PEACE PRINTS

South Asian Journal of Peacebuilding

Vol. 3, No. 1: Spring 2010

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Foundation for Universal Responsibility
of His Holiness the Dalai Lama

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Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace
Foundation for Universal Responsibility
of His Holiness the Dalai Lama
New Delhi, India

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Published by
WISCOMP
Foundation for Universal Responsibility
Core 4A, UGF, India Habitat Centre
Lodhi Road, New Delhi-110003, India

WISCOMP is grateful to the Embassy of Finland, New Delhi and Ford Foundation for their support to this project.

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Editorial

This issue of *Peace Prints* on "Gender, Peace and Conflict" builds on a growing body of feminist reflections on epistemology, methodology, peace and conflict issues as it has evolved over the years. Since the late 1980s and particularly with the publication of the special issue of the journal *Millennium*, in 1988, there has been a proliferation of feminist writings that has considerably influenced the way we think and shape the disciplinary contours of International Relations. At the core of International Relations was the Westphalian nation-state system with its entrenched patriarchy and its associated social hierarchies, which had for many years steadfastly resisted admitting gender as a cross-cutting issue in the workings of the international system.

For feminist International Relations scholars, the uncritical acceptance of the state as the most important constitutive element of the international system and as the chief guarantor of peace and security is clearly problematic. They contend that the paradigm of 'national' security does not address the myriad vulnerabilities that come out of socially differentiated experiences of insecurity. It neither takes into account the vulnerabilities of women in situations of conflict or 'post-conflict', nor does it create a space for factoring in women's activism in areas that are outside the public sphere.

The feminist project also made a natural extension into the fields 'traditionally' allied to International Relations, which included *inter alia* Peace and Conflict Studies, as peace, security and conflict issues were seen as key areas of international politics. Not surprisingly, Peace and Conflict Studies also borrowed from the multidisciplinary insights that International Relations itself accepted from the late 1980s onwards, as it first carved out its own disciplinary niche, and then interrogated its older paradigms of conflict 'management' and 'resolution', as it moved towards the more contemporary frameworks of 'prevention', and 'transformation' leading to a more nuanced understanding of 'peacebuilding'. Feminists made definitive inroads into these new frameworks of understanding and responding to conflict by engendering the new discourses that flowed from it.

Much of the writings around women, war and peace that constitute part of the project to engender conflict studies had, at least in the initial stages, remained mired in the nature-nurture debates. They revolved around the question of whether women are inherently more peaceful than men or if they are more peaceful because of the processes of socialization, and, either way, if the 'call to motherhood' could be

used as a plank for women's peace activism. There were others who sounded a note of caution suggesting that political projects on peacebuilding that draw on an essentialist logic could be laced with danger. While it might, in the short run, help rally women as peace activists opposed to war and violence, the emphasis of womens' 'essentially' peaceful nature as the basis of this activism could also backfire in the long run. Arguably it could be used to strengthen the bases of patriarchy and create further oppressive regimes by turning a Nelson's eye to the structural causes of conflict. In any case the essentialist argument appeared to be empirically unsustainable as well, with several examples to suggest that women have not shied away from participating in violent militant movements in some cases, even as they have been the forerunners of peace activism in others.

Moving away from the dichotomies of the nature-nurture debates, another strand of literature emerged on issues of victimhood and agency of women particularly in times of conflict. Significantly, this also provided a context to examine changes that conflict could generate in terms of gender roles, gender identities, gendered power structures and gender ideologies. It was acknowledged that conflict could indeed create spaces, (some of which were no doubt unintended) for empowering women by altering the pattern of gender roles and gender identities**,** but whether this would produce concomitant changes in gender ideologies and gendered power structures remained an open question. Gender analysts have to be forever alive to the possibility that even as the changes in gender roles and identities appear to be facilitating a new empowerment of women following protracted conflict, patriarchal power is also being reconstructed and reconfigured at the same time and may well emerge in a different shape and form.

Contemporary feminists who have written on issues of peace and conflict have now taken the discussions to a whole new plane by focusing on the complex webs of relationships at the intersection of caste, class, kinship, community, race and culture during periods when the state and society are increasingly being militarized; when inequities associated with globalization and modern paradigms of development are creating social schisms even during times of apparent peace; and when so called 'post- conflict' reconstruction and rebuilding plans are under way following periods of violent conflict. These discussions recognize the resilience of patriarchy even as it acknowledges that patriarchy is intrinsically linked with militarism and is a major stumbling block to sustainable peace and equity.

In researching peace and conflict issues framed by feminist lenses, the issue of epistemology invariably surfaces. Feminists cannot but ask: who creates acceptable knowledge, who validates and authenticates it and for whom? Who decides what is

to be rendered visible and what is to be relegated to the zone of the invisible? How does the feminist researcher's own location, history and experience impact the research process?

This edition of *Peace Prints* features a mix of reflections, academic articles, voices from the field and a book review that indicates how gender mediates the field of peacebuilding.

Mari Fitzduff's reflective piece *Women and War in Northern Ireland: A Slow Growth to Power* explores the changing role of women in the conflict in Northern Ireland from their limited function in violence containment and conflict amelioration to their eventual expanded role as conflict transformers and political peacebuilders. The journey from the realm of community work that focused on social issues and education that respects diversity, to active political work designed to mediate the Belfast agreement of 1998 carries lessons for women and peacebuilding that go beyond the immediate context of Northern Ireland. South Asian scholars and activists will find useful resonances and templates for understanding here despite the differences in the historical and political contexts of the conflicts. Fitzduff's own position as a woman who has lived amidst the protracted conflict and worked actively as a peacebuilder makes this story and the lessons drawn from it particularly persuasive.

Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian in her article titled *Palestinian Women and the Politics of Invisibility: Towards a Feminist Methodology* uses a series of compelling narratives from the field to 'visibilize' the lives of Palestinian women and girls living under the shadow of what she calls the Israeli 'security theology.' Her writing focuses on 'unheard' voices and 'unseen' images of Palestinian women and girls – rendered inaudible and invisible by the trappings of global capitalism, militarism and neo-colonial projects of state-building – that wreck havoc on the lives and livelihoods of citizens, particularly women, and block them out from mega narratives of the conflict. Turning the searchlights on one stark act – the act of demolishing homes – Shalhoub-Kevorkian raises a series of questions that have continued to baffle feminist scholars and activists. What does the 'home' actually symbolize, particularly in a situation of active conflict? Is it a place of refuge or as some feminists point out, a place of oppression? How does a feminist scholar-activist locate herself/himself on this canvas when s/he is an integral part of the scenario that is being researched? What is the responsibility of the researcher to the 'subjects' s/he is researching? While definitive answers are difficult to come by, these are relevant questions in researching *any* situation of conflict.

If the context of the Palestinian question has rendered women in Palestine ‘invisible,’ in Nepal, the Maoist led People’s movement has offered a contrasting image of highly visible women ‘polishing their guns’ and ostensibly forming 30 per cent of the combat forces. Rita Manchanda’s paper *Women’s Question in Nepal’s Democratic Post-Conflict Transition: Towards a Policy Research Agenda* critically examines the impact of the Maoist movement in shaping a new consciousness among women in Nepal. Nepal’s dramatic transition into democracy following the People’s movement popularly known as Jana Andolan II had stunned the world with its sheer pace and momentum. In ensuring that 33 per cent of seats in the Constituent Assembly would be occupied by women, Nepal appeared to blaze a new trail in engendering politics and policies. Manchanda draws attention to an important gap in research on contemporary Nepal – namely an inadequate empirical mapping of the changes that occurred at the grassroots level in the course of the Maoist led People’s War – and the extent to which this paved the way for the ascent of women to the Constituent Assembly mandated to create the institutional edifice for an inclusive, egalitarian democracy. In seeking to fill that gap Manchanda also touches upon vital question of women combatants and their reintegration into society – a thorny issue that persists till date.

A different scenario where a woman has been ‘visible’ not as an epitome of a violent militant struggle but as an apostle of a unique non-violent, Gandhian struggle is captured through the life and times of Irom Sharmila of Manipur in India’s highly militarized North East. A legislation called the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, which provides extraordinary powers to the Indian Army operating in Manipur and other parts of the Northeast has had horrific impact on civilians, especially women of the region, prompting Irom Sharmila to protest against it through a uniquely Gandhian form of resistance – the act of indefinite fasting. Her struggle in the context of increasing militarization and the broader relevance of Gandhian forms of resistance within the contemporary framework of peacebuilding is described and analysed by Deepti Priya Mehrotra in her article titled *Irom Sharmila’s Protest Fast: Women’s Wars, Gandhian Non-Violence and Anti-militarization Struggles.*

Mainstream definitions of war and conflict tend to classify entire countries ‘at war’ or ‘at peace.’ In doing so, they gloss over situations where congealed violence persists in the interstices even when active hostilities have petered out. For example, in cases of conflict-induced displacement, all too common in contemporary conflict scenarios across the world, the displaced continue to face enormous everyday violence and insecurities at camp sites which are often shielded from the public eye simply because the violence is not played out in the formal political field. A peace agreement offers little guarantee of protection from gender based violence – indeed

it may even bring in its wake a disturbing culture of impunity and new forms of violence as Swarna Rajagopalan argues in her article *Gender Violence, Conflict, Internal Displacement and Peacebuilding*.

Most of the authors in this issue of *Peace Prints* implicitly accept that gender is not just a matter of personal identity but an analytical tool that is as much about men and masculinity as it is about women and femininity. Judith Large in her contribution *The Restructuring of Masculinities as a Dynamic in War and Peace* and Brandon Hamber in his essay *Masculinity and Transitional Justice: An Exploratory Essay* explore this in greater depth.

Judith Large examines the notion of masculinity particularly in times of violent conflict, reminding us that like femininity, masculinity too involves multiple identities. It is consequently necessary to factor in relationships *among* men along with relationships *between* men and women in laying out the template for a gender perspective to conflict and peace. The existence of 'multiple masculinities' is particularly important in the context of societies with divided cultural identities and overlooking this can create a false picture of gender relations that can mask a whole set of hidden hierarchies. In fact the existence of hegemonies amidst multiple masculinities may complicate the puzzle even further but this is a lived reality that plays itself out particularly in the iconography of contemporary violent conflicts typically characterized by the 're-masculinization' of war.

Brandon Hamber in further unpacking the implications of masculinities points to some of the key literature on this subject and explores its connect with processes of transitional justice, using South Africa as a case in point. Transitional justice is now a burgeoning field that is considered integral to peacebuilding and the repertoire of judicial and non-judicial approaches it uses including truth telling, reparations, trauma healing, and community reconciliation have a special resonance with reference to South Africa in the post-apartheid era. The assertions of violent masculinities even as mechanisms of transitional justice are in operation need to be analysed in the context of fluid gender identities at a time of rapid transition. Hamber suggests that the linkages between the mechanisms of transitional justice, broader social reforms and prevention of gender based violence call for further investigation and multiple masculinities must be treated a cross-cutting variable in this matrix.

Peace Prints also contains a section on 'Experiments with peacebuilding' that seeks to document actual practices of dialogue and peacebuilding in diverse theatres across the world. This edition of *Peace Prints* describes a dialogic interactive workshop between women from India and Pakistan by facilitators Meenakshi Chhabra from India and Anila Asghar from Pakistan**,** documented in their joint article *Appyling*

the Interactive Problem Solving Approach: A Workshop between Indian and Pakistani Women. Conceptualized as a problem solving workshop, women from both countries engaged in facilitated discussions on contentious issue that have separated the two neighbours using the partition of 1947 as a starting point. A shared concern for the rights of women in both countries provided a leitmotif for engagement.

In another perspective from the field, Emma Reinhardt's collection of narratives from women's peacebuilders in Wajir district of Kenya forms the basis of her article *Building Safe Communities through Story Sharing.* By weaving narratives of women building peace into the framework of a programme called HerVoices founded by Reinhardt to facilitate cross-cultural understanding, she demonstrates how relationship building through dialogue lies at the heart of conflict transformation and peacebuilding.

The 'Book Review' section features an important contribution to the area of gender and peacebuilding in the form of an edited volume by Dubravka Zarkov, titled *Gender, Violent Conflict and Peacebuilding*. Manjrika Sewak in her comprehensive review of this volume evaluates both the theoretical and the empirical insights from this collection, anchoring it within the current state of the field of peacebuilding.

The collection of research articles and field perspectives in this edition of *Peace Prints* draws on a repertoire of experiences and scholarship from across the world and in diverse contexts, yet at one level all of them bring us back to a common drawing board. They all reflect in some way or another on the critical question of how asymmetrical power and gender relations can shape the experience of violence. Moreover, by mapping the landscape through feminist lenses the contributors to this volume alert us to the dangers imminent in the uncritical use of the terms war, 'post-conflict' and peace. They remind us that gendered violence is not just a feature of wartime – it can be ever present during times of 'post-conflict' reconstruction – and even during times of apparent peace.

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WOMEN AND WAR IN NORTHERN IRELAND – A SLOW GROWTH TO POWER

Mari Fitzduff

Abstract

In Northern Ireland, until the 1990's, the women from both protestant and catholic areas contained the war, and limited its effects, mainly in so far as it affected themselves, their own families, and their own communities. By and large they were not directly involved in the politics of stopping the war until, following the ceasefires of 1994, they became actively engaged in politics. Using their extensive community connections and credibility, and their position as a cross community political party they helped to mediate and broker the Belfast 1998 agreement that was to herald the beginning of an agreed peace in Northern Ireland.

In Northern Ireland, in the early eighties, I found myself living in an area that was known as the Tyrone murder triangle, or alternatively, the Killing Fields. It was an interface zone, where many Catholic and Protestant areas bordered each other, and it had the second highest sectarian murder rate in Northern Ireland. There was a continual battle going on around us between the Republican Nationalist Catholics, who wanted a United Ireland[1] and the Unionist Loyalist Protestants[2], who wanted to keep Northern Ireland as part of Britain, and between the British Army, and the Northern Irish police force who frequently found themselves in violent conflict with the Catholic population. When I arrived in Northern Ireland, the war had been

[1] In 1921 Ireland had been divided into Northern Ireland, where the majority of people were Protestants (66%) and the Republic of Ireland where the majority of people were Catholics (90%).

[2] The Protestant were mostly descendants of the Scottish and British settlers who had come to Ireland in the 17th and 18th centuries so as to 'plant' or 'settle' the power of the British in Ireland. They were called Unionist because they wanted to retain the 800 year link that Ireland had had with Britain, and loyalists because they were loyal to the British Queen.

Mari Fitzduff is currently the Director and Professor of the Master's Program in Coexistence and Conflict at Brandeis College, near Boston. Previously she was Professor of Conflict Studies, and Director of the United Nations International Conflict Research center based in Derry/Londonderry in Northern Ireland. She has published extensively on the subject of conflict resolution. Her book *'Beyond Violence' – Conflict Resolution Processes in Northern Ireland (2002)* a UNU/Brookings publication won an American Library Associations Notable Book award.

going on for almost a decade and a half and showed no sign of victory for either side. We lived in a mainly Catholic area, near what had been my husband's family settlement for almost 300 years. His Protestant forebears had come over from Scotland, probably in the search for religious freedom themselves, and eager to take up the opportunities available in the northern part of the island of Ireland. They had farmed and prospered, building up their distinctive houses and businesses through the efforts of the many indigenous Catholics in their neighborhood on the shores of Lough Neagh.

Our locality had seen the worst of much of the violence that had started again in the late 1960's.[3] Many Catholic and Protestant neighbors, and soldiers and policemen had been killed within a few miles of where we lived, some in front of their family. The family business, because of its complicated history, had been blown up by both Protestant and Catholic paramilitaries and now functioned with only a square foot of a window of light, so as to better protect it from bombs.[4] It was an area that was been continually patrolled and searched by the army and the police.

Our two sons, both born in the late seventies, had been brought up to the constant sound of surveillance helicopters, landing frequently beside our house, and the frequent sounds of bombs and gunfire. Their great aunt was the postmistress of the post office at the end of our lane that was so often robbed by the IRA in pursuit of funding for their military campaign that it was eventually closed. This great aunt was a very fine gardener – all of her spare time was spent tending her garden in the house she lived in near to the home farm, on top of a hill, alongside a crab apple fairy tree which was so sacred to the community that a road had been built around it rather than over it. One day, Aunt Evelyn, as we knew her, was out in her garden, when she looked up to see group of men in balaclavas – the normal paramilitary face mask uniform – coming through her garden fence of plants and flowers. Obviously they were up to no good – in fact it transpired that they were setting a bomb on the road outside the house so as to blow up some British military patrols, and were making their escape through her fence. But what mostly offended Aunt

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[3] Discrimination against Catholics became rife in Northern Ireland in the decades following the division of the island in 1921 See Richard Rose, *Governing without Consensus: An Irish Perspective* (London: Faber, 1971). The civil rights movement started as a movement for Catholic equality in 1967, but not enough was done quickly enough to address issues of inequality and within 2 years, a peaceful process was turned into a violent campaign which saw the reemergence of paramilitary forces on both sides.

[4] A few generations previously the family had become Catholic through marriage, but they retained many of the advantages of the settlers.

Evelyn was that they dared to harm her precious garden fence. She promptly yelled at them saying that they had no right to come through it – that there was a perfectly good gate into her garden just a few yards away, and they were to use that. And, somewhat disconcerted, they did.

I tell the story to exemplify both the success and the limitations of many women living in Northern Ireland and to illustrate the fact that by and large, until the early nineties, the women of Northern Ireland contained the war, in so far as it affected themselves and their families, and their communities – but, by and large they did not stop the war.

Gerry Adams[5] once famously said "If the women of the Falls Road[6] come and ask me to stop the war, I will." But they did not come – and it took many decades after he had said it for the war to end. So what did they do – and why did they not get seriously involved in the politics of stopping the war until the early nineties?

Women Contained the War

Within, and occasionally between their communities, women were very involved in trying to ensure that the war did not affect their families, their children, and their communities. In Northern Ireland there are roughly 4,000 non-governmental groups (NGO's), most of them involved in social issues, or in community development i.e. empowering communities to address issues of poverty and social concern though grass roots development and policy leverage. Since the regional political representatives had been stood down by the British in 1972, because of the apparent inability of the majority Unionist government to maintain order in the region after the peaceful civil rights protests of the Catholics were taken over by the violence of the IRA. The IRA maintained that the Unionist government would never concede equality to Catholics, and that they could only get such equality in a united Ireland. NGO's had played a powerful role in setting the social and economic agendas for their communities in conjunction with the British civil servants and ministers who retained responsibility for government.

There were many dozens of women's group doing community development through Northern Ireland, but mostly on a sectarian basis. One group which did begin to cross party lines was the Women's Information Group, set up to utilize Protestant/ Catholic cross community power to seek better social rights and resources for

[5] A leading figure in the IRA – the Irish Republican Army, an illegal militia seeking a united Ireland.

[6] The main thoroughfare of the working class Catholic community in Belfast.

families and their communities. In this they were very successful – but it took many years of working together before enough trust developed for them to begin to address very contentious issues such of politics and policing together, and even then, most of the group maintained their focus on easier issues such as childcare, better youth facilities, employment opportunities etc.

Another group that began to cross the community divide in the early 90's was WAVE – a cross community group who collectively tried to address the needs of those who had been victims of the violence from both communities.[7] Women were also very involved in the development of integrated schools - i.e. joint Protestant/ Catholic schools, whose numbers grew to over 60 such schools during the course of the conflict and whose success was due to the immense energies of the parents of the children who attended these schools. Within their communities, women were very also involved in trying to stop many of the anti-social manifestations of the war, such as joy riding, i.e. the tendency for young men to rob cars and drive them fast through their communities, often killing themselves and others in the process. The process of keeping social order within Catholic communities was very difficult, because the regular police who were almost totally Protestant were seen as anti Catholic and therefore not acceptable in Catholic areas.

The influence of women was more keenly noticeable in developing and maintaining viable social communities, and in containing the war by easing the anger of the families of victims. In addition, there were some women who took it upon themselves to act as informal go-betweens between the many groups in conflict such as the Catholic and Protestant militias, the regional police, the British Army, and the British government and their representatives in Northern Ireland. For many years they shuttled between such groups, undertaking the necessary social and political dialogues that were required if political talks were to succeed while all the time refraining from becoming actively involved themselves in local or regional politics.[8] So why did they abstain from being active in the very processes that looked to give the best hope for an eventual peace agreement?

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[7] There were over 3.600 people killed during the course of the conflict, out of a population of 1.5 million. The equivalent killed in population terms in the US would be 670,000 deaths.

[8] Niall Fitzduff and Sue Williams, *Cumulative Impact Case Study How Did Northern Ireland Move Toward Peace?* (Cambridge: CDA, 2007). http://www.cdainc.com/cdawww/pdf/casestudy/rpp_cumulative_case_northern_ireland_final_Pdf.pdf

War is mostly a Man's Game – At the Moment

The first thing to recognize is that women appear indeed to be different to men, when it comes to fighting wars. Gender difference in aggression and competitive tendencies start as early as two years of age, when sharing and helpfulness are displayed much more frequently by girls than boys. The differences in male and female biology almost always point towards men being both more willing and more capable of engaging in war [9] although there is no doubt that the 'socialization' of the sexes plays an extremely important part in this difference. Whether or not it is a testosterone factor or a socialising factor, the reality is that aggression and violence is much very likely to provide meaning to the lives of men than to women. In past and current wars, men are the main perpetrators and victims of violence.[10] In Northern Ireland it was mostly young men killing young men - women were only 8.9% of the victims i.e. 322 women were killed, and 3279 males were killed.[11]

In Bosnia, according to the Red Cross, of those missing after the war, and presumed to be victims, 92% were men, and 8% women. In current armies men still vastly outnumber women i.e. they total about 97%, and they are even less represented in combat troops which are 99.9% male. In only 6 of the worlds 200 armies do women make up more than 5% although the figure for the United States is now US 14%. There are a slightly higher percentage of women who are participants in paramilitary groups e.g. women constituted 6% of the paramilitaries in Northern Ireland, in Eritrea their participation rose to 20% and in the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to 30%.

We are Confused as Women about our Equal Right to Kill – And be Killed

One of the most difficult choices we had to make as women in Northern Ireland came about when a woman soldier – one of the few - took a case of discrimination to the Equality commission, because she had been given a smaller sized gun than her male companions, and she wanted an equal size gun. How should women feel about this?

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[9] It is quite possible that new technology, which requires little physical strength to wage a war, will change this.

[10] There is no sign in history of the fabled Amazonian warriors.

[11] Marie Smith with Fay, Marie-Therese and Mike Morrissey, *Northern Ireland's Troubles: The Human Costs* (London: Pluto, 1999).

Should women rejoice when they heard that Kurdish and Palestinian women are joining their guerilla movements in growing numbers, and choose to blow up others or themselves in order to achieve their political objectives? Should the Equality Commission have accorded the Northern Irish woman soldier an equal size gun, as they eventually did?

Burguieres[12] asserts that women are indeed conflicted as a group – and that there are three tendencies within feminists in relation to war. The first is that as *pacifists* i.e. people who believe that because of their nature, women are much less likely to support violence than men – and who feel it is unnatural for women to take up the cause of killing.[13] The second group is what she calls *Liberalists feminists* i.e. these are women who believe other women have as equal a right as men to kill. The third group is *the Anti-militarist Feminists*, who don't see women as necessarily peaceful – but reject militarism as a process for solving conflicts.

Women often Collude in Keeping Wars Going

In fact, research shows that while some women oppose war, most support them. Often women have colluded with the men in seeing war as valorous – many of the white feathers sent to pacifist in World War 1 were from women, goading the men to go out and fight. Women worked in the munitions factories. Women did not take up the Lysistrata option i.e. they generally did not and do not go on sex strikes to prevent their men from killing other people's children – or sweethearts or fathers, or mothers.[14]

Women often sing war songs with their babies at their breast – the very songs that often send their boys and men out to war. My own doctoral research on why nationalist men from Northern Ireland take on violence showed that the stories and traditions learned from their families, including their mother, often taught them that there was honor in fighting violently for a cause.[15] In Northern Ireland, when a nationalist woman was found to be dating a British soldier, it was other women who 'tarred and feathered her' i.e. poured boiling tar over her naked body, and

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[12] Mary Burguieres, "Feminist Approaches to Peace: Another Step for Peace Studies," *Millennium Journal of International Studies* 19(1), (1990):1–18.

[13] There is only some slight evidence to show that women vote a little more for politicians with peace agendas.

[14] However, in 2003, the women of Liberia went on a sex strike to force their men to go and make a peace agreement.

[15] Mari Fitzduff, "From Ritual to Consciousness – a Study of Change in Progress in Northern Ireland". (D.Phil thesis, New University of Ulster, 1989).

poured feathers over her to teach her a lesson in not betraying her community through association with the enemy.

Many also colluded with their men by agreeing to defer the feminist cause so as to first win the nationalist cause – when the occupation is over, they were told by their men, later on, you can fight your feminist war.[16] Some of the bitterest debates in Northern Ireland during the 70's and 80's were between those women who wanted to put the feminist agenda first – and those who wanted to fight only the nationalist agenda. To nationalist women, feminism was seen as being disloyal or self-indulgent.

Women do not Generally Believe that War is Their Business

I remember a friend of mine, who had previously lived with a loyalist gunman, who was frequently involved in murdering Catholics. Many a night she would go out and secretly deactivate his car by ensuring a puncture in it, or smashing his front car window, so as to prevent him going out at night on what the paramilitaries called a night of 'action' i.e a night of bombing and shooting the other side. However, it turned out in later discussions that her only thought in smashing the car was that she could prevent her man being killed – not his killing of other men, women or children. It is very common to find women focused on such a cause i.e. the Russian Committee of Soldiers' Mothers who protested against the war in Chechnya did so not because their sons were fighting in Chechnya with significant civilian casualties among the Chechens, but because they were losing their own sons in the war. The Peace People in Northern Ireland began in Northern Ireland as a reaction against the deaths of three children and subsequently their mother through suicide in an incident involving the British army.[17] Mairead Corrigan, a sister to the mother of the children and Betty Williams together organized street marches with many thousand of people, mainly women, over the next few years, pleading for peace to return to Northern Ireland. The campaign gradually petered out because to many their plea suggested a return to the perceived injustices which had accumulated among the Catholic community, and which has energized the civil rights campaigns which had started the latest bout of the conflict in 1969.

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[16] I have also seen this among Palestinian men and where many women have been persuaded to desist from seeing their own liberation – until their country was established and free.

[17] http://www.peacepeople.com/

Women are often more Reluctant to Divorce Relationships from Roles

As noted above, most of the women from the Women's Information Group, who fought together on social issues for many years, were very reluctant to talk together, or to seek common ground on issues of security or politics, rather than common social issues.. Many were convinced that the newly developed relationships that they had forged across the divide on social issues would not survive the difficulties of such dialogue. When, in 1996 The Northern Ireland Women's Coalition (NIWC) was formed, and ran for seats in the newly set up regional Forum, which seats they won, they were astounded at the level of cat calling and mooing to which they were subjected to by the men while the forum was in progress. They found it impossible to understand how the politicians in the forum could express such bitter vehemence to each other while in the chamber, and then easily move on to drinks together outside of the Forum framework. They were unable to divorce their personal frameworks of relationships from their work frameworks, and it took them many months for them to achieve an ease with this process, and to develop the 'thick skin' that they needed to endure the political process.

Women are often Power Illiterate – But this can and did change in Northern Ireland

Throughout the first two decades of the conflict, women were very reluctant to become involved in local or regional politics. Even women who had achieved significant social and economic influence in their community shunned the sectarian politics of the day. They were however very concerned about issues affecting women, so when in 1996, after both sets of paramilitaries had called ceasefires, and it was announced that a new political forum would be set up, they lobbied for the existing political parties to include women in their candidate lists. When this action was effectively ignored by all except one of the parties, they decided to form their own political grouping to contest the elections. The party was called the Northern Ireland women's Coalition (NIWC) and its party color was purple in honor of the suffragettes. They ran on a campaign agenda of women's issues, plus they put themselves forward as a process party – i.e. committed to facilitating a process of political agreement. The women involved came from all sides of the political divide, and they also spanned a wide range of fields i.e. community and voluntary workers, teachers and university lecturers, doctors and domestic workers. Many of them had had many years of local community work behind them. The development of the NIWC was the culmination of a long process where women eventually came to realize that they had to move into the political sphere if they were to significantly change the context of a war within which they had lived for 25 years.

The NIWC won two seats in the elections and they moved into political power.[18] Such a move enabled them to participate directly in the talks leading up to the Belfast agreement of 1998, which was to see the beginning of the end of the war. During the talks, almost all of the party delegations were male while the NIWC delegation was exclusively female. The NIWC was careful to ensure that both nationalist and unionist women were at the table at all times. Because they favored an agreement, and not a particular constitutional position, they were able to use their talents well in moving between the parties in a form of shuttle mediation which was significantly helpful during the two frustrating years it took for the parties to reach an agreement.

The NIWC's involvement in the negotiations not only facilitated and promoted women's participation, but it also showed the possibility that civil society can participate in and influence formal political negotiations, as their party was continually interacting with local communities during the process of negotiations, and taking lesson learned from the communities into the negotiations. In doing so they emphasized a new kind of politics, one which they as women could be proud of, and without which achieving an overall agreement, and the beginnings of peace, would have been so much more difficult.

What Lessons have we Learned from the Involvement of Women in the Northern Irish Conflict?

Women in Northern Ireland lacked neither courage nor ingenuity in ensuring that their families and communities were protected as much as possible from the effects of the three decades of the war. Most of the work they did however was within their own communities, where many of them were very active in addressing the social and economic needs of their families and those of their near neighbours. Realising that they had a better chance of getting more of their needs addressed by government if they worked on a cross community basis, many were even willing to do this – as long as contentious issues were left outside the doors of their somewhat fragile relationships.

However, it was only when the women realized that the direct political processes being set up to decide on the future of Northern Ireland could go ahead without them, leaving their needs outside, and that all of the power was moving to the political sphere, that they realised they had to forego their distaste for politics, and

[18] See Conciliation resources site at http://www.c-r.org/our-work/accord/public-participation/ni-womens-coalition.php for a short history of the NIWC by Kate Fearon.

become part of that particular game. In doing so, they discovered that not only were they able to ensure that the issues they cared about were on the agenda of all politicians, and political parties, but they also discovered, almost three decades after the start of the war, that they had a taste and a capacity for direct political peacebuilding. In doing so they were only discovering what the many women politicians in Scandinavia had discovered some years previously i.e. that the track record of their men in the doings of politics was little to boast about – and that it was time for them to prove that they as women could hardly do any worse than their men, and might in fact do a great deal better. It was indeed a pity that this realization came so late in the day, but better later than never for them to discover their new found political power and their capacity to more directly change the hopes of their communities for what turned out to be increasingly peaceful relationships between their peoples in the years ahead.

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PALESTINIAN WOMEN AND THE POLITICS OF INVISIBILITY: TOWARDS A FEMINIST METHODOLOGY

Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian

Abstract

This paper examines the effect of the politics of militarization and how violent conflict and war like situations can completely silence the voices of a certain segment of the society and render their suffering "invisible" in both the local and global context. In researching this invisibility the hitherto unheard voices of Palestinian women and girls find articulation through a series of case studies. These voices cast light on the unprecedented levels of hegemonic military power that is used to-occupy land, demolish homes, and wage unequal wars between civilians and the state- in this case-the Israeli state. It reflects on how Feminist methodologies can engage in studying the effect of militarization and endless violence. It asks how such methodologies can be developed when violent transgressions, both local and global, work in a spiral and accumulative manner, and when localized contexts and global power politics change rapidly and unpredictably, leaving victims/ survivors in a constant state of confusion.

Introduction

The problem is that first my house was demolished and we all moved to live in the school. Then the school was demolished, and I do not know where we should move to and when. Why can't my house be my house, my school be my school, and I live a normal life with an undemolished house and undemolished school?

Hidaya, 15 years old[1]

[1] Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, "The Gendered Nature of Education Under Siege: A Palestinian Feminist Perspective," *International Journal of Lifelong Education* (2008): 189.

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When they demolished my school, I felt that I lost my own home. Maybe the world can't understand, but for Palestinian girls like me, the school is all we have. Girls in the world can go places, visit each other, find the books they want to read, organize field trips with their school and teachers, but Palestinian children have nothing. We the Palestinian girls feel that our schools are the only place we can meet friends, share books, meet, talk, play, sing, write, love... and now they demolished my school.

Nora, 15 years old [2]

When my house was demolished, the neighbors feared even coming out to help us. They feared fighting back with us, because they knew that they would be next, that they would end up losing their homes. The demolition of my home, the loss of my belonging, of my ability to gather my family under one roof and feel safe, disappeared in seconds, and no one wanted to look at us. They looked at the building. I mean the physical building, as if it is about the walls, the windows and the doors. People maybe felt sorry when they heard the noise during the demolition, but do you think anybody is capable of hearing the demolition of our hearts? Of our dreams? Of our future plans? I guess such voices are never heard. Do you think they even noticed my fear, my agony, my horror? No way. They (fear, agony, and horror) have no voice, no noise, and military occupation has no eyes, no morality, no consciousness, no God.

Salwa, 28 years old[3]

The voices cited above are just a small sample of the voices of Palestinian women who are living with the effects of militarization and Israel's demolition policies on their home lives and education. As a result of these policies, Palestinian girls and women have been turned into internally displaced persons (IDPs), made homeless and, as Nora put it, "displaced at home." Women like Nora have experienced the trauma not only of losing their home, but also of losing their sense of safety, security and belonging as a result of the ongoing political conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, coupled with the denial of their suffering and silencing of their voices.

This article addresses the "politics of invisibility," and asks questions on how to research and analyze unheard, silenced voices, understand the meaning of the loss of one's home and the loss of access to education and one's right to education, and what kind of methodology one should employ in order to examine ongoing suffering.

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[2] Ibid, 189-190.

[3] Ibid.

The voices of Hidaya, Nora and Salwa reveal that the brute force of military power does not perceive or acknowledge their suffering. However what about feminist activists and feminist researchers? Are they capable of developing methodologies that can engage with their suffering, respond to it and investigate its 'invisibility'? If so, what kinds of methodologies are called for?

The article discusses the need to develop counter-practices in research methodologies that allow for engagement with indigenous womens' knowledge, experiences and 'ways of knowing' in conflict zones. It reflects on how to visibilize the strength and resilience of women in the midst of daily ordeals and in the context of the global workings of power, unending violence, and the 'technologies' associated with colonialism and militarization. Thus the primary epistemological question raised in this article is whether, how, and when we can engage with and know the 'invisible' and invisibilized. In addressing this question the paper draws from two of my studies in Palestine, one that studies militarization, gender and education[4] and another that examines the loss of home, and housing demolitions from a feminist perspective.[5] Both studies challenge perceptions of Palestinian women as victims, transgressors or criminals, by placing their everyday actions in the context of military occupation and oppression.

I examine several intertwined issues and dilemmas pertaining to researching invisibility and developing an appropriate feminist methodology. To begin with, how can we research invisibility, and where should we look for it? Most importantly who are we accountable to when we conduct such research and what is the price of disclosing the experiences of Palestinian women that would otherwise have remained invisible? In other words are we sensitive to our responsibilities towards the women we research, and how we engage with their voices? A related question emerges. What is the price of **not** engaging with women's ordeals and daily lives in a zone of such violent conflict?

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[4] Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, "Negotiating the Present, Historicizing the Future:Palestinian Children Speak about the Israeli Separation Wall," *American Behavioral Scientist Journal,*49(8), (2006): 1101-1134. Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, "The Gendered Nature of Education Under Siege: A Palestinian Feminist Perspective," *International Journal of Lifelong Education* (2008): 179-200. Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, *Militarization and Violence against Women in Conflict Zones: A Palestinian case-study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

[5] Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, "Counter-spaces as Resistance in Conflict Zones: Palestinian Women Recreating a Home," *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy: An International Forum*, 17(3/4), (2005): 109-141. Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2008 and 2009), op. cit.

My own position, as a Palestinian feminist researcher living in the area of my research, borrowing meanings from the absent voices and ordeals of the invisible and the silenced, compels me to address the methodology that is needed to capture such invisibility seriously. As a Palestinian feminist researcher, a mother of three daughters, a wife, and a member of the Palestinian nation, researching the invisible and invisibilized is a human/political, academic and moral obligation. Researching the invisible, and focusing on invisibility as the main category of analysis, requires that one remains attentive to each woman in the context of her collective and objective experience of militarization and patriarchy, which play out against the backdrop of colonialism, a violent political economy and the inequities of globalization and racism. To do so, researchers must engage with the past (mainly the history of injustice, including the ongoing effects of the Nakba on Palestinians) and how this impacts the lives of women. They must look carefully at the ways in which women locate themselves in the meanings they attribute to their experiences, in the memory of the collective consciousness of their families, community and nation. Building a feminist methodology to research invisibility in conflict zones requires that one be attentive to and be able to document women's resistances and struggles against power relations, in their daily acts, on their way to school, in their work, in their care-giving, and in their strategies of survival.

The paper will conclude by engaging with a dilemma. Should Feminist researchers research all instances of invisibility in conflict zones, especially as in some cases women's invisibility and silence becomes a mode of survival and a form of self-protection? By foregrounding women's narratives and voices, the paper reveals that information is one of the first casualties in conflict ridden areas, and that the 'other' is further invisibilized as a result both of the inability of the oppressed to come forward and explain their positions and their suffering, and of the ability of those in power to maneuver and silence influential actors in the media, the economy, the law, and even human rights defenders. We also have to be alive to the possibility that information about women's lives, education, health and movement under conditions of vulnerability can well be used as a tool of oppression. The challenge to feminist scholar-activists is consequently to understand the politics of invisibility, particularly viewed through the prism of the trauma of violence and constant loss. The paper suggests that the epistemology of conflict and the politics of knowing in conflict zones take us back to the very personal as the political, while stressing that the production of knowledge never takes place outside the realm of politics, history and justice.

Spiral Transgressions, Militarization and the Disruption of Everyday Life

The establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, the military rule, and the occupation of additional Palestinian land in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967, resulted in the creation of the Palestinian refugee problem, challenged the question of taking historic responsibility for this creation and opened up the question of the right of return. It further questioned the legitimacy of the Zionist claims that portrays Israel as an exclusive state of the Jewish people, and justifies the constant attacks of the Jewish state on Palestinian's bodies, lives, homes, and homeland. The failure of the peace process, and the failure of the trial to bring an end to the conflict, is rooted – in my belief – in the profound historical insecurity that Israel has about its existence in the region. The issue of security, safety and legitimacy of Israel is rooted in 'historical' claims that justify Israel's need to totally control the Palestinians, in order to feel secure. The sufferings of the Palestinian victims are augmented through the injustices inherent in the major settler colonial project, through forceful attacks, displacement, land grabbing, housing demolitions and destabilization of Palestinian lives. This is being done to further the explicit aim of establishing a Jewish state in Palestine.

Our focus is on military attacks on homes and schools and the way in which the Jewish settler colonial project not only destabilizes Palestinians' everydayness, but further works on 'invisibilizing' their just cause. The attack on the Palestinian home, and the Palestinian right to safe education, have not only made many families homeless, but have also disrupted individuals' rights to safety, and violated their access to education, healthcare, social networks, etc.[6] I have termed these acts of violence 'spiral' transgression, in order to reflect their wide-ranging consequences in the lives of those they affect. Though they may appear on paper as isolated physical events, the trauma cause by a house demolition or a violation of basic rights permeates every aspect of life, irrevocably altering the daily reality of those targeted by this violence. This trauma spirals out and impacts the body, mind, social networks, economic status, etc. of all those involved. For example, when a child's house is demolished, she or he loses her or his bed, books, toys, clothes, neighbours and friends. Children must accept and adapt to living with relatives, moving to a new environment, place and space, change schools, witness their family's loss, and relive their trauma through their daily everyday acts. When a woman's house is demolished, her loss affects her bodily safety, privacy, mobility, lifestyle, welfare, physical health, psychological wellbeing and system of social support. Hence,

[6] Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2008), op. cit.

the attacks on the body, the home and homeland work in a spiral manner, intruding on all aspects of life, and distorting the meaning of an individual life under military occupation.

The militarization of the Palestinian space is a widely-used tactic of the Israeli military, and is reflected in the hundreds of military checkpoints, the attacks on Palestinian educational institutions and house demolitions. For example, since 1999, the Israeli military has destroyed more than 5,200 Palestinian homes, rendering 25,719 Palestinian women, men and children homeless.[7] It has been a powerful method of imposing Israeli spatial dominance and creating constant chaos that feeds into the spiral manner in which militarized violence functions in the every day life of Palestinians.

The disruption of everydayness and its spiral transgressive power is reflected in 11 year old Mariam's voice and ordeal. Five years ago, while conducting research in the field, engaging with and interviewing victims of housing demolitions, I realized that one of the houses that had been demolished belonged to Ayman, a former student of mine. A week after my interview with the family, Ayman came to visit me with his wife and daughter Mariam. He wanted my help in finding a way to alleviate the effect of the severe trauma from which his daughter had been suffering following the loss of the family home and their displacement.

Talking to the family, and mainly the little girl, revealed to me the inseparability of the historical denials (global and local) of Palestinians' right to a home, and the ongoing personal trauma of Mariam, Ayman and the rest of their family. Mariam shared with me her story of the demolition of her house with a great deal of despair, pain, tears and anger. She told me how hundreds of police and military officers had attacked her house in Silwan while she was sleeping. She described the big dogs primed to attack her mother, who was resisting the demolition of their home while carrying her younger brother, the loud noise of the bulldozers, the extreme horror that struck her family, and her confusion, loss of the ability to speak and anger towards the injustice. Then she said:

> *House demolitions have become normal. The bulldozers have become something normal for the Jews. They have demolished so many houses in Silwan…that the demolition of my home is normal, which makes me so upset at the world. Sick, very sick… I feel exhausted.*

[7] B'Tselem, The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories. "Statistics: Destruction of Property," B/Tselem. http://www.btselem.org/english/statistics/Index.asp (accessed February 10, 2010).

To hear such reflections and emotions from an 11 year old girl was shocking. But the research in housing demolitions revealed that Mariam's voice was one of the many ordinarily unheard voices that contest the normalization of violence in conflict zones. It calls on us to unpack the violence inflicted against her, and to question the injustice that is reflected in the politics of the invisibility of her loss. It draws our attention to the lack of acknowledgement of her victimization, its 'normalization' and its legalization. Mariam's trauma, though not heard or acknowledged, points to the fact that there is no production of knowledge outside politics and the history of loss, displacement and injustice. Her rejection of the normalization of her trauma, reflected in the politics of housing demolition, highlights the fact that for feminist research the acknowledgment of such hidden suffering is not only a scientific necessity, but also a political obligation.

This obligation takes us away from the positivist approach, which typically poses questions about the legitimacy of the study relating to the 'size' of the sample, its representativeness etc. Instead it leads us to a different approach, one that situates people like Mariam as the source of knowledge. It raises new sets of questions that revolve around acquiring justice and alleviating the pain of those living the 'everydayness' of militarization and violence. Mariam's plight calls for feminist to be attentive to researching invisibility and the invisibilized.

Mariam was persistent in discussing the impact that the noise, the terrorizing bulldozers, and the violent military power had on her small body and young life. She insisted on asking me whether I knew someone who would let her share with the world her fear of the color yellow, which reminded her of the bulldozers and her sense of loss.

However, her persistent request to share and speak 'truth to power' was interrupted by her mother's anxious interventions. Her mother explained that if Mariam were to speak to a television station, the Jewish state would deprive her of the medical treatment she needed. But Mariam remained adamant in asking me and her father to find a way for her to tell her story. Her father began to make suggestions, but her mother – who was close to tears – stated that she was unable to deal with additional losses that might result from such story-telling. She explained that Mariam's health was what counted now (Mariam developed child diabetes following the demolition of her house), not whether or not the world knew about the effects of the home demolitions. She asked me, "Do you think the world cares about us? Do you think that we are counted as human beings in the world's power formulas?" Despite her mother's words, Mariam insisted, "I want to tell the whole world what they did to us. I want to show them what they did to me."

Mariam's voice, and her family's long history of loss and injustice allow us to reflect on the effect of the global, regional and local denial of the suffering of the unseen and invisibilized. I refer here specifically to the Palestinian case. It requires that we look closely at the way such denial and the workings of power influence the bodies and shapes the lives of individuals and families living in conflict and war zones. It sheds light on the unprecedented levels of hegemonic military power implicated in the occupation of land, and asks whether and how feminist methodologies can be developed when violent transgressions, both local and global, work in a spiral and accumulative manner, affecting everyday acts and movements of individuals. It requires that we understand how and whether we can study "invisibility" through voices of individuals when localized contexts and global power politics change rapidly and unpredictably, leaving victims/survivors in a constant state of turmoil and confusion, and when our research carries political ramifications.

The spiral nature of transgression, as apparent in the protracted suffering of Mariam's family, has affected every aspect of their lives. The family lost her house in Haifa in 1948 (during the Palestinian Nakba), lived thereafter in a state of constant displacement, lost contact with members of their nuclear and extended family, were deprived of social networks, proper access to education, and were left unable to find gainful employment or safeguard the family's wellbeing. The loss of Mariam's family home and the inability of her family to protect her from further trauma – against the backdrop of the world's failure to bring an end to the continuous violation of Palestinians rights – have worked in a spiral manner to impact Mariam and her family economically, socially and psychologically.

Mariam's losses and their ramification are reflected in, for example, her health situation, and in the heavy medication she is taking. It has a bearing on her eating habits, her body image and her entire future as a woman. For Mariam, being a woman in a patriarchal society such as the Palestinian one, suffering from childhood diabetes affects not only her physical health, but also the degree of her vulnerability as a young woman. It will (as her parents explained) further influence her ability to acquire social and economic safety, access educational institutions, impact her sexuality and affect her prospects for marriage.

Similar findings were apparent when revealing the effect of the loss of the home, due to its demolition, on women's bodily safety, sexuality politics, sense of privacy, and personal future decision. Young women for example explained that they needed to refrain from applying to universities, and accept an early marriage proposal due

to the heavy economic burden on their families.[8] Other's explained that they needed to live with a large number of the extended family, lose their bodily safety, privacy, and sense of protected familiality following the demolition of their homes. Thus, the spiral manner in which violence functions and affects the lives of individuals living under its shadow has added to the already excessive levels of force, (that have been justified under what I call Israel's security theology) and legitimated disproportionate attacks against Palestinians, disrupting their everyday life and future. The disruption of Palestinian everyday lives be it through disrupting their ability to reach school, to maintain the home as a safe space, to give birth in safety, or to bury their loved ones with dignity, was justified on the alleged need to ensure 'security for Israel.' 'Securing Israel' from the Palestinians, at any cost, and even if it violates international codes of moralities and laws, has become a new religion, a new theology that is above questioning and challenge. Israeli state security, as defined by the Israeli military leadership and political elite, creates a spiral of insecurities and attacks that impinge upon every moment of the lives of Palestinian civilians. Some of these attacks, as Mariam's ordeal exposes, are invisible, uncounted, and denied recognition.

The accuracy, power, and efficiency of the spiral effects of militarized, violent practices, resulted in escalating threats to Mariam's family, including the threat of continuous internal displacement, exile, the loss of home and family, loss of economic sustenance and the deprivation of the rights to health and education. And yet the mode, structure and epistemic power of this security theology, which renders the human suffering of Mariam and her family invisible, itself remains indistinct and hidden.

Studying the spiral effect of legalized violence (internal displacement, the deprivation of safety and security, etc) and the use of women's bodies and lives to empower colonial bureaucracy and policies will help in the development of a clear, politicized feminist methodology that situates the suffering of women at and as the centre. My argument is that by foregrounding the voices of Palestinian women and girls, as affected by the morphology of the Israeli security theology, and reflected in the attack on the body, home, homeland and life, one could build a critical analytical space from which to theorize a feminist methodology against colonial violence. To further my argument, I draw from women's voices facing housing demolitions, follow by drawing from women's voices facing the violation of their right to education, and conclude with some reflections on feminist methodologies and the dangers of both invisibility and visibility.

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[8] Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2005), op cit.

Feminist Methodologies and Homes of Invisibility in Conflict Zones

The daily activities of displaced Palestinian civilians are impacted by militaristic policies, manifested among others in home demolitions and the Israeli Separation Wall. As a result of these measures and as affirmed by the women I interviewed, Palestinian women have lost their sense of security, autonomy and economic independence. Women explained that they suffer the constant fear of losing their homes, family members and their ability to provide for their children. The economic strangulation that prevents Palestinians from reaching schools, from finding decent work, and from moving freely within and between their own areas, has had a profound impact on women's bodily safety and lives. Women express fear for their own bodily safety; many of them sleep fully dressed, afraid of abuse and the arrival of bulldozers coming to demolish the house. The voices of Manar, Hoda and others cited below reveal the way in which Israel's militaristic policies have permeated every area of Palestinian life.

Manar recounts:

> *For the past three years, after I wash up at night, I have gone to bed with all of my clothes on... I fear even wearing pajamas to sleep because one never knows what will happen... just ask what happened to Hoda when they demolished their house and you will understand why we sleep with all of our clothes on.*

Hoda describes the demolition of her house as follows:

> *When they demolished the house, I was still in my training suit... I only realized that when I saw the pictures in the newspaper... I was without my veil, and only in my training suit! I will never forgive them for violating my privacy and my right to safety in my own house. Because of that, even today, I refuse to take off my veil and my dishdasheh [long dress] when I'm at home in my rented place. Since the demolition last year, I do not know what sleeping means. I feel that they even deprived me of the right to sleep and to sleep safely.*

Nawal and Salma tell similar stories of loss and fear. In Nawal's words:

> *We lost everything – every sense of safety. We can't get water without a struggle, we can't meet our parents without a struggle, we can't sleep, and we can't scream or cry out. And even if we do, no one listens. Even though both my husband and I are Jersusalemites, our children are not, and they do not have I.D. cards... They are all under constant threat. We have lost*

> *all sense of safety and security. Sometimes, I feel that being a dog or a cat is safer than being a Palestinian.*

According to Salma:

> *Safety is our main problem. Our children are facing sexual harassment on their way to school each and every day. Three months ago, someone attempted to kidnap my six-year-old daughter, and I had no one to ask for help. They refuse to safeguard the streets and there is no public transportation. Thus, we end up walking in insecure areas and our children end up walking to school on insecure roads.*

For Hoda, talking to me about her own hardships was an opportunity for her to share her experiences and ventilate her feelings in her own language, rather than "as a legal expert". She repeatedly stated that her problem is not the legality or illegality of her demolished home, but rather, "the illegality of my existence… so, do you have a law that checks whether I should exist, whether my family should live or not? Could you all write my questions in your research?"

Hoda, together with her neighbours, posed questions and requested that their questions and worries should be brought before the world. Their constant use of phrases such as, "No one sees us or hear us," and "we are not considered human beings" led me to a realization of the importance of developing a feminist methodology that engages with invisibility as a major space for understanding the unseen and unheard.

Hoda, like other Palestinian women I interviewed, underscored the fact that the attack on the Palestinian home is a deliberate strategy of war. It changes gender roles, causes physical dislocations and the destruction of social networks, and ruptures the social fabric. It leads to changing gendered roles and intergenerational confrontations, and shakes social values.[9] In such conditions, cultural roots and religious and spiritual beliefs act as psychological buffers that help women survivors to shape and re-shape their subjectivity in order to reduce risk. The fact that the home (both physically and emotionally) is a site of resistance, survival, and a source of women's voices, reconstructs new meanings. As Samar stated:

> *My home was the family home; it was the place where we gathered the entire family on Fridays, the place that most of our relatives came to ask for help when they were in trouble…it was a place that we gathered in*

[9] Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2005), op.cit.

> *happy and sad moments…during weddings, during birth, when we lost someone, when someone was released from prison…it was the place I felt happy…in control, loved, appreciated, respected…a place to talk, cry, share, meet, relax, fight. I was so proud of my home, so strong and energetic… .Now…it looks like a grave yard…they buried all our energies and solidarity…now…we are divided and very lost. Samar, 58 years old.*

Within the highly oppressive Israeli militaristic regime, the home is one of the few places where Palestinian women can find solace. As the only place for refuge, the home is a place for personal growth and community-building. As such, the home is an oppositional site within a military-state patriarchy and a place where Palestinian women can be safe from the "dual spheres of racism and sexism."[10]

I argue that feminist methodologies in conflict zones must be attentive to the meaning that certain spaces carry, such as the meaning of the home space. The voices of Palestinian women revealed that the home represents a nurturing place that facilitates growth for them. The home was found to be the only place of refuge. It is a place for identity formation and community-building. The home, as we learn from Palestinian women, serves as a safe space they create from a history and life of displacement. For them, the home has become not just a site of personal cultivation, but a space of political resistance and agency. Losing their home is tantamount to losing the space in which they can safely transform into more independent and stronger individuals amidst the constant uncertainty and violence. It implies losing the space that affirmed their power of love and care, regardless of the strangulation of the Palestinian economy, the ongoing loss and deprivations, and the global denial thereof. It means losing the only space in which they can restore their dignity, denied by the structures of power and their industrialized security theology. While home for some Palestinian women might be what conventional feminist theories conceive of as a site of oppression and subordination, it is also the only space that affirms their humanity in an otherwise inhumane and brutal global and local contexts. As the site of "personal/political resistance," the private space of the home gains heightened importance for individual women victims of military violence and constant displacement.

Similarly, my study on the effects of the Israeli Separation Wall on Palestinian school girls revealed how the ordeals of girls and their daily struggle to cross military checkpoints and pass through the Wall have became a serious concern and source of worry for them. Their fears of being sexually abused and harassed, their concerns

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[10] Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2008), op.cit.

of being left waiting for hours in the cold or under the sun, the denial of their right to access their schools, which caused them to miss examinations and disrupt their attendance, were found to have militarized their spaces and violated their right to education. Examining the daily struggles of girls and the ramification of the violation of their right to education was however lost in the legal, global and media discussions regarding the legality or illegality of the construction of the Wall. The ordeals of girls and voices were invisibilized, not only by the Israeli occupation and its supporters, but in some cases even by human right activists who used the legal and human right discourse to stress the illegality of the Wall's construction, and unjust demolitions of house, while turning a blind eye to the psychological trauma of its construction.[11] But, in studying and engaging with the daily experiences of women and girls, I learned how violent conflicts affected their everydayness, the way they act, dress, plan their future, take decisions, marry, etc. I learned that in some cases parents decided to prevent girls from pursuing their education, fearing the effect of military checkpoints on their safety and security. In other cases, young girls were unable to cope with the daily humiliations and hardships, and decided to quit schools; in yet others girls agreed to an early marriage to escape the daily oppression.

Developing methodologies that are capable of reading, hearing and seeing the unseen requires that one look at the invisibilized others – in our case Palestinian women – as sources of invisible knowledge about the role and value of a safe home under constant upheavals. The continued invisibility of women's ordeals contributes to the failure to understand the effects of militarization and thus compounds the effect of instability and chaos during times of danger and trauma in conflict zones where uncertainties and the interruption of life prevail.

Researching this invisibility allowed me to challenge the epistemic violence of the hegemonic production of knowledge, which claimed that the Wall was constructed to 'safeguard' and 'protect' lives. It brought to the fore an ongoing 'necropolitics,' an economy of life and death that dictates whose life should be safeguarded and protected, and who are the uncounted 'others.' Hearing young girls' voices enabled me to untangle the implications of colonialism, militarization, hegemonic ideologies and war on our methodologies. It opened up new windows of empowerment, and of researching invisibility. It brought to the research front, as to the conflict front, the importance of investigating the lack of access to hospitals and schools as a deliberate way to further the fragmentation of Palestinian society.

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[11] Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, & S. Khsheiboun, "Palestinian Women is Voices Challenging Human Rights Activism," *Women's Studies International Forum* 32(5), (2009): 354-362.

The Ever-Shifting Power of Spiral Transgressions

In my study on the gendered nature of education[12] I showed how the everydayness of militarism and violence affects the way in which young girls access their schools. The study quotes Reem, a 13-year-old girl who shared the following narrative:

> *I really want to continue going to school, but the soldiers and the Mishmar Hagvul [border patrol] keep on harassing me and my family. As you see, we live very close – one minute away – from the racist separation wall and the soldiers do not bother me on my way to school, but do not allow me to come back home after I am done. I am now sneaking around and reaching home from school through the sewage pipes that are still open. Every time they refuse to allow me to come back home, they know that I will reach home either by walking more than five kilometres, or by sneaking through the sewage pipes.*

Reem's voice reveals the way in which her time, space and route to school were violated on a daily basis. It speaks of her daily upheavals, as well as her acts of resistance and agency. However, Reem's ordeal is rarely seen or known, and her daily encounters, like those of many women and men living in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), scarcely visible. The encounter between Israeli state violence and Palestinian women civilians is colonial in nature, a making of dominance through practices of violence that are directed at the colonized body, home and homeland. Colonial encounters, including violent evictions, claims that the land is empty, and the alleged need to save the colonized from their own 'backward' culture and lack of civility, affect the daily acts of the colonized. The colonial power-holders have confined Palestinians to specific spaces and places in the OPT, and created a new colonial administration. People's movements and lives are under the control of the settler colonialism regime. The management of boundaries within the Palestinian spaces is also under their administration. Ghettoized spaces are created for the Palestinian 'other' controlled by military checkpoints, new zoning and planning laws, and the establishment of spaces and roads for settlers, both conceptually and materially. Thus the Palestinian body, home, school, time and space, and their everyday acts, are raced and gendered.

One instance of a counter-space, created in opposition to the demolished home, was found in Iqbal's narrative. She speaks of the night on which her home was demolished with only thirty minutes' warning:

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[12] Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2008), op.cit.

> *They came, with their big bulldozers, cars, police forces… many soldiers with their weapons directed at my children… and the noise… their voices, their Hebrew language which no one understood, made me feel like I was in a whirlpool [dawameh]. I was running like crazy, between calming down the kids, fearing they would be shot, collecting our papers, documents, birth certificates... collecting the gold the children got as presents from their grandparents... I was trying to gather everything in such a hurry... and when they said that they are about to demolish the house, Salim, my four-year-old son [at the time he was under the age of two] was not around. I thought he was inside the house and started screaming… screaming without being able to stop. But he was right beside me, holding my deshdasheh [a long, wide housedress] ... When they started demolishing the house, I hugged him with his sisters... wrapped them all in my deshdasheh and we all cried. To this day, the girls still remember how the whole family stood, wrapped in my dirty home deshdasheh, crying like we have never cried before, cried and cried while our hearts were on fire.*[13]

Examining the invisibility in Iqbal's act enables us to expand our understanding of world politics to include the personal ordeal of the otherized, as constitutive of previously invisible spheres, and to conceive of women's acts of resistance and agency as counter-hegemonic acts that function under a severe and spiral transgression. Studying invisibility in the context of spiral transgression in conflict-ridden areas raises crucial feminist/political and ethical issues that one cannot turn a blind eye to. The development of a feminist methodology that acknowledges and visibilizes the ordeals of women in conflict zones is both an epistemological and political action, a means of turning methodology into a political act of resistance to subjugation.

The study of the home and the educational space as sites of invisibility, but also as a source of knowledge, reveals the spiral and intricate connection between internal factors (personal, familial, community) and structural/politico-economic factors. As the Palestinian case-studies indicated (and as could be seen in many conflict zones), the localized institutionalization of the violence and of peace, has facilitated our understanding of the effect of the workings of localized global militarism on the everydayness of women's lives. Engaging with women's voices revealed the way displacement, home demolitions, the deprivation of education and loss is a

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[13] Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2005), op.cit., 133.

clear and deliberate strategy of war. The silencing and invisibilization of the displaced Palestinian since the 1948 Nakba (the Palestinian catastrophe), and the spiral effect of physical and emotional dislocation, including the destruction of whole communities, led to drastic changes in the behavior of women and girls, the loss of certain values, and acquisition of new ones. For example, visibilizing how women shape and re-shape their subjectivity to reduce risk under extreme violence could be illuminating for researchers of conflict zones. Revealing the silenced and invisibilizing global effect of deprivation of education, of safety, and of certainty and predictability, and the everydayness of violence, via critical feminist methodology, is a feminist and a political act. A methodology of this kind allows us to comprehend how the personal and familial hold life together and help women to preserve the humanity of their loved ones.

In order to develop a feminist methodology of the politics of invisibility, I have attempted to un-map the daily experiences of the Palestinian woman and the effect that spiral transgression has on her (as on other Palestinians), and her rights to housing and education, as well as to free access to family, school, health, water, food, etc. This process of un-mapping helps us uncover the hierarchies of the hidden and apparent violence. Un-mapping and making Palestinian women's 'invisible' spiral transgressions visible, requires that we look at the roots of the historical injustice caused to Palestinians and juxtapose it with the effect of continuous settler colonialist violence and militarism. It is a process that compels us to question the relationship between her identity politics, as a Palestinian refugee, the politics of "invisibilizing" her rights, cause, needs and everydayness of suffering and the geopolitics of the colonial project as reflected in the spatial politics of land grabbing, displacement and housing demolitions. Analyzing the relationship between identity politics, geopolitics, and the politics of invisibility requires that we analyze their effect on the day to day encounters of Palestinian women living in a context of global denial of their basic rights to life and livelihood. The analyses of everydayness require that one reads the colonized woman's "invisibility" through the organizations of politics in her everyday life. It means that we look at what is being imposed and projected onto specific bodies and lives.

Developing a feminist methodology that reveals the invisibility of women's daily acts of resistance requires that we first un-pack the technologies of domination, such as control over bodily safety and security, over water, food, electricity, movement. It requires unmaping the control over spaces, places, time, economies and development; all employed by the settler colonialist regime. Such a methodology asks that we read the counter-languages, counter-actions and counter-spaces created by the colonized and the occupied in putting up resistance to oppression. It also

requires a reading of the spiral, continuous, and ever-shifting power of the colonizer's technologies of dominance.

Feminist Methodology and the Dangers of Invisibility and Visibility

The paper argued that the Feminist failure to develop methodologies that visibilize the invisible is not merely an academic issue, but also a political one that requires careful analyses of history and justice. I argue that there is a serious danger in both invisibilizing and visibilizing women's ordeals and the spiral effect of the everydayness of violence against women in conflict zones. Such an argument calls us to keep in our mind questions such as: What is the price of not engaging with women's ordeals and their call for historical justice? What is the price of not acting upon the everydayness of their experiences, and for denying women's theorization a platform? What is the price of researching women in conflict zones without allowing them to speak 'truth to power' through the research? What is the price of failing to visibilize the invisible? What is the effect of the trauma of silencing? All these are relevant questions that need further unpacking.

Sociological analyses of visibility[14] pointed to the importance of studying asymmetries and distortions of visibility, when they are the norm, and suggested that these should be incorporated in critical feminist methodology. Furthermore, I posit that such asymmetries transform the visibility-invisibility issue into a site of strategy and politics and hence require a counter politics, methodology and language. A methodology that stipulates the tracking of the archeology of the 'invisible' women's resistance in conflict zone helps us debunk the engineered Western scholarship, be it that on traumatology, which tends to pathologize acts of resistance[15], or human rights, which needs to use the legal regulatory discourses and thus legalizes and de-politicizes inhumane acts [16] or criminology or victimology, which are deeply influenced by those who control the production of knowledge and its academic stronghold. Palestinian women's hidden/silenced voices teach us that developing a feminist methodology that probes invisibility requires that we also question how, why and when visibility intersects with perceptions of dangers and 'security'. It requires us to look at, and engage with the way in which the marginality of woman intersects with her 'dangerousness' as a Palestinian, and

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[14] A. Brighenti, "Visibility: A Category for Social Science," *Current Sociology*, 55(3), (2007): 323-342.

[15] I. Martín-Baró, *Writings for a Liberation Psychology*, ed. and trans. A.Aron & S.Corne (Cambridge/London: Harvard University Press, 1996).

[16] Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian & S. Khsheiboun, (2009), op. cit.

how the Israeli state constructs a security theology that operates at all levels of everyday life to silence and invisibilize women's voices.

Connecting the dots between the politics of transforming the visible into invisible, and comprehending the workings of power in normalizing or denying such invisibility, as apparent in the voices of Palestinian women living in conflict zones, takes us back to where we started. It takes us back to analyzing the effect of the local and global politics of denial in understanding the politics of researching "invisibility" and the invisibilized in conflict and war zones. It invites us to closely research the politics of seeing and listening, while mapping the terrifying landscape in which order, regularity, predictability, routine, and everydayness itself is organized in militarized zones. It assists us in developing a critical feminist methodology that documents and engages in the every day acts of resistance/survival of the "invisible" women living in conflict zones.

Moreover, the shaping and management of visibility and invisibility raises questions such as who are the women in conflict zones who should or should not be seen and why. It also requires one to unpack the regime of invisibility. Visibility is an operation of power, controlled and operated by the politics and knowledge production, when the invisible is not static or absolute, but rather an owner of hidden power that should be feared.[17] Researching the invisible trauma of Palestinians, when they lose their homes and homeland and when they survive constant danger and uncertainties, requires that one looks at the interlocking connections between the spiral transgressions of trauma and invisibility in the historical context of racism and invisibilizing, globalized power politics. To understand the silenced voices of girls who are deprived of their right to access education, or comprehend the meaning of the loss of the home to Palestinian women, one should study the invisibility of their histories, of the global denial of their rights, as well as the invisibility of their psychological traumas as young girls and women facing continuous injustice.

The women's voices shared in this paper also present a challenge to the role of international politics in denying justice to Palestinians, by highlighting how the daily, private lives of women are closely linked to global politics of seeing one side, while rendering the other 'invisible'. Hence, studying invisibility requires both a macro and micro analyses of the global political economy, to link women's private lives with the global power game. Studying invisibility can help us detect

[17]Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, "Palestinians, Education, and the Israeli 'Industry of Fear'", in *Education and the Arab World: Political Projects, Struggles, and Geometries of Power,* World Yearbook of Education, eds., André E. Mazawi and R.G. Sultana, (Routledge, 2009).

'security' allegations that may further silence the unseen. Studying women and their families at moments of militarization and displacement, when the body, the future, the home and the family are threatened might at times disturb the production of hegemonic knowledge. The question remains whether such disturbance could be considered a form of feminist political action. Reading and writing invisibility contributes in many cases to preventing individual women from losing their achievements in the daily struggle for survival. Whether such a methodology would empower or be transformative for women in extreme situations of violence is a question that remains unanswered.

Two final questions remain unanswered: What is the price of disclosing the invisible experiences for Palestinian women? Who would pay the price of such visibility? And might visibility add insult to injury and inflict additional trauma and loss? Based on my clinical activism and the research shared in this paper on home demolitions and the militarization of education, I would like to argue that, in some cases, women themselves exercise the right to remain silent and chose to live in the darkness, in an effort to negotiate their survival strategies. Their refusal to speak up should not only be taken into consideration, but also respected and protected, for – as I have stated elsewhere in my research on women facing sexual abuse in Palestine[18] – women are not vehicles for political activism, research or change. Our first and most important ethical and political commitment as feminists should be to be guided by women's judgments, silences, speeches and choices. To me, being a feminist means not only bringing or not bringing the power and meanings inherent in silence and speech; it also means being responsive and responsible for the ways of engaging, writing, reading and not-writing or visibilizing the hidden voices of those who are surviving in the dark and dealing with injustice on a daily basis.

Notions of academic 'truths' and our commitment to those we study in the context of the politics of invisibility and responsibility bear complicated ethical and political meanings and ideologies. The stories of women and girls, such as that of Mariam, made me question the role of developing a methodology that is able to make the invisible visible, and to write about the wrongs done to the "invisibilized" in the midst of a volatile and violent conflict.

Women may need to remain invisible, and their decision to deny their knowledge a voice, and prevent their narratives from seeing the light of day should guide our

[18] Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, "Blocking her exclusion: A contextually sensitive model of intervention for handling female abuse," *Social Service Review* 74 (4), (2004): 620-634 and Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, "Imposition of Virginity Testing: a Life-Saver or a License to Kill," *Social Science and Medicine* 60 (2005): 1187-1196.

constructions. But one must not forget that it is in the mere intimate level of Mariam's 'invisible' life suffering, and with an attention to the everydayness of the details, that one could develop a feminist methodology that researches invisibility, and comprehends in depth the effect of the power of spiral transgressions on women's lives. For as Mbembe states: "power, in its own violent quest for grandeur and prestige, makes vulgarity and wrongdoing its main mode of existence."[19] Consequently, it is this intimacy of experience and the obscenity of power – as Mbembe defines it – that one should attempt to uncover in researching "invisibility".[20]

I would like to thank Sarah Layton for her assistance with this paper.

[19] A. Mbembe, "The Banality of Power and the Aesthetics of Vulgarity in the Postcolony," *Public Culture* 4(2), (1992): 1-30.

[20] Ibid.

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WOMEN'S QUESTION IN NEPAL'S DEMOCRATIC POST CONFLICT TRANSITION: TOWARDS A POLICY RESEARCH AGENDA*

Rita Manchanda

Abstract

In Nepal's elected Constituent Assembly sit 191 women – the wives and daughters of former Prime Ministers next to Dalit and janajati (indigenous peoples) women who came to politics during the Maoist 'Peoples War'. The lofty Maoist vision of a revolutionary Nepal was said to have opened up spaces for poor, illiterate, rural women to 'join' as agents in a potentially transformative politics. Is that agency being carried over into the democratic transition or is Nepal too succumbing to the historical trend of the marginalization of women post conflict. The article explores the changes that occurred during the Maoists 'Peoples War' that redefined women's roles and gender consciousness and paved the way for the socio-political ascent of the women to the CA. It will flag the contradictions and challenges that are emerging in the post conflict landscape in the re-envisioning of the women's question in a new Nepal as it confronts the exigencies of governance and power politics.

South Asia's newest republic, Nepal has become the region's trailblazer in the socio-political assertion of women as exemplified in the 33 % representation of women in the new Constituent Assembly. In the 1990s, India had broken revolutionary ground by reserving 33% seats for women at local body levels, but its scaling up to state and national legislative bodies has been stymied. Nepal, however, shows the way. Disempowered, poor, illiterate rural women largely from the oppressed castes have been enabled to walk the track from invisibility to political protagonism.

In the newly-elected Constituent Assembly sit 191 women – the wives and daughters of former Prime Ministers, next to Dalit and *janajati* (indigenous peoples) women who came to politics during the People's War. The Communist Party of Nepal –

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*This article was written in 2008 before the current deadlock in Nepal.

Maoist (CPN-M) leads the way with 74 women, Nepali Congress 39, the middle path Communist Party of Nepal – Unified Marxist-Leninist (CPN-UML) 36 and the Madhesh parties with 17. There is the potential opportunity to write into the Constitution a transformative agenda on gender relations, to assert sustainable entitlements to decision-making rights, to prioritize the social agenda and redefine security and gender in security sector reform. Historic experience has been that in democratic transition, in the drafting of new policy frameworks, the citizen is considered gender-neutral. Will Nepal steer a bold new path?

The sceptics are vociferous in decrying the capacity of largely uneducated Constituent Assembly women to contribute. But Maoist Constituent Assembly member Sarala Regmi, who defeated a UML heavyweight, Bam Dev Gautam, has heard such criticism before when Maoist women manned the fierce battle lines – "It was extremely hard for some sections of our patriarchal society to accept that women were on the frontline sacrificing their lives. Now they doubt us and say we will not be able to write a good constitution". But she was dismayed when in the wheeling and dealing of coalition politics, the defeated Bam Dev Gautam was nominated Home Minister. Regmi who is from the downtrodden castes, is determined to not led the power games of Kathmandu defeat the goal of inscribing in the Constitution the dismantling of federal structures and recognition of ethnic, class and gender rights[1] .

What does this gender-assertive profile of political protagonism portend? In Nepal, are we seeing the reversal of the historical trend evident in the aftermath of most conflicts, of the pushback to the status quo and the suppression of the agency of women mobilized during the conflict? The lofty Maoist vision of a revolutionary Nepal was said to have opened up spaces for masses of women, especially poor, illiterate, rural women to 'join' as agents in a potentially transformative politics. Is that agency being carried over into the democratic transition? Is the progressive agenda of social reform claimed by the Maoist movement being translated into law? Will the process of reintegrating women combatants be gendered or as elsewhere, will women's contributions be made invisible and the challenge of culturally reintegrating mobilized women ignored? Will the tentative 'gains' from readjusting the macho-masculinised culture of militaries be built upon through the inclusion of gender perspectives in redefining security? Will the justice agenda address the issue of sexual violence in conflict and resist the trend towards making it invisible as private or trivializing it as collateral to armed conflict? Will the post-conflict development frameworks be gender-sensitive to the increasing economic

[1] "Sarala's struggle," *Nepali Times,* October 24-30, 2008; *The Himalayan Times,* October 13, 2008.

and social burden shouldered by women in the aftermath of political violence, which is simplistically summed up in the descriptive social category of 'female-headed households'.

This article does not intend to answer the cluster of questions raised above which would require an exhaustive documentation of the history of Nepali women in conflict and the post-conflict aftermath. It is too early in Nepal's ongoing process of post-conflict socio-political transition to do more than suggest directions of empirical inquiry and to indicate the challenges that face policymakers, women's solidarities and feminist scholarship to counter the historical trend of the marginalization of women post conflict.

This brief essay will map some of the broad changes that occurred at the grassroots level during the Maoists People's War that opened up spaces for redefining women's roles and gender consciousness and paved the way for the socio-political ascent of the women to the Constituent Assembly. Here, I will focus on the women in the Maoist movement rather than the wider field of gender as a category of analysis. In my earlier writing, I had explored the 'ambivalent spaces' that conflict opens up for women outside the movement in terms of assuming decision-making roles, taking on ritually sanctified gender-differentiated tasks of ploughing the land, thatching roofs or defying ritual practices of widowhood.[2]

The paper will also flag the contradictions and challenges that are emerging in the post-conflict landscape in the re-envisioning of the women's question in a new Nepal as it confronts the exigencies of governance and power politics. It will pick up on the social currents towards pushback to a gendered status quo, as manifest in the rising graph of domestic violence and the trend towards impunity in addressing the issue of sexual violence in conflict.

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[2] Some limited field-based empirical work, using gender as a category of analysis explored the narratives of civilian women managing survival and carving out new gender roles in the midst of the societal upheaval of conflict and displacement and the narratives of 'politicised' and militarised women in the Maoist movement discovering a new sense of self esteem, struggling to rework gender relations in a patriarchal militaristic order.

Shobha Gautam, Amrita Banskota and Rita Manchanda, "Where there are no Men: Women in the Maoist Insurgency in Nepal," in *Understanding the Maoist Movement of Nepal,* ed. Deepak Thapa (Kathmandu: Martin Chautari Centre for Social Research and Development, 2003).

Also see "Maoist Insurgency in Nepal: Radicalizing Gendered Narratives," *Cultural Dynamics*, 16 (2-3), (2004): 237-258.

For descriptive information on women's fledgling initiatives in mitigating impact of violence see IHRICON Newsletter 2004.

I am drawing, perhaps overly, on the writings of Maoist women leaders along with a sprinkling of journalistic articles, films and some tentative efforts at scholarly research on women in the Maoist movement. Unfortunately, there is too little empirical field research to do a social audit of the lofty Maoist claims to socio-cultural transformation. For example, in the base area model 'women exploitation free villages' were created. How did they work? Are they sustainable? What demonstration impact are they having? A "survey" carried out by the (Maoists') Women Dept in 2002-2003 provides remarkably frank insights into the assumptions of a socially transformative experience of the women in the Maoist movement, especially its fighting force. Those assumptions need to be problematized in rigorous field-based research. We do not know whether the claimed reworking of gender relations in the People's Liberation Army (PLA) has carried over to the peace camps where women and men combatants have been cantoned for over a year. It is an urgent agenda for research to guide policymakers in acknowledging women's contributions and consolidating social 'gains'.

Introduction

During the decade-long People's War (1996-2006), Nepal's society and polity were radically altered. In the area of gender relations, Maoist women leaders claimed that the locus of Nepal's women's movement shifted from the urban centres to the rural areas, from middle class women to the *janajati* and lower castes[3] . "Today, the image of tired malnourished women carrying children at one end and rearing cattle at the other end has been transformed into the image of dignified fighting women with guns", Hsila Yami alias Comrade Parvati asserted[4] .

As an index to the multiple layers of oppression that bind Nepali women, especially the model of the upper caste Hindu woman, there is a popular saying, "If my next life is to be a dog's life, I'd rather be a dog than a bitch". The gender profile of Nepal reveals that women suffer from 54 discriminatory laws, including citizenship and inheritance[5] . A woman's life span is shorter by two and a half years. Nepal's maternal mortality rate of 905:100,000 is matched only by Afghanistan; women watch one in every ninth child die under five. This is accompanied by early marriage, multiple pregnancies to beget sons and thus ensure their marital life and their share of land via sons. Women are not entitled to an equal share of parental property

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[3] Comrade Parvati, "Women's Perspectives in the Maoist Movement," in *The People's War in Nepal,* ed. Arjun Karki and David Seddon (Delhi: Adroit Publications, 2003).

[4] Hsila Yami, *People's War and Women's Liberation in Nepal* (Raipur: Purvaya Prakashan, 2006).

[5] Forum for Women, Law and Development, 2005.

(only unmarried women over 35 years) nor can they inherit tenancy rights and therefore access bank loans etc. While Nepali women are culturally differentiated in view of their ethnic, caste and regional identities and *janajati* women enjoy relatively more freedom than the Hindu caste-bound women, multiple levels of oppression bind women down to unhygienic menstrual social ostracism, torturous widowhood, dowry and polygamy.

Mobilizing Women

The material reality of Nepal is that one in two male householders is caught up in seasonal migration and women are the mainstay of subsistence agriculture. This reality determined that the Maoists mobilize women for the agrarian-based revolutionary struggle. Maoist ideology and policy specifically reached out to girls and women and not as a last resort as in the case of the LTTE in Sri Lanka. Property rights for women comprised a key demand in the Maoists' demand charter. Moreover, overriding traditional constraints, the Maoists opened up the fighting ranks to women. Sarala Regmi was one of the first 60 women guerrillas to be recruited in the PLA. The result was the mass visibility of poor, rural, illiterate women, the majority from oppressed castes and indigenous communities, in the movement, as propagandists and mobilizers, party cadres and district secretaries and above all as soldiers in the people's militia and People's Liberation Army (PLA).

Maoist leader Hsila Yami claimed that women constituted 30% of the force in the PLA and even more in the militia. An indication of the mass visibility of women in the movement can be gathered from their presence in the western Nepal region. According to Maoist sources, the region had 1500 women's units, and in mass women's organisations 600,000 members. In the military field, there were ten women section commanders in the main force, two women platoon commanders in secondary force and several militia commanders in the basic force. The team commander of the health section of the battalion force was a woman[6].

Overall in the PLA, there were dozens of women at the regional level, hundreds in the district level and several thousands in area and cell levels in the party. Since 1995, when the decision was taken to have two women in each guerrilla squad, women in the PLA had become commanders and vice commanders within brigades, platoons, squads and militia. In order to encourage women's leadership, there were separate women's sections in brigades, women platoons and women squads.

[6] Hsila Yami, *People's War and Women's Liberation in Nepal* (Raipur: Punaiya Prakashan, 2006), 36.

According to a questionnaire based survey conducted by the Women's Department of the Party targeted at women in leadership-level positions in the movement, more than 40% 'coveted working in the PLA'[7].

Local eye witness accounts of the last Maoist-RNA battle in Benin speak of the high visibility of women. Journalist Matrika Poudel writing in the *Nepali Times* on "Nepal: Women Warriors" (November 22, 2005) claimed that the proportion of women in the Maoist ranks in eastern Nepal appears to be higher than in the west. Particularly among the *janajati* (indigenous peoples) communities, where there were relatively fewer constraining upper caste bonds, as in the Kirat and Limbu communities, the number of women guerrillas was higher. The UN report on Children in Armed Conflict records that from November 2005 – September 2006, 39% of the recruits were girls. Post conflict, of the 32,250 registered Maoist combatants in 28 cantonments, UN Mission in Nepal (UNMIN)-led Joint Monitoring Coordinating Committee verified 19,692 PLA fighters as eligible for 'integration', of which 5000 were women.

From Invisibility to Protagonism

Did the visibility of women in the three organs of the Party, the PLA and the mass fronts translate into protagonism? This would depend upon the opening up of spaces for the development of women's leadership. However, with the majority in the age group of 15-25 years[8], can we talk of agency in shaping and pushing a radical socio-economic programmatic agenda for the movement? Feminist scholarship has tended to be very critical of women's agency in militarised movements, in particular the LTTE women who Radhika Coomarawsamy, dismissed as 'cogs in the wheel'[9], in a reductionist view that has been challenged by the more recent writings of Darini Rajasingham (2001) and Miranda Alison (2003)[10].

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[7] Hsila Yami, Ibid, 63.

[8] An insight into the age pattern can be garnered from a Survey conducted by the CPN-M Women's Dept to assess problems in establishing women's leadership in 2002-3. Questionnaires were sent to those positioned for leadership responsibilities, e.g. in the party – area committee level, PLA – Cdr and Vice Cdr level and mass front – district committee level. Some 47% were within 19-25 group, est 37% in 18 and below group. Hsila Yami, Ibid, 58.

[9] Radhika Coomarawsamy, "Women of the LTTE," *Frontline Magazine*, January 10, 1997

[10] Miranda Allison, "Cogs in the Wheel? Women in the LTTE," *Civil Wars,* Volume 6, No 4, (London: Routledge: 2003), 37-54. Darini Rajasingham Senanayake "Ambivalent Empowerment: The Tragedy of Tamil Women in Conflict in Women War and Peace," in *Women War and Peace in South Asia: Beyond Victimhood to Agency,* ed. Rita Manchanda (New Delhi: Sage, 2001), 102-130.

In the case of the Maoist movement, during the People's War, in the party's Central Committee, there were eleven women members (the 2005 Chunbagh National Convention downsized the Central Committee and retained only two women). In the United Revolutionary Peoples Council, the embryonic central government, there were four women out of thirty-seven members. Women's participation in all People's Councils was held to be mandatory. However, in 2001 when the people's governments were set up in twenty-one districts, none was headed by a woman, although there were four women Vice Chairs.

Yami's frontal attack in her writing about the patriarchal construct of marriage and the pressure on young women in the movement to marry and take on the gendered burden of child-bearing and rearing, reflects her frustration at women losing out on assuming leadership roles. This was especially the case in the PLA where there were few women above twenty five years of age. Many of her writings are extremely critical of the top party leadership in failing to strategically address the questions of sexuality, marriage and reproductive responsibilities and to give priority to the demands of the mass women's fronts to provide for a social infrastructure of crèches and caregivers.

Moreover, the survey conducted by the Women's Dept in 2002-3 to ascertain the problems in establishing women's leadership, revealed that more than 74% of respondents who were in mid-level leadership positions felt that gender discrimination was 'normally present', especially in the PLA, vehicle for the most rapid socio-political transformation . In the movement as a whole, more than 61% sensed gender discrimination while being promoted and 58% felt that their abilities were doubted. About a third of the women felt that the men in the movement continued to judge women on the basis of a feudal conservative outlook[11] .

Notwithstanding these contradictions in challenging the socially subordinate status of women, that the Maoist movement significantly radicalized the social agenda and the women's question was evident in the way successive governments in Nepal felt obliged to commit on reservations for women. During the 2003 ceasefire negotiations, the government proposed reserving for women 25% of all seats in representative bodies.

Through the furnace of the People's War have come forth many disempowered poor, rural women from the indigenous communities and oppressed castes, to take their seat in the Constituent Assembly – women like Jayapuri Gharti from the Maoist

[11] Hsila Yami, (2006), op.cit, 65.

heartland and Rolpa who joined the movement in 1990 when still at school. Coming from a family that was poor, belonging to a socially downtrodden caste, and being the seventh of eight children, Rolpa was lucky to have been sent to school. In high school, she fell under the influence of her Maoist teacher, Nand Kishore Pasang and joined the party. In 1998 she became the Central Committee (CC) member, in 2003 head of the Women's Wing and in 2008 she defeated seven rivals, all male, to become Constituent Assembly member[12] .

Socio-cultural Transformation

Maoist writings claim that the People's War affected a template shift in the socio-cultural transformation of Nepali women in the rural areas. CPN-M Chairperson 'Prachanda' in interviews to the RIM journalist Li Onesto, frankly admitted that the party was running to keep up with the overwhelming response of women to political opportunities and the intended and unintended social consequences. He spoke of a "whole cultural revolution going on among the people. Questions of marriage, questions of love, questions of family and of relations between people, all of these were being turned upside down and changed in the rural areas"[13]

Yami's writings draw attention to the major strides made in the socio-cultural field, through consciousness-raising campaigns, often reinforced through FM radio broadcasts, aimed at anti-liquor drive, countering trafficking among communities like the Badi community, exhortation towards simplicity in marriages and ceremonies, hygiene consciousness especially against physically and socially degrading menstrual practices, tortuous widowhood and long mourning and support for widow remarriage. In the base areas, women exploitation free villages were set up where women were said to get their equal share of parental property, where domestic violence, child marriage, forced marriage and polygamy were said to have been reduced and crèches and support infrastructure was available. Living that new vision were women like Jayapuri Gharti Magar who married a fellow PLA combatant and whose daughter was brought up by the *Janata*.

A new legal code used in the Maoists-run Peoples' Courts formulated a separate law regarding women and family. Women were encouraged to acquire basic legal training and served as barefoot lawyers in these peoples' courts. National and international newspapers of the period were full of reports from rural areas of the

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[12] *Nepali Times,* 28 September - 2 October; *Himalayan Times* Sept 9, 2008.

[13] Li Onesto, "Red Flag Flying on the Roof of the World: Interview with Prachanda," *The Worker 1043,* February 20, 2000, 195. Accessible at *www.rwor.org*

people's courts punishing wife-beaters, rapists and exploiters of women and of open jails and reformative justice[14].

Did the Maoist People's War period provide more empowering and enduring cultural identities for women both within and outside the party? Yami in her analysis of the survey acknowledges that the Maoist women did not serve as role models or motivators in mobilizing women in the movement. It was fathers, brothers or 'others'. And Jenny Marx was the favoured icon. One reason may have been that most of the women were first-generation recruits. Yami, however, recognises that male chauvinism persisted in the PLA and there were significant reports of gender discrimination and sexual exploitation. Alongside, there was the emergence of full-time revolutionary husband-and-wife teams, though the barrier of traditional labour relations remained[15].

What would an independent field-based social audit of the movement's agenda of socio-cultural transformation reveal? That is a research task that is waiting for some rigorous empirical studies. What do some of the journalistic reports and more scholarly writings suggest? Sujitha Shakhya of the UML is fierce in her denunciation of the Maoists claim of a socially transformative agenda. "Injustice, tyranny, exploitation and oppression faced by women cannot be overcome by beating someone over the head with 500-1000 sticks and breaking a pot of wine", Shakhya said. She claimed that the Maoists ill-treated women and used sexual violence as a means of control[16].

In a more sympathetic analysis of the movement's impact, Anju Chhetri, cofounder of Asmita, a women's publishing house, consolidates the claims made in Maoist writing of People's War opening up spaces for progressive social transformation. Chettri, while drawing attention to the 'losses' – families dislocated and ruptured, estimates of 3000 widows, the burden of single parenthood and financial deprivation – acknowledges, that there have been 'gains'. Before the war, "polygamy was a matter of bravery and pride", now "the Maoists have stopped it not only in practice but also prohibited it by formulating law". Property rights of women featured in the original Maoist demand agenda. In 2001, the civil code was changed to entitle

[14] Rita Manchanda, "Maoist Insurgency in Nepal: Radicalizing Gendered Narratives," *Cultural Dynamics,* 6 (2-3), (2004): 237-255.

[15] Hsila Yami, op.cit, 2006.

[16] Sujitha Shakhya, "The Maoist Movement in Nepal: An Analysis from Women's Perspectives," in *The People's War in Nepal,* ed. Arjun Karki and David Seddon (Delhi: Adroit Publication, 2003), 395.

women to inherit ancestral property, and two years later, in 2003, the right to abortion was passed[17].

Evidently, these changes have proved sustainable enough to impact upon the gendering of the structure of legal reform in democratic transition. The newly constituted Ministry of Law, Justice and Constitutional Affairs in October 2008 has formulated a draft bill that proposes to amend 14 gender discriminatory laws, including recognising daughters as equal partners to parental property.

Anthropologists Shneiderman and Pettigrew are wary of over-determining a gender consciousness in understanding why so many girls joined the Maoists. The survey suggests that while 65% were motivated to join because of class oppression some 16% added gender discrimination. Women like Sarala Regmi and Jayapuri Gharti, clearly indicate that social and gender oppression were important in drawing them into the struggle for justice and equality. Shneiderman and Pettigrew in their interviews with Maoist women guerrillas reveal a quiet gender consciousness as reflected in the statement of a young Maoist recruit – “You see there used to only be sickles and grass in the hands of girls like us; and now there are automatic rifles”[18]. Their encounter with a two-woman team, a Dalit and a Chettri, at a Maoist camp, revealed the possibility of spaces for not only transcending caste but also gender relations. The two were found cleaning their guns. “They did not help in preparing food or in repairing uniforms, both of which jobs were done by men,” observed Shneiderman and Pettigrew[19].

Yami, analysing the above mentioned survey, found the presence of gender discrimination and male chauvinism persisting in the PLA. Notwithstanding these findings, Yami notes that the participation of a critical mass of women in the PLA has had a transformative impact on the highly masculinised culture of militaries as well as the popular image of the culture of militarism as being coercive power structures with violent practices[20]. Yami, alias Comrade Parvati, writing in the Maoist organ *The Worker* in an essay titled ‘Women’s Participation in People’s Army’

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[17] Aditi Bhaduri, “Nepal’s Historic vote puts women in the running,” Women’s news, April 9, 2008, http://www.womensenews.org/story/campaign-trail/080409/nepals-historic-vote-puts-women-in-running (accessed Feb 4, 2009).

[18] Judith Pettigrew and Sara Shneiderman , “Women in the Maobaadi: Ideology and Agency in Nepal’s Maoist Movement,” *Himal Magazine* (Jan 2004) http://www.himalmag.com/read.php?id=3744 (accessed November 6, 2008)

[19] Ibid.

[20] Rita Manchanda *op.cit,* 2001; Anuradha Chenoy, *Militarism and Women in South Asia* (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 2002).

(2003), argued, "The infusion of women in PLA has made it easier to expand its activities from fighting to organizing and engaging in productive activities. It has brought gentleness, compassionate feelings in rigorous combatant life. Above all, it has smashed the masculine image of the fighting force… [It has made the] PLA [a] gender-friendly and class-conscious force. This gets more reinforced when their women combatants are brutally tortured, raped and killed by the reactionary force… In hostile areas, women combatants are more readily accepted and believed. Thus it helps in removing the initial fear of the masses. Their presence in the people's court makes masses, particularly women more accessible, more at ease and more hopeful for egalitarian justice"[21].

The Aftermath Landscape

The historical experience is that post conflict, the socio-political moment opened up by the societal upheaval of conflict, even in the midst of the 'losses' of conflict, fast slips back to a restoration of gender status quo in the war-weary pursuit of 'normalcy'. Women are pushed back, often by means of sexual and family violence. Their contribution is undervalued and their sacrifices are not compensated. The record is that even internationally-funded and UN-supervised processes tend to be gender-neutral and contribute to women's marginalization and impoverishment post conflict [22].

International policy commitments like the UNSC Resolution 1325 (2000) specifically acknowledges the interconnection between 'Women, Peace and Security' and requires the UN system and states to include women in peace processes and the implementation of peace agreements[23]. This is further consolidated by UNSC Resolution 1820 (June 2008) which recognises rape as a war crime and draws attention to the neglected issue of sexual violence in conflict, its violation of victims'

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[21] Comrade Parvati (alias Hsila Yami), "Women's Perspectives in the Maoist Movement," in *The People's War in Nepal* ed. Arjun Karki and David Seddon (Delhi: Adroit Publications, 2003); see also Comrade Parvati, "The Question of Women's Leadership in People's War in Nepal," *The Worker*, (January 8, 2003), *www.cpnm.org/worker/issue* (last accessed 5 Nov 2008).

[22] Rita Manchanda, *"Women's Agency in Conflict & Peace Building: Gender Relations in post-conflict reconstruction with attention to Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and Nepal,"* Working paper no 8, UNIFEM, 2006.

[23] Sanam Anderlini, "The A-B-C to the UNSC Resolution 1325 on Women Peace and Security," (London: International Alert, 2000). Elisabeth Porter, "Women Political decision making and peace building", *Global Change Peace and Security,* 15 (3), (Oct 2003): 245-262.

rights but also its wide social consequences. It emphasises the need to counter impunity against sexual violence for sustainable peace and security[24].

Also, feminist scholarship has establishing a co-relation between militarized conflict and increasing domestic violence, i.e. the connection between violence, militarism, a construction of a *macho* masculinity and a pattern of reinforced gender (power) relations that exacerbates violence against women. Impunity for mass sexual violence in conflict reinforces and legitimizes post-conflict sexual abuse of women. Also, violence is an important variable in determining whether war time 'gains' can be consolidated as men use violence and the threat of violence to push women back into the kitchen and grass cutting, especially in restructuring 'normalcy'[25].

In the case of Nepal, the UN has been involved in monitoring the democratic transition via elections, and in particular, overseeing the management of the two militaries. The UNMIN had for the first phase, a gender point person, Ratna Kapur, but with a limited mandate of gender auditing the Constituent Assembly elections. The gender position was not retained in the truncated UNMIN role of supervising and managing the two armies. However, UN agencies like UNFPA have been focusing on documenting increasing levels of gender based violence (GBV). Would a gender audit in Nepal reveal that the UN agencies are integrating a gender perspective and enabling women's voices in shaping policies? Sadly, the UN's track record is not encouraging as evinced in the Report of the UN Special Envoy, Angela King's gender audit of Afghanistan. This is further corroborated in the findings of the UNIFEM sponsored Independent Experts Commission on Women, War and Peace[26].

In most post-conflict transitions, humanitarian and security responses rarely address this in the articulation of legal and policy approaches to security sector reform or pay attention to the challenges of socio-cultural reintegration post conflict. In Nepal, the thicket of international donor agencies involved in the post-conflict transition process rarely recognises the carryover implications of gender-based violence as systematic in the conflict and post-conflict social landscape.

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[24] For texts of UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 see S/RES/1325(2000) and S/RES/1820 (2008); also Concept Paper for Open debate of Security Council, October 2008, UN Document S/2008/655 and Background Note on Women Peace and Security, UNSC Res 1820 (2008) UN Information Office.

[25] Sheila Meintjes, Anu Pilay & Meredith Turshen, ed., *The Aftermath: Women in Post-conflict Transformation* (London: Zed Press, 2001).

[26] Elisabeth Rehn and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, *Women, War, Peace: The Independent Experts' Assessment on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Women's Role in Peace-building (Progress of the World's Women Vol.1)* (UNIFEM, 2002), 1-19. Rita Manchanda, 2006, op cit.

The critical question for Nepal is whether in the aftermath, the Maoist social revolution will succumb to the historical pushback of women to the kitchen and grass cutting? According to the survey, for 20% of the respondents, it was the equality between men and women in the People's War which they liked the most. Is that experiment already getting unravelled as the Sarala Regmis and Jayapuri Ghartis discover that despite the Constituent Assembly being the most multi-ethnic, multi-regional and gender inclusive body in Nepal's history, the exigencies of coalition power politics is reproducing upper caste men in dark suits deliberating over backroom deals, while the Constituent Assembly process is at risk of getting marginalized. Sarala Regmi had defeated Bam Dev Gautam, only to find him back as Home Minister. During the People's War, the Party had arranged for Sarala Regmi's remarriage after her husband was killed in the war. During the Constituent Assembly elections, Bam Dev Gautam had used her violation of tradition (widow remarriage) to traduce her reputation. Nonetheless, she won the election.

Maoist Women Combatants

Nepal's Maoist women guerrillas may have learnt the meaning of equality in the war years, but what will be the fate of the women among the 32,250 Maoists registered as PLA soldiers, of which UNMIN has verified as eligible 19,692 including 5000 women. Where will the underage or recent recruits go? What about those women who are pregnant or are lactating mothers? Will gender bias determine who is to be excluded? Can they go back?

Hsila Yami had said to me sometime back, "Sons will be welcomed back with open arms, but for daughters there can be no return. When they become guerrillas, the women set themselves free from patriarchal bonds. How can they go back?" Also, given the propaganda of sexual licentiousness in the movement, their cultural reintegration into patriarchal Nepali society would be problematic. Moreover what do they go back to, to return to the old ways of women's servitude – the house, the kitchen, and grass cutting. What one young Maoist recruit described to writer Manjushree Thapa as "Doing Nothing" [27] .

Information about the situation of the women in the camps is largely anecdotal, culled from media stories. We do not have data on how sustainable the gendered consciousness of empowerment has been. Yami has observed that "during the

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[27] The reintegration experience of the LTTE girl soldiers was chastening. They were not accepted back by the community, precipitating early marriage and re-recruitment. Moreover, there were the 'belt incidents' involving LTTE women cadres in the camps. They resisted shedding their uniform style belt worn over the shirt because once civilianized, they lost authority and dignity.

People's War, women were singly focused on one goal, but now, they are slipping back, for women's socialization encourages them to disperse their attention". Even more disturbing are stray newspaper reports of escalating social violence against women in the camps. Sunita Dangol a photojournalist on an NGO sponsored tour to report on women in Kailali district, including the Maoist cantonment there, wrote, "Every week one woman commits suicide either due to poverty, lack of food and basic commodities or they are raped by either police officials or Maoist cadres"[28]. The looseness of the reporting style does not encourage confidence in its credibility but, it does point to the critical need for rigorous field-based research. The staff of the NGO speaks of encountering former Maoist women who find themselves socially alienated.

The litmus test for the Maoist-led government will be its capacity to address the highly controversial issue of the Maoist soldiers in the camps. It has not only reduced security sector reform to a one-point agenda, but threatens to derail the peace process. According to the Interim Constitution, those eligible are to be "supervised, integrated and rehabilitated'. Given how fractious the issue is proving, efforts to raise gender questions are either brushed aside as further dividing, or de-prioritized, that is, expected to be naturally resolved once the basic policy is in place.

To determine that policy, six months after the elections to the Constituent Assembly, a multi-party five-member Army Integration Special Committee (AISC) was set up in October 2008. Needless to add, there are no women on the Committee. Significantly, criticism about all major political parties not being represented in the Committee, has given an opportunity to Chairperson of the Sadhbhavna Party, Sarita Giri, to urge a reshuffle of the AISC and ensure a minimum of two representatives from among the women[29].

Where are Women in Policy Making?

The ideological commitment to a social revolution and the requirements of the People's War had mobilized women as integral to the revolutionary transformation of Nepal. At the grassroots level, it translated into opportunities for socio-political agency for poor rural disempowered women. But already in the interregnum of 'no peace-no war' i.e. the ceasefire negotiations, the exigencies of gendered neutral policies were manifest in the Maoists constituting an all-male negotiating team.

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[28] Sunita Dungal, Text & Photo feature, *The Kathmandu Post*, September 13, 2008, Sunday magazine section.

[29] "Govt breaches pacts, statutes: Oppn" in *The Kathmandu Post*, November 1, 2008.

The Maoists had carefully ensured that their team reflected their multiple constituencies such as *Janajati* (indigenous) and *Madhesi* (regional). But where were the women? Top Maoist leader Baburam Bhattarai defensively explained that women did not have to be physically included to have their interests represented.

Subsequently, the *Jana Andolan* II of April 2006, building upon the radicalization of the socio-political agenda during the People's War, saw in the popular mass democratic upsurge, women assertively in the forefront. In the 1990 *Jana Andolan* I, women had participated and sacrificed for democracy. However, Nepal's first experiment with democracy brought little change in gender-discriminatory laws. Would women once again be marginalized? In May 2007, the Nepal Parliament made a lofty commitment of 33 per cent reservations for women in all public institutions. But the reality remained of men talking to men in the interim constitutional structures – at the peace table and in the new committees – the Interim Constitution Drafting Committee, the Ceasefire Code of Conduct Monitoring Committee and the Rayamajhi Commission of Inquiry into abuse of authority. As an example of how quickly the slip back happened, the first draft of the Citizenship bill was gender-discriminatory, i.e. against the children of Nepali women married to foreigners.

Lobbying by an inter-political party women's alliance, supported by high profile women activists and backed by the UN eventually resulted in priority of place for women in the committees. The women had protested their exclusion from the drafting committee to the interim constitution, and secured places for four women. Three women were included in the 'back up' team of the 32-member Peace Committee.

The Maoists proved more decisive, leading the way in the interim Parliament, by nominating over 40 of the 73 seats to women. However, when the Interim Government appointed 27 new Departmental Administrators in 2007, not one was a woman, though subsequently several were named. The Maoists' choice of the Women's Ministry and Pampha Bushal as Minister was welcome. Hsila Yami in the crucial Water Resources Ministry showed her mettle in trying to overhaul a corrupt discredited system, till stonewalled by bureaucracy.

The real challenge was the Constituent Assembly elections. The Election Commission mandated 33% women for the 240 seats in the direct elections fray, the Maoists put up 20% women candidates, while the dominant Nepali Congress and the UML could not find more than 26 women to contest. 191 women sit in the Constituent Assembly as elected members, making up more than 33% of the house. But what makes it even more exceptional is that a substantive number are from the disempowered communities, and are first time political protagonists. However,

in the Cabinet, the Maoists have nominated upper caste, professional and relatively 'elite' women, who nonetheless have been through the furnace of the struggle, Pampa Bushal and Hsila Yami. The Sarala Regmis and the Jayapuiri Ghartis will have to wait.

More importantly, the exigencies of post-election coalition politics and the commitment to consensual policy making has put the makings of a 'New Nepal' on a slow and halting track, especially as the once dominant Nepali Congress is determined to play spoiler. The result is that the priority that should have been given to writing the constitution has been compromised and the locus of policy making has shifted away from the Constituent Assembly to the political bosses and the Parliament. The newly mobilized constituencies could be at a loss.

Despite these contradictions, there have been some promising developments. The Ministry of Law, Justice and Constitutional Affairs has introduced a bill that proposes to amend 14 gender discriminatory laws, including property rights for women. Also a newly-formulated Domestic Violence Bill is on the anvil. Moreover, the draft of the Truth and Reconciliation Bill floated by the former government, excluded rape from the recommended general amnesty for gross violations of human rights. Whether the new government reviews the impunity provisions is unlikely, but women's groups have urged a wider definition of sexual violence. The lack of debate or attention to the issue of widespread SRV in conflict and the importance of locating it as structural violence and post-conflict, addressing its social and economic consequences, is evidence of the pressure to subsume the women's question in the larger struggle for 'New Nepal'. It seems disproportionate or even irrelevant to assert the need for integrating gender perspectives when it takes six months to even form a government.

However, as Nepal's newly-elected Constituent Assembly members turn their minds to drafting a Constitution, it is promising that there is a Woman's Committee that is mandated to examine every bit of policy. In addition there is the inter-party committee as well as a more informal caucus.

Final remarks

When Nepal's Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed in November 2006, widows and missing family members and the displaced were left struggling in the war's wake. Single parenthood, with its financial burdens and social responsibilities, had become much more commonplace in Nepal. Its other side was masses of disempowered poor rural women, mobilized for the first time as political agents

during the People's War, equally determining along with men, the future destiny of Nepal. At the grassroots level, there was a radicalization of the socio-political agenda and experiments in reworking gender relations.

What did it mean to newly-empowered women like Dilmaya Pun, a Nepalese activist of the Chhing village in Rukum? "A lot of change has come among women after the People's War. They have become fearless, clever and capable of speaking against grievances. A political awareness is rising among them. Untouchability has been demolished from the village," she said in an article by Chhetri and fellow journalist, Manju Thapa in *Samaya* magazine on 22 June, 2006.

It's too early to say whether the gendered narratives of Nepal's revolutionary and post-conflict experiences will succeed in challenging some of the fundamental theoretical assumptions developed by feminist scholarship about the marginalization of women in the aftermath and women's mobilization in militarized struggles. Nepal may write a new chapter about the possibility of an emancipatory politics and a transformative agenda flowing from women's participation in authoritarian and militarized struggles for 'freedom'. What is clear is that this is an important agenda for future research.

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IROM SHARMILA'S PROTEST FAST: 'WOMEN'S WARS', GANDHIAN NON-VIOLENCE AND ANTI-MILITARISATION STRUGGLES

Deepti Priya Mehrotra

Abstract

This paper explores contemporary politics of resistance and peace-building in north-eastern India, specifically the state of Manipur. Through the lens of the ongoing indefinite fast by Irom Sharmila, the paper seeks to understand the roots of civilian discontent and possibilities of resistance. The paper places Irom's protest in terms of unique histories of women's movements in Manipur, and examines her location vis-à-vis the theory and practice of Gandhian non-violence. Against the background of spiraling violence fuelled by militarization and insurgencies, Irom Sharmila's stance articulates the popular demands for justice, peace and human rights, and poses a challenge to statist paradigms of development, nationalism and national security.

In India's north-eastern state of Manipur, one woman has engaged in nine years of non-violent struggle, against militarization and the violence that is ravaging her homeland. Irom Sharmila has been fasting for repeal of a specific law that grants special powers to military and para-military forces, enforced throughout virtually the entire state since 1980.

Irom Sharmila began her fast after Assam Rifles personnel shot dead ten ordinary persons standing at a village bus-stop, on 2nd November 2000. This was not the first such atrocity: protected by the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), "Indian security forces have repeatedly committed human rights violations and brutal

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atrocities…. Over the decades, they have committed murders and rapes, destroyed dwellings, subjected people to arbitrary arrests, and humiliated people."[1]

After she sat on fast at Malom village (site of the 2nd November killings), countless citizens, women's groups and human rights workers expressed solidarity with her cause; many of them had been struggling against AFSPA over the years. The official reaction has been to arrest and jail her for a spurious crime: 'attempt to suicide'. Through most of the past nine years, she has been in judicial custody. The state keeps her alive through force-feeding, but has so far failed to negotiate on the issues she is raising.

Here we explore Irom Sharmila's protest in the context of women's activism in Manipur, and the theory and practice of non-violence. The paper places her specifically in terms of the history, and contemporary politics, of women's resistance movements in Manipur, including the two Nupilans (Women's Wars) against colonial exploitation. It also examines her location vis-à-vis Gandhian non-violence, satyagraha and civil disobedience.

Section I

Women's Resistance and Protest Movements in Manipur

Manipur has a rich history of people's struggles, with women at the forefront. Working-class women have formed the backbone of many movements in the state – including the contemporary struggles against militarization and state violence.

Over the centuries, women have held a central position in management of household and agricultural economy, as well as trade.[2] However, they have been oppressed by patriarchal social customs, operating within the family and personal domain. During the past decades, sex ratio, livelihoods and health status has been declining, along with increased trafficking, rape, dowry and related crimes against women. Yet, women continue to play prominent roles in the articulation of public protest,

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[1] Kranti Kumar, "India: Popular Agitation Against Army Atrocities Engulfs the Northeast State of Manipur", *World Socialist Website*, September 15, 2004. Also Kavita Joshi's documentary film, *Tales from the Margins*, 2006; and CNN-IBN documentary, *True Lies*, 2009. Local newspapers *The Sangei Times* and *Imphal Free Press*, and the website http://www.epao.net provide coverage to many of these atrocities.

[2] Chungkham Sheelaramani,"Gender Construction in the Meitei Society," *Quarterly Journal* (23), (Imphal: Manipur State Kala Akademi, February 2007: 34-44; and Narorem Sanjaoba, ed., *Manipur Past and Present –The Ordeals and Heritage of A Civilisation* (New Delhi: Mittal, 1991).

individually and in the collective: "The ancient and medieval period of folk oral literature of Manipuri language was the literature of protest. The protagonist was always a woman... The nucleus of female power in the group form is intact [even today]."[3]

This spirit of female resistance is prominent in everyday life. Particularly within families, especially working class families, caring and mutually respectful bonds exist between women, forming a strong base, facilitating participation in wider public struggles. Irom Sharmila's emergence in public life is a case in point.

Within the Family: Caring and Inspiration

Born on 14th March 1972, Irom Sharmila was the youngest of nine children. Her family is Meitei, the majority ethnic community of Manipur. The family home is in Kongpal Kongkham Leikai (village) at the edge of Imphal city. She grew up in a family which cultivated paddy; women also wove cloth and grew vegetables. Belonging to a working class family, close to nature, with strong cultural roots, local wisdom, and a tradition of respect for women, has been important in shaping her persona, and subsequent politics. Since childhood, she has been connected to material grassroots realities, as well as a bedrock of warm human relationships. This has shaped her perceptions, and the fact that her basic aspirations are articulated in terms of the common good, rather than individualistic goals. Experiencing strong bonds within a wide family, neighbourhood and community, she has tended to develop an inclusive politics.

Early in life, she experienced hardship, and developed resilience, as well as trust in human ability to endure, and prevail. Her mother Shakhi Devi was forty-four years old when she gave birth; she nurtured the growing child with cow's milk, rice gruel, fish and vegetable curries. In 1989, when Sharmila was still in school, her father Nanda Singh, who had worked in the government's Veterinary Department, contracted blood cancer, and passed away.

After completing school, Sharmila joined a course in journalism in the early '90s, began writing articles and poetry, and worked with social organizations like the Blind School for Children, and Universal Youth Development Council. She attended seminars and workshops, coming close to several women's organizations. In 1998

[3] Arambam Ongbi Memchoubi, "The Indigenous Meitei Women," *Quarterly Journal* (23), (Imphal: Manipur State Kala Akademi, February 2007: 1-18.

she attended a course in nature cure and yoga. In October 2000, she took up a month-long internship with Human Rights Alert, a human rights organization, to help conduct an `Independent People's Inquiry into the Impact of AFSPA in Manipur'. Commission members made field visits during 21–26 October, gathering testimonies of victims of human rights violation.[4]

This internship brought Irom Sharmila close to the situation of many victims of violence, providing impetus for her subsequent decision to go on indefinite fast. She took the decision unilaterally, and sought her mother's blessings without disclosing the specific plan, simply saying: "Ima, I am going to do something for the whole nation….." Shakhi Devi gave her blessings, with implicit trust.

By tacit agreement, Shakhi Devi and Sharmila have not met since then. Sharmila explains, "Although she is illiterate, and very simple, she has the courage to let me do my bounden duty…. There is an understanding between us: that she will meet me only after I have fulfilled my mission." Both realize that Shakhi Devi may be unable to bear the sight of her daughter's suffering, and Sharmila in turn may be unable to bear her mother's suffering. Shakhi Devi says, "Sometimes, when I think of her… I feel I will go mad."[5] For her part, Sharmila says, "When the Armed Forces Special Powers Act is withdrawn, I will eat. I will break my fast by eating rice gruel from my mother's hands."

Another woman in her family played a decisive role in shaping Sharmila's consciousness: her paternal grandmother, Irom Tonsija Devi. "Whatever we have learnt, we have learnt from our grandmother," exclaimed Sharmila's brother, Irom Singhjit, one day. "…Sharmila's strength is from our grandmother."[6]

Tonsija Devi (1903-2008) carried memories of people's resistance to imperialism, as fresh as if the events had occurred yesterday. She herself participated in the Second Nupilan or Women's War of 1939, a major anti-colonial struggle. She was born into an ordinary working class family living in Shinzamai Bazar, Imphal. Since 1891, Manipur was a princely state under British suzerainty.

I meet Tonsija Devi, aged 104, in April 2007. When I ask her whether she recalls the Second Nupilan, she narrates, "The price of paddy was 25 paise for about 30

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[4] The Inquiry Commission team comprised Justice H. Suresh (retired, Bombay High Court), Colin Gonsalves, Supreme Court advocate and Director of Human Rights Law Network (HRLN), New Delhi, and Preeti Verma, senior lawyer with the same organization.

[5] Irom Shakhi Devi, Interview, Kongphal Kongkhom Leikei, Imphal, April 2007.

[6] Irom Singhjit, Interview, New Delhi, February 2007.

kilos. All of a sudden the price rose to 3 or 4 rupees. It became impossible for people to buy rice. Rice was sent out of Manipur, while people were starving. Women streamed in from all sides – all the women of Manipur. I was there. We spent days outside the Durbar, and finally we won. The Maharaja ordered the price of paddy to be brought down. So we could all eat, and live as before." [7]

Tonsija Devi's account is confirmed by history books, which provide detailed studies of the two Nupilans. Since early childhood, Sharmila was very close to her grandmother. Surely, a line of influence existed, conveying the spirit of resistance, across the generations.

Nupilans (Women's Wars) and Other Anti-Colonial Struggles

Ordinary women of Manipur had a right to collectively present grievances to the king. In response to women's demand, a king sometimes granted reprieve to a person sentenced to death[8] – a right to clemency probably unique among the peoples of the world. Women often used their right of appeal to correct state policies.[9]

In 1891, the British sentenced two leaders, Bir Tikendrajit and Thangal General, to death. On 13th August 1891, the day scheduled for the execution, 6000 women gathered at Mapal Kangjeibung, the public grounds in Imphal, and appealed for forgiveness. Although British governors were aware of women's special right to plead for clemency, the two leaders were executed at the gallows.

People were angry at loss of sovereignty, the execution of beloved heroes, and imposition of an alien judicial and administrative system. In 1904, women fought the *First Nupilan*. Government issued an order for Manipuri men to go to Kabow, cut timber and rebuild colonial offices and bungalows, which had been burnt down by anonymous persons. Thousands of women demonstrated in Imphal, demanding withdrawal of this order for forced labour. Women vendors led the movement, including Sanajaobi Devi, Leishangthem Kethabi, Dhaballi Devi and Laishram Ningol Jubati Devi. The British tried to quell the agitation, summoning army reinforcements from neighbouring areas, but finally had to withdraw the order.

Meiteis in Imphal valley, and Naga and Kuki-Chin ethnic communities residing in the hill areas of Manipur, rebelled against colonial policies. In 1917–19, Kukis

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[7] Irom Tonsija Devi, Interview Kongphal Konghkhom Leikei, Imphal, April 2007; interpreters Irom Manglem Singh and Irom Singhjit.

[8] Manjusri Chaki-Sircar, *Feminism in a Traditional Society*, (New Delhi: Shakti Books, 1984) 26.

[9] Bimola Devi, "The Changing Role of Manipuri Women," in *Quarterly Journal*, op.cit., 19-31.

rebelled against forced labour recruitment. The Bazaar Boycott Agitation, 1920-21, was followed by the Water Tax Agitation, 1925–32, and the Zaliangrong Movement. In the mid-1920s, a movement in Tamenglong district mobilised people towards Naga unity, against unjust laws, compulsory porterage and exorbitant house tax. Gaidinlieu, a thirteen-year old girl of Ningkhao village, joined the movement in 1928, and took over leadership after the British executed the leader, Jadonang, in 1931. British forces captured her in October 1932 and sentenced her to life imprisonment. She spent most of her life in prison, in the Mizo hills and Meghalaya. After 1947, she spent her last years in exile in Nagaland.[10]

The Second Nupilan took place in response to artificial famine, created by the British policy of exporting paddy which, coupled with hoarding and excessive rain in 1939, led to severe shortages. Women petitioned the British Political Agent for a ban on rice export. In December 1939, a women's delegation confronted the President of Manipur State Durbar, T.A. Sharpe, and forced him to send a telegram to the Maharaja, who was out of Manipur. Leaders Chaobiton Devi, Ibemhal Devi, Tongou Devi and others sat inside the Telegraph Office, while thousands stood vigil outside. By evening, 4000 agitators surrounded the Telegraph Office. Policemen and sepoys attacked the women, about thirty of whom sustained injuries inflicted by batons and bayonets. On 13th December, the Maharaja sent a telegram ordering immediate ban on export of rice, signalling a major victory for the people.

In 1949, Manipur was merged with the Indian union, as a Part 'C' state, creating widespread discontentment. People struggled for recognition as a full-fledged state, while some kept up a demand for self-determination.

Meira Paibis and Anti-Militarisation Struggles: 1980 onwards

Despite becoming a full-fledged state in 1972, life hardly improved for the people of Manipur. In the 1970s women organized themselves as a force against government policy of liberally licensing liquor vends. They formed 'Nisha Bandh' or anti-alcoholism groups, in different parts of Manipur. Walking in groups at night, they carried torches or lanterns, caught drunken persons, and imposed fines. They raided liquor vends and set fire to alcohol supplies.

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[10] When Jawaharlal Nehru visited Shillong in 1937, he met Gaidinlieu in jail and gave her the title 'Rani'. She was imprisoned up to 1947, but even the Indian government did not permit her return to Manipur. She was awarded a pension and kept in Makokchung, Nagaland. Belatedly, in 1972, she was awarded a freedom fighter award, and in 1987 a Padma Bhushan.

From 1980 onwards, these women's groups, dubbed Meira Paibis (literally, women who carry flaming torches) increasingly took up issues related to militarization and military excesses. By this time, insurgency had proliferated. Forced merger with the Indian union in 1949, poverty, unemployment, poor governance and chronic neglect of Manipur by the Centre, drew supporters to the insurgents' side. The state sent in security forces, with a mandate to capture insurgents. Many innocent young men, who had no links with insurgency, were also picked up by security forces, and sometimes arrested and tortured.[11] In May 1980, Chief Minister Dorendro Singh announced that due to deteriorating law and order, he was declaring Manipur a Disturbed Area. Simultaneously, AFSPA was promulgated.

On 14 May 1980, women submitted a memorandum to the chief minister demanding removal of the Disturbed Area clause, and revocation of AFSPA. They held a mass meeting at Mapal Kangjeibung, and formed an organisation called Manipur Nupi Kanglup (MNK). MNK organized a rally on 28 May, at which some 10,000 women gathered, defying a ban on mass meetings.

Meira Paibis patrolled at night to safeguard their communities against search operations by security forces. They set up shelters, called Meira Shanglens, in their localities. Over the years, virtually every community in Manipur developed a strong women's front – for instance the Tangkhul Shanao Lung, Naga Mother's Association, Kuki Women's Association, Lamkang Women's Union, Mayan Women's Union, Chothe Women's Union, Naga Women's Union. These groups became well known as active guardians of their communities, and campaigners for women's rights.

On 11-12 July 2004, Assam Rifles personnel brutally raped and murdered Ms Thangjam Manorama, a young woman of Bamon Kampu.[12] On 15th July, Meira Paibis staged a dramatic protest against this rape.[13] Twelve elderly activists disrobed in public, outside

Kangla Fort, the compound within which Assam Rifles regiments were stationed. The activists carried a long white banner bearing the slogan – *INDIAN ARMY, RAPE US*, and shouted, 'Rape Us, Kill Us, Take Our Flesh'. Meira Paibis explain that often in the past, women have been raped by armed forces in front of family

[11] Ramani Devi, in Gunjan Veda, *Tailoring Peace: The Citizens' Roundtable on Manipur and Beyond* (Guwahati: North-East Network, 2005), 32-33.

[12] "The Merciless Killing of Thangjam Manorama," worldpress.org, 23 July, 2004.

[13] The Meira Paibi nude protest against rape by state functionaries has been analysed by the author, in detail in Deepti Priya Mehrotra, *Burning Bright: Irom Sharmila and the Struggle for Peace in Manipur* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2009), 89-103.

members.[14] Ima Gyaneswari felt that it was a do-or-die situation for Manipuri women.[15] Loitam Ibetombi Devi explained: "Our humiliation was beyond endurance." Another noted, "We have nothing to do with underground organisations. Our struggle is to protect people caught in the crossfire between militants and security forces...."[16] They risked social stigma: for instance, a literateur commented that he is "sceptical about the moral justifiability of the act".[17] However, most people appreciated their action. Elderly women per se, and elderly women activists especially, are generally held in high regard in Manipur. Elderly women are universally addressed as `Ima', literally mother. As Seram Rojesh, a young research scholar and activist, commented, "Today Manipur is alive only because of its Imas". Elderly Meira Paibi activists are popularly perceived as the ones who care, nurture and actively protect the people and the land of Manipur. Motherhood is symbolically associated, in this politico-cultural complex, with an autonomous, pro-people activism.

The Imas' nude protest captured headlines, forcing a response from the state. Sriprakash Jaiswal, Union Minister of State for Home, promised to set afoot a high-level review of AFSPA. The Justice Jeevan Reddy Committee was subsequently set up. However, its recommendation – that AFSPA be repealed – has not been implemented.

Through their action, women transformed themselves from total victims to determined survivors. Their 'ritual of inversion' enabled them to dilute the impact of power and even, momentarily, turn power relations upside down. They put the state on the defensive. Through symbolically enacting collective power, it became possible to gain new perspectives and imagine an enduring struggle that would confront and transform abuse.[18] They inverted the usual patriarchal association of dishonour with women's violated bodies. Rejecting the masculinist definition and appropriation of women's bodies, they moved into a different paradigm, wherein the body is understood as a woman's means of expression – of dissent, anger,

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[14] Gunjan Veda, op.cit., 33-34.

[15] Teresa Rehman, "Who is Ima Gyaneswari?," *Infochange Agenda* (14), (2009): 32-33.

[16] Khelen Thokchom, "She Stoops to Conquer," *The Telegraph*, 25 July, 2004, cited in Khelena Gurumayum, *The Role of Manipuri Women in Crisis Management during the Extension of Ceasefire between the Government of India and NSCN-IM without Territorial Limits* (New Delhi: WISCOMP, 2007), 40.

[17] Ng. Ibodon, "Manipuri Women Today: A Conversation," *Quarterly Journal*, op.cit., 95-104.

[18] Lisa Schirch, *Ritual and Symbol in Peacebuilding* (Bloomfield: Kumarian Press, 2005) has an interesting discussion on the use and importance of symbolic and ritual action by peace-builders.

fearlessness. They converted vulnerability into strength, reminiscent of Sabitri Heisnam's theatrical representation of Draupadi, in Manipuri director H. Kanhailal's play *Draupadi*, in which the protagonist discards all her clothes one by one, screaming out her protest to the men who are her rapists.[19] For this Draupadi, as for the Meira Paibi nude protesters, protest becomes a site for a woman to establish the right to control her body and its symbolic potential, investing her body with her own meanings. The protesters reclaimed their agency and identity as thinking, articulate subjects.

Irom Sharmila: The Power of One, Related to Many

When we place Irom Sharmila in the context of women's activism in Manipur, we recognize her as one point in a continuum. This point is unique: her struggle is unique. At the same time, it is part of a tradition of struggle, of determined dissent. Her individual self is linked integrally to a collectivity. Her struggle is a lone one, yet it emerges from a context of shared convictions; she enjoys the support of many.

Like the twelve Imas, Irom Sharmila reclaims her body: as a means through which to express her agency, ideas, emotions and values. Asserting her right to deploy her body as she sees fit, she has inverted the norm – of eating. Eating daily meals is so basic to human beings, and such a central ritual of human society, that refusal to do so strikes a blow to the whole system. She is enacting, over nine years now, her very own ritual of inversion: original, dramatic and uncompromising. Through this, she has created her own meanings, her own interpretations, reclaiming her right to self-definition. At the same time, her interpretations are accessible to the wider community, and are intended to be meaningful for humanity at large.

She says, "I am not a spirit. I have a body. It has a metabolism." Any harm her body may incur is, in her view, inconsequential. As she puts it, "I have no other power. I do not have economic power, or political power. I have only my self... This is the only way I have to get my voice heard."[20]

Here is a person exercising her right over her body, and her actions. In fasting without end, she has redefined normality: and communicates her message in no uncertain terms. We understand that this person refuses to be quiescent while injustice

[19]Trina Nileena Banerjee,"Written on the Body", *Infochange News and Features*, February 2006, http://infochangeindia.org/200602165625/Agenda/Claiming-Sexual-Rights-In-India/Written-on-the-body.html

[20]Irom Sharmila, Interview, New Delhi, December 2006.

and violence rage all around. She speaks out resistance, literally through every pore of her being. She asserts that it is *not* normal for armed, uniformed men, representing a democratic state, to violate citizens with impunity; nor is it normal to be apathetic and look the other way, pretending all is well, when such violence rages in one's homeland.

In judicial custody year after year, she hasn't allowed anybody to make her taste a morsel of food, or indeed a drop of water. She submits to the tough and uncomfortable regime of the plastic tube. When others express concern about the effect on her physical health, she says, "That doesn't matter. We are all mortal." She practices yoga for several hours a day, and walks in the hospital corridor. Exceptionally close to nature, the work with her body is in harmony with natural rhythms, has ensured her survival and indeed, fairly good health (considering the circumstances).

Reclaiming agency through her self-chosen fast, Irom Sharmila transfigures herself "in the domain of collective suffering", telling "a story of suffering in me for the other". As Sukalpa Bhattacharjee points out, the body here plays a multi-dimensional role. Her body in hospital-prison, incarcerated and monitored, is a "social body that now belongs to the domain of every other suffering self in which Sharmila can participate."[21] Staying alive in an active, performative mode, she has turned her body into a site for "writing her protest", affirming subjectivity and posing a moral threat to statist power.

Section II

Non-Violence, Satyagraha and Civil Disobedience

Most protesters fast only for strategic ends, using this method as a tactical tool.[22] For others, like Irom Sharmila, fasting is an act of 'philosophical non-violence'. It is a means of non-violent expression which trains one's own self, and aims to teach the 'opponent', bringing about a change of heart, a conversion in beliefs, convictions and behaviour.

Sharmila often refers to her fast as 'spiritual'. She accepts and adapts to suffering, deprivation and pain. She claims it is not very hard, since she is doing exactly what she has chosen to – her unique task in the world. As she puts it, "…**How shall**

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[21] Sukalpa Bhattarjee, "Gendered Constructions of Identity in Northeast India," *Eastern Quarterly,* 5(2-3), July-December (2008) on "Gender Studies in the Northeast," 104-114.

[22] Gene Sharp, *There Are Realistic Alternatives* (Boston: Albert Einstein Institute, 2003), 39-48.

I explain it, we all come here with a task to do. And we come here alone." An involved political actor, her task-in-the-world involves influencing and changing people, society and politics.

She sees herself as a symbol of justice, a rational being representing universal truth. Gandhi's struggle for swaraj, while aiming to establish self-rule, was also a quest for universal truth – a search for the underlying commonality that unites human beings.[23] The underlying rationale behind Gandhi's frequent fasts, which were part of his life-long 'experiments with truth', was an aspiration to control the senses and emotions, rather than be controlled by them; simultaneously, they were meant to have a beneficial impact upon other people, thus vitally affecting society and polity.

Irom Sharmila's fast is of course political, but at the same time is rooted in her spiritual quest. She says, trying to translate into mundane language the deeper mainsprings of her actions, "I have not succeeded so far in my aim. It means that I have to purify myself. God is experimenting with me…. I have to cleanse myself first."[24]

Gandhi identified certain 'vratas' or vows as integral to a non-violent social order. These include ahimsa (non-violence), satya (truth), asteya (refrain from stealing), brahmacharya (celibacy or restraint), asangraha (non-accumulation), aswad (control of the palate), abhaya (fearlessness) and sarvadharma sambhav (love for all religions).[25] Irom Sharmila is living most of these precepts. In particular, she practices aswad – the use of food as a means of sustenance, not for gratification of the taste buds. She demonstrates abhaya, absence of fear of anything, including physical harm or death.

> *People sometimes remark that rather than 'languish' in jail, Irom Sharmila should give up her fast, and join the 'active struggle for change'. We recall the Gandhian claim that non-violence is an active force, not passive: active even when we sleep, for it works through the human heart. It is the law of humanity, just as violence is the law of the brute. Non-*

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[23] Thomas Pantham,"Post-Relativism in Emancipatory Thought: Gandhi's Swaraj and Satyagraha," in *The Multiverse of Democracy*, ed. D.L. Sheth and Ashish Nandy (New Delhi: Sage, 1996), 210-229.

[24] Irom Sharmila, Interview, February 2007, New Delhi.

[25] L.M. Bhole,"The Gandhian Model of Nonviolent Social Order", in *Nonviolence: Contemporary Issues and Challenges,* ed. Mahendra Kumar (New Delhi: Gandhi Peace Foundation, 1994), 273-283.

> *violence is a weapon of the strong. It implies an ethical choice, balanced against expediency. Most practitioners of non-violence could access other means, including brute force. Yet they consciously reject the option, and strive to attain non-violence, a perfection involving great discipline. As Gandhi put it*, "One person who can express ahimsa in life exercises a force superior to all the forces of brutality."[26]

Irom Sharmila is basically a law-abiding citizen – akin to Gandhi, Thoreau, Martin Luther King or ung Saan Suu Kyi. Satyagraha, non-cooperation and civil disobedience are based on the logic that if rulers are unjust, citizenry can – and in fact, should – refuse to cooperate. While satyagraha implies resistance to injustice by the force of Truth, non-cooperation is refusal to fit into an unjust system; and civil disobedience is the active and open defiance of unjust state laws.

Civil disobedience comes into play after authorities fail to respond to people's appeals, petitions and memoranda. Involving principled resistance to the wrongdoing of those in power, it is integral to the process of fully establishing and upholding a democracy. So long as practitioners of civil disobedience are non-violent, and willing to pay the penalty when they violate an unjust law, they are abiding by the country's Constitution. Their violation of the law is specific, limited, and deliberately designed to achieve a higher aim: significant improvements in laws, policies and politics of the nation.

Irom Sharmila is a practitioner of non-cooperation and, indeed, civil disobedience, for she is openly breaking one law, even as she protests for the withdrawal of another. In following the dictates of her conscience, she has become an 'outlaw'. While the authorities treat her fast as an infringement of law, she perceives AFSPA to be infringing a higher law.

By disobeying unjust laws, conscientious objectors expose such laws to public scrutiny. Thoreau saw principled resistance as a duty of the righteous citizen: "Under a government which imprisons any unjustly, the true place for a just man is also in prison."[27]

Socrates violated the law when he taught young people to think for themselves, and ask questions. The state arrested, jailed, and sentenced him to death. Although

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[26] M.K. Gandhi,"*A Talk on Non-violence*," Harijan, (March 14, 1936), M.K. Gandhi, *Non-violence in Peace and War,* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1942), 154-157.

[27] Henry David Thoreau, cited in J.B. Kripalani, "Civil Disobedience," in *Facets of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol I: Non-violence and Satyagraha*, eds. S. Mukherjee and S. Ramaswamy (New Delhi: Deep and Deep, 1994), 63-73.

associates urged him to escape, he accepted punishment, drinking the cup of hemlock with equanimity. He died, yet his voice was not silenced. In Platonic dialogues, Socrates argues that although he seems to break the law, in reality he is obeying a higher law, that of his conscience.

Aung San Suu Kyi speaks of fearlessness, and the "supremacy of moral force over force based on the might of arms and empire"[28]. Although Suu Kyi's party won national elections in 1988, the military regime keeps her in isolation, and crushes dissent. Yet in September 2007, Buddhist monks broke the deadly silence and led over 100,000 people in peaceful street protests. The junta cracked down on monks and lay activists, but worldwide, governments spoke out, asking Myanmar to democratize its institutions.

Clearly, non-violence is not ineffective. Nor is it a weapon of the weak: rather, it is a weapon used by "the stoutest hearts".[29]

Irom Sharmila adds, about the future: "I do have hope. My stand is for the sake of truth, and I believe truth succeeds eventually. God gives me courage. That is why I am still alive through these artificial means…."[30]

Means and Ends: Vision of a Just and Peaceful Social Order

Irom Sharmila's anti-AFSPA stand draws critical attention not only to the need to protect our democratic rights and civil liberties, but also, at the same time, to devise alternative developmental paths – emphasizing dignified livelihoods for all, environmental protection, cultural integrity, and plurality. Underlying is the urge towards transformation in political thinking, policy and approach. She notes, "In Manipur there is no development. There is no industry. Everything is imported. Earlier we had rice in plenty, but now we do not grow enough for our needs. There are no jobs. For any job, a large bribe has to be paid. My campaign is for the right kind of development. The politicians are not thinking of development. They are very corrupt. When I thought of taking this step, it was to change the trend in politics...."[31]

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[28] Aung San Suu Kyi, "May We Go Forward in Disciplined Strength," speech delivered on 10 February 1995.

[29] M.K. Gandhi,"Theory and Practice of Non-violence," *Young India*, (December 31, 1931), in M.K.Gandhi, *Non-violence in Peace and War*, op.cit., 148-153.

[30] Irom Sharmila interviewed by Kavita Joshi, September 2005. Quoted by Kavita Joshi, '"My Fasting is a Means; I Have No Other"', in *Infochange India News and Features*, November 2006.

[31] Irom Sharmila, Interview, 7 November 2006, New Delhi.

Her stand against AFSPA is also a direct challenge to patriarchal ideology, which normalizes high levels of violence against women. This ideology flows into hyper-masculinist, militaristic mentality, which glorifies practices associated with war and military. When soldiers rape 'the enemy's women', it is valourised as the ultimate victory. Armed forces deployed in the North-East use violence and abuse as weapons of control, symbols of humiliation and threat to local communities.[32] In Manipur, use of violence is justified and glorified by the state as well as by several insurgent groups; today there are over thirty underground groups, with armed militias. 'Counter-insurgency' laws like AFSPA have actually resulted in a multiplication of insurgent underground groups, and their increasing adoption of violent methods.

Irom Sharmila's response to the escalating violence is a determined non-violent protest. Rather than take up arms, she is simply taking an unshakeable stand, and through it, helping build up **solidarity**: the power of the powerless.

Nationally and internationally, Irom Sharmila has been hailed as a defender of human rights. The National Alliance of People's Movements, a network of over 200 movement groups in India, has extended support to her cause. In March 2007, the United Nations Committee for Elimination of Racial Discrimination advocated that the "draconian" legislation of 1958 be replaced with "a more humane act". The United Nations Human Rights Committee has noted that AFSPA is incompatible with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), ratified by India in 1979. In May 2007, citizens of Gwangju, South Korea, awarded Irom Sharmila the Gwangju Human Rights Award. She used the prize money to set up a foundation for peacebuilding work, called `Just Peace Foundation'.

At the local level, alongwith Meira Paibis and Apunba Lup, a network of thirty-two civil service organisations, Irom Sharmila is at the centre of people's movements for peace and justice. On 10th December 2008, International Human Rights Day, Manipuri women began a continuous relay hunger strike in Imphal, rallying around the slogan, 'Save Sharmila, Repeal AFSPA', coordinated by 'Sharmila Kanba Lup' (Save Sharmila campaign).

On 7th March 2009, when Irom Sharmila was released, Meira Paibis and others received her, and an emotional Sharmila said, "I come back to the arms of my mothers, the mothers of Manipur." Elderly Meira Paibi leaders such as Ima Ramani, Ima Mongol, Ima Taruni, Ima Momon and Sitara Devi often refer to Irom Sharmila

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[32] Anuradha Chenoy,"Militarisation, Conflict and Women in South Asia," in *Women and War Reader*, ed. Lois Lorentzen and Jennifer Turpin (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 101-110.

as their daughter. Sharmila joined protestors at the relay hunger strike; she spoke to them about corruption in the administration, and the need for women to take part in decision making. "She did not sleep for long during the two nights. She spent the time talking to us. Her courage and stamina are beyond our imagination," said P. Sumita Devi, a Meira Paibi leader. On 9th March, police commandos came and re-arrested her.

On 10th March 2009, a delegation submitted a memorandum to the governor demanding that Sharmila's life be saved, AFSPA repealed, and peace and harmony restored in the state. Ima Janaki, Convenor of Sharmila Kanba Lup, announced that along with continuation of the relay hunger strike, their stir would be intensified with street corner meetings, posters and pamphlets. The demand for removal of AFSPA from Manipur was extended to demanding removal of AFSPA from the entire North-East.

Every day 30 to 50 women fast at the site, PDA Complex, Porampat, near JN Hospital where Irom Sharmila is interred. The women come from different places in Manipur – for instance Wangkhei Meihoubam Lampak on 27th September 2009; Khurkhul Apunba Nupi Chaokhat Lup on 1st October; Kwakeithel Leimajam Leikai Nupi Lup on 6th October (301st day of the relay-hunger strike); and Kha-Nongpok Apunba Lup on 4th November.[33] This is an amazing demonstration of public opinion, articulated in united action by thousands of peace-loving citizens. On 4th November 2009, marking the beginning of the tenth year of Irom Sharmila's fast, supporters gathered at the site included writer Mahashweta Devi from West Bengal, lawyer-activist Dayabai from Madhya Pradesh, Father Augustine from Kerala, filmmaker Kavita Joshi from New Delhi and many others. A Festival of Hope, Peace and Justice was organized in Imphal by Just Peace Foundation, 2-6 November, with inter-faith prayers, protest theatre, music, films, photo-exhibiton and public lectures. Literateurs, musicians and the university community joined in, and even religious heads – of faiths including Hindu Vaishnavite, Christian Baptist and Catholic, Muslim and Buddhist – openly voiced their solidarity with Irom Sharmila and the need to withdraw AFSPA.

Clearly, many people are sensing an urgent need to establish democratic processes in the state of Manipur, and are trying to bring this about through democratic means. Irom Sharmila's fast is motivating others to join in the effort.

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[33] "Relay hunger strike enters 301st day", *Hueiyen News Service*, October 6, 2009; "Sharmila Stir", *The Sangei Express*, October 1, 2009; "Hunger Strike", *The Sangei Express*, September 9, 2009; and http://www.epao.net during September-November 2009.

Section III

Some Insights and Implications

Sharmila's protest clearly has continuities and discontinuities with earlier, as well as contemporary, forms of women's activism in Manipur. While she is one figure in a wide spectrum of protests, she occupies a unique place. She belongs to no one group, party or organization: yet is respected by many. The cause she has taken up is important to ordinary citizens, democratic and human rights workers, feminists and peace activists. By applying the method of fasting, to attract attention to the cause, she is contributing in a very special way.

She does not talk about being a woman. Being a woman is intrinsic to the way she is, and is important in shaping her being and her politics, but her political and spiritual goals are articulated in terms that transcend gender. She couches her goals in universal terms, seeing herself as a symbol of justice. Her specific personal trajectory including family has influenced and formed her, and her identity is rooted in being Manipuri, yet this in no way detracts from the universal relevance of her vision. Her vision has elements of liberal democratic thought, strands of socialist and radical; she may be said to be continuing, in a sense, the anti-imperialist struggle which remained incomplete in 1947. At the same time, Irom Sharmila is rooted in a specific locale, which is rich in social, cultural and cosmological dimensions, which she is committed to helping preserve.

The impact of her action certainly does have implications for gender. She has built an identity that goes well beyond any ascribed gender roles or stereotypes. She is respected widely, by women and men, for the universality and nature of her protest. This is despite her youth, and unmarried status, which is unusual among Manipuri women activists, who are quintessentially 'Imas'. Initially, innuendos were made by detractors, but these have never gained circulation or prominence. This may pave a way for younger women to enter politics: many see her as a youth icon, and her independence of spirit and decision-making makes her exemplary. 29-year old Agatha Sangma, Member of Parliament, articulates this, when she acknowledges empathy and deep respect for Irom Sharmila.[34]

In jail, Irom Sharmila has been growing spiritually: "she is not the same Sharmila who began the fast".The experience has been changing her. She is reading literature

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[34] Agatha Sangma, speaking at book release of *Burning Bright: Irom Sharmila and the Struggle for Peace in Manipur,* New Delhi, September 5, 2009.

from various spiritual traditions, building up inner resources and strength, to cope with her situation.[35]

Irom Sharmila's indefinite fast is taking forward the theory and practice of philosophical non-violence, and creating space for re-formulating the isues at stake. Her non-violent stance confirms that ignoble means cannot bring about noble ends, and indicates the relevance of non-violence in the contemporary world. Non-violence is, arguably, a necessary accompaniment to any politics aiming at peace, justice, ecological protection, clean governance and people-oriented economic development.

Non-violent practice exerts an ethical force, which inspires others too to work towards radical personal, social and political transformation. Her example urges others to clarify and articulate their visions – and act according to their deepest convictions. It is a tough politics, which accepts that personal suffering may be a necessary concomitant to meaningful social transformation.

[35] Lokendra Arambam, speaking at book release, ibid, New Delhi, September 5, 2009.

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GENDER VIOLENCE, CONFLICT, INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT AND PEACEBUILDING

Swarna Rajagopalan

Abstract

The overlay of conflict, displacement and gender violence is altogether so traumatic as to beg the question: is true, sustainable peace possible where the experience of gender violence is both widespread and deeply embedded? A discussion about gender violence and peace-building takes us back to very old questions about peace and justice, which this essay explores by summarising what we know about gender violence, conflict and displacement.

In the last year, South Asians have had to face up to a long-standing reality – that thousands of people are displaced within their country because of circumstances they cannot control – as a consequence of an upsurge of fighting in two conflicts, the Sri Lankan Army's campaign against Tiger strongholds and the Pakistan Army's campaign against the Taliban. Displaced persons flee violence, but continue to experience violence in flight and beyond. Displaced women and children particularly are vulnerable to physical abuse and sexual exploitation, both of which leave wounds that smart throughout a life.

Can peace coexist with any kind of violence in society? What does the persistence of gender violence portend for the prospects of ending conflict and building peace in any context? Persons displaced within their own country as a consequence of conflict represent an important constituency and factor for peacebuilding; how does the increased experience of violence by women and children, even men, in their numbers predispose them towards any post-conflict dispensation?

Swarna Rajagopalan is a political scientist, with a special interest in gender and security issues. She is the co-editor (with Farah Faizal) of *Women, Security, South Asia: A Clearing in the Thicket* (New Delhi: Sage, 2005) and has otherwise written prolifically on this subject for academic, electronic and mainstream media. Based in Chennai, she works as an independent scholar and consultant. She is also the founder of Prajnya Initiatives.

What is Gender Violence?

"Gender violence," "gender-based violence," "sexual violence" and "violence against women" are used interchangeably in everyday discussions. However, they are not exactly co-terminus and it is useful to differentiate between them.

Violence against women refers to violence experienced by women that singles them out by virtue of their gender, and it may be sexual violence or other physical violence. The new Indian law on domestic violence extends the understanding of violence beyond the physical and sexual to include verbal, emotional and economic abuse. Sexual violence may or may not be actually physical; street sexual harassment (euphemistically described as 'eve-teasing') and workplace sexual harassment illustrate this.

"Gender-based violence" is defined by Judy Benjamin and Lynn Murchison as "violence that is directed at an individual based on her or his specific gender role in a society."[1] The use of the term gender instead of women signals several things. First, it acknowledges that women, men, gay and transgender individuals experience this kind of violence. Second, gender violence can take any form and includes sexual violence but is not limited to it. Dowry harassment is gender violence, so are honour killings, pre-natal sex selection, forced marriage and trafficking. Finally, it imports the feminist view that such violence expresses nothing more or less than the desire to control another person or community. Gender hierarchy articulated through gender violence becomes the vocabulary through which other forms of social and political control are asserted, established, consolidated and maintained.

The use of 'gender' rather than 'women' allows us to connect gender violence to other forms of violence in society. Making this connection is the first step to taking violence that is perpetrated by individuals against individuals (no matter whether family, clan, culture or community offer the pretext) into the public sphere and building a political and policy agenda around its elimination.

Bringing up the rear in the social hierarchy of a predominantly patriarchal world, however, more women and girls experience gender violence than do men or sexual minorities. Therefore, the slippage between gender violence and violence against women in everyday parlance as well as in academic and political writing is largely a reflection of the world as it is.

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[1] Judy A. Benjamin and Lynn Murchison, *Gender-Based Violence: Care & Protection of Children in Emergencies: A Field Guide* (Save the Children, 2004), 3.

Those of us that campaign against gender violence are often asked: Is this still a problem? Is this very common? The short answer is: yes. UN reports regularly state that at least one out of every three women around the world has been beaten, coerced into sex or abused in their lifetime; moreover, a very small percentage ever tell anyone about that experience.[2] Cutting across class, caste, community, age or any other variable, human beings experience gender violence on a scale that for any other kind of disease would be considered pandemic proportions.

Gender violence is facilitated among other factors by patriarchal social hierarchies including male child preference; by the acceptance of violence as a mode of social interaction and political interface; by socio-economic inequality; by easy access to guns; and by a breakdown of norms and social structures. Many of these conditions obtain during conflict and displacement. What are the prospects for peace-building given that conflict and then displacement increase the incidence of gender violence manifold? Moreover, what would it take to build peace in the circumstances?

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in South Asia

When you take into account that internal displacement is a function of conflict, disasters and development projects, then, even leaving out other forms of forced migration such as trafficking, we can say that the number of internally displaced persons in South Asia is extremely large, even if we cannot provide an authoritative figure.

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre estimates that at least 26 million people were displaced at the end of 2008.[3] South Asia alone has around 3 million of these, distributed as in Table 1.0.[4] Women and girls make up the majority of those internally displaced, it is commonplace to say. But one of the challenges of working in this field is that both the aggregate numbers and the gender disaggregated percentages are estimates – at best, these numbers are thus indicative of the scale of the problem.

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[2] See *Gender Violence in India 2009: A Prajnya Report* (Chennai: Prajnya Initiatives, November 2009), http://www.prajnya.in/gvr09.pdf.

[3] Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, *Global IDP estimates (1990-2006)*, 2008, http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/(httpPages)/10C43F54DA2C34A7C12573A1004EF9FF?OpenDocument&count=1000

[4] Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, *Global statistics: IDP country figures*, 2009, http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/(httpPages)/22FB1D4E2B196DAA802570BB005E787C?OpenDocument&count=1000

Table 1.0: IDPs in South Asia

Country	Estimate
Bangladesh	60,000-500,000
India	At least 500,000
Nepal	50,000-70,000
Pakistan	1.25 million
Sri Lanka	Over 300,000

The numbers are also likely to be much higher in reality. Typically news reports cover flight after conflict or disasters. Displacement as a result of development projects whether it is infrastructure construction like roads or dams or the purchase of land for setting up special economic zones, is largely undocumented. What we know is that cities across the subcontinent take in vast numbers of displaced persons who need to find new homes and new livelihoods. Informal settlements house them, outside the administrative and legal purview of municipal authorities.

We live with the knowledge of internal displacement but like many other forms of deprivation and disenfranchisement, we learn over time not to see it – here the 'we' refers both to the policy-making elite and to the voting/agitating public, an intersecting set.

It is important to note that because they do not cross a border, there are no international treaties or conventions that protect IDPs. Moreover, international organizations working with other displaced populations are at a disadvantage working to provide for the needs of the internally displaced. The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement are not legally binding and states may or may not use them as a reference point in framing their own policies and actions. In the absence of laws or frameworks based on the Guiding Principles, the internally displaced are by and large not recognised as a population with special needs.

Gender Violence and Internal Displacement

Judy El-Bushra identifies four important questions to ask concerning gender and forced migration (of which internal displacement is a variety): "the impact of interventions on processes of social change, the management of camps for refugees and displaced persons, sexual violence against women and the implementation of international conventions and guidelines on the rights of (especially women) refugees

and IDPs."[5] The experience of gender violence actually cuts across all these questions. [6]

Neither flight nor other forced migration allows an individual the luxury of moving with their property or community. Moreover, international norms on evacuation posit a hierarchy of needs, with the sick and wounded evacuated first, followed by women, children and elderly.[7] Adult and young men and boys are left behind, vulnerable to fire as well as recruitment.[8] The result is that women outnumber men in most conflict displacement contexts.

Broken families may be further decimated in the course of flight. Landmines, bandits, abduction, trafficking, illness turning fatal due to lack of medical facilities and separation en route contribute to decimating an individual's support structure. Adolescent and little girls are most vulnerable in these circumstances to sexual abuse and exploitation, to abduction and sexual slavery by militias and to forced marriages.[9] Adult women too, however, face similar threats. It is very hard for women and children to stay safe from gender violence and sexual predators when their social support network has been shattered.

The word 'refugee' conjures up images of camps segregated from the host country's mainstream and camp conditions that are definitively sub-human: cramped quarters that women and children sometimes live with strangers; long walks beyond the settlement to collect firewood for fuel; lacking enough, decent, accessible toilets and needing to walk in the dark to use a distant, common toilet in order to have privacy; shortages conspiring to make sex currency for those seeking rations; desperate parents selling or trafficking some children to take care of others.

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[5] Judy El-Bushra, "Gender and Forced Migration: Editorial," *Forced Migration Review* 9 (2000): 5.

[6] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Sexual and Gender-Based Violence against Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: Guidelines for Prevention and Response* (2003). On page 20, the report charts the different kinds of gender violence experienced at different stages of the refugee cycle.

[7] R. Charli Carpenter, "'Women and Children First': Gender, Norms, and Humanitarian Evacuation in the Balkans 1991–95," *International Organization* 57 (2003): 681.

[8] There is a variation to this tale. Amena Mohsin describes the homesteading role of mothers who stayed behind to hold on to their property in the middle of the 1971 war following which Bangladesh was founded. See, Amena Mohsin, "Silence and Marginality: Gendered Security and the Nation-State," in *Women, Security, South Asia: A Clearing in the Thicket*, ed. Farah Faizal and Swarna Rajagopalan, (New Delhi: Sage, 2005), 134-153.

[9] See *Refugee Girls: The Invisible Faces of War* (New York: Women's Refugee Commission, 2009) and *Untapped Potential: Adolescents affected by armed conflict* (New York: Women's Commission for refugee women and children, 2000).

Opportunities for gender violence abound: from sexual harassment, molestation and rape to trafficking and forced marriage to honour killings. In the name of protection, the community is more likely to place limits on a woman's mobility and agency than to alter the conditions that facilitate violence.

Many refugees live outside camps and almost all internally displaced persons do. This is why their movement to camps in Sri Lanka has seemed more like interment than temporary settlement. Where they are not in a structured setting, displaced persons face three important disadvantages: they cannot avail whatever relief supplies are being distributed; their presence, experiences and problems remain undocumented within relief networks and support services; and finally, they are dispersed and separated from others who might have fled with them, shared their experiences and formed the kernel of a new support network for them. The willingness to reach out to rebuild community depends on whether an individual is able to communicate with those around her and whether she thinks they will remain in the same place for a while.

IDPs suffer the same ruptures and traumas as refugees but because they do not leave their country, there are no special regimes or dispensations for them. They must continue to be governed by the same laws, share in the same pie and face the same civil rights challenges as they did before displacement but without the emotional security of belonging to a place or the political security of being native. The *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* enjoin governments to protect women and girls, both by safeguarding them from gender violence as well as assuring their rights.

The political equivalent of not having a social support system is not having a voice in the political dispensation of your host location. A displaced person, even within her own country, may not have a vote in the constituency to which she has moved. She will not have address and identity proof. She will not own property there. A displaced woman or girl who experiences sexual violence has nowhere to lodge a complaint and seek justice. This compounds the impunity enjoyed by perpetrators of gender violence within that society. She is much more vulnerable in the new location but has the same level of protection from the judicial system as before.

Impunity is a serious issue in most contexts when it comes to gender violence. But in the context of the IDP experience it has even more disastrous consequences. Impunity as a function of the absence of applicable, relevant laws as well as the lack of enforcement capability is relatively easily addressed. But those who commit atrocities against IDP communities enjoy impunity for two other reasons: IDPs fall between the cracks of protection extended to 'locals' and to foreign 'refugees' and

quite often, it is those in charge of their protection that are responsible for sexual exploitation and other forms of gender violence. Knowing their chances of being punished are virtually nil, emboldens potential perpetrators, and knowing they will not get justice, reduces victims and survivors to silence about gender violence. Impunity has thus been described as "the second wound of rape."[10]

Sometimes, during a crisis, women and girls take on non-traditional roles, exercise agency in both everyday matters as well sometimes as camp-related matters, have access to education and health care that was earlier unavailable to them. This could be a function of circumstance with men and boys having stayed behind, been recruited into fighting or having been killed or injured, or even a function of particular relief schemes by international or non-governmental agencies. This is intrinsically positive. However, there are certain conditions in which this positive change boomerangs on the very sections it is intended to empower.

First, interventions that leave men and boys disengaged and alienated are as detrimental in the long run to gender equity as those overlooking the needs of women and girls. Simon Turner describes camps in Burundi where men find themselves sidelined, first, because relief programmes restore to women agency they are said to have lost during the conflict, but which they might never have had; then, by virtue of UNHCR being better placed to provide for their families than they are; and finally, with younger men taking on responsibilities for the community because they learn new languages faster and are mobile.[11] Violence is often a response to other feelings of powerlessness and alienation, and interventions that empower women while sidelining men facilitate the use of violence as a control mechanism. In fact, elsewhere in the same article, Turner's interlocutors saw in their camps a situation of "moral decay," where: "Women were becoming prostitutes, men were polygamists, divorce rates were going up and young men were marrying old women."[12]

Gender Violence and Conflict

Insofar as women got a look in on traditional narratives and conventional analyses of conflict, they were victims or potentially vulnerable members of society.

[10] IRIN Web Special, *Our Bodies – Their Battle Ground: Gender-based Violence in Conflict Zones* (2004), 14, http://www.irinnews.org/pdf/in-depth/GBV-IRIN-In-Depth.pdf.

[11] Simon Turner, "Vindicating Masculinity: The Fate of Promoting Gender Equality," *Forced Migration Review* 9 (2000): 8-9. See also Catherine Brun, "Making Young Displaced Men Visible," *Forced Migration Review* 9 (2000): 10-12.

[12] Simon Turner, ibid., 8.

Thus, they had to be protected. Wars were fought in the name of their protection and of all the property belonging to the male members of society, they were to receive protection on a priority basis, along with children. Women whose agency was recognized were so rare as to form the subject of story and myth – an Boadicea or Lakshmibai here, a Florence Nightingale there or a St. Joan of Arc or Durga.[13]

The narrative of victimhood is a feature of traditional histories of war and international relations that feminist abhor. Writing about gender violence, however, it is hard to deny the victimhood of women. It is hard to ignore the vulnerability of women and children. We meet feminist critiques of traditional international relations part of the way by acknowledging that men also experience gender violence, sexual violence in particular. Neither agency nor victimhood is the monopoly of men or women.

In times of conflict women, and in some cases men, experience gender violence which exacerbates the general, common impact conflict has on people in general: death, injury, bereavement, displacement, loss of property and loss of livelihood. Combatants on either side use sexual violence as a part of their battleplan.[14] In any case, militarised societies experience, and absorb, higher levels of violence. The conflict environment effectively provides opportunity and impunity for violence that would have occurred anyway, but is almost facilitated by the circumstances.

Rape has been a part of violent conflict through human history but scholars have come to recognize the systematic, planned acts of rape – often gang-rape, carried out before witnesses, intended to subjugate and humiliate – during conflict as a separate category, sometimes described as genocidal rape. A securitization act, this points to rape's profound impact on both the individual who is raped and her/his community.[15] Rhonda Copelon however, argues that this view, somewhat reflected

[13] Boadicea, an English queen from the early Christian era, led her troops in rebellion against their Roman conquerors. Lakshmibai, the dowager queen of Jhansi, fought with rebel troops against the British in 1857. Lakshmibai's contemporary, Florence Nightingale attended to the wounded during the Crimean War (1854-6), creating a new identity and respect for nursing as a profession. Joan of Arc was a young French peasant who rallied French troops against an invading English army in the first part of the fifteenth century. Durga is a form of the Indian mother-goddess, and as such epitomizes primal energy.

[14] Jennifer Turpin, "Many Faces: Women Confronting War, in *The Women and War Reader*, ed. Lois Ann Lorentzen and Jennifer Turpin (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 4-7.

[15] "Securitization" is a concept developed by international relations theorists of the Copenhagen School. It captures the idea that when something is labeled a 'security' issue, it is taken out of the realm of ordinary politics and policy-making and placed in a discursive realm where there is less openness and more discretionary power to act. Securitization works when we accept such removal and relocation of a subject. The canonical text on this is Barry Buzan, Ole Waever and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Press, 1997).

in international law, not only allows rape to be invisible once more and obscures its gendered dimension, it also obscures the reality that war rape shares characteristics in common with gang-rape and marital rape.[16] Writing about girls in conflict zones, Carolyn Nordstrom asks, "..would we as readily accept the physical and sexual abuse of children in war if child prostitution did not flourish in many countries, if domestic violence and incest were not tacitly allowed simply because these crimes are very difficult to formally uncover and prosecute?"[17] The same question applies to adult women as well.

In addition to being recognized as gendered violence during the conflict, rape should be recognized as including all forms of sexual torture, humiliation and violence that women and men experience, beyond just vaginal penetration. Antjie Krog writes that South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission had to contend with terms of reference that did not include rape but just "severe ill-treatment" and South African law that defined rape "as occurring only between a man and a woman and involving the penetration of the vagina by the penis."[18] The absence of a comprehensive category left no room for testimonies about rape to be specifically recorded as such.

Women activists appear, by all accounts, to be singled out for particularly brutal treatment.[19] In addition to underscoring their subjugation in custody and humiliating them, it appears that sexual violence against women activists is designed to diminish their political significance and their agency. Lois Ann Lorentzen paraphrases Ana Guadalupe Martinez, an activist from El Salvador, saying while sexual violence was their main suffering, "Constant references to rape and sexual abuse were the most demoralizing aspect of imprisonment.."[20] In Krog's very moving article, she writes about many factors contributing to silence on the part of otherwise vocal women – the kind of humiliation, a culture where some vocabulary was meant to

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[16] Rhonda Copelon, "Surfacing Gender: Reconceptualizing Crimes against Women in Time of War," in *The Women and War Reader*, ed. Lois Ann Lorentzen and Jennifer Turpin, (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 64, 75.

[17] Carolyn Nordstrom, "Girls Behind the (Front) Lines," in *The Women and War Reader*, ed. Lois Ann Lorentzen and Jennifer Turpin, (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 86.

[18] Antjie Krog, "Locked into Loss and Silence: Testimonies of Gender and Violence at the South African Truth Commission," in *Victims, Perpetrators or Actors? Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence,* ed. Caroline O.N. Moser and Fiona C. Clark (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 2001), 206.

[19] Antjie Krog, ibid., 203-206.

[20] Lois Ann Lorentzen, "Women's Prison Resistance: Testimonios from El Salvador," in *The Women and War Reader*, ed. Lois Ann Lorentzen and Jennifer Turpin, (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 197.

be private – and the invisibility of their pain. Krog writes, quoting South African activists who shared their experiences with her:

> *"Female premiers, ministers, business women – they all kept silent. Some of them had been tortured, some of them raped. All of them are formidable women. Yet they did not come forward. They did not speak. 'How can I?' one asked me. 'The police force is my provincial portfolio. I don't want to know that when I address them, that they look at me thinking…' Some gave other reasons: 'The day I became involved in the struggle I made a choice and I fully understood the consequences of it.' …'I didn't tell a single soul about it. I don't want them to pity me. I don't want them to call me names.'"*[21]

Related to rape is the idea that forcibly impregnating women can help wipe out a community. Children in most societies are thought to inherit the ethnicity of their father; when raped women give birth to the enemy's children, they are seen as contributing to the destruction of their community. The humiliation is a bonus for those who choose this strategy, which has been used in conflict settings as different as Sarajevo, Rwanda and Bangladesh.

Conflict zones offer a facilitating environment for gender violence of all sorts. Conflict, especially but not just protracted conflict, transforms society and culture irreversibly; militarization is one example. Anuradha M. Chenoy defines militarization as "the process that emphasizes the use of coercive structures and practices."[22] Militarization and its attendant ideology, militarism can pervade institutions, structures and behaviours in times of peace as well, and both are underpinned by patriarchy and ideas about masculinity. As Chenoy puts it, "Militarism is part of the wider web of social relations between state and society, between groups, and between men and women."[23] Rita Manchanda affirms, "Cultural violence against women gets magnified as conflict promotes macho values which legitimise misogyny."[24]

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[21] Antjie Krog, op. cit., 205-06.

[22] Anuradha M. Chenoy, "Militarization, Conflict, and Women in South Asia, in *The Women and War Reader*, ed. Lois Ann Lorentzen and Jennifer Turpin, (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 101.

[23] Anuradha M. Chenoy, ibid., 108.

[24] Rita Manchanda, "Where are the Women in South Asian Conflict?" in *Women, War and Peace in South Asia,* ed. Rita Manchanda (New Delhi: Sage, 2001), 18.

Gender violence, especially prostitution and domestic violence, becomes more common in the context of militarization and militarism.

Cynthia Enloe's work has consistently highlighted the twinning of a military presence with prostitution.[25] American bases in the Asia-Pacific and the use of women by the Japanese army from minority and conquered groups as 'Comfort Women' are well-known examples, but they are not the only ones. Prostitution, the capture of women by troops for sexual slavery and the barter of sex for food and other essential supplies are known to happen beyond the contexts of established bases and occupying armies. In recent years, peace-keepers and peace-builders have also been accused of sexually exploiting women in the communities where they are located.

More invisible yet more pervasive, the presence of conflict correlates positively to increasing levels of domestic violence.[26] This is attributed to two factors. The first is that weapons are more easily available in times of war, especially if there are demobilized combatants in the household. Notwithstanding the rhetoric of those who defend the right of individuals to bear arms, the fact is that when weapons are available, they get used against whoever is present and vulnerable.[27] The second factor, in Rita Manchanda's words, is that, "Men compensate for their loss of power by hitting out at women."[28] This is true both in the conflict and post-conflict phase. Powerlessness comes from several factors: the loss of livelihood and home; injury; being displaced; and the experience of subjugation at the enemy's hands.

For women, the breakdown of social networks due to conflict is an important reason why they are so much more vulnerable in times of conflict. In a sense, conflict creates opportunity and impunity together – an opportunity-impunity window, we might say. Sexual harassment, exploitation, trafficking, forced marriage, domestic

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[25] Relevant works by Cynthia Enloe: *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Relations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); *The Morning After: Sexual Politics at the end of the Cold War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women's Lives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); *Globalization & Militarism: Feminists Make the Link* (Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007).

[26] A really good summary of lessons from the field is available at Helpdesk Research Report: Conflict and sexual and domestic violence against women, Governance and Social Development Centre, Birmingham, Date: 01/05/09, http://www.gsdrc.org/docs/open/HD589.pdf.

[27] See Amnesty International, *The Impact of Guns on Women's Lives*, (ACT 30/001/2005, 2005), http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ACT30/001/2005.

[28] Rita Manchanda, op.cit., 18.

and intimate partner violence and rape are all more common in conflict situations than before or after. But there are two kinds of impunity that really make this possible. The first is that with broken or separated families and extended community networks, there is no one to challenge gender violence. Parents, siblings, neighbours, cousins – that network, if it were a protective one, is likely in disarray. But even more there is a climate of impunity that works at multiple levels. First of all, the rhetoric of hostilities sometimes sanctions gender violence, as we have seen. It may not always be organized or on a large scale, but where there is sanction for violence against the other community it extends also, maybe especially, to gender violence.[29] Secondly, conflict's end raises the challenging of building peace over a recent history of bitter hostility. Truth commissions and war crimes trials may or may not recognize gender violence as a separate category of crimes. But impunity really comes with the promise of political amnesty. For all gender violence committed in the name of conflict, amnesty is available as it is for other political acts.

The full import of the opportunity-impunity window is illustrated by an example from South Africa, where the post-apartheid amnesty extended to sexual violence when it was a part of ethnic cleansing. Antjie Krog writes that men were claiming to have raped girls for political reasons and this was so common that a neologism was coined to indicate the rape of girls "who seem to be doing their own thing."[30]

Reading academic research and field reports about gender violence during conflict is disturbing and haunting. Voices and stories stay with the reader long after the research is done. For those who experience this brutality and who live with violence and its memories, how much harder must it be to imagine, to build and to live peace?

Conflict + Displacement + Gender Violence = The Road to Peace?

> *"'When I look around, I marvel at how we battle to be normal – and no one knows how shattered we are inside.' "*[31]

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[29] On gender violence in the Bosnian conflict, see Darius M. Rejali, "After Feminist Analyses of Bosnian Violence," 26-32; Cynthia Enloe, "All the Men are in the Militia, All the Women are Victims: The Politics of Masculinity and Femininity in Nationalist Wars," 50-62; and Vesna Nikoliè-Ristanoviè, "War, Nationalism, and Mothers in the Former Yugoslavia," 234-239, all in *The Women and War Reader*, ed. Lois Ann Lorentzen and Jennifer Turpin, (New York: New York University Press, 1998).

[30] Antjie Krog, op.cit., 207.

[31] Antjie Krog, ibid., 205-6.

The overlay of conflict, displacement and gender violence is altogether so traumatic as to beg the question: is true, sustainable peace possible where the experience of gender violence is both widespread and deeply embedded?

We pose this question in an international climate that has changed considerably to accommodate gender concerns and recognize women's experiences. The conflict in Bosnia drew the attention of the international community to the systematic and strategic use of sexual violence during war. The Rwandan genocide underscored this reality. The terms of reference for the International Criminal Tribunals established to investigate and try war crimes in both those cases, recognised rape as a crime against humanity. The first convictions from these tribunals were followed by the recognition in 2000 of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, which advocates an active role for women in peace processes and peace-building while also calling on concerned authorities to take measures to protect women and girls from gender violence. In 2008, the Security Council passed another resolution, this time specifically expressed concern about the continuing, even rising, sexual violence perpetrated against women in conflict zones, and called for protection, prevention and an end to impunity. In just a year, Resolution 1888 followed, reiterating concern and this time calling for a Special Representative to coordinate efforts to respond to victim's needs.[32] It would seem that we live in an age where the relationship between the pervasiveness of gender violence and prospects for peace-building has finally been recognized. However, although the same principles and conventions apply to all conflicts, conflict-displacement situations and peace-building processes, these do not always follow the pattern of negotiated ceasefire, mediation, treaties, trials and punishment.

Far too often, as these resolutions recognize, justice is delayed, ergo, denied. Victims of gender violence have to wait not just for justice but for negotiations about what processes must obtain and what amnesties will be granted. The internally displaced depend not on these special tribunals or processes for justice but the workings of the local legal system. By the time a specific case comes to court, the victim may have had to relocate again, the perpetrator may have been killed or displaced and evidence which is hard enough to gather in peacetime, may simply not be available.

Identity politics and the identification of women's bodies with the identity and prestige of a community are at the root of much of the gender violence that people

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[32] You can access the full-text of the United Nations Resolutions through WomenWatch, *Women and Armed Conflict*, Directory of UN Resources on Gender and Women's Issues, http://www.un.org/womenwatch/directory/women_and_armed_conflict_3005.htm

in conflict zones and the conflict-displaced face. Equally, time and again, in response to the question, "What drove women to join this or that rebel movement?" one hears that they did so either to avenge gender violence or because rape did not leave them anywhere else to go. A grave concern relating to gender violence, conflict and displacement is the long-term legacy of lingering trauma and memories. In our time, this memory is also kept alive through photography and film, used or evoked over and over again in our popular media and arts. Communities remember not just the sexual violence experienced by their members, but also those who chose 'death over dishonour.'

Amnesties are thought to foster reconciliation, but in the case of gender violence, they simply create an uneasy denial. Physical and sexual abuse leave the victim with a sense of betrayal, with mental health challenges like depression, with lowered self-esteem – all of which predispose them to expect and accept abuse. For the conflict-displaced, other losses exacerbate this alienation. Where do they belong? To what rights and protections can they lay claim? Who will speak for them?

The terms of a peace settlement are the foundations of the post-conflict polity. While the international community has recognized the insidiousness of gender violence and the importance of including women in the peace process, these general principles do not always translate into concrete measures. Will gender violence be investigated and tried during the post-conflict transition? Will new institutions reflect the gender-sensitivity of the international regimes that address them? Will the new post-conflict polity begin by providing justice to the large number of women that will have surely experienced gender violence during conflict and displacement? Will it treat gender violence during conflict as a different beast from gender violence in 'normal' times, treating one as unremarkable and the other as heinous? A peace settlement and post-conflict dispensation which do not take seriously the impact of gender violence on people's lives and psyches, would make for a dispensation that reinforced the distrust and alienation of those who survived the violence to live within its jurisdiction.

> *"Few women testified about rape, and fewer named the rapists. It was as if the rapist and the raped were working together in bizarre collusion."*[33]

As you think about this and glance across a map of the world, you find scarcely a corner where conflict has not increased the incidence of gender violence or caused displacement, nor an instance where displacement has not created such insecurity for women, girls and boys.

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[33] Antjie Krog, op.cit., 207.

This discussion about gender violence and peace-building takes us back to very old questions about peace and justice. Justice requires truth and reconciliation is facilitated by amnesty. Truth about gender violence hangs in the air – who perpetrated violence, when, where, how – haphazardly investigated and ignored out of discomfort. If punishment is seen as divisive, lack of punishment can snowball into a desire for revenge. Punishment is also justice. And yet, what can punishment fix for a person who has been forced into marriage or raped (or both)?

Peacemakers often prioritize the need for reconciliation and healing over punishment that cannot repair. Denial and silence add disempowerment to trauma, forgiveness coming more easily when the abuse and violence have been directed mostly at women. The new understanding of the post-conflict era is predicated on victims' tacit consent to silence.

We are left searching, once again, for a middle path. Peacebuilders have to contend with this moral dilemma that reconciliation can come at the cost of justice for those who have been wounded. Lawmakers must seek the delicate balance between ending impunity and not allowing it to descend into blame-games and campaigns for revenge. Social activists must facilitate a climate where those who speak out are neither glorified as a sop for their subsequent neglect nor ostracised for having survived violence to tell the tale. A social contract depending on denial and silence about gender violence or violence against women is an imperfect social contract with a short life-span. It is also unjust, asking of (mostly) women and girls, that they turn a blind eye to violence on a scale that would be unacceptable in any other demographic. Gender violence is a messy, painful reality that, ignored or condoned, can undermine the best-negotiated settlement and best-drafted constitutions.

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THE RESTRUCTURING OF MASCULINITIES AS A DYNAMIC IN WAR AND PEACE

Judith Large

Abstract

The author argues that 'Gender' as an area of research and action should be understood as belonging to men and studies of masculinity, as well as to women and feminist studies. The use of gender analysis for the formulation of development and peacebuilding policy is at a critical stage, in which capturing the dynamic of inter-relationship is crucial to building healthy and peaceful societies and futures. At the same time, it is becoming increasingly evident that laws and discourses pertaining to gender are central to the self-definition of political groups and, indeed, signal the political and cultural projects of movements and regimes. In particular, recent '(re) masculinisation' in war policy and behaviours shows how masculinity can be reconstructed, in this case highlighting the 'warrior' but in a new global landscape of extremes. This is cause for concern and warrants further research for informed response.

Over the past few decades great strides have been made in 'mainstreaming gender' for development, relief and conflict transformation work; the phrase generally a reference to making visible the perspectives, needs and roles of women. This is significant and important, for it can be argued that for a long time these specific issue areas were marginalized or neglected in policy and practice.[1] Gender is at once a broad social and political issue, (frequently seen through lenses of participation, power, rights and/or status issues) and also an intimate and personal question of identity, role models, values and interpersonal behaviours. Each

[1] See the Chair's Summary, *Peacebuilding Commission Working Group on Lessons Learned Gender and Peacebuilding: Enhancing Women's Participation,* 29 January 2008. www.un.org/.../peacebuilding/.../WGLL290108GenderPBCSummary.pdf

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individual human being is born into a physical body which will 'gender-determine' how they are received and what is expected of them socially and culturally; at the same time pursuing their own growth and experience of sexuality and personal identity. The 'givens' in society – who wields power, who makes decisions, models of what men do and what women do – will colour aspirations and expectations.

A growing field of research documents how men and women behave in, and are affected by war and collective violence. We know that in liberation wars, women frequently fight alongside men. It is clear that laws and discourses pertaining to gender are central to the self-definition of political groups and can signal the political and cultural projects of movements and regimes.[2]

Contradictions and complexities, of course, are a constant feature. The Maoist campaign in Nepal, for example, advocated a platform of gender equality as part of its resistance to feudal monarchy. Yet after the comprehensive peace agreement in Nepal it became evident that actual inclusion of women in informal and formal decision-making and/or official roles was far from the norm. The United Nations advocates for women at the negotiating table for peacemaking and passed Security Council Resolution (SCR) 1325 to support this (2000), but finding meaningful implementation is difficult. More recently in 2008 SCR 1820 was agreed upon. This resolution addresses the severe, negative impact of sexual violence in conflict zones, as a profound security issue in itself.

We also know that in the discourse of many ideological struggles, women are relegated to symbolic roles of those who need protection, and as the birthing/bearer mothers of future fighters. They symbolize an idealized, weaker collective entity for which men fight, but may in the course of that fighting also become victims of sexual violence and rage.

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[2] Too neat a categorisation of 'men's business' and 'women's business' in armed conflict is deeply problematic. First, the complex question of gender becomes an over-simplified one which focuses solely on gender roles, giving the impression that these are static. Denying the 'male' roles that women take on in times of crisis; for example, the combatant roles which women have taken alongside men in liberation struggles (including those in Algeria, Zimbabwe, Aceh, the LTTE in Sri Lanka, and other) could be seen as an integral part of the processes by which women are often relegated to less-than equal socio-economic and political roles when war is over. In Aceh for example, many female former Free Aceh movement, *Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* (GAM) combatants returned to their villages in shame to relative invisibility after the conclusion of a negotiated agreement. During the war in former Yugoslavia, in newly independent nationalist Croatia and Serbia, a previous constitutional commitment to women's equality under socialism gave way to a conceptualization of women as the bearers of sons to fight for nationalist struggles.

Serious gender analysis takes into account the interplay of class, caste and familial relationships, seen against a backdrop of broad structure and power dimensions which determine hierarchy and mobility in society. Generally, feminist critiques define militarism as masculine, and development practice has taken the concept of 'gender' and applied it with a primary focus on women. That women's positions, interests and choices are influenced by their gender is widely recognized. The fact that men's situations and agency are similarly gender-influenced is less understood. The theme of domination, central to studies of patriarchy, is also relevant to subordinating hierarchies within masculinity itself, as vividly portrayed Robert Saviano's study of the Neopolitan Camorra.[3] It is increasingly recognized that men are also victims of rape and physical intimidation during war (the latter subject remaining nearly taboo).[4] 'Gender' as an area of research and action should be understood as belonging to men and studies of masculinity, as well as to women and feminist studies. This paper will first explore the possibility of 'multiple masculinities' which may challenge previously held monolithic views, to demonstrate the fluidity of identities and gendered interactions in society and more specifically in war. It will then raise questions about the global narrative and iconography/presentation of violent conflict during the first decade of this still new millennium. Very specifically it will interrogate possible mirroring of polarities in the're-masculinisation' of war.

The author is mindful of the myriad of localized struggles set in specific contexts where men and women experience violence: inter-communal, against the state or by the state, or become caught between opposing armed forces which take their toll. This paper will focus rather on whether there is a cosmopolitan meta-narrative which transmits and fixes influential messages and images, and whether these in turn impact on a 'currency' of given interpretation.

'Multiple masculinities' refers here to cultural differences; to varieties of interpretation of masculinity within a given society; and to the way images and modern global messages portray specific or dominant gendered themes and 'performance' which in turn influence the behaviour and choice of those who view them.

[3] Robert Saviano, *Gomorrah: Italy's Other Mafia*, trans., Virginia Jewiss (London: Macmillan, 2008) .

[4] Note the pioneering work of Chris Dolan, for example "Collapsing Masculinities and Weak States: A Case Study of Northern Uganda" in *Men, Gender and Development*, ed. Frances Cleaver (London: Zed Books, 2002).

The notion of cultural difference in the shaping of masculinities is not new.[5] In 2005 Jani de Silva published a seminal work, *Globalisation, Terror and the Shaming of the Nation: Constructing local masculinities in a Sri Lanka Village* [6] De Silva calls her work ‘an anthropological study of a particular kind of violent act – that which unfolds in a spectacular way – which took place in a Sri Lankan village’. Her focus is the abduction of twenty-two schoolboys from their homes by masked gunmen in late 1989; boys who were taken to an army camp, tortured and killed. By giving this event a localised context in time and place, with detailed, painstaking analysis, she ‘explores the troubled nexus between globalization, acts of terror and the local construction of a new generation of masculinities in South Asia’. With an approach reminiscent of Paul Richards (1996) *Fighting for the Rain Forest,*[7] she sheds light on behaviours we often find inexplicable. Part of her analysis rests on a detailed exposition of ancient and modern Sinhala masculine patterns and norms, in contrast to contemporary Western constructs of masculinity. The latter (revisited by scholars seeking to understand the break-down in laws of war and codes of military behavior [8]) was informed by ritual notions of valour and honour as in the custom of the ‘dual’ and notions of oppositional victory and defeat.

De Silva points to a different kind of masculine culture. Historically, ‘in the absence of a martial nobility and valour-ridden codes of honour…agrarian values of material prosperity came to signify intrinsic human worth…the notion of status replaced

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[5] Studies and stories abound, including personal narratives of being uprooted from one culture to another with the identity issues this brings. For contrasting introductions to the theme, see: Ravindra Rukhmini Pandharinath, Harish Sadani, S.N. Mukund and V. M. Geetali, eds. *Breaking the Moulds: Indian Men Looking at Patriarchy Looking at Men* (Delhi: MAVA and Purush Uvach, 2007);

Thokozani Xaba, “Masculinity and its Malcontents: The Confrontation between ‘Struggle Masculinity’ and ‘Post-Struggle Masculinity’ (1990-1997),” in *Changing Men in Southern Africa*, ed. Robert Morell (Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press: 2001);

Heather Ellis and Jessica Meyer ed., *Masculinity and the Other: Historical Perspectives* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2009). See www.c-s-p.org/Flyers/978-1-4438-0151-5-sample.pdf. See also the work of Sikata Banerjee, such as “Armed Masculinity, Hindu Nationalism and Female Political Participation in India: Heroic Mothers, Chaste Wives and Celibate Warriors,” *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 8 (1) (March 2006): 62-83.

[6] Jani de Silva, *Globalisation, terror and the shaming of a nation: constructing local masculinities in a Sri Lankan village* (Victoria, B.C. Canada:Trafford Publishing, 2005).

[7] Paul Richards, *Fighting for the Rain Forest. War, Youth & Resources in Sierra Leone* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1996 and Oxford : James Currey publications, 1996). Richards refutes the thesis of the ‘new barbarism’ by offering a detailed analysis of why young men resorted to war, as rebels or soldiers, and puts behavious in context for new insights.

[8] Michael Ignatieff, *The Warrior’s Honour: Ethnic War and the Modern Conscience* (London: Vintage Press,1998).

that of honour (becoming) the defining trait of Sinhala hegemonic masculinity. Status however, is conveyed through a certain sedateness of bearing which did not lend itself to violence or to practices of risking the body.' Violence, if needed, was relegated to others lower in rank, in a male hierarchy built on deference rather than assertiveness, where status could not be openly contested and shaming rituals aimed at humiliating opponents.[9]

Attributes regarded as 'masculine' and 'feminine' can be possessed by either women or men, and are not fixed either between or within societies. Women's and men's gender identities and behaviour fluctuate and change in response to external forces, including colonization, globalization, and armed conflict. The socialisation of boys and young men is of vital importance in understanding the causes of conflict, allied to a recognition of the structural factors which are creating conflict in resource-poor situations or conditions of gross inequality. Thus de Silva offers a comparative framework extending to Northern Ireland, asking what factors contributed to the need for boys to become 'hardmen' (able to fight physically) and how this evolves to 'gunmen' – where the gun does the killing almost regardless of physical prowess. The notion of the 'hardman' carries with it toughness and physical prowess, at its best translated in to heroism. Its negative extreme however, veers towards what has been called essentialist 'patriarchal masculinity' which comes at a cost:

'Patriarchal masculinity cripples men. Manhood as we know it in our society requires such a self-destructive identity, a deeply masochistic self-denial, a shrinkage of the self, a turning away from whole areas of life, the man who obeys the demands of masculinity has become only half-human... To become the man I was supposed to be, I had to destroy my most vulnerable side, my sensitivity, my femininity, my creativity, and I had to pretend to be both more powerful and less powerful than I feel'.[10]

A central question can be: how is it that young boys today in Somalia, Italy or Northern Ireland – whose great-grandfathers lived male identities where poetry, music and song were considered attributes – will today opt for hardmen and gunmen identities? In Somalia recitation of oral traditions and original poetry was for generations central to male stature and respect. In Ireland the art of story-telling, music making and song have long been important for men. Folk traditions of southern Italy draw on the music of shepherds who used pipe and organetto playing to pass

[9] op. cit. de Silva 27 and 235.

[10] Roger Horrocks, *Masculinity in Crisis: Myths, Fantasies, and Realities* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1994), 25.

the time; and the songs of agricultural workers who sang as they toiled in fields and orchards. Love songs and serenades used poetry to woo future brides. Some of these distant, pre-urban memories survive in the art form of Italian opera, but are a far cry from generalized men's behaviours today. More often work and livelihoods demand being tough, and competition is strong for success and material reward. City streets are recruiting grounds for young men, where music and song are now coded as feminine in a patriarchal world. In Saviano's analysis the Italian Camorra functions not merely as a challenge to the state, but as a masculine, transnational, political entity in its own right, functioning both beyond and regardless of national governance.

In political theory it is argued that the State holds legitimate monopoly on violence and the use of force. Traditionally a standing army carries this function and role. The public display and potential or actual use of weapons is an intrinsic part of violent, militarized models of masculinity. If and when the State carries little legitimacy or relevance; or if longstanding grievances are not met and political agency is denied, one recourse is to demonstrate manliness through taking up weapons: "The specific 'message' conveyed by the display and use of weapons is dependent on the social and cultural environment….weapons are part of one notion of masculinity, a militarized view that equates 'manliness' with the 'sanctioned use of aggression, force and violence'. Weapons are used as status symbols but also as tools to achieve economic and social gains, wielding power over unarmed males and females. This can often be linked to a crisis of masculinity, when there is a 'fear of loss of male power and privilege' through social transformations, leading to a backlash in which 'traditional' gender roles are reinforced. The construct of the male warrior/protector relies on the suppression of others–" [11]

In 1990's civil wars such as those in Somalia, Sudan, Yugoslavia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, and the Philippines featured both gunmen as rebels and resistance or freedom fighters, but also mass media coverage of the effect of war on civilians, notably through displacement, forced migration and casualties. Globally this was an era of political disintegration, which also featured high profile humanitarian response. Armed violence, the political aims and victims of war featured in news coverage and response strategies. The sheer numbers of civilian casualties shocked and mobilized 'humanitarian' response on a new scale, and civil society groups organized around meeting the needs of victims as well as advocating for ways to end war. New activism exposed sexual violence and rape as a crime of war. Human

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[11] See Henri Myrtinnen, "Disarming Masculinities" ms1.isn.ethz.ch/serviceengine/.../06_ Disarming+Masculinities.pdf –

rights groups from Bosnia to Aceh documented mass graves and summary executions, and a new wave of community based groups and non-governmental organizations organized for response to the needs of victims and an end to injustice. Internationally, the image of national armies (male warrior/protectors) was extended to a new articulation of 'humanitarian intervention' meant to emphasize rescue, provision of assistance for the needy, and redress of injustice. While these claims in themselves warrant close scrutiny, they retained a resonance at the end of the last century.

Global Iconography

During the past decade the discourse has radically changed. Localized resistance movements and civil wars remain, all over the world. But global communications and mass media seem to have 'locked in' a vivid polarity between the developed world with its armies and high-tech weaponry, and a 'lesser-developed' realm of ideological warriors who are taking on not only a specific state but a world order itself. Within both the (West) USA and the (East) settings of jihadist groups, religious extremism has increased with comparable re-subordination of women – whether within US Christian evangelical circles or on the streets of Kabul. Whereas the threat of risk to its own civilian victims (following the 11 September, 2001 twin tower attack) was used to justify the US declared 'war on terror', the conduct of that war has meant disruption and death for thousands of other civilians who remain somehow invisible.

Nominally many national armies now feature women as well as men soldiers. In an eerie reversal of gender stereotypes, the Abu Ghraib prison torture revelations of 2004 featured a woman inflicting sexual humiliation on male prisoners in Iraq.[12] The worst type of excessive masculine domination behaviour was replicated, for all the world to see, by a female soldier. Doubtless thousands of women serve in the military with ethics and constructive demeanor, but it remains that the image of Lynddie England made a strong imprint of masculine soldiering behaviour devoid of honour. Honour is a quality most national militaries strive for, to build an ethos of respect and professionalism. However, the simple fact is that national militaries in the West find it increasingly difficult to recruit soldiers. Meanwhile the appeal of honour through religious dedication or commitment to purist anti-imperialism can recruit warriors informally, regardless of national borders and the limitations of state governance.

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[12] The *Taguba Report* on the Treatment Of Abu Ghraib Prisoners In Iraq. Article 15.6 'Investigation of the 800th Military Police Brigade' news.findlaw.com/hdocs/docs/iraq/tagubarpt.html

Ironically, notions of 'warrior' masculinity are highly visible in western mass culture. The urban warriors of today, whether dedicated to street crime, corporate profit, or sheer fashion awareness may be seen wearing military-style designer clothes and driving in luxury versions of military vehicles such as Land Rovers or Humvees. Camouflage patterns are a feature of clothing available to all income brackets, for both men and women. But the risk of putting real soldiers 'in harms way', felt acutely in Western capitals, contrasts sharply with the jihadist willingness to die for a cause. This risk has been mitigated in two pronounced ways: by recourse to the rapid rise of Private Military Security Companies PMSCs, and by substituting unmanned technology for solider to soldier combat.

The history of companies like Blackwater (now known as Xe) is based on the private commodification of heavy battle-ready 'real men' whose toughness can literally be bought for battle and defense purposes. The exponential rise in their use is striking, as per the fact that in 2007 their presence as part of the occupation of Iraq was estimated to be close to 200,000 in comparison to the 160,000 uniformed personnel of national militaries occupying the country. [13]

The ethical, governance and economic implications of PMSCs are profound. The image they present is of the modern warrior with ruthless expertise in 'taking out' 'targets' and offering highly armed defence. Scholar Paul Higate thus points to the extreme masculinity portrayed by, and indeed performed by PMSCs: 'It is not simply that PMSCs have become increasingly important to how conflict is managed, but crucially - in contrast to regular militaries - their activities remain largely unregulated and their personnel almost entirely unaccountable. When seen alongside the perpetration of human rights abuses by a not insignificant number of private military contractors - including most notoriously the shooting of 17 unarmed Iraqi civilians in Najaf in September 2007.... it is possible to suggest that PMSCs represent a key moment of (re)masculinisation in the contemporary period.'[14]

Higate argues that the curiosity of critical scholars of gender 'should be sparked since the mobilisation of thousands of men trained in violence who go on to work in spaces of legal exception is a unique phenomena that can, at times, exacerbate

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[13] "Bush's Shadow Army," *The Nation,* 4/2/2007 By the end of Rumsfeld's tenure in late 2006, there were an estimated 100,000 private contractors on the ground in Iraq – an almost one-to-one ratio with active-duty American soldiers. See review of Jeremy Scahill's *Blackwater: The Rise of the World's Most Powerful Mercenary Army* (New York: Nation Books, 2008).

[14] Paul Higate, "Putting Mercenary Masculinities on the Research Agenda", *Working Paper No. 03-09 Dept. of Politics, University of Bristol UK*, quoted by permission, www.bristol.ac.uk/politics/workingpapers/03-09phpaper.pdf -

the insecurity of those vulnerable populations forced to host them'.[15] All over the world the private military industry engages men and masculinities in the buying and selling of force protection and offensive-defensive security.

According to Singer and Highgate[16] PMSCs draw on a workforce of men from the majority and minority worlds. U.S. or British-run companies in Iraq tend to recruit veterans of elite forces including the Special Air Service (SAS), the Special Boat Service (SBS), the U.S. SEALS, Delta and Rangers. Global inequality is reflected within PMSC structures, given the contrast between elite forces and men who are known as 'Third Country Nationals' (TCNs – not the host country, not the occupying coalition countries) who are poorly paid, poorly equipped, and lack high quality training. We see a new international male hierarchy where workers recruited by Middle Eastern labour brokers come from countries such as Bangladesh, Nepal and the Philippines and do menial work for Private Security Companies, such as cooking, serving food and cleaning toilets. Other contractors provide soldiers from countries such as Fiji and Uganda and Latin America, who more often undertake high risk physical protection and military support duties. No accountability mechanism exists for public information, so the generally unreported deaths and injury of many hundreds of private military contractors does not reflect on the governments or policies of the US and UK.

PMSCs provide lethal but low-profile functions, carried out by human beings who are not seen or acknowledged. In a surreal reality the same principle of lethal invisibility applies to the use of drones for attacks in the Afghanistan/Pakistan 'theatre' of war. Here is a high-tech, secret weapon, massive robotic bullets (the symbolic phallic shape is inescapable here) which require no pilot, only remote control. Referring to the CIA, a New York Times article states that 'For the first time in history, a civilian intelligence agency is using robots to carry out a military mission, selecting people for killing in a country where the United States is not officially at war'.[17] Those people include the innocent, the men, women and children who are in the wrong place at the wrong time, and their numbers are mounting.

The development of this extraordinary programme is documented by Steve Coll in his book Ghost Wars, which contains chapters and headings like ''Blood Brothers'

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[15] Ibid., 4.

[16] Ibid., 10, and Peter Singer, *Corporate Warriors: the Rise of the Privatised Military Industry*, (Ithaca,NY: Cornell University Press, 2005).

[17] See *Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) - Predator Drone* -4 Dec 2009 topics.nytimes.com

and 'You crazy white guys').[18] He traces its development from the early 1990s, originally as an arial robotic intelligence gatherer relying on satellite networks for visual and sound transmission. X2 Predator spy planes were used in Bosnia and Kosovo in the 1990s – at 27 feet long and costing $4.5 million apiece. It was but a short step to armed Predators as unmanned killer attackers which could penetrate targeted spaces with no immediate risk to their 'pilots' who sit in front of screens and operate controls miles away.

The US military now includes 7,000 unmanned drones.[19] In April 2009, a Lahore newspaper *The News* published figures provided Pakistani officials indicating that 687 civilians have been killed along with 14 al-Qaeda leaders in some 60 drone strikes since January 2008 – just over 50 civilians killed for every al-Qaeda leader.[20] What Coll depicted the Ghost Wars are now open warfare, i.e. what was Covert in the 1990's is now Overt, with fatal implications for civilians. It surely makes a mockery of proclaimed 'hearts and minds' approaches, however much they are believed in and acted upon by genuine soldiers.

Mirroring Polarities and Extremes

National armies have traditionally drawn on a soldiering base consciously defined through acts of bravery, heroism and sacrifice – sons and daughters of the nation who take on the traditional role of Protector and Defender. In the current deep cleavage of global war, the notion of heroic protection is presented but at the same time undermined. The picture given is that of conflict between the US led staunch defenders (of self-proclaimed democratic and neo-liberal ideals) and ideological, (oft-cited religious or 'Islamist') radicals who would tear down the secular order and build something different. We may well ask whether religious nationalists on both sides of the divide invoke masculine divinity to justify actions of war, mobilizing around the perceived or proclaimed violation of sacred place. Here is spectacle which portrays exclusively male violence with the power to deliver death, (just as maleness can also 'deliver' life); an elevation of violence over diplomacy; a blurring of lines between the criminal and the political. It has serious implications for other long running, protracted conflict sites as per Israel/Palestine, internal struggles in Yemen, the Horn of Africa, or within South Asia itself. If violent models of masculinity are hegemonic, what chance is there for considering justice, human

[18] Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: the Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to Sept 10,* 2001 (New York: The Penguin Press, 2004), 522-524.

[19] www.brookings.edu/articles/.../11_robotic_revolution_singer.aspx –

[20] www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/KF17Df01.html

security, peaceful social change or the protection of the weakest (men, women and children) in society?

The 're-masculinisation of war' is evident in a myriad of uncomfortable features which appear to echo each other across a manufactured divide:

- The glorification of manly force and killing evident in both the macho PMSC swagger and the zealous bearded, robed warrior.
- The sanitization of death through invisible PMSC casualties (and heroes' funerals for the fallen from national service) on one side, and glorified suicide or jihadist sacrifice on the other.
- One side accusing the other of subjugating women, while the other counters with accusations of defiling and corrupting women.
- Battle by stealth, whether the high-tech drone or the low-tech lone assassin or bomber.
- Marginalisation of the victims, the social cost, the grief and internalization of memory, rage and despair created by indiscriminate violence in communities.
- Invisibility of Women's Constituencies and Voice on either side.

The current re-masculinisation of war captures mass media attention, glorifies macho aggression and creates potential legacies for reaction throughout the future. This sharp polarization of enemy images, coupled with fear, grievance or singular idealism, brings new followers of the same behaviours, replication of fixed 'us' and 'them' attitudes. In a visual wave from the west, USA or UK through Europe, the central Balkans and eastward, through to Asia and southward, in Thailand or Indonesia, local bus journeys show Rambo-style action films with strong heroes, reactive violence and instant deaths. Computer screens and games throughout the world pick up on similar modeling for boys and girls to 'play'. Meanwhile, the narrative of war in mass media broadcasting conveys men fighting, and bombing, and controlling other men.

But it also obscures the specifics of context and experience in specific, localised conflict sites, each with its own particularities: history, people, poverty, displacement, competing narratives of claim and counter-claim, injustice, or identity, tactics, aspirations, struggle and counter-struggle. Perhaps the scholar and the practitioner need to point out that a smokescreen is in place; that listening, analysis and clear observation are needed if we are to find a way out of a quagmire of competing

forces. Perhaps it is possible to re-instate women, men who opt for non-violence, non-combatants/those who suffer from armed aggression, are disabled or dislocated by war; ethical security policies; engagement and diplomacy; and to eventually temper the use of brute force. To do this we must ask what lies behind such extreme presentation; what is shaping this 'given' polarity; and what are the missing intersections between extreme acts of war and the warrior-self, between fighter and brother, sister, wife, parent, child. We must challenge the hegemonic, re-masculinisation of war.

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MASCULINITY AND TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE: AN EXPLORATORY ESSAY

Brandon Hamber

Abstract

In recent years, there has been a growing focus on including women in transitional justice processes. Some scholars question whether transitional justice mechanisms take obstacles for women, such as ongoing domestic violence, into account. This article follows this line of inquiry using the prism of ongoing violence against women in South Africa. It focuses on masculinity, and questions the degree to which masculinity, and violent masculinities in particular, are considered in transitional justice studies. The article calls for a nuanced understanding of masculinities and their relationship to transitional justice, and sets parameters for a more concerted study of the subject.

Introduction

The capacity of transitional justice mechanisms to prevent violence, develop a human rights culture or generally contribute to human security in societies in transition has not been thoroughly evaluated. Questions remain regarding the impact of learning about and documenting human rights violations, for example via a truth commission[1]. There is little empirical evidence to demonstrate that lessons from transitional justice processes are generalised to the prevention of other types of violence, such as that based on gender in the wake of political conflict.

Acknowledgement

This essay was first published in the International Journal of Transitional Justice, Vol.1, 2007, 375-390. It is reprinted here with the permission of Oxford University Press.

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Such questions risk overloading transitional justice mechanisms with aims that are beyond their influence. Yet, societies emerging from conflict face a plethora of issues of security, social exclusion and poverty that extend beyond the conventional political arena. A broader view of justice that embraces social justice seems necessary. With regard to gender in particular, a more comprehensive analysis of transitional justice – one that takes 'intersectionality'[2] into account – is needed.[3] Christine Bell argues that we should not try to make a feminist notion of justice fit transitional justice processes but rather ask how transitional justice helps or hinders projects to secure material gains for women.[4] Meanwhile, the roles of men and of masculinity as cross-cutting themes within such a debate are largely unexplored.

This article is intended as an exploratory essay on masculinity and transitional justice. It aims to set parameters within which a more concerted study of the subject could be undertaken. The article questions the degree to which violent masculinities in particular are taken into account in societies in transition and in the study of transitional justice. It begins by outlining some of the key literature on masculinity. It then addresses the debate in South Africa, where the literature on masculinity is burgeoning, and uses the South African case as a prism to raise questions about the relationship between transitional justice and violent masculinities. It calls for a nuanced understanding of masculinity within transitional justice debates.

The article concludes with four key points relevant to a new theoretical and research

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[1] Tristan Anne Borer, ed., Telling the Truths: Truth Telling and Peace Building in Post-Conflict Societies (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006); Brandon Hamber, '"Nunca Más" and the Politics of Person: Can Truth Telling Prevent the Recurrence of Violence?' in Telling the Truths: Truth Telling and Peace Building in Post-conflict Societies, ed. Tristan Anne Borer (Indiana: University of Notre DamePress, 2006).

[2] A definition of intersectionality is challenging and the subject of much academic debate. See for example, Rooney and Ní Aoláin's article in this issue, as well as the recent special issue on intersectionality in *Politics & Gender* 3(2) (2007). The central premise of the concept is that identities are 'integrated' and 'mutually constitutive,' or that gender differences must be understood 'within a particular context and in connection with other aspects of identity, both individual and collective.' (Editorial Comment,'Intersectionality,' *Politics & Gender* 3(2) (2007): 229). In other words, as Eilish Rooney notes, intersectionality provides a framework for analysis 'of how gender relations, class relations and configurations of ethnicity and race are interwoven in the structural make-up of a given society.' (Eilish Rooney, 'Engendering Transitional Justice: Questions of Absence and Silence,' *International Journal of Context and Law* 3(2) (2007): 98).

[3] Rooney, ibid.

[4] Christine Bell and Catherine O'Rourke, 'Does Feminism Need a Theory of Transitional Justice? An Introductory Essay,' *The International Journal of Transitional Justice* 1(1) (2007): 23–44.

agenda. First, it recommends a greater focus on the issue of masculinity in transitional justice research and practice. Second, it highlights the dangers of an approach to masculinity that treats 'men' as an interest group devoid of a gendered analysis. Third, the article criticises responses to the questions raised by masculinity that centre on the 'crisis in masculinity' discourse. Finally, it highlights the importance of considering how transitional justice mechanisms infused with a greater understanding of masculinity can influence types of violence (such as intimate partner violence) traditionally seen as outside their focus.[5]

Masculinity: An Open Field

In recent years, there has been a growing focus on including women in transitional justice processes. This has involved, inter alia, an improved sensitivity to the concerns of women in processes such as national reparations programs,[6] the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda (ICTY and ICTR)[7] and truth commission hearings and final reports.[8] Such changes, although they represent progress, have been criticised because of the lack of capacity of such institutional reforms 'to deliver feminist transformation and the tendency of interim reforms to produce new obstacles for women.'[9] A move beyond thinking about women in transitional justice to thinking about the role of gender more broadly, including a focus on men, has also been advocated.[10] To date, however, studies on masculinity and transitional justice are all but nonexistent.

Masculinity studies, largely in sociology and psychology, have in turn said little about political transitions or transitional justice. That said, the study of masculinity itself is still developing. The sociology of masculinity, which has until recently largely focused

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[5] Rachel Jewkes uses the term 'intimate partner violence' to describe 'physical violence directed against a woman by a current or ex-husband or boyfriend... Intimate partner violence often includes sexual violence and can also include psychological abuse; both these forms of abuse often, but not always, accompany physical violence.' (Rachel Jewkes, 'Intimate Partner Violence: Causes and Prevention,' *The Lancet* 359 (2002): 1423). That said, there is confusion in the literature as to whether the term includes sexual violence. In this article, the terms 'intimate partner violence' and 'domestic violence' include the full gamut of violence Jewkes outlines in the quote above.

[6] Ruth Rubio-Marín, ed., *What Happened to the Women? Gender and Reparations for Human Rights Violations* (New York: Social Science Research Council, 2006).

[7] Bell and O'Rourke supra n 4.

[8] Beth Goldblatt and Sheila Meintjies, 'Gender and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission' (Johannesburg: Unpublished submission to the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 1997).

[9] Bell and O'Rourke, supra n 4 at 33.

[10] Rooney, supra n 2.

on Western masculinities, only came into its own in the second half of the 20th century.[11] The study of masculinities in Africa is still in its infancy.[12] Although the topic is mentioned in some peacebuilding research that explores gender questions,[13] a systematic treatment of the subject is not readily available. The psychology of masculinity, or more precisely psychologists attempting to understand the male psyche, has been part of the discipline for over a century, but critical analyses of the interrelationship between psychology and a gendered social context are limited. Where the study of the psychology of men exists, it is clinical and largely experimental,[14] although the last decade has seen a growing number of studies on masculinity in discursive and critical psychology.[15] In the legal field, masculinity has been largely restricted to the field of criminology[16] and family law.[17]

Clearly, there is a vast literature on masculinity,[18] with some 700 references identified in sociology alone.[19] *The Men's Bibliography*,[20] an online resource, lists 17,300 books and articles on a wide range of subjects. A full review is beyond the scope of

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[11] Stephen Whitehead and Frank Barrett, 'The Sociology of Masculinity,' in *The Masculinities Reader*, ed. Stephen Whitehead and Frank Barrett (Cambridge: Polity, 2005).

[12] See for example, Lisa A. Lindsay and Stephan F. Miescher, ed., *Men and Masculinities in Modern Africa* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003); Robert Morrell, ed., *Changing Men in Southern Africa* (London: Zed Books, 2001); Lahoucine Ouzgane and Robert Morrell, ed., *African Masculinities: Men in Africa from the Late Nineteenth Century to the Present* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); and footnote 28 below.

[13] For example, Gender Action for Peace and Security, 'Report on Involving Men in the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security Based on the Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS) Event Hosted by the Canadian High Commission' (Canada House, London: GAPS, 2007); Sheila Meintjies, Anu Pillay and Meredith Turshen, 'There Is No Aftermath for Women,' in *The Aftermath: Women in Post-Conflict Transformation*, ed. Sheila Meintjies, Anu Pillay and Meredith Turshen (London: Zed Books, 2001); Mireille Widmer, '"Real Men" without Guns,' *New Routes: A Journal of Peace Research and Action* 11(4) (2006): 12–14.

[14] See the journal, Psychology of Men and Masculinity.

[15] See for example, Desmond Painter, Martin Terre Blanche and Jill Henderson, 'Critical Psychology in South Africa: Histories, Themes and Prospects,' *Annual Review of Critical Psychology* 5 (2006); Margaret Wetherell and Nigel Edley, 'Negotiating Hegemonic Masculinity: Imaginary Positions and Psycho-discursive Practices,' *Feminism & Psychology* 9(3) (1999). Also see selected essays in the *International Journal of Critical Psychology*.

[16] See for example, Judith Allen, 'Men, Crime and Criminology: Recasting the Questions,' *International Journal of the Sociology of Law* 17(1) (1989): 19–39; Richard Collier, 'Men, Masculinities and Crime,' in *The Blackwell International Companion to Criminology*, ed. Colin Sumner (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003); Richard Collier, 'Reflections on the Relationship between Law and Masculinities: Rethinking the "Man Question",' *Current Legal Problems* 56 (2003): 345–402.

[17] See for example, the subsection entitled 'Divorce, Separation and Child Custody' in *The Men's Bibliography: A Comprehensive Bibliography of Writing on Men, Masculinities, Gender and Sexualities*, compiled by Michael Flood, 16th edition (2007), http://mensbiblio.xyonline.net.

this article. That said, masculinity, because of its nature and being 'unhave-able'[21] is not an object around which a coherent science can be developed.[22] One of the best-kept secrets in the literature on masculinity, according to Kenneth Clatterbaugh, is that 'we have an extremely ill-defined idea of what we are talking about.'[23] There is a need to theorise masculinities,[24] and theorising about masculinity in transitional justice is an open field.

Most theorists and researchers working on this subject argue that it is more accurate to talk of masculinities than of masculinity.[25] There are multiple masculinities[26] and as many masculinities as there are men.[27] In South Africa, research on masculinity in transition is burgeoning, and some of the views emerging from this work are instructive.[28] For example, it has been asserted that stereotypes dominate views of men in South Africa and fail to capture masculine diversity,[29] as well as that there is no typical South African man.[30] What could be more different in South Africa, Robert Morrell asks, than the 'image of a grim-faced, rifle-toting soldier clad in camouflage gear, patrolling the streets of a township and a colourful cross-

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[18] Tim Edwards, *Cultures of Masculinity* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

[19] Stephen Whitehead, *Men and Masculinities* (Cambridge: Polity, 2006).

[20] Flood, supra n 17.

[21] Edwards, supra n 18 at 1.

[22] Robert William (now Raewyn) Connell, 'The Social Organization of Masculinity,' in Whitehead and Barrett, supra n 11.

[23] Kenneth Clatterbaugh, 'What Is Problematic About Masculinities?' *Men and Masculinities* 1(1) (1998): 28.

[24] Harry Brod and Michael Kaufman, ed., *Theorizing Masculinities* (California: Sage, 1994).

[25] Arthur Brittan, 'Masculinities and Masculinism,' in Whitehead and Barrett, supra n 11; Whitehead and Barrett, supra n 11.

[26] Connell, supra n 22.

[27] John MacInnes, 'The Crisis of Masculinity and the Politics of Identity,' in Whitehead and Barrett, supra n 10.

[28] See for example, Mamphela Ramphele, 'Teach Me How to Be a Man: An Exploration of the Definition of Masculinity,' in *Violence and Subjectivity*, ed. Veena Das et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Robert Morrell, 'The Times of Change: Men and Masculinity in South Africa,' in Morrell; Graeme Reid and Liz Walker, 'Masculinities in Question,' in *Men Behaving Differently: South African Men since 1994*, ed. Graeme Reid and Liz Walker (Cape Town: Double Storey Books, 2005); Liz Walker, 'Men Behaving Differently: South African Men since 1994,' *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 7(3) (2005): 225–238. Thokozani Xaba, 'Masculinity and Its Malcontents: The Confrontation between "Struggle Masculinity" and "Post-Struggle" Masculinity (1990–1997),' in Morrell, supra n 12.

[29] Morrell, supra n 12.

dresser, strutting his stuff in a gay pride march?'[31] Such questions could apply to many societies around the world.

In a similar vein, the international literature on masculinity generally suggests that masculinities are not uniform and that power relations exist within them. There are subordinate and marginal masculinities,[32] as well as hegemonic masculinities.[33] As Raewyn Connell writes,

> *we have to unpack the milieux of class and race and scrutinise the gender relations operating within them. There are, after all, gay black men and effeminate factory hands, not to mention middle-class rapists and cross-dressing bourgeois.*[34]

In South Africa, any discussion of masculinity must be infused with an analysis that addresses different racial and class positions, not to mention sexual locations. Such an analysis also must recognise that all masculinities influence one another.[35] Although white masculinity has been hegemonic in South Africa, urban black and rural African masculinities are now jostling for ascendancy.[36] New masculinities are developing, as is true the world over.

Despite the complexities of trying to define masculinity,[37] Stephen Whitehead and Frank Barrett do so in terms of 'behaviours, languages and practices, existing in specific cultural and organisational locations, which are commonly associated with males and thus culturally defined as not feminine.'[38] Connell agrees that 'masculinity' does not exist except in contrast with 'femininity' and no masculinity arises except in a system of gender relations.[39] Masculinity is 'simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality

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[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid, 3.

[32] Whitehead and Barrett, supra n 11.

[33] Robert William (now Raewyn) Connell, *Masculinities*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

[34] Connell, supra n 22 at 38.

[35] Morrell, supra n 12.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Clatterbaugh, supra n 23.

[38] Whitehead and Barrett, supra n 11 at 15-16.

[39] Connell, supra n 22.

and culture.'[40] Masculinity can also be ways of 'doing gender,' which are related to a social environment.[41]

Masculinity, for the purposes of this article, is defined as the widespread social norms and expectations of what it means to be a man,[42] or the multiple ways of 'doing male.'[43] Bearing in mind its inherent plurality, 'widespread' needs to be understood in the broadest terms possible. Within transitional justice, and particularly transitional justice mechanisms such as truth commissions or trials, the social norms and expectations under scrutiny are often those developed and shaped during war and its aftermath. Implicit will be the roles of men, and their relationship to women, as combatants and victims of political conflict. Critical masculinity studies would urge one to look beyond this to the positioning of men in a range of social and political settings following conflict.

The ways of 'doing male' are continually changing, shaped not only by the experience of war but also by the shifting social, economic and political context during and after conflict. To fully understand the role of masculinities within the transition from conflict to 'peace,' the continuities between past and present need to be tackled. This is a challenge to many transitional justice processes, which are often founded on liberal legal frameworks that demand the delineation of what is considered political violence and what is not. This kind of delineation has been challenged from a gender perspective. Defining what is conflict and what is non-conflict can result in a lack of emphasis on socio-economic exclusions (which can be seen as a form of structural violence) or violence deemed private, such as domestic violence.[44] For example, forced marital unions or forced domestic labour have to date not been adequately recognised as human rights violations in reparations debates.[45] The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was criticised for its narrow focus on individual, physical forms of harm that underplayed

[40] Ibid, 33–34.

[41] Walker, supra n 28 at 237.

[42] Widmer, supra n 13.

[43] Drawing on the work of Connell and Whitehead, cited in Ken Harland, Karen Beattie and Sam McCready, 'Young Men and the Squeeze of Masculinity: The Inaugural Paper for the Centre for Young Men's Studies,' Occasional Paper No. 1 (Belfast: Centre for Young Men's Studies, 2005).

[44] Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, 'Political Violence and Gender During Times of Transition,' *Columbia Journal of Gender and Law* 15 (2006): 829–850.

[45] Ruth Rubio-Marín, 'The Gender of Reparations: Setting the Agenda,' in Rubio-Marín, supra n 6.

the ‘everyday’ experience of women.[46] A narrow view of violations can lead to a gendered hierarchy of suffering because, generally, more men are directly affected by what is considered conflict-related violence.[47]

South Africa and Violent Masculinities

Violence against women is a global problem. Survey data reveals that 40, 42, 46 and 60 percent of women report being physically abused regularly in Zambia, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, respectively.[48] Studies in the United States show that between 33 and 37 percent of men have demonstrated physical aggression against their female dating partners.[49] In South Africa, a society that has undertaken major transitional justice initiatives as well as numerous policy and legislative interventions focused on addressing violence against women,[50] incidence remain extremely high – it is one of the highest rates in the world for a country not at war.[51] According to police statistics, there were 52,733 reported rapes in South Africa from 2003 to 2004.[52] Domestic violence is more difficult to assess because it is not classified as a separate crime. One study found that 50 percent of women in South Africa report experiencing domestic violence, whether physical, emotional or financial,[53] and another that one in four women in South Africa have experienced physical violence

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[46] Fiona C. Ross, *Bearing Witness: Women and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa* (London: Pluto Press, 2003).

[47] Beth Goldblatt, ‘Evaluating the Gender Content of Reparations: Lessons from South Africa,’ in Rubio-Marín, supra n 6.

[48] Katherine Wood and Rachel Jewkes, ‘Violence, Rape and Sexual Coercion: Everyday Love in a South African Township,’ in Whitehead and Barrett, supra n 11.

[49] Amy Holtzworth-Munroe and Glenn Hutchinson, ‘Attributing Negative Intent to Wife Behavior: The Attributions of Maritally Violent Versus Non-violent Men,’ *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* 102 (1993):206–211; Jacquelyn.W.White and Mary P.Koss,‘Courtship Violence: Incidence in a National Sample of Higher Education Students,’ *Violence and Victims* 6 (1991): 247–256.

[50] Human Rights Watch has noted, for example, that South Africa had some of the most progressive domestic violence legislation in the world but that it was not being properly implemented. Cited in Shanaaz Matthews and Naeema Abrahams, *Combining Stories and Numbers: An Analysis of the Impact of the Domestic Violence Act (No. 116 of 1998) on Women* (Pretoria: Gender Advocacy Project and Medical Research Council, 2001).

[51] Wood and Jewkes, supra n 48.

[52] It is asserted however that only one in nine cases are actually reported to the police suggesting the figures of actual rape would be substantially higher. See, ‘One in Nine: Solidarity with Women Who Speak Out,’ http://www.oneinnine.org.za.

[53] Liz Walker, ‘Negotiating the Boundaries of Masculinity in Post-Apartheid South Africa,’ in Reid and Walker, supra n 28.

from an intimate partner.[54] Levels of intimate femicide are also high. On average, four women are killed per day by an intimate partner in South Africa, or 8.8 per 100,000 women.[55]

Attitudes toward violence against women, especially among men, are also alarming. According to a survey of 2,059 men in the Southern Metropolitan Local Council Area of Johannesburg (an area which includes Soweto, various informal settlements and the central business district), 31 percent of men believe that they can be violent toward women and one in four believes women mean 'yes' when they say 'no' to sexual advances.[56] One in thirteen in the same survey feel that it is acceptable to hit one's wife as a form of punishment if she argues.[57] A more recent countrywide survey found that 10 percent of South Africans feel domestic violence against women could be justified.[58]

When it comes to sexual violence, a household survey of South Africans found that almost two-thirds of men believe women are partly to blame for sexual violence, and 4 percent of women believe forcing sex with a wife or girlfriend is not sexual violence.[59] Nine percent of women surveyed said they are drawn to sexually violent men.[60] Of the male sample, 20 percent said they had had sex with women without their consent, with 6 percent saying that they like 'jackrolling' (a popular term for gang rape) or that it is a game.[61]

The connection between poverty and sexual violence is also well established in South Africa and elsewhere. Although all women surveyed in the South African study above believe they have a right to avoid sexual violence, some 60 percent feel they would accept it if they did not have enough money and 47 percent of

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[54] Matthews and Abrahams, supra n 50.

[55] Shanaaz Matthews et al., 'Every Six Hours a Woman Is Killed by Her Intimate Partner: A National Study of Female Homicide in South Africa,' MRC Policy Brief 5 (Cape Town: Medical Research Council, 2004).

[56] CIETafrica, *Summary Report South Africa: 1997–2000 Surveys on Sexual Violence* (Johannesburg: CIETafrica, 2000), supra n 56.

[57] Ibid.

[58] The World Values Survey South Africa, quoted in Sapa/AFP,'SA Proud of its Rainbow Nation - Poll,' *IOL Online*, 27 August 2007, www.iol.co.za.

[59] CIETafrica.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Ibid.

respondents said they would allow their children to be abused in the same situation.[62] Rachel Jewkes reviewed studies across the world and concluded that although violence occurs in all socio-economic groups, poverty and associated stress are key contributors to intimate partner violence.[63] Intimate partner violence is more frequent and severe in groups living in poverty.[64] This is likely at least in part a result of the trapping influence of poverty – studies internationally show that women who are better off are more likely to leave abusive relationships.[65]

These statistics, specifically those concerning South Africa, suggest that the TRC had little impact on the physical security of women, let alone their social and economic security. Transitional justice mechanisms obviously cannot do everything. Their success needs to be evaluated within the context of other institutions, such as national human rights institutions or the criminal justice system, and of social, economic and political change more generally. As Rooney notes, however, while transitional justice experts may not be in a position to influence directly what happens to women, they can shape the discourse that determines the potential for transitions to deliver benefits.[66] This leaves one asking whether transitional justice processes, notwithstanding the context in which they unfold, are fulfilling their full potential in terms of preventing violence against women.

This question may sound tangential but it becomes vitally important to transitional justice studies when, as in the South African context, current gender violence is often explained as an extension of the past. It appears, writes Liz Walker, that violent masculinities of the anti-apartheid era have become even more violent in the present South Africa.[67] Thokozani Xaba, for example, argues that there was a 'struggle masculinity'; meaning that young impoverished black men who were associated with the anti-apartheid struggle were endowed with respect and status as 'young lions' and 'liberators' within their communities.[68] Their violence was revered, and those in leadership positions were coveted by women, with many having multiple partners.[69] 'Struggle masculinity' considered women fair game[70] and rape was used

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[62] Ibid.

[63] Jewkes, supra n 5.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Amy Farmer and Jill Tiefenthaler, 'An Economic Analysis of Domestic Violence,' *Review of Social Economy* 55(3) (1997): 337–358.

[66] Rooney, supra n 2.

[67] Walker, supra n 28.

[68] Xaba, supra n 28.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Ibid.

at times as a way of 'disciplining' women.[71] But the 'struggle' version of masculinity is no longer considered acceptable in the new order, with the result that such men (and those that aspire to this type of masculinity), many of whom are unemployed, find themselves vilified and often on the wrong side of the law for the same reasons that they were considered heroes in the past.[72] Demobilisation can often lead to a sense of emasculation and a resulting desire in some men, both ex-combatants and security forces, to reassert their power through violence.[73] Men whose masculinity is threatened can feel forced to find ways of reasserting their manhood.[74]

Such an analysis on its own however is limited and can feed into stereotyping of ex-combatants – already one of the scapegoats of the new South Africa[75] – and fail to consider their heterogeneous nature.[76] Further, we cannot overestimate the marginalisation and extreme poverty of some ex-combatants in South Africa, and around the world. Poverty and rising expectations have 'proved a tragic mixture of fostering violent masculinities.'[77] This stems from an historical context where violence and masculinity are interconnected and 'partly imprinted in social and economic conditions.'[78] Reviewing a range of literature that explores the link between poverty and masculinity, Jewkes concludes:

> *Violence against women is thus seen not just as an expression of male powerfulness and dominance over women, but also as being rooted in male vulnerability stemming from social expectations of manhood that are unattainable because of factors such as poverty experienced by men.*[79]

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[71] Beth Goldblatt and Sheila Meintjies, 'Dealing with the Aftermath – Sexual Violence and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission,' Agenda 36 (1997): 7–17; Graeme Simpson, *Jackasses and Jackrollers: Rediscovering Gender in Understanding Violence* (Johannesburg: Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, 1992).

[72] Xaba, supra n 28; Graeme Simpson, Brandon Hamber and Noel Stott, 'Future Challenges to Policy-making in Countries in Transition, Presentation to the Workshop' (paper presented at the Comparative Experiences of Policy Making and Implementation in Countries in Transition Workshop, Derry/Londonderry, Northern Ireland, 6–7 February 2001).

[73] Sasha Gear, *Now That the War is Over: Ex-combatants Transition and the Question of Violence – a Literature Review* (Johannesburg: Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, 2005).

[74] Tina Sideris, 'Rape in War and Peace: Social Context, Gender, Power and Identity,' in Meintjies et al, supra n 13.

[75] Jacklyn Cock, 'Gun Violence and Masculinity in Contemporary South Africa,' in Morrell, supra n 12; Gear, supra n 73.

[76] Gear, supra n 73.

[77] Morrell, supra n 28 at 19.

[78] Reid and Walker, supra n 28 at 7.

[79] Jewkes, supra n 5 at 1424.

We therefore need to guard against a focus merely on the expressions of masculinity, however critical these are, which do not address structural factors such as unemployment and living conditions that exacerbate violent masculinities and the fact that such dispositions are not shared or typical of all ex-combatants, or men for that matter. That said, the point at the core of Xaba's analysis is important; there is some continuity between past and present. This is not restricted to ex-combatants. South Africa's past is steeped in violence, in everyday life and on the sports field, as well as in the anti-apartheid struggle. Many whites sanctioned the use of violence, participating as soldiers, police or in 'ordinary' violence against black workers. The result is that some masculinities are deeply enmeshed with violence.

Research in South Africa has revealed trends to this end. A number of the men interviewed in a recent study seemed to have the strong misapprehension that there had been a dramatic change for women since 1994, in terms of general social and economic security.[80] In reality, 'more women than men continue to live in poverty, greater numbers of women are unemployed and have lower education status than

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[80] The project proposed to assess the impact of political transition on the security of women in South Africa, Northern Ireland and Lebanon by comparing how men and women conceptualise the notion of security. It particularly examined whether the participants had different notions of how women's security was affected by the transition process. The core research team were Brandon Hamber, Paddy Hillyard, Amy Maguire, Monica McWilliams, Gillian Robinson, David Russell and Margaret Ward with research associates Ingrid Palmary at the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation in South Africa and Mona Khalaf at the American University in Beirut. See, Brandon Hamber et al., 'Discourses in Transition: Re-imagining Women's Security,' International Relations 20(4) (2006): 487–502. In all, 11 focus groups were carried out in South Africa; six all-women groups, four all-men focus groups and one mixed group. A total of 58 participants took part in the focus groups. The six women focus groups were broken down in terms of political campaigners, those in public life, ex-combatants, victims of political violence, those working in NGOs and those involved in economic reconstruction. The four male focus groups included political campaigners, those in public life, ex-combatants and victims of political violence. The mixed group (for logistical reasons) comprised male and female politicians. Twelve interviews with key policymakers were also undertaken. All the male focus group participants were black South Africans, and there were one or two white participants in the women focus groups. Most were from working-class backgrounds, although some of the participants working in NGOs and public life could probably be seen as middle class. The interview and focus group process was carried out by Ingrid Palmary, Sinothile Msomi and Oupa Makhalemele at the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation in Johannesburg. The above two quotes have been extracted for illustrative purposes from the vast amount of data (one million words from across the three contexts) and belie a wider textual analysis of the data in which key themes were coded and extracted. This project has been funded under the UK Economic and Social Research Council New Security Challenges Programme (Ref No. RES-223-25-0066), http://www.incore.ulst.ac.uk/research/projects/rwsst.

men.'[81] Women interviewed, meanwhile, linked men's perception that women are benefiting from the transition more than them with the challenges to their manhood that men faced, such as unemployment, and with violent behaviour in the home. This was exemplified by the comment of a male participant who directly linked violence against women (by other men, not himself) to the perceived threat of women to men:

> *So I think that's the reason why you'd find that incidents of violence against women ... not that they were not there in the past ... but right now they are so in the open because it's the only weakness that you can now use against women. You can't use financial resources against them because now they are pretty much earning more than us. So we can't use that, whereas in the past we've had that leverage of saying I am working alone, I don't need your money, but right now you can't say that ... they are looking for another weakness within a woman. And that weakness right now is sexual weakness. That we can always rape you, we can physically show you our strength.*

A female participant in the study made a similar point:

> *[The] more women are empowered, the more aggressive men get because they are losing their space in society. So I think in as much as the law of the country allows women to be empowered that is going to have a spin-off effect on men's behaviour and men's attitudes towards women. In particular those so-called empowered women. They'll always be [the] subject of abuse all over the ... everywhere you go.*

Although claims in these interviews cannot be generalised given the size and nature of the sample, they certainly point to trends, especially when read in conjunction with the data on gender violence in South Africa and other studies. Walker's research with men aged 22 to 35 in Alexandra Township elicited remarkably similar comments.[82] For example, some men felt women were being disproportionately advantaged:

> *Men say, there is a voice for women, what about us? Some believe that the government is treating women much better ... that the government is overdoing it ... when women shout the government listens. Change to men is like taking away their privileges. When things change they fear it, I fear it, because they don't know what will be happening.*[83]

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[81] Walker, supra n 28 at 227.

[82] Ibid.

[83] Ibid, Interview, 11 June 2002.

The link between this and violence against women is also made:

> *We are seen as the enemy now. Women are advancing in education, economically. Men feel threatened. I see a lot of women who have gained a lot of confidence in who they are. I know women who provide for themselves now and that threat is actually what maybe [is] evoking a lot of violence. It is that strength, it is that threat of knowing that I can no longer hold onto that same position I held, or my father or my brother held. I suppose you could say I feel weaker. I'm not saying the rape is a new thing but it's playing itself out in why men are being more violent.*[84]

These narratives point to a security-insecurity cycle; some of the advances in the security of women, in social, political and egalitarian terms, even if not completely realised, have led to other physical insecurities for them. This, of course, is not to say that there should be no such advances. Rather, it highlights the complex interplay among security, insecurity and masculinity, and its highly gendered nature.

Men's identity, argues Tina Sideris, can emerge from conflict more damaged than women's.[85] Since many women have to develop survival strategies throughout the war, they are often better equipped to deal with the aftermath.[86] Traditional gender roles are also often disrupted during conflict, with some women who had previously been excluded from public life becoming economic providers, leaders and activists.[87] Men can feel threatened by the survival of women and try to reassert their manhood in the spaces where they can, most typically in intimate relationships.[88] This may be one of the reasons why women in a number of societies fail to consolidate wartime gains as men reassert their claims, often violently.[89]

Research in psychology contends that masculine socialisation results in men feeling intense pressures to abide by gender-role norms and expectations.[90] Studies show

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[84] Ibid, Interview, 25 April 2002.

[85] Tina Sideris, 'Problems of Identity, Solidarity and Reconciliation,' in Meintjies, et al, supra n 13.

[86] Ibid.

[87] Meredith Turshen, 'Women's War Stories,' in *What Women Do in Wartime*, ed. Meredith Turshen and Clotilde Twagiramariya (London: Zed Books, 1998).

[88] Sideris, supra n 87.

[89] Meintjies, et al, supra n 13.

[90] Todd M. Moore and Gregory L. Stuart, 'Effects of Masculine Gender Role Stress on Men's Cognitive, Affective, Physiological and Aggressive Responses to Intimate Conflict Situations,' *Psychology of Men & Masculinity* 5(2) (2004): 132–142.

that when masculine norms are challenged, 'gender-role stress'[91] is experienced by some men, which can lead to verbal abuse or violence.[92] However, as Isak Niehaus writes in reflecting on rape, we should not confuse an analysis that relates men's social positioning and violence with a simplistic conception of male violence as merely an expression of patriarchy.[93] It is often the fantasies of powerful identities inscribed in gender hierarchies and emotionally invested in by men that fuel male violence. Violence may ensue when investments are thwarted, when others refuse to take certain subject positions or when men face contrary expectations of identity.[94] The picture is complicated by the fact of multiple masculinities. Feminism has long argued that men collectively have power over women, while critical masculinity studies show that

> *not all men have the same amount of power or benefit equally from it, and that power is exercised differently depending on the location and the specific arrangement of relations which are in place.*[95]

Masculinity and Transitional Justice: A New Agenda

I argue that masculinity should be considered a cross-cutting issue in transitional justice. As a point of departure for future work, I suggest that four broad areas need to be explored. First, more research is needed to advance a more sophisticated approach to masculinity and transitional justice. A focus on masculinity should not be used to undermine services to female victims or a focus on the needs of women.[96] Yet the lack of rigorous studies, debate and policy direction on the role of men in the perpetuation of violence, political or otherwise, is a threat to the security of women. As Colleen Duggan notes in the foreword to a recent book on gender and reparations, further study is needed on 'how men deal with their own compromised masculinity in the face of adversity, since this has a direct impact upon women's

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[91] Joseph H. Pleck, 'The Gender Role Strain Paradigm: An Update,' in *A New Psychology of Men*, ed. Robert F. Levant and William S. Pollack (New York: Basic Books, 1995); Joseph H. Pleck, *The Myth of Masculinity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981).

[92] Richard M. Eisler, 'The Relationship between Masculine Gender Role Stress and Men's Health Risk: The Validation of a Construct,' in Levant and Pollack; Todd M. Moore and Gregory L. Stuart, 'A Review of the Literature on Masculinity and Partner Violence,' *Psychology of Men & Masculinity* 6(1) (2005): 46–61.

[93] Isak Niehaus, 'Masculine Domination in Sexual Violence: Interpreting Accounts of Three Cases of Rape in the South African Lowveld,' in Reid and Walker, supra n 28.

[94] Ibid.

[95] Morrell, supra n 28 at 9.

[96] Colleen Duggan, 'Foreword,' in Rubio-Marín, supra n 6.

long-term chances for recovery and empowerment.'[97] In other words, a more thorough analysis is required of the interrelationship between men, masculinity and the insecurity of women post-transition. Central is the 'need to critique practices and policies which fuel and flow from violent masculinities.'[98] This, in turn, should inform how we construct transitional justice institutions, the discourse with which we infuse them, how they deal with men and the issue of masculinity and how they affect gender relations.

Second, we must consider the impact of transitional justice processes on men. If we are to understand the role of men as the perpetrators of the majority of violence during political conflict and after it (albeit, purportedly, in a different form, such as domestic violence), we must address how we hold men accountable before, during and after transition. We thus need a more complex understanding of changing masculinities, transitional justice processes and their relationships to transition and post-conflict social reform. We must move beyond the idea of simply reforming the male psyche in an individualistic way. It is important to address the societal structures that influence the violent attitudes of many men. Attitudinal change is critical and undervalued in transitional justice, which is often legally driven and focused on larger questions of civil and political rights.[99] A concern with masculinity should not be equated with talking about masculinity in transitional justice as 'men's issues' or with asking bland questions like 'where are the men in transitional justice?'. Men should not be considered an interest group with a focus on men's needs alone. Rather, masculinity should be seen as central to how we conceptualise the outcomes that transitional justice processes can deliver in terms of gender justice more broadly and women's security in particular. The focal point needs to be on how violent masculinities endure post-transition and how transitional justice mechanism can be structured to impact upon this.

Overly stressing the needs of 'men' at the expense of considering the place of masculinity in transitional justice and a web of gendered relationships could have negative results, such as the spawning of inwardly focused men's movements around transitional justice processes. As Ross Haenfler argues, men's movements often lack a feminist understanding of structural inequality, the intentional involvement of women or a thorough comprehension of the gendered nature of society.[100] Jacklyn Cock contends that new gender identities

[97] Ibid, 18.

[98] Morrell (1998) cited in Cock, supra n 74 at 54.

[99] Ní Aoláin, supra n 44.

[100] Ross Haenfler, 'Manhood in Contradiction: The Two Faces of Straight Edge,' Men and Masculinities 7(1) (2004): 77–99.

> *cannot be achieved through equal rights feminism – a stunted feminism which focuses on specific issues such as women's access to armies and combat roles. Nor can it be achieved through a radical feminism which focuses narrowly on domestic violence against women. Nor can it be achieved by women acting alone.*[101]

In the final instance, any analysis of masculinity and its relationship to transitional justice needs to recognise multiple masculinities. This should not be used to dilute a focus on violent masculinities. Anti-sexist male politics and challenges to violent masculinities, or gender transformation more broadly, at least at this stage, must become a source of disunity among men, not one of solidarity,[102] and include the intentional involvement of women.[103] Points of rupture between dominant masculinities and emerging new masculinities should be continually highlighted and explored. These should be accentuated to increase contestation between masculinities, seeking change through confrontation. In other words, both a structural analysis and a more comprehensive understanding of the interrelationships between men and women, and among men are needed. A robust debate should begin among transitional justice experts themselves as to how best to approach the issue of masculinity if transitional justice mechanisms are to influence post-conflict violence and gender inequities.

Third, the international literature suggests that a theory of masculinity and transitional justice cannot be built on the 'crisis in masculinity' discourse. This discourse assumes that men have been reduced to being confused, dysfunctional and insecure because of (i) rampant consumerism; (ii) women's, and more particularly feminism's, assault on male bastions of power; and (iii) the now widespread social and cultural disapproval of traditional displays of masculinity.[104] Contemporary masculinity research generally questions the notion of 'crisis,' with its implication that there is one, fixed masculinity.[105] The word 'crisis' implies a coherent system of some kind, and this is an illogical way of thinking about a configuration of practices within a system of gender relations.[106] Others argue that the use of the crisis discourse implies that male identity is a fragile and tentative thing, which makes it almost impossible to talk about masculinity without implying it has a substantive base.[107] Furthermore,

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[101] Cock, supra n 74 at 54.

[102] Connell, supra n 33.

[103] Haenfler, supra n 100.

[104] Whitehead and Barrett, supra n 11.

[105] Connell, supra n 22.

[106] Ibid.

[107] Brittan, supra n 25.

to convey that traditional masculinities are in crisis implies they are disappearing, whereas 'aggressive masculinity is alive and well.'[108] Aggressive masculinities are visible in the rituals of neo-Nazis, paramilitary groups and the military, as well as in films, on television and on the sports field.

Recent changes for men (and women) have been historically significant, and changes within a transitional society are doubly challenging, but Whitehead and Barrett warn against the trap of equating changes in men's experiences and opportunities with a 'crisis in masculinity.'[109] Masculinity may well be in crisis, but not in the way popularly perceived.[110] As Tim Edwards suggests:

> *Some men are suffering or will in all likelihood suffer some experience of crisis on some level, whether in relation to loss of employment prospects, despair as to their future, rising demands from women in their personal lives, frustration at perceived inequalities with other men, or all of these.*[111]

In the South African context, Walker prefers to talk about masculinities being disturbed and destabilised since 1994.[112] Others talk about the disruption and transformation of masculinities not as an overall crisis but rather as tendencies toward crisis.[113]

A contextual analysis recognises that male cries of insecurity do not come out of thin air but that they are the product of a social and political context in which gender is integrally linked with power and changing power relations in a myriad of ways. These power balances are themselves linked to transitional politics and to the transitional justice mechanisms put in place to deal with violence. As power relations begin to shift and struggles intensify, or when new and powerful discourses of equality emerge, as in the South Africa case, there will be different responses. Some men acquiesce (reluctantly), other men embrace change and still others resist. We need to understand the nature of these reactions by recognising that men's expressions of insecurity, which might lead to violent behaviour, are deeply gendered psycho-social-political phenomena that require attention.

Finally, we cannot divorce questions of accountability for human rights violations from the fact that most perpetrators of violence are men and that violence against

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108 Whitehead and Barrett, supra n 11 at 7.

109 Ibid.

110 Edwards, supra n 18.

111 Ibid, 16.

112 Walker, supra n 28.

113 Connell, supra n 33; Connell, supra n 22; Edwards , supra n 18.

women seldom stops once the conflict is over as it is deeply intertwined with violent masculinities. Truth commissions, as one transitional justice tool, often are committed to uncovering the truth about the past so 'it' will not happen again. However, exactly what 'it' means is generally not defined. If 'it' means politically motivated human rights violations, truth commissions may have some preventive effect by highlighting in detail what transpired in the name of politics. If 'it' means human rights violations of all types (which one has to assume is part of entrenching a human rights culture, another aim of most truth commissions), there is little evidence to date that the lessons of truth commissions extend to the post-conflict society.[114] This is starkly evident when it comes to violence against women in transitional societies, and specifically in South Africa.

Transitional justice literature has been criticised for embracing a simplistic liberal notion of moving 'from' male-defined political violence 'to' a liberal democratic framework.[115] A binary view of transition fails to recognise the multiple layers of power that exist within society and the continuities between past and present. This is important when considering gender violence before, during and after conflict. More recent truth commissions have given space for women to talk of such violence publicly, but this may create a disconnect between what is defined as being about the transition and the 'everyday' violence women experience at home and in the community.[116] The end of violence and the start of political reform, including transitional justice mechanisms primarily concerned with civil and political rights, are insufficient in dealing with the harms suffered by many women before and after the cessation of hostilities.[117] They also do not address how violent masculinities perpetuate these harms. This places an onus on transitional justice processes to move beyond concern only with the public realm, accountability processes, legal and institutional rebuilding or formal equality to consider continued injustices in the private sphere.[118] The study of masculinity is integral to this shift.

In addition, an analysis of masculinity and its relationship to transitional justice processes should recognise the complexities of individual and socio-political processes in which masculinity is deeply linked to notions of femininity and the

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[114] Hamber, supra n 1.

[115] Bell and O'Rourke, supra n 4.

[116] Fionnuala Ní Aoláin and Catherine Turner, 'Gender, Truth and Transition,' UCLA Women's Law Review 16 (2007): 229–279.

[117] Ní Aoláin, supra n 44.

[118] Vasuki Nesiah, 'Discussion Lines on Gender and Transitional Justice: An Introductory Essay Reflecting on the ICTJ Bellagio Workshop on Gender and Transitional Justice,' Columbia Journal of Gender and Law 15 (2006); Ní Aoláin, supra n 44.

social positioning of men post-conflict. Hegemonic masculinities generally demand that 'real men' have gainful employment and provide for their families.[119] Jewkes' review of the relationship between poverty and intimate partner violence highlights the need for a 'renegotiation of ideas of masculinity, and recognition of the effects of poverty and unemployment on men in prevention of intimate partner violence.'[120] This, in turn, demands a more intersectionality-driven analysis[121] of transitional justice and careful scrutiny of how we conceptualise the relationship between transitional justice processes, social reform and prevention of violence in the long term.

The South African case clearly highlights the need for a greater focus on the interrelationship between specific transitional justice reforms (such as targeted reparations for women) and wider social reforms (such as the gender equality agenda). It is vital to understand how violent masculinities persist and react to the advances of women. Undoubtedly, transitional justice processes can shape public discourse and attitudes. To this end, the onus is on these mechanisms and the experts who work with them or theorise about their value to project a nuanced understanding of masculinity that can endure beyond the immediate post-conflict period and thus contribute to a society that allows new masculinities to develop.

Thanks to Finnuala Ni Aoláin for commenting on a draft of this article and Robin Wilson for his editorial assistance.

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[119] Harland et al., supra n 42; Ramphele, supra n 28.

[120] Jewkes, supra n 5 at 1425.

[121] Rooney, supra n 2.

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APPLYING THE INTERACTIVE PROBLEM-SOLVING APPROACH: A WORKSHOP BETWEEN INDIAN AND PAKISTANI WOMEN

Meenakshi Chhabra
Anila Asghar

Abstract

In this article we attempt to construct a framework to analyze the narratives of Indian and Pakistani women that emerge from the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947 – an epoch-making event that touched the lives of millions of Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis. In this regard, three women from India and three from Pakistan met for an Interactive Problem-Solving Workshop at Harvard University, where the sharing of narratives from across conflict lines revealed the core constructs that had informed the perceptions of the participants from the two groups and so, had resulted in the delegitimization of the other. Independent narratives from both sides divulged that these constructs were mirror images, creating doubt amongst the participants about their own narratives and blurring the boundaries between the constructs. The core concepts that were being perceived as exclusive to the other community, such as the treatment of women, religious fundamentalism and the condition of minorities, became the reference points for collective inquiry. From this transformative moment, the process moved towards a shared analysis of the conflict and new interdependent narratives focusing on joint responsibility and action began to emerge.

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Introduction

"He drew a circle and shut me out,
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout,
But love and I had the wit to win,
We drew a circle that took him in".
– Edwin Markham, *Outwitted*

Both the authors of this paper belong to the post-partition generation of South Asia. Yet, stories and images of partition have remained a constant reality for us through oral tradition, written history, and geographical maps that are associated with our respective national identities. The moment of partition has become the origin of new identity in the newly-defined homelands, for which the discourse centered on nostalgia and the loss of life, friends, and property. Boundaries between 'us' and 'them' were clearly drawn.

As an Indian, I, Meenakshi, remember being told by my grandmother about how ruthlessly the Muslims had killed the Hindus and how they had been forced to leave their homes. Every time she shared these intense stories of partition, her indignation and anger were palpable. Simultaneously, the history lessons that I learnt at school echoed the same sense of loss with an emphasis on losing a part of the homeland with the hope that one day it will be a part of India. The enemy images of the "other" were painted as someone not to be trusted and a constant threat to the Indian nation.

As a Pakistani, I, Anila, had heard family stories that depicted the sense of loss of home and friends who were still living on the other side of the border. The national discourse was one of celebration on the creation of a separate homeland – not only had we gained independence from the British colonial rule, we had also freed ourselves as Muslims from the domination and subjugation of the Hindus. Attached to this celebration were the voices of loss and sacrifice of innocent lives during the partition at the hands of the Hindus.

These feelings of anxiety, hate, and anger for the other intensified through the three wars that the two countries had fought over the past fifty years. In addition, every act of communal violence in each of our countries was attributed to the "other." Communication and interaction across the borders has been minimal since partition. However, outside those boundaries when Pakistanis and Indians meet, there is a natural positive *social* interaction due to similarities in culture. These conversations remain very congenial as long as they do not move in the direction of the discussion around the conflict. For both of us it was the same till we started confronting the

"other's" stories. These stories generated feelings of discomfort and frustration. Each of us felt the need to defend our country and to "convince" the other side about the rightness of our story. Through a deliberate attempt at engagement with each other around these issues we became aware of the "voices in our head" that challenged whatever the other said and inhibited us from listening to each other. We must admit that this has been a hard struggle and was a constant challenge. And yet we wanted to work together for peace.

We both believe in the unconditional dignity of and respect for human life. This passion has been the driving force for this joint work. So for the sake of peace we worked out a guiding principle for us, which was and continues to be – 'Creating Value for Peace'. In the midst of difficult and challenging moments we began to ask ourselves, "Is what I say and do contributing to the process of peace?" With this as a guiding principle, we started listening more to each other, becoming more aware of "the voices in our head," and constructing a common narrative out of both our stories – a narrative that included both our partial truths to make a new truth.

This new truth does not lie in negating our different narratives embedded within our larger realities and frameworks in each of our countries. It is not about each of our stories from an individual perspective, neither is it our story told exclusively from the standpoint of the other. It is about "integrating" these tales and perspectives into a meaningful narrative for creating the value of peace[1] .

In this study, we draw on the narratives shared by the women from both sides of the India-Pakistan conflict. The three women that participated in the interactive dialogue brought their narratives in the form of images, beliefs and perceptions of the politics of partition and its subsequent and ongoing effects.

Social Transformation through Women's Conversations across Borders?

In the summer of 1999, one year after the nuclear testing by India and Pakistan, I, Meenakshi, coordinated an Interactive Problem Solving workshop[2] with women from India and Pakistan. This pilot workshop was based on the Interactive Problem-

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[1] Seyla Benhabib, *Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Postmodernism In Contemporary Ethics* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

[2] The workshop was organized with support from PICAR (Program for International Conflict Analysis and Resolution) at Harvard University.

[3] Herbert C. Kelman, "Social Psychological Dimensions of International Conflict," in *Peacemaking in International Conflict methods and techniques* ed. I. William Zartman and J. Lewis Rasmussen (Washington, D.C: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997),191-235.

Solving Workshop approach to international conflicts developed by Herbert Kelman[3] in the early 1990's at Harvard University[4]. As a student of Kelman, I, Meenakshi had participated as a third party in an Interactive Problem Solving workshop between the Israelis and Palestinians and witnessed the power and potential for meaningful conversations between communities polarized by long-term, protracted conflicts.

The relationship between India and Pakistan at this time was at one of its worst. Both countries had declared themselves nuclear powers, the Kargil War had started in May and the violence in Kashmir was escalating day-by-day. The effect of this was experienced by the Indian and Pakistani community in the United States. In New England, Massachusetts, there was an increased tension between them. Signs of this could be seen in social exchanges and interactions among the community members from both sides. It was against this backdrop that I decided to apply the Interactive Problem Solving Approach by bringing together members of the two communities in New England and provide a space for conversations about the issues around the conflict.

The Interactive Problem Solving approach is an unofficial third-party approach anchored in social psychology. It has been widely applied to other international and ethnic conflicts, for example, the conflict in Israel and Palestine, the conflict in Ireland and the conflict in Sri Lanka. The workshop model in its original form, brings together politically influential members (members who can influence policy in their respective communities) of conflicting parties in a private setting for direction communication. The intent is to provide the space for the parties to explore each other's perspectives and through a joint process of creative problem-solving, to generate new ideas for possible solutions that are mutually satisfactory. The goal is to transfer the learning and insights from the workshop into the political debate and decision-making process in the two communities.[5] Kelman writes that the Israeli recognition of Palestinian nationhood in the year 1993 was an outcome that was a result of an interactive problem-solving workshop. The participants in that workshop were in positions of power and influence in their respective communities and were able to filter the workshop dialogue into mutual recognition. This was a huge step at that point, given the long history of the Israel-Palestine conflict.

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[4] I, Meenakshi, was greatly inspired to do this work after having participated in the interactive problem-solving workshop by Prof Kelman, between Israelis and Palestinians at the Harvard University.

[5] H. Kelman, "Social Psychological Contribution to Peacemaking and Peacebuilding in the Middle East," *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 47 (1), (1998): 5-28.

Most attempts at conflict resolution in the India-Pakistan conflict have been made through various official agreements at the inter-state level. By far, these agreements have failed to address the needs and fears of the conflicting parties. Both sides had invariably framed their responses in terms of the use of threat, military pressure, nuclear deterrence and other coercive means. Such a belligerent approach had clearly not contributed to transforming the relationship of mistrust between the two countries. The focus of this Interactive Problem-Solving workshop was to engage civil society in general and women in particular, to bring their thinking about the issues of the conflict and subsequently, their contribution to social transformation. The voice of the people and their experiences, especially those of women of the India-Pakistan conflict has been largely missing from the discourse. Recent research has begun to fill that gap[6] .

The idea of a workshop with women was guided by a similar rationale. The primary reason was to make women "a focus of inquiry, a subject of the story, an agent of the narrative"[7] . Another reason for the "all-women" participation was guided by the notion that since women and men are affected by the conflict in different ways, women may understand and react to it differently. Now that war involves women as never before, we can look to them for new viewpoints and ideas in relation to the peace process. Moreover, contemporary scholarship questions the traditional notion about women as passive victims in war contexts, and focuses on exploring the ways in which women understand, negotiate, and deal with political violence in their daily lives. Conflict shapes and transforms women's lives in myriad ways. Women's peace movements in different South Asian countries, for example, empower them as they carve out an active role for themselves in the public sphere[8]. Also, in Sheldon's view, women can bring fresh perspectives as "outsiders" to the war system's traditional reasons and justifications for war. Women question whether making war is an inevitable part of human nature and envision societies without war. Told they are naive idealists for doing so, women stubbornly maintain that their idealism is in fact common sense. Survival depends on understanding and arresting the impulse to destroy, which today as never before in history, is capable of extinguishing humanity altogether[9].

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[6] Ritu Menon & Kamla Bhasin, *Borders & Boundaries: Women in India's Partition* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1998).

Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India*, (India: Penguin Books, 1998).

[7] Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

[8] Rita Manchanda, *Women, War and Peace in South Asia: Beyond Victimhood to Agency* (London: Sage Publications, 2001).

[9] Sayre Sheldon, *Her War Story* (Southern Illinois: University Press, 1999).

The goal of the workshop was to initiate a conversation through deliberate engagement aiming at "exercising the art of enlarged thinking". It was not about reaching a unanimous consensus on the conflicting constructs, but to develop an awareness and acknowledgement of the diverse views around the issue. According to Benhabib, in a "moral conversation" one seeks to engage with the "other" to understand the issue, and to "reach some reasonable agreement. The goal of such conversation is not consensus or unanimity but the anticipated communication with others whom I know I must finally come to some agreement"[10].

Three women from Pakistan and three from India participated in the workshop. In addition to accessibility, the criteria for participation were: people who had some knowledge about the conflict, who were not on the extreme side of the political spectrum, who were in some capacity socially engaged in their respective communities, and who were interested in attending the workshop or more appropriately, felt motivated to attend it. Finally the selection was done through acquaintances and recommendations from both sides.

Among the three women from Pakistan, Saima was from the generation that had directly experienced partition[11] . She had moved with her family to Karachi from India during the partition. Later, she moved to the US and has been settled in the United States for the last twenty years. She is a teacher of Social Sciences in the school system in her community. Ishrat was a business entrepreneur from Lahore and had moved to the US six years back, with a background in International Relations and was from the post-partition generation. She is actively engaged in the Pakistani Association in Boston. Anila, was the third participant. She was also from the post-partition generation and had been in the US for a little over a year in pursuit of a doctoral degree at Harvard University.

From the Indian side, one of the participants was from the generation that had experienced partition as a child. Harnoor was from Punjab, a state that shares a long stretch of the border with Pakistan. She grew up in Britain and has been living in the US for almost twenty years. She is an activist in the South Asian community, and has started initiatives in the Boston area for the rights of South Asian women. Another participant – Radhika – was from a Hindu family of Kashmir and was also from the post-partition generation, having moved to the US five or six years back.

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[10] Seyla Benhabib, *Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Postmodernism In Contemporary Ethics* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

[11] We are not using participants' real names in this study. Instead, we have assigned them aliases to protect their privacy.

The third participant was from South India. Anjana has been in the US for fifteen years or so and is an active member of the Hindu and Indian Associations in Greater Boston.

Format

The format of the workshop constituted: a) one pre-workshop session with each country group, b) two joint sessions with both groups, c) post-workshop interviews with the participants individually[12] and d) a concluding joint session. All these sessions were facilitated by a third party experienced in the interactive problem-solving approach, comprising of two women associated with the Program on International Conflict Analysis and Resolution (PICAR) at Harvard University. We had different roles in the process. One of us was a participant (Anila) the other a participant-observer (Meenakshi), since the interactive sessions were not taped.

Process

The pre-workshop sessions held separately with each group provided the participants an opportunity to acquaint themselves with each other and to learn about the spectrum of opinions within each group. The pre-workshop session enabled the third party to observe the internal processes within each party that were an essential element of the process of inter-group conflict. They provided valuable information about the conflict and helped in planning the topics for the workshop itself. These pre-workshop sessions also uncovered some underlying stereotypes about the other held by each side. The different ethnicities within each group and the resulting wide spectrum of opinions on each side illuminated the complexity of the conflict. The atmosphere was quite different in each of the pre-workshop sessions. There was greater disagreement amongst the Indian group as compared to the Pakistanis in relation to the history of the Indo-Pak conflict, for example, while some of the Indian participants accepted the reasoning behind partition, others expressed their disagreement about its justification. Among the Pakistani participants there was unanimous agreement about partition. There were also some common issues identified by both. These included the colonial experience and the role of the British, the partition in 1947, the Kashmir issue and the Hindu-Muslim aspect of the conflict.

The Pakistanis felt that the conflict between the two countries persists because Indians have never accepted the partition and the existence of Pakistan, that the

[12] The post-workshop interviews are not a part of the original design of the interactive problem-solving workshops. These interviews were conducted by Meenakshi to assess and record the outcome of the interactive sessions.

treatment of the Muslims in India by the Hindus is far from desirable and that India was forcibly occupying Kashmir, which has a majority Muslim population. The Indian group felt that the partition had divided India, that Kashmir was India's territory and that Muslims were perceived as fanatical and threatening to the Hindus and to the security of the country. Both the groups agreed in the perception that both had suffered the trauma of the partition of 1947. Both groups also shared concerns about patriarchy in their respective communities. The workshop session was scheduled after a week of the pre-workshops, due to the scheduling constraints of the participants and of the third party.

The workshop seating was a little formal, around a table. The third party sat at the opposite ends of the table, the participants sat as a mixed group, two of the same group on each side and I, Meenakshi, seated myself just a little away from the table, in a position to be able to observe and take notes. Like the pre-workshop sessions, these sessions were also not recorded, to ensure complete confidentiality and safety of the participants and the process. The third party gave a brief introduction of the process by setting out the ground rules. The complete confidentiality of the workshop was emphasized, further explained as confidentiality as well as the non-attribution of the ideas that emerged as part of the workshop. The role of the third party in the process was described. It was explained that the third party was not an audience to be convinced or the judges of a debate who were determining which party had a better case. The third party would not intervene in any substantive issue. Interventions would be made to conversations directly between the two parties, to clarify, to summarize, and to challenge the parties to look at the conflict as a joint problem.

The workshop proceeded with the third party laying out the framework of the fundamental issues that both groups had raised in the pre-workshop sessions. These were defined as the issues that centered on the partition and on Kashmir. Initiated by one of the Indian participants, the groups entered into a discussion about who were considered "heroes" in each of their countries. As the discussion unfolded, both groups realized that the heroes of one side were the "bad guys" of the other. This led to a discussion and comparison of each group's perceived reality of the partition and of independence. Some of the participants in each of the groups brought in the issues of the writing of history, the content of the elite, the treatment of minorities in both the countries and the effect of these on the perpetuation of the conflict and mistrust between the two communities. A unique feature of the first session was that the participants had created their own agenda, which had steered away from the initial prompt of the third party, to focus on the issues identified by each of the groups in the pre-workshop session.

In order to provide some structure to the discussion in this session, the third party prompted the participants to explore the underlying needs and fears of each group vis-à-vis the other. This led to a discussion on the Kashmir issue, in the context of the treatment of minorities and of the religious identities of Hindus and Muslims. This progressed into conversations about who are the stakeholders who have vested interests in the continuation of the conflict, and how these stakeholders have systematically developed hostility in both communities. This helped participants move towards a joint analysis of the conflict. At this stage, the third party made a significant intervention by questioning the participants about the needs and fears prevalent in the communities that in turn, facilitated such actions by the stakeholders. Due to the limitation of time, this question could not be explored fully. However, during this session, the question focused the discussion towards the crucial concerns of the participants about the conflict.

Although there were only two workshop sessions scheduled, the groups expressed their desire to have another one, to be able to explore joint suggestions and actions that they could take in the direction of conflict resolution. This session was scheduled after three weeks, giving enough time to the participants to reflect on the content and process of the workshop. During this time, the post-workshop interviews were conducted with the participants individually. A summary of the core issues that had emerged was shared with each of the participants. After going through several drafts, the participants reached an agreement about the core issues. In this sense, the process of the interviews became critical in setting the stage for the last session. It helped to bring the participants to the same starting point and to begin to think in the direction of assuming shared responsibility.

The focus of the last session was on brainstorming ideas for joint action in the direction of conflict resolution at different levels. Some concrete suggestions that emerged out of this discussion were:

a) To jointly work on a paper analyzing the content of history taught in the schools in both the countries and how that contributes to the perpetuation of conflict between the two countries.

b) To exchange experiences and the trauma experienced by both sides relating to the partition of 1947 in a session on oral history and to invite Pakistani and Indian historians for the session and to provide a theoretical framework to the experiences.

c) To continue the dialogue and conversations within the larger group by continuing informal interactions between the participants.

d) To promote joint cultural events between the two communities in the Greater Boston area.

e) For the participants to share their learning form this workshop within their respective communities.

Analysis & Discussion

For the purpose of the analysis, we gathered our data from notes that I, Meenakshi, had taken during the sessions which included the key points noted in the pre – and post-individual interviews with the participants. We also took note of our recollections of the process as a participant and as a participant observer respectively.

The questions that guided our analysis of the narratives were: What were the perceptions of Pakistani and Indian women around the moment of partition? How did each group react to the other's story? What were the differences and the overlaps in their narratives? In what ways, if any, did the two narratives change through this interaction and dialogue?

As a strategy for analyzing the narratives, we identified the core concepts that had repeatedly surfaced in the discussion during the sessions. The critical points for us were those constructs that both groups were using to delegitimize the other. The overlapping and intersecting of these constructs created mirror images in their narratives. In the analysis we used these mirror images as focal points of exploration. Of course, there were divergent views within each group. Some of the participants were not polemic in their discussion. They brought in an enlarged perspective of the issues. These participants played an active role at different times in the workshop helping the participants to recognize the overlapping and intersecting of the constructs that each side was claiming exclusivity of.

Perspectives from the Indian Participants

- India is a "multi-ethnic, multi-religious country", constant interference from Pakistan with regards to the Muslim population in India is not appreciated.
- The perception exists that "aggression has always been initiated by Pakistan".
- Strong military influence in the politics of Pakistan raises the concern amongst Indians of Pakistan readily adopting a military course as opposed to a democratic one.
- The strong influence of the US and of China on the decision-makers in Pakistan raises the concern that it introduces new players in the power politics of the region and increases the threat of an arms race with these powers (because of the perceived help of both the US and China to Pakistan).

- The Kashmir issue raises the fear of increased instability in the region and a concern that it may lead to the further disintegration of the country. The concern that all "terrorist activities" in Kashmir are being supported by Pakistan was also expressed. The Indian participants were of the view that Kashmir was an internal problem and Pakistan's repeated interference in the issue has raised suspicion about Pakistan's intentions.
- The fear of Islamic fundamentalism, especially with regards to the perception of *jihad,* also exists. The concern that Islamic law "does not treat women equally" discourages education amongst women and perpetuates "backwardness" in the country.

Perspectives from the Pakistani Participants

- India, as the largest country in the region, has problems with all its neighbors.
- There is the constant fear in Pakistan of being annexed by India.
- There is the concern that India has never accepted the 1947 partition.
- There is concern that India is a predominantly Hindu state and that Hindus do not respect Muslims as a religious group.
- There is also the concern about the conditions of Muslims in India – that they are not treated equally. Also, there is a fear amongst them of being forced to convert to Hinduism.
- History has taught that Islam has given equal rights to women. But, Hinduism threatens that equality.
- The Kashmir issue raises concerns about the Muslims in Kashmir. They are being persecuted by the Indian military and their basic human rights are being threatened. India is forcibly controlling Kashmir.

Conflicting Perceptions

The Kashmir issue emerged as the tip of the iceberg in this process, bringing to light some of the underlying issues in the conflict. In the discussion centered on the moment of partition, some of the differences in interpretation that emerged from the narratives were: for the Indian participants, partition was a division of the country; it was a loss. For the Pakistani participants, it was the need of the time, the only way to ensure the protection of the rights of the Muslims, in pre-partition India. Independence, for the Indian group signified independence from the British, while for the Pakistani group it meant independence from the British and the Hindus in India. This difference of perception was also reflected in the language used by each side. While the Pakistanis

called the movement for an independent Kashmir as a movement by "freedom fighters", the Indians addressed it as an "act of terrorism". In the same light, the Indian participants also learnt that the popular sentiments and language expressed amongst Indians about becoming one nation again were perceived as threats by the Pakistanis and raised suspicion among them about India's intentions.

Mirror Images

The sharing of narratives from across conflict lines revealed the core constructs that each group was anchoring on to delegitimize the other. Some of the core concepts that were being perceived as exclusive to the other community were: a) the oppressive treatment of women, b) religious fundamentalism, c) aggression and d) the unequal treatment of minorities.

Core Concepts	Indian Participants' Perceptions of Pakistan	Pakistani Participants' Perceptions of India
The oppressive treatment of women	Muslim women are veiled and kept "backward".	Indian culture has oppressed women historically. We still hear incidents of "sati" (women burnt alive on the husband's pyre).
Religious fundamentalism	Islamic fundamentalism	The Hindu hardliners' approach has resulted in communal riots against Muslims in India.
Aggression	Pakistan has mostly had a military government, which has always initiated armed aggression against India.	India wants to dominate the smaller countries in South Asia and all its policies are directed towards that goal.
Treatment of minorities	The majority of the population in Pakistan is Muslim and the minorities have no voice.	Muslims in India cannot practice their rituals. There are restrictions on their religious practices.

These core concepts illustrate that both sides had similar concerns about the other. The concerns featured around the social, political, religious and cultural milieu. For example, around women the Pakistani women brought up the issue of *sati*. The Indian women echoed the same tone in their response and brought up their fear about the subjugation of Pakistani women in the name of Islam and its ramifications for Indian women. In this particular discussion, the frameworks centered on the oppression of women in the "other's land". This started a discourse around defending their positions to deny the allegations. The Indian women explained that *sati* as a practice was not existent anymore. One of the Indian women explicated her view about *sati* as an optional ritual practiced by women of that time. The women from Pakistan reiterated that Islam stands for equality and women's rights, contrary to the Indian women's perception.

At this point, one of the participants acknowledged some elements of the oppression of women in her society, opening the way for the other group to accept the same in their context. This intervention acted as a point of building common ground among all the participants enabling them to shift the focus from their national identity to a gender identity. Within this gender framework, they came together as one group acknowledging their common concerns as women, moving in the direction of collective inquiry and action. They expressed the desire to continue similar kinds of dialogue to raise awareness about women's rights in the South Asian context and to spread this awareness among other women from the region.

The issue of rights and treatments of the minorities emerged as another core concept in the group. The discussion started off with exclusive frameworks around suppression of minorities in both the countries. One of the Pakistani women expressed a deep concern about the plight of the Muslim minority in India. She believed that Muslims were not offered equal economic opportunities in India. Indian women contradicted this conception and cited a number of examples to demonstrate that Muslims participated equally in the social, economic and political arenas of India. In their view, the Muslim population in India is more than in Pakistan and so, their rights were affirmed. They asserted that India being a secular democracy has always encouraged all minorities equally and that Pakistan being a Muslim majority state does not acknowledge the rights of minorities.

One of the participants from the Indian group shared her dissenting voice about the violation of minority rights in certain parts of India through examples of communal rights and separatist movements in different parts of the country. This in-group diversity in thought seeded cohesion in the larger group within this particular context. A Pakistani participant reciprocated by sharing her concern about the serious

problems being faced by the minorities in Pakistan. This shift in the discourse enabled the participants from both sides to acknowledge the violation of rights of minorities as a universal issue. This exposure to the mirror images and a subsequent sharing and acknowledgement led to the broadening of mutually exclusive frames. The frames that were only centered on the mistreatment of minorities in the *other's* world were enlarged to include all minorities, even those who were suffering in their own societies.

Both sides accused each other's country for initiating aggression in the region. The "other" was the aggressor, whereas their country's act of aggression was justified as an act of defense. According to one of the Indian participants, Pakistan's military government promoted a policy of aggression against India. For the Pakistani participants, India's "hegemonic behavior" in the region and its resulting aggression was of great concern and a constant threat. They were of the view that Pakistan's decision to nuclearize itself was a response to this threat. The ensuing discussion helped both sides to acknowledge the rising aggression in both the countries and the policy of deterrence employed by both and how that was adversely affecting peace in the region.

Religion was another core construct that surfaced on a number of occasions in the discourse. Pakistani participants felt that the Muslims in India suffer at the hands of the Hindu majority because of their religious beliefs. Cases of communal riots against the Muslims were mentioned. Likewise, the Indian women expressed a strong fear about the Islamic fundamentalism of Pakistan being exported to India, posing a threat to their secular institutions. They also expressed another fear that was related to Pakistan having a history of military and theocratic governments. The Pakistani participants, on the other hand, defined their constitution as upholding human rights. This came as a surprise to some of the Indian participants who believed that Pakistan only had a strict Islamic law, which discriminated against non-Muslims.

The momentous process of confronting these multiple core constructs of themselves by the other brought out questions about the sources of these images. A number of participants traced these to the media and the school curriculum of history in both the countries. In this way, the participants started exploring the roots of their constructs, which they had been using to delegitimize the other. This suggests that participants from both groups evaluated their frames with reference to the larger context, about which they shared multiple constructs. The recognition of these aspects of this larger reality contributed to the further broadening of their narratives. This is in line with Schon and Rein's view that individuals who hold conflicting views of *some* reality, about which they are locked in intractable controversy,

nevertheless live in a *larger* reality, an everyday world about which they share many perceptions[13].

This led to a "creative redefinition of the conflict"[14] through collaborative re-examination of the issues and raising new questions. Some of these questions were: "Who is benefiting from the perpetuation of the conflict?", "What is the role of the international community in this conflict?" The individuals contributed to a deeper understanding of the conflict in which they were entangled through shared analysis of issues common to both the countries. The shared concerns voiced by both groups focused on issues of war, partition and women's rights. For example, all the participants felt that war is not a solution to the conflict. They expressed a desire to meet each other, dialogue, learn and understand each other on a people-to-people level (an opportunity that is rare for both groups in their respective countries). Some shared the need to analyze and reflect on the multiple, often conflicting, accounts of partition narrated to both sides. Both sides agreed that there was a need to process the "shared trauma" of partition in 1947 and share the "stories" from both sides on a personal level. A shared concern for the rights of women in both countries also emerged as an important area for further exploration and joint analysis.

On further exploration of these concerns, participants identified the political, social and economic factors common to both the countries, that they felt were contributing towards sustaining the conflict. The common concerns encompassed a wide range of issues on both sides, such as extreme poverty in both India and Pakistan and social inequalities resulting from the class and caste systems, rampant illiteracy, the treatment of minorities, subjectivity in the writing of history, and an "undemocratic" political order in both the countries where the voice of the people has been suppressed and power is concentrated in the hands of few.

Conclusion

The Interactive Problem-Solving Workshop among Pakistani and Indian participants stimulated new insights into the dynamics of the conflict. Besides providing a safe environment for discussing difficult issues around the conflict, the workshop process facilitated an analytical discussion of the conflict. Through the process of the

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[13] Donald Schon and Martin Rein, *Frame reflection: Toward the Resolution of Intractable Policy Controversies (*New York: Basic Books, 2000).

[14] Herbert C. Kelman, "Social Psychological Dimensions of International Conflict," in *Peacemaking in International Conflict Methods and Techniques,* ed. I. William Zartman and J. Lewis Rasmussen (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997), 191-235.

pre-workshop and workshop sessions the discussion moved from a simplistic description of the conflict to a discussion that revealed a wide spectrum of opinion within each group, called for more inquiry from each side and revealed the complex nature of the conflict. The participants brought conflicting perceptions about the *other*, which they had been firmly holding on to as their exclusive narratives. However, a discussion around these revealed these narratives as mirror images of each other. These mirror images created a doubt among the participants about their own narratives, about themselves and that which they were holding of the other, blurring the boundaries between *us* and *them*. This created moments of acknowledging the *other's* narrative, initiating a process of synthesizing elements from their conflicting narratives to jointly construct an enlarged framework that included the *other*. As a result, the conflicting perceptions that surfaced gave rise not to paralysis or deadlock, but to adjustment or accommodation, and in some instances, "reframing" of the narratives around common issues[15] and a gearing towards joint inquiry and action.

These kind of interactive dialogues between cultures have the potential of having far-reaching implications in terms of developing greater understanding of and questioning assumptions about the *other*. The interactive workshop model provides a structured and safe environment for a joint and critical analysis of the issues on the part of the parties engaged in the conflict, creating a web of relationships through sustained and genuine dialogue at all levels of society – social, political and religious. Changes at the level of individuals, in the form of new insights and ideas, resulting from the critical and collaborative discourse can then be fed back into the political debate and decision-making in the two communities, thus becoming vehicles for change at the macro level[16]. It is important to encourage an ongoing process of interactive dialogue between the two communities at different levels, particularly in the wake of the global and political changes affecting the peace and security of South Asia.

Two roads diverged in a wood,
And I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.
– Robert Frost, *The Road Not Taken*

Since then, the two of us, Meenakshi and Anila, have continued working together. In 2001 we were able to extend our work to the youth from India and Pakistan.

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[15] Donald Schon and Martin Rein, *Frame reflection: Toward the Resolution of Intractable Policy Controversies* (New York: Basic Books, 2000).

[16] Herbert C. Kelman, (1997), op cit.,191-235.

We have continued to work with youth and educators from across borders and jointly write about these interactions. We have been exploring the ideas of Pakistani and Indian adolescents about the India-Pakistan conflict and how their understanding evolves as they engage in conversations with each other. It has been a transformative journey for us as we hope it has been for the youth[17] .

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[17] M. Chhabra & A. Asghar, "Development as Peace: A Vision of Hope in the India-Pakistan Conflict," *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development* (First Issue, American University Press, 2002).

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BUILDING SAFE COMMUNITIES THROUGH STORY-SHARING

Emma Dorothy Reinhardt

Abstract

This paper introduces readers to community transformation strategies used by the women peace-leaders in Wajir, Kenya to reduce violence in their district and introduce effective systems of collaborative, sustainable peace. In order to do so, the author invites readers into a global web of women's testimonials collected by a U.S.-based organization called HERvoices. Woven together, Wajir's successful means of conflict management and the use of HERvoices' testimonies to foster cross-cultural understanding propose the use of story-sharing to build safer local communities and a safer global community.

Peacebuilding in Wajir, Kenya

I was first in Wajir, Kenya in 1999 when I was twenty-two years old and conducting research for my Master's thesis. I had learned that a group of Muslim women indigenous to the area had emerged as the leaders of a successful, nonviolent movement and I wanted to learn from them. Three family clans – the Ajuran, Degodia and Ogaden, all of whom are Somali Muslims living within Kenya's bounds just over Somalia's border – had been fighting over sparse natural resources, discrepancies between traditional and colonial law and disputed land boundaries in Wajir district for decades. However, when the fighting reached the town of Wajir and began effecting the women and children directly, the women launched a proactive, nonviolent response. I was most interested in how the women could be effective leaders during conflict times since they were excluded from mainstream

Emma Reinhardt, founding Director of HERvoices, is an organizational manager and social entrepreneur who specializes in conflict resolution, community-building and the empowerment and inclusion of underrepresented communities into mainstream forums. The mission of HERvoices is to build a safer global community by strengthening cross-cultural openness and understanding through story-sharing presentations that profile women and girls. Emma has a Bachelor's degree from Wesleyan University, CT, and a Master's degree from the University of Ulster, N. Ireland.

politics and decision-making processes during stable times; and what forms of nonviolence actually worked to abate the conflict and create stability in the area.[1]

During my ten weeks there in 1999, I conducted fifty interviews of women and men involved with and impacted by the conflict and nonviolent resolution process. I lived with a family and was hosted by the peace group in Wajir. My research culminated in a summary of the nonviolent means of resolution that were utilized successfully and an assessment of what the global community could learn from the accomplishments in Wajir.

I returned to Wajir in early 2008 with one other researcher and now under the umbrella of HERvoices, a U.S.-based organization whose multimedia presentations bring narratives of women and girls to diverse audiences so to build cross-cultural openness, understanding and a global exchange of ideas and perspectives. During our one-week visit this time, we conducted forty interviews of women and girls involved in the peace work and impacted by it. Our goal was to be able to introduce Wajir's work to others from the platform of HERvoices to both share the effective, nonviolent practices with others around the world, and to bring into the global conversation voices rarely heard publicly: the candid, ordinary and extraordinary voices of Muslim Somali women using nonviolence successfully.

When I first learned of Wajir and the peace work conducted there, I learned about Dekha Ibrahim Abdi. In 1999, it was to Dekha I wrote my letter asking if I could visit Wajir and learn from her and the others. When I arrived in Nairobi and was waiting at the regional airport at dawn to find a flight to Wajir, it was Dekha who met me and welcomed me to a land that then felt so frighteningly far away from anything I knew.

I met Dekha at sunrise that August of 1999, and she impressed me immediately in the same way a sunrise does: she is a phenomenal woman who exudes universal qualities of immense, unwavering warmth, generosity and trustworthiness. In communities around the world, she, her work and the Wajir community's work has become a cited case of the success of nonviolence over violence. And yet, in the quiet of the HERvoices interview during my return visit to Kenya in 2008, as the sun was setting in her home, the story that best anchored her in her renowned work was this one about her father:

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[1] Though there is not yet one complete report on the conflict and peacebuilding practices in Wajir, extensive information is available. The author recommends beginning with: CDA's "Reflecting on the Peace Practice Project," written by Janice Jenner and Dekha Ibrahim Abdi, October 2000.

> *There is a memory that comes to my mind as I talk about this – it's my dad, may God rest his soul. It's me walking with him from our home to downtown Wajir, and he will stop to greet, and he will stop to greet and talk, and stop to greet and talk. So he will not really walk straight. And as a young person, maybe eleven, I wanted the task done. The task was the walking. You have to walk from A to B. And he was like, "No. You'll still reach B, but as you move from A, take your time, greet the neighbors, ask how they are." And I used to say, "That's a waste of time. The sun is hot, let's just get on already." And he said, "My daughter, one day, one time, you will understand what I am doing. For now, just ask the question."*
>
> *So I learned his openness. He could see I didn't understand, but at the same time, he didn't shut me down, he just allowed me to be. ...And he died in 1982. And in 1997, I was walking from my office to the post office: I left the office at three o'clock and I reached the post office at five o'clock and it got closed on my face. And I was like, "Oh my God, that's a fifteen minute walk. You took two hours!" What was I doing? Exactly like my dad did: Stop, greet, stop, greet, but unconsciously. It hit me that I couldn't post the letters. So I couldn't do the task. But I had fantastic relationships of greeting people and asking them how they were. And I was like, "That's it. Dad, thank you very much." Now I know, it's about relationships, it's about caring about people. And sometimes it's not about getting your task done.*

I had already known Dekha for years at the time of this interview, and had studied the Wajir conflict and resolution processes extensively by then, but still, I had imagined the interview would again allow a newcomer to the topic to learn the explicit details of the structures and mechanisms now known as the Wajir peace process. But in the telling of her story that she had told over and over, I heard in Dekha the foundation for her work: relationships. Somehow it was the telling and re-telling that provided space for Dekha to find a new reference and meaning to her powerful work. "I've never reflected on these things like this," she concluded.

Peacebuilding through Relationships

> *"Politics ... is about relationships among significant clusters of citizens to solve public problems in a cumulative, multilevel, and open-ended process of continuous interaction over time..."*

(Saunders, Harold, "Politics is about Relationship,"
Palgrave Macmillan, NY 2005, 47)

With the fifty interviews from 1999 incorporated into my thinking and philosophy, alongside the forty more from 2008, and then the hundreds of others now from other communities I have had the honor to work with and interview in affiliation with HERvoices, I can conclude so simply and in agreement with Dekha: building safe communities, peacebuilding, is about building relationships. While Dekha and her father walked from their home to their town's center, and twenty years later, while Dekha walked from her office to the post office, the adult in each story (Dekha's father in the first, and then Dekha on her own in the second) was able to appreciate that the importance of each journey was not the explicit result of the journey – the arrival at the destination and the completion of the named task – but rather the process of making connections and forming relationships along the way, of building community based on continuous, open, interpersonal interactions.

It seems simple enough for each of us to borrow from Dekha's story and resolve to pause more during the day to establish a human connection to the people we pass. Christine Tibor, a HERvoices' interviewee living across the world from Dekha, giving her HERvoices interview from her school office where she runs an English-as-a-second-language program for adults in Framingham, Massachusetts in the U.S. made a similar conclusion:

> *The best way to solve issues is to connect to people one-on-one. I don't think you need to do anything more than talk to people. But I think the number one way to do it is when you talk to the fellow pumping your gas, or you take a risk and go into a new bakery, or you see someone on the street who needs your help that you say good morning. And you talk to them – whether or not they can answer you in perfect English doesn't really make a heck of a lot of difference ... You just start to see people as more similar than dissimilar when you talk to them, and then a lot of those challenges disappear. And if the challenges are there and in reality, the only way to address them is to talk to people anyway.*

Locally, and in stable, peaceful communities, we can imagine the possibility of taking the time to build relationships with our neighbors and we can imagine the richness and closeness that could come from that. Knowing the story of Wajir district, which was once strangled by daily ethnic violence, I can even begin to understand how Dekha and her team led their community to stability: one, then ten, then ten-thousand people living in Wajir began to take on this philosophy of metaphorically and literally 'stopping and greeting' each other and prioritizing relationships over tasks.

With Dekha's story in mind, and through this new lens of peacebuilding-through-relationships, I can revisit and re-understand all of the Wajir interviews I have from both my 1999 and 2008 visits, alongside my summary and analyses of all of the strategies of nonviolence that were utilized successfully in that community: The Wajir Peace Group's Rapid Response Team relied on urgency, its commitment to building Collective Peace relied on inclusiveness, and its pre-emptive Peace Festivals were dependent on optimism. These three pillars to Wajir's Peace – urgency, inclusiveness and optimism – can be reanalyzed and further strengthened when seen as adhering to this simple strategy of peacebuilding-through-relationships.

Building Relationships through Story-Sharing

HERvoices relies on this same strategy. However, as an organization, we are challenged by the reality that in so many communities, the social divides – or geographical distances – are too great to hope that members of one community will be able to either comfortably and/or safely take on the commitment of 'stopping and greeting' those of another community with whom they do not usually interact. Even within communities where violence is not a threat per se, like in a classroom in a safe town, it is likely that a well-meaning, relatively judgment-free student will not feel s/he has 'permission' – the social excuse – to begin 'stopping and greeting' a student with whom s/he has not previously felt a natural connection. Simultaneously, an open-minded, well-intentioned adult living in the U.S., for example, will likely not have access to 'stopping and greeting' another adult living in Iraq, to continue this example. In the former classroom scenario, a small social divide may continue to exacerbate notions of difference and distrust between the two students; and in the latter scenario with the adults, that lack of access to or real knowledge of each other can in fact result in dehumanizing ideas and resulting actions that have a truly grave impact within the global community.

Following the philosophy of both Dekha and Christine, HERvoices provides a platform for 'stopping and greeting' across social and geographical divides, enabling peacebuilding-through-relationships to occur through the exchange of narratives: At each HERvoices presentation venue, women in the audience step in as the live readers of the profiled women's testimonies, alongside an audio-visual slide-show – so that students in New York City, for example, take on the voices of and feel connected to women in Wajir, Kenya; and women in Wajir, Kenya take on the voices of and feel connected to women in Sindh, Pakistan, etc. "You got to feel for these women and know them, like you had met them," wrote Zach, age 13, one of HERvoices' now 10,000 audience participants. "The stories introduce you to the

real people that statistics can't, and inspire empathy," wrote Maggie, another audience participant, age 28. Participants are in consensus: Hearing the candid testimonies of others, in their peers' voices, gives them permission to share their own stories and ask others about their lives; the HERvoices testimonies expand the parameters of the participants' conversations.

Founded in 2004, HERvoices' mission is to build a safer global community by strengthening cross-cultural openness and understanding through these presentations and adjoining workshops. It tours its programs to co-ed audiences of all ages, while allowing each presentation to be comprised entirely of female voices.

Wajir's Process: Urgency, Inclusiveness, Optimism

We are all capable of 'stopping and greeting,' of building relationships and in fact, of peacebuilding. It is exciting to learn how accessible peacebuilding can be and how we each can and do participate in it in different ways. Three paramount nonviolent techniques used in Wajir were centered around urgency, inclusiveness and optimism, respectively. A brief summary of each, paralleled by excerpts from HERvoices interviews that emphasize the same philosophy, embed Wajir's work in a wider web of women's stories, while inviting the wider web of women's stories into an arena of explicit peacebuildling.

In the throes of deadly clashes between three Somali clans in the middle of the expansive red desert of northeast Kenya, a group of women said, "No." "No" to the fighting, "No" to the deaths of their husbands and children, and "No" to the disrupted trading at the marketplace. They responded with urgency, inclusiveness and optimism.

Nuria Abdullahi, one of the leaders of the peace movement and also my host during my 1999 visit, generously summarized the previous two decades of peace work during her 2008 HERvoices interview:

> *The Wajir Peace and Development Committee started as a community-felt need. After the 1991-92 ethnic clashes in Wajir, we felt that the government forces were really using excessive force towards the civilians and it was like, "Violence could not solve violence," so we decided as a community, the youth and the women came together to intervene.*
>
> *And after a long process started by three women, we were able to contain the situation and came up with a Rapid Response Team and made the Wajir Peace and Development Committee which was a coalition of*

> *Government officers, civil society organizations, elders, women, youth, religious leaders, the business community, Parliamentarians, local leaders, local counselors … Because we believe peace is a collective responsibility. Everybody was taking conflict and everyone learned ways to respond and support the community process.*
>
> *We decided to look at structures to build and maintain the sustainability of the peace process. The first structure we looked at for sustaining the peace process was building district, locational and sub-locational peace committees, which are replicas of the district level structures involving all of the community members, the religious leaders, the education sector, including developing peace education in schools as a means of adopting a culture of peace … All facets of the community within that locality should be part of the process because peace is a collective responsibility.*

Nuria and the others also proactively and optimistically organized Peace Festivals during this time of violent conflict, to celebrate the Peace to come, to enable the community to taste its anticipated sweetness as an incentive. At the Festivals, the Peace Group honored traditional clansmen who were spearheading the fighting – they would publicly honor them as Peace Leaders. The result? They would "hike up their bootstraps and start acting like Peace Leaders," they explained. The group introduced Peace education into all sectors of the community. They were inclusive in their work so within a few years, every sector of the community had taken part in the Peace work to the point that everyone seemed to "own" the Peace. The Peace group helped others lead, and through means reliant on urgency, inclusiveness and optimism, the Peace became sustainable.

Peacebuilding with Urgency

As Nuria discussed above, in the early 1990s, women from the three clans combined resources and joined together to form a cross-community Rapid Response Team that responded instantly to all incidents of violence perpetrated by one clan against another. Working as one unit, the Team would arrive at the injured family's home and address the family's losses and basic needs, face-to-face. The Team would then arrange for that family to receive any provisions they required like soap or food, especially if the injured person or persons were the main providers for the family. The Team would also begin negotiations between the injured family and the perpetrators in order to dissuade the victims from retaliating. Sometimes an exchange of cows, for example, would be arranged by the Team. Thus, the ongoing cycle of violence was slowed as retaliatory violence was greatly reduced.

Paramount to this part of the process was the immediacy, the deliberate and fast, urgent act. "The important thing to do – whichever group was hit, get there fast, before they hit back!" explained Amran Abdikadir, an interviewee in Wajir during my 1999 thesis research. There was one moment, one point of decision in each of these scenarios when it was necessary to jump in order to effectively change what would otherwise be the inevitable direction of the path of violence or stability in Wajir.

People talk about these turning points, these pivotal moments in their lives in very different contexts throughout HERvoices interviews. While the contexts and locales are substantively different between Wajir and Pakistan, and the U.S., and the many other places HERvoices works, it is clear that this certain spirit of urgency and these necessitated and timely acts underscore many of HERvoices' interviewees' stories, and lives in fact. One after another, the women with whom we work speak of these pivotal moments, propelled by their own ability to respond rapidly and urgently to their given situation in order to restore a peace and/or find a sustainable and sound solution in their own lives: Rhonda faces an overwhelming sense of directionless and depression after being released from jail and she finds herself turning inward and to God in order to make a dramatic change in her life in the middle of one cold winter night in Framingham, Massachusetts; fifty years earlier in the same town, Roberta Walcott confronts the town after it bans her son, an African American high school student, from riding the school bus; as a mother of three in Sindh, Pakistan, Mahanta makes the first decision about her own life when she realizes it is being threatened by her husband – she takes her children and flees the country; and "K," a South Asian woman seeking work abroad and finding herself enslaved instead survives one situation after another because of her ability to act with urgency, and literally jump:

> *One day, he put his gun on my forehead and said if I gave him trouble, he was going to shoot me. He lay down to take a nap. I saw the door open, and I ran. After half-hour, I got to the main street. I found a truck taxi. I was sitting in the front seat and the man put his hand on my thigh. I opened the door fast and jumped out. I found another taxi, a young boy - sent by a god - was so nice. He saw I was crying and I asked him to please take me to my country's Embassy.*

In one moment of mentally reviewing the hundreds of HERvoices interviews in my head and in our files, I can see one woman, then another, then another jumping from her situation in order to save herself, her family or her community. Through these stories, these women are connected to each other, and those who have the

opportunity to hear the testimonies are connected to the women who are otherwise very far away from them.

In Wajir, acting with urgency changed the direction of the conflict and eventually enabled the Peace to take hold, thus nurturing the process of peacebuilding. In the context of the HERvoices interviews, interviewees often define themselves in the segments of their own stories in which they were effective in *responding rapidly* to their own difficult situation in order to change their life-path's direction. The urgency of their actions shifted each woman's relationship to herself and the path she was on; and by sharing her story with others though HERvoices, the peacebuilding is reinforced through the story-sharing as it is empowering for the interviewee, and informative – and even inspiring – for the listener.

Peacebuilding through Inclusiveness

Wajir's cross-community team of women leaders was inclusive and quickly expanded to involve men and children to the point that everyone truly felt an ownership of and responsibility to the Peace to come and the peacebuilding systems in place. Wajir calls its peace "collective:" involving everyone in every sector of the community – from government to education – so that even those least likely to contribute positively felt empowered, vital and effective and thus heartily joined the movement.

We each have easiest access to those we are close to – our children, parents, husbands, other women in our community or congregation, etc. – and throughout the HERvoices interviews, it seems that universally, we all actively make space for and encourage the participation of those within our reach: Born in Italy and now living in the U.S., Marisa D'Eramo talks to her husband about women's rights in the context of her three daughters; Kanwal Memon runs human rights awareness workshops for other women living near her in Sindh, Pakistan; and the older Mamas in Wajir describe their technique in involving their husbands in the peace process. Mama Fatuma Mire explains:

> *One of our first tasks as the Wajir Women For Peace was going to the villages looking for the guns to have turned in. We visited at the homes, tried to talk to the mothers. The first woman we met said, "That man is here with me, and he has refused to return the gun." Our advice to her: "When your man comes at night, don't give him a space to sleep, don't agree to sleep with him. If the man comes to you three times and you refuse to welcome him three times, he will not ask a fourth time, he will*

turn in his gun." The woman did that and the man came to her the fourth time. He had handed over his gun to the government, and the government gave him a job in exchange. We advised the others to take an example of that.

Who can we each reach most effectively and how we can best involve them in constructive community participation? How can we begin to expand our reach, and encourage others to do the same?

Peacebuilding with Optimism

The peacemakers and leaders in Wajir – during both my 1999 and 2008 visits – spoke about their Peace Festivals with pride and pragmatism, and also a little humor. By celebrating that which they wished for – Peace – and by honoring positive behavior of the clan leaders needed by the community in order for its stability to increase and be sustainable, the peacemakers of Wajir led their community with optimism. We often hear references to the 'power of suggestion' in our ordinary lives – the Peace Festivals and Peace awards to the violent leaders were successful in just that way. "We were changing their psychology," one leader explained.

Other women around the world are leading their communities in similar ways, by suggesting publicly the positive possibilities that may not seem immediately accessible to those around them. Dalia Abrego, for example, born in El Salvador and now a middle school teacher in the U.S. explains how she introduces the concept of college to her teenage students:

I started realizing, I went to college, I was motivated, but in my home we really never talked about, "You're going to go to college." And so I thought, "Well, we are going to talk about it, it is going to be a part of their lives." When I talk to them, I say, "Well when you go to college, or when you become this…" My hope is that it will become a part of them.

Similarly, many women interviewed by HERvoices who have survived horrific periods of time talk about the dreams that kept them alive and inspired them to want to live, even during their various forms of detention. Dreams too, like Peace Festivals and the 'power of suggestion,' remind us of what can come, enable us to viscerally imagine the safety, sweetness and richness that could be ahead, and encourage us to pursue forward despite the difficulties of our current situations.

Finding the Story to Peacebuild Across Divides

Towards the end of her interview, Dekha told me a story about a difficult situation she found herself in at the airport in Tel Aviv, in Israel. She acted with urgency, inclusiveness and optimism as she privately navigated herself through:

> *There are many challenges and there are those many moments that seem to sort of fight against you. And when those moments come, I go back to my spiritual base: I reflect, I meditate, I pray, I read the Koran. It gives me clarity of thought. … Like there was a time, I was at the airport in Tel Aviv and this young girl, a security agent, she asked me a really horrible question and I could not even see the security part of the question. And I would have lost my cool, I would have lost my everything. And I just stopped. And I asked her … "What's your name? … How are you?" … Just making that human connection. And then she told me her name and what it meant, something to do with dew in Hebrew. And then I said, "That's it – I am harvesting that dew. It's really challenging to be in this airport… It's really challenging to harvest dew … It's really challenging to be asked all of these questions, to be looked at suspiciously, and it's like harvesting dew." I made that human connection and I went poetical. And that helped me really calm down. So I wasn't seeing her as a security agent … I was just seeing she could be my daughter, she is just doing her job.*

Dekha found in herself a reliable resource – her spirituality, her poetry – so that she could quickly shift her mental posture, and act constructively and with urgency in the difficult situation. She then reached out to the security agent, including her in the situation fully, and humanizing her. And then Dekha optimistically thought beyond the obvious limitations of the situation and concluded that the other woman could be her daughter, was just doing her job, and that the more beneficial response on Dekha's part was to accept her as familiar, even as family.

By prioritizing the relationship between herself and the young woman at the airport, by 'stopping and greeting' and exchanging a story, Dekha was able to dissolve some of the barriers between them. Dekha's actions enabled the two women to find a point of common, human connection, once again shifting a path away from conflict and towards building a safe community.

Special gratitude to Sarah O'Gorman for helping with this article.

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Book Review

GENDER, VIOLENT CONFLICT AND DEVELOPMENT

DUBRAVKA ZARKOV (ED.)

NEW DELHI: ZUBAAN, 2008, 310 PP, INR 595 (HB)

Reviewed by: Manjrika Sewak

This edited volume is the outcome of an interdisciplinary dialogue between scholars, practitioners and policymakers working on issues that lie at the intersection of gender, violent conflict and development. The dialogue was hosted by the Netherlands Institute of International Relations, Clingendael, The Hague, in 2003. The ideas and perspectives shared at this dialogue served as the kernel for the studies included in this book.

The authors offer a rich mix of theoretical inputs and "from-the-field" perspectives on the ways in which gender influences development practice and violent conflict. They question conventionally held beliefs about the "causes of conflict", calling for a deeper analysis of the role of militarism and hegemonic masculinities and femininities in processes of armed conflict.

Militarism and Neo-liberalism: Re-examining the Causes of Armed Conflict

The book opens with the proposition that the growing culture of militarism is linked closely to the widespread use (and often imposition) of gendered neo-liberal economic policies in regions coded as "post-conflict". As the Editor of this volume, Dubravka Zarkov, notes in the *Introduction*, "Violent conflicts and wars are not just a by-product of today's global capitalism, but its intrinsic element". In many "post-conflict" regions, neo-liberal policies manifest themselves as Structural

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Adjustment Programs (SAPs), which hit social sectors such as health care and education. These Programs rest on gendered concepts of what constitutes work and production wherein women's unpaid work is considered irrelevant. This means that while women do 60 percent of the world's work, they get only 10 percent of the world's income, and own one percent of the world's property. Ruth Jacobson, in the study on the "complex political emergency" in Mozambique in the 1980s, shares that the SAPs imposed on the country (by the World Bank) led to an increase in the "feminization of poverty". The introduction of user charges, in health and education, meant that such services were no longer accessible for a large section of the female population.

The book's focus on the role of global economic processes in the sustenance of violence (at different levels) is a valuable addition to the literature on armed conflict. Particular emphasis is placed on the economic interests of MNCs and Western governments. For example, Zarkov notes that the top 10 MNCs account for 76 percent of global production, making them the drivers of trade and investment. What this also means is that these corporations (and Western governments) now play a key role in the economic and political processes of the countries – mostly in the Third World – where the armed conflicts are raging. The now established complicity of MNCs in trading "conflict diamonds", minerals and oil in areas such as West Africa, the Gulf and the Great Lakes Region, with support from Western governments, is only the tip of the iceberg. Yet, most international agencies and NGOs often ignore this dimension and continue to see poverty, underdevelopment, identity politics and/or the "failed state" as the key causes of contemporary armed conflicts.

The Role of Masculinities and Femininities in Conflict

Zarkov also underscores the role that gendered ideologies and practices, marked by violent masculinities, play in sustaining the culture of militarism and exacerbating violent conflict. Central here is the exclusion of alternative gender practices, particularly those that advocate a "nonviolent masculinity".

She points to the need to examine the structures of gender inequality (within the domestic domain as well as in the arenas of economy and governance) saying that masculinities and femininities are not adequately recognized as factors in violent conflict. Where these are recognized, the tendency is to "bring the women in" into whatever it is that the NGO, agency or government is doing on the ground. This causes further problems because, first, the men are left out of the process (which often results in a backlash against the women). Second, the process is

pre-determined because it is based on what the funders/organizers believe is the need on the ground. Consultations with local men and women from a gender perspective are rarely ever the case. Third, when the women are brought into the process, their participation is seen in terms of numbers rather than the perspectives they bring to the issue.

Foregrounding the relationship between militarism and a certain construction of masculinity, Zarkov notes that in many regions of conflict, "soldiering" and "security" jobs have emerged as viable livelihood options, leading to an unprecedented acceleration of militarization on a global scale. In Afghanistan and Iraq, for instance, the militaries (of the Western governments and the national governments) remain the biggest employers. Added to this is the market for private military companies and private security companies, which is growing at the rate of USD 10 billion a year.

Inherent in the training and recruitment processes for such jobs is the principle that violence is the most effective tool to address conflict and that a man's sense of self is linked to the exercise of power, through violence, over women and children as well as over unarmed battle-age men and old men. Henri Myrttinen, in the study titled *Sketching the Militias: Constructions of Violent Masculinities in the East Timor Conflict*, reminds us that such masculinities are not just prevalent "out there" in regions experiencing mass violence, but rather they are constructed in, and disseminated by, the First World. He points to the training that the Indonesian security forces and militias (in East Timor) received at facilities such as the notorious School of the Americas (now renamed Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation) in the United States of America. At SOA, men are not only taught that violence is the most legitimate tool to confront political, personal and social problems, but the construction of their masculinity is linked to the wielding of power over people. While a glorification of violence is inherent in such constructions of masculinity, nonviolent conflict resolution and mutual empowerment are seen as weaknesses and have no place at facilities such as SOA.

The studies on Rwanda, Iraq, Mozambique, East Timor and Sri Lanka show that in many regions of armed conflict, a similar understanding of masculinity prevails. Men assert their "manhood" by being breadwinners or soldiers and engaging in confrontationist and aggressive behaviour. Women's femininity is linked to their vulnerability and is manifested in their image as "symbols of communities" and as "homemakers". Femininity is often equated with powerlessness, and during war, this notion is narrowed down to the image of the women war-victim.

The focus on dominance and violence in conceptions of masculinity proves particularly disastrous in a context already fraught with political and social conflict. Armed conflicts are marked by widespread destruction of economic resources and activities, forced migration, psychological and physical injury, and separation from one's usual social networks. In such situations, dominant notions of masculinity – defined through marriage, property and participation in community life – become inaccessible for a vast majority of men. In other words, many men are unable to achieve the kind of masculinity that is prescribed by their community. These men, in turn, use aggression and violence (often against women) to establish a sense of self-respect and "manhood" (as defined by their community). A vicious cycle ensues whereby masculinities produce and normalize violence and the violence further entrenches hegemonic notions of "manhood".

Civilian men can also "reclaim" their manhood during violent conflict by joining the militaries and militias. As members of such groups, they regain power and status by engaging in looting and violence. Such acts help to restore to the men access to property and to women (often seen as property). The authors of the studies from Africa and East Timor in fact note that the concept of the "bride price" system, prevalent in these regions, gives credence to the belief that women are the property of men!

Such constructions of masculinity and femininity have been shown to play a role in the exacerbation of sexual violence. The study on the Rwanda genocide by Chiseche Mibenge (titled *Gender and Ethnicity in Rwanda: Legal Remedies for Victims of Wartime Sexual Violence*) makes the revelation that men engaged in sexual violence to reclaim the lost ground of patriarchy and reassert male dominance by driving women out of the public space (that they sought to share with the men). Tutsi women who were, in particular, seen to be questioning power relations between men and women emerged as a threat to male dominance, and were therefore a key target during the genocide.

Deeply rooted structures and attitudes, which inform definitions of "manhood" and "womanhood" not only cause violence but, in some ways, also rigidify once the violence has ended. For instance, NGOs and international organizations often assume that violent conflicts provide opportunities for the transformation of gender relations and for establishing women's equality. Yet, the study by Judy El-Bushra titled *The Culture of Peace or The Culture of the Sound-bite: Development Practice and the Tyranny of Policy* reveals that an increase in women's work and responsibilities (and the resultant self-confidence that this process unleashes) is accompanied by psychological problems of adjustment for the men. The deeply-

rooted notions of masculinity and femininity ensure that the *values* concerning men's and women's behavior do not change and neither do the community or national-level *institutions* that could provide women with decision-making powers. On the contrary, power relationships between men and women (particularly within the domain of the home) change little.

At the macro-level, attempts by policymakers to legislate for women's rights often encounter a backlash against women and children. For example, Chiseche Mibenge in the study on Rwanda shares that even though the post-genocide period has been characterized by women's participation in decision-making processes, this does not mean that women can now assert their fundamental human rights. The gap between men and women's wealth, literacy levels and school enrolment has only widened. Added to this is the stigmatization that women experience because of the sexual violence carried out against them during the genocide.

Citing an instance of the way in which deeply rooted *values* and *attitudes*, about "manhood" and "womanhood", play themselves out in daily life, El-Bushra points to a situation commonly encountered in camps housing refugees and internally displaced people. The responsibility of fetching water for the family lies with the women and the girls. Because water often becomes a scarce resource in times of conflict, women and girls spend many hours standing in line to fetch water. The staff of development organizations notice this problem and often work around it by increasing the number of water access points instead of encouraging the men (who have much less work) to shoulder this responsibility or to at least share the burden with the female members of the household. Even if development workers want to do something about it, El-Bushra concludes that the "tyranny of the urgent" prevents them from doing so.

Chiseche Mibenge, in the study on Rwanda, shows how specific notions of masculinities also inhibit gender justice. The construction of masculinity is such that men can be shamed through the act of sexual violence against the women of their community. In a post-conflict situation, men therefore try to conceal the incidence of such violence because its revelation in a public forum (such as a courtroom) would mean that the men were unable to protect the women of their community. Such protection is traditionally assumed to be a prerogative of masculinity. This sense of communal shame among the men is cited as a reason for the low number of prosecutions even though at a societal level, the scale of the sexual violence during the genocide is widely discussed. Accompanying this notion of masculinity is a femininity that silences the rape survivor and disempowers her to access mechanisms of justice. Therefore, as Mibenge puts it, "stories about the

rape are told in public by the press, by lawyers and by academics, but hardly ever by the women who lived through it”.

The book’s focus on masculinities and femininities is a valuable contribution to peacebuilding literature because it foregrounds a re-conceptualization of violent masculinity and of power relations between men and women as a central element of efforts to build sustainable peace and security. A first step in this respect is to redefine masculinity as one which creates a space for nonviolence and in which a man’s sense of power is not related to his ability to carry out violence against a woman. Second, support for alternative masculinities must also be accompanied by the recognition of “agency” and “subjectivity” as central elements in conceptions of femininity. Third, new constructions of masculinity and femininity must also recognize the widespread victimization of men in conflict. If their victimization is indeed recognized, it is often listed in a hierarchy of victimhood where the violence committed against them is less visible and considered less real than that against women and children. This needs to change, and perhaps will change once masculinities and femininities are constructed in more inclusive and nonviolent ways.

Feminist Critique of Development Practice

The gendered impact of mainstream development practices in contexts of violent conflict forms another key focus of the book. Evaluating a diverse set of development projects from regions of conflict, the authors state that while the differential impact of development on men and women has been recognized, policy and rhetoric have often been easier to influence than practice.

This, as Sunila Abeysekera notes in the chapter *Organizing and Mobilizing Women for Peace: Some Reflections on Sri Lanka*, is most clearly reflected in the “rushed” and “non-consultative” nature of contemporary development practice, which tends to focus on the “fulfillment of internationally designed and sponsored projects through the cooption of local human resources”. Echoing this perspective, Sarala Emmanuel, in the second study on Sri Lanka titled *Global Issues, Local Realities: A Note from a Post-Tsunami Coastal Town*, writes that international organizations have earned the reputation of parachuting into regions of conflict and deciding for the local people what their needs are. In the rush to be the “first” or the “leading” agency, organizations show little concern for local sensitivities and perspectives. This often leads to an incorrect assessment of the needs on the ground, and, worse still, has a negative impact on the dynamics of inter-personal and inter-group relations.

The consequence of such practice is that it creates a situation where development policies (particularly economic) exacerbate social and economic exclusion and increase the "genderedness" of such exclusion. A central leitmotif of the book, this issue comes up in nearly all the empirical studies, and, in some cases, the evidence even links development practice to higher rates of public and private violence against women. What comes out starkly is that while the "do-no-harm" approach entered the lexicon of the development profession close to a decade ago, sadly, in many regions around the world, development practice continues to exacerbate conflict, failing to reflect local perspectives and sensitivities.

The problem begins with the very way in which Western agencies and governments define development and then impose it on countries coded as "post-conflict". Ruth Jacobson in the chapter *Gender, Development and Conflict in Mozambique: Lessons of a 'Success' Story* writes, "Linked closely to the paradigm of 'modernity', development is advocated as a transition from tradition to modernity to be brought about through emulation of the economic and social systems of Western capitalism." While there are several problems with this conception, perhaps the most significant is that such a process sidelines the perspectives and aspirations of local actors as well as indigenous resources for development.

Edda Kirleis in the essay *Rethinking Gender, Violent Conflict and Development from Local Perspectives: Reclaiming Political Agency in South Asia* adds that the problem also lies in the definition of the "political and development actor". Citing examples of South Asian women's groups who have engaged in successful grassroots peacebuilding work for several years, Kirleis observes that when government-level peace negotiations and development projects are designed, these women are not recognized as political actors and are often kept out of the decision-making process. Even while they are the most active in the arena of peace, reconciliation and rehabilitation, they are not perceived as *actors* or *agents* and remain mere *objects* of peace negotiations as well as of development planning and implementation.

Elaborating on this point, Kirleis writes:

> *"There is a need to redefine the actor in gendered terms, in order to recognize women's political agency as well as the nonviolent agency of men….In the dominant notions of femininity and masculinity, it is not surprising that in situations of violent conflict, those who are seen as political actors are at the same time addressed as development actors. Those whose agency is not recognized in the conflict are also not taken into account for taking charge of their development. They may be addressed as victims and become objects of humanitarian assistance. Not surprisingly,*

> *those commonly…acknowledged as political and development actors in a violent conflict are those who are leading the communities and the militaries into the conflict, and those who carry the arms. As the majority of those in formal politics, in the military…and in leading multinational and private enterprises are men, it is men who are commonly perceived as actors in both violent conflict and in development, while women are seen as…bystanders and as victims. When rehabilitation takes place or development activities are planned, political and military leaders are called to the negotiating table. Inevitably then, they are also the actors who have the power to decide what the society of the future will look like…Only a change in gender relations and in notions and practices of masculinity and femininity will bring about a recognition of women's agency in politics and development alike as well as a recognition of male victimhood and agency in peacebuilding."*

The failure to recognize women as *actors* in the development process has had disastrous consequences. For example, many of the studies point to the prevalence of sexual violence in refugee camps owing to the physical location of water access points and toilets. The location of these facilities made the women vulnerable to sexual harassment and violence. This could have been avoided had the women been consulted in decisions concerning the location of the toilets and other facilities.

Jacobson in the essay on Mozambique notes that during the armed conflict, development and emergency relief agencies "replicated patriarchal assumptions about the nature of family relationships". "The distribution of food and other goods to displaced families was conducted on the assumption that the normal family was male headed and special provision could only be made for widows. As a result, unmarried women and female-headed households were simply left out of the aid process." Although policy-level changes in humanitarian organizations have sought to address this problem, the results on the ground have been mixed.

Criticism also stems from the failure of the development profession to recognize that most contemporary conflicts do not follow the neat time-lines of "pre-violence", "active violence" and "post-violence", and are, in fact, characterized by long periods of prolonged violence. The result has been the establishment of clear-cut lines separating "humanitarian" and "relief aid" from "development". The assumption, albeit naïve and even dangerous, is that development can happen only in times of peace. The essays in this book question this neat chronology by pointing to today's reality which is that most regions of conflict are marked by perpetual and prolonged violence that varies in intensity and nature (from structural and private violence to criminal, inter-group and state-led violence). Linked to this is the continuum of

violence that women experience, from domestic violence within the home to sexual harassment, rape and torture, which are used as instruments of religious repression and political weapons in war. The studies on the conflicts in Iraq, Mozambique and Rwanda reflect this phenomenon marked by high rates of domestic violence in "post-ceasefire" and "post-accord" contexts.

The tendency to focus on "emergency relief and assistance" at the cost of longer-term development needs is cited as a major shortcoming of development policy in regions experiencing prolonged violence. Often, development policy is designed in such a manner that the linkages with other dimensions of peacebuilding (human rights, social justice, psychosocial healing, governance, women's rights et al) are simply not made.

A big part of the problem, as Welmoed Koekebakker in the study titled *Women and Violent Conflicts in Iraq* notes, is that while it is much easier to mobilize financial resources for the provision of shelter and food, it is much more difficult to raise funds for issues such as governance, justice and human rights. Koekebakker shares that international organizations are more willing to give money to meet the short-term goals of "relief and assistance" in areas such as housing and health care than for longer-term projects on reproductive rights, local governance and education. Due to the prolonged nature of the conflict in Iraq, scores of women and girls have been unable to attend school for years. Therefore, while female literacy should be a central goal for development policy in Iraq (and even though local Iraqis articulated this sentiment in their conversations with Koekebakker), most international organizations and Western governments have instead focused on the short-term goals of relief and rehabilitation. As a result, the more complex issues of development are left to local civil society groups to address.

This has created a situation wherein, often, international development agencies and local civil society groups work at cross-purposes with the latter advocating a broader definition of development that includes human rights and social justice issues.[1] In this context, the authors advocate a broader definition of development

[1] Due to the paucity of funds for such issues, some local civil society organizations are forced to shut down operations. Many, as a survival technique, change their agenda to the blinkered goal of "delivery of assistance and relief". Others become sub-contractors for larger national and international NGOs. The two studies on Sri Lanka by Sunila Abeyesekara and Sarala Emmanuel highlight this phenomenon and point to the "brain drain" that international agencies and organizations have initiated by poaching local staff – often women – of community-based NGOs through the allurement of exorbitant salaries and job benefits. In a situation already marked by scarce human resources, such processes have a detrimental impact on local civil society activism and capacities for peacebuilding.

practice, linking it to issues of gender, peace, justice and sustainability and foregrounding the psychosocial and relational dimensions in addition to the political and economic aspects of the conflict.

They assert that a thorough research of the complexities of the local context *prior* to the conceptualization of development policies should be the *norm* rather than the *exception*. Often, people are forced to accept global policy approaches even if they have articulated a different perspective on the kind of development support they need. While the reasons for this imposition vary from the dictates of funders to those of "time efficiency" and "less effort", the result is that development practice fails in its goals of economic reconstruction, social and gender justice, and most importantly, in enabling local stakeholders to reach their fullest potential. The starting point, as the authors indicate, should be to dialogue with those who have suffered from the conflict, and to ask them to envision the kind of society they wish to build. Inherent in this dialogue is a discussion on gender identities and gender relations, and how these might change in the "post-conflict" context.

In the context of the above critique, a key question that the authors ask is this: Is it possible to think of "development from within" where the process is conceptualized and sustained by local stakeholders rather than driven by an external source, be it the World Bank or an international women's NGO? Can the benchmarks for success be re-conceptualized to include the "development of local capacities, the establishment of local ownership over activities, and the promotion of an active civil society"?

Women in Decision-Making Processes

Even as the authors emphasize the valuable role that women play in development and peacebuilding, they try to transcend the essentialist notion that women are "born peace-lovers, care-givers and nurturers" and that men are "warriors". In so doing, they point to the violent agency of women and the nonviolent agency of men as peacebuilders and as victims as well.

In this context, the authors, drawing on their research from diverse regions of conflict, debate the question: If a "critical mass" of women were to be included in decision-making processes, would policy and practice be different? Some of the authors feel that it would be naïve to overstate the impact of the mere physical presence of women at peace negotiations. For example, Jacobson in the study on Mozambique is sceptical if the presence of women could have averted the imposition of neo-liberal economic conditions on the post-conflict government. Others hold that

women's presence will make a difference once they are also involved in the planning and design stage. They take the view that the focus on a "critical mass" of women will not show results if such processes have been conceptualized without a gender lens. Mibenge in the study on Rwanda notes that even though women have 30 percent reservation in the national Parliament, their presence has had little impact on the number of prosecutions for sexual violence during the genocide. This is attributed to the absence of a gender lens in the conceptualization of the legal and political frameworks. Reflecting the divergences on this question, the book acknowledges the need for far greater empirical research on the subject.

PEACE PRINTS, a South Asian Journal of Peacebuilding, is published by WISCOMP (Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace), an initiative of the Foundation for Universal Responsibility of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, New Delhi.
Providing a space for research on issues that lie at the intersection of gender, conflict, peace and security, the journal serves as a resource for practitioners and scholars working in the field of peacebuilding in the South Asian region.

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