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A GENDER ANALYSIS OF WARTIME ACTION PROPOSALS IN THE
CASE OF UKRAINE: DISCOURSE ON EXISTING SPEECHES SINCE THE
FULL-SCALE INVASION

MA Thesis

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Abstract

This thesis examines the role of gender in shaping wartime action proposals offered in response to the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine. Grounded in feminist peace research and discourse analysis, the research investigates whether and how the wartime prescriptions articulated by male and female political actors and commentators differ across five countries: France, Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Estonia. Drawing on speeches and public commentary from twenty individuals, equally divided by gender, the analysis identifies thematic binaries such as war prescriptions versus peace prescriptions, military versus non-military approaches, and justice versus human life valuations. The findings suggest that gender does influence discourse, with women more frequently emphasizing the broader consequences of war, such as human suffering and long-term social impacts, while men more often focus on strategic goals. However, this division is not absolute, and instances of similarities emerged across contexts. The research also situates its inquiry within the broader framework of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, which advocates for women's meaningful inclusion in conflict and peace processes. Ultimately, the thesis argues for the necessity of integrating gendered perspectives into international relations and conflict resolution, not only as a matter of equity but as a pathway toward more comprehensive and sustainable peacebuilding efforts.

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1. Introduction

„I also want to address the people of Ukraine. I sincerely want you to understand us: we do not want to harm you in any way, or to hurt your national feelings. We have always respected the territorial integrity of the Ukrainian state [...]“: Vladimir Putin (2014)

As of March 31, 2025, there has been a total of 43,610 civilian casualties since 24th of February when Russian Federation launched its full-scale invasion in the Republic of Ukraine (Statista 2025). This is the way the current President of Russia discursively demonstrates the unharmed of the people of Ukraine and respects their territorial integrity. Three years since the start of the ongoing full-scale war that has truly been ongoing, albeit in lower intensity, since the annexation of Crimea in 2014 (CFR 2025). While the outcomes of potential peace-talks and negotiations are still uncertain, possibilities and solutions that would enable Ukraine to win this war, have circulated the conflict ever since the beginning of it. What exactly has been discussed, is it war or peace, in service of Ukraine or something else? Evidently, a circumstance that nobody has investigated thoroughly. An aspect that could change the perspective of the proposals to war, potentially even the solutions. So, what exactly is being proposed and does the gender of those offering such proposal matter?

Following the collapse of Soviet Union, Ukraine formalized its independence in 1991 with a broad public consensus in favor of sovereignty (Makuch et.al 2024). With the Orange Revolution in 2004 marking one of Ukraine's first major post-Soviet democratic breakthroughs, it demonstrated the will and wish of self-determination and marked the beginning of distancing itself from Russian identity (Makuch et.al 2024). With corruption, fraud and pro-Russian influences around Ukrainian leaders throughout the years, the failure of the association agreement with the European Union in 2013, followed by Euromaidan protests, the stability of the country and for some, its imperatives have been unclear (NYT 2022). Justified with the imperative of protecting Russian-speaking populations, Russian Federation annexed Crimea in 2014 (CFR 2025). Armed conflict erupted in Eastern Ukraine, where Russia-backed separatists declared independence in parts of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts (ibid). Minsk Agreements, led by France, Germany, and OSCE were developed to de-escalate the situation but failed to produce persistent results as low-intensity warfare continued (CFR 2025; Hodunova 2025). In February 2022, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine (CFR 2025). The invasion, framed by the Kremlin as a response to NATO expansion and a need to “denazify” Ukraine, was initially aimed to capture Kyiv and install a pro-Russian

regime with the first 24 hours (NYT 2022). As that failed, Russia launched counteroffensives that retook parts of Kharkiv and Kherson (CFR 2025). As of 2025, the war remains ongoing, with Russia occupying approximately 20% of Ukrainian territory and over 40,000 civilians' deaths (ibid). Four million people are internally displaced, 6.8 million have fled Ukraine and 14.6 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance (ibid). Throughout the war, Ukraine has significantly strengthened its ties to the West, receiving more than \$100 billion in military, financial, and humanitarian support (CFR 2025). As of today, Ukraine is a candidate member of the European Union, aspiring to join NATO, has proposed a peace-plan by President Zelenskyy and has entered negotiations with the United States which are still ongoing (NYT 2022; Zelenskyy 2022; European Commission 2025).

Studies in psychology find that women are better at solving conflicts than men (Dildar, Amjad 2017 15(2) 37-41; Birkhoff 1998; Brahmam, Chin 2005 24(3):197-208). The realm of psychology offers a significant amount of research on the topic of conflict resolution, mainly focusing on the workplace and how gender plays a role in these situations. Even though, certain developments in political studies about gendered perspectives can be seen, women continue to be largely excluded from participating in and mediating peace processes. With the popular image of successful peace agreements being "*dark-suited men – and it is almost always men – emerging bleary-eyed from marathon negotiations*", gender perspectives are often discarded or set aside (Caspersen 2017:9). Outside of feminist research, gender perspectives do not find a wide enough of soundstage even though women play a tremendous role in promoting peace, peaceful dialogue and ending hostilities in armed conflicts (UN 2017). A 2012 UN Women study of 31 peace processes between 1992 and 2011 illustrates this marginalization of women: only 4 percent of signatories, 2.4 per cent of chief mediators, 3.7 percent of witnesses and 9 percent of negotiators were women (UN 2017). According to the United Nations agency UN Women, women's participation in mediation is essential for achieving lasting, positive peace, while also confirmed that female signatories have a positive effect on the duration and quality of the peace agreement (UNIFIL 2022; Krause et al 2018:197-208). Still, women make up just about 2% of mediators in major peace processes (UNIFIL 2022).

So why exactly is the low inclusion of women a problem? Not only is this discarding gender equality but research has found that agreements without female signatories contained more provisions regard to military reform and agreements with female signatories included provisions regard to political, social and economic reform (Krause et al 2018:1001).

Correspondingly, peace-processes with female signatories proved to have a positive effect on the duration and quality of that peace agreement (UNIFIL 2022). Brahnam and Chin (2004) discovered that women are more likely to utilize a collaborative conflict resolution style and men are more likely to avoid it. As collaboration style is generally considered more productive and avoidance more disruptive in the conflict resolution process, women should thus bring more effective results (Brahnam; Chin 2004: 204).

Considering this, United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) was adopted on 31 October 2000 (OSAGI 2000). A first step towards advocating for gendered dimensions in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. The first resolution of its kind to acknowledge both the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on women and girls and the essential role women can play in conflict prevention, peace negotiations, post-conflict reconstruction and security governance (UNSCR 1325). Originally driven by the growing awareness throughout the 1990s of systemic sexual violence in armed conflicts, including those in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, the notable absence of women in formal peace processes gave it even more of an impetus. Advocated for most vocally by the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, helped to push this issue onto the United Nations Security Council's agenda (ibid). The resolution is structured around four interrelated pillars: prevention, protection, participation and relief and recovery which collectively form a comprehensive framework to guide member states and international organizations in integrating a gender perspective into all stages of peace and security processes (ibid). Prevention entails the commitment to reduce conflict-related violence against women and girls and to ensure that early warning systems and preventive diplomacy incorporate gender-sensitive indicators (UNSCR 1325). Protection refers to safeguarding the rights of women and girls during conflict, especially against gender-based and sexual violence with participation calling for the increased involvement of women in peace negotiations, political transitions and security sector reform at local, national and international levels (UNSCR 1325). Relief and recovery emphasize addressing the specific needs of women and girls during repatriation, resettlement and reconstruction, consequences of war (ibid).

Since its adoption, one of the most significant tools for UNSCR 1325 has been the creation of National Action Plans (NAPs), which allows individual states to translate the resolution's broad mandates into context-specific strategies (OSAGI 2000). As of 2024, over 100 countries have adopted such plans, reflecting a growing, though uneven, global commitment to the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda (OSAGI 2000). The United Nations itself has taken gender advisors to peacekeeping missions and training on gender and

human rights has become a standard part of pre-deployment protocols for peacekeepers (ibid). Additionally, various UN agencies and regional organizations, including NATO and the European Union, have developed institutional frameworks to support implementation (ibid). Despite these advances, challenges remain. The resolution is not legally binding and mechanisms for accountability and enforcement are limited (Working Group on Women, Peace and Security 2007). As a result, implementation across states and institutions varies widely. Women's participation in peace processes remains underwhelming as Jana Krause, Werner Krause and Piia Bränfors emphasized in their research on "Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations and the Durability of Peace" that only 13 out of 130 peace agreements between 1990-2014 were signed by women (Krause et al 2018:987). According to UN-Women through the Women in Peace Processes Monitor, in 2023, women made up only 9.6 per cent of negotiators, 13.7 percent of mediators and 26.6 percent of signatories to peace and ceasefire agreements (UN Women 2023). And that proportion of women signatories drops to 1.5 per cent if Colombia's agreements are excluded (UN Women 2023). Even though the UN Security Council introduced a resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in 2000 and the numbers have increased since the 1990s, between 1990 and 2000, only 12 percent of peace agreements included references to women (UN Women 2023). By 2011-2020 the share grew to 31 percent and in 2023, only 26 percent peace and ceasefire agreements mentioned women, girls, or gender (UN Women 2023). There are continued concerns that women are still primarily portrayed as victims rather than as agents of change, stereotypes that Feminist Peace Researchers have fought against since beginning of time.

As the evidence of cases where women were included in conflict resolution negotiations has not proven to rise as it was expected after the adoption of UNSCR 1325 and existing data seems to refer that women have a positive effect in these processes, widening the scope by focusing on gender differences outside peace processes will present another perspective. As existing research has focused on women in peace processes and expects there to be a difference in the way men and women approach war, this thesis looks how men and women with influence outside peace processes discuss proposals and solutions to an ongoing war. Offering another perspective for research that could fundamentally change the way gendered perspectives are accounted for in conflict resolutions and in International Relations overall.

As the previous research in International Relations and conflict resolution has shown, the inclusion of women in peace processes and in conflict resolutions is unapologetically low

even though it has been suggested that women focus on aspects that should result in long term peace or “*just peace*” compared to when they are not included. Still gender perspectives are often disregarded and not seen as vital to research due to societal structures and focuses on quick-fix methods rather than long term and sustainable peace (Bell 2015:3; O’Reilly et al 2015:3-4). The empirical evidence suggests that gendered perspectives are missing or not enough advocated for in research. There is the acknowledgement of the issue, which is that women are often excluded and do not figure in the peace processes but a gap in research whether it is the same outside negotiations and processes. Not enough research made overall that includes women and to demonstrate the fact that the inclusion of women does result in more successful peace negotiations. As policymakers and commentators frame the public opinion, compose potential action proposals or just discuss war, it can be valuable to emphasize and raise awareness over the commonly used discourse and how it has the potential to influence negotiations and conflict resolutions. So, this thesis looks how these policymakers and public commentators both men and women, suggest their action proposals and discover does gender play a role in those action proposals offered to ongoing wars? So, the main argument of this thesis is that there is a difference based on gender when analyzing action proposals to the full-scale war in Ukraine and where women are less likely to warmonger and more likely to focus on broader consequences of war than men. The aim will be to explore whether gender differences play a role in conflict resolution. In this case, proposed actions by men and women, are recommendations for what a state entangled in unwanted war, such as Ukraine, should proceed with its war or peace aims to prevail. Steps envisaged by men and women are discussions of war and/or peace, which emerged because of the analysis. While Ukraine’s vision of solution is victory, it is expected, much for the aforementioned literature, that the proposed steps can be different among men and women (see also: The Guardian 2024). This adds another dimension to the thesis which would be able to discover not only how men and women see potential wartime actions but if the wartime actions proposed for the case of Ukraine, are any different.

This research will hope to contribute to the knowledge of gender perspectives in peace processes, emphasize the existence of it and see if there are differences between men and women when offering wartime action proposals while discovering the understanding of the proposed solutions and does that vary depending on gender.

The structure of this thesis is as follows. The first part is focused on theoretical aspects which discusses the research question, elaborates the concepts used in this thesis, and provides the literature overview where two types of approaches are discussed the field of International Relations and Feminist Peace Research. Following is the methodology chapter which explains the research design, justifying the selection of a qualitative methodology. Details the target of analysis, which is the ongoing war in Ukraine. Continuing with case selection and discussing the choice of methods, specifically the use of discourse analysis. Data collection and analysis processes are disclosed, explaining the thematic coding framework used and finally, the limitations are acknowledged. The third part is focused on the analysis according to the themes discovered with the discussion as the following chapter entailing translation of the results and discussion. Thesis concludes with the summary of the research done and main findings.

2. Theoretical framework

A following research question is formed to find and confirm that there is a difference in the way men and women talk about and discuss war [or peace] proposals. It is as follows: “*Does gender play a role in action proposals offered to ongoing wars?*” “*A gender analysis of wartime action proposals*, which will compare approaches and potential solutions offered by men and women in power as well as commentators to bring into the light the positions of representatives that operate on the sidelines.

2.1 Concepts

Gender

The aim of this thesis will be to explore whether gender differences play a role in conflict resolution and more specifically, in the case of an ongoing war and does gender matter in action proposals during wartime?

Since this thesis is focused on gender analysis, it entails a comparison of wartime proposals provided by both men and women. The concept of gender in this thesis for the sake of the comparative aspect, is binary. This is not to say that the extent of gender only that but to emphasize the spectrum of this specific thesis which is comparative. As it is not possible and appropriate to examine the gender of the chosen representatives, a binary approach is taken. It is of course, a fact that the concept of gender overall runs deeper, is personal and more complex

than the two traditional examples and that is also covered to some extent in Feminist literature which includes the rights and policy-making recommendations for LGBTQ+ communities. Thus, most of the approaches in feminist literature do not only stand for women and the feminist perspective but also defend and propagate for other marginalized groups in society.

When looking at different definitions of gender, most of the time this concept entails different societal phenomena or structures. Catia Confortini defines gender as not just a binary category (male/female), but a hierarchical system that shapes access to resources, power and security in conflict and peacebuilding (Confortini 2006:336). Gender, in her work, is a fundamental factor in understanding how violence whether it be direct, structural and/or cultural, is perpetuated in society (Confortini 2006:342). Confortini finds that gender is a social construct tied to power relations, to which she refers to as „*socially learned behavior and expectations that distinguish between masculinity and femininity*“ and serves as an analytic category that helps organize how people perceive and interact with the world (Confortini 2006:341). She takes Galtung’s violence and gender theories and integrates a feminist perspective in four ways (*Incorporating notions of gender as a social construct embodying relations of power; Mutually exclusive categories that shape our understanding of the world are gendered; Violence and peace can be constituted through language; Violence produces and defines gender identities and, in turn, is produced and defined by them*), seeing that peace- and feminist studies can complement each other (Confortini 2006:341-342). Kiran Kaur Grewal sees gender as a legal and political category that structures people’s experiences of war, justice and post-conflict recovery (Grewal 2021:76). Elise Feron conceptualizes gender as a fluid and contextual identity that is shaped by migration, displacement, and post-conflict experiences and challenges the notion that gender operates the same way in all conflict settings, standing for a context-sensitive understanding of how gender interacts with other identities (Feron 2021:430). Brahnam and Chin define gender in relation to behavioral patterns in conflict resolution (Brahnam & Chin 2005:200). Their work contributes to gendered analyses of diplomacy and negotiation tactics, showing that socially constructed gender roles influence decision-making styles which also consider the experiences as Feron states.

Illustrative examples of all these topics can be brought from real life situations. Gender functioning as a legal and political category that determines war crimes, particularly those involving sexual violence, can be served in the case of The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) where the ICTY failed to categorize rape and sexual slavery as war crimes, treating them as lesser offenses compared to other forms of wartime violence such

as torture or genocide (ICTY 2017). It was only through sustained feminist legal advocacy that rape was recognized as a crime against humanity, leading to important precedents in international law. Without gender-sensitive approaches to justice, entire categories of war-related violence remain invisible or under-prosecuted, disproportionately affecting women and marginalized groups. Gender playing a central role in shaping migration and displacement experiences can be illustrated by the displacement of Ukrainian women and children following the Russia-Ukraine war. As refugees, these women can experience gendered expectations that can vary across national borders. In some cases, they can be seen as temporary migrants looking for a way to contribute to society, in other cases as intruders or victims of broader geopolitical concerns. When trying to exemplify socially constructed gender roles, a 2012 UN Women study of 31 peace processes between 1992 and 2011 found that only 4 percent of signatories, 2.4 per cent of chief mediators, 3.7 percent of witnesses and 9 percent of negotiators were women (UN 2017). This dynamic aligns with traditional gender norms that associate men with hard power (military and political decision-making) and women with soft power (diplomatic and humanitarian work). Christine Bell in her own works but also for UN Women, Marie O'reilly et al and Kevin McNichol define gender as a policy category or political framework. The focus of these authors is on the political and legal issues that gender either constructs or is seen as a solution for these issues (Bell & McNicholl 2019:1; Bell 2015:5; Marie O'reilly et al 2015:5-6). All the previous interpretations include some form of a societal aspect as is defined by Smith and Owens that gender can be understood as the "social construction of difference between 'men' and 'women' (Smith & Owens 2008: 181). Hannah Schaper in her thesis explains this further as the term 'sex' is usually referred to the biological differences between people thereby categorizing them either as men or women (Schaper 2017:12). "Gender attaches to this differentiation based on biological factors, certain expectations on how an individual identified as a man or woman is supposed to behave: "Gender can be defined as a set of socially constructed ideas about what men and women ought to be"" (Smith & Owens 2008:181).

All the previous has demonstrated various interpretations of gender which presents how many understandings a concept can have. It is vital to understand that even though in this thesis, the focus in terms of gender is on the sex, it thus referring to biological differences and categorizing them as men and women, it does not discard other interpretations, nor does it limit the possibilities of the concept. By acknowledging the existence of various definitions, it presents the discoveries made and possibilities to further make including feminist perspectives and that it can coexist within different theories. It helps and demonstrates the need for gendered

perspectives and can thus advocate for bigger inclusion of women and potentially other marginalized groups. The purpose of this thesis is to advocate for gendered perspectives by discovering if there is a difference in wartime discourse depending on gender and whether it correlates to the expected outcome of women being more likely to advocate for long term peace.

Action proposals

Action proposals are discursive engagements with potential solutions to an ongoing war and further steps envisaged based on chosen cases. What do these selected policymakers and commentators think should be done? If they are talks of war or peace and how are they defined. In this case, proposed actions are recommendations for what should be done, so how a state entangled in an unwanted war, such as Ukraine, should proceed with its war or peace aims, and how to achieve this in order to prevail. Steps envisaged by men and women can be discussing war or peace, this will emerge throughout the thesis. While Ukraine's vision of solution is victory, it is expected, much for the aforementioned literature, that the proposed steps can be different among men and women (see also: The Guardian 2024). This adds another dimension to the thesis which would be able to discover not only how men and women see potential wartime actions but if the wartime actions proposed for the case of Ukraine are any different.

Warmongering as a concept in this thesis is not only meant to be seen as an action or behavior that encourages war but more of a bundle of ulterior motives that are beneficial to a specific person (Cambridge Dictionary 2024). These ulterior motives can be political tactics to hold onto power, increase one's popularity or be for financial gain. Margaret Thatcher's rhetoric during the Falklands War provides a vivid example of warmongering: "*The battle of the Falklands was a remarkable military operation, boldly planned, bravely executed, and brilliantly accomplished. We owe an enormous debt to the British forces...They have been supported by a people united in defence of our way of life and of our sovereign territory*" (Thatcher: House of Commons on June 14, 1982). Above can be seen how she discursively framed the war as a test of national resolve, portraying it as a defense of British values and sovereignty, which also significantly boosted her popularity at home at the time.

Thatcher's speech exemplifies warmongering from a woman's perspective. This is to say that even though the hypothesis of this thesis expects women to be less likely to warmonger, does not mean that it does not occur at all. According to feminist literature, women do not focus only on a simplified interpretation of winners and losers, but also aspects of consequences of

war for women, ideas of justice and overall issues of human needs like identity and diversity (Confortini 2006:334). Hence 'broader consequences of an ongoing war' means expanding further from traditional power politics and to look for advocations of collective well-being, displacement or post-war rebuilding. Even though in Thatcher's case there are clear winners and losers, feminist literature assures there to be more dimensions to the case. UN Women and their projects here are an example. An entity focused on women's empowerment and gender equality, supporting some marginalized groups while addressing post-war consequences and contributing to community rebuilding (UN Women 2025).

It is important to emphasize that by having the expectation of women being less likely to warmonger, it does not imply that women are by nature morally superior and more peaceful than men and that the aim is not to side with the traditional feminist approaches that would translate the results as such. Neither is this thesis' goal to support the view of radical feminists of generalizing women's peacefulness that constructs women as passive victims by associating femininity automatically with peace. This thesis does not assume that women equal peace. If done so, it would reinforce the traditional gender stereotype even further. As Thatcher's example demonstrated above, expecting women to be less likely to warmonger does not mean that it would not occur at all.

Based on the existing research this thesis expects there to be a difference in the way men and women approach war.

2.2 Literature overview

When examining the theoretical background of this thesis, it comes down to mainly two theories- International Relations (IR) and Feminist Peace Research (FPR). Even though one theory does not exclude the other, in this thesis, a differentiation is made to emphasize the gap in research. In this research International Relations theories offer an IR perspective to a matter in discussion that includes diplomacy, peacemaking and often a framework like the UN. As international relationships are inextricably linked with the question of war and aims to study and understand it, it is applied in this thesis. Feminist Peace Research focuses on the feminist perspective and can be in any field whether it be law, policymaking or psychology. Discovering the gender question overall, most of the developments have so far been made in the Feminist Peace Research area or in the case of International Relations, in the form of policy recommendations. Some of the most outstanding works in Feminist Peace Research (FPR)

include „*Feminist Responses to Conflict*“ by Kiran Kaur Grewal (Grewal 2021:70-79) from „*Feminist Peace Research Handbook*“ and more by Elise Feron (Feron 2021:428-436). Also, Catia C. Confortini’s takes on Galtung’s violence theories (Confortini 2006:333-367) and Christine Bell in “Principled Pragmatism and the 'Inclusion Project': Implementing a Gender Perspective in Peace Agreements,” and “*Text and Context: Evaluating Peace Agreements for Their 'Gender Perspective*” (Bell 2019:1-51; Bell 2015:1-30). All these authors recognize and highlight the fact that traditional peace and conflict research often ignores or marginalizes gendered perspectives and sees women in supporting roles rather than in actual peace discussions (Grewal 2021:71; Feron 2024). Some developments have also been discovering common features between peace theorists and feminists in terms of identity issues, diversity and multiple realities as opposed to traditional power politics (Confortini 2006:334). This set of literature, among others, brings to attention more of Galtung’s „*structural*“ side of violence as compared to his „*direct*“ side of violence which most traditional literature in peace and conflict studies have focused on.

Aside from feminist perspectives, the more significant works in International Relations (IR) include discussions of the role of women comparatively to men (Krause et al 2018:985–1016; Wise 2023:1-4; Dayal; Christien 2020:1-9; Bell 2015:1-30; O’reilly, Ó Súilleabháin, Paffenholz 2015:1-42). Here, the background of IR reflects the rather scarce academic research on the gender question. As is brought out by Jana Krause, Werner Krause and Piia Bränfors in their research on “Women’s Participation in Peace Negotiations and the Durability of Peace” only 13 out of 130 peace agreements between 1990-2014 were signed by women (Krause et al 2018:987). According to UN-Women through the Women in Peace Processes Monitor, in 2023, women made up only 9.6 per cent of negotiators, 13.7 percent of mediators and 26.6 percent of signatories to peace and ceasefire agreements (UN Women 2023). And that proportion of women signatories drops to 1.5 per cent if Colombia’s agreements are excluded (UN Women 2023). Even though the UN Security Council introduced a resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in 2000 and the numbers have increased since the 1990s, between 1990 and 2000, only 12 percent of peace agreements included references to women (UN Women 2023). By 2011-2020 the share grew to 31 percent and in 2023, only 26 percent peace and ceasefire agreements mentioned women, girls, or gender (UN Women 2023).

So, women continue to be largely excluded from participating in and mediating peace processes. As Nina Caspersen (2017:9) begins her book on peace agreements stating that the

popular image of successful peace agreements is an image of “*dark-suited men – and it is almost always men – emerging bleary-eyed from marathon negotiations*”. Gender perspectives are often discarded or set aside and do not find a wide enough soundstage outside of feminist research even though women play a tremendous role in promoting peace, peaceful dialogue and ending hostilities in armed conflicts (UN 2017). Recalling here an earlier example of a 2012 UN Women study of 31 peace processes between 1992 and 2011 that illustrates this marginalization of women: only 4 percent of signatories, 2.4 per cent of chief mediators, 3.7 percent of witnesses and 9 percent of negotiators were women (UN 2017). According to the United Nations agency UN Women, women’s participation in mediation is essential for achieving lasting, positive peace, which is also confirmed by another research by Krause, Krause, and Bränfors (2018) that female signatories have a positive effect on the duration and quality of the peace agreement (UNIFIL 2022; Krause et al 2018:197-208). Still, women make up just 2% of mediators in major peace processes (UNIFIL 2022). This chapter of theoretical framework presents and discusses the existing literature and developments made first in Feminist Peace Research areas and then in the International Relations sphere.

2.2.1 Feminist Peace Research

Christine Bell is one of the scholars that illustrates the developments made in gendered perspectives in peace processes. Her works include Feminist perspectives but also policy recommendations (“*Principled Pragmatism and the 'Inclusion Project': Implementing a Gender Perspective in Peace Agreements*” 2019:1-51 and “*Text and Context: Evaluating Peace Agreements for Their 'Gender Perspective'*” 2015:1-30). In her article with Kevin McNicholl, “*Principled Pragmatism and the 'Inclusion Project': Implementing a Gender Perspective in Peace Agreements,*” a systematic evaluation of how gender perspectives have been incorporated into peace agreements from 1990 to 2016 are presented. Using the PA-X peace agreement database, which includes over 1,500 peace and transition agreements, they analyze the extent to which gender has been integrated into peace processes and what impact this has had on the inclusivity and durability of these agreements (Bell & McNicholl 2019:1). Their research provides valuable insight into the challenges and progress of gender mainstreaming in peace settlements, revealing that while gender considerations are increasingly acknowledged, their implementation often remains fragmented and superficial (Bell & McNicholl 2019:6).

Still, the inclusion of women in peace negotiations correlates with more sustainable peace outcomes (Bell & McNicholl 2019:6). The article indicates that the inclusion of women plays a particularly significant role in enhancing the inclusivity and durability of peace processes. Policies related to women are more likely to be included in agreements that feature political power-sharing (Bell & McNicholl 2019:12). The focus here is on broader discourse on feminist political settlements, examining how women and gender perspectives are positioned within peacebuilding efforts and whether they hold meaningful influence over conflict resolution processes. The study suggests that gender is frequently referenced in peace agreements, but often as an afterthought rather than as a core framework for conflict resolution which supports the statement that the current thesis is based on which is that there is a gap in research that is based on gender in conflict resolutions. Bell and McNicholl begin by exploring the concept of a "gender perspective" in the context of peace agreements. They emphasize that adopting such a perspective is more than just inclusion of women and that it necessitates a comprehensive approach that addresses the roles, needs and experiences of all genders affected by conflict (Bell & McNicholl 2019:16). This includes considerations for women, men, boys, girls and LGBTQ+ communities, ensuring that peace processes are inclusive and representative of diverse societal segments (Bell & McNicholl 2019:16). They analyze the integration of gender perspectives in peace agreements, where they distinguish interstate and intrastate agreements and look at how the stage of the peace process (e.g., pre-negotiation, ceasefire, comprehensive agreements) affects the inclusion of gender provisions (Bell & McNicholl 2019:11). They find that comprehensive agreements tend to have higher levels of gender references (Bell & McNicholl 2019:27). Authors discover a correlation with political power-sharing that states that agreements which include political power-sharing arrangements show a stronger correlation with gender inclusion measures (Bell & McNicholl 2019:42). Which suggests that when political power is deliberately redistributed, there may be more opportunities to advocate for gender-inclusive policies. So, Bell and McNicholl introduce the concept of "*principled pragmatism*" to describe the dynamic where elite commitments to political equality are leveraged by various groups to advocate for a more pluralistic political settlement (Bell & McNicholl 2019:42).

This approach reflects a pragmatic acknowledgment of existing power structures while striving to expand inclusivity beyond the primary conflict actors. Meaning that when the elite negotiators that often focus purely on conflict parties, expand their discussions to a wider array of social groups, including women, the results are higher societal inclusion and thus more

durable peace processes (Bell & McNicholl 2019:42-43). The *"Inclusion Project"* thus becomes an ongoing effort to embed gender perspectives within the broader framework of political and social restructuring during post-conflict transitions (Bell & McNicholl 2019:5-6). Addressing the research question at hand, „*Does gender play a role in action proposals offered to ongoing wars?*“ the findings of Bell and McNicholl suggest that while there is a growing recognition of the importance of gender perspectives, their implementation remains inconsistent and often superficial. Gender considerations are frequently added as supplementary rather than being integral to the core strategies of conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

To demonstrate the necessity of gendered perspectives even more and to emphasize the depth of the issue, Kiran Kaur Grewal in her chapter, *"Feminist Responses to Conflict: Within, Against, and Beyond the Law,"* in the Routledge Handbook of Feminist Peace Research, critically examines the role of legal frameworks in addressing conflict-related gendered violence (Grewal 2021:70-79). She argues that while legal mechanisms are essential for accountability, they often fall short in transforming the underlying power structures that perpetuate violence (Grewal 2021:71). Grewal advocates for a multifaceted approach that operates within, against and beyond the law to effectively address the complexities of gendered violence in conflict settings. Grewal's analysis highlights that legal responses, though necessary, are insufficient on their own and that legal systems often reflect and reinforce existing patriarchal and colonial power dynamics, which can limit their effectiveness in delivering justice for marginalized groups (Grewal 2021:71-72).

For instance, international criminal law may focus on prosecuting individual perpetrators without addressing the systemic inequalities that facilitate widespread violence. This perspective suggests that action proposals relying solely on legal interventions may not fully capture the gendered dimensions of conflict (Grewal 2021:74). To counteract these limitations, Grewal proposes engaging with the law critically (*"within"*), challenging and resisting its shortcomings (*"against"*) and developing alternative, community-based strategies that transcend legalistic approaches (*"beyond"*) (Grewal 2021:71-75). Applying Grewal's insights to the research question at hand „*Does gender play a role in action proposals offered to ongoing wars?*“ it becomes evident that gender significantly influences both the formulation and potential success of these proposals. Traditional, law-centric approaches may overlook or inadequately address the gender-specific impacts of conflict, thereby limiting their

effectiveness. In contrast, incorporating a gender-sensitive lens that operates, according to Grewal, within, against and beyond legal frameworks can lead to more comprehensive and transformative action proposals (Grewal 2021:75).

Elise Féron, another prominent author in Feminist Peace Research, examines the intricate relationship between gender and diaspora communities, particularly in the context of conflict and peacebuilding in her chapter in *"Gender and Diaspora"* from the Routledge Handbook of Feminist Peace Research (Féron 2021:428-436). Féron argues that diasporas are not homogenous entities, instead, they are shaped by internal gender dynamics that influence their political engagements and contributions to both conflict perpetuation and resolution (Féron 2021:428). Féron highlights that within diaspora communities, traditional gender roles and norms can be both challenged and reinforced. Women in diasporas often navigate complex identities, balancing their roles within their communities and the broader societies they inhabit (Féron 2021:432). This positioning enables them to act as crucial intermediaries in peace processes, leveraging their unique perspectives to foster dialogue and reconciliation (Féron 2021:431-432). However, their contributions are frequently marginalized due to persistent patriarchal structures within both their diaspora communities and the larger political arenas as Féron demonstrates (Féron 2021:431).

Applying Féron's insights to the research question „*Does gender play a role in action proposals offered to ongoing wars?*“ it becomes evident that gender significantly influences the formulation and effectiveness of such proposals. Diaspora communities often participate in transnational advocacy, lobbying for specific interventions or support, so the gendered power relations within these communities can shape the nature of the action proposals they endorse (Féron 2021:432). For instance, male-dominated diaspora organizations might prioritize militarized solutions, while women's groups may advocate for humanitarian aid, social services, and inclusive dialogue. Moreover, the marginalization of women's voices within diaspora communities can lead to a narrow framing of conflict narratives and proposed solutions, often overlooking the needs and experiences of women and other marginalized groups (Féron 2021:432). This exclusion can result in action proposals that fail to address the root causes of conflict or to promote sustainable peace. Therefore, incorporating a gender-sensitive approach that amplifies diverse voices within diaspora communities is crucial for developing comprehensive and effective action proposals.

Catia C. Confortini's (2006) article, "*Galtung, Violence, and Gender: The Case for a Peace Studies/Feminism Alliance*," offers a critical feminist analysis of Johan Galtung's theory of violence, highlighting the need for a gendered understanding of conflict resolution (Confortini 2006:333-367). Her work provides a crucial foundation for answering the research question of this thesis: "*Does gender play a role in action proposals offered to ongoing wars?*". By arguing that violence both produces and is shaped by gender identities, Confortini demonstrates that conflict resolution strategies, if they fail to account for gendered power dynamics, risk reinforcing structural and cultural violence (Confortini 2006:353). Galtung's framework categorizes violence into direct, structural and cultural forms, offering a model for understanding war and peace (Confortini 2006:337-338). Confortini critiques this model for lacking a gendered dimension, arguing that traditional peace proposals often overlook the ways in which gender norms shape both the causes of violence and the solutions proposed (Confortini 2006:341-342). If peacebuilding efforts do not account for gendered experiences of war, they may reinforce existing inequalities, leading to incomplete or unsustainable resolutions.

This perspective argues that dominant (often male-led) action proposals in war contexts can prioritize state security and military solutions over human security and gender-inclusive peacebuilding (Confortini 2006:346-347). Research shows that when women participate in peace negotiations, agreements are more likely to address issues such as gender-based violence, displacement and social reintegration, leading to more sustainable outcomes (Krause, Krause & Bränfors, 2018). Confortini states that failure to integrate gendered perspectives in peace processes may perpetuate cycles of violence by neglecting the root causes of gendered oppression within war-torn societies (Confortini 2006:333). If peace agreements do not address these gendered structures, they risk being short-term solutions that fail to create lasting stability. Confortini's work strengthens the argument that gender is not just an additional factor but a central element in shaping conflict resolution strategies. By integrating feminist perspectives into peace studies, her analysis reveals how gendered power relations can influence the design, implementation and effectiveness of action proposals in ongoing wars (Confortini 2006:341). In answering the research question, her findings suggest that a lack of gender-sensitive approaches weakens peace efforts, while gender-inclusive frameworks lead to more effective and enduring conflict resolutions (Confortini 2006:356).

Brahnam and Chin's (2005) study, "*A Gender-Based Categorization of Conflict Resolution*," provides valuable insights into how gender influences conflict resolution

strategies in everyday life. Their findings indicate that women predominantly adopt a collaborative approach to conflict resolution, while men are more likely to engage in avoidance (Brahnam & Chin 2005:197). Empirical evidence suggests that collaborative conflict resolution, favored by women, leads to more effective and sustainable solutions, whereas avoidance that is more commonly exhibited by men, may delay or obstruct necessary interventions (Brahnam & Chin 2005:204). In peace negotiations, this translates to women prioritizing dialogue, inclusion and long-term peacebuilding measures, while male-dominated decision-making structures may neglect or postpone critical humanitarian concerns due to tendencies toward avoidance (Brahnam & Chin 2005:204). Feminist perspectives as discussed above, support this argument, asserting that traditional conflict resolution models, shaped predominantly by men, often focus on militarized and power-centric solutions. In contrast, women's involvement in peace processes introduces inclusive, community-oriented approaches that emphasize reconciliation, social justice and civilian protection (see Confortini above). Still, political resistance, cultural norms and institutionalized biases restrict women's roles in formal negotiations as already mentioned before, often reinforcing male-dominated decision-making structures that prioritize short-term strategic gains over sustainable peace (Feron 2021:432).

This overview of literature in feminist perspectives presented aspects of policymaking, different conflict resolving strategies, violence theories, law and diaspora communities. Studies made by authors such as Krause, Krause and Bränfors (2018) provided a base which demonstrates that peace agreements with female participation are more likely to succeed and endure over time due to their comprehensive nature (Krause et al 2018:197-208). Brahnam and Chin's research provides a perspective that complements analyses of gendered conflict resolution basing their research on workplace conflicts. Grewal (2021:70-79) demonstrated aspects of fundamental laws that disadvantage women and Confortini exemplified feminist perspectives in Galtung's violence theories (Confortini 2006:333-367). All of these authors tackle the issue of women being marginalized or disadvantaged by the system that we live in and that in many different spheres of the society.

2.2.2 International Relations developments

Academic research in international relations broadly speaking and conflict resolution more specifically on the gender perspectives overall, has so far discovered the scarcity of

women participating in peace negotiations. As was brought out by Jana Krause, Werner Krause and Piia Bränfors in their research on *“Women’s Participation in Peace Negotiations and the Durability of Peace”* only 13 out of 130 peace agreements between 1990-2014 were signed by women (Krause et al 2018:987). According to UN-Women through the Women in Peace Processes Monitor, in 2023, women made up only 9.6 per cent of negotiators, 13.7 percent of mediators and 26.6 percent of signatories to peace and ceasefire agreements (UN Women 2023). And that proportion of women signatories drops to 1.5 per cent if Colombia’s agreements are excluded (UN Women 2023).

Even though the UN Security Council introduced a resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in 2000 and the numbers have increased since the 1990s, between 1990 and 2000, only 12 percent of peace agreements included references to women (UN Women 2023). By 2011-2020 the share grew to 31 percent and in 2023, only 26 percent peace and ceasefire agreements mentioned women, girls, or gender (UN Women 2023). Since we have evidence of very few cases where women were included in conflict resolution and existing data seems to indicate that women may have a positive effect in these processes, it would be most useful to see if increased involvement of women would result in more efficient conflict resolutions. Krause et al (2018) found that agreements without female signatories contained more provisions regarding military reform and agreements with female signatories included provisions regarding political, social and economic reform (Krause et al 2018:1001). Also, Brahnam and Chin, discussed above, (2004) discovered that women are more likely to utilize a collaborative conflict resolution style and men are more likely to avoid it (Brahnam & Chin 2005:204). Relying on previous data in Feminist Peace Research, a tendency seems to form in conflict resolution that is based on gender.

In her analysis for UN Women, *“Text and Context: Evaluating Peace Agreements for Their ‘Gender Perspective’”*, Professor Christine Bell delves into the intricate relationship between gender and peace processes. She examines how peace agreements have historically addressed or neglected gender considerations and the active participation of women (Bell 2015:1-30). Bell's work underscores the necessity of integrating gender perspective to achieve sustainable and inclusive peace which in the context of this thesis is also what Ukraine wants (Zelenskyy 2022:1-7). Bell highlights a persistent trend: women are frequently marginalized in formal peace negotiations (Bell 2015:24). This exclusion is not merely a matter of representation but has profound implications for the comprehensiveness and durability of peace

agreements (Bell 2015:17). By sidelining women's voices, peace processes often overlook critical issues such as sexual violence, gender-specific needs in post-conflict reconstruction and the unique experiences women endure during conflicts (Bell 2015:19-20). This exclusion can lead to agreements that fail to address the root causes of conflict and the specific grievances of half the population, thereby undermining long-term peace prospects.

Bell emphasizes that integrating a gender perspective into peace agreements involves more than just mentioning women, it requires a transformative approach that reconsiders power dynamics, societal roles and the allocation of resources (Bell 2015:22). Adopting such a perspective ensures that peace agreements are not gender-blind but are instead tailored to address the distinct needs and contributions of all genders. This approach can lead to more equitable and effective solutions, as it encompasses a broader range of experiences and insights. The adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2000 marked a significant milestone in acknowledging the role of women in peace and security. Bell's research indicates a positive trend post-UNSCR 1325, with an increase in peace agreements referencing women: from 11% before the resolution to 27% afterward (Bell 2015:3). However, she cautions that mere references are insufficient and that many agreements lack a comprehensive gender perspective and the implementation of gender-specific provisions remains inconsistent (Bell 2015:3). This gap between policy and practice highlights the challenges in translating international commitments into tangible outcomes on the ground.

Here, International Organizations, particularly the United Nations, play a pivotal role in promoting gender inclusivity in peace processes. Bell observes that peace agreements involving UN signatories are more likely to reference women: 14% before UNSCR 1325 and 38% after (Bell 2015:3). This statistic underscores the influence international actors wield in setting norms and standards. However, Bell also notes that highly internationalized agreements, while more likely to include gender provisions, often face significant implementation challenges, especially when there is a lack of genuine commitment from local parties (Bell 2015:3). When addressing the research question, „*Does gender play a role in action proposals offered to ongoing wars?*“ Bell's findings suggest that while there is an increasing acknowledgment of gender considerations in peace agreements, the depth and effectiveness of these considerations vary widely. Gender often influences action proposals superficially, with token mentions rather than substantive integration (Bell 2015:3).

In her 2017 book „*Peace Agreements: Finding Solutions to Intra-State Conflicts*“, Nina Caspersen offers a thorough examination of the processes, challenges and outcomes associated with the formulation of peace agreements in separatist and internal conflicts (Caspersen 2017:1-229). While Caspersen provides a detailed analysis of the political, military and institutional factors that influence peacebuilding, she also touches on the role of marginalized groups, particularly women, in these processes. The research question at hand, „*Does gender play a role in action proposals offered to ongoing wars?*“, is relevant, especially as she underscores the tendency for peace agreements to be gender-blind, overlooking the specific needs and contributions of women in both conflict and post-conflict contexts (Caspersen 2017:97).

Caspersen highlights that peace agreements in intra-state conflicts are often driven by negotiations between the state and armed opposition groups, with a focus on political and military concerns (Caspersen 2017: 1–226). However, the gendered impacts of conflict, such as the prevalence of sexual violence, the displacement of women and children and the destruction of social infrastructures, are frequently underrepresented or ignored in these formal agreements (Caspersen 2017:100-101). This oversight can result in peacebuilding measures that fail to address the needs of the most vulnerable populations, particularly women. As Caspersen points out, gender considerations are often sidelined in favor of more immediate, security-focused goals which do not correlate with the goal of “just peace”. In peace negotiations, the voices of women and marginalized groups are frequently absent, and this marginalization reflects the broader gendered power dynamics within societies where women have traditionally been excluded from decision-making roles in both the public and private spheres. Action proposals for ending conflict often emerge from frameworks that prioritize the interests of powerful, male-dominated political and military elites, who are more likely to focus on military solutions, territorial control and political power-sharing agreements, rather than on issues such as gender-based violence, women's participation in governance, and long-term social reintegration efforts (Caspersen 2017:9).

Applying Caspersen’s insights to the research question, gender clearly plays a significant role in the formulation of action proposals for ongoing wars, especially as the absence of gender inclusivity can weaken the long-term sustainability of peace efforts. When women’s experiences and needs are excluded from the negotiation table, the resulting action proposals may fail to adequately address crucial issues such as post-conflict rehabilitation,

transitional justice and the prevention of sexual violence (Caspersen 2017:99.). Caspersen's work suggests that gendered power imbalances influence the substance of peace agreements. Male-dominated negotiations may prioritize military victories or political power-sharing, leaving little space for proposals that promote gender equality, women's representation in government or broader social and economic reintegration for marginalized groups (Caspersen 2017:97-99.)

Marie O'Reilly, Andrea Ó Súilleabháin and Thania Paffenholz in "*Reimagining Peacemaking: Women's Roles In Peace Processes*" (2015) examined the underrepresentation of women in formal peace negotiations and highlighted the impact of their inclusion (O'Reilly et al 2015:1-35). Their report underscores that while peace processes have evolved to address broader societal structures, the participation of women has not progressed correspondingly which confirms the findings of other researchers and proves the point of the thesis at hand (O'Reilly et al 2015:3-4).

They found several systemic barriers that hinder women's involvement in high-level peacemaking, primary issue being the traditional focus of peace processes on ending violence through agreements between warring parties, typically male-dominated groups (O'Reilly et al 2015:13-14). This narrow approach often excludes women, who are less likely to be combatants but are profoundly affected by the conflict. Prevailing security paradigms prioritize state-centric concerns over human security, marginalizing issues that disproportionately impact women, such as sexual violence and community welfare (O'Reilly et al 2015:5). Institutional systems within multilateral organizations further compounds the problem, as commitments to gender inclusivity are not always matched by actionable influence in negotiations (O'Reilly et al 2015:2). Empirical evidence here demonstrates that women's participation significantly enhances the prospects for achieving and sustaining peace and that peace agreements with female signatories are more likely to be implemented and endure over time (O'Reilly et al 2015:34.).

Authors also demonstrate various models for incorporating women into peace processes. These range from direct representation at the negotiation table to the establishment of parallel forums that influence formal talks (O'Reilly et al 2015:13-14). Highlighted is the importance of designing inclusive processes that not only invite women to participate but also empower them to influence outcomes meaningfully. This involves creating mechanisms that ensure women's voices are heard and their contributions are integrated into the final agreements

(O'Reilly et al 2015:11). Case study in their research was conducted on the peace process in the Philippines where women played pivotal roles both at the negotiation table and through civil society initiatives, contributing to the successful resolution of the conflict with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (O'Reilly et al 2015:19). Their involvement ensured that the peace agreement addressed a wide array of issues, including those specifically affecting women and children, thereby enhancing the agreement's legitimacy and sustainability (O'Reilly et al 2015:19). Therefore, integrating a gender perspective is not merely a matter of equity but a strategic imperative for achieving lasting peace.

In terms of International Relations and conflict resolution, previous research has focused on history and origins of the issue, inclusion of all genders, so not only women, has looked more in depth into intra-state conflicts and the overall gender blindness. As mentioned above, women and gendered perspectives in peace processes are still a rarity due to societal structures and focuses on quick-fix methods rather than long term and sustainable peace (Bell 2015:3; O'Reilly et al 2015:3-4). Interesting from this point on would be to prove and demonstrate whether women compared to men are actually more efficient in their offered solutions when included into conversation about a certain war and are there certain patterns forming that are peculiar to either gender.

3. Methodology

This chapter outlines the research design, case selection, methodology, data collection techniques and analysis methods employed to answer the research question: „*Does gender play a role in action proposals offered to ongoing wars?*“ This thesis investigates how gender influences discourse on wartime action proposals by focusing on the ongoing war in Ukraine. A qualitative discourse analysis is used to examine public narratives from political leaders, policymakers, military officials and media commentators in five different cases: France, Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Estonia. The four bigger countries have been most active with their commentary and interest on the war in Ukraine, some considered to be the potential rebuilders and main financiers of it. Estonia, bordering Russia and being one of the most vociferous small countries, qualifies for the sample all the same as the others by being among the greatest military supporters of Ukraine (Republic of Estonia: Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2024).

The chapter is divided into several sections. First, it explains the research design, justifying the selection of a qualitative methodology. Second, it details the target of analysis, the ongoing war in Ukraine. It continues with the case selection, explaining why the chosen five cases are suitable focus for this study. Third, the choice of methods is discussed, specifically the use of discourse analysis. Fourth, it describes the data collection process, outlining how textual sources will be gathered and categorized. Fifth, the data analysis section explains the thematic coding framework used to identify gendered patterns in discourse. Finally, the research limitations are acknowledged, considering constraints related to scope, selection bias and contextual differences.

3.1 Research Design

This thesis executes a qualitative research design to explore whether and how gender shapes the framing of action proposals in the context of an ongoing war. Qualitative research, suitable for examining social constructs, such as gendered narratives, enables an in-depth and interpretative analysis of language, meaning and power structures. Unlike quantitative methods, which emphasize numerical data and statistical correlations, qualitative methods possess a nuanced understanding of how discourse constructs in this thesis, gender roles in war-related policymaking. The research's approach is inductive, meaning it seeks to discover patterns from observed discourse. It is exploratory in nature, focusing on the ways gendered narratives manifest in public discussions about the war in Ukraine and how they influence action proposals.

This thesis will be focusing on how men and women publicly comment and offer further actions to the full-scale war in Ukraine. The war in Ukraine was selected as the target of analysis for this research due to its geopolitical significance, it being a full-scale war affecting all of Europe and being one of the main security concerns for the EU and wider world overall (EU External Action 2024). Given the intensity of the conflict, a widespread global attention has been on this ongoing war, resulting in a large pool of men and women discursively engaging with it, making the war in Ukraine suitable for studying the discourse around it. The extensive international discourse surrounding it and the varied responses it has elicited. This conflict serves as a possibility for analyzing gendered narratives given the extensive global media coverage, policy discussions surrounding military aid, peace negotiations, humanitarian support, post-war reconstruction and the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325.

To analyze the ongoing war, this thesis focuses on five cases. These cases were selected based on their differing political positions in terms of the target of analysis which is the ongoing war and relationships with Ukraine and Russia. France, Germany and The United States were a part of the Minsk Process and thus have connections and a link to Ukraine (OSCE 2024). These countries are also great powers and that makes them somewhat more influential. The United Kingdom is chosen for their involvement in the conflict and so is Estonia (HM Treasury; Reeves MP 2024). Estonia additionally represents a post-Soviet space, common understanding of the threat that is the Russian Federation and has been portrayed as one of the most vocal supporters of Ukraine (Fedosiuk 2023). Estonia is not taken because it is a major power, but because it has been highly affected by (i.e. Ukrainian refugees) and vocal towards the conflict, both internationally and domestically. Based on that, there is the expectancy of both men and women using stronger discourse in their proposals which can be discovered during research. Estonia is also among one of the greatest military supporters of Ukraine (Republic of Estonia: Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2024). With the history that Estonia has of Soviet occupation, it can provide a deep understanding of Russia's imperialistic tendencies and the political, social and cultural consequences of such domination, hence would offer more concrete solutions to the full-scale war in Ukraine.

In terms of choosing the individuals for representative cases (France, Germany, UK, USA, Estonia), no clear pattern was applied in this thesis. Choices were made based on the availability of the information and their presence in the full-scale war sphere. Meaning, depending on the domain, different individuals can figurate and seem prominent. Also, not all ministries have female representatives in their composition every year hence in this thesis, not all state officials were ministers in the same year. The requirement in this case was the timeline since the start of the full-scale war in Ukraine, so beginning from 2022 up till this day. The same approach was applied when analyzing the text and speeches, that they must fit in this specific timeframe. The sample comprises 20 individuals in total- 10 men and 10 women- selected to ensure grounds for a comparison. Five countries were chosen as cases to represent a wider perspective of gender: France, Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States and Estonia. From each country, four individuals were included: one man and one woman in a position of power (politicians, government officials, policymakers) and one man and one woman commentator or journalist. This was done to ensure a balanced representation of a gender, as well as institutional and media-based discourses. The idea of it is to, to include the

voices of „*bystanders*“ and political activists that are often excluded from the decision-making processes.

For each of the countries selected, two individuals among policymakers were chosen: one man, one woman. In this case, the approach was to first choose between foreign and defense ministers. Decision between those positions depended on the availability of the information and the content of it which had to entail proposals to the war in Ukraine. As for women, the criteria were mainly the official position and the context of the information available. Thus, the scope was widened, since not all governments have female ministers on foreign or defense positions or in the government now at all. So, the previous terms of office were considered. Selection from there depended on the availability of relevant information and the overall exposure in media and society overall. For France, the woman and man chosen were Catherine Colonna and Jean-Noël Barrot. Colonna being the former Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of France and Barrot being the current one. In the case of Germany, Annalena Baerbock and Boris Pistorius were chosen as Baerbock was at the time the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany (now former) and Pistorius the current Federal Minister of Defense of Germany. For the United States, Nancy Pelosi and Marco Rubio were chosen. Pelosi has figured in media with her strong and decisive discourse on the topic of Ukraine and was chosen on purpose to potentially demonstrate the opposite of peacefulness. Pelosi is also a former Speaker of the United States House of Representatives. Marco Rubio is the current United States Secretary of State and has figured in media in the context of the ongoing war in Ukraine perhaps the most with United States being the potential mediator between Ukraine and Russia. Policymakers chosen for the United Kingdom were Elizabeth Truss and John Healey. Truss being the former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, held ministerial office for more than ten years between 2012 and 2022 and having a strong online presence were the reasons for her selection. Healey is the current Secretary of State for Defense of the United Kingdom and has appeared frequently in media considering this ongoing war. For Estonia, the woman and man chosen were Kaja Kallas and Margus Tsahkna with Kallas being the former Prime Minister of Estonia and now the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. Kallas is also known for her strong and resolute discourse towards Russia which makes her the opposite of what the existing literature so far has presented. Tsahkna is the current Foreign Minister of Estonia.

Likewise, in the case of public commentators understood as journalists or academics/experts active in public commentary, two individuals were chosen: one man, one woman. The selection process entailed expertise on the matter of Ukraine and the ongoing war as well as consistent vocality on the matter. In most cases, media outlets had a certain correspondent on the matter of Ukraine, international security or foreign relations. In other cases, some intellectuals and specialists stood out from others due to their appearance in the media and their sought-after opinion by the public. The selection also depended on the existence of relevant information. In the case of France, Sylvie Kauffmann and Bernard-Henri Lévy were chosen as Kauffmann is currently the editorial director and foreign affairs columnist at the French newspaper *Le Monde*, with previous focus on Eastern and Central Europe. Lévy is a public intellectual, frequently appearing in active media on the matters of Ukraine and is known for his resolute discourse. Claudia Major and Sönke Neitzel were chosen for Germany's case. Major is a Senior Associate at the International Security Division at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs in Berlin, focusing on NATO and European security issues related to Ukraine. Neitzel is Chair of War Studies at the University of Potsdam and was chosen due to his appearances in media by giving interviews and commentary on the ongoing war as well as lectures on the Russian war tactics. Sarah Rainsford and Keir Giles were chosen for the United Kingdom as Rainsford is the Eastern European correspondent for the BBC with history reporting from Russia and Giles as an expert on Russian military and security issues. Giles is also the director of the Conflict Studies Research Centre, frequently commenting on the war in Ukraine. For the United States commentaries, Anne Applebaum and Alexander Vindman were chosen. Applebaum is a historian and journalist, focusing on Eastern Europe, authoritarianism more specifically and has proposed deep insights into the war in Ukraine in media. Vindman is a retired U.S. Army lieutenant colonel and former Director for European Affairs at the National Security Council, focusing now on academia with the emphasis on policy towards Russia and Ukraine. Kadri Liik and Meelis Oidsalu were chosen in the case of Estonia, representing the commentator's positions. Liik is an Estonian political analyst and senior policy fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations, focusing on Russia, Eastern Europe and Baltic security. Chosen for her analyses on the war in Ukraine and the Baltic regions. Oidsalu is an Estonian security expert with the background of having worked in the Ministry of Defense and has vocally discussed the war in Ukraine in Estonian media, resolutely critiquing responses to it. There are various choices for these positions, but as was disclosed above, the selection process focused on individuals that were featured more frequently in media, more vocal and with the focus on the war in Ukraine.

In this thesis discourse analysis is used to examine the whole bodies of texts and see whether there are differences in how men and women discuss or offer action proposals related to war in Ukraine. Any visual material used was transcribed. Discourse analysis is particularly useful for studying the social construction of reality, as it allows for an examination of the ways discourse is portrayed, used and framed in political and media texts (Fairclough 1992; van Dijk 2008). Discourse analysis is based on the details of speech or writing that are relevant in the situation and are relevant to the arguments the researcher is trying to make (Gee 1999:88). Thus, for the research where the findings emerge throughout the research and form the nature of it, discourse analysis helps to discover the vitality of the information and assess it depending on the context of it. Even though Critical Discourse Analysis focuses on power dynamics reflected in the language and could potentially reveal deeper dimensions that can correlate to this thesis' research question, Traditional Discourse Analysis looks at the whole and entire text which allows the researcher to apply their own conceptual and theoretical perspectives discussed in earlier sections. In this thesis the Traditional Discourse Analysis approach is essential for understanding the difference in discourse used by men and women and will thus allow to answer the research question. It is used as a tool to discover differences based on gender, how male and female policymakers differ in their discourse on war-related action proposals, variations in gendered narratives across national contexts and the implications of gendered discourse on actual policy decisions.

As language simultaneously reflects reality and constructs it, this approach communicates the urgency and seriousness of the ongoing war suitably (Gee 1999:82). By using discourse analysis, this thesis will attempt to find differences in how men and women discuss and fundamentally frame potential action proposals to the full-scale war in Ukraine. As existing research brings out the absence of gender perspectives, positive correlation between women in peace processes and the duration of that peace, recognizing that dominant proposals in war can prioritize military solutions over human security, a difference in action proposals based on gender is expected.

3.2 Data collection

Collected data was chosen from the speeches and articles since the beginning of the full-scale war in 2022. A wider timeframe allowed for a higher availability of speeches with relevant content. It also ensured a higher chance of including women for the research as not all current governments have female ministers or heads of state. The data collection process

concluded in March of 2025. The data collection follows a purposive sampling approach, selecting discourse that directly relates to action proposals for the Ukraine war. So, the chosen text had to relate to Ukraine and war-related policy proposals made by a political, military or media figure with influence in public discourse.

Media platforms for this thesis were public office statements of the countries, CNN, BBC, specific country outlets like Le Monde or Postimees, and security discussions with the topic of the full-scale war in Ukraine. A tentative course of action entailed public office statements from the people in power and additional outlets for the commentators. Texts were chosen with the imperative that reflected the opinions of individuals as clearly as possible. To ensure this, the data collection process began first from the state's official ministry websites and personal websites of individuals if these existed. From there on, visual material in the form of interviews, security presentations and discussions were considered, followed by academic outlets and journals. In this thesis, textual sources were preferred to avoid possible errors from the transcribing process. One text per individual and in the timeframe from the start of the full-scale war were the approaches taken.

Out of the texts of 20 individuals, five were taken from official websites of the country's ministries. This was the case for policymakers like Catherine Colonna, Jean-Noel Barrot, Annalena Baerbock, Boris Pistorius, John Healey and Margus Tsahkna. Out of all the suitable texts, these being about the full-scale war, entailing proposals to it and in the selected timeframe, the most concise bodies of texts were chosen, a position or a proposal made by the selected individual in the headline. Meaning that the selected text was preferably a longer one, ensuring enough material for the analysis and a with a clear incentive of having proposals and action plans in them. To ensure the suitability of a text, a short sample was conducted for each. If the sample resulted in useful and topical discourse, the text was chosen. In the case of Colonna, the latest interview published on official page of the Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères (The Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs) was chosen from 2023, back when she was the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of France. For Barrot, an interview by the BBC, published on the official page of the French Embassy in London, was chosen as it contained clear prescriptions on Ukraine. In the case of Baerbock, an official press release made on the Federal Foreign Office page on Ukraine. For Pistorius, from the page of Federal Ministry of Defense, a transcribed speech made at the Munich Security Conference panel was chosen. Healey's oral statement as the Defense Secretary on the war in Ukraine was chosen, it

being in a text format and offering clear prescriptions. Directed towards Parliament and published on the official Government page of the United Kingdom. As for Tsahkna, one of the latest comments at the time, published of the Estonian Foreign Ministry page considering the possibility of US stopping its aid for Ukraine, was chosen.

Personal websites were mainly the case for intellectuals and commentators apart from Elizabeth Truss, whose speech in transcribed form was taken from her own page, commenting on the passing of the first year of the full-scale war. Anne Applebaum as a public intellectual had expressed her thoughts on the full-scale war on her personal page, hence the choice of texts from there. A choice was made among other sources as this specific one gave prescriptions and not just an overview of the situation as was the case for many of the commentators and journalists.

Texts taken from different journals and news pages like BBC, The Times, Le Monde and more specific academic articles containing policy-recommendations, turned out to be most common. For Sylvie Kauffmann, the text chosen from Le Monde was focused on her perspectives and opinions rather than just corresponding information which many of the articles contained. Bernard-Henri Lévy's comments were taken from The Free Press, containing a direct headline and proposals on what Europe should be doing. Rather than focusing on wider intellectual aspects of the war which he does on his personal page, the article chosen for this thesis reflects a more concise and directed approach towards the matter. Claudia Major as an academic, has mainly published policy-recommendations and those with a more specific focus. Her text was chosen according to the content which emphasized the need for a strategy for Ukraine, thus specific proposals on what should be done in Ukraine and not overall war prevention methods or foreign policy advice. Sarah Rainsford's text was chosen from the BBC outlet, her being the Eastern European correspondent. The selected text was her latest comment in the timeframe of this thesis and was thus chosen for analysis. Keir Giles also, having mainly academic incentives, had mostly given lectures of the matters of Ukraine and the full-scale war. Having released a collection of policy-recommendations in 2023 (*How to end Russia's war on Ukraine*), focusing on Russian military and security issues and its effects on European security, proposals for a way forward were offered and used for analysis. Alexander Vindman's proposals were taken at the time, from one of the recent textual materials available. As Vindman had recently published a book, most of his appearances touched upon that subject, thus an interview focusing on Ukraine, was selected. Kadri Liik had published

policy-recommendations on the Russian perspective and its consequences on Ukraine. This being one of her most recent publications, it was chosen for the analysis. For Meelis Oidsalu, an opinion piece with security focus was one of the criteria for the source as the Estonian outlet Postimees offers articles with various incentives. The chosen text reflects and focuses on his views in Ukraine as he is mostly covering and reporting on the events in Ukraine.

Video materials used for analysis were selected for Sönke Neitzel, Nancy Pelosi, Marco Rubio and Kaja Kallas. All video materials were transcribed and translated, if necessary, for the analysis. As Neitzel's appearances and comments on Ukraine, aside from published books focusing on the Second World War, were in the video format and in German, an interview given on a news program was selected. This interview entailing his recent comments on the full-scale war in Ukraine. For Nancy Pelosi, an interview given to Vice News, was her personal appearance, reflecting her resolute approach, expanding further from funding issues and her being the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives at that time. As Rubio is the US Secretary of State and one of the key players in Ukraine-Russia discussions and potential peace negotiations, the source chosen reflected at the time, the freshest approach of the US after negotiating with the Ukrainians. Kaja Kallas' speech was chosen from the time when she was still the Prime Minister of Estonia, as she was chosen in this thesis, to represent the Estonian case. As there are countless of statements made by her on the topic of Ukraine, a speech on the topic of Ukraine's path to victory, offering proposals and suggesting actions to be taken in the Copenhagen Democracy Summit in 2023. As this speech presents Kallas' perspectives and proposals in a cohesive and thorough manner and was directed towards a foreign audience, it was chosen over other available materials to avoid excerpts taken out of context.

Discourse analysis was used to identify recurring gender patterns. Focus being on proposals to the full-scale war and variations in the language used by male and female representatives. Key patterns include: *Offering war prescriptions/Offering peace prescriptions; Ending the war/Winning the war; Military based approach/ Non-military approach; Economic Considerations; Problem for Ukraine/Problem for everyone; Value of human life/Loss of life as mundane*. Relevant data found from the chosen outlets was thematically coded into an excel table where it allowed the data to be filtered by gender, country, person and patterns (*see visual representation of the table in Appendix 1*).

3.3 Limitations

Possible limitations in this thesis can arise from the perspective of the researcher. This entails the coding of the discourses, findings in terms of patterns and form the categorization process of the relevant information. All these aspects reflect the individuality of the inductive framework that allows the researcher to define the findings based on their perspective. This will in most cases be different based on the researcher, their background and objective overall which means that findings and analysis will be different in terms of the focus used to detect useful information and perspective used to analyze that information.

A potential limitation in this thesis can be considered the use of one text, speech or interview per individual. Texts chosen for each individual were with the specific focus on proposals and action plans for the full-scale war in Ukraine. Still, people can change their opinions over time thus a wider set of speeches or texts will most likely change the outcome. What an individual thought or suggested at the beginning of the year, may not be the same at the end of the year. Opinions change and for that there is no assurance.

This thesis also analyzes discourse from a specific timeframe which is constantly stretching and elongating. This means that evolving narratives may not be fully captured since new information and statements are released and published almost every day. To ensure the latest and freshest information possible, in the future, the researcher could stretch or plan their data collection process near official security summits, meetings or negotiations. Complications come in from the fact that it is difficult to predict when these types of events will take place. Security summits are usually planned but emergency meetings, guest lectures or commentators and negotiations are not.

The variation of different platforms and outlets can be seen as a potential limitation. To eliminate this wide variety of platforms, in the future, one platform can be chosen where all the used texts and speeches are taken from. This would ensure the cohesiveness of the analyzed texts and speeches but would complicate the information finding process since finding all the necessary individuals and their perspectives on one platform can turn out to be nearly impossible.

4. Analysis

The analysis was conducted through a systematic coding process, identifying recurring patterns and themes across the emerging data. The aim is to explore how various discursive strategies are used to frame the war, its settings and potential paths toward resolution with particular attention on how these suggestions and strategies may differ depending on gender. Patterns discovered throughout the analysis revealed the spectrum of narratives and rhetorical choices observed in the speeches and commentaries which serve as a lens that can be used to interpret how different speakers discursively engage with the war. The gender analysis further enables a comparative dimension, highlighting whether and how male and female speakers engage with these patterns differently in their discursive constructions addressed in the analysis part, and further thoughts of the author addressed in the discussion section.

4.1 Offering War Prescriptions/Offering Peace Prescriptions

This theme is relying most on the overall discourse by considering the whole text entirely, as a principle of discourse analysis, to put together what the individual is really discussing which could be different from what they themselves think they are doing. Out of 20 individuals, 15 (8 women; 7 men) were giving out war prescriptions. Meaning that their action proposals entailed war tactics, military based advice, perspectives of an aggressor and the victim. The overall understanding is that war is ongoing, and the focus is also on the frontline. A clear understanding is visible of military capabilities playing a role in this war. It can be said that more than half of the chosen individuals are discussing war and proposing action plans depending on the fact that there is still a war happening. Discourses reflecting war prescriptions entailed calls for arms, provision of resources, demonstrations of military readiness and the overall attitude and climate of the speeches. Kaja Kallas, for instance, emphasized that: „[...] *our primary focus should be on making sure that aggression ends in defeat and we are prepared to deter to stop its continuation or expansion in the future*“. Her resolute understanding that the war must be won by defeating Russia is an aspect that can be seen throughout her discourse. Similarly, Pelosi is emphasizing military readiness and continued efforts by calling for support: „*The counteroffensive, by admission of the Ukrainians, has not gone as quickly or strongly as they had hoped, but that doesn't mean it won't. We have to make sure that the counteroffensive works*“.

Difference in discourse based on gender in the case of this pattern is minimal as Barrot brought out the main incentive which is „[...] *stepping up our efforts in terms of defence, this means stronger cooperation throughout [...]*“. Supported by Healey is the understanding of common goals and security as he states that this fight is for everybody: „*Ukraine is fighting to regain its sovereign territory, but it's also fighting to reinforce peace, democracy, and security in the rest of Europe*“. Overall, the common understanding is that there is still an ongoing war and that is where the focus is. The negotiation phase is still not in sight or the possibility of it is considered a part of war prescriptions, still focusing on the aspect of an ongoing full-scale war and its tactics. Still, more women offered war prescriptions than men.

Out of 20 individuals, the remaining 5 (2 women; 3 men) offered peace prescriptions. Meaning that they saw the possible action plans for this war to revolve around peace-making, peace negotiations and approached the issue with an attitude of amiability, clear goal of establishing peace in mind and generally more non-military suggestions in terms of action plans. Offering peace prescriptions does not necessarily mean that there is not a clear understanding of an aggressor or that the discussion of peace entails a utopic vision of the situation on the frontline but is rather focused on discussing peace and achieving peace, not on how to win the war and on military efforts. Baerbock advocates for the strongest position possible for the Ukrainians, but is doing that through the discourse of peace, emphasizing that this peace must be on their terms: „*Ukraine can only pursue negotiations on the path to its own peace – and ultimately to Europe's peace – from a position of strength*“. Rubio's discourse revolves the most around peace and its definition: „[...] *there isn't a peace to secure until you have a peace. But there's no way to have an enduring peace without the deterrence peace being a part of it*“. Similarly, the main concept is peace even though there is the acknowledgement of there being something else in the air, in this case deterrence and position of strength that is needed to achieve first, but with the emphasis on peace. Discussions of peace emerged more in the discourses of men than women. Compared to „*offering war prescriptions*“, peace prescriptions were overall occurring less often which means that action plans offered are mostly war prescriptions and the generally discussed phenomenon is war. Still, men offering more peace prescriptions reflects the general attitude towards the full-scale war which is the belief that there are possibilities of peace, perspectives for peace talks and seeing this as the most viable course of action whether it correlates with the overall motion of the situation or not. As a result, more women discussed war prescriptions than men and more men discussed peace prescriptions than women.

4.1.1 Defining Peace

Relevant in this case is also the discourse around peace. This revolves around what kind of peace is discussed, what kind of peace is seen for Ukraine, what peace is and what it is not. It is important to keep in mind that discourse about peace in this case does not mean that the individual is automatically offering peace prescriptions or is thus peace oriented. This chapter demonstrates different kinds of names for peace. What kind of discourse was chosen when talking about peace and what does peace means for them.

Two different approaches emerged from the speeches, what peace is and what peace is not. When describing an occurrence, one possibility is to create an opposition. To define what it is not and thus applying the opposite of that. Out of 20 individuals, 10 (5 women; 5 men) gave peace an illustrative name. This means that equal amount of men and women defined what kind of a peace they are talking about or should be put into practice in the case of Ukraine. Peace was given 8 different names across this thesis which were: „*lasting peace*“, „*peace of Ukraine*“, „*peace of Europe*“, „*permanent peace*“, „*enduring peace*“, „*just peace*“, „*sustainable peace*“ and „*long-standing peace*“. This discourse reflects who the peace is for, what kind of characteristics does peace in the context a full-scale war needs to have and how peace is understood overall. What peace is not what defined in three different ways: „*no insecure peace*“, „*no dictated peace*“, „*peace populism of US*“. These reflect versions of peace that have no future perspective, that should not be strived for and that does not serve Ukraine. Two men and one woman chose this method of discourse to illustrate their understanding of peace. Claudia Major proposes further steps on how the West can establish itself and its values in possible negotiations that are still yet to come: „*By increasing economic pressure through sanctions and military pressure through weapons delivery, Trump could send a signal that he will not accept a dictated peace on Russian terms*“. Peace on Russian terms should not be accepted. Meelis Oidsalu is also referencing the weight that the US and its representatives are bearing by emphasizing the responsibility and the role that they play in this war: „*[...] there is no plan on what Estonia or the European Union will do or say to their populations if the worst-case scenario happens, and Ukraine suffers a military defeat due to the erratic peace populism of US Republicans*“. Military defeat cannot happen as it is the worst-case scenario and so far, the actions of US Republicans are threatening to bring it to just that. Healey is referencing potential peace talks and negotiations, reminding that if rushed, it will not bring satisfactory results: „*We all want the fighting to end, but an insecure peace risks*

more war“. Based on that, it can be said that men are more likely to describe peace for what it is not, than women. Choosing to define peace by opposing it.

4.2 Winning the War/Ending the War

Initially meant to emphasize pro-Ukrainians, pro-Russians and everything in between, these patterns in the end, resulted in less radical evidence. Based on findings, this theme illustrates what is seen as a possible course of action for this war. „*Victory*“ correlates here with „*winning the war*“ and is considered equivalent. „*Ending the war*“ reflects an understanding that victory is not the main goal and that the war needs to be stopped at any cost. In this case, „*stopping the war*“ is considered the same as „*ending the war*“ due to an unemphasized motion towards a side that should come out of it victoriously, justified in most cases, with the loss of human lives. Out of 20 individuals, 9 (7 women; 3 men) saw victory for Ukraine as the solution to this war. This means that 7 women and 3 men used discourses like „*winning the war*“ or „*victory [for Ukraine]*“ while discussing or proposing potential plans for this war. This entailed discourses of resolute approaches towards this war, clearly referencing or calling out the aggressor state [Russia]. Accompanied by emotional appeal, a comparative stance was taken either by condemning Russia and referencing its actions or calling for support and speaking for the success of Ukraine. Pistorius makes it clear as his example illustrates the views of men using the „*winning*“ discourse by stating the will to win this ongoing war, pledging continued support and calling others to do the same: „*That means we will support them in fighting and winning this war*“. Similarly, an example by Colonna is demonstrating further, which was the case for most of the women, what does the winning of this war mean and is referring to the rights that Ukrainians are fighting for:

„So Ukraine’s victory will mean, firstly, the failure of this aggression, with the withdrawal of Russian troops from the territories within Ukraine’s borders recognized since 1991, and thus the restoration of its sovereignty and territorial integrity“: Catherine Colonna

Here, victory is defined as what it will mean once it happens and what is seen as an acceptable course of action to ensure it. Restoring sovereignty references to it being taken in the first place and by whom is further assured, by Russia being seen as the one that needs to withdrawal, meaning admitting its defeat or at least retreat. In the context of expanding the understanding

of winning, similarly to Colonna, Applebaum is reflecting the need for recognition for the Ukrainian capabilities in her discourse. Victory could potentially be achieved in various ways, but Russian defeat must be the common nominator:

„This war will end, in other words, only when the Russians run out of resources—and their resources are not infinite—or when they finally understand that Ukraine’s alliances are real, that Ukraine will not surrender, and that Russia cannot win“: Anne Applebaum

The understanding was common between men and women in this case, as men also emphasized the defeat over Russia as the right course of action: *„Clear and unequivocal defeat of Russia will bring both immediate and longterm benefits for European security“: Keir Giles*. When discussing *„winning the war“*, the use of *„we“* and *„we must“* are reoccurring pronouns, reflecting a common responsibility, unity and the understanding that Ukraine’s victory is for the sake of all Europe. Meaning, that it is in the interest of everyone [at least in Europe] for Ukraine to win this war. This is also a reference to Ukraine already being *„part of the group“*, belonging to the European Union with it having candidate status, demonstrating approval for the accession process. This notion was especially evident in women’s discourse as can be seen in Pelosi’s case where her framing of the proposals is focused over the collective aspect: *„We must win this war, it must be won, and we cannot not win because we have withheld something“: Nancy Pelosi*. Similarly, Elizabeth Truss formulates her response as she adds the economic dimension to the argument: *„We need to keep winning the argument, and we need to keep defending our values with hard security and economic security, if we are to succeed“: Elizabeth Truss*.

Suggestions and further action plans are also composed in a prohibitive form directed mostly towards *„ourselves“*, meaning the audience and thus all of Europe mainly. Referencing to decisions made in the past, plans that failed or approaches and impressions that turned out to be false, Truss is monitoring in her discourse, referring that there will still be the need to follow through with measures put in place for Russia: *„[...] we must not be complacent when that war is won“: Elizabeth Truss*. Cautioning note is similarly, detected in Applebaum’s discourse as she looks back and states that not enough help has been given to the Ukrainians: *„Since this war began, we haven’t been able to imagine that the Ukrainians might defeat Russia, and so we haven’t tried to help those who are trying to do exactly that“: Anne Applebaum*.

Looking at this from the gender perspective, a clear difference can be noticed. Seven women used „*winning the war*“ or „*victory*“ in their speeches. This is two times more frequent than men (used only 3 times). What this confirms is that there is a difference, with women emphasizing the winning aspect of the war which is more inclined with the Ukrainian leader’s perspective and the needs of the Ukrainian people (Zelenskyy 2022:1-7). This also reflects that women in this case, speak for Ukraine and clearly state the terms of victory and whose victory it seems to be. Discourse of winning means the defeat of something or someone and in this case, women clearly stated the aggressor, the one who needs to be defeated thus demonstrating a more resolute stance.

Men, on the other hand overall, refrain from discourses like victory for Ukraine or winning the war which can mean different things. For one, it demonstrates the tactic of „*keeping all of the options open*“ like in the case of Marco Rubio where to make negotiations appealing for Russia, he emphasizes that there is no military solution for this war and does not speak of any sort of victory or winning:

„The only way this conflict can end is through negotiation. That's the only way you're going to have peace is through negotiation and so we need to start that process and it is hard to start a process when people are shooting at each other and people are dying and so our hope is that we can stop that, all these hostilities, and get to a negotiating table [...]“: Marco Rubio

So, their discourse was often more cautious or indirect, possibly indicating a preference to avoid alienating allies or making definitive predictions about military success. To add more depth into the matter, refraining from speaking of victory or winning can also reference the reality that there are rarely any winners in war. Meaning that when innocent people are dying every day, how can anyone be called a winner. But what also must be considered is that Ukraine, its leaders and people, have defined what winning and victory means for them and that is defeating Russia and claiming their right to their sovereign territory (Zelenskyy 2022:7). From this point of view, when sided with democratic rule of law, there cannot be any speculation on who needs to **win** this war.

One man and one woman also saw „*stopping the war*“ a viable course of action. Reflecting the position that this war needs to end as soon as possible to stop people from dying. From one perspective, it demonstrates a high value for human life, on the other, it demonstrates no clear

position on who is the aggressor in this war just that this situation must stop. Even though the number of times this discourse was used is low, it is worth mentioning since it reflects another possible action plan for this war.

It can be said that more women see Ukraine „*winning the war*“ or needing to secure „*victory*“ than men. Women are more adamant to express this motion in their discourse and feel more passionate towards this matter considering that pronouns „*we must*“ and overall resolute understanding of a clear aggressor were constant and reoccurring appearances. For women, especially those in power, it seems as they feel a higher collective responsibility due to their position. Almost as having achieved this level of authority means that they need to make it count and cannot afford to stay neutral. As taking a clear position demonstrates strength and decisiveness which makes them seem more serious, reflecting resolute leadership.

4.3 Military-Based Approach/Non-Military-Based Approach

This pattern demonstrates the fundamental difference in how men and women conceptualize the means to achieve an end in the war in Ukraine. The „*military-based approach*“ focuses on continued or increased armed resistance, defense or offensive measures, while the „*non-military-based approach*“ reflects diplomacy, negotiation, continued sanctions and other tools beyond physical combat. While these approaches are not always mutually exclusive, speakers tended to emphasize one over the other, reflecting their perceived solutions to the conflict. Out of the 20 individuals, 9 women and 10 men advocated for a „*military-based approach*“ in their discourse, using language that focused on defense, weapons, battlefield strategy or military aid. Military-based discourse included strong calls for support through arms, continued resistance and the use of military strength as the decisive tool in ending the war. These statements often positioned Ukraine’s military capabilities and the support thereof as essential to protecting democratic values or deterring further aggression. The use of urgent, determined and strategic language was common, as was the reference to military aid in specific quantities or terms. In the context of military-based proposals, discourses of both, Baerbock and Pistorius, reflect the similar approach that men and women had while discussing action plans for Ukraine. Funding aspect kept in mind: „*The EU is currently preparing a substantial new multi-billion-euro package for artillery, air defence, and drones*“: Annalena Baerbock,

alongside tactics that will help to survive: *„Effective deterrence is our life insurance“*: Boris Pistorius.

Women who adopted the *„military-based approach“* frequently framed it in terms of taking action and playing a part in this war. Military defeat is favored, reminding that more needs to be done in terms of military aid and emphasizing this war is for everyone's security. Sylvie Kauffmann in her discourse reminds that a frozen conflict or any other scenario other than winning, will turn to Russia's advantage: *„[...] they still refuse to give Ukraine the military means to win the war and escape the scenario of a frozen conflict, which would turn to Moscow's advantage“*: Sylvie Kauffmann. Kallas specifies that military defeat on the battlefield is where the war must be won: *„The aggressor must be defeated on the battlefield“*: Kaja Kallas. Women's discourse often drew attention to the necessity of military approach, demonstrating that this is the way to approach the war and potential solutions. In these cases, weaponry and defense systems were discussed not as instruments of war per se, but as tools for framing the conflict and safeguarding justice by not giving in to the aggressor and ensuring a way that this war is seen.

Men in support of the *„military-based approach“* often leaned into discourses of defense, support and strategic suggestions, resulting in somewhat unexpected outcomes in terms of the strength of speech. While women emphasized the need to act, taking the reins and sending a clear message by being readying for arms, men framed their suggestions in the form of defense. Pistorius in his discourse, is emphasizing appearances and formulating any action as defense: *„Together with our Allies we are sending a strong message to Putin: If any Russian soldier puts their boots on Allied territory, we will defend every inch of it“*: Boris Pistorius. Similarly, focuses Healey on defense, adding the unity dimension, hinting that this is the common approach of all the allies: *„We will actively deter and defend against Russian threats, working in partnership with our allies“*: John Healey. Sönke Neitzel directs his defense focus on a more specific target, readying for arms: *„We do have to prepare for the defense of the Baltics“*: Sönke Neitzel. Men's language reflected preparations needed for a cohesive defense, mentions of Allies were frequent and thus plans proposed for the European Union and NATO. A sense of strategic and more detailed proposals entailing military tactics was more common compared to women. While there was not a clear difference between men and women in this case, women proved to use more dominant and resolute discourses in their proposals as more men had a

higher use of specific military language, demonstrating their general use of language and their perspectives in offering potential solutions.

In terms of „*non-military-based approaches*“, 6 women and 4 men emphasized alternatives to military thinking and approach. This entails action plans like negotiations, support in terms of belief and overall diplomatic influences. As mentioned above, these two opposing measures were not always mutually exclusive but results still proved that women generally attained a more „*non-military-based approach*“ while men a more „*military-based approach*“. Those who emphasized a non-military approach discussed alternative routes to resolving the conflict like diplomatic pressure, sanctions, peace talks, humanitarian aid and long-term political solutions. In some cases, military solution to the conflict was discarded, claiming that defeat in that way cannot be possible or is only possible if Russia stops their attacking. This was reflected from the discourse of Neitzel: „*[...] I believe it's simply not militarily possible to get the Russians out again*“: Sönke Neitzel. Persuasion is seen as a tool for winning: „*[...] Ukraine and its Western allies have to persuade Russia to stop fighting. We have to win this war*“: Anne Applebaum. Similarly to Neitzel and Applebaum, Rubio is referring to other means of solutions, depending and waiting on the actions of Russia:

„[...] now we all eagerly await and the Russian response and urge them strongly to consider ending all hostilities so people will stop dying, so bullets will stop flying, and so a process can begin to find a permanent peace“: Marco Rubio (USA)

Focus on terms of discourse is on the reasons why military approach is short-sighted and will bring more damage. From a gender perspective, women emphasize alternative measures, these being economic possibilities and gains, tactical ways to influence the „*big decision-makers*“ like Donald Trump, especially in the light of his recent statements, and strategies to gain some leverage in this war. Kallas insists that economic imperatives have a significant role in this war, and they need to be considered: „*So Ukraine's win also depends on our ability to dry up Kremlin's war machine and income to finance its aggression*“: Kaja Kallas. Major in her discourse is describing diplomatic approaches, suggesting different ways on how to make the Ukrainian victory more appealing:

„[...] instead of opposing Trump's deal, Europeans should look for ways to influence and shape it. [...] They would need to convince Trump that it is in

his personal interest and that of the US that Ukraine emerges from the war as a strong sovereign state, even if it fails to fully restore its territorial integrity“: Claudia Major

Action proposals that women generally offered focused on different ways in framing the situation, these being mostly about the attitude taken while approaching the war and potential solutions. Exercising all means of influences and doing that on all fronts of the war whether it is behind the negotiation table or strategies on the frontline.

Men who adopted a „*non-military-based approach*“ tended to focus more on discussing through different scenarios. „*What would happen if...*“ and „*what I would*“ or „*would not suggest*“ forms of discourse. Proposals of Neitzel were an example in this case: „*I think the best-case scenario will be a ceasefire on the current front line, which is unsatisfactory, but then Odessa would still be a port, so to speak*“: Sönke Neitzel. Similarly, shared Vindman his suggestions: „*We should be investing in places like Ukraine or Taiwan - other places around the world that look like they could be the targets for the aggression of our adversaries*“: Alexander Vindman. Pronouns like „*I think*“ or „*I believe*“ were most common amongst men. Even though this thesis is analyzing personal opinions and suggestions which means that an „*I*“ form could be expected, it has not been the norm. Most of the discourse is presented in „*we*“ form, as discussed in „*Ending the war/Winning the war*“ chapter.

From a gender perspective, while support for military measures was evenly distributed, women showed a greater tendency to blend military and non-military approaches, maintaining a resolute approach towards the aggressor while offering alternative solutions and means to influence the war. Men, on the other hand, maintained a defense-oriented approach, leaning more towards military solutions but proposing them in a more subtle way, frequently connecting their solutions with different organizations. While both men and women spoke in favor of military-based solutions, women were more likely to engage with non-military approaches or emphasize them alongside traditional security approaches. This confirms an expected gendered nuance in discourse where women are more likely to alternate between two approaches whereas men tended to emphasize only one. Women are thus more likely to consider and offer different approaches and solutions to war than men.

4.3.1 Calling for Justice

From the „*military-based approaches*“, a sub-pattern emerged discussing justice which turned out be characteristic only for women. At first, an example used to express military approaches, formed into a clear pattern expressing the need for Russia to take responsibility over the damage caused. Four women constantly demanded justice for Ukraine in their discourse, calling out the aggressor and emphasizing the need for punishment. Done so with the purpose of taking accountability, demonstrating the need for it and proposing ways to implement it for the sake of the Ukrainian people. Truss and Colonna stated that justice must be a priority for all: „[...] *justice must be our shared priority. There will be no peace without justice*“ (Colonna), and that following through on the acceptance of blame, is crucial: „*We need to make sure that Russia pays for the crimes that it has committed and that it is held to account for the appalling atrocities and war crimes—all of them*“ (Elizabeth Truss).

Justice is reflected in being a vital part of achieving peace. The process of winning this war must bring some consolidation to the people of Ukraine, meaning that Russia must pay for its actions and take accountability for them. As disclosed, this type of discourse was evident in the case of women only and even though through a small number, a pattern emerged that could not be discarded. This emphasizes the importance of redemption that is seen necessary to move on after the war, referencing to the feelings of the people left behind who in most cases have proven to be women (Feron 2021:432). Having no men discussing this aspect in war demonstrates the distance between the needs of those on the frontline and the needs of post-war reconstructionist (usually women). While not present on the battlefield, women are central to the preservation of everyday life, the maintenance of communities and the post-war reconstruction of institutions and civil society. Thus, a vital part of any sort of solution or action plan. By having only women use this in their discourse, confirms the existence of a difference that is based on gender. What is seen as a necessary part of war and its solutions by women, is not valued the same for men. Thus, it can be said that women exercise a more confrontational approach towards the aggressor by demanding justice and requiring acknowledgement over the damage caused.

4.4 Economic Considerations

This pattern emphasizes economic aspects of the war, rebuilding and developing. As it emerged through a clear and distinctive pattern amongst others without opposition emerging to it, it will be analyzed accordingly. This theme entails discourses of sustainable peace, economic resilience, societal reconstruction and the institutional aftermath of the war. Among the 20 analyzed individuals, 5 women and 2 men engaged in discourses that emphasized „*economic considerations*“. This gendered pattern suggests that women are more likely to embed their action proposals within broader considerations of post-conflict recovery, structural rebuilding and the long-term impact of war.

Women who emphasized economic perspectives framed the war not only as a battle to be won militarily or diplomatically, but as a war with far-reaching repercussions. Their discourses stressed the economic fallout, proposals on how to earn profit in times of war and human capital loss. Attention was given to post-war economic stability, infrastructure redevelopment and psychosocial consequences for civilians, particularly women. These discourses often included references to the economic dependencies created by war and emphasized the necessity of planning how to ensure that Ukraine and Europe more broadly, emerges stronger and more self-reliant after the conflict. Kauffmann calls for the preservation of local industrial sector: „*But where there is industry in wartime, it must be protected*“ (Kauffmann). Kallas is similarly, emphasizing the importance and the weight that effective economy plays in war: „*So Ukraine's win also depends on our ability to dry up Kremlin's war machine and income to finance its aggression*“ (Kallas 2023). Women also brought up the institutional preparation needed for post-conflict governance, such as stabilizing the local economy and restructuring national industries to reduce reliance on conflict-prone sectors. There was a strong emphasis on the continuity of democratic systems and ensuring that the post-war state does not replicate pre-war inequalities or dysfunctions. Applebaum's discourse calls for reflection of the current situation as she offers her proposals on how to keep the Ukrainian economy functioning:

„The means to prevent that kind of international catastrophe are right in front of us, in the form of Ukraine's drone factories, the underground sea-drone laboratory, the tools now being designed to enable the Ukrainian army to beat a larger opponent—and also in the form of our own industrial capacity“: Anne Applebaum

In the case of men, long-term issues such as rebuilding, economic fallout or social reintegration were often omitted or minimally addressed. This reflects a prevalent framing of war as a finite event, rather than a long-term disruption with multidimensional consequences usually proven to affect women the most. Only two men addressed the economic aspect of the war. In these instances, their comments were broader than those of their female counterparts. They tended to approach economic issues with the „*support in all areas*“ generalization without the societal depth seen in women’s discourses. Healey is calling allies to all have a unified approach of providing support across all possible dimensions: „*That’s why UK support, alongside allies, is so important. Military, economic, industrial and diplomatic support*“ (Healey). Vindman’s proposal is more specific, emphasizing a potential weakness in security and offering to minimize it with economic tools: „*We should be investing in places like Ukraine or Taiwan - other places around the world that look like they could be the targets for the aggression of our adversaries*“ (Vindman 2025).

From a gender perspective, this emergence reflects how women often adopt a more in-depth view of conflict, seeing it not only as a political or military confrontation but as a disruption of entire societies with enduring consequences. Their action proposals reflect this multidimensional awareness, as they tend to integrate future-oriented thinking, often calling for concurrent planning for reconstruction, social cohesion and economic independence. This may be tied to women’s marginalized positioning in peace processes, prompting a broader consideration of human and structural dimensions that are often overlooked in short-term state-centric policy agendas. Men tended to not see “*economic considerations*” as vital as women. Demonstrating the unawareness over the reality of those left behind or lack of importance on the economic development and rebuilding. As such, their action proposals may risk reproducing a model of conflict resolution that delays or deprioritizes meaningful post-war planning.

Ultimately, the pattern of “*economic considerations*” reveals a gendered divide in the importance of economic effects and long-term consequences, with women more likely to engage in anticipatory thinking that extends beyond the battlefield. This confirms that gender plays a role in shaping the content and priorities of action proposals offered to ongoing wars, specifically by introducing alternative dimensions and timelines to peacebuilding and recovery. The difference based on gender is evident with women being more focused and emphasizing the economic rebuilding and overall development, than men.

4.5 Problem for Ukraine/Problem for Everyone

These discursive patterns explore how speakers frame the scope of responsibility and the collective nature of the war in Ukraine, whether it is treated as a localized crisis “*problem for Ukraine*” or as a broader challenge implicating all of Europe and the international community “*problem for everyone*”. This framing significantly influences the kinds of action proposals that are given and based on the results, most are seeing the full-scale war in Ukraine as common threat. Among the 20 individuals analyzed, 2 women and 2 men explicitly framed the war as primarily Ukraine’s problem, while 9 women and 8 men situated the war within a broader collective struggle, emphasizing shared responsibility and strategic unity. These differences in discourse highlight how actors conceptualize solidarity, threat perception, distance themselves from the war and political obligation across gender lines.

Those who attained the “*problem for Ukraine*” perspective often positioned Ukraine as a distinct, though supported, actor. In these cases, action proposals focused on assisting Ukraine in its own fight, be it through weapons, humanitarian support or sanctions, without deeply embedding the conflict into the broader values or fate of Europe and its allies. The war was described as Ukraine’s burden, where Western responsibility lay in enabling Ukraine to defend itself, rather than jointly confronting the aggression as a shared existential threat. Major’s discourse reflects this occurrence as she portrays the defeat to be Ukraine’s and not everyone’s: „*Over time, both a continuation of the war on its current trajectory and a “failed deal” scenario carry a high risk of a Ukrainian defeat through exhaustion*“ (Major). Similar approach is evident from Healey’s discourse as he directs his proposal towards Ukrainian people: „*Ukrainians need to strengthen their frontline in the east and they will look to hold the territory in Kursk*“ (Healey). While such statements are not necessarily unsupportive, they reflect a degree of detachment, portraying the war as external to the speaker’s own national or regional identity. These discourses tended to emphasize aid and support rather than co-resistance or collective security, potentially framing Ukraine as an isolated victim rather than an integrated part of a European or democratic “*we*”. This subtly implies that Ukraine is the battlefield, but not necessarily part of the community whose survival is at stake.

In contrast, the majority: 17 out of 20 (9 women and 8 men), adopted the “*problem for everyone*” approach. In this perspective, Ukraine is not a distant other, but a part of a shared

community, and the war is treated as an attack on common values, regional security and democratic institutions that are shared. Speakers using this discourse emphasized solidarity, common identity and a collective enemy, reinforcing the idea that the war threatens not just Ukraine's sovereignty but the stability of the entire Western world. This understanding was consistent among both men and women, who invoked inclusive language like "we" and "our values," presenting Ukraine not just as a recipient of aid but as a fellow actor within a unified front. These discourses also emphasized the moral imperative to act, with war seen as a test of shared commitment to peace, democracy and human rights. War thus becomes a mirror of collective ethics and action proposals are grounded in mutual interest rather than charity or distant sympathy.

Women frequently tied collective framing to values-based action, emphasizing shared suffering, moral responsibility and social interdependence between Ukraine and the wider world. They often framed inaction as a failure not only of strategy but of human solidarity, making the war a deeply personal and ethical concern. Kallas is framing it for all of Europe: „Ukraine's fight for its existence is also a fight for peace and dignity in Europe“ (Kallas), while Colonna is referring to all the peoples: „[...] we'll defend the right of peoples to live in peace, freedom and sovereignty in their country“ (Colonna). Pelosi's discourse is directed towards Ukrainians and the collective us, demonstrating different focuses that can be used to express unity: „The people of Ukraine are fighting for their democracy and ours. They're fighting for democracy writ large“: Pelosi. Welfare of the Ukrainian people is linked to the welfare of all peoples. „When they suffer, we suffer“ approach. Unity and the belief in it, is seen as the key with emphasis on the fact that no one will stand alone.

Men who adopted the "problem for everyone" framing often connected it to allied security, emphasizing different organizations like the EU and NATO. Their proposals entailed alliance cohesion, Europe as a whole and prevention of regional escalation. The inclusion of Ukraine in this collective logic was thus more pragmatic, anchored in deterrence strategy with suggestions. In Margus Tsahkna's discourse everyone is mainly Europe: „[...] it is clear that Europe must move from words to action and demonstrate its ability to support Ukraine and counter Russian aggression [...]“ (Tsahkna). Pistorius does not specify his „we“ but refers to international order as his proposals are meant for the wider international arena: „We stand for cooperation and support, not hatred and destruction. We stand for freedom and the rules-based international order that benefits us all“ (Pistorius 2025).

From a gender perspective, the „*problem for everyone*“ discourse highlights how men and women both engage in inclusive and collective reasoning with almost no difference, when offering action proposals. Instead of responding to a distant war, they suggest acting within a shared struggle. The “*problem for Ukraine*” discourse, present in both genders equally, tended to isolate responsibility and make action conditional on Ukrainian resilience. Meanwhile, those who viewed it as a “*problem for everyone*” proposed not only more comprehensive actions but also situated these actions within a shared community, ultimately portraying Ukraine as part in the security and identity of Europe. While women’s discourse on „*problem for everyone*“ was slightly more common, there was no distinct difference compared to men. Men tended to reference more different types of institutions and on the ways to implement their work, while women focused on the overall unity and on the common fundamental values that views everyone as the same. There is a difference in what kind of unity is emphasized but the overall message is the same across both genders.

4.6 Value of Human Life/Loss of Life as Mundane

This pattern highlights the ways that speakers bear in mind and emphasize the loss of life in Ukraine in their discourse when suggesting action proposals. The “*value of human life*” category reflects discourse that directly acknowledges and emphasizes the protection of civilians, the suffering of individuals and the moral responsibility to prevent further loss of life. The contrasting pattern, “*loss of life as mundane*” did not emerge among the speakers, however, a lack of emphasis to casualties, particularly among male speakers, suggests an implicit downgrading of its importance or seeing the matter just as a part of war. Out of the 20 individuals analyzed, 7 women and 2 men explicitly demonstrated the “*value of human life*” in their discourse.

In the case of women, discourse surrounding the „*value of human life*“ frequently connected strategic decisions directly to humanitarian outcomes. Life was framed as the ultimate cost of war and a circumstance that cannot and should not be accepted in any way. Women emphasized the civilian toll of the war, referenced human suffering, mentioning children and underlined the necessity of minimizing further casualties through their proposed actions. Meaning that not only was the loss of life condemned but proposals on how to further manage to save as many lives as possible, were the pervasive occurrences. Sarah Rainsford’s discourse while offering

proposals, focused on possibilities that could benefit the civilians in war: „*Trump can point to Putin's pledge to halt attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure for 30 days. If that actually happens, it will bring some relief to civilians*“ (Rainsford). Kallas reflects on the fundamental values of the Russian people, as she discursively demonstrates that loss of human lives is seen as an inevitable aspect of war in Russia: „*As long as territorial expansion is considered to be a virtue in Russia, and human lives lost are its acceptable side effect, Russia's aggressions will sooner or later return*“ (Kallas 2023). Similarly to Kallas, Applebaum is also weighing on the consciousness of the Russian people as she sees the acceptance of Ukrainian territory not being Russia, the base for a potential cease-fire:

„[...] must the Russians come to accept that Ukraine is not Russia. At that point, there can be a cease-fire, a discussion of new borders, negotiations about other things—such as the fate of the more than 19,000 Ukrainian children who have been kidnapped and deported by the Russians, an orchestrated act of cruelty“: Anne Applebaum

Demonstrating the emotional appeal by showing sympathy and references to the everyday impact of war on ordinary citizens were common among women. The statements often revealed a deep concern for both immediate and long-term consequences of human suffering, not only the reality of the moment but also what will happen in the future. Emphasizing human life was seen to frame the war itself, insisting that any successful resolution must prioritize human dignity, the protection of civilians and not dismiss the cruelty against the Ukrainian people.

Men who referenced the „*value of human life*“ did so in different settings and seemingly with different motives through discourse. While two men acknowledged casualties, a strategic context could be detected. Framing the protection of human life as a moral endpoint did occur but to add on, these references were typically used to justify particular policy choices, such as delaying certain military escalations or arguing for cautious strategies to avoid “*unnecessary losses*”. References to human life were tied to waiting for someone else’s decisions which gave the impression of evasion from responsibility. Rubio in his discourse passed on the responsibility over the situation to Russia, referring to the US having done its part but emphasizing the main goal which is to stop people from dying: „*[...] now we all eagerly await and the Russian response and urge them strongly to consider ending all hostilities so people will stop dying, so bullets will stop flying, and so a process can begin to find a permanent peace*“ (Rubio 2025). While Rubio did not specify the who the people dying are, Pistorius

makes it clear in his discourse, emphasizing the suffering of the Ukrainian people specifically: „*Putin’s illegal and inhumane war is bringing unspeakable suffering to the Ukrainian people*“ (Pistorius 2025). Examples from male speakers included strategic considerations to minimize casualties and reflections on the difficulty of launching certain offensives without incurring heavy losses. While no explicit discourse presenting human loss as “*mundane*” was discovered among the analyzed speeches, the absence of detailed discussion regarding civilian casualties, especially in speeches given by men which generally relied heavily on military aid, strategy and territorial defense, suggests that human life was often considered as inevitable part of war. Life was not openly dismissed, but it was frequently backgrounded in favor of discourses focusing on military capabilities, strategic alliances or territorial integrity. So generally focused on what has to be done and what will be done but minimal explanations and references to those enduring the effects and cruelty of war.

From a gender perspective, women’s greater emphasis on the value of human life illustrates a different prioritization in their action proposals. Women consistently framed the protection of human life as integral to any successful outcome, forming humanitarian considerations into strategic discourse. Men, demonstrated a tendency to instrumentalize discussions of casualties within broader tactical frameworks, indicating a lower direct engagement with the human cost of war. Thus, while both genders discussed military and strategic issues, women were significantly more likely to root their proposals in the defense of human dignity and the minimization of suffering. This gendered difference highlights that women’s discourse more often values life as an active consideration, whereas men tended to treat it as an inevitable aspect of war. These findings support the argument that gender plays a significant role in how solutions to ongoing wars are framed, with women more inclined than men to integrate ethical and humanitarian concerns alongside strategic goals.

5. Discussion

Out of six different patterns that emerged from the analysis, four, one being a sub-pattern, proved there to be a difference in the way men and women discuss and propose action plans to the full-scale war in Ukraine. Meaning, that in four cases of six, there was a difference in action proposals based on gender. Patterns where no clear difference emerged were *Offering war prescriptions/Offering peace prescriptions*; *Military based approach/ Non-military approach* and *Problem for Ukraine/Problem for Everyone*. Generally, most individuals saw full-scale war as a problem for everyone, referring to unity (*among all peoples and overall Europe*) and similar fundamental values. War prescriptions were most common as half of the individuals whose speeches were analyzed, were discussing war, revealing that based on discourse, the stage of the full-scale war in Ukraine, was still on the battlefield. And the main approach revolved around military-based proposals, having differences only in the content as women's approach turned out to be more blended while offering military proposals than men. In the end, the analysis did not result in a difference between men and women in this case. As existing literature expected there to be clear difference between men and women where men prioritize military solutions over human security and gender-inclusive peacebuilding, the results of this specific case are unexpected since no such difference was detected. Men used specific military language more often and women's military proposals were more varied in terms of proposed actions, but this does not confirm that men are more likely to focus on military aspects of an ongoing war since their distribution was almost the same.

Analysis showed that discussions of peace rather rare instances, meaning that proposals were made mainly for warfare. Still, to disclose the matter in full detail, compared to men, women discussed and gave war prescriptions slightly more than men. Men in contrast, gave slightly more peace prescriptions than women. Even though discussing war does not automatically assume that women are more prone to war and thus more likely warmongering, this could possibly be hinting to war-waging which correlates to this thesis' definition of warmongering. Based on that, it cannot really be said that women are thus more war oriented and warmongering than men as the difference in discourse was one-off. What it can translate into, is that these men are more focused on the possible future perspectives of peace-making, attempting to direct the phase of the war from battle to negotiation, trying to emphasize the overall goal that is peace oriented and not focused on the frontline activities. These results also help to question the stereotype that women are more peaceful by nature, demonstrating the

possibilities and depths that opinions can reflect and form. What these results show is that women were mainly focused on the war aspect as being active in warfare, engaged and clear in the mission are not necessarily aspects to condemn. Considering the absence of women in peace processes and behind negotiation tables, assertive and active engagement in discussions about ongoing wars and proposing action plans to it, may improve the overall image of women in conflict resolutions. Demonstrating the opposite of the stereotypical assumption where women are believed to be more peaceful than men and where femininity can be connected to being passive as opposed to assertive and engaged, could thus help to improve the overall position of women in politics and society overall by making them more visible. This does not mean that all women act in service of their gender by bearing in mind a bigger purpose in all their endeavors, but it also does not eliminate the possibility of it.

In the case of the rest of the three patterns and one sub-pattern (*Winning the war/Ending the War; Economic Considerations; Value of human life/Loss of life as mundane* and *Calling for Justice*) the difference between men and women, was evident. For „*Winning the war/Ending the War*“ women saw victory as a solution to this war and the need for it more than men. Confrontational discourse and understanding that Ukraine/*(collective we)* must win, was generally the only viable option for women. A clear vision of who must be the winner and who must be defeated. Men proved to be more cautious in their expressions, maintaining the approach of „*keeping all the doors open*“ for any future developments, possibly negotiations and dismissing the impression that the only solution is victory. This type of approach can be seen as weak and two-faced by not showing full support for Ukraine and holding back on the true nature of the aggressor, but it is proving to be less resolute on the fact that there must be a clear winner and a loser. Naturally, the one who attacks the other with the imperative to kill and dominate, is the one at fault and needs to take responsibility. This fact cannot and should not be challenged but is defeated on the battleground the only option, is debatable. Even though it is morally right, it does not mean there are no other means to do that. Seeing winning and victory on the battlefield generally as the only solution, it can be said that in this instance, women’s discourse reflects an understanding and a need for a clear winner and a loser. Still, women advocating for victory, winning the war and defeating Russia, are serving the wishes and objectives of the Ukrainian people and their President Volodymyr Zelenskyy (Zelenskyy 2022:1-7) so rightfully condemning the aggressor for its actions is not warmongering.

As a sub-theme, *Calling for Justice* reflects the biggest difference between the discourses of men and women in this thesis as it emerged only from the texts of women. Discourses of justice did not occur in men's texts but formed a clear pattern in women's. This is an example of women referring to a necessary part of war and its solutions whereas men do not consider or notice it at all. Based on the analysis, it can be said that women exercise an approach towards the aggressor that demands justice, requires acknowledgement and accountability over the damage caused, considering the psychological effects of the war and proposing steps for post-war healing. Possibly trying to prevent further hostile attitudes that could escalate conflict in the future. This correlates with existing literature which suggested that women focus more on long-term consequences of the war, than men. As justice in this thesis, resulted discursively in the form of acknowledgement and the need for accountability of the aggressor, bearing in mind the possibilities to move on post-war, it can be said that women discuss and offer action plans that consider the long-term effects of an ongoing war more, than men.

Economic Considerations emerged through distinctive pattern, confirming even further that more women are discussing and proposing long-term solutions to war than men. Focus on what happens after the war and possibilities for rebuilding, demonstrated humanitarian aspects that men tend to dismiss, as confirmed by existing literature (Feron 2021:432). Men compared to women, can be considered more short-sighted in terms of societal issues affecting locals in warzones, than women. Based on the analysis, *Value of Human life/Loss of Life as Mundane* resulted in women having greater emphasis on the value of human life, than men. Meaning, that women are generally more likely to root their action proposals around or considering the value of human life. Emphasizing the effects of deportations, children being taken from Ukraine to Russia and displacement being one of the results of war, emerged mostly in the discourses of women. This difference reflects the extent that men in their action proposals on the results of this thesis, are able or willing to go. As only two men out of 10, expressed empathy and regret over the lives being lost in this full-scale war, it raises concern over the reality that male policy-makers live in. As women have shown to be the main rebuilders of post-war states as they generally do not serve on the battlefield, it is most alarming that one half of the decision-makers dismiss their perspectives and needs.

Results of the analysis did not detect a clear instance where women were more prone to warmongering than men. In four cases, women were less likely to warmonger as they

discussed an aspect of war that men did not in the form of justice, had more emphasis on the long-term aspects and consequences of war in two cases and discursively showed a higher value for human lives, it can be said that women are less likely to be advocates of warmongering than men. As disclosed earlier on, this thesis did not suggest that women do not warmonger or possess tendency to do so but was expecting them to do so less likely than men.

Unexpectedly, a higher amount of findings resulted in no difference between men and women, as existing literature expected the difference to be more often occurring. Even though the amount of patterns that were equally distributed between men and women, occurred more often than expected, when it comes to seeking justice, economic considerations and long-term consequences of a war, women are more oriented to seeking it. Women generally tended to have a more blended approach while providing solutions to this war, had more emphasis on the value of human lives, offered more long-term perspectives and called for accountability for the damage caused by the aggressor, as opposed to men. Women focused more on possibilities of rebuilding the country post-war, value of human lives, economic developments for functional society and overall, more blended approach in action plans, than men. Based on these results, it can be concluded that there is a difference in the way men and women offer action plans to ongoing wars that is dependent on gender. Difference that resulted more positively for women as they had multidimensional action plans that did not only focus on military discourse, but on the socio-economic aspects as well. This confirms that gender does play a role in action proposals and that the inclusion of women in negotiating processes are more likely to offer diverse and more varied plans which can positively affect the duration and quality of the peace agreement signed. Thus, the inclusion of women into negotiations and peace-processes would not only rise the level of inclusion for women but would ensure more representation for the people affected by war, more focus on long-term aspects, like justice and responsibility, that proved not to be focal points for men. Including women would advocate for gender equality and minority groups, address and avoid the stereotypical outlook on women affected by war merely as victims.

The focus of this thesis was on the gender differences where the target of analysis was the ongoing full-scale war in Ukraine and where the analyzed discourse about the full-scale war was chosen among five cases to provide a broader representation of a gender. Differences between opinions of chosen individuals were expected, hence the reason to expand the choice of cases from one to five. It cannot be denied that the inclusion of five cases did not influence

the results of this thesis. The impact of different societies, cultures and political landscape cannot be discarded but in the scope of this thesis, it was used to offer a wider representation of a gender. As disclosed in the Methodology chapter, all the chosen cases served a reason for being included in this thesis, the selection was not random. Even though the scope of this thesis was gender analysis, between chosen men and women, it does not discard that further research can be done by adding the national dimension to the analysis. If that were the case, the focus would be on differences between the same gender representatives, so differences in action proposals between women or men from different countries. As disclosed, this was not the aim of this research, nor would it enable us to answer the proposed research question. Still, for future research and transparency of this thesis, a sample analysis with the scope of differences in the gender based on country differences can be found in Appendix 2.

6. Conclusion

Studies in psychology have found that women are better at solving conflicts than men (Dildar, Amjad 2017 15(2) 37-41; Birkhoff 1998; Brahnam, Chin 2005 24(3):197-208). Even though certain developments in political studies about gendered perspectives can be seen, women continue to be largely excluded from participating in and mediating peace processes. With the popular image of successful peace agreements being “*dark-suited men – and it is almost always men – emerging bleary-eyed from marathon negotiations*”, gender perspectives are often discarded or set aside (Caspersen 2017:9). Outside of feminist research, gender perspectives do not find a wide enough soundstage even though women play a tremendous role in promoting peace, peaceful dialogue and ending hostilities in armed conflicts (UN 2017). Still, women make up just about 2% of mediators in major peace processes (UNIFIL 2022) . As existing research has focused on women in peace processes and expects there to be a difference in the way men and women approach war, this thesis looked at how men and women with influence outside peace processes discuss proposals and solutions to an ongoing war. Offering another perspective for research that could fundamentally change the way gendered perspectives are accounted for in conflict resolutions and in International Relations more broadly. Thus, this thesis looked at how chosen policymakers and public commentators both men and women, suggested their action proposals and discovered does gender play a role in those action proposals offered to ongoing wars?

The main argument of this thesis was that there is a difference based on gender when analyzing action proposals to the full-scale war in Ukraine and that women are less likely to be warmongers and more likely to focus on broader consequences of war than men. The aim was to explore whether gender differences play a role in conflict resolution with the following research question: “Does gender play a role in action proposals offered to ongoing wars?”. A gender analysis of wartime action proposals was conducted, which compared approaches and potential solutions offered by men and women in power as well as commentators to bring into the light the positions of representatives that operate on the sidelines.

The theoretical background of this thesis came down to mainly two theories- International Relations (IR) and Feminist Peace Research (FPR). All the feminist peace research authors mentioned in this thesis, recognized and highlighted the fact that traditional peace and conflict research often ignores or marginalizes gendered perspectives and sees women in supporting roles rather than in actual peace discussions (Grewal 2021:71; Feron 2024). Some developments discovered common features between peace theorists and feminists in terms of identity issues, diversity and multiple realities as opposed to traditional power politics (Confortini 2006:334). The background of International Relations reflected the scarce inclusion of women in conflict studies and dismissal of the gender differences overall. According to UN-Women through the Women in Peace Processes Monitor, in 2023, women made up only 9.6 per cent of negotiators, 13.7 percent of mediators and 26.6 percent of signatories to peace and ceasefire agreements (UN Women 2023). Even though the UN Security Council introduced a resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in 2000 and the numbers have increased since the 1990s, between 1990 and 2000, only 12 percent of peace agreements included references to women (UN Women 2023). By 2011-2020 the share grew to 31 percent and in 2023, only 26 percent peace and ceasefire agreements mentioned women, girls, or gender (UN Women 2023).

In this thesis the method used was discourse analysis to examine the whole bodies of texts and see whether there are differences in how men and women discuss or offer action proposals related to war in Ukraine. As language simultaneously reflects reality and constructs it, discourse analysis as a tool communicates the urgency and seriousness of the ongoing war (Gee 1999:82). This thesis focused on how men and women publicly comment and offer further actions to the full-scale war in Ukraine. The war in Ukraine was selected as the target of analysis. To analyze the ongoing war, this thesis focuses on five cases. These cases were selected based on their differing political positions in terms of the target of analysis which is the ongoing war and relationships with Ukraine and Russia. France, Germany and The United

States were a part of the Minsk Process and thus have connections and a link to Ukraine (OSCE 2024). The United Kingdom was chosen for their involvement in the conflict and was Estonia (HM Treasury; Reeves MP 2024). The sample comprised 20 individuals in total- 10 men and 10 women- selected to ensure grounds for a comparison. From each country, four individuals were included: one man and one woman in a position of power (politicians, government officials, policymakers) and one man and one woman commentator or journalist. Collected data was chosen from the speeches and articles since the beginning of the full-scale war in 2022 and concluded in March 2025. Discourse analysis was used to identify recurring gender patterns. The analysis was conducted through a systematic coding process, identifying recurring patterns and themes across the emerging data. The aim was to explore how various discursive strategies are used to frame the war, its settings and potential paths toward resolution with particular attention on how these suggestions and strategies may differ depending on gender.

In the case of these thematic discourse patterns: *Offering war prescriptions/Offering peace prescriptions; Military based approach/ Non-military approach and Problem for Ukraine/Problem for Everyone*, women and men did not differ much. However, what was found through the analysis was that in *Winning the war/Ending the War; Economic Considerations; Value of human life/Loss of life as Mundane and Calling for Justice* patterns, men and women differed as women saw victory as a solution to this war and the need for it more than men. Alongside the discourse of justice, where women exercised an approach towards the aggressor that demanded justice, required acknowledgement and accountability over the damage caused, considering the psychological effects of the war and proposing steps for post-war healing, as opposed to men who did not prioritize such values through discourse. Moreover, women were generally more likely to root their action proposals around or considering the value of human life. Emphasizing the effects of deportations, children being taken from Ukraine to Russia and displacement being one of the results of war, more than men. Based on these results, it can be concluded that there is a difference in the way men and women offer action plans to ongoing wars that is dependent on gender. This confirms that gender does play a role in action proposals and that the inclusion of women in negotiating processes is more likely to offer diverse and more varied plans which can positively affect the duration and quality of the peace agreement signed.

As this thesis demonstrated the existence of differences in how men and women discuss and offer action proposals to the ongoing war in Ukraine, regardless of the fact that differences emerged on a smaller scale than expected from the existing literature, it can be said that the

inclusion of women into negotiations and peace-processes would not only rise the level of inclusion for women but would ensure more representation for the people affected by war. As women tended to focus more on long-term aspects, like justice and responsibility, that proved not to be focal points for men. Inclusion of women and gender differences in future research would advocate for gender equality and minority groups, addressing and avoiding the stereotypical outlook on women. This research has contributed to the knowledge of gender perspectives in peace processes, emphasizing the existence of gender differences and demonstrating the differences between men and women when offering wartime action proposals.

Potential limitations arise from the perspectives of the researcher. As this thesis entails the coding of the discourses, findings in terms of patterns and the categorization process of the relevant information, these aspects reflect the individuality of the inductive framework. Texts chosen for analysis in this thesis for each individual, were with the specific focus on proposals and action plans for the full-scale war in Ukraine. Still, individuals can change their opinions over time thus a wider set of speeches or texts will most likely produce a different outcome. The variation of different platforms and outlets can be seen as a potential limitation. To eliminate this wide variety of platforms, in the future, one platform can be chosen where all the used texts and speeches are taken from. This would ensure the cohesiveness of the analyzed texts and speeches but would complicate the information finding process since finding all the necessary individuals and their perspectives on one platform can turn out to be complicated. Future research could extend this inquiry of research by broadening the sample to include a larger range of individuals or conduct a similar analysis but with a different case selection. Focus could also be shifted from differences between men and women to within the gender differences. This would reveal country-specific patterns and would allow the researcher to compare the results within gender to uncover differences among women or men.

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Appendix 1

Men	Officials	Boris Pistorius	GER	Military based approach	Together with our Allies we are sending a strong message to Putin: If any Russian soldier puts their boots on Allied territory, we will defend every inch of it.	https://www.bmvg.de/en/news/keynote-speech-delivered-by-boris-pistorius-at-the-msc-24-5749178
Men	Officials	Boris Pistorius	GER	Problem for everyone	We Europeans must and can do more. And we need to do it faster.	https://www.bmvg.de/en/news/keynote-speech-delivered-by-boris-pistorius-at-the-msc-24-5749178
Men	Officials	Boris Pistorius	GER	Urgent time wise	We Europeans must and can do more. And we need to do it faster.	https://www.bmvg.de/en/news/keynote-speech-delivered-by-boris-pistorius-at-the-msc-24-5749178
Women	Journalists	Claudia Major	GER	Problem for everyone	[...] the Europeans need to prepare for "deal" and "no deal" scenarios.	https://ip-quarterly.com/en/europe-needs-ukraine-strategy
Women	Journalists	Claudia Major	GER	Problem for everyone	Europeans should prepare for a high level of uncertainty, disruption, and volatility.	https://ip-quarterly.com/en/europe-needs-ukraine-strategy
Women	Journalists	Claudia Major	GER	Offering war prescriptions	[Europeans] They need to prepare for different scenarios. This starts with defining their interests, identifying the means and tools they have to shape the war's outcome, and deciding what they are willing to invest.	https://ip-quarterly.com/en/europe-needs-ukraine-strategy
Women	Journalists	Claudia Major	GER	Stopping the war	If the US administration fails to strike a deal, there is a risk that Trump will become annoyed and blame Kyiv. He might then significantly reduce or even cut off support and leave the mess to Europe.	https://ip-quarterly.com/en/europe-needs-ukraine-strategy

Table 1. Visual representation of the coding table

Appendix 2

This sample was divided into two tables where one focused on the differences between men from five countries and the other on the differences between women from the same five countries. What stands out in the case of men is that French men framed their proposals in the form of Europeans and Europeans must do, instead of choosing the collective we pronouns like men from Germany or UK who emphasized the unity with Ukraine. Men from Germany and Estonia had their focus specifically on the war and military aspects of it as opposed to the men from USA that emphasized possible negotiations and were more careful and less confrontational in their discourse. What also stands out is that only men of Germany and USA mentioned the value of life in their discourse, assuming that casualties are a part of any war.

Country	Main discourses	Distinctive features compared to other men
FRA	Europeans, discussing war and peace, unity	Europeans must do
GER	discussing war, military readiness, clear aggressor, military and non-military approach, common responsibility	focus on war, collective responsibility, value of life
UK	discussing peace and war, Ukraine=Europe, defining peace	defined peace, Ukraine is us
USA	appeasing, discussing peace and war, negotiations and fighting, defining peace	careful, negotiations in mind, value of life
EST	resolute, military mindset, discussing war, critical, defined peace	focus on war, military mindset, most resolute

Table 2. Differences in men's discourse based on countries

For women, what stands out is that Estonian women were the only ones to refer to the historical considerations and actions of the aggressor. Women of France, USA and Estonia emphasized the discourse of winning the war as opposed to Germany where no discourse of victory or winning was detected. Women that discussed war prescriptions only were found in France, UK and USA as opposed to others that discussed both, war and peace. In the case of UK, women based their discourse heavily on the justice element by calling for accountability from the aggressor.

Country	Main discourses	Distinctive features compared to other women
FRA	we must, victory, discussing war	collective we, winning the war, only military approach
GER	discussing war and peace, defining peace, unity, need for strategy/plans	defining peace, strategic, no winning discourse
UK	victory, justice, discussing war, we collectively	justice, military
USA	discussing war, victory, no room for negotiations	victory, negotiations not seen as possible
EST	discussing war and peace, defining peace, economic aspects, justice, winning, clear aggressor with history references	economic focus, historical perspectives, defining peace, victory

Table 3. Differences in women's is discourse based on countries