The Intersection of Conflict-Related Rape with Humiliation and Dignity

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The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (SRSG-SVC) was established in 2009 by the UN Security Council Resolution 1888. The Special Representative is mandated to address sexual violence in conflict settings and support survivors.
The current Special Representative, Pramila Patten, was appointed in 2017.

Author statement:
This analytical essay was written in response to Pramila Patten's request in 2024 to apply my theory of humiliation on conflict-related rape and the situation of survivors of sexual violence in conflict situations.
In this essay, references to my research are primarily made using my family name, 'Lindner,' in order to maintain a formal and consistent style. The first-person pronoun 'I' is used sparingly to highlight personal reflections or specific experiences.
References are provided both in the Endnotes and the Reference List.

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Executive Summary

This executive summary provides an overview of Evelin Lindner's analytical essay on the intersection of conflict-related rape with humiliation and dignity, which Lindner authored in 2025 in response to a request from Pramila Patten, the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. To maintain a formal and consistent style, Lindner primarily refers to her work in the third person in this essay.

Key Points

1. Foundational Inquiries: This essay contextualises conflict-related sexual violence and survivor integration within broader questions of war and peace. Lindner's personal background, stemming from a family that directly experienced war and displacement, is acknowledged.
2. Conceptual Framework: Lindner uses Max Weber's ideal-type methodology to analyse the transition from honour-humiliation to dignity-humiliation in the context of large-scale psycho-geo-political changes.
3. Theory of Humiliation: Lindner describes feelings of humiliation, particularly those stemming from the violation of dignity, as the *nuclear bomb of the emotions*. The COVID-19 pandemic starkly revealed how deeply interconnected and interdependent our world truly is, making the reality of the global village impossible to ignore. Lindner suggests that we can speak of a *humiliation pandemic* now.
4. Conflict-Related Sexual Violence: The essay examines how rape is perceived and used in different societal contexts — (1) in hierarchical honour-based societies, (2) in societies embracing equal dignity for all, and (2) during times of societal transition.
5. Prevention and Support: Lindner places primary responsibility on the global community, asserting that only a fundamental reform of global governance structures can effectively prevent conflict-related sexual violence and address survivors' needs. She argues that current economic systems incentivise what she terms 'humiliation entrepreneurship', which exploits the growing impact of humiliation, fuels global militarisation, and undermines ethical standards.
6. Long-term Prevention: The essay identifies several areas requiring attention — (1) becoming aware of the growing significance of the phenomenon of humiliation, (2) overcoming phallocentrism, (3) moving beyond the security dilemma, (4) discontinuing economic exploitation, and (5) addressing *ecocide*, *sociocide*, and *cogitocide*
7. Future Recommendations: Emphasising the collective duty to address shared challenges and foster a more dignified world, Lindner advocates for a shift towards a unified, yet diverse global society that recognises interconnectedness and mutual obligations. She speaks up for creating a *decent global village* with strong governance institutions capable of dignifying both people and planet. The work of the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict at the global level is therefore of the greatest importance.

Local initiatives are advised to recover any Indigenous wisdom of healing and shield themselves as much as possible from a global context that captures the world within institutional frames that incentivise humiliation entrepreneurship, militarisation, and the disregard for ethical standards.

Conclusion

Lindner's work is crucial because it highlights historically new risks that are easily overlooked — risks that even could threaten the survival of all life on Earth. Lindner's work emphasises the critical need to understand and address the dynamics of humiliation in conflict situations, particularly in relation to sexual violence. She calls for a comprehensive approach that considers global dynamics in addressing complex issues of violence and conflict transformation and embeds local initiatives.

Abstract

Polycrises define contemporary global challenges, marked by systemic humiliation dynamics that fuel ecological collapse and militarisation, including the weaponisation of sexual violence. Post-Cold War optimism has yielded to a perilous trajectory where global cohesion is eroded precisely when planetary stewardship demands cooperation. This essay examines how humiliation intersects with conflict-related sexual violence, and opportunities for survivor support.

Lindner's work exposes historically unprecedented opportunities and risks, identifying dignity-humiliation as the *nuclear bomb of emotions*, capable of irreparably fracturing communities. The COVID-19 pandemic, by powerfully demonstrating the profound interconnectedness and mutual dependence of humanity and throwing into sharp focus the reality of a global village, provides the context in which Lindner proposes that this village now faces a true *pandemic of humiliation*. The essay highlights historical opportunities to heal such breaches, warning that unawareness of the need to prevent these dynamics represents the most significant obstacle to a dignified future for humanity. Academics and practitioners are urged to deepen their awareness of the critical significance of humiliation dynamics and to integrate this understanding more fully into their work.

Using sociologist Max Weber's ideal types, Lindner distinguishes honour-humiliation (regulated by hierarchical codes) from dignity-humiliation (violations of equal worth), demonstrating how conflict-related rape and the ways in which victims are being treated differ in these two contexts and in the transition between them. Transitional phases can exacerbate cruelty, while at the same time creating better pathways for survivor-centred support.

Lindner's research reveals that local efforts to mitigate conflict-related sexual violence are often undermined by global dynamics. Surges in militarisation are only one of several symptoms of failing global governance structures, as complicit governments shrink civic spaces and allow for the disregard for international law.

As a consequence, Lindner places the primary responsibility with the global community to initiate and maintain coordinated action addressing the root causes of what can be summarised as *ecocide*, *sociocide*, and *cogitocide*. This essay underscores the urgency of overhauling global governance structures to address interconnected local-global dynamics, emphasising that systemic humiliation prevention requires dismantling the dominator logic and drawing on Indigenous models of societal care.

Lindner calls for a *decent global village*, highlighting that the co-creation of global governance institutions that prioritise dignity and planetary balance is feasible for the first time in modern human history, as global interconnectedness can be drawn on to replace zero-sum competition for dominance with mutual solidarity.

This essay calls on the 'global street' — ordinary people around the world — to stand up and co-create global institutions capable of bringing together a divided world, so that past cycles of humiliation can be halted and repaired, while new ones can be prevented from arising. In such a world, rape will still occasionally happen, yet war and mass killings will be prevented, including the systemic use of sexual violence. While such a world is a utopia so far, Lindner affirms that it is a *necessary utopia* that needs to guide the way forward.

Evelin Lindner

Introduction

This analytical essay explores the dynamics of humiliation by drawing on Evelin Lindner's conceptual framework and theory of humiliation, focusing on its application to conflict-related sexual violence. The content is structured to provide a comprehensive understanding of the topic, starting with brief introductions to Lindner's work before delving into the complex issue of sexual violence in conflict situations. Throughout this essay, Lindner mostly refers to her work in the third person to maintain a formal and consistent style, using the first person only when referring to personal experiences.

The essay begins by making transparent the motivation that inspires Lindner's work. It then examines the rise of conflict-related sexual violence and its various manifestations within different societal contexts. It explores rape in hierarchical honour-based societies, its role as a 'war declaration' between groups, and its use as a weapon of war. The discussion then shifts to how rape is perceived in societies that have embraced the concept of equal dignity for all.

A significant portion of the essay is dedicated to analysing sexual violence during times of transition, including the historical shift from focusing on 'state' to 'feelings'. This section explores how emphasising feelings can both nurture compassion and, paradoxically, also lead to more cruelty.

The essay then addresses long-term prevention strategies for war and conflict-related sexual violence. It highlights several areas that require attention, including becoming aware of the growing significance of the phenomenon of humiliation, overcoming phallocentrism, moving beyond the security dilemma, discontinuing economic exploitation, and addressing *ecocide*, *sociocide*, and *cogitocide*.

Current initiatives for preventing conflict-related rape and supporting victims are discussed, with a focus on the role of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (SRSG-SVC). The essay concludes with advice for future actions and a list of references for further reading.

Throughout, the essay aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between humiliation, conflict, and sexual violence, drawing on Lindner's theoretical framework to offer insights into both the causes of these issues and potential solutions.

Brief introduction into Lindner's conceptual framework

Lindner's research has grown out from the foundational questions about peace and war that became pressing in the aftermath of two World Wars and a Cold War, as humanity was brought to the brink of military annihilation for the first time. I hail from a family that was deeply impacted by these wars, as well as by the forced displacements that followed. Ongoing planetary resource depletion, which introduces a new risk of global catastrophe, underscores the importance of critically investigating the foundations of the human condition. The need for such investigation motivated me to dedicate my life to developing a unique research method to explore the following questions:

Given the necessity of global cooperation to address worldwide challenges, what is the greatest obstacle to achieving successful collaboration? Is human nature inherently incapable of sustaining peace, or are humans capable of doing so? In the current historical moment, is global cooperation feasible, or not?

After five decades of interpretative work embedded in family-like structures across all continents, Lindner concludes that the most significant obstacle to global cooperation is the

widespread lack of awareness that several parameters of the human condition have shifted in ways that make global cooperation feasible for the first time in modern human history, while the phenomenon of humiliation at the same time becomes so explosive that it threatens to close this window of opportunity again:

> Cycles of humiliation are the greatest obstacle [to global cooperation], and this problem will increase the more the world interconnects, the more its finiteness will make itself palpable, and the more human rights ideals of equal dignity will become salient and create expectations that were absent before. For global cooperation in responsible solidarity to succeed, the highest goal must therefore be to dismantle existing systemic humiliation, to end and heal present cycles of humiliation, and to prevent new ones from emerging in the future.[1]

It is important to note that Lindner applies sociologist Max Weber's ideal-type methodology in her work.[2] To illustrate this concept, traffic may serve as a metaphor. Every society must decide between left-hand or right-hand driving. A society that interprets 'freedom' as allowing individuals to drive on either side would produce chaos and numerous accidents. The choice between left-hand and right-hand driving is one that requires societal consensus. Individual diversity can only exist in the types of vehicles and driving styles people adopt.

The left-hand versus right-hand driving decision thus operates at the highest level of abstraction, while the diversity of vehicles and of driving styles operates at lower levels of abstraction. It is important to note that in real life, these distinctions are not always clear-cut — there are numerous exceptions, overlaps, and diversities. Weber's ideal types are abstract constructs that serve as analytical tools, not perfect representations of reality. They allow researchers to simplify complex social phenomena and use these simplified models as points of comparison with real-world observations. This approach enables the analysis of broad societal shifts while acknowledging the complexities and variations that exist in actual social contexts. Just as the decision on driving side provides a framework for traffic organisation, Lindner's use of Weber's ideal types offers a conceptual framework for understanding societal transitions in values and social norms.

Lindner is operating at the highest level of abstraction when she relates the shift from honour-humiliation to dignity-humiliation to the transition from unequal to equal worthiness being ascribed to individuals. Moral-ethical 'accidents' are the result wherever values of unequal and equal worthiness are held concurrently in the same community, just as accidents would be the outcome if left-hand driving and right-hand driving were allowed to occur concurrently.

The shift from unequal worthiness being ascribed to individuals — in her work, Lindner speaks of *ranked honour* — to equal worthiness — Lindner reserves the phrase *equal dignity* for this ascription — is part of large-scale psycho-geo-political transitions in social arrangements.

While this transition is located at the highest level of abstraction, it intersects with other transitions that operate at lower levels of abstraction. Among them is the transition from what has been called collectivism to individualism — the realities these concepts attempted to describe are not as binary as initially suggested. Lindner uses the phrase *honour-based collectivistic contexts* for social configurations of tightly knit communities where roles are rigidly defined and ranked hierarchically, with 'higher beings' presiding over 'lesser beings'. Such settings typically provide a high sense of social belonging, while they often have oppressive aspects. The situation is inverse in *equal dignity-based individualistic contexts* that embrace the principle of equality in worthiness for all. While typically offering more freedom,

individualism often goes too far, wearing down social cohesion and leading to anomie and loneliness.

In the first and the second context, as well as in the transition between them, humiliation plays out in different ways, impacting also how sexual violence is being perpetrated, as well as the kinds of treatments victims can expect.

Lindner recommends bringing together the best of the two contexts, namely, freedom and belonging, into *equal dignity for all in mutual solidarity*. Lindner speaks up for *interconnected individuality*, a kind of individuality that liberates the individual from oppressive collectivism while at the same time stopping short of creating cruelly disconnected individualism.[3] In Lindner's view, only if cultural mindsets and practices of *interconnected individuality in equal dignity for all in mutual solidarity* are manifested in global institutions, will a dignified and dignifying future for humanity be possible. Only then can wars and mass killings be prevented and contained, including sexual violence as a weapon.

The most significant obstacle on this path, according to Lindner, is that in the current transitional era, too few people understand the heightened prevalence of humiliation dynamics. Humiliation is now at the core of social dynamics that influence terrorism, violence, and societal collapse, all of which is more dangerous now than in the past, even involving the potential for existential threats like global annihilation. Many people still misunderstand the nature of humiliation, believing that 'arrogance of power'[4] produces submissive humility similar to historical patterns, without recognising that modern backlashes can be far more destructive than in the past.

The phenomenon of humiliation, despite its pressing need for attention remained, however, largely unstudied as an independent subject until the pioneering work of Linda Hartling[5] and Evelin Lindner. This lack of research can be attributed to several factors. First, emotions are often perceived as unsuitable for 'hard' scientific inquiry, too 'soft' a topic, and second, understanding humiliation requires a complex, inter-, trans-, multi-, and cross-disciplinary approach that spans multiple fields of study. This is particularly challenging in an era where scholarly research is increasingly dependent on external funding and is fragmenting into ever more isolated specialisations. In her writing, Lindner always attempts to bridge separate disciplines and overcome academia's siloisation by striving to understand the core messages of various fields of academic inquiry and then bringing these messages together on different levels of abstraction. She uses the ideal-type approach of sociologist Max Weber[6] to reconstruct diverse academic disciplines from the perspective of dignity and humiliation. So far, she has done this with war, genocide, and terrorism (2000, 2017),[7] international conflict (2006 and 2009, translated into Chinese in 2019),[8] gender and security (2010),[9] and economics (2012, translated into Brazilian Portuguese in 2016), [10] and global governance structures.[11]

Brief introduction into Lindner's theory of humiliation

Lindner's theory of humiliation is best described not as a traditional theory in the narrow sense, but as a multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary conceptual framework or paradigm for understanding humiliation as a psychological, social, and political process. Rather than offering a single, testable hypothesis, Lindner's work integrates insights from anthropology, psychology, sociology, history, political science, and philosophy to analyse how humiliation functions at individual, group, and societal levels, and how its meaning has shifted over time — from a tool for maintaining social order to a violation of human rights ideals of equal dignity for all in mutual solidarity. At its core, Lindner's framework defines humiliation as the enforced lowering or subjugation of a person or group, stripping away honour and dignity, and emphasises its

effects on both individuals and societies. Her approach provides a layered, context-sensitive model for understanding and addressing the role of humiliation in conflict, trauma, and social change, rather than a rigid, predictive theory.

In her work, Lindner offers a historical narrative that integrates anthropologist William Ury's *simplified view of human history* with the anthropological concept of *circumscription* and that of the *security dilemma*, as described by political scientists.

Circumscription, derived from Latin meaning 'to write around', refers to limitations or confinements. It can manifest as territorial (geographical barriers), social (human obstacles), or resource-based restrictions.[12] If the planet were larger, current generations would still live in small mobile groups and follow the wild-growing food just as human ancestors did prior to the Neolithic revolution. Yet, the planet is limited in size. Current times are characterised by hyper-circumscription — everything is limited, not just the size of the planet, everything from clean water to clean air (except solar energy).

The *security dilemma* can be summarised as a fear-driven arms race, 'We arm ourselves out of fear, which in turn frightens others, leading them to arm themselves, further escalating our fears.'[13] This dilemma is encapsulated in the Roman maxim, 'Si vis pacem para bellum' (If you want peace, prepare for war),[14] and can play out between ethnic groups as much as between states.[15] It unfolds as a dilemma because efforts to secure long-lasting peace through military preparedness tend to lead only to short periods of respite between wars. The security dilemma is at the core of the sense of *ontological security* of individuals as much as of groups — families, clans, or nations — ontological security as a stable sense of self and reality that is a fundamental need of individuals as much as of groups.[16] In the distant past, fear of the unknown and surprise attacks created general insecurity — Mongols, Vikings, or Spanish conquistadores appeared suddenly and unexpectedly on the shores of their victims. The security dilemma arose when neighbouring groups became aware of each other's military capabilities, leading to cycles of mutual suspicion and arms accumulation. The security dilemma was thus driven by mutual uncertainty and suspicion between neighbouring groups, each fearing that the other's military preparations might be a prelude to aggression. As a result, the sense of ontological security was fundamentally undermined by *fear rooted in uncertainty about others' intentions*.

In response to the security dilemma, throughout the past millennia, many societies adopted hierarchical structures, or what social scientist Riane Eisler calls the *dominator model of society*.[17] This model of society was prevalent across diverse cultural realms on the globe, from the Japanese samurai to the Aztecs, featuring rigid authority-based structures in both family and state. Hierarchy was maintained through various forms of socially accepted violence, from wife- and child-beating to large-scale warfare.

Lindner inscribes humiliation into this dominator model by highlighting how humiliation was regarded as a pro-social tool in the hands of men in power, a tool to 'hold underlings down and enemies out'. Only men in power of equal standing could interpret humiliation as a violation — they could challenge each other to duel or duel-like wars — while the humiliated and beaten wife or slave were expected to accept their status of humble subservience. Humiliation was widely accepted as a means of enforcing respect for the authority of those in power — internalised and even accepted by those subjected to it.

In the context of the dominator model of society, what is called *patriarchy* arose.[18] Public and private spheres became separated, with women being conditioned to accept transgenerational 'training' for care work in the private sphere, while men were being prepared for combat in defence of their in-group's boundaries. Psychologist Kenneth Gergen once wrote that 'by far the

most obvious and most deadly outcome of the urge to eliminate evil is the hardened shell separating relational clusters — families, communities, religions, nations, ethnic traditions, and so on'.[19] The security dilemma was a cruel teacher in that it 'hardened the shell', tasking men to 'steel' themselves as the shell's guardians, requiring soldiers to overcome their fear of dying and killing. Men had to avoid falling for 'softness' in war, as enemies had to be fought rather than pitied and cared for.

As wars are per definition existential emergencies, they require maximal attention, and as males were the ones to plan for wars out in the world, while women did the 'invisible' care work in the home, 'hard-shell' thinking acquired a higher status and became admired as 'male' rationality, while whatever was 'soft' smacked of 'female' irrationality. Philosopher Ágnes Heller explains that 'masculinist models of consciousness objectify world order, obfuscating how fluid and continuously malleable it in reality is'.[20] The dominator model of society moved men 'outside and up', while women were relegated to spaces defined as 'inside and down', 'hardening' the demarcation between both spheres.

Following the historical narrative by William Ury,[21] Lindner describes the past three per cent of human history, namely, the period that followed the first significant turning point in modern human history (known as the Neolithic Revolution, or, more precisely, the human adaptations to the onset of circumscription), also the period that was characterised by the dominator model of society, as the era of honour, or, more precisely, the era of collectivistic ranked honour, or the era of arrogant pride. This was a period of the kind of 'peace and quiet' that was created and perpetuated by systemic humiliation, or what peace researcher Johan Galtung would have called cultural violence.[22] Lindner added that this kind of cultural violence could be called the 'art' of humiliation,[23] paid for by the pain from humiliation, a pain that was largely accepted as God-given or nature's order even by those who suffered it.[24]

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, the situation changed. Age-old ideals of equal worth for all individuals re-emerged and became enshrined at the global level for the first time. The core tenet of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states, 'All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights', in stark contrast to what was regarded as normal before, namely, that 'higher being' presided over 'lesser beings'. While emancipation movements had materialised in the past — the *Axial Age* has been described in this way, for instance[25] — they had always been co-opted by the dominator model of society surrounding them.

The current historical period thus represents a second significant turning point in modern human history — significant because emancipation movements have for the first time in modern human history a genuine possibility of success. Millennia-old societal structures and entrenched power dynamics are currently undergoing unprecedented transformation, creating opportunities[26] to shape enduring new realities for future generations.

Lindner's analysis entails the warning that overlooking the uniqueness of the present historical moment is a critical mistake — this is the first time in history when humanity has the opportunity to leave behind the self-defeating cycle of ever-increasing security measures that paradoxically undermine collective safety. Unprecedented pathways stand open, pathways towards realising what Riane Eisler terms a *partnership model* of society or Linda Hartling's *mutuality model*,[27] and to do this not just locally. What distinguishes the current era, above all, is the unprecedented capacity to institutionalise such frameworks at a global scale — the essential step to avoid repeating the historical pattern in which progressive societal models were ultimately undermined by the larger structural contexts surrounding them.

It is in this context, that Lindner speaks of a transition from honour-humiliation to dignity-

humiliation. The horizontal line in the middle of Figure 1 represents equal dignity and dignified humility in mutual solidarity, with systemic humiliation being absent. This line stands for a worldview that declines to define the core of human worth and worthiness as something ranked — it resists rankism,[28] rejecting subservient humbleness as much as arrogant superiority. It is a worldview that abstains from essentialising socially constructed rankings into primary differences, it resists regarding people who do 'lowly' work as 'lowly beings', it resists seeing 'children', 'the elderly', 'foreigners', 'brown people', or 'women' as having less worth.[29]

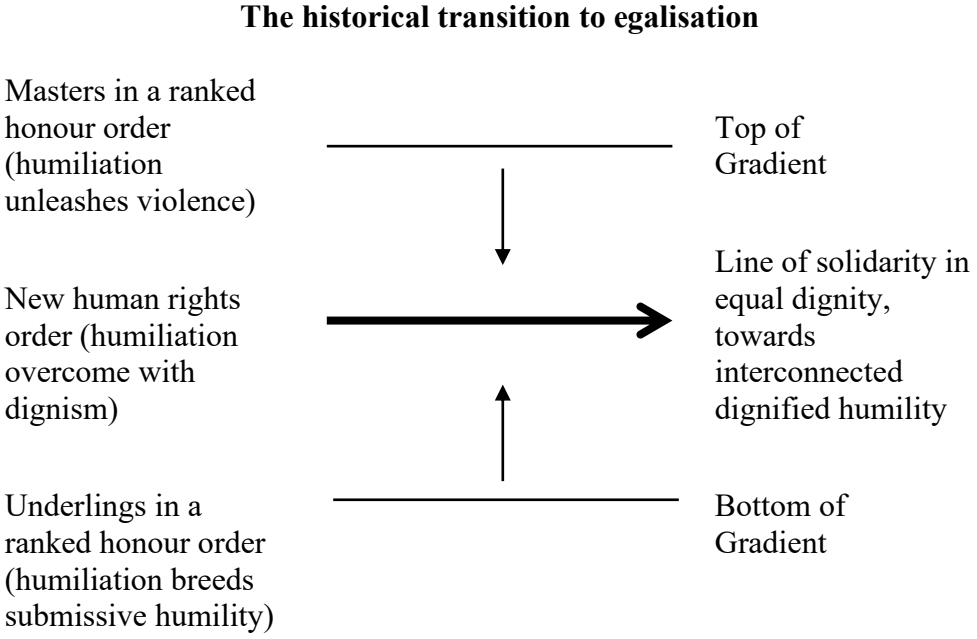

Figure 1:
The historical transition to equal dignity in freedom and solidarity[30]

A crucially important insight flowing from this analysis is that the humiliation of equal dignity is felt more intensely than the humiliation of honour, and that this can lead to backlashes that are so severe that conciliation is no longer possible. Lindner warns that if humanity allows this to happen at a larger scale, the world will become ever more divided, and the above-mentioned unique opportunity to do the opposite, namely, cooperate globally, will be wasted.

The reason for why the humiliation of equal dignity is felt more intensely than the humiliation of honour, is that the concept of equal dignity sets higher standards than that of unequal honour. In contrast to honour-humiliation, the pain of dignity-humiliation is two-fold, first the pain from being pushed down and held down, and second, the pain caused by the experience of betrayal, the betrayal of the promise of equal worthiness, of equality in dignity. Anyone who is taught to expect a just world will be hurt more by a contradictory reality than if they had never heard about a just world in the first place. Likewise, a person who learns to believe in the promise of equal dignity, will feel more disappointed when she experiences that this belief is being betrayed than if she had never heard of a such a promise. 'To recognise humanity hypocritically, and betray the promise of equal dignity, humiliates in the most devastating way by denying the humanity professed'.[31] This sense of devastation is exacerbated in today's interconnected world, because information about dignity violations spreads more rapidly than before, sparking feelings of

humiliation at a global level in whoever identifies with people who are being victimised somewhere else in the world.

The result are unprecedented expressions of hurt and anger, first because feelings of dignity-humiliation are being felt more deeply and personally than in the case of honour-humiliation, and second, because these feelings have the potential to capture the feelings of many more people than in the past.

The only path out of dignity-humiliation that is consistent with dignity is the 'Gandhi-path', which means nurturing conciliation and abstaining from the use of violence. Unfortunately, current generations seem not yet ready for this path. Too many people still respond to dignity-humiliation in ways that are more consistent with revenge for honour-humiliation. Lindner calls it *cross back* when individuals choose what could be called the 'Hitler-path' out of dignity-humiliation rather than the Gandhi-path.

There are several reasons for why this cross back is still happening all too often. One reason is that violent retaliation became normalised within the dominator model of society throughout the past millennia almost everywhere on the globe and is therefore still more familiar than conflict transformation through dialogue. Second, while the heightened intensity of feelings of dignity-humiliation may lead to more apathy and depression, they may also lead to 'going black', or, as psychologist Helen Lewis called it, to humiliated fury.[32] This, in turn, makes it more difficult to channel the urge to react to dignity-humiliation into more constructive directions than was the case with honour-humiliation.

As a result, dignity-humiliation can lead to extreme degrees of cruelty. Revenge for dignity-humiliation is likely to aim at maximising and prolonging the suffering of victims so as to imprint the message of revenge into their psyches. Victims will be made to stay alive longer — a dead victim cannot feel pain anymore — making the killing of the enemy or the enemy's defeat almost secondary.

Regarding conflict-related rape, also this is likely to be perpetrated more cruelly in the context of dignity-humiliation than in the context of honour-humiliation. Lindner has gained deep insights into these dynamics through her research in Rwanda. This is what motivated Lindner to call feelings of humiliation, particularly of dignity-humiliation, the nuclear bomb of the emotions.

As mentioned earlier, in the past, the security dilemma was driven by *fear rooted in uncertainty about others' intentions*. As the human population has grown and the world has become more interconnected, concerns such as *fear of future humiliation* have increasingly contributed to the dynamics of the security dilemma. What remains constant, however, is that uncertainty lies at the heart of the security dilemma — the sense of ontological security continues to be undermined by persistent uncertainty, which, in turn, increases the risk of conflict and war.[33]

Fear of humiliation attracts what Lindner calls 'humiliation entrepreneurs', people who are intent to use this fear as a resource, as a pathway to personal profit and power, people who amplify it, so as to instrumentalise it. Humiliation entrepreneurs typically create the opposite of what they pledge — they promise their followers rescue from (real or perceived) humiliators, whom they declare to be enemies, while the outcome will be more enmity rather than rescue from it. While humiliation entrepreneurship was a pathway to power also in the past, contemporary economic systems — and the *Zeitgeist* they shape — make this strategy even more attractive and dangerous today. Humiliation entrepreneurship piggybacks on the widespread glorification of economic entrepreneurship, which is now celebrated even by those who are

ultimately victimised when this entrepreneurial drive becomes unhinged and creates destructive power differentials and abusive economic inequality.[34] Often, humiliation entrepreneurs are among those who initially contribute to such inequality, only to later exploit the feelings of humiliation experienced by the disadvantaged as a platform for offering rescue — thereby further entrenching inequality. In this way, polarisation within societies is fuelled, and even the security dilemma between nations heightened. In this context, Lindner speaks of a *humiliation pandemic*, as the use of humiliation narratives to mobilise followers increasingly spans the globe.

According to Lindner, humiliation awareness is urgently needed, and this includes awareness of the role of contemporary economic rules and institutions that heighten risks rather than mitigating them.

Conflict-related sexual violence is on the rise

It is only a few decades ago that conflict-related sexual violence against women was recognised as a serious human rights violation, after long being dismissed as an inevitable consequence of war rather than acknowledged as torture, a war crime, or a crime against humanity. Although important progress was achieved through key United Nations resolutions (see more further down), recent years have witnessed significant setbacks and a resurgence of resistance to these earlier advances. In this context, conflict-related sexual violence has increased amid ongoing and escalating conflicts.[35]

Conflict-related sexual violence is thus not an isolated issue that can be addressed separately or be solved by local populations — local populations can only mitigate it. It is a problem that is intertwined with global trends. Militarisation and arms proliferation is driven by financial gain motives,[36] and this, in turn, is characterised by disregard for international law,[37] in a context where civic spaces are made to shrink under complicit governments.[38] As a consequence, the primary responsibility rests with the global community to initiate coordinated action addressing the root causes of these global trends, including conflict-related sexual violence.[39] (See also Lindner's *twenty-to-two* approach.[40])

It is in reflection of the current systemic failures in wartime accountability frameworks that hegemonic militarisation processes normalise sexual violence as a feature of modern warfare, and conflict-related sexual violence witnesses a marked surge. UN-verified cases of conflict-related sexual violence increased by 50 per cent in 2023,[41] ranging from rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, enforced sterilisation, to forced marriage.[42] This rise is occurring amidst the highest number of conflicts since World War II, affecting regions such as Ukraine, Sudan, Gaza, and Afghanistan. The United Nations and other organisations have highlighted the urgent need for action.

The following sections will delve into the complex and sensitive issue of rape, examining its manifestations and implications across various societal contexts and historical periods. The first section explores the prevalence of conflict-related sexual violence with a particular focus on rape as a weapon of war and its role in hierarchical, honour-based societies. The discussion then considers how rape is perceived and addressed in societies that have adopted principles of equal dignity for all individuals. A significant portion of this analysis is dedicated to understanding sexual violence during the period of societal transition that shifts the emphasis towards individual experiences and emotions. It will be explored how this change in perspective has both positive and negative consequences, fostering empathy as well as leading to unintended adverse outcomes.

By examining rape through these multifaceted lenses, this essay's aim is to provide a comprehensive understanding of its impact on individuals, communities, and broader societal structures.

1. Rape within hierarchical honour-based contexts

From ancient Mesopotamian civilisations to traditional Chinese and Indian societies, the sexual conduct of women was tightly controlled through legal, religious, and social mechanisms. Sexual transgressions were not merely personal matters but were viewed as potential threats to social order, family structures, and inheritance rights. Patriarchal systems targeted women's sexual autonomy by implementing strict controls of sexual behaviour inside and outside sanctioned

relationships. These regulations manifested through various cultural practices like bride price, arranged marriages, and severe punishments for female adultery.

Enforcing cultural moral codes with the aim to maintain social stability and protect economic interests transcended single religious or cultural traditions. Abrahamic religions, for example — Judaism, Christianity, and Islam — shared similar foundational approaches to regulating sexual behaviour, even though the implementation varied, emphasising marital fidelity and condemning extramarital relations. In some cases, public shaming was practiced, while others imposed physical punishments or legal sanctions for sexual transgressions.

- Rape as a 'war declaration' between clans

As Lindner explains in her 2010 book on gender,[43] and her 2017 book on terror,[44] in cultural contexts that arose in the context of a strong security dilemma, the woman's hymen often marked the family's borders and stood for her family's males' honour, symbolising the male ability to guard their in-group's borders against unbecoming out-group intruders.

As I learned through my doctoral research Somalia, for example, rape of the women of another clan could represent a 'war declaration' to that clan — it could potentially be intended as a 'message' of humiliation to the men of that clan. 'Perforating' the honour of their male enemies at its most symbolic and intimate place, the hymen of their unmarried women or the vaginal opening of their wives, the very source of their sons, showed her men that they could not protect their own 'possessions'. In the past, councils of elders would gather to discern whether the rape of a woman of another clan was 'just' an 'accident' perpetrated by a young immature male, or whether it was intended as a 'war declaration' against the other clan. In either case, appropriate repair and peace-making efforts would follow.

Somali society, inhabiting the vast semi-desert of the Horn of Africa, was traditionally organised around a pastoral clan system. An 'artificial' balance of political power was maintained among the five dominant clans by way of a cultural framework for social order, conflict resolution, and political representation.[45] It was regarded as a 'tradition' that clans would attack each other — so young men would learn how to defend themselves — but the practice of peace negotiations was as well established. Peace agreements, even though they were always fickle, were reached rather easily, and they were stabilised, among others, through the exchange of women in marriage, called *godob reeb* (extinguishing hatred). This practice contributed to protecting women from rape and was surveyed by elder men who played a crucial role in upholding this societal structure and community honour by preventing younger men from committing rape 'accidentally'. Women were 'shielded' from rape furthermore through the clan system's complexity that prevented any single clan from defeating other clans completely, which would have undone this balanced system (something that happened later, with the advent of the concept of the nation state and a dictator). Women were furthermore protected by the large territorial distances in the vast semi-desert, which could make it physically difficult for opposing clans to access their adversary's women during conflicts.

In an egalitarian pastoral society like Somalia, with large semi-deserts, women had quite some space within which they could move. The situation was different in agricultural contexts, wherever the dominator model of society prevailed. Women were confined within rather narrow private spheres, while men, in their capacity to protect their in-group's borders, occupied the public space. As mentioned before, patriarchy means that men are seen as 'outside and up', while women are to remain 'inside and down'.[46]

During the fifty years of being embedded on all continents — particularly during the seven years I worked as a therapist in Egypt, and during my doctoral research later — I was often

reminded of the work of anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908–2009), a French anthropologist and ethnologist, who significantly influenced the development of structuralism.[47] Lévi-Strauss viewed the exchange of women between families as a fundamental mechanism for creating social bonds and structuring societies. He based this on the incest taboo, which he saw as a positive injunction to marry outside one's group, and the principle of reciprocity, where women were considered the 'supreme gift' due to their reproductive capacity. Lévi-Strauss identified two general forms of women exchange: elementary structures with prescriptive marriage rules, and complex structures with less rigid rules. He argued that this system of exchange was the foundation for creating lasting societies, binding social groups together, and forming the basis for all other reciprocal exchange relations. Even though Lévi-Strauss's theory has been criticised for its androcentric approach and sometimes uncertain empirical support, his ideas on the exchange of women significantly influenced anthropological thought and continue to be debated in academic circles.

In the context of my work, I witnessed the many ways in which male honour was protected by way of erecting barriers in and around female bodies. These ways were much more elaborate than the simple mate guarding that can be seen in animals,[48] as they ranged from mild gender segregation to female genital cutting, and, in cases of violations, to what has been called honour killing or femicide. Just as Lévi-Strauss theorised, whenever a female is being seen as a token, as a representation of the family or group to which she belongs, daughters or sisters are seen as 'gifts' for marriage into families her males want as allies. Only intact girls, 'closed' girls, 'unused' girls, are then regarded as 'honourable gifts', as the intact hymen of an unmarried woman is taken to be a visible manifestation of the intactness of her men's honour.

In Somalia, one way of 'shielding' women was the 'closing' of the vaginas of young girls, as only an 'unopened' girl was seen as a valuable gift. This was done with stitches, called infibulation, the most radical form of female genital mutilation.[49] In that way, 'barriers' were erected even within the female body, barriers against the penetration of female bodies that was not 'authorised' by her men. In Somaliland, I learned how preserving chastity was a duty given to women. It was a tradition that the mother would check her daughter's hymen when the daughter came home from outside of the house. A gynaecologist whom I interviewed on 25th November 1998 in Somaliland, supported this tradition by sighing with regret that this duty was now often being neglected.

Traditions of 'closing' female body openings are not reserved to Somalia, however. In other parts of the world as well similar practices were and still are prevalent. The idea of a 'chastity belt' in Europe, for instance, pointed into the same direction.[50]

Throughout history, female bodies have been subjected to regulation not only through surgical interventions. During my seven-year tenure as a psychologist in Egypt, I witnessed the extensive array of methods used to govern women's autonomy. In Egypt, it was said that a woman was supposed to leave the house only twice, once she got married and moved to her husband's home, and second, when her dead body left the house. In my 2010 book on gender and security,[51] I examined the whole range of historical and cross-cultural prescriptions for women's bodily coverage — including burqas, niqabs, hijabs, and chadors. I interpret such attire as 'mobile private spheres', as mobile houses — garments that replicate the separation between visible male-dominated public spaces and the 'invisible' domestic sphere, enabling limited mobility while maintaining social boundaries.

The gendered division of public and private spheres, often dismissed as a relic of the past, persists globally in both the Global South and North, even though sometimes in very subtle

ways. As I have been embedded in many different cultural contexts on all continents for many decades, I came across many examples. In Egypt, for instance, I learned that many daughters of wealthy families were sent do French schools, French being seen as the language of culture, the private sphere, while sons learned English, the language of money, the public sphere. India, where I am embedded since 2017, is a country with a tradition of arranged marriages that is similar to that in Egypt. The wife in wealthy Indian families 'should have fair skin', while the man 'should have money', to say it simplified.[52] All over the world, men are proud of being responsible for the occasional barbecue, confirming the idea, though misguided, that since time immemorial 'hunting meat' was for men, so that the family could 'feast' on it, while women supposedly did the much less significant daily gathering job.[53] Unequal pay for women and men in modern labour market mirrors the same segregation.

The reason for why female autonomy has been controlled across diverse societies throughout the past millennia was the link of gender with security.[54] In the face of the security dilemma, the penis underwent a transformation from intimate symbol to emblem of power. The penis acquired symbolic potency — not merely as a biological feature but as a marker of dominance, reflecting broader narratives of male superiority and control. Wherever the security dilemma was strong, the entire male body itself, tasked with guarding the in-group's borders, became seen as a weapon, whether in war, violent sports, or acts of sexual violence. Philosopher Michel Foucault spoke of biopolitique[55] when the male body becomes the soldier's body and the female body the reproductive body of preferably male offspring.[56]

In the context of complex agriculture, the penis became also associated with the activity of sowing and the female body as the earth that passively receives the male semen.[57] In Ancient Egypt, for example, the erect penis symbolised divine life-giving power, while in India, the lingam was a symbol associated with the Hindu god Shiva, representing divine creative power and fertility, all closely linked to agricultural activities.

Given the higher status of the male sphere, all over the world, until the day today, women often remain silent after rape. If she alleges she has been raped, she runs the risk of being 'accused of having provoked the situation and having tempted the man into sex'.[58] 'In Iraq, a woman who suffered rape is considered to be dead to society, as she is held responsible for having enticed males to abduct, rape or molest her'.[59] If she were so unlucky as to get pregnant, 'this will be taken as proof that she consented, because it is regarded to be biologically impossible to become pregnant through rape'.[60]

Zina, in Islam, means extramarital and premarital sex, for which Islamic law prescribes harsh punishments. Zina refers to unlawful and consensual sexual intercourse between individuals who are not married to each other, while rape is defined as sexual intercourse without consent. Even though zina and rape are distinct concepts in Islamic law, in legal systems of some Muslim-majority countries they are conflated, blurring the distinction between zina and rape. Wherever rape is defined as 'zina without consent', it is subjected to the same strict evidentiary standards as zina, requiring four male witnesses or a confession, making rape convictions extremely difficult. Wherever zina and rape are conflated, rape victims therefore risk being charged with zina if they cannot prove the assault, which has led to situations where victims were punished for reporting the crime.[61]

Honour killing is a term often used for the killing of a girl by her family with the aim to remedy humiliated family honour. In the dominator model of society, the group — be it family or clan — is the primary entity, the relevant body, rather than the individual. As a raped girl represents 'damaged goods' — she is seen to be no longer 'usable' as an 'honourable gift' — she

is likened to a diseased limb that needs amputation to save the rest of the body. In the context of her psychotherapeutic work, I witnessed many ways of covering up for rape or making it 'legal' by marrying the victim to the rapist. I also heard of girls who identified with these rules to the point that they took their own lives, not least to alleviate their families of the duty to kill them.

In summary, in male-dominated, highly collectivist societies governed by strict honour codes, rape transcends individual trauma in that it may lead to devastating social consequences. Given that in such contexts rape victims may face lifelong ostracism or even honour killings, sexual violence has the potential to function as both a social and even physical 'death sentence'. Rape thus represents one of the most powerful weapons — with one single act of rape, a whole family can be dishonoured and even a death sentence delivered. Sexual violence used as a weapon can destroy not only individual lives but also destabilise familial and communal honour, perpetuating cycles of gendered humiliation between families, clans, as well as larger groups.

- Rape permitted as the victor's 'spoils of war'

The security dilemma held a divided world in its grip throughout the past millennia with dominator polities being pitted against each other in mutual fear. In this context, the warrior code of honour indicated that an opponent in combat must be a worthy enemy — an aristocrat would only challenge a worthy equal to duel, not a slave or a woman. War has traditionally been seen as an honourable undertaking, a well-planned and officially declared duel-like showdown. Over centuries, historians and ethicists have consistently condemned dishonest tactics in warfare. Wars were to be declared formally, for example. It was not an honourable way of declaring war to send 'messages of humiliation' to the men of the enemy group through raping the enemy's women. Ambushes, guerilla attacks, as much as rape as a weapon, all violate the traditional notion of honour and were seen as dishonourable 'dirty' tactics that only 'cowards' would use. In cases where systematic use of rape was used, it was therefore always denied by military leaders and attributed to individual misconduct among their soldiers. This legacy persists until today, even in the face of evidence that suggests a different reality on the ground.[62]

The warfare tactics of Nazi Germany can serve as an example. Erwin Rommel, a general in the *Wehrmacht*, the Nazi-era German armed forces, operated in the north of Africa, where he publicly denounced rape of local women and enforced punishment for such acts among his own soldiers.[63] He sought to uphold the reputation of the chivalrous soldier by showing moral authority and fostering goodwill among local populations. To say it differently, he regarded it as 'dishonourable to use the security dilemma as a pretext to satisfy personal desires to humiliate people'.[64] While rape was officially forbidden in all of the *Wehrmacht*, and while rape was relatively rare only in northern and western countries considered 'worthy enemies', the situation was very different in the east, where populations were regarded as 'sub-human'. This historical fact, however, was deliberately concealed for decades after the war, even by the *Bundeswehr*, the post-war West German army — precisely because such acts were regarded as profoundly dishonourable and incompatible with the desired image of the military.[65]

Ambushes and guerilla attacks could themselves be interpreted through the lens of rape, not as rape of an individual but of a group. In the context of a strong security dilemma, people 'huddled' together for protection from the enemy to the point that whole nations regarded themselves as unified entities who would act as if they were a person.[66] While planned wars resembled duels between individuals, even though large armies faced each other in a display of strength, a sudden, unanticipated invasion of one nation or ethnic group by another mirrored the structure and function of rape. Akin to the dishonour that rape would bring to an honourable

warrior, ambushes or guerilla tactics brought dishonour to the perpetrators who were deemed to be cowards.

Even today, in contexts of power asymmetry, the term 'cowardly' is often invoked to mask these imbalances with moral outrage. As exemplified by Nelson Mandela's leadership of *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, acts of resistance may be valorised as freedom fighting by supporters, while condemned as cowardly terrorism by those in power. Such labelling frequently serves to obscure systemic oppression, as seen in apartheid South Africa's criminalisation of sabotage, which ignored the underlying power asymmetry maintained through state violence.

In contrast to the rules concerning rape during warfare, these rules were traditionally very different when wars had ended. When formal hostilities ended with peace agreements and both sides maintained their integrity, the use of rape as a weapon could also end, since this type of 'messaging' was no longer needed. Rape's societal repercussions endured, however, as survivors frequently faced stigmatisation, ostracism, or even honour-based violence from their own communities.

In case one party had been thoroughly defeated and their men killed, the rules of war allowed raping and enslaving the women of defeated enemies as part of the 'spoils of war'. The bodies of defeated women were then turned into objects of the victor's unlimited sexual aggression, no longer as messages to their male adversaries, as those were mostly dead. In the past, these practices were part of the rules of war that were accepted by all sides, including the defeated. 'Spoils of war' implied that the *violation of the honour and dignity of victims was seen as legitimate.*

Historical examples show that women even killed themselves pre-emptively to avoid rape after defeat. *Jauhar*, for instance, was a historical practice of mass self-immolation performed by Hindu Rajput women and children in parts of the Indian subcontinent to avoid the humiliation of capture, enslavement, and rape by invading forces during times of certain defeat in war. Women would dress in wedding attire, adorn themselves with jewellery, and enter a large pyre, often at night, while Brahmin priests chanted Vedic texts. This practice, seen as a way to preserve honour and cultural pride, was most famously performed at Chittorgarh Fort in 1303, 1535, and 1568. The next morning, Rajput men would perform *saka*, marching into battle expecting death.

2. Rape in societal contexts that have embraced equality in dignity for all

Currently, the Zeitgeist — beliefs, mindsets, moral landscapes — is caught between two assumptions. On one side is the assumption that competition for domination is inevitable, on the other side that a global partnership society is possible. The first standpoint reflects a psychological investment in the belief that human nature is inherently belligerent, so that the world ought to be kept divided and the security dilemma maintained strong, together with the dominator model of society. The second standpoint expresses the conviction that the human nature is such that the security dilemma can and should be transcended by uniting the world and realising the partnership model of society for the planet's inhabitants.

The results of Lindner's research align with the second standpoint,[67] in support of a wider body of scholarship that indicates that human nature is relational rather than belligerent. From the perspective of this standpoint, the first standpoint is outdated and suffers from an attribution error by overlooking the influence of the security dilemma on human behaviour. The first standpoint is outdated also because it overlooks the novelty of global interconnectedness and the increasing salience enjoyed by ideals of equal dignity, despite backlashes. Most importantly, as Lindner highlights in her work, for the first time in modern human history, it is feasible to

establish global institutions capable of ensuring that conflicts are waged without the use of violence.

Large-scale psycho-geo-historical changes, as described in Lindner's historical narrative that integrates anthropologist William Ury's insights, are at the core of this development. According to this narrative, humanity finds itself in its second significant transition, as significant as the so-called Neolithic Revolution. Lindner's research indicates that in this situation, only the second standpoint is a viable path into a dignified future.

At the present point in time, in 2025, many advances that were made in the last century are, however, being turned back again. The League of Nations was founded in 1920, with the aim to stop war and maintain world peace, to discourage aggression, deal with disputes through negotiation, and provide collective security. These aims were confirmed by the Atlantic Charter of 1941, and the United Nations in 1945. All these initiatives sought to prevent wars through collective security and disarmament, as well as settling international disputes through negotiation and arbitration. In 1948, the members of Eleanor Roosevelt's committee, hailing from all corners of the world, drafted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, establishing the principle of 'inherent dignity' as its foundation.

The principle of equality in dignity for all in mutual solidarity is at the core of the second mindset. In cultural contexts that embrace these ideals, the entire moral landscape changes, inspiring the implementation of the *partnership model of society*, as Riane Eisler called it, or the *mutuality model of society*, as Linda Hartling prefers to name it.[68] The sentence 'All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights' describes this new landscape, as it represents a moral-ethical 'U-turn' compared to the dominator model of society, where this sentence would go as follows, 'All human beings are born unequal in worthiness and rights, and some are freer than others'.

The sentence that 'all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights' furthermore stipulates that *all human beings* are equal in dignity, rather than only 'all Europeans' or 'all Christians', which implies that united *people* need to guarantee peace in dignity in the future, more than united *nations*. As the years that followed the founding of the United Nations have demonstrated, its internal national sovereignty structure has entrenched power disparities rather than collective governance, thus falling short of United People. When Security Council veto powers obstruct action on conflicts, the result resembles 'Disunited Nations', a system where national sovereignty norms paralyse conflict prevention. Despite efforts by civil society to fill the gaps, a truly effective global security framework remains distant.

In other words, a global partnership society that succeeds in fulfilling the goal of preventing war and solving conflicts peacefully is still a utopia — far from realisation. It remains, however, a *necessary utopia*, because only global cooperation can systemically protect and nurture values such as equality in dignity for all in mutual solidarity. Only global cooperation can open space for a dignified and dignifying future for all life on Earth.

Whenever this utopia will succeed, rape will still occur occasionally, yet it will no longer be employed systematically. Victims of rape will receive trauma therapy, while perpetrators will be brought before courts that adhere to principles of restorative justice. Victims of rape and their offspring will be treated with compassion and respect, focusing on integration and healing.[69] This approach will involve de-stigmatising victimhood from sexual violence through education and awareness campaigns, for instance, through providing comprehensive medical, psychological, and legal support, and through ensuring economic support for survivors and their children.[70] Communities will actively work to reintegrate survivors and their offspring, offering

appropriate support to address transgenerational trauma. Reparation programs will aim to transform underlying gender-based inequalities, and all efforts will be applied without discrimination.

By implementing these strategies, societies will create an environment where survivors and their children are valued, supported, and given opportunities to heal and thrive as fully integrated members of the community.

As long as the human family remains divided and fails to establish global institutions that foster United People, the security dilemma will persist, leaving local efforts vulnerable to being thwarted. Despite of this, the scenario described above as the 'second mindset' or 'second standpoint' must, however, be upheld as a 'lighthouse', illuminating the path that still lies ahead.

3. Sexual violence in times of transition

The following question is legitimate: Why has the aim been missed, at least so far, to co-create a global partnership society where war is prevented, including the use of sexual violence as a weapon?

The reason is that the transition from the dominator to the partnership mindset is fraught with pitfalls. Among these pitfalls are the dynamics of humiliation. They block the transition by increasing the potential for violence. Rape as a weapon in armed conflict is at the core of this dynamic, likely to increase both in frequency and intensity during the transition.

Lindner's work is particularly important in this context, because it highlights risks which, as they are historically so new, are prone to be overlooked — even though such oversight can endanger nothing less than the survival of all life on Earth. As feelings of humiliation, particularly feelings of dignity-humiliation are extremely potent — described by Lindner as the nuclear bomb of the emotions — unawareness of the need to prevent these dynamics represents one of the most significant obstacles to a dignified future.

There are multiple pathways through which the dynamics of humiliation obstruct the transition from dominator to partnership models. When required to relinquish privileges, those accustomed to dominance often interpret this as undue status degradation — as undue humiliation — responding with intensified coercive control, including violent oppression. Their actions stem from assumptions rooted in historical contexts when humiliation was regarded as a pro-social mechanism for maintaining hierarchical order. They stem from times when even those at the bottom of society were complicit in upholding such arrangements, believing they reflected God's will or 'nature's order'. As discussed earlier, persistent beliefs in the inevitability of competition-driven hierarchical social structures, the inescapability of security dilemmas, and the necessity of militarised responses continue to uphold these paradigms.

In an increasingly interconnected world, however, where ideals of equal dignity have gained global significance not least through institutions like the United Nations and human rights frameworks, humiliation loses its former efficacy as a tool of control, as oppressed groups may now *refuse* submissive responses. Human rights norms explicitly reject the practice of ascribing hierarchically ranked worthiness to people, instead championing partnership models that recognise inherent dignity across all social strata. This shift transforms humiliation from an accepted mechanism for enforcing honour-based hierarchies into a violation of universal rights.

However, also the rejection of humiliation introduces transitional hazards, as even emancipatory efforts can perpetuate cycles of dehumanisation. As oppressed groups gain agency, they risk mirroring the oppressive tactics of their former dominators instead of pursuing constructive resistance through dialogue. Oppressed groups may turn to retaliatory violence for

past humiliation, which, as mentioned before, can even eclipse traditional vengeance for honour-humiliation.

In short, powerholders, even those avoiding overtly cruel acts like public executions, often remain oblivious to which degree even the most casual displays of power can trigger violent retaliations — evidenced in historical patterns from the French Revolution's pitchforks to modern uprisings. Conversely, marginalised groups seeking liberation frequently fail to recognise that merely inverting power hierarchies perpetuates cycles of humiliation rather than repairing them. Lindner therefore cautions against the use of the phrase of 'empowerment', as it risks replicating dominator logic through its implicit hierarchy of over/under. In the terminology of humiliation/humility, 'empowerment' entails the danger of creating arrogant narcissism.[71] Lindner therefore advocates *entrustment* — a collaborative process fostering dignified humility through mutual recognition and shared responsibility. Subservient humbleness needs to transform into dignified humility rather than into arrogance.

While many people remain oblivious to humiliation's systemic role, there is one group of people who is highly versed in humiliation dynamics. These are 'humiliation entrepreneurs', as Lindner calls them, who exploit humiliation dynamics strategically by leveraging collective grievances for financial gain as a path to financial gain and to power. They operationalise cycles of humiliation, transforming victimhood narratives into tools for mobilising support, while disregarding the risks of escalating violence inherent in such tactics.

Given the urgency of the situation, there is a pressing need for intensified scholarly and practical engagement with the dynamics of humiliation, as these dynamics pose significant obstacles to achieving a dignified and peaceful future. Would-be dominators must recognise that humiliation, while it once was a tool for enforcing hierarchy, now risks provoking violent retaliations, as victims increasingly reject subjugation and refuse subservience. Simultaneously, oppressed groups seeking justice must avoid retaliatory humiliation that perpetuates cyclical violence through replicating oppressive patterns — humiliating humiliators only replaces old tyrannies with new ones.

The path forward lies in cultivating global systems rooted in mutual dignity, where equal worth displaces humiliation as a social mechanism. The way into a dignified future is to build a *decent world society*, where humiliation has no place anymore.[72]

- The historical transition from 'state' to 'feelings'

Humiliation, and the ways in which it is being felt and responded to, is embedded in large-scale changes in psychological sensitivities, influenced by and influencing historical geo-political changes in social arrangements. As reported above, anthropologist William Ury has identified core patterns driving these changes. Another scholar, legal historian William Ian Miller, has shed light on the deeper layers of these historical transitions and explored how they affect humiliation. Miller looked into the articulations and conceptualisations of the 'self', and how it has changed over time.

Miller's interest was picked when he noticed that the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) does not treat humiliation as an emotion, but only makes links to emotions, while treating humiliation proper as a state rather than a feeling:[73]

> One could hazard the claim that as late as the seventeenth century the self did not feel emotions at all; instead, the emotions were borne almost as a quasi-juridical status or as allegorical personae that the subject put on mask-like. When one was sad, one became the character Sadness in a moral and social drama, with its behaviour thus constrained by the role.[74]

During my medical training, I have indeed met people who enacted their feelings in the ways Miller describes. I vividly remember patients from rural backgrounds in Western Asia, for instance, who entered the clinic with their extended families, and it was as if they had to 'prove' their suffering to the family and the medical personnel through enactment — loud mourning, wailing, and sighing. It was clear that this enactment was not spontaneous, it required an effort that burdened their already compromised health utterly.

In his book, Miller reflects on the reasons for why the construction with 'feel + emotion term' becomes common only in the nineteenth century, and why, after that, both be and feel constructions became available for most emotions in regular usage. Miller describes how the fixed state of the 'mask' of honour dissolved into fluid feelings:

> But when one could at last feel sad, sadness became a feeling, a perturbation of the nerves coupled with the effects of the thoughts one might have about that perturbation. The new self could thus be something more than its feelings; it could be more detached from them, more ironical, perhaps more restrained, and definitely more self-conscious. And this last characteristic — self-consciousness — might also tend to make this new self more likely to feel such emotions as humiliation and embarrassment than heretofore. This claim may seem a bit mystifying, but it is not without some reason. It is reasonably consistent with some of the drift of Norbert Elias's work.[75]

A 1740 novel written by novelist Samuel Richardson and titled Pamela; Or, Virtue Rewarded, makes palpable the historical move from the state of the role carried as a mask by each individual in a hierarchical model of society to the intrinsic dignity of each individual, including their feelings, in a more egalitarian concept of social life.[76] The novel tells the story of Pamela Andrews, a 15-year-old servant girl known for her beauty and virtue. The narrative revolves around her struggles with her employer, Mr. B, a wealthy landowner who repeatedly attempts to seduce her. Despite facing numerous challenges and even forceful advances, Pamela steadfastly maintains her chastity. As the story unfolds, Mr. B's persistent pursuit eventually transforms into genuine affection. Moved by Pamela's unwavering virtue and kindness, he proposes marriage. This turn of events sparked a debate among readers, dividing them into two camps. One group, sceptical of Pamela's motives, suspected her of cleverly manipulating Mr. B into marriage. This perspective aligned with the prevailing 18th-century Zeitgeist that servants should acquiesce to their masters' desires, and that chastity held little value for those of lower social standing. In contrast, supporters of Pamela embraced a more progressive viewpoint. They recognised and applauded the young woman's determination to preserve her integrity and virtue, regardless of her social status. This interpretation reflected an emerging shift in societal values, acknowledging the worth of individual morality across class boundaries.

To employ Lindner's terminology, what unfolded was a gradual dissolution of identity masks from a strictly delineated, 'mask-like' highly collectivistic and hierarchically structured *unequal* face of honour to a far more flexible and dynamic notion of *equal* dignity for each person. The gradual dissolution of identity masks deeply impacted the experience and conceptualisation of emotions and sentiments. More attention was given to the inner life, together with the manners and emotions supporting them, at first in elite social circles in Europe, and from there spreading out into the world.

The novel *Pamela* was not the only example of writing that discussed the importance of

emotionality. Jane Austen's 1811 novel *Sense and Sensibility*, for instance, explored the balance between reason (sense) and emotion (sensibility), whereby 'reason' is embedded in societal pressures related to marriage, money, and status. Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* of 1847 told a similar story. Both Bronte and Austen contributed to bringing to light the rise of emotion and morality.[77]

The same transition can be observed in academic research.[78] Emotion was long regarded as too 'soft' a topic for 'hard' science, overlooking that its consequences can create the hardest of facts — from hostile polarisation to terrorism to genocide to war.[79] It is telling that emotions become more visible in present-day's research in the wake of the emergence of 'hard' technology, namely, the neuroimaging technique of functional MRI, which can now study the brain areas that are involved in emotions the 'hard' way.

Related conceptualisations of transitions can be found in the social sciences and in philosophy, namely, in the concept of *face* in social interactions explored by sociologist Erving Goffman (1922–1982) and philosopher Emmanuel Lévinas (1906–1995). Goffman views face as a socially constructed image that individuals strive to maintain in social encounters.[80] His conceptualisation aligns with the idea of face as a protective mask, reflecting societal expectations and norms of honour. It emphasises the ritualistic nature of social interactions, where individuals engage in 'face-work' to preserve their own and others' social standing. Research in social psychology has indeed confirmed that the social humiliation of losing face can lead to forms of retaliation even at the cost of self-destruction.[81]

In contrast to Goffman, Lévinas presents a different interpretation of face, moving beyond the notion of a mask.[82] For Lévinas, the face of the Other represents an ethical imperative, serving as the foundation for moral responsibility. His perspective shifts the focus from self-presentation to an ethical obligation towards others, emphasising the intrinsic dignity of every individual. While Goffman's view aligns with a collectivist understanding of honour, where social standing is paramount, Lévinas articulates a perspective more in line with the concept of universal human dignity, emphasising individual worth and mutual respect.

Comparing both viewpoints, a transition becomes visible that aligns with the broader societal shifts towards recognising the fundamental equality and dignity of all individuals, while still acknowledging their diversity in the complex dynamics of social interactions, namely, the transition from face as a social construct to face as a symbol of inherent human value.

Philosopher Martin Buber's *I-It* versus *I-Thou* concept comes to mind as well. His concept describes two fundamental ways humans can relate to the world and others.[83] The I-It relationship treats others as objects to be used or experienced, characterised by detachment and objectification. In contrast, the I-Thou relationship recognises others as unique, valuable beings, fostering mutual respect, empathy, and genuine dialogue. I-Thou relationships are present-focused and creates a sense of intimacy. From the psychological point of view, the *I-It* versus *I-Thou* concept applies also to the relationship people may have with themselves. Recent research has shed light on the psychological and pedagogical mechanisms entailed in the transition from a fixed mindset, or ego-oriented performance orientation, to the adoption of a psychological growth mindset, or a task-oriented learning-mastery orientation.[84]

Lindner does not necessarily see Romanticism, industrialisation, and capitalism as roots of these transformations, as William Ian Miller does, rather the above-described large-scale psycho-geo-historical developments that are still unfolding today, even if only working in the background, developments that influence all aspects of contemporary Zeitgeist.

Looking back millennia, using a big-history lens, the role of circumscription becomes obvious

and how it introduced the security dilemma, which was initially driven by *fear rooted in uncertainty about others' intentions*, spawning the dominator model of society with its 'mask-like hardness'. Then, slowly, the world became more globally interconnected — after all, the sun never set on the British Empire. New scientific findings expanded the horizon of the known world ever further — rather than the centre of the world, planet Earth is a sphere (rather than a flat disk) that is lost in a vast universe, all of which was further confirmed by the pictures from the astronauts' perspective that showed a tiny planet Earth in a vast black universe.

As it became increasingly evident how insignificant humanity's place in the universe might be, a realisation that challenges the grandiosity of dominator logic and undermines self-aggrandising narratives — and induces what Lindner calls *ontological humility* — more and more people began to adopt what has above been specified as the 'second standpoint'. An expanding number of people recognised that all living beings are neighbours on a tiny planet, whether they are 'good' or 'bad' neighbours, and that the concept of 'enemy' only leads to global infighting, ultimately endangering the survival of all life on Earth. The insight grew that, just as parents must care for their children even after divorce, neighbours have the duty to avoid violent conflict and prevent the destruction of the planet's resources, however much they may dislike one another.

- Focusing on feelings can nurture compassion, yet it can also do the opposite

An increase in emotional awareness is presently transforming global norms across all societal domains. Previously suppressed feelings now inform legal and cultural frameworks, driving the reclassification of once-accepted practices. What was formerly accepted as *due* humiliation, becomes rejected as *undue* humiliation. The term *domestic violence* may serve as one of many examples for this shift, as the same practice, namely, corporal punishment, was previously termed *domestic chastisement*, since it was considered the man's duty to discipline disobedient family members. Even in an egalitarian country like Norway, it was legally permissible until 1868 for a husband to beat his wife.[85]

Redefinitions are not limited to a few individuals, though, they affect millions of people. The more ideals of equality in dignity become known, millions of people who previously remained silent — whether they had internalised their low status as God's will or nature's order or had turned humiliation inward and inflicted it on themselves — begin to interpret their experiences as undue humiliation rather than due humbling. Social psychologists Yashpal Jogdand and Stephen Reicher, for example, documented this transition through their interviews with Dalits in India. They found that mistreatments of the past were not identified as humiliation as long as Dalits held an *unvalued identity*, but when they acquired a *valued identity*, past mistreatments were retrospectively reappraised as humiliating.[86]

The heightened focus on emotional dynamics exposes what Lindner describes as 'millennia-long war injuries', namely, systemic psychological wounds inflicted on all participants by security dilemmas. Women sustained injuries through routinised humiliation and exclusion from education, depriving societies of their leadership potential. Conversely, men, compelled to uphold honour-based 'masks' of invulnerability, developed emotional dissociation that normalised excessive risk-taking and perpetuated cycles of harm to themselves and others.

Throughout history, the imperative that men were subjected to, namely, to always be ready for combat, created deep psychological wounds.[87] Within security dilemma-driven societies, these systemic costs were, however, systematically obscured — either minimised as necessary sacrifices, denied through honour narratives, or romanticised as moral fortification. While the consequences were devastating, they were accepted as 'collateral damage' or pathologised as

personal failures — fractured kinship bonds, communal trauma, and the physical/psychological mutilation of those conditioned to equate vulnerability with failure.[88] Feelings were not a private affair, rather, emotional authenticity was subservient to militarised survival needs.

The new focus on feelings exposes all aspects of former arrangements. The dark sides of past ways of organising societies and their relations with each other can increasingly be acknowledged. The suicides committed by war veterans can now be recognised as evidence of the extent to which active-duty military personnel suffer psychological harm. The fact that war veterans take their own lives exposes that it is not inherently natural for a human being to kill another.[89] A conscientious objector is no longer simply regarded as a coward or deserter. Lindner therefore resonates with neuroscientist Jonathan Shay, who campaigns against the usage of the diagnostic jargon of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) on war veterans. 'There is no illness, he argues, no malady, disease, sickness, no disorder: what veterans suffer from is war injury, a psychological injury from war, and it should therefore be called Posttraumatic Stress Injury'.[90]

In 2016, I met a former U.S. soldier serving in Afghanistan who had killed a man considered to be an enemy.[91] Initially, the soldier felt a sense of accomplishment and pride. His commanding officers commended him for being a 'real man, a killer', and he cherished this recognition, having longed for such validation all his life. However, his emotions soon shifted. He felt compelled to undertake a bold endeavour: to establish a posthumous 'connection' with the individual he had killed. He examined the photographs he found on the deceased's recovered mobile device, learned his name, and researched his personal history and family background. Essentially, he posthumously transformed the faceless adversary he had eliminated, into a fellow human being with an identity and story.[92] By becoming part of the movement of 'veterans for peace', his feelings helped him to recover his own humanity from military mutilation and withstand the dehumanising pressure of a strong security dilemma.

As this example shows, whenever and wherever the security dilemma attenuates, individual feelings can come more into focus, and this can have a humanising effect. However, it can also go into the opposite direction.

In security dilemma-driven societies, both war and torture became institutionalised forms of violence, legitimised through *enemy* construction. *External* adversaries faced ritualised combat framed as honourable duels — man-to-man clashes promising glory to victors. It was within this paradigm that rape was stigmatised as dishonourable, a violation of warrior codes, which were passed on intergenerationally.[93]

Internal enemies, in contrast, bifurcated into two categories — rival elites were treated like external foes, while subordinates were subjected to dehumanising rituals. The latter involved systematic humiliation rather than honour-based duel-like confrontation, reflecting dominator logic's hierarchical enforcement. Those tasked with 'cleansing' dissent (torturers, executioners) occupied society's lowest strata — no proud man would want to engage in a cleaning task that was typically given to women. Furthermore, 'dirt' that had to be 'cleaned up' was suspected to pollute also the 'cleaners'. Through their association with polluting acts gendered as feminine, these people became 'untouchables', avoided by the rest of society.[94]

> …elites (who legitimised torture) hesitated to torture their equals. Inferiors were more 'eligible', as were traitors, those who were perceived to have lost the status of equals through treason. Thus, torture was a legal and normal part of societies' dealings with their lower power subjects for long periods of humankind's past, deeply embedded in the world of ranked honour. [95]

Wherever the security dilemma attenuates, hereditary hierarchies dissolve, and hereditary 'untouchable' groups become unavailable. Leaders who still want to rule by brutality must 'replace' the pressure that formerly was provided by a strong security dilemma by focusing on the feelings of those they want to 'groom' as torturers and rapists.

In Somalia, for instance, warlords used to put militia boys on pickup trucks, provide them with weapons and drugs, and sometimes with young girls as sex slaves. While exact figures are lacking, hundreds of thousands of children under the age of eighteen, some as young as eight years old, currently serve in government forces or armed rebel groups all around the world.[96] Even small children can become brutal killers after being manipulated and drugged.

In other words, leaders who want to turn others into tools of brutality, now need to develop complex environmental pressures and systematic conditioning to target personal vulnerabilities so as to 'break' their moral and psychological barriers. They instrumentalise empathy to increase suffering, because, after all, cognitive and affective empathy are needed 'to identify the victim's weak spots'.[97]

Rape — whether conflict-related or occurring in peacetime — is subject to the same transitional dynamics. The new focus on individual feelings can have both humanising and dehumanising effects, potentially preventing rape or making it even crueller. A would-be perpetrator might, for instance, feel sympathy for the suffering he (most often a man) causes and decide to release his victim, thus preventing the act. Conversely, as will be explored more further down, this very suffering may be precisely what the perpetrator intends to inflict.

- Cross back: From feelings of dignity-humiliation to revenge for honour-humiliation

Unexpected problems of the gravest nature that have to do with humiliation accompany the transition from an honour-based divided world towards a more unified and dignified future for all. Activists working for ideals of equal dignity for all need to take these problems into account.

Advocates of ideals of equal dignity need to be aware that, even though they bring hope to the downtrodden, they do so by ways of surfacing intense feelings of humiliation that may have been submerged before, something that may trigger the 'going black' of humiliated fury.[98] Advocates of ideals of equal dignity furthermore 'democratise' the right to get angry, a right that was once reserved for power elites. A critical challenge thus emerges when marginalised groups embrace equal dignity ideals and reinterpret past subservience as systemic humiliation,[99] while still lacking the psychological or social resources to actualise them constructively.

While dignity-based humiliation should theoretically inspire Gandhi-style resistance that eschews violence (what Lindner calls the *path of entrustment*), victims may revert to honour-humiliation's retaliatory toolkit. However, empowerment should not be confused with violent counter-humiliation. When Lindner sees dignity-humiliation being responded to with the toolkit for avenging honour-humiliation, a toolkit that was historically reserved for elites to assert dominance, she speaks of *cross back*. A predicament called post-victim ethical exemption syndrome[100] captures the moral paradox wherein violated dignity is weaponised in ways that compound the violation of dignity.

What is significant to note is that historical cruelty may be vastly exceeded when dignity-humiliation inspires retaliation. Unlike honour-based conflicts, where defeating a respected enemy could involve mutual recognition, dignity-driven vengeance seeks to maximise suffering far beyond mere victory. Victims-turned-perpetrators, now hyper-focused on their own emotional wounds, may delay the death of victims with the aim to enforce prolonged humiliation — after all, dead victims cannot feel humiliation anymore. Where honour systems permitted

'clean' dominance (such as battlefield kills), dignity-humiliation's visceral focus on psychological violation fosters rituals of protracted dehumanisation. *Cross back* means applying honour-humiliation's punitive logic to dignity conflicts, despite their fundamental incompatibility, and then intensify the 'punishment'.

This *cross-back* dynamic manifests acutely also in sexual violence. Wherever egalitarian dignity norms gain traction, it is likely that rape becomes one of the prime pathways to weaponise dignity-humiliation — shifting from a tool of domination into a mechanism for inflicting existential dehumanisation. Unlike traditional conflict, where rape focused on male-to-male messaging or immediate power assertion, dignity-driven sexual violence seeks to indelibly scar the victim's psyche, exploiting the victim's heightened awareness of their inherent worth to maximise humiliation. In terms of the concept of *cross back*, perpetrators employ honour-humiliation's toolkit (such as marking enemies through sexual violation), while targeting the victim's dignity-conscious sense of self, thereby compounding psychological devastation.

In Rwanda, for example, during the genocide against the Tutsi in 1994, meticulously designed humiliation rituals of prolonged degradation often preceded killing. These rituals, which frequently included sexual violence, were described by Lindner as the *core drivers* of genocide, as the death of the victims often was only the final outcome rather than the primary objective. Lindner posits that the term 'ethnic killing' may misrepresent this dynamic, proposing 'ethnic humiliation' instead. Perpetrators delayed victims' deaths to maximise psychological suffering, forcing them to internalise their subjugation. This reflects what Lindner terms the *shame-cleansing paradox* — perpetrators seeking to eradicate their own shame from past subservience through hyper-cruelty, thus using 'ethnic cleansing' as a ritual of transferring humiliation rather than mere physical eradication.[101]

The genocide against the Tutsi exemplified the catastrophic potential of weaponised humiliation as the *nuclear bomb of emotions*.[102] It demonstrated how low-cost communication channels — like Rwanda's radio station Mille Collines — could amplify and manipulate collective humiliation narratives to incite mass violence. By framing past Tutsi dominance as existentially threatening humiliation requiring self-defence, radio broadcasts urged Hutu listeners to use household tools as weapons to pre-emptively prevent future humiliation.[103] Leveraging historical grievances to transform humiliation into a cost-efficient 'emotional weapon' that maximises harm through community participation was a 'cost-effective' way to minimise conventional military expenditure.

The propaganda tactics employed by Nazi Germany's Joseph Goebbels were a blueprint. The Hutu narrative of humiliation paralleled Goebbels' radio-disseminated humiliation narrative, namely, that an *Endlösung* (Final Solution) was purportedly the way to prevent future humiliation. More recent efforts by extremist groups seeking to revive a caliphate come to mind as well. These groups exploited modern internet platforms to recruit 'foreign fighters' from disenfranchised Muslims through narratives of humiliation, portraying the West as humiliator of Islam by highlighting historical grievances while framing their own struggle as a fight to restore dignity and honour to the Islamic world.[104] These patterns — transforming emotions into a driving force for violent acts of terror — underscore the potent and far-reaching impact of humiliation when harnessed as a tool for mobilising violence.

As mentioned earlier, Nazi ideology revered the high ideals of male honour and contrasted it with the lowly task of 'cleaning up dirt' considered lowly not least since cleaning was what females were usually tasked to do. These two tasks — the honourable and the dishonourable ones — not only coexisted in Nazi Germany, they were taken to their extremes. Rape was

officially forbidden in the German *Wehrmacht* during WWII and indeed, when the northern and western countries in Europe were being conquered, they were relatively spared as they were considered 'worthy enemies'. The situation was very different in eastern and southeastern Europe, where rape played a pivotal role in the Nazis' aim to destroy people they considered inferior, such as Jews, Russians, and Poles.[105] While German SS soldiers were not allowed to have sexual contact with a 'sub-human' Russian woman,[106] they could rape her after branding her as 'Whore for Hitler's troops', and then killing her.[107] In other words, killing these women was not 'enough' — first, the woman's feelings had to be targeted with humiliation to make her 'understand' her worthlessness. Rape was not even a 'message' to her males, because also they were regarded as sub-human, unworthy of being treated like respectable enemies. All these atrocities were exposed as late as 2011, more than half a century after the event, when conversations between German prisoners of war were published that had been secretly recorded by the Allies.[108] Before that, the myth was held up for decades that the *Wehrmacht* had preserved its honour and had not been involved in war crimes.

Nazi leader Heinrich Himmler intertwined honourable and dishonourable tasks in the most unseeming ways. He posited that true bravery lay in upholding male honour while simultaneously engaging in what he deemed lowly work associated with women, namely, cleaning tasks. In a speech delivered to high-ranking Nazi officials in Posen on 6th October 1943, Himmler acknowledged that killing helpless Jews would bring dishonour to proud soldiers, yet he rationalised it as a necessary evil for which future generations would be grateful. In his first Posen speech on 4th October 1943, he commended his SS men for maintaining their 'honour' while carrying out the grim task of exterminating individuals who were likened to pests.

In Somalia, during the Isaaq genocide from 1987 and 1989, rape was being employed so systematically that it led to the division of the country. After gaining independence in 1960, Somalia adopted a Western-style democratic system, raising high hopes for a prosperous future. However, this initiative was short-lived, ending in 1969, not least because Western democracy principles violated the traditional pastoral system of local consensus-building.[109] Siad Barre, the Commander of the Somali National Army, was therefore hailed as a saviour when he seized power in a coup, only to establish an authoritarian regime later. The traditional clan balance that gave women a certain degree of protection from rape was gradually disrupted under Siad Barre's influence. At first, Barre attempted to dismantle the clan system entirely through his 'scientific socialism' ideology that he applied on the idea of a Greater Somalia nation state, only to do the opposite later, when he manipulated clan dynamics for his political gain. In 1979, rape was for the first time perpetrated systematically under his command by the Somali military, against Majerteen women during the first rebellion in the Majerteen region. Subsequently, rape became the most 'cost-effective' weapon for Barre to maintain power above the clan system. During the Isaaq genocide between 1987 and 1989, the Somali military used mass rape against Isaaq women, which ultimately led to the collapse of the Somali state. The civil war that began in 1991 saw an escalation of the use of rape as a weapon, as militia groups raped systematically to humiliate enemy clans and take revenge.[110]

During my doctoral research in Somaliland, I was urged by Somalilanders to tell the world that Somaliland could no longer be part of Somalia, despite the fact that all Somalis share the same language, ethnic roots, and religion. Somalilanders felt that they needed to be independent from Mogadishu, for the very reason that a 'red line' had been crossed during the Isaaq genocide,

namely, that not just opportunistic rape had been perpetrated, but systematic public rape in front of families.[111] This was perceived as unforgivable humiliation.

It was through studying the personal biographies of Adolf Hitler, Siad Barre, and the extremist Hutu leaders in Rwanda, that I came to understand what I eventually called *cross back*, namely, that feelings of dignity humiliation may be responded to with counter-humiliation that is even more cruel than traditional revenge for honour humiliation would indicate.

Applying the lessons from Somalia on world society, it becomes clear that nothing can divide the world community as profoundly as the humiliation that flows from rape used as a weapon. This kind of rape has the potential to create enmity and division in ways that are so deep that peace in dignity is almost impossible. This is why it is the world community's highest responsibility to prevent it.

It is important to note that while cruelty may escalate in dignity-conscious societies during conflicts, the post-conflict situation might be completely different. Post-atrocity environments tend to greatly benefit from the promotion of egalitarian values. Wherever norms of equal dignity take root, survivors can be recognised as individuals with complex psychological needs, worthy of trauma-informed care rather than being reduced to dehumanised social roles. The shift from unequal honour to equal dignity enables two critical changes, namely, first dismantling any 'discardable goods' mentality through systemic support networks, and second, fostering collective accountability that addresses both individual and societal complicity in past violence.

In Rwanda, for example, in the aftermath of the genocide against the Tutsi in 1994, significant efforts have been made to integrate perpetrators and victims of rape. One notable example is the work of SEVOTA (Solidarity for the Development of Widows and Orphans to Promote Self-Sufficiency and Livelihoods), an organisation that focuses on helping survivors of sexual violence and their children.[112]

Lindner's 'dignity clinics' model of dignity restoration emphasises multiple pathways to rebuild fractured personhood.[113] Central to her approach is dignifying dialogue — communication grounded in mutual respect and equality — which fosters understanding and connection while rejecting humiliation and stigmatisation. The model also incorporates appreciative inquiry, focusing on strengths and positive experiences to inspire constructive action. Additionally, this approach highlights the importance of relational and community-based efforts — such as communal storytelling — where supportive networks nurture dignity through shared care and solidarity. Creative educational methods and initiatives play a key role in raising awareness and developing skills for dignifying relationships, while witnessing and validating individuals' suffering through attentive listening and public acknowledgment further support healing. Together, these diverse pathways can work in concert to restore dignity and promote healing in both individuals and communities.

Long-term prevention of armed conflict, including conflict-related sexual violence

You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete. — Buckminster Fuller[114]

A new scientific truth does not triumph by convincing its opponents and making them see the light, but rather because its opponents eventually die, and a new generation grows up that is familiar with it. — Max Planck[115]

Contemporary historical periods are marked by polycrisis. The optimism that emerged after the Cold War has, for many, been replaced by a pervasive sense of despair. Humanity appears to be heading down a perilous trajectory — one that some might even describe as self-destructive. The concept of a united 'global village' is increasingly overshadowed by conflict, with nations and groups arming themselves out of distrust of one another, all fearing humiliation from the other. The escalation of conflict-related sexual violence is only one of several symptoms that characterise this broader crisis. Militarisation and arms proliferation drive this crisis, which, in turn, are propelled by power and profit motives.[116] International law is being flagrantly ignored,[117] and civic spaces shrink under the rule of complicit governments that have seized power unconstitutionally.[118]

All this happens while the opposite is needed, at least if a dignified future to all life on Earth shall be achievable. Given the fact that the planet's carrying capacity has been overstretched, global cooperation is the order of the day. Global collective action is needed to tackle root causes rather than merely addressing isolated manifestations — with the rise of conflict-related sexual violence being among the most significant ones. Global cooperation is needed, keeping the global village united, rather than global infighting that fragments this village through fences and trenches.

In this situation, Lindner offers a surprising insight. She proposes that, considering all of human history, the co-creation of world-wide peace in dignity has never been as possible as at the present historical moment. Clearly, pessimism remains warranted — humanity is perhaps not capable of using this opportunity — yet pessimism ought not to make blind for the opportunity. Concerted global efforts could use this opportunity and guide the world's population from its life-threatening fragmentation towards a united and responsible global community.

Several key factors offer the human family a unique historical opportunity to create global institutions capable of guiding humanity towards a future rooted in dignity and mutual respect.

A historical window of opportunity stands open

For the first time in modern history, it is possible to build global governance frameworks capable of leading the way into a dignified future for all life on Earth — frameworks that embrace *unity in diversity, grounded in the equal dignity of all and strengthened by mutual solidarity*. Lindner appreciates scholars who acknowledge the role of narratives of decline as motivators for change,[119] as well as other scholars who more explicitly centre on narratives of possibility — narratives that open the way for new solutions, understandings, and positive change.[120]

To inspire courage for positive change in her audiences, Lindner has chosen to open her talks by presenting her narrative of possibilities, highlighting several historically unprecedented

factors — many of which were unknown or unavailable to past generations — that now hold the potential for transformative change previously considered unthinkable:

1. *The overview effect*: The astronauts' perspective of Earth from space provides presently living generations with a profound understanding of global interconnectedness, allowing them to visualise their planet as a unified whole.

2. *Awareness of interconnectedness*: Extreme weather events, much like a pandemic with global reach, make the interconnectedness of the planet's ecosystem more tangible than ever before. The need for collective action shifts from a theoretical consideration to a palpable experience for an ever-growing number of people.

3. *Digital trust and connectivity*: Global communication systems — whether digital platforms or travel opportunities — enable more people than ever before to foster global consonance,[121] trust, and collaboration, in this way diminishing the uncertainty that is at the core of the security dilemma, the very uncertainty that spurns wars despite their high cost.[122] To fully realise their potential, these opportunities must be freed from the profit motive, as this often fuels division and hatred rather than fostering social connectivity.[123]

4. *Scientific knowledge availability*: For the first time in human history all necessary scientific knowledge is available that is needed for the co-creation of global institutions capable of fostering peaceful conflict transformation and environmental protection.[124]

5. *Human nature and cooperation*: Research indicates that human nature is inherently relational and capable of peaceful, cooperative behaviour, and this not just locally but also on a global scale.[125] The erroneous assumption that human nature is per definition belligerent arose in the context of a strong security dilemma.

6. *Revitalised emancipation movements*: Initiatives like the League of Nations, Atlantic Charter, United Nations, and Universal Declaration of Human Rights reinvigorated older emancipation movements (see, for instance, the *Axial Age*[126]). The initial aims of these institutions, namely, to ensure world peace, are still valid, even though they have not been reached so far.[127] The security dilemma awaits to be overcome, and the definition of national sovereignty adapted in ways that the notion of *military security in a divided world* can be replaced by *human security within a global community*. A *decent global village* manifests unity in diversity in equal dignity for all in mutual solidarity.[128]

7. *Urgency of climate action*: The current generations' opportunities are unique insofar as these are the first generations to experience significant human-made climate change impacts and perhaps the last generations able to address them effectively. As wars exacerbate environmental degradation, this creates also a compelling impetus for action to protect the planet through preventing wars and military armament.

The convergence of these factors presents an unprecedented opportunity to establish global institutions that foster a globally caring and united human family. It is the unique opportunity to unite humanity in its stewardship of its habitat, in the awareness that the human species is part of

the inter-being of everything in everything else rather than the master of this planet. By using digital connectivity as a pro-social tool (rather than a tool to create hatred), by drawing on the available scientific knowledge, and by renewed commitment to ideals of equal dignity and mutual solidarity, the human species has the unique opportunity to overcome historical barriers and create a more just, peaceful, and sustainable world.

The concept of international solidarity, as outlined, for instance, in the Revised Draft Declaration on the Right to International Solidarity,[129] provides a framework for states, organisations, and individuals to collaborate in addressing global issues. This solidarity extends beyond humans to include animals and ecological integrity, aligning with a broader vision of a caring global family.

Lindner has developed a definition of what she calls *dignism*, which will be presented at the end of this essay.

What must be done:

- Becoming aware of the growing significance of the phenomenon of humiliation

We live in a world where the spirit of honour is often concealed behind human rights rhetoric and not invoked as openly as before,[130] even though it still informs the deep structure of modern-day cultural scripts in all world regions.[131] It comes to the surface, among others, through *casual displays of power*,[132] which emerge from the conviction that one's own superiority is so legitimate and well-deserved that everyone else ought to agree. This conviction collides with an increased awareness of egalitarian values and resistance to authoritarianism, which motivates people to challenge hierarchical dominance rather than submitting unquestioningly.

Germany can serve as an example. The term *Besserwessi* exemplifies a casual display of power by West Germans (*Wessis*) towards East Germans (*Ossis*) following German reunification in 1990. It reflects the perceived superiority of West Germans who often viewed themselves as more knowledgeable or modern compared to their Eastern counterparts. Th term *Besserwessi*, derived from *Besserwisser* ('know-it-all'), encapsulates the frustration and resentment felt by East Germans who were marginalised in the reunification process. This dynamic illustrates how subtle forms of dominance — through stereotypes and cultural expectations — can perpetuate power differentials without overt repression.[133] The election of right-wing parties in East Germany during subsequent years is interpreted as a kind of 'revenge' against the 'know-it-alls'.[134]

The Versailles Treaties after the First World War can be analysed in similar ways, as can the 'triumphant sound of one hand clapping'[135] after the dissolution of the Soviet Union.[136] These cases demonstrate that humiliation — whether through treaties, economic policies, or social interactions — can have far-reaching consequences, especially in times when ideals like equality, dignity, and human rights are being promoted concurrently. Western democracies bear a particular responsibility, as they advocate these ideals but betray them by prioritising strategic and economic power interests. Such inconsistency causes serious degrees of humiliation, damaging trust, discrediting human rights ideals, and undermining the West's moral authority on the global stage.

To prevent future conflicts and foster stability, policymakers need to prioritise fairness, mutual respect, and dignity-preserving strategies in their actions rather only in rhetoric.

- Overcoming phallocentrism

Several other hurdles must be overcome to achieve a more just, peaceful, and sustainable world, a world where also sexual violence will no longer be employed systematically, and survivors will be treated with care.

One of the tasks at hand is to nudge people to abandon phallocentric mindsets. This can be done, among others, through leaving behind phallocentric language. Language shapes perception and action in profound ways, and while some aspects of language processing require conscious attention, much of its impact on perception and behaviour occurs at a subconscious level. Language influences how experiences are framed, and thoughts are structured below the threshold of conscious awareness, even altering the brain physically.

Phallic symbolism is very complex, as the penis or phallus represents not only loving connection and fertility, but also power and violence. Hélène Cixous was one of the first female scholars to describe and critique phallocentric language. In her influential essay 'The laugh of the Medusa', published in 1975, Cixous argued that language is male-centred or phallocentric when words define the world as existing in dualistic and hierarchical oppositions.[137] She explored the ways in which a language of dominance affects the conceptualisations of almost all aspects of life, among others, giving weapons and violence a 'heroic' gloss. Objects like guns, for instance, are often viewed as phallic symbols that reaffirm masculinity and dominance.

Cixous published her essay in 1975, yet the situation has not much changed since. The so-called *manosphere* (man plus blogosphere), or *androsphere*, or *mandrosphere*, supports this language rather than attenuating it. It is a blogosphere that congregates around an agreement that the main problem of modern time is the 'extensive tearing of the social contract by decades of feminist tinkering'.[138] Even in high politics, military terms have been used as recently as in 2024 for purely political strategies — the German Free Democratic Party (FDP), for instance, a party attractive not least to young men, used the term 'D-Day' for a purely political strategy.

Phallocentric symbolism persists in many ways. Some men still believe that 'having' a penis makes them more important than women — they may even promote this conviction as male 'self-confidence'. The German phrase 'sie muss mal durchgefickt werden' is a crude and misogynistic expression that translates to 'she needs to be thoroughly fucked'. This saying reflects attitudes towards women and sexuality and implies that a woman's behaviour or mood could be 'corrected' through the imposition of sexual intercourse, objectifying women and disregarding their autonomy and dignity. This type of language normalises sexual aggression and disrespect towards women.

The massive scale of men sending out what is called 'dick pics' — studies finding that 41– 48 per cent of men have sent unsolicited 'dick pics'[139] — is only one symptom of many. While this practice is often based on the misguided assumption that women would appreciate such behaviour,[140] in other cases, it is an act of aggression with the aim to harass women. The widespread use of drugs of erectile dysfunction (ED) like Viagra as so-called 'recreational' drug[141] furthermore betrays that for many men, the penis is the centrepiece of intimacy, believing to give 'satisfaction' to a woman in the form of penis performance. Even men who believe themselves to be 'emancipated' for attempting to 'satisfy' a woman through means other than penetration, if they approach this as a form of service, will ultimately fail to understand intimacy as a collaborative act that embraces vulnerability and authentic connection rather than a transactional exchange of 'services'.

Reducing self-confidence to essentialised body parts (be it the penis or the vulva or uterus) oversimplifies human experience and gender identity and risks unleashing humiliation cycles by

equating worth with narrow physical traits. Lindner aligns with Jean Baker Miller and Linda Hartling's Relational-Cultural Theory (RCT) by advocating for a relational *sense of self* over atomised 'self-confidence'.[142]

The RCT framework rejects the veneration of 'lone (male) heroes' who dominate through control, as such models stifle personal growth. Instead, RCT posits that personal development flourishes through mutual connection — a dynamic process where authentic engagement fosters shared empowerment. Psychological growth is best nurtured through mutual, growth-fostering relationships characterised by empathy and mutuality.[143]

- Moving beyond the security dilemma

The security dilemma has shaped language and identities over the past millennia — and vice versa. Fear rooted in uncertainty is at the core of the security dilemma, and it drives war. The only way to overcome it is to move from a fragmented world of mutual distrust and potential self-destruction towards one of global unity.

Despite material conditions enabling global cooperation, the security dilemma currently persists and is even re-instigated, driven by power/profit motives and reinforced through zero-sum linguistic frameworks (such as 'us versus them' narratives) that obstruct 'security dilemma sensibility', namely, the capacity to empathise with others' defensive fears while recognising one's own role in perpetuating reciprocated threats.[144]

The security dilemma stems from fear of unpredictable aggression, which increasingly manifests through fear of humiliation — both real and imagined. Cycles of reciprocal degradation become entrenched in collective memory, and humiliation entrepreneurship can perpetuate and aggravate conflicts that otherwise could become irrelevant. Sexual violence emerges as a potent tool in this dynamic — rape serving as a low-cost, widely available high-impact weapon that weaponises humiliation, leveraging its capacity to inflict lasting psychological trauma while reinforcing group power hierarchies.

In an interconnected world, the notion is obsolete that dominance ensures security — mutual trust and shared responsibility now form the bedrock of global safety.[145] Expanding the maxim 'If you want peace, prepare for war' to 'If you want peace, ensure enough deterrence so that others will not humiliate you',[146] risks aggravating and perpetuating the security dilemma by fuelling arms races.[147]

The Franco-German model offers a blueprint for transcending the security dilemma also globally, as it proves that even historic adversaries — archenemies — can transition to Gandhi's tenet that 'peace is the path' via mutual vulnerability recognition. Scaling this trust-building to the global level is the task at hand, so that the security dilemma can be left behind and global cooperation succeed.

- Discontinuing economic exploitation

The word *economy* comes from Greek *oikonomia*, where *oikos* means 'house' or 'dwelling' and *nemein* means 'to manage'. The concept of 'household management' was first recorded around 1440, referring to the management of the economic affairs of a monastery.

Adam Smith (1723–1790) and Karl Marx (1818–1883) both advocated for welfare for all through egalitarian ideals, though through divergent frameworks.[148] Smith's 'invisible hand' of self-interest aimed to uplift societies via market-driven prosperity, while Marx sought systemic equality through collective ownership. Authoritarian regimes like Stalin's instrumentalised Marxist terminology to justify oppression, distorting Marx's original critique of class

exploitation into a tool for state control — a departure Marx himself most probably would have rejected given his emphasis on worker emancipation.

Since the Reagan-Thatcher era (1979–1990), also economic systems labelled 'capitalism' have shifted from collective welfare models to market-driven individualism, prioritising competition over cooperative care for the entire 'household'. Their policies embraced the 'trickle-down' theory in the hope that short-term quantitative gains for corporations and a few financially affluent would ultimately translate into quality of life for all. Empirical evidence shows, however, that this approach fails to meet its expectations and rather exacerbates inequality without delivering broad-based welfare.[149] The invisible hand's modern application has become a strangling force.

As it is challenging to admit this failure, German managers are still being encouraged to see business and entrepreneurship as combat similar to warfare:

> Conquering markets, eliminating competitors — the vocabulary of management is usually warlike. And in order to hold their own in the competition, entrepreneurs and managers must also act like generals. Wargaming's strategy simulation is the perfect tool for this: it enables the development of powerful competition and growth strategies, including budget planning – without great effort and using entirely civilian means.[150]

Military and economic pursuits share that power dynamics can easily become destructive. Both spheres can devolve from using protective and defensive strategies, instead going for offensive and aggressive ones — both can shift from approaches guided by partnership mindsets aimed at safeguarding the well-being of all members within a community, to tactics driven by the dominator mindset that usually end with power elites exploiting the majority.

This shift stems from the conflict between honourable truthfulness, on one side, and the perceived practical necessities of warfare on the other side — the need for victory often prioritises pragmatism over virtue. While deception is historically condemned as dishonourable, military strategy has traditionally 'secretly' tolerated certain forms of it — such as tactical misinformation — as 'acceptable' means to secure success.[151] This was done even though there is problem with this approach, namely, that victories achieved through dishonourable eroding their own legitimacy, replacing the moral credo of 'right makes might' with the cynical 'might is right'. Consequently, societies, while unofficially condoning 'dirty' tactics, will officially disavow them to preserve the illusion of moral superiority.

It is in this context, as noted earlier, that the 'dirty' tactic of systemic conflict-related rape continues to being denied by military leaders until the day today, despite overwhelming evidence of the contrary.[152] The weaponisation of humiliation through rape stands out as one of the gravest violations of traditional codes of war honour. As mentioned before, Lindner's research in Somaliland revealed systematic public rape as a unique rupture point — while mutual attacks between clans had been ritualised and was accepted, public rape destroyed the moral reciprocity essential to post-conflict reconciliation. Systematic sexual violence represented an irreparable breach of communal trust that transcended conventional warfare's 'rules', explaining why Somalilanders' refuse to reunite with Somalia since then. In short, being attacked was not the primary problem for them, the problem was the violation of the shared moral high ground through public rape.

Similar ethical erosion now also pervades economic competition. Contemporary markets increasingly reward underhanded practices — such as tax evasion, predatory algorithms, and

wage suppression — by treating them as acceptable 'strategies' and normalising a 'win-at-all-costs' mentality, even dismissing ethical behaviour as naïve or 'dim-witted'. Tragically, this mentality can also serve to justify growing militarisation. The adage 'All is fair in love and war'[153] reflects this convergence, as amorality becomes a transposable logic, framing both economic and military arenas as zero-sum contests where honour and dignity are sacrificed for dominance. This creates a self-reinforcing cycle — economic actors emulate the moral flexibility of warfare, while militaries adopt corporate-style cost-benefit analyses that prioritise efficiency over ethics. As a result, the boundaries between economic and military logic blur, and the pursuit of profit can further incentivise militarisation, especially when combat-tested technologies are seen as more lucrative.

Historical power dynamics have consistently been reshaped by technological innovations in tools and weapons.[154] It can be argued that in the modern era, global financial markets — particularly speculative derivatives — have become a force that wields so much influence that it eclipses traditional military power. Warren Buffett's characterisation of derivatives as 'financial weapons of mass destruction' underscores their systemic risk, aligning with Lindner's critique of economic systems that prioritise financial gain over human dignity and planetary sustainability.[155]

Around the time Ronald Reagan came to power, American business schools began to initiate an ethical shift that has since proliferated globally[156] — traditional standards became increasingly dismissed as performative virtue-signalling ('peacock-like display'), while deception and manipulation gained legitimacy as 'strategic tools'. The archetypal American 'lone hero' — once valorised as a visionary — increasingly now embodies a 'raider' mentality, prioritising short-term gains over collective welfare.[157] This normalisation of meritocratic ideologies, which conflate success with inherent worth, entrenches victim-blaming narratives that pathologise ethical adherence as naivety. The adage 'All is fair in love and war' now operates as a self-fulfilling prophecy, reframing amorality as pragmatism rather than recognising its corrosive societal impact.[158]

A doctoral research in Norway uncovered that despite Norway's use of the phrase *næringsliv* (literally 'nourishment life') that frames business as a societal good, an 'anything goes' mentality has emerged in practice (*i business er alt tillatt*).[159] Findings reveal that ethics is frequently treated as a post hoc concern — addressed only after profit-driven priorities — a dynamic that prioritises short-term gains over systemic sustainability. In this way, *næringsliv* is increasingly degraded into what Lindner would call *sulteliv* ('hunger life').

Whether weapons manifest as financial instruments or as firearms, their outcomes converge in devastation. When sexual violence becomes a tool of conquest, when the plundering of ecological and social commons (the 'economic rape of the Earth'[160]) is lauded as 'success', and when elders cautioning against such dishonour are dismissed as antiquated or 'weak' and insufficiently 'masculine', then global *sulteliv* ('hunger life') is being courted. Systemic collapse due to short-term dominance eclipses collective survival when mutual nourishment (*næringsliv*) is replaced with extractive hierarchies that weaponise humiliation across both economic and military domains.

Humiliation entrepreneurship represents the most insidious form of power-seeking — a calculated manipulation of collective emotions. One of the most effective tools in the arsenal of humiliation entrepreneurship is sexual degradation as it weaponises humiliation to fracture communal trust the most. While the strategic use of humiliation has always enabled authoritarian control throughout history, modern economic institutions and digital ecosystems — from the

arms trade to algorithmically amplified 'un-social media' — have industrialised this practice, apart from also 'democratising' humiliation as a tool of domination. Humiliation entrepreneurship systematically obstructs the dignity-centred 'path to peace' that Gandhi advocated, the path that prioritises mutual respect and coexistence without violence. Today's platforms and markets institutionalise humiliation through mechanisms like viral shaming, predatory financial practices, and the commodification of social exclusion, transforming what was once a localised tactic into globalised systems of power.

Adam Smith, foundational to modern economic paradigms, grounded his work in ethics, as evidenced by *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759).[161] His 'invisible hand' metaphor — introduced to describe how self-interested actions might unintentionally foster societal benefits — has been distorted to justify unchecked greed and deregulation. Modern interpretations have erroneously equated it with laissez-faire absolutism, ignoring Smith's emphasis on moral constraints and societal reciprocity — after all, Smith thought of localised trade (butchers, bakers), not globalised financial systems. This distortion exacerbates systemic harms by rising inequality throughout the world and by aggravating environmental degradation, as militarised economies prioritise short-term profit over collective well-being. The 'invisible hand' now effectively 'chokes' societies through extractive practices.

Lindner's framework emphasises planet Earth as a *shared commons*, necessitating collective stewardship of its interconnected systems to ensure intergenerational justice. Climate change, biodiversity collapse, and resource depletion demand global cooperation rooted in dignity and mutual care, rejecting competitive domination. Systemic exploitation — whether ecological extraction ('economic rape of the Earth'[162]) or social commodification — if it is allowed to proliferate, risks escalating conflicts and eroding planetary resilience. Effective Earth system governance must prioritise safe and just operational limits (such as climate thresholds and biodiversity protections) while dismantling extractive hierarchies that normalise short-termism driven by humiliation entrepreneurship.

Small Indigenous groups protect their commons through socially enforced norms, with elders upholding taboo systems to instil an understanding of long-term ecological consequences also in younger generations. By prioritising collective stewardship over exploitation, such norms mitigated the *tragedy of the commons* — the depletion of shared resources through individual self-interest. While population growth does complicate efforts to manage shared resources, economist Elinor Ostrom's research has shown that it does not make sustainable management impossible. What is needed are effective, locally adapted governance institutions, with clearly defined rules, monitoring, and adaptive management.[163]

Today, the most urgent task is to manifest globally coordinated institutional systems that liberate national interest from misguided short-termism. What is needed is equitable global resource governance that protects the dignity of all living beings on Earth and ensures planetary resilience.

- Addressing ecocide, sociocide, and cogitocide

Contemporary practices of economic exploitation have precipitated unprecedented *sociocide* (such the erosion of communal bonds and a loneliness epidemic) and *ecocide* (climate collapse and biodiversity loss), both rooted in systemic alienation.[164] As philosopher Martin Buber has warned, modern societies prioritise *I-It* relationships — objectifying people and nature as exploitable resources — over *I-Thou* connections that foster mutual respect.[165] The dual crisis of sociocide and ecocide amplifies collective humiliation, which, in turn, is compounded by economic systems that allow for its monetisation through humiliation entrepreneurship. Practices

like algorithmic outrage amplification and predatory financialisation profit from social fragmentation.[166] These dynamics corrode the *cogitosphere* — the realm of collective reasoning — by replacing reflection with reactivity, pushing societies towards *cogitocide*, the collapse of critical thought under the weight of manufactured division.[167]

Humiliation entrepreneurs typically position themselves as saviours against perceived humiliators, framing adversaries as existential threats that must be defeated. This strategy exacerbates polarisation and can manufacture or intensify the security dilemma. Wherever this happens, societal roles rigidify into war-preparation archetypes that reduce human agency to state-managed functions — a biopolitical dynamic Michel Foucault termed *biopolitique*[168] — the male body is militarised for conflict, the female body is politicised as a reproductive vessel. As today's polarised climate re-instigates the security dilemma, not only are arms races being triggered, also issues such as abortion rights and gender identity disputes have become battlegrounds. These, in turn, are weaponised by humiliation entrepreneurs who frame them as existential threats to their followers' identities. Conflict-related sexual violence — including systemic wartime rape and domestic oppression — exemplifies this instrumentalisation of humiliation to consolidate power.

Across the past millennia, most societies were entrenched in security dilemmas that valorised combat-readiness and dominance as core tenets of masculinity. Today's polycrisis of climate collapse and geopolitical instability is aggravated not only by humiliation entrepreneurship exploiting collective resentment and profiting from the ways economic systems are organised, it profits also from the continued cultural idolisation of combat-oriented masculinity. This creates a self-perpetuating cycle where aggression becomes its own justification — aggression being conflated with decisiveness — aggravating conflict even in contexts where cooperation would otherwise be possible. In the past, this was accepted — combat-oriented norms only risked regional conflicts — while now, in an era requiring global coordination for survival, they court planetary-scale catastrophe.

Despite of this enormous risk, combat-oriented rhetoric currently fuels a broader societal shift towards normalised aggression, observable across micro (individual), meso (institutional), and macro (systemic) levels. The 'law of the strongest' manifests in many ways now, from increased workplace bullying and militarised leadership styles — even medical doctors are now being physically attacked.[169] Present-day tech leaders, who initially presented themselves as saviours of world peace by enhancing global connectivity, now advocate reviving 'masculine energy'.[170]

This trend reflects the weaponisation of dominance as a social ideal, framing aggressive power grabs — often involving humiliation as a tool — as 'strength', even though they undermine collective security and equity. What is needed instead is for non-toxic masculine traits, such as courage, to decouple from dominance and instead couple with empathy.

The result of ecocide, sociocide, and cogitocide is that the macro level, the Doomsday Clock now stands at 89 seconds to midnight — the closest to global catastrophe since its 1947 inception. This symbolic measure of humanity's proximity to self-annihilation initially started at seven minutes to midnight and reached its safest point (17 minutes) in 1991, following Cold War détente and nuclear arms treaties.[171] However, as of January 2025, the Clock stands on its most alarming setting ever. This reflects a polycrisis where multiple existential threats converge, eroding international cooperation and amplifying humiliation-driven conflicts.

The only effective response to ecocide, sociocide, and cogitocide is to co-create global governance systems that prioritise planetary resilience, defined as upholding the dignity of all living beings as well as the dignity and integrity of the Earth's landscapes, waters, and

ecosystems. This task, while monumental, is now feasible for the first time, due to historically unprecedented factors — as listed above. Among these factors is global interconnectedness and the fact that a sensitivity for equal dignity in mutual solidarity has been growing throughout the past centuries. Despite persistent backlashes from authoritarian nationalism, corporate capture, and short-term profit incentives, these factors make systemic shifts possible, shifts towards planetary commons governance that protects critical Earth-regulating systems.

As conflict-related sexual violence serves as a keystone mechanism in perpetuating cycles of humiliation, it directly undermines planetary resilience and justice by destabilising communities and eroding trust — all of which are prerequisites for effective cooperation. Planetary commons governance frameworks must be co-created and strengthened, prioritising global stewardship of Earth's critical systems (such as climate stability and biodiversity), while dismantling systemic exploitation and gendered violence. Such frameworks require institutionalising safeguards like ecocide laws, amplifying marginalised voices in decision-making, and replacing extraction with mutual-care economics to end and repair past humiliation cycles and prevent new ones from arising.

Current initiatives preventing conflict-related rape and supporting victims of rape

Conflict-related sexual violence — including the use of rape as a weapon — has recently escalated,[172] driven by the weaponisation of humiliation in modern warfare on the background of increased militarisation and the erosion of international norms established in the wake of the two world wars of the twentieth century. One of this essay's aims is to explain why conflict-related sexual violence is becoming increasingly brutal, while survivors may face an improved situation. On one hand, perpetrators exploit contemporary geopolitical fractures to act with fewer moral constraints using humiliation as a tool, helped by the fact that humiliation becomes a more significant force wherever it is experienced as a violation of equal-dignity ideals. On the other hand, the situation for survivors improves in places where they have access to support networks that highlight this dignity, even while systemic integration of such support remains uneven.

The backdrop for these dynamics is formed by large-scale psycho-geo-political changes. Currently, societies oscillate between two antithetical clusters of convictions (see the discussion of the traffic metaphor earlier in this essay). On one side is a cluster of beliefs that holds that human nature is such that a zero-sum worldview is inevitable, together with traditional hierarchies and perpetual security dilemmas. On the other side is the view that it is possible to unite through mutual dignity in a global partnership society. Post-World War II institutions like the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights acted on the latter conviction, which is still being amplified by global digital interconnectedness. Recent decades, however, have seen a resurgence of the first belief — divisive nationalism, weaponised humiliation, and extractive competition are on the increase — dynamics that directly and indirectly fuel also the normalisation of sexualised violence.

The first belief — that humanity's inevitable division justifies militarisation — relies, among others, on the assumption that humiliation is an effective tool for enforcing subservience. This assumption clashes directly with the second cluster of beliefs, namely, those that embrace ideals of equal dignity for all. The tension between these two core convictions generates high degrees of what Lindner calls dignity-humiliation, which she identifies as uniquely destructive, because unlike honour-based humiliation (which reinforces hierarchies), in dignity-focused communities, such violations are experienced as existential threats to personhood. This intensity explains why Lindner terms particularly dignity-humiliation the *nuclear bomb of emotions*, as this humiliation, while it can lead to deep depression and paralysing apathy, it can also fuel enormous rage, thus driving cycles of humiliation that ultimately undermine planetary stability.

Twentieth century attempts to prevent war and protect ecological balance through establishing global governance — from the League of Nations' peacekeeping vision to the United Nations's founding ethos — are currently in the process of failing. Whenever prevention failed in the past, societies defaulted to self-defence (such as trench warfare and fortified enclaves), and these are precisely the patterns re-emerging today. The dominator mindset trumps the partnership mindset, the world returns to outdated infighting, people again hole up in trenches and bunkers, armed to the teeth, dividing the world into enemies. This exacerbates environmental degradation and endangers the survival of all life on Earth. The phrase 'rape of the Earth' captures such human-made harms.[173]

The most urgent task at hand now is to direct all efforts towards overcoming such failures and co-creating superordinate authority structures at the global level that allow for unity in diversity to flourish in equal dignity for all in shared responsible solidarity.

From silence to recognition: The long road to addressing sexual violence in conflict

Conflict-related sexual violence is not an isolated issue that local communities can resolve alone. It is deeply intertwined with broader global dynamics, with war rape serving as one of the most effective weapons to reinforce divisions within humanity. Therefore, efforts to overcome this division and unite humanity can only be led and coordinated at the highest levels across the world. At present, the highest level of coordinated global response is represented by the United Nations system, with its principal organs and specialised agencies guiding collective action on issues of peace, security, and human rights. What is still needed is leadership by a truly united humanity — a United People — capable of transcending the limitations of current institutions, which often rest on the hope that national interests will gradually give way to a greater commitment to global welfare. (Lindner deliberately refrains from using the term 'inter-national' when speaking about global welfare, because it unconsciously affirms national sovereignty and assumes that the 'national' aspect will eventually yield to the global good — an assumption that has not been realised so far.)

Until recently, conflict-related sexual violence against women was neither defined as torture nor acknowledged as a war crime, let alone a crime against humanity. Instead, it was largely dismissed as an inevitable aspect of war — regarded as collateral damage rather than a violation demanding international attention. It was only in recent decades that it began to be recognised as a serious human rights concern.

The first steps to change this situation happened in the early 1990s, as reports from conflicts in Bosnia and the Congo exposed the systematic and widespread use of sexual violence against women. These revelations, combined with determined advocacy from feminist groups, were pivotal in bringing the issue onto the global agenda.

A major turning point came with the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, where the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action affirmed that abuses against women are 'an inalienable, integral, and indivisible part of universal human rights'.[174] This led to calls for a Declaration on Violence against Women and the appointment of a special rapporteur to investigate and report on such violence.

Building on this momentum, the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 saw women's rights activists campaign for the United Nations Security Council to address these issues. Their efforts culminated in the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on 31st October 2000 — the first time the Security Council formally recognised the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women and girls, and called for women's rights, participation, and protection in peace and security processes.[175] Resolution 1325 marked a paradigm shift insofar as it moved the focus of security policy to the rights, needs, and participation of women and girls during armed conflict, and established the organising framework for the Women, Peace, and Security agenda, setting out strong commitments for all actors to advance gender equality and protect women and girls in conflict situations

Resolution 1325 paved the way for a series of subsequent Security Council resolutions, such as 1820 (2008) and 1888 (2009), which explicitly recognised sexual violence as a weapon and tactic of war, and affirmed that rape and other forms of sexual violence can constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity, or acts of genocide.[176] These resolutions demanded an end to impunity, calling for protection and support for survivors, and stressing the need to hold perpetrators accountable.

Security Council Resolution 1820 (2008) explicitly refers to humiliation in the context of sexual violence:

> Recognising that sexual violence, when used or commissioned as a tactic of war in order to deliberately target civilians or as part of a widespread or systematic attack against civilian populations, can significantly exacerbate situations of armed conflict and may impede the restoration of international peace and security, and expressing deep concern that despite repeated condemnation by the Council, sexual violence in situations of armed conflict is widespread and in some situations has become systematic, and has reached appalling levels of brutality, including as a tactic of war to humiliate, dominate, instil fear in, disperse and/or forcibly relocate civilian members of a community or ethnic group...[177]

As we write 2025, the 25th anniversary of Resolution 1325 provides an opportunity to reflect on its significance for women's rights, participation, peace, and security — considering both the achievements realised and the challenges that remain. The progress made is the result of a long, struggle by women's rights advocates who were carried by the Zeitgeist that prevailed after World War II, and who, in turn, carried it forward, in that way transforming the global response to sexual violence in conflict.

The recent rise in conflict-related sexual violence shows that there is still a long way to go to prevent violence — including sexual violence as a weapon of war — as well as provide redress and rehabilitation to survivors and ensure accountability.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict

The establishment of the position of a United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (SRSG-SVC) was the result of a series of landmark developments within the United Nations system that recognised and responded to the impact of sexual violence in conflict. The office was formally created in 2009, with Margot Wallström as its inaugural holder, followed by Zainab Bangura, and since 2017, Pramila Patten.

It was the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1888 of 2009 that established the SRSG-SVC, mandating it to address sexual violence in conflict settings and support survivors, signalling a shift in the international community's approach — sexual violence in conflict was now seen as a preventable and punishable crime under international law, not an inevitable byproduct of war.[178]

The Special Representative serves as the UN's spokesperson and political advocate on conflict-related sexual violence, chairs the UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict, and leads efforts to address the root causes of such violence, ensure accountability, and support survivors.

Humiliation is a central theme throughout the Special Representative's mandate, given the fact that dynamics of humiliation shape the root causes of conflict-related sexual violence as much as they influence the pursuit of accountability, and they profoundly affect the support and recovery of survivors. This essay seeks to examine all these dimensions.

Pramila Patten, who holds the position of the SRSG-SVC since 2017, is a Mauritian lawyer and experienced human rights expert who has extensive judicial expertise in women's rights, having been a member of the Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) since 2003 and has held various advisory and leadership roles related to women, peace, and security.[179]

Patten has shifted the emphasis of her office's efforts to a more survivor-centred approach, working to enhance access to healthcare services for those affected by sexual violence in conflict situations. This shift reflects a recognition of the need to address not only the legal and political

dimensions of conflict-related sexual violence but also the physical and psychological health needs of survivors.

In the terminology of honour and dignity used in this essay, Pramila Patten's emphasis on the reintegration of victims is driven by and drives the Zeitgeist transition towards equal dignity for every person in mutual solidarity (which is in line with what has been described above as the second cluster of beliefs). As this approach is embedded in a broader context that oscillates between viewing humiliation as a legitimate tool or as an illegitimate violation, Patten's emphasis contributes to shifting the prevailing perspective towards recognising humiliation as an illegitimate violation. Inevitably, this shift is bound to encounter resistance from those who adhere to more traditional hierarchical convictions.

Patten's approach also recognises that psychological dynamics shape not only individuals but also the behaviour of collectives. As discussed earlier in this essay, psychological dynamics are central to the sense of ontological security for both individuals and groups — a stable sense of self and reality is a fundamental need.[180] As the ontological security of people is deeply affected by the uncertainty entailed in the security dilemma, which is increasingly driven by dynamics of humiliation, it is essential to repair old cycles of humiliation and prevent new ones from arising. By focusing on psychological dynamics, Patten helps move the traditional focus in political science on *military security* in *inter-national relations* towards global *human security* flourishing as part of *global internal relations*.

Pramila Patten's shift in emphasis is also in line with the larger move from a 'state' of honour to the dignity of human 'feelings' that was described earlier in this essay. This is particularly relevant since the honour mindset still informs the deep structure of modern-day cultural scripts particularly at national levels[181] — it is still 'national honour' that is being defended. Patten's focus helps move dignity to the forefront, the dignity of the entire human family as being part of all life on Earth.

Patten's shift also aligns with philosopher Martin Buber's call to recognise others as unique and valuable beings, deserving to be treated as persons rather than as objects or commodities (be they 'damaged' or 'intact' 'goods', as explained earlier in this essay).[182] Buber's distinction between *I-Thou* and *I-It* suggests that authentic human existence requires openness and respect towards other people and towards the environment, calling on humans to abandon the illusion of standing above their environment as its masters. It calls for acknowledging that humans exist in reciprocal, dialogical *inter-being* relationships with their habitat.[183]

Pramila Patten's emphasis furthermore resonates with Emmanuel Lévinas's notion of the *face of the Other*, which represents an ethical imperative forming the foundation of moral responsibility.[184]

Together, Pramila Patten's perspectives reflect a highly relevant contemporary ethos of equal dignity for all, grounded in mutual solidarity and respect.

Local initiatives aiming at integrating survivors of conflict-related sexual violence

Local initiatives addressing conflict-related sexual violence and supporting survivors now operate in an increasingly hostile global context, as ongoing wars perpetuate cycles of humiliation and violence. The systematic use of rape in several contemporary conflict zones exemplifies how such violence erodes communal trust and isolates victims. These challenges persist even after active hostilities subside, often through structural violence manifested as inadequate healthcare, lack of psychosocial support, and widespread legal impunity for perpetrators.[185] A seminal study documented a critical continuum, namely, that the 'presence of authorised or sanctioned killing during wartime has a residual effect on the level of homicide in

peacetime society'.[186] Recovery efforts are bound to remain fragmented and underfunded without dismantling systemic complicity (such as patriarchal legal frameworks and extractive economies).

Despite these systemic pressures, local initiatives can still achieve significant impact. Baba Sheikh Khurto Hajji Ismail, for instance, the spiritual leader of the Yazidi community in Iraq, played a crucial role in welcoming back Yazidi women who had been captured and raped by ISIS. In 2014, Baba Sheikh issued a groundbreaking decree that allowed Yazidi women who had been forced to convert to Islam and were sexually abused by ISIS to be reintegrated into the Yazidi community. This decision was significant because it went against long-standing Yazidi traditions that viewed sexually abused women as having lost their honour.

The acceptance of children born from these rapes, however, remains a complex issue:

> While the community has embraced the return of formerly kidnapped mothers like her, the children's status has proved much more contentious, colliding with long-standing Yazidi beliefs and newer scars. Many vehemently reject accepting these children in the community, viewing them as the non-Yazidi offspring of men who inflicted on them unimaginable horrors and humiliations.[187]

In recent efforts to assist victims of sexual violence in Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), various church organisations have been actively engaged in community work aimed at fostering environments of acceptance and providing essential services, to help survivors reclaim their lives and integrate back into their communities. Sudan and DRC suffer chronic insecurity, leaving many women and children traumatised and marginalised, as social stigma surrounding sexual violence is strong, exacerbating the trauma faced by survivors.[188] Many women fear rejection from their families and communities, leading them to suffer in silence.

The church organisations advocate for holistic care models integrating medical treatment, psychosocial support, and community-led social rehabilitation for survivors. The South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC), for example, explicitly condemns victim stigmatisation, urging communities to acknowledge survivors' suffering and replace judgment with active empowerment initiatives. During religious services, they emphasise that 'there is no shame in being a victim of sexual violence; the shame must lie with those who perpetrate such heinous acts'.[189] Beyond immediate healthcare, these programs prioritise long-term societal integration through livelihood training and trauma-informed economic support.[190]

In Sudan, women survivors of sexual violence are spearheading grassroots support networks within refugee camps, establishing peer-led counselling circles to confront stigma and foster emotional healing. These initiatives have become critical for trauma recovery and community reintegration, particularly in contexts where formal mental health services are scarce or culturally inaccessible.[191]

Evidence from post-conflict regions shows that when societies institutionalise restorative justice frameworks — prioritising truth-telling, reparations, and ecological repair — they create pathways for both perpetrators and survivors to access justice while rebuilding communal trust. Such frameworks, as exemplified, for instance, by Rwanda's *gacaca* courts, demonstrate that healing divided communities is possible when humiliation cycles are replaced with mutual accountability and Earth stewardship.

Political psychologist Inger Skjelsbæk, author of the influential monograph *The Political Psychology of War Rape: Studies from Bosnia and Herzegovina*,[192] reported in 2010:

> Sexual violence in war is being theorised and conceptualised more than ever before and, as I argue in the report, the taboo against speaking about it seems to have been lifted. Now, there are more and more arenas for talking about, discussing and trying to understand this form of violence. My hope is that this wealth of studies and knowledge will benefit those who deserve and need our support, i.e. the courageous survivors who dare to speak not only for themselves but also on behalf of those who remain silent.[193]

By 2025, much of the progress Skjelsbæk envisioned has been realised, yet these gains are now confronted by increasingly strong resistance and backlashes. Cycles of revenge persist unless societies institutionalise reconciliation frameworks that channel feelings of humiliation into efforts to promote dignity and follow the 'Mandela path' of forgiveness and solidarity, rather than *crossing back* into retaliation.[194] As dignity-violating practices like weaponised rape perpetuate cycles of revenge that destabilise societies and ecosystems alike, preventing humiliation has become a planetary imperative. To enable dignity-based solidarity to thrive, the systemic use of sexual violence as a tool of domination must therefore end. Encouragingly, Indigenous models rooted in mutual care are still available, reminding of the fact that superordinate authorities — like elders governing through restorative justice — can end cycles of violence by prioritising dignity over domination. Modern institutions necessitate reforms that draw on these traditions.[195]

Initiatives addressing the psychological impact of conflict-related sexual violence

Nora Sveaass is an internationally renowned psychologist and human rights expert from Norway, specialising in trauma rehabilitation, transitional justice, and psychosocial interventions for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence and torture. Sveaass has served as a member of the United Nations Committee Against Torture (UNCAT) from 2005 to 2013, including a term as Vice-President in 2008–10, and later as member of the UN Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture (SPT) from 2014–2022.

Nora Sveaass has initiated and chairs the website for Mental Health and Human Rights Info (MHHRI), which has a clear focus on sexual violence as a critical human rights issue.[196] The site addresses topics such as gender-based violence, children in armed conflict, and supporting survivors of sexual violence, providing resources and information aimed at both prevention and support for survivors. The work emphasises the importance of medical, psychosocial, and legal aid for survivors, as well as the need for gender-sensitive approaches and training for professionals who assist victims. It also underlines the need for a human rights-based approach in work with survivors of severe human rights violations. The MHHRI platform serves as a hub for sharing knowledge and practical tools to address sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict settings, reflecting Sveaass's commitment to supporting survivors and advancing human rights protections.

Sveaass draws from her clinical experience and research on war rape when she describes the humiliation connected to rape as a profound and deeply personal trauma. She explains that rape inflicts not only physical harm but also a lasting sense of shame and humiliation, which fundamentally alters survivors' sense of self and their place within society.[197] This humiliation is compounded by societal stigma, as survivors often feel marked by the crime, leading to social isolation and significant challenges in reclaiming a secure sense of self.

Sveaass emphasises that the shame experienced by survivors is not merely an internal feeling but is deeply tied to the experience of helplessness and powerlessness during the assault. The act

of rape is designed to strip individuals of control over their own bodies and identities, leaving them with a sense of being violated and rendered powerless. This helplessness can linger long after the event, manifesting as chronic feelings of vulnerability, self-blame, and a pervasive loss of agency. Survivors may struggle with trust, intimacy, and the ability to feel safe, as the trauma disrupts their most basic assumptions about themselves and the world.

The sense of shame and humiliation is not limited to the individual but extends to families and communities especially in contexts where rape is used as a weapon of war to attack collective identities and dignity. In such cases, the trauma can become transgenerational, affecting not only those directly assaulted but also their children and subsequent generations. The silence, stigma, and unprocessed grief within families can transmit the emotional wounds of rape across generations, shaping family dynamics, relationships, and even the psychological well-being of those who were not direct victims.

Sveaass also notes that some survivors attempt to transform their experience of shame by redefining themselves — not just as victims, but as survivors, soldiers, or even war veterans, in line with Jonathan Shay's suggestion of a Posttraumatic Stress Injury'.[198]

This process of redefinition can help shift the stigma and make the previously unspeakable more discussable, both on a personal level and within the wider community. However, she emphasises that such transformation is only possible when survivors have access to support and social acceptance, which provide the safety needed to move beyond the trauma.

In summary, the humiliation associated with rape, according to Sveaass, is not a fleeting emotion but has long-term psychological and social consequences. It affects survivors' ability to trust, form intimate relationships, and maintain overall mental health. She underscores the importance of justice, accountability, and reparations as essential components of the healing process, while also acknowledging that the act of coming forward can itself be a source of further humiliation and difficulty for survivors. Sveaass portrays the humiliation connected to rape as a deep, multifaceted trauma that profoundly affects survivors' identities and social standing. At the same time, she recognises the potential for resilience and transformation when survivors are adequately supported and acknowledged.

Nora Sveaass is Professor Emerita in the Department of Psychology at the University of Oslo, where humiliation has been studied also by other colleagues. Jon Monsen and Ole André Solbakken are Norwegian psychologists who have conducted extensive research on affect integration, with a particular focus on complex emotions such as humiliation and shame. Their work explores how the experience and integration of emotions like humiliation relate to psychological health and therapeutic outcomes. They have developed and validated models and assessment tools to measure affect consciousness — the capacity to recognise, tolerate, and express emotions, including humiliation — and have shown that difficulties in integrating such emotions are linked to various mental health challenges and can predict responses to psychotherapy.[199] Their research highlights the importance of understanding and addressing humiliation in both clinical and social contexts to promote psychological well-being.

Beate Seibt and Thomas Schubert are social psychologists at the University of Oslo's Department of Psychology, whose research explores the emotional experience of humiliation and its relationship to other social emotions. A central focus of their work is the concept of *Kama Muta* (a Sanskrit term meaning 'moved by love'), which they describe as the feeling of being emotionally touched or moved, often arising in moments of sudden communal sharing or connection.[200] Their studies suggest that experiences of humiliation and dignity are deeply intertwined with how people perceive social inclusion or exclusion. Lindner sees emotions like

Kama Muta as prime pathways from humiliation to dignity and healing, as the work on *Kama Muta* contributes to understanding how social emotions shape responses to exclusion, reconciliation, and the restoration of dignity in interpersonal and intergroup contexts.

Inger Skjelsbæk has been quoted above. She is another leading expert in gender studies, political psychology, and peace and conflict research from Norway, with a particular focus on sexual violence in war and post-conflict settings. Her research began with qualitative studies of women's experiences in conflict zones, especially in the wars of the former Yugoslavia, and her doctoral work examined sexual violence, ethnicity, and gender diversity during the Bosnian war. Skjelsbæk has published extensively on the political and psychological dimensions of war rape. She has also contributed to research on transitional justice, gender and extremism, and the broader impacts of mass violence.

Skjelsbæk describes the humiliation connected to rape as both a deeply personal and a profoundly social trauma. She emphasises that rape is not only an attack on an individual's body but also a deliberate act of degradation, humiliation, and submission, targeting the victim's identity and dignity.[201] This humiliation is compounded by the cultural and social meanings attached to sexual violence, particularly in contexts where women's chastity and sexual virtue are closely linked to family and community honour.

Skjelsbæk notes that rape as a weapon of war is intended to inflict shame not just on the survivor, but on her family and entire community. The act is used to destroy the social fabric by making survivors feel 'spoiled' or less valuable, which can lead to isolation, stigma, and silence. Many victims are left unable or unwilling to speak about their experiences due to overwhelming shame and fear of ostracisation, further deepening their sense of humiliation. Public rapes, in particular, are used to spread fear and shame throughout a community, forcing people to leave their homes and making return impossible due to the lasting stigma.

Ultimately, Skjelsbæk highlights that the humiliation of rape is not only about the event itself, but about its enduring impact on survivors' sense of self, their relationships, and their standing within their communities. The trauma is reinforced by societal reactions-silence, blame, and exclusion-which can make recovery especially challenging.

Skjelsbæk has held leadership roles at The Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), served as director of the Centre for Gender Studies at the University of Oslo, and has been a visiting fellow at prominent institutions such as the London School of Economics and the University of California, Berkeley. She is recognised for her editorial work in international journals, her role as a commentator on gender-based violence in armed conflict, and her service as a deputy member of the Norwegian Nobel Committee.

The work of Jon Monsen, Ole André Solbakken, Beate Seibt, and Thomas Schubert is highly relevant beyond academia, influencing clinical practice and social understanding. Nora Sveaass and Inger Skjelsbæk, as well, make their research accessible and practically useful for a broad audience through initiatives like training manuals, resource platforms, and direct engagement with practitioners and policymakers. Through their engagement, they actively bridge the gap between academic research and real-world application, ensuring their work informs and improves professional practice, policy, and support for survivors in the fields of trauma, human rights, and gender-based violence.

Reflections for leaders, helpers, and healers

To effectively address conflict-related sexual violence and support survivor integration, practitioners may benefit from engaging three critical stakeholders: (1) the global community, tasked to globally enforce accountability, (2) conflict-affected communities, particularly in the Global South, where grassroots initiatives try to counter stigma and enable healing, and (3) actors benefiting from systemic failures by the global community to ensure ethical standards and contain militarisation.

Reflections addressing the global community

Lindner positions the global community as primary duty-bearers in establishing ethical governance frameworks that ensure dignity for all life. This obligation involves creating global institutions that integrate stewardship principles that involve expanding the Indigenous adage 'It takes a village to raise a child' into 'It takes the global village to safeguard planetary life'. The need for collective responsibility applies to the global village as a whole as much as to any local village, collective responsibility applies to all scales — from grassroots movements to global mechanisms enforcing accountability.[202] Every citizen of this village can contribute.

Citizens of the Global North bear an especially significant responsibility given the fact that Western powers have a long history of colonising much of the rest of the world. Driven by a dominator mindset, they leveraged technological and military advantages to subjugate vast regions, resulting in profound and often traumatic injuries. Some might use the language of rape and say that Western powers metaphorically 'violated' or 'raped' the rest of the world with their superior weapons. They defined civilisation through the lens of domination, justifying their actions by claiming a duty to bring 'civilisation', overlooking Indigenous partnership-based mindsets that are arguably more deserving of the term civilisation. Concepts like *buen vivir* or 'good living', rooted in Indigenous traditions, embody values of balance, coexistence, and respect for nature — qualities that could be considered more civilised than Western ideals of domination and exploitation.

Unfortunately, many local populations in former colonies have been manipulated into believing that the dominator mindset is superior, and this despite the fact that it exploited them and is now driving global *sociocide* and *ecocide*. Today, all local populations — including those in the West — are increasingly subjected to *cogitocide*, the erosion of the cogito-sphere, the realm of thinking and reflection. The more concepts such as freedom and success are being framed in ways that perpetuate sociocide and ecocide, theorist Isaiah Berlin's remark applies, 'Freedom for the wolves has often meant death to the sheep'.[203]

The task at hand for both the Global North and the Global South is to decolonise their own cogito-spheres and assist others in doing the same. Many foundational changes await to be embarked on in the spirit of *buen vivir* — among others, transitioning from punitive justice to restorative justice, while rethinking economic systems and reforming Western concepts of democracy which often prove too divisive. With respect to current economic activities, they are increasingly destructive due to being driven by the profit motive without regard for whether what is being done is 'good' or 'bad', while essential 'good' activities are neglected if they fail to generate financial gain. To say it simplified, while some 'good' is achieved as a result, far too much 'bad' persists — excessive militarisation as one example, which erodes ethical norms, including rules against rape in war.

Humiliation entrepreneurship, as a path to profit and power, exacerbates this problem by

amplifying feelings of humiliation and perpetuating the image of the 'enemy' that maintains the security dilemma, which, in turn, drives further militarisation. Such narratives have become a uniquely inexpensive yet highly effective weapon, capable of surpassing even the costliest war machines — with sexual violence emerging as one of the most potent 'bullets' in the arsenal of humiliation entrepreneurship.

The global proliferation of humiliation narratives is exacerbated by the 'democratisation of revenge' through technological innovation and global interconnectedness, which lowers barriers for individuals to act on perceived grievances. It is relatively easy to repurpose civilian infrastructure for terror — vehicles can be used in terror attacks, for example, and even commercial airplanes can be transformed into weapons of mass destruction, as tragically demonstrated in the 2001 attacks on the Twin Towers in New York City. Easily accessible machetes and agricultural tools enabled low-tech massacres during Rwanda's genocide. Nothing, however, is as widely available as the male body, which, in turn, can be weaponised for sexualised violence.

Humiliation narratives that justify violence can be either global or local. In Somalia, for example, dictator Siad Barre in Somalia used a local humiliation narrative, inciting hatred against specific clans he scapegoated to maintain power after a military defeat. The genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda was another example for the application of a local narrative. Da'esh (also known as IS, ISIL, or ISIS[204]), on the other side, employs a global narrative, portraying the West as oppressors of Islam and using historical grievances to mobilise support and justify violence.

To counteract these interlocking crises, the global community must institutionalise restorative justice frameworks that centre Indigenous governance models like *buen vivir*, dismantle the dominator-cogitocide nexus, and establish global accountability mechanisms to dismantle humiliation entrepreneurship while elevating partnership-based narratives of shared planetary stewardship, co-creating governance structures rooted in mutual solidarity, thus achieving social and ecological balance on planet Earth.

Reflections addressing affected local communities

Affected local populations, particularly in the Global South, can be reminded that they are not obligated to accept blame for global trends. Instead, their struggles highlight the international community's failure or unwillingness to enforce ethical standards on a global scale. This absence of planetary responsibility can be described as global systemic humiliation. Conflict-related sexual violence is one of many symptoms of this failure, stemming in part from increasing militarisation. As militarisation intensifies — driven by power and profit motives beyond the control of local populations — ethical standards are violated, and international law is disregarded.[205]

Human rights defenders from the Global North bear a particular responsibility in this context, namely, to emphasise that the norms regulating human conduct on planet Earth must be reformed not only locally but globally.[206] It is insufficient to focus solely on local victims while remaining unaware of, or inactive against, the global systemic humiliation that drives such victimisation. It is especially important to recognise that terminologies used in international recommendations (such as 'economic empowerment'[207]) may reflect outdated reliance on global economic frameworks. These economic frameworks often incentivise systemic humiliation — such as through militarisation — which undermines human rights ideals instead of preventing its violations or at least reducing their harmful impact.[208] Contemporary global economic rules and institutions can be seen as the latest iteration of technological innovations that empower

dominators — today, economic frameworks incentivise the production and sale of vast quantities of weapons, exposing local populations to violence from armed groups, and then selling them more weapons for self-defence, thus perpetuating cycles of insecurity and dependency.[209]

To shield themselves from destructive global systemic influences — such as economic dependency, exploitative trade, and the global arms trade — local communities in the Global South are advised to critically distance themselves from relying solely on the hope that the Global North will finance local solutions. It has been frequently observed that this hope leaves local populations in a state of helpless limbo, since such support is typically inconsistent and unreliable.[210] Instead, it may be more effective for local populations to nurture mutual solidarity and self-reliance.

Despite challenging global contexts, local populations in the Global South can still take meaningful action. The first step is to reject a focus on shame.[211] Next, they can shield themselves from harmful global trends by reconnecting with their own indigenous traditions of healing that protect and nurture social and ecological commons. These traditions are reflected in many concepts that are still around, such as the *seven-generation rule* (an indigenous time horizon), *ho'oponopono* (a traditional Hawaiian practice focused on reconciliation, forgiveness, and restoring harmony), or *ubuntu* (an African philosophy that highlights the interconnectedness of humanity and the importance of community), to name but a few.

These traditions are also encapsulated in the above-quoted saying, 'It takes a village to raise a child'. In many Indigenous contexts, as long as communities remained undisturbed and had ample space, systematic war was largely absent. While violent conflict and rape occasionally occurred, such incidents were regarded as ruptures in the social fabric to be addressed through healing efforts aimed at all parties — perpetrators, victims, and the community as a whole.[212] Respect for elders was a cornerstone of these societies. Elders not only taught long-term thinking to younger generations, they also instilled a mindset of equal dignity, partnership, and mutual solidarity.

At all times, past and present, a subgroup of youth has required particular attention, a group that in today's terms are being identified as having Callous-Unemotional (CU) traits within the Conduct Disorder (CD) diagnosis.[213] Wise and experienced Indigenous elders always took care of these would-be dominators through direct social control or by establishing and reinforcing taboo rules that encouraged long-term thinking and upheld the partnership mindset.

In today's world, Lindner calls particularly on elder women to take on more prominent roles in guiding young people towards mutual support, away from competing for domination.[214] The above-mentioned grassroot movements in Sudan, where women who had experienced sexual violence support one another, is therefore especially recommendable.[215]

Humiliation dynamics play out at all levels, at the systemic level as well as at the deeply visceral personal level, whereby both levels can reciprocally enforce each other. Human rights defenders must recognise that ideals of equal dignity for all in mutual solidarity, while essential for integrating victims of sexual violence, can also inadvertently increase cruelty. This occurs when 'counter-humiliation' is perceived as a justified response to dignity-humiliation. As has been explained earlier in this essay, dignity-humiliation — the violation of the ideal of equal dignity for all, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights — can set off *humiliated fury*,[216] and intensify what has been called the *post-victim ethical exemption syndrome*.[217] Lindner describes dignity-humiliation as the *nuclear bomb of emotions*, emphasising its immense potential to legitimise extreme acts of cruelty and continuing cycles of violence and retaliation.

Whether rape is being perpetrated in fury or as a calculated military tactic, in no case is rape intrinsic to male nature, nor is it a source of honour. To understand the latter, two historically evolved warfare paradigms need to be considered, both rooted in the dominator mindset that emerged with sedentary agriculture and replaced earlier partnership-based societies. This shift redefined human relationships as zero-sum contests over land and resources,[218] fostering the security dilemma encapsulated by the dictum 'If you want peace, prepare for war'.

Within this framework, two distinct warfare models developed, first, the honour-based model, characterised by regulated combat following the template of duels, where civilians had to be protected and sexual violence rejected as dishonourable, and second, the raiding model, which employed ambushes, guerrilla tactics, and systematic rape to terrorise communities. The latter, akin to rape itself, was widely viewed as cowardly — even when victorious. By contrasting these models, communities can reframe sexual violence as a source of collective shame — rather than a marker of masculinity — urging their males to recognise that such acts dishonour perpetrators as profoundly as they harm victims.

The case of the Nazi *Wehrmacht* in the Second World War can illustrate both types of warfare. The Nazi leadership regarded Western enemies as respectable, and rape was rare in the West. In contrast, in the East, even though it was officially forbidden there as well, German soldiers often committed rape, first dehumanising their victims before killing them. This historical fact was concealed for decades after the war, even by the *Bundeswehr*, the post-war West German army, precisely because such behaviour was considered as deeply dishonourable.

Local communities are called on to envision a future rooted in *unity in diversity* — a principle that balances personal freedom with the preservation of cultural, intellectual, and ecological diversity. Since this diversity is inextricably tied to specific landscapes — such as Amazonian ethnobotanical knowledge or Sámi reindeer herding routes, to give only two examples — its survival depends on Indigenous people being supported by global systems so they can choose to stay and steward these traditions. This requires a globally anchored collective understanding of the long-term value of both biological and cultural diversity, grounded in an appreciation that Indigenous traditions are among the most valuable sources of wisdom for building a just and dignified global society. It requires providing material and legal backing to those who wish to maintain traditional lifeways, recognising their role as custodians of the biocultural diversity that is essential to planetary resilience. It requires also overcoming the false binary of either forced urbanisation or rural isolation, instead fostering hybrid pathways where tradition and modernity can not only coexist but create a new and more dignified future. As a first step, public and private financial support needs to be shifted away from homogenising industries that erode biocultural diversity and directed towards those that sustain it.

To summarise, ending cycles of violence and humiliation — including conflict-related sexual violence and its reverberations — requires a fundamental shift in global systems. Local communities can play a pivotal role by helping to institutionalise Indigenous-led restorative frameworks at the international level. It is essential to dismantle militarised economic systems and recentre governance on mutual solidarity and seven-generation stewardship. Only such an approach can replace dominator logic with partnership-based global norms that prioritise healing over retaliation, dignity over domination, and planetary balance over profit-driven exploitation.

Local communities are called on to help nurture local-global synergy, decolonial governance, and dignity-centred ethics, while grounding solutions in dignifying Indigenous models.

Reflections addressing those who profit from militarisation

The third group comprises those who profit from militarisation — particularly the materially wealthiest individuals[219] — who must confront the consequences of perpetuating a world where their children inherit fortified bunkers rather than thriving communities.[220] By exploiting systemic inequalities and eroding ethical norms, these actors provoke the very rage they seek to escape, as disenfranchised populations increasingly demand accountability enshrined in frameworks like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Their choice is stark — perpetuate cycles of violence that endanger all, including their heirs, or invest in *buen vivir*-inspired systems that prioritise dignity and planetary stewardship over extraction.

Outlook into the future: Overcoming the *humiliation pandemic*

Lindner advocates for a *decent global village* with governance structures strong enough to uphold the dignity of both people and the planet.[221] She uses the phrase 'global village' to expand on the saying, 'It takes a village to raise a child', to emphasise that 'It takes the global village to nurture life on Earth'. The concept of a 'village' highlights a sense of community, suggesting a close-knit social structure aligned with Lindner's concept of *interconnected individuality* — a vision of combining freedom with belonging. The concept of a 'village' inspires the co-creation of mutual trust, enabling global cooperation and fostering a global partnership society that is capable of transcending the security dilemma. The use of 'village' furthermore conveys a manageable scale, making the task at hand more relatable and less overwhelming than broader terms like 'society' or 'community'.

Lindner issues a clarion call, stressing that a historical window of opportunity is open to co-create a decent global village founded on *unity in diversity, equal dignity, and mutual solidarity* worldwide, where neither military nor economic wars can find a place.

To highlight what has to be overcome on the path towards a decent global village, Lindner introduces the notion of a *humiliation pandemic* — a global, systemic spread of humiliation, amplified by the interconnectedness of modern society and economic systems that make it profitable. The COVID-19 pandemic starkly revealed how deeply interconnected and interdependent the world truly is, making the reality of the global village impossible to ignore. Lindner draws parallels between the spread of viruses and the spread of humiliation, emphasising that today's social and economic systems can propagate humiliation as efficiently as they do goods, services, or information. As the world becomes more interconnected, both positive ideals (like dignity) and negative forces (like humiliation) spread more rapidly and widely, and humiliation has reached pandemic proportions — not in the medical nor metaphorical sense, but with real social, psychological, and political consequences. Other scholars and commentators have echoed these concerns, describing a 'pandemic of shame' during COVID-19.[222]

Humiliation has become a central and growing problem in modern society, particularly due to economic systems that prioritise profit maximisation over the common good. Lindner has introduced the concept of *humiliation entrepreneurship* to highlight how individuals or groups exploit collective feelings of humiliation by channelling them into powerful narratives, using these emotions as resources to gain profit and power. This is facilitated by globalised, interconnected economies that amplify both the spread and the impact of humiliating practices. Lindner describes is as *systemic humiliation* when economic structures — much like apartheid — pervade all aspects of life, making humiliation widespread and inescapable. She specifically warns against economic practices and institutions that degrade human dignity, arguing that when profit motives dominate, they can send humiliation 'into every corner of the world'.[223]

Lindner's work suggests that unless systemic changes are made to prioritise dignity and the common good, the humiliation pandemic will persist and possibly worsen.

The United Nations was founded with the highly laudable aim of securing peace and dignity in the global village. However, the persistent tension between national interests and the UN's mission to foster global cooperation has posed significant challenges. Decision-making within the UN, especially in the Security Council, is often paralysed by the veto power of its five permanent members, who can block resolutions that conflict with their own agendas. Altogether, the UN Charter's emphasis on state sovereignty can undermine human rights and global security, as nation-states frequently prioritise short-term national interests over long-term global concerns,

impeding effective responses to worldwide challenges and resisting intervention in what they deem domestic affairs. Another critical issue is the risk of *systems capture*, where powerful actors manipulate institutions for their own benefit. Following the end of the Cold War, there was widespread hope that this era marked the 'end of history,'[224] with democracy and market economies seen as the ideal pathways to a dignified future — an optimism that has since been tempered. It is likely that neither Karl Marx nor Adam Smith would have approved of how their ideas have ultimately been realised in practice.

As a result, the United Nations, once envisioned as a force for unity and global human security, increasingly devolves into what could be called Disunited Nations. In the terminology of a village, rather than acting as a single, united village taking care of its internal global *human security*,[225] the inter-national system resembles a collection of separate 'villages' — nation-states live in mutual suspicion and engage in arms races under the banner of *military security*. This undermines ethical standards and enable systemic abuses, including the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war. While arms races may serve the short-term interests of weapons manufacturers and some states, they ultimately threaten all of humanity. Filling an interconnected world with military arsenals capable of catastrophic destruction — whether through direct armed conflict or the ecological damage these weapons inflict — risks to be ultimately self-destructive for all involved. Fuelling geopolitical enmities through a pandemic of humiliation,[226] then invoking the slogan 'we need to prepare for war', risks turning this warning into a self-fulfilling prophecy. Instead, healing past cycles of humiliation and preventing new ones from emerging offers a true path forward.

An ideal future world should be rooted in the principle of *unity in diversity*, which Lindner sees as essential for global dignity and sustainability.[227] Cultural diversity is as vital as biological diversity, both are essential for the richness and resilience of the world. Cultural diversity fosters innovation and creativity by enabling the exchange of varied perspectives and ideas, while biological diversity — the variety of living species and ecosystems — supports the health and adaptability of natural systems. These two forms of diversity are mutually reinforcing, as the loss of cultural diversity can accelerate biodiversity loss when traditional local ecological knowledge disappears — biodiversity sustains cultural practices, and cultural diversity helps preserve biodiversity. Ancient Indigenous wisdom represents itself as a particularly valuable resource in this context. The path towards building a global community free from systemic humiliation, including free from rape in all its forms, is drawing on the dignity and wisdom found in diverse cultural traditions, languages, and ways of life.[228]

Lindner urges everyone to imagine being tasked with drafting a world constitution in the near future. She refers to the next opportunity for global agreement on ethical rules as 'Eleanor Roosevelt moment' — a reference to the historic window when the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was created. Lindner argues that whenever such a window opens, the world's inhabitants must be prepared to act.

Lindner has designed a roadmap of 'four logics' that will need to inform global rules and institutions — (1) overcoming the security dilemma through global unity, (2) knowledge as an expandable pie of resources, (3) a long future time horizon, and (4) social identity constructions based on respect for equal dignity in mutual solidarity.[229] Lindner has coined the term *dignism* ('dignity' + 'ism') to describe her vision of a dignified world[230]:

> Dignism describes a world where every being — human and nonhuman — finds space and is nurtured to unfold their highest potential, within in a social context of loving appreciation and

> connection. In this world, the planet's carrying capacity guides the ways in which all basic needs are met. It is a world of unity in diversity, where unity does not become oppressive uniformity, and diversity does not devolve into hostile division. Instead, everyone unites in respecting everyone's dignity while celebrating their diversity.
> Dignism means ending cycles of humiliation of the past and preventing new ones from emerging. It calls for loving care for the common good of all of humanity as co-inhabitants of one single, finite habitat. Dignism seeks to integrate the most dignifying elements of all world traditions into systems that connect and protect the dignity of all living beings in the global village.

In the context of dignism, constructive conflict resolution can become the norm.[231] By addressing root causes, sexual violence can be abolished as a weapon of mass atrocities. While isolated incidents of such violence may always persist, a survivor-centred approach can ensure justice, rehabilitation, and dignity for victims and perpetrators alike.

Lindner calls on the 'global street' — ordinary people around the world — to stand up and co-create global institutions capable of uniting a divided world. This, she argues, is essential to halt and repair past cycles of humiliation, prevent new ones from arising, and foster a dignified future for all.

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Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies has two pillars, it is both a transdisciplinary academic field and a global transdisciplinary community. It is a fellowship of concerned academics and practitioners who wish to stimulate systemic change, globally and locally, to open space for dignity, mutual respect and esteem to take root and grow. This community has a global advisory board, a global core team, a global research team, and a global education team with around 1,000 invited members and more than 8,000 people on the HumanDHS address list.

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In the spirit of ubuntu: I am because of all of you!
In the spirit of Gandhi: I am therefore you are, and you are therefore I am.

Other books by Evelin Lindner

Making enemies: Humiliation and international conflict
Foreword by Morton Deutsch
Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, Greenwood, 2006
This is the first book on dignity and humiliation and how we may envision a more dignified world, and it has been characterised as a pathbreaking book and been honoured as 'Outstanding Academic Title' by the journal Choice for 2007 in the USA. Choice is a publication of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), a division of the American Library Association.
This book discusses dignity and humiliation and how we may envision a more dignified world. It first lays out a theory of the mental and social dynamics humiliation and proposes the need for 'egalisation' (the undoing of humiliation) for a healthy global society. It then presents chapters on the role of misunderstandings in fostering feelings of humiliation; the role of humiliation in international conflict; and the relationship of humiliation to terrorism and torture. It concludes with a discussion of how to defuse feelings of humiliation and create a dignified world.
More on www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/evelin/book/01.php

Chinese translation: 树敌 : **侮辱与国**际冲突 (Making Enemies: Humiliation and International Conflict). Translated by Lanzhi Lui. Beijing: Foreign Languages Publishing Press, 2019

Emotion and conflict: How human rights can dignify emotion and help us wage good conflict
Foreword by Morton Deutsch
Westport, CT: Praeger, 2009
This is a book about dignity and how realising its promise can help improve the human condition at all levels — from micro to meso to macro levels. The book uses a broad historical lens that captures all of human history, from its hunter-gatherer origins to the promise of a globally united knowledge society in the future. It emphasises the need to recognise and leave behind malign cultural, social, and psychological effects of the past. The book calls upon the world community, academics and lay people alike, to own up to the opportunities offered by increasing global interdependence.
More on www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/evelin/book/02.php

Gender, humiliation, and global security: Dignifying relationships from love, sex, and parenthood to world affairs
Foreword by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Afterword by Linda Hartling in honour of Jean Baker Miller and Don Klein
Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, ABC-CLIO, 2010
Review by social psychologist and Kurt Lewin expert David Bargal, 2011.
'Highly recommended' by Choice (July 2010):
'In this far-ranging, sometimes brilliant book, Lindner (Columbia Univ. and Oslo Univ.) studies the social and political ramifications of human violations and world crises related to humiliation, defined as the enforced lowering of a person or group, a process of subjugation that harms or removes the dignity, pride, and honour of the other. A 'transdisciplinary social scientist', the author charts how humiliation — and its antidote, love — are conditioned by large-scale,

systemic social forces such as globalisation. The force of this book resides in its construction of a compelling, compassionate alternative to the psychological effects of humiliation on gender and sexual relations, parenthood, and leadership. For Lindner, this alternative is not only love but also its psychological correlate, humility, both of which can become the basis of the social, political, and cultural change necessary to reform the harmful global tendency towards humiliation. Lindner's philosophy is avowedly non-dualist and rooted in ancient Eastern wisdom. A powerful follow up to her Making enemies: Humiliation and international conflict (CH, Mar'07, 44-4114), this book appears in the 'Contemporary Psychology' series; it will be indispensable for psychologists, humanists, and political scientists and invaluable to policy makers. Summing Up: Highly recommended. Upper-division undergraduates through faculty and professionals'. — M. Uebel, University of Texas.
More on www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/evelin/book/03.php

A dignity economy: Creating an economy that serves human dignity and preserves our planet.
Foreword by Linda Hartling, director of Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies, and Ulrich Spalthoff, Director of Dignity Press
Lake Oswego, OR: World Dignity University Press, 2012
More on www.dignitypress.org/wdu-press-books/dignity-economy and www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/evelin/book/04.php

Honor, humiliation, and terror: An explosive mix — And how we can defuse it with dignity
Foreword by Linda Hartling, director of Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies
Lake Oswego, OR: World Dignity University Press, 2017
More on www.dignitypress.org/wdu-press-books/honor-humiliation-terror-dignity and www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/evelin/book/05.php

From humiliation to dignity: For a future of global solidarity
Foreword by peace philosopher Howard Richards.
Lake Oswego, OR: World Dignity University Press, 2022
More on https://www.dignitypress.org/evelin-lindner-from-humiliation-to-dignity.

For more chapters and papers by Evelin Lindner in full text see www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/evelin02.php.

Short biography of the author

Evelin G. Lindner (Evelin Gerda Lindner) has a dual education as a Medical Doctor and a Psychologist, with a Ph.D. in Medicine (Dr. med.) from the University in Hamburg in Germany, and a Ph.D. in Psychology (Dr. psychol.) from the Department of Psychology at the University of Oslo in Norway.

She is the founding president of Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies (HumanDHS), leading it together with Linda Hartling, its director. Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies is a transdisciplinary academic field and a global transdisciplinary community of concerned academics and practitioners who wish to stimulate systemic change, globally and locally, to open space for dignity, mutual respect and esteem to take root and grow. HumanDHS's goal is to end systemic humiliation and humiliating practices, and to prevent new ones from arising, thus

opening space for feelings of humiliation to nurture constructive social change, so that call can join in repairing the cycles of humiliation throughout the world.

Lindner and Hartling are also co-founders of the World Dignity University initiative, including Dignity Press and World Dignity University Press. They convene two conferences per year together with the HumanDHS network, and more than 40 conferences have been conducted since 2003 all around the world. One conference takes place each December at Columbia University in New York City, it is the Workshop on Transforming Humiliation and Violent Conflict, with Morton Deutsch as honorary convener until his passing in 2017. The other conference takes place at a different location each year, since 2003 in Europe (Paris, Berlin, Oslo, Dubrovnik, Madrid), Costa Rica, China, Hawai'i, Turkey, Jordan, New Zealand, South Africa, Rwanda, and Chiang Mai in Northern Thailand. See for a list of past and future conferences and the status of the work at www.humiliationstudies.org. All initiatives are not for profit.

Lindner lives and teaches globally and is affiliated with the University of Oslo since 1997 (first with the Department of Psychology, and later also with its Centre for Gender Research, and with the Norwegian Centre for Human Rights). Furthermore, she is affiliated with Columbia University in New York City since 2001 (with the Advanced Consortium on Cooperation, Conflict, and Complexity, AC4), and since 2003 with the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme in Paris. As

As representative of HumanDHS's dignity work, Lindner has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2015, 2016, and 2017. She has received other awards, among others a Honoris Causa Doctor of Letters (D.Litt.) in India in 2025.

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Endnotes

[1] Lindner, 2022, p. xvii.

[2] Max Weber, 1904/1949.

[3] Lindner, 2022, p. 36.

[4] Fulbright, 1966.

[5] Hartling, 1996.

[6] In her work, Lindner applies the *ideal-type* approach as described by sociologist Max Weber, 1904/1949.

[7] *The psychology of humiliation: Somalia, Rwanda / Burundi, and Hitler's Germany* was Lindner's doctoral dissertation in social psychology at the Department of Psychology of the University of Oslo, Norway. See Lindner, 2000.
Quality of life: A German-Egyptian comparative study (in German) was Lindner's doctoral dissertation in psychological medicine at the University of Hamburg, Germany. See Lindner, 1993.
Honor, humiliation, and terror: An explosive mix — and how we can defuse it with dignity was Lindner's fifth book, which came out in 2017 in Dignity Press, in its imprint World Dignity University Press, with a Foreword by Linda Hartling, director of Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies. See Lindner, 2017. See more chapters and papers in full text on www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/evelin02.php.

[8] *Making enemies: Humiliation and international conflict* was Lindner's first book on dignity and humiliation and how we may envision a more dignified world, characterised as a path-breaking book and honoured as 'Outstanding Academic Title' for 2007 in the USA by the journal *Choice*. It was published by Praeger. Please see Lindner, 2006, and for the translation into Chinese, Lindner, 2006/2019. See more details on www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/evelin/book/01.php.
Emotion and conflict: How human rights can dignify emotion and help us wage good conflict was Lindner's second book, also published by Praeger. See Lindner, 2009b. See also www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/evelin/book/02.php.

[9] *Gender, humiliation, and global security* was Lindner's third book, published by Praeger as well. Archbishop Desmond Tutu kindly contributed with a Foreword (asked for a prepublication endorsement, he was so generous to offer to contribute with a Foreword). The book was 'highly recommended' by *Choice* in July 2010. See Lindner and Desmond Tutu (Foreword), 2010. For more details, see www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/evelin/book/03.php.

[10] *A dignity economy: Creating an economy that serves human dignity and preserves our planet* was Lindner's fourth book, and the first publication of Dignity Press, published in its imprint World Dignity University Press. See Lindner, 2012, and the Brazilian-Portuguese version at Lindner, 2012/2016. See also www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/evelin/book/04.php.

[11] *From humiliation to dignity: For a future of global solidarity* was Lindner's sixth book, published in Dignity Press, in its imprint World Dignity University Press, with a Foreword by Howard Richards. See Lindner, 2022. For more details, see www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/evelin/book/07.php.

[12] Circumscription theory has been developed by anthropologist and curator of the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, Robert Leonard Carneiro. See, among others, Carneiro, 2018

[13] Herz, 1950.

[14] Publius Flavius Vegetius Renatus and Reeve, 2004Publius Flavius Vegetius Renatus, commonly referred to simply as Vegetius, was a writer of the Later Roman Empire in late 4th century CE.

[15] Barry Posen, 1993, Russell Hardin, 1995, and Rose, 2000.

[16] Mitzen, 2006.

[17] Eisler, 1987

[18] See Lindner and Desmond Tutu (Foreword), 2010.

[19] Gergen, 2009, p. 360.

[20] Heller, 1984.

[21] Ury, 1999.

[22] Galtung, 1990.

[23] See Lindner and Desmond Tutu (Foreword), 2010.

[24] See also Souza, 2024, for how this dynamic is still relevant.

[25] See Jaspers, 1949. See also Bellah, 2011, and Bellah and Joas, 2012.

[26] Watzlawick, et al., 1974/2011.

[27] Linda Hartling in a personal communication, 5th October 2020.

[28] See Fuller, 2003, and Fuller and Gerloff, 2008.

[29] Lindner, 2022, p. 356.

[30] Lindner, 2022, p. 357.

[31] Stephan Feuchtwang in a personal communication, 14th November 2002.

[32] Lewis, 1971.

[33] Fearon, 1995.

[34] Alvaredo, et al., 2018.

[35] See, among others, Ferro Ribeiro and van der Straten Ponthoz, 2017, Stachow, 2020, UN Secretary-General, 2024, United Nations, 2020.

[36] *War drives revenue increases for world's top arms dealers: New data shows weapons companies winning in all conflicts around the world*, William Hartung, Responsible Statecraft, 2nd December 2024. https://responsiblestatecraft.org/war-profiteering/.

[37] *Reckless arms trading devastates lives. Weapons and ammunition are produced and sold in shockingly large quantities*, Amnesty International, 2004. www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/arms-control/.

[38] *Strongly condemning rise in conflict-related sexual violence, speakers urge security council to better prevent, enforce accountability for such crimes*, United Nations Meetings Coverage and Press Releases, SC/15357, 14th July 2023. https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15357.doc.htm.

[39] Lindner is among others anchored in Norway, which has been instrumental in supporting research on the problem, with several notable scholars being involved. See, among others, Hagenaars, et al., 2020, Sveaass, 2019, Sveaass and Gaer, 2022, Sveaass and Wessells, 2020, and Enloe, et al., 2021, Skjelsbæk, 1999, 2006b, a, c, 2010, 2012a, b, 2015, 2018, Skjelsbæk, et al., 2015.

[40] See Lindner, 2006, pp. 155–157, or Lindner, 2022, p. 402.

[41] *War on women – Proportion of women killed in armed conflicts doubles in 2023*, Press release, UN Women, 22nd October 2024. www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/press-release/2024/10/war-on-women-women-killed-in-armed-conflicts-double-in-2023.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Lindner and Desmond Tutu (Foreword), 2010.

[44] Lindner, 2017, p. 79.

[45] Lindner, 2000.

[46] See Lindner and Desmond Tutu (Foreword), 2010.

[47] Lévi-Strauss, 1949/1969.

[48] For mate guarding and sperm competition, see, among others, Wigby and Chapman, 2004, or Elias, et al., 2014.

[49] Lindner has frequently been told in Somalia that female circumcision began with the pharaohs of Egypt, as early as the Third Dynasty (3000 – 2800 BCE), that a princess forced this practice on her potential rival females to protect her position with the pharaoh by making it more difficult for him to access those rivals. The term 'pharaonic circumcision' is used throughout the Middle East, describing a full infibulation, involving the total removal of the external genitalia and suturing to a tiny hole which allows for urination but must be cut open for sex.

[50] Chastity belt, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chastity_belt.

[51] Lindner and Desmond Tutu (Foreword), 2010.

[52] 'The people fighting "light skin" bias', by Brishti Basu, *BBC*, 19th August 2020. www.bbc.com/future/article/20200818-colourism-in-india-the-people-fighting-light-skin-bias.

[53] Anderson, et al., 2023.

[54] Lindner and Desmond Tutu (Foreword), 2010.

[55] See Foucault, 1975. See also Ueno, 2004.

[56] See Mosse, 1996, and read about emotional roles (for instance, a grieving widow, a jealous lover, an angry young man, a nervous, expectant father, and so forth) in Averill, et al., 1997, pp. 513–43.

[57] Funke, et al., 2017.

[58] Lindner and Desmond Tutu (Foreword), 2010, p. 583.

[59] Fontan, 2001, p. 7. See also Al-Khayyat, 1990.

[60] Lindner and Desmond Tutu (Foreword), 2010. See also 'GOP Senate Candidate Akin says pregnancy "rare" in "legitimate rape",' by Dean Schabner, *ABC News*, 19th August 2012. https://abcnews.go.com/blogs/politics/2012/08/gop-senate-candidate-akin-says-pregnancy-rare-in-legitimate-rape.

[61] *Zina1, rape, and Islamic Law: An Islamic legal analysis of the rape laws in Pakistan*, A position paper by Karamah: Muslim Women Lawyers for Human Rights, 2005. https://karamah.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Zina-Rape-and-Islamic-Law-An-Islamic-Legal-Analysis-of-the-Rape-Laws-in-Pakistan.pdf.

[62] 'The devastating use of sexual violence as a weapon of war: Three new UN reports detail atrocities in Ethiopia, Haiti, and Ukraine', *Think Global Health*, 1st November 2022. www.thinkglobalhealth.org/article/devastating-use-sexual-violence-weapon-war-three-new-un-reports-detail-atrocities-ethiopia.

[63] Rommel, 1891–1944.

[64] Lindner, 2017, p. 110.

[65] An exhibition organised by Jan Philipp Reemtsma, titled 'Crimes of the German Army between 1941–44' (*Wehrmachtsausstellung*), sparked intense controversy and public debate in Germany when it began touring in 1995. See www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/1500088163. The exhibit challenged the longstanding myth of the 'clean Wehrmacht' by presenting photographic and documentary evidence of war crimes committed by regular German soldiers during World War II. Critics, including some historians and former soldiers, accused the exhibition of using misattributed or falsified images and of unfairly condemning the entire Wehrmacht. In response to these criticisms, the exhibition was suspended and subjected to a thorough review by a commission of historians, which ultimately found that the vast majority of the evidence was genuine, though some documentation was imprecise and the arguments occasionally too sweeping. The controversy highlighted deep divisions in German society about confronting the Wehrmacht's role in wartime atrocities and led to significant public discussion about historical responsibility and memory.

[66] See also the notion of *imagined communities* by Anderson, 1983, 2006.

[67] Lindner, 2019.

[68] Linda Hartling in a personal communication, 5th October 2020.

[69] See the Istanbul Convention as a framework for survivor protection. www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention.

[70] See the body of work produced by the EU-funded CHIBOW (Children Born of War) research network, Lee, et al., 2023.

[71] The outcome of the self-esteem movement can serve as an example, see *The narcissism epidemic: Living in the age of entitlement* by Twenge and Campbell, 2009.

[72] See *The decent society*, by Avishai Margalit, 1996.

[73] See many quotes in Lindner, 2022, pp. 21–22.

[74] Miller, 1993, p. 177. Italics in original. See also Elias, 1939/1994.

[75] Miller, 1993, p. 177. Italics in original. See also Elias, 1939/1994.

[76] Richardson, 1740.

[77] Linda Hartling in a personal communication, 9th February 2025.

[78] See Lindner's 2009 book on emotion and conflict, and in her 2010 book on gender and humiliation.

[79] See Lindner, 2009b, and Lindner and Desmond Tutu (Foreword), 2010.

[80] See, among others, Goffman, 1955, Goffman, 1967.

[81] Social psychologist Bert R. Brown carried out experiments which showed that 'when bargainers have been made to look foolish and weak before a salient audience, they are likely to retaliate against whoever caused their humiliation. Moreover, retaliation will be chosen despite the knowledge that doing so may require the sacrifice of all or large portions of the available outcomes', Brown, 1968, p. 119. See the work of primatologist and ethologist Frans de Waal, who has studied the phenomenon of *inequity aversion*.

[82] See Lévinas, 1961/1969, Lévinas, 1982, Lévinas, 1985b, Lévinas, 1985a.

[83] Buber, 1923/1937.

[84] Psychologist Carol Dweck, 1999, found that the challenges of life can be approached with an ego-oriented performance orientation or a task-oriented learning-mastery orientation, or as Linda Hartling would express it, a fixed mindset versus a growth mindset.

[85] Isdal, 2002

[86] Jogdand, et al., 2020.

[87] See Winegard, et al., 2014, on the precariousness of manhood.

[88] See, for instance, Goldstein, 2001.

[89] In the United States of America, at least four times as many active duty personnel and war veterans of post-9/11 conflicts have died of suicide than in combat, see *High suicide rates among United States service members and veterans of the post-9/11 wars*, by Thomas Howard Suitt, Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, Brown University, Costs of War, 21st June 2021, https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/papers/2021/Suicides.

[90] Shay, 2011, p. 181. Quoted in Lindner, 2017, p. 79.

[91] Lindner, 2022, p. 135.

[92] See 'After action', by Drew Pham, *Blunderbuss Magazine*, 7th June 2016. www.blunderbussmag.com/after-action/. See also, 'The long march ahead: A veteran's place in resistance', 22nd November 2016. www.wrath-bearingtree.com/2016/11/the-long-march-ahead-a-veterans-place-in-resistance/.

[93] See, among others, *Transgenerational trauma – violence shapes us*, Medica Mondiale. https://medicamondiale.org/en/violence-against-women/overcoming-trauma/transgenerational-trauma.

[94] See the work of Mary Douglas, 1966, on 'purity and danger'.

[95] Lindner, 2006, p. 107.

[96] 'Facts about child soldiers', Human Rights Watch, 3rd December 2008. www.hrw.org/news/2008/12/03/facts-about-child-soldiers.

[97] Lindner, 2017, p. 191.

[98] Lewis, 1971.

[99] Jogdand, et al., 2020.

[100] James Edward Jones, 2006, paper presented at the 2006 Workshop on Humiliation and Violent Conflict, Columbia University, New York, 14th–15th December 2006:

> Persons affected by the PVEE syndrome often defend, minimise and/or rationalise the most outrageous attitudes held and acts carried out by themselves or members of their particular group. When you talk to such people, you will quickly find that the reason that they take such a usually untenable position is because 'their people' either are or have been victimised by one or more other groups. This is the golden rule turned on its head, 'Do bad unto others because they (or someone else) did something bad to you'. It is a deceptively simple and somewhat pervasive point of view...

[101] Lindner, 2009a.

[102] Lindner, 2009a

[103] Hartling, et al., 2013.

[104] See Lindner, 2017

[105] Brownmiller, 1975.

[106] Bartov, 2001, pp. 126–27.

[107] 'Rape, murder and genocide: Nazi war crimes as described by German soldiers', by Jan Fleischhauer, *Der Spiegel*, 8th April 2011. www.spiegel.de/international/germany/rape-murder-and-genocide-nazi-war-crimes-as-described-by-german-soldiers-a-755385.html:

> The myth that the Nazi-era German armed forces, the Wehrmacht, was not involved in war crimes persisted for decades after the war. Now two German researchers have destroyed it once and for all. Newly published conversations between German prisoners of war, secretly recorded by the Allies, reveal horrifying details of violence against civilians, rape and genocide.

[108] 'Rape, murder and genocide: Nazi war crimes as described by German soldiers', by Jan Fleischhauer, *Der Spiegel*, 8th April 2011. www.spiegel.de/international/germany/rape-murder-and-genocide-nazi-war-crimes-as-described-by-german-soldiers-a-755385.html.

[109] Lewis, 1961.

[110] Somali Institute for Development Research and Analysis (SIDRA), 2019.

[111] Lindner, 2000.

[112] 'Rwanda: Solidarity overcomes social exclusion', *Medica Mondial*, 3rd June 2023. https://medicamondiale.org/en/violence-against-women/news/rwanda-solidarity-overcomes-social-exclusion.

[113] See United Nations Security Council, 2019, for UN Resolution 2467 (2019) on sexual violence survivors' rights to dignity-centred reparations. See also Kirby, et al., 2020.

[114] 'You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete'. Buckminster Fuller quoted in Quinn, 1999, p. 137.

[115] Planck, 1949, pp. 33–34.

[116] *War drives revenue increases for world's top arms dealers: New data shows weapons companies winning in all conflicts around the world*, William Hartung, Responsible Statecraft, 2nd December 2024. https://responsiblestatecraft.org/war-profiteering/.

[117] *Reckless arms trading devastates lives. Weapons and ammunition are produced and sold in shockingly large quantities*, Amnesty International, 2004. www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/arms-control/.

[118] *Strongly condemning rise in conflict-related sexual violence, speakers urge security council to better prevent, enforce accountability for such crimes*, United Nations Meetings Coverage and Press Releases, SC/15357, 14th July 2023. https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15357.doc.htm. See also, 'Civil society: The last line of defence in a world of cascading crises', by Inés M. Pousadela and Andrew Firmin, Montevideo, Uruguay / LONDON, *Inter Press Service*, 20th March 2025. www.ipsnews.net/2025/03/civil-society-last-line-defence-world-cascading-crises/. See also Tobia and Jan, 2020.

[119] See Gergen, 2009.

[120] See foundational texts, such as Currie, 2014, Currie and Sterelny, 2017, Beatty, 2017, or Swaim, 2021.

[121] German sociologist Hartmut Rosa, 2016/2019, speaks of *resonance*.

[122] Fearon, 1995.

[123] Note, among others, Georg Emil Riekeles, an Associate Director at the European Policy Centre (EPC) in Brussels, warning that the tech industry is using the same strategies as the tobacco industry before it:

> It's about lobbying. It's about framing the narrative. It's about creating alliances and setting up front groups and astroturfing campaigns. It's about influencing or buying think tanks and academics. It's about hospitality. It's about political support and funding. It's using philanthropy. It's also about litigation and intimidation, and about the use of international pressure.

Quoted from *Tech giants' intimidation and subversion tactics to evade regulation in Canada and globally*, The Committee Report No. 13 - CHPC (44-1) - Chambre des communes / House of Commons of Canada. www.noscommunes.ca/documentviewer/en/44-1/CHPC/report-13/page-54.

[124] See, among others, *International solidarity map for peace and human rights*, by Cecilia M. Bailliet, United Nations, 20th December 2024. www.un.org/en/un-chronicle/international-solidarity-map-peace-and-human-rights.

[125] Lindner, 2018.

[126] See Jaspers, 1949. See also Bellah, 2011, and Bellah and Joas, 2012.

[127] *International solidarity map for peace and human rights*, by Cecilia M. Bailliet, United Nations.

[128] See *The decent society*, by Avishai Margalit, 1996.

[129] *International solidarity map for peace and human rights*, by Cecilia M. Bailliet, United Nations.

[130] Kagan, 1997. See also Hooper, 2001.

[131] See Steward, 2000.

[132] Fulbright, 1966.

[133] See Rommelspacher, 1998, on dominance culture.

[134] 'Die späte Rache der Ossis', by Simone Schmollack, *die tageszeitung (TAZ)*, 25th September 2017, https://taz.de/Debatte-Wahlverhalten-in-Ost-und-West/!5447829/.

[135] Eriksen, 2016, p. 13.

[136] Lindner, 2022.

[137] Cixous, et al., 1976. See also Enloe, 1990.

[138] Kimmel, 2013.

[139] 'The psychology of unsolicited dick pics: How many men have sent them, and why?' by Justin Lehmiller, *Sex and Psychology*, 13th November 2019. www.sexandpsychology.com/blog/2019/11/13/the-psychology-of-unsolicited-dick-pics-how-many-men-have-sent-them-and-why/.

[140] 'Why do so many men send unsolicited dick pics?', by Justin Lehmiller, *Men's Health*, 8th November 2019. www.menshealth.com/sex-women/a29737171/why-men-send-dick-pics/.

[141] Atsbeha, et al., 2021.

[142] Miller, 1984.

[143] Jordan, et al., 2004.

[144] Booth and Wheeler, 2008.

[145] See, among others, *30 years ago today: Kissinger on Russia & NATO expansion Dec. 5, 1994 PBS Newshour, w/ Jack Matlock*, UCLA Irv and Xiaoyan Drasnin Communication Archive, 6th December

2024, https://youtu.be/ZHm_7T7QNl8. Henry Kissinger and former Ambassador Jack Matlock debated the future of NATO and Russia during the Budapest Summit on Dec. 5, 1994. Robert MacNeil moderated the discussion. While Kissinger supported NATO expansion, Matlock opposed NATO expansion, warning it could be 'the most profound strategic blunder made since the end of the Cold War' and might provoke a chain of events leading to serious security threats for the United States. See also www.democracynow.org/2022/2/17/jack_matlock_ukraine_russia_nato_us.

[146] 'The price of American retreat: Why Washington must reject isolationism and embrace primacy', by Mitch McConnell, *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2025, published on 16th December 2024. www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/price-american-retreat-trump-mitch-mcconnell.

[147] See, among others, Jervis, 1978.

[148] Lindner, 2022, p. 331.

[149] Among the vast literature, see, for instance, a report by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Cingano, 2014. For academic research, see, for instance, Capital in the twenty-first century, by Thomas Piketty, 2013/2014. He shows that throughout the past hundreds of years, the dominating trend has always been that capital grew faster than the economy in general, and that the years directly after WWII with their higher economic equality were only a historical exception — the dominating trend was simply interrupted for a while by capital shocks caused by two world wars and the ending of colonies. In the course of the last thirty years, however, the dominating trend has become visible again, as neo-liberal deregulation, tax cuts, and lower economic growth have brought back levels of inequality that are comparable with the eighteenth century. The coronavirus pandemic magnifies this trend.

[150] Gilad and Junginger, 2010. German original summary translated into English by Lindner from: https://www.amazon.de/Business-Wargaming-Markt-erobern-Kriegsf%C3%BChrung/dp/3868811974.

[151] Bauer, 2026. See also, 'Lie all you can lie: Dishonesty plagues America's war machine', by William J. Astore, *Informed Comment*, 30th September 2022, www.juancole.com/2022/09/dishonesty-plagues-americas.html. William J. Astore is a retired lieutenant colonel (USAF), who has taught at the Air Force Academy, the Naval Postgraduate School, and the Pennsylvania College of Technology. See furthermore Bandura, 1999.

[152] 'The devastating use of sexual violence as a weapon of war: Three new UN reports detail atrocities in Ethiopia, Haiti, and Ukraine', *Think Global Health*, 1st November 2022. www.thinkglobalhealth.org/article/devastating-use-sexual-violence-weapon-war-three-new-un-reports-detail-atrocities-ethiopia.

[153] All is fair in love and war - Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/All_Is_Fair_in_Love_and_War.

[154] See Lindner, 2012, pp. 10–11.

[155] Warren Buffet in the 'Berkshire Hathaway's Annual Report to Shareholders' in 2002. www.berkshirehathaway.com/2002ar/2002ar.pdf.

[156] On November 5, 2011, I attended the 31st Annual E. F. Schumacher Lectures in New York City. Juliet B. Schor, co-founder of the Center for a New American Dream, reported how Martin Feldstein, who had served in the Reagan administration, came to Harvard in 1984 and reshaped the introductory economics class 'Social Analysis 10: Principles of Economics' (commonly referred to as 'Ec 10') to implement neo-liberal teaching as mainstream economic dogma. See more in Lindner, 2012, p. 87.
Note also Kate Raworth's account of how Goal 8 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) became symbolised by an exponential curve, pointing at economic growth. In the 42nd

Schumacher lecture of 2022, Raworth described the 2012 meeting in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where the SDGs were being formulated, and where Goal 8 was first defined as respecting planetary boundaries. The finance minister of Brazil came into the room in the last moment, saying, 'What's this: planetary boundaries? That is a limit to our development! Take it out!' See more in Lindner, 2023a.

[157] Lindner, 2012, p. 71.

[158] All is fair in love and war - Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/All_Is_Fair_in_Love_and_War.

[159] Jørn Bue Olsen wrote his doctoral thesis on the ethics in the telecommunication business in Norway, a country proud of its international peace work. Olsen found an increase in attitudes such as 'i business er alt tillatt' ('in business, everything is allowed'). Ethics were seen as something to be thought of when all other 'more important things' had been taken care of. See Jørn Bue Olsen (2006).

[160] Dango, 2022.

[161] Smith, 1759.

[162] Dango, 2022.

[163] Ostrom, 2010.

[164] Lindner, 2022.

[165] Buber, 1923/1937.

[166] Lindner, 2022.

[167] The concept of cogitocide was suggested to Lindner in 2020 by the former head of the Club of Rome, El Hassan bin Talal, important thinker with a global outreach and member of the Jordanian royal family.

[168] See Foucault, 1975. See also Ueno, 2004.

[169] Yücel Özden, et al., 2024.

[170] Joe Rogan Experience #2255 - Mark Zuckerberg, 10th January 2025, https://youtu.be/7k1ehaE0bdU. Zuckerberg laments to podcaster Joe Rogan the absence of 'masculine energy' in corporate America.

[171] Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, https://thebulletin.org/.

[172] *War on women – Proportion of women killed in armed conflicts doubles in 2023*, Press release, UN Women, 22nd October 2024. www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/press-release/2024/10/war-on-women-women-killed-in-armed-conflicts-double-in-2023.

[173] Dango, 2022.

[174] The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. Adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna on 25th June 1993. www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/vienna.pdf.

[175] Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security. S/RES/1325 (2000). https://undocs.org/S/RES/1325(2000).

[176] See:
- Resolution 1820 (2008) on Women, Peace and Security. S/RES/1820 (2008). https://undocs.org/S/RES/1820(2008).
- Resolution 1888 (2009) on Women, Peace and Security. S/RES/1888 (2009). https://undocs.org/S/RES/1888(2009).

[177] UN Security Council Resolution 1820 (2008), preamble and operative paragraphs.

[178] The United Nations Security Council Resolution 1888 (2009) established the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (SRSG-SVC). See https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/666430?ln=en&v=pdf. See also United Nations Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (OSRSG-SVC), 2022.

[179] For Pramila Patten, see www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/about-us/about-the-srsg/.

[180] Mitzen, 2006.

[181] See Steward, 2000.

[182] Buber, 1923/1937.

[183] See the work of Karen Barad, 2003, who draws on physicist Niels Bohr and his concept of *intra-actions*, arguing that one must reject the presumed inherent separability of observer and observed, knower and known. Read more about Barad's work in note 2342 in chapter 7 of Lindner, 2022.

[184] See Lévinas, 1961/1969, Lévinas, 1982, Lévinas, 1985b, Lévinas, 1985a. Emmanuel Lévinas (1906–1995) was a Jewish philosopher from Lithuania, who moved to France and wrote most of his works in French. His work focuses on the ethics of the Other: The Other is not knowable and cannot be made into an object, as is posited by traditional metaphysics.

[185] Kallas, 2025.

[186] Archer and Gartner, 1984, p. 96.

[187] 'She became a mother after Islamic State captivity. A decade on, Yazidi community shuns her children', by Mariam Fam and Salar Salim, *The Associated Press*, 31st July 2024. www.ap.org/news-highlights/spotlights/2024/she-became-a-mother-after-islamic-state-captivity-a-decade-on-yazidi-community-shuns-her-children/.

[188] Amnesty International, 2011, Amnesty International, 2004, and International, 2023.

[189] South Sudan Council of Churches, 2021.

[190] See the Istanbul Convention as a framework for survivor protection on www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention. DRC's Tearfund programs show how churches can become safe spaces for survivor testimony and healing. See www.tearfund.org/about-us/our-impact/where-we-work/democratic-republic-of-congo. It is important to mention, however, that challenges like underfunding and cultural resistance are also relevant within faith communities. See, among others, Le Roux and Palm, 2021.

[191] Ikong, 2024.

[192] Skjelsbæk, 2012a. See also Enloe, et al., 2021, Skjelsbæk, 1999, 2006b, a, c, 2010, 2012a, b, 2015, 2018, Skjelsbæk, et al., 2015.

[193] Skjelsbæk, 2010, p. 2. Skjelsbæk is widely published in international journals and is a recognised commentator on gender-based violence in conflict. She has authored the important monograph *The political psychology of war rape* (Skjelsbæk, 2012a).

[194] See for the 'Mandela path' also the work of Prince El Hassan bin Talal of Jordan, host of the 2022 Global Dignity Conference. See, among others, 'A call to action: Upholding human dignity in a changing world', *Modern Diplomacy*, 11th February 2025. https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2025/02/11/a-call-to-action-upholding-human-dignity-in-a-changing-world/.

[195] See, among others, the United Nations General Assembly, 2007.

[196] Mental Health and Human Rights Info (MHHRI). www.hhri.org/about-2/.

[197] See Sveaass, 2012. See also Hagenaars, et al., 2020, Sveaass, 2019, Sveaass and Gaer, 2022, Sveaass and Wessells, 2020.

[198] Shay, 2011, p. 181. Quoted in Lindner, 2017, p. 79.

[199] Solbakken, et al., 2011.

[200] Fiske, et al., 2017.

[201] Skjelsbæk, 2006c.

[202] See, among others, the United Nations General Assembly, 2007.

[203] 'Freedom for the wolves', Berlin, 1969, p. xlv. See also Berlin, 1958b, a. The 2017 documentary film *Freedom for the wolf* by Rupert Russell takes its title from Isaiah Berlin.

[204] Da'esh is the acronym from the Arabic name Al-Dawlah Al-Islamiyah fe Al-Iraq wa Al-Sham, for the self-proclaimed Islamic State (IS) in Iraq and Syria, or ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant), or ISIS (the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria).

[205] See, among others, Ferro Ribeiro and van der Straten Ponthoz, 2017, Stachow, 2020, UN Secretary-General, 2024, United Nations, 2020. See also *Reckless arms trading devastates lives. Weapons and ammunition are produced and sold in shockingly large quantities*, Amnesty International, 2004. www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/arms-control/.

[206] Lindner, 2012. See also *Youssef Mahmoud: An eminent global thinker*. Interview with Evelin Lindner as part of the Dignity Conversations, UN Church Center, New York City, 18th November 2024. https://youtu.be/m7oHLsdM2sc.

[207] Murphy, et al., 2022.

[208] See also Lindner, 2012.

[209] '*Ukraine the world's biggest arms importer; United States' dominance of global arms exports grows as Russian exports continue to fall'*, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute SIPRI, 10th March 2025. www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2025/ukraine-worlds-biggest-arms-importer-united-states-dominance-global-arms-exports-grows-russian:

> Arms transfers to West Africa have been rising sharply in the past 15 years as the security situation has deteriorated. The combined arms imports of West African states almost doubled (+82 per cent) between 2010–14 and 2020–24. Nigeria accounted for by far the biggest share (34 per cent) of arms imports to West Africa in 2020–24. 'The growth in arms imports to West Africa has been striking. While the volume of imports remains relatively small, it has important geopolitical implications,' said Katarina Djokic, Researcher with the SIPRI Arms Transfers Programme. 'States like Burkina Faso, Mali and Senegal seem to be rapidly increasing their imports. Arms suppliers are using arms exports to boost their influence in this part of the world, including emerging suppliers — primarily Türkiye — alongside more established actors such as China, France, Russia and the USA.'

[210] 'Background on the current situation in the Global South', by Max Tallberg, *Global Vision for a Better World*, 10th June 2024. www.globalvisions.fi/en/2024/06/10/background-on-the-current-situation-in-the-global-south/.

[211] Martingano, 2022:

> Understanding how empathetic arousal of shame can lead to hurtful intentions towards rape victims has important implications for future interventions: Programs that draw attention to the shame or humiliation experienced by rape victims may do more harm than good. For instance, some anti-rape

campaigns portray pictures of women covering their faces. These campaigns, however well intentioned, may discourage people from helping victims because they may evoke feelings of shame in the perceiver. On the other hand, societal movements, such as the #Metoo movement, may be particularly effective by reducing the shame surrounding sexual assault and promote helpful behaviours.

[212] William Ury: The walk from 'no' to 'yes', TEDxMidwest, 2010. www.ted.com/talks/william_ury.html.

[213] See, among others, *Conduct disorder*, by Josephine Elia, The Merck Manual (Consumer). May 2023. www.msdmanuals.com/home/children-s-health-issues/mental-health-disorders-in-children-and-adolescents/conduct-disorder.

[214] See also Lindner and Desmond Tutu (Foreword), 2010, chapter 9.

[215] Ikong, 2024. See also Lindner and Desmond Tutu (Foreword), 2010, chapter 9.

[216] Lewis, 1971.

[217] James Edward Jones, 2006, paper presented at the 2006 Workshop on Humiliation and Violent Conflict, Columbia University, New York, 14th–15th December 2006.

[218] Ury, 1999.

[219] *War drives revenue increases for world's top arms dealers: New data shows weapons companies winning in all conflicts around the world*, William Hartung, Responsible Statecraft, 2nd December 2024. https://responsiblestatecraft.org/war-profiteering/.

[220] 'Survival of the richest: The wealthy are plotting to leave us behind', by Douglas Rushkoff, *Medium*, 5th July 2018, https://medium.com/s/futurehuman/survival-of-the-richest-9ef6cddd0cc1. See also the book by Badley Garrett, 2020, *Bunker: Building for the end times*.

[221] See *The decent society*, by Avishai Margalit, 1996.

[222] See, among others, *Shame on you, shame on me: A pandemic of shame*, by Pierre Brouard, Centre for Sexualities, AIDS and Gender, 5th May 2020/in News/by CSAG. www.csagup.org/2020/05/05/shame-on-you-shame-on-me-a-pandemic-of-shame/. Brouard is a clinical psychologist and Deputy Director at the Centre for Sexualities, AIDS and Gender (CSA&G) at the University of Pretoria, South Africa, with a background in social justice, HIV research, and diversity education. His writings and public statements focus on critical social analysis, public health, and issues of shame, stigma, and social justice, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and broader societal challenges.

[223] Lindner, 2020.

[224] Fukuyama, 1992.

[225] The motto of the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security is 'freedom from fear', 'freedom from want', and 'freedom to live in dignity'. See www.un.org/humansecurity/what-is-human-security/. See also Archer and Hay-Edie, 2005, Elworthy and Rifkind, 2005, Mack and Nielsen, 2010, and Reardon and Hans, 2010.

[226] See also my book titled *Making enemies: Humiliation and international conflict*, Lindner, 2006. This book was translated into Chinese, see Lindner, 2006/2019.

[227] Lindner, 2022.

[228] Lindner, 2007.

[229] Lindner, 2023b.

[230] See the first version of this coinage in Lindner, 2012, chapter 10, pp. 123. This definition appears in all of her publications, each time with slightly different formulations.

[231] The formulation 'waging good conflict' was coined by Jean Baker Miller, 1976/1986.