniyat* is still a force with which to be reckoned and a large amount of Somali territory is still under Shabaab control. The organization can obviously still mount cross-border actions and it is unlikely that its leadership will not seek to regain their former position of power. In addition, the group led by Ahmed Abdi Godane, has claimed to be allied with Al-Qaeda. This alliance triggered internal struggles over the group's direction and leadership. While Al-Shabaab must follow a "Somalia-first" policy of necessity, its globally oriented ideology remains aligned with the larger group. Al-Shabaab link to Al-Qaeda was always more than just lip service, it was, at least for a time, the most favoured and successful of Al-Qaeda so-called "affiliates". There have been numerous reports that Al-Shabaab may have formed some links with other militant groups in Africa, such Boko Haram in Nigeria, Al-Qaeda in the Islamist Maghreb, based in the Sahara desert and even ISIS. This prospect of collusion among Islamist extremist group poses a grave threat to international peace and security. Al-Shabaab continues to carry out bombings and assassinations in Mogadishu. It has taken over large swaths of territory. As a result of continuous warfare and forced displacement, Somalia faces serious famine in the coming year.

Genocide Watch places Somalia at Stage 9 on the 10 stages of genocide and issues a genocide and mass atrocities alert.

4.2.1 Control Variables

- a) *Prior genocide since 1955*: yes. Unpunished genocidal massacres perpetrated by Barre's regime, primarily against the Isaaq clan in the late 1980s. From 1969 to 1990, president and military dictator Siad Barre oversaw a campaign of widespread atrocities that decimated Somali civil society. To quash separatist movements in the 1980s, the Somali Armed Forces targeted civilians in the northwest, culminating in the bloody 1988 siege of the regional capital Hargeisa, which claimed 5,000 civilian lives. In 1978, military officers from the Majeerteen clan launched a coup attempt. The Red Berets, military special forces, responded by destroying water reservoirs in Majeerteen areas. As a result, an estimated 2,000 Majeerteen died of thirst. Paramilitaries also waged a campaign of sexual violence against Majeerteen women.
- b) *Ethnic and ideological character of the ruling elite*: yes. Polarization and rule by clans; Islamist rule by Al-Shabaab, both of which have exclusionary ideologies.
- c) *Polity type*: interregnum. An interregnum is a period during which there is a complete collapse of central political authority. In Somalia, there has been no effective central government since its embattled ruler Mohammed Siad Barre, who had rule the country since 1969, fled the country in 1991 at the height of inter-clan warfare. In September 2012, Somalia established a new government but the political framework still appears fragile.
- d) *Trade openness*: low. The base of economy is narrow because the majority of the population is nomadic and highly dependent on livestock and livestock exports for livelihoods. A lack of internal revenues and weak public financial management are serious constraints on the national budget, leaving country

almost totally dependent on foreign assistance. The socio- economic indicators of Somalia remain very low, so the country remains very vulnerable to external shocks. Somalia's narrow economic base remains a binding constraint on the federal government's capacity to generate sufficient revenues to support reconstructions and development in an unstable macroeconomic environment.

- e) *State-led discrimination*: yes. The absence of functional democratic institutions over a period of many years has given way to lawless environment. Residents must also contend with abuses committed by warlords, clan leaders, and the Shabaab in the absence of government control in several areas of the country. The Shabaab continues to control large swaths of the south central region. The group regularly infiltrate various government institutions. Most Somalis share the same ethnicity, but clan divisions have long fuelled violence. The larger, more powerful clans continue to dominate political life and are able to use their strength to harass weaker clans. As a result, no effective or legally recognized political parties currently exist. The political process is driven largely by clans, traditional kinship networks that are pillars of Somali social and political organization. The four largest clans (Darod, Dir, Hawiye, and Digil Mirifle) exercise outsize influence. In addition, with no functioning government in Somalia, Christians are targeted by Islamic terrorists and clan authorities. As the government gains more control state actors are joining the vicious two to persecute Christians. Islamic religious leaders maintain publicly that there is no room for Christianity, Christians and Churches in Somalia.
- f) *Minorities at risk*: Bantu, Benadiri, "Caste groups" (Gaboye, etc.), Hawiye, Darod, Issaq, and clan members at risk fighting.

4.2.2 Gender Equality

Somali women face considerable discrimination. Sexual violence remains widespread across Somalia (notably in the South Central regions), with the increases in frequency consistently observed during military offensives, particularly at checkpoints. According to Gender Based Violence Information Management System, 2891 incidents of gender-based violence were reported between January and August 2014 in Mogadishu alone; of these 28% were cases of rape and 9% were sexual assaults.³² These numbers are regarded as a gross underestimation, as fear of stigma and reprisals inhibits reporting. Most reported cases (81%) involved internally displaced persons, who number more than one million across the country, with members of minority clans exposed to greatest risk.³³ Armed militias allied with the government and clan militias are also accused of forcing girls into marriage. Interview with women's groups in the newly recovered area of Hundur (in the Bakool region) indicate that forced marriage was common, as it was in other areas under the control of Al-Shabaab. Girls forced to marry Al-Shabaab fighters are often abandoned during military offensives, when the force retreats or when they are deemed to be "too old".³⁴ Survivors are frequently forced to marry their rapist as a form of "restitution" ordered by customary courts. In the Puntland region, many women and girls are subjected to sexual violence in displacement camps and avoid pursuing legal action for fear of reprisals by their attackers. In the few cases where survivors choose to report, they are required to pay fees to the police to open a case file and to cover the costs of feeding the accused in detention. There also have been periodic reports of girls raped by members of the national army and police, which erode trust in the legal system. Data from the Gender Based Violence Information Management System indicate that the majority of survivors decline offers of referral to legal assistance.³⁵

³² UNSC, Report of the Secretary General on "Conflict Related Sexual Violence" S/2015/203 (23 March 2015) <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2015_203.pdf> accessed 27.07.2015.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

Women and girls who become pregnant as a result of rape are often further victimized by their families and communities. The main perpetrators of sexual violence are unidentified armed men, though there are also reports implicating the Somali national army and the Somali police force, in addition to Al-Shabaab.

According to the 1975 Family Code, the legal minimum age for marriage is 18 for both men and women, but women can marry at the age of 16 years with parental authorization. Despite the law early marriage is practised in Somalia with 2006 data showing that 22% of girls aged 15 to 19 were married, divorced or widowed.³⁶ Although non-arranged marriages have become more common, reports suggest that arranged marriages, including forced marriages, still take place in the country. Somalia has laws prohibiting rape, however they are very rarely enforced. There are no laws prohibiting domestic violence, spousal rape or sexual harassment. Whilst most incidents of violence go unreported, there is a culture of impunity surrounding sexual and domestic violence in Somalia. Customary approaches to deal with violence against women typically involve making “arrangements” between clans of the victim and the rapist. Women living in internally displaced person camps are particularly vulnerable to rape, abduction and forced marriage, and recent reports have documented a pattern of sexual exploitation by troops, in which sex is exchanged for food or money.³⁷

Although there is a lack of prevalence data, sexual and domestic violence is reported to be a serious problem in Somalia and recent reports suggest that it is increasing. UNICEF reported that 76% of women 15-49 years old consider a husband to be justified in hitting or beating his wife if his wife burns the food, argues with him, goes out without telling him or neglects the children or refuse sexual relations.³⁸

Reports suggest that trafficking of women and girls is a problem linked to pirate activity in Somalia. Women’s physical integrity in Somalia is also compromised by limited reproductive rights, and abortion is only permitted to save the life of the mother. Health care facilities are limited owing to the volatile security situation and restricted humanitarian access.

Before civil war, girls and boys used to go to schools in a similar way and the education was free. However, since the collapse of Somalia’s central government, not only the security has gone, but also the public services were missing during the last two decades, including education for children. The overall children in school are very low and girls in schools are small in number compared to boys (just 36%).³⁹ Somali culture was identified as a general barrier to girls’ education. Within this culture, gender roles are identified and priority is given to boy children over girls and girls are expected to do housework. Some parents believe that the end of girls’ education is the home of her husband and do not expect to see the benefits, so they better prioritize educating boys who they see as supportive. Some parents do not acknowledge the importance of education and, as a result, do not send their children to school. In addition, economic reasons are a major barrier. Lack of money for school fees is the primary factor that prevents children from going to school and long distances to travel to school and limited standards of school facilities are additional barriers.

Although women in the country are not prohibited from inheriting and acquiring land, discriminatory customary and Sharia laws prevail in practice, thus limiting women’s access to land. Under customary law, women are not independent, legal people, and thus are largely excluded from owning land. Ongoing conflict has caused a general loss of mobility in Somalia. The threat of different forms of violence, particularly sexual violence, continues to limit women’s freedom of movement. Recent reports suggest that

³⁶ Social Institutions and Gender Index – Somalia Country Profile, < <http://genderindex.org/country/somalia> > accessed 18. 08. 2015.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Somali Current – Bringing Balance Back to the Somali News, “Access to education for girls in Somalia”, < http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/pdf/wstrust/ISPABE_Somalia_Girls_Education.pdf > accessed 17. 08. 2015.

women are particularly concerned about the extreme interpretation of Sharia law by insurgent groups restricting women's access to public space and requiring women to cover their faces in contradiction with the accustomed practice of Islam and Somali culture. There have also been reports of Al-Shabaab militants imposing a dress code on women.

In the given period, the World Bank reports that the fertility rate in Somalia is of 6.56 (unchanged during the considered years). While the proportion of seats held by women in national parliament is 14% (doubled since 2012) and the labour force participation (rate female % age 15 +) is 36,69 (unchanged during the considered years).⁴⁰

5. Conclusion

Over the years, the United Nations produced a consistent number of resolutions aiming at reducing both the risk of mass atrocities and gender inequality. However, these issues have been the object of "separate" interventions and, until now, gender policies were directed to the female population with the primary goal of improving women's condition worldwide. However, according to the existing literature, there is a proven correlation between gender equality and the presence or absence of armed conflict, human rights violations, the likelihood of becoming involved in militarized intrastate disputes and the likelihood of using violence first during militarized interstate disputes. An increase in gender equality leads to a decrease in conflict levels. Many studies have proven that promoting gender equality can be one of the means to lower the use of violence in armed intrastate violence as well as in society in general. The author focused on Nigeria and Somalia where genocide is underway, in the period from 2005 to 2014 as Test Cases, to see what factors influenced the eruption of violence. Data on the current year are not available yet. The author extrapolated the control variables from Barbara Harff's model prevention of genocide, adding indicators of gender equality to test the correlation between gender equality and the eruption of violence in Nigeria and Somalia.

In the case of Somalia is not possible to "weight" the influence of gender equality for, even if there is a high level of gender inequality, of the six indicators presented in Harff's model, all influenced the eruption of genocidal violence in Somalia. On the other hand, of the six control variables just few influenced the eruption of genocidal violence in Nigeria: the Nigerian – Biafran war in 1967, which was genocide, minority groups at risk and state-led discrimination. On the other hand, the Nigerian polity type and the indicators of trade openness do not influence the risk assessment and the ruling elite does not represent a minority communal group or adhere to a belief system that identifies some overriding purpose or principle that justifies efforts to restrict, persecute, or eliminate certain categories of people. However, there is a high level of gender inequality throughout Nigeria, revealed by the very high fertility rate and the scarce female economic participation, educational attainment, health and survival and very low political empowerment. Given the limited temporal and special domain, it is not possible to generalize the results asserting that there is a proven correlation between gender inequality and genocide. Still, what one can conclude is that in both cases, the eruption of genocidal violence happened in a contest marked by gender inequality. The author is convinced that adding gender indicators to existing risk assessing models of genocide prevention can help in enlarging the perspectives on prevention of genocide. We need more research on this topic to consider a greater commitment to reduce gender inequality as one of the means to reduce the risk of mass atrocities, since the negative repercussions that gender inequality has at the societal level go beyond the

⁴⁰ Gender Equality and Data Statistic: Somalia, World Bank, <<http://datatopics.worldbank.org/gender/country/nigeria>> accessed 20. 07. 2015.

negative impact on women. If confirmed, the correlation between levels of gender inequality and mass atrocities invariably leads to consider the elaboration of policies aiming at reducing gender inequality, not just as a means to improve women's condition, but also as a possible way to reduce both levels of violence (both intrastate and interstate) and the risk of mass atrocities.

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