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Wars Against Women: Sexual Violence, Sexual Politics and the Militarised State

Liz Kelly

Stories on the news, disconnected messages from war zones. The standoff in Drumcree [Northern Ireland]; women supporting the marchers and women protesting. But at root this is macho posturing; men of power, men who presume power refusing to give up one iota of historical privilege. I think about the stories my friend Monica McWilliams has told me of men's behaviour in the so-called 'peace talks', where their misogyny and bigotry are palpable. For days the headlines which followed tell of the rape and murder of women and girls: Jade Mathews aged nine; Lyn and Megan Russell, a woman and her child murdered in woods; Nicola Parsons, an eighteen-year-old. A man has walked into a nursery school in Wolverhampton waving a machete. Chaos and the breakdown of the social order, or just business as usual? There is a common thread, which none of the reporting seems to notice – these are all stories of men engaged in the pursuit of entitlement, men who rage at being challenged or denied, men who have no respect for the lives of women and children. (Journal entry, 10 July 1996)

This short reflection encapsulates the core theme of this chapter: that sexual violence¹ as a deliberate strategy in war and political repression by the state is connected in a range of ways to sexual violence in all other contexts. Sexual violence is one of the most extreme and effective forms of patriarchal control, which simultaneously damages and constrains women's lives and prompts individual and collective resistance among women (Kelly 1988). In exploring these connections the conventional distinctions in political theory between 'public' and 'private', 'war' and 'peace' become problematic. Gladys Acosta from Bogota notes:

Every war causes us pain and the last few years we have been removing the veil of suffering of women in these times of war. These wars concentrate the greatest destructive capacity of humankind ... but there is another war. There is an invisible war, a war more difficult to name, which is the one that

women suffer in those closed spaces called our homes, and from which some of us survive and others don't. (Reilly 1996: 26-7)

This 'invisible' war has been variously named a 'shadow war' or, in the early days of second-wave feminism, simply 'the sex war'; one question this chapter poses is whether the use by feminists of the word 'war' with respect to gender relations should be understood as a powerful metaphor or as an accurate naming of a historical reality.

Victim and/or Agent: Women's Use and Support of Violence

In focusing in this chapter on men's use of violence against women I am acutely aware of the potential criticism that the analysis is predicated on an exclusion of women as perpetrators and supporters of violence in both inter-personal and inter-group relations. Elsewhere, I have addressed the necessity of feminists developing both theoretical frameworks and practical strategies for dealing with women as perpetrators of interpersonal violence (Kelly 1991, 1996). Other chapters in this volume draw attention to the fact that women, in a variety of contexts, 'take up arms' as members of the military and insurgent groups, and support, collude with, or acquiesce to, the use of violence in civil unrest and international conflicts.

This does not, in my view, alter the fact that the use of violence – inter-personal, state-sanctioned and insurgent – remains a primarily masculine preserve, and that women who enter these terrains do so within a set of long-standing gendered meanings. Recent debates about how a focus on women as victims of violence constitutes a denial of women's agency are revealing in this context (see Kelly et al. 1996). In many versions of this argument agency appears to reside solely in the actions of the violator; thus, the position of agent for women is confined to perpetration of, or support for, violence. The agency which women exhibit (and feminist research has documented) not only in resisting and coping with personal victimisation but also through collective opposition to inter-personal violence and/or war, is disavowed. In this construction, women's agency is recognised only when women act in ways which resemble traditional male behaviour. This restriction of the meaning of agency does a profound injustice to survivors of sexual violence, and to feminist research, practice and activism which have consistently sought to make visible the actions involved in surviving, coping with and resisting victimisation.

To integrate women's use of (and support for) violence alongside the connections between contexts in which women are victimised is beyond the scope of this chapter. The volume as a whole none the less represents a movement towards developing the tools to do justice to this challenging

area of feminist thought, without either valorising the use of violence or ignoring women's agency within victimisation.

War and Peace

An important motivation behind an earlier paper (McCollum et al. 1994) on which this chapter builds was to point out, in the context of extensive media coverage of war rape in former Yugoslavia, that knowledge of sexual violence in armed conflicts was not new. Brownmiller (1975) compiled evidence of its pervasiveness in 1975, including rapes of Scottish women in 1800 during the English occupation, during the German occupation of Belgium and France in 1914, and in World War II. Mezey notes: 'Rapes of German women by Russian soldiers during the liberation were widely reported and charges of the raping of Chinese women in the "Rape of Nanking" were heard at the trials in Tokyo in 1946: 20000 reports in the city during the first month of occupation' (Mezey 1994: 589).

Revealingly, the Japanese reluctance to prosecute perpetrators was justified on the basis that: 'If the army men who participated in the war were investigated individually they would probably all be guilty of murder, robbery or rape' (quoted in Brownmiller 1975: 62). Enloe (1987, 1988, 1989, 1993) has, for over a decade, been documenting the connections between masculinity, militarism, war and coerced and organised prostitution.

What requires exploration, therefore, is not only how sexual violence is implicated in armed conflicts, but also why and how violence against women has been minimised, denied and hidden in the documentation of these events. The central questions this chapter addresses include: how does the violence which is an essential part of armed conflict articulate with gender relations? Does militarism construct a particular form of brutal (or brutalised) masculinity? When is a war a war, and what constitutes peace from the perspective of women?

A central concern of 'second-wave' feminism has been to develop language and meanings which reflect women's reality; this is as relevant to international as to inter-personal politics. Key questions for feminist theory are: what are the conditions of 'war' and 'peace' for women? What is a feminist definition of war? The term 'sex war' was commonplace in feminist rhetoric and analysis in the 1970s. Undoubtedly in some contexts this was intended as a powerful metaphor, but in some of its uses the intention was undoubtedly to challenge the limited definition of war; to extend its meaning to the continuing social and political conflict between men and women. The concept has been less evident in the 1980s and 1990s (see French 1992 for an exception), perhaps because of the frequent use of it, usually in trivialised contexts, by the mass media. Nevertheless, the locating

of gender relations as ongoing sites of conflict suggests that we should understand sexual violence in situations of national/civil armed conflict, as expansions in location, forms and intensity, as the intersection of two conflicts informed by, and constructed through, gender.

The conventional (patriarchal) definition of war involves associations with activity, heroism and masculinity. Peace, by contrast, is often understood as the absence of war, but in more developed formulations it is also linked to the quiet, mundane, feminine. Even within this conventional definition, 'peacetime' in one location involves conditions and actions which foster 'wartime' elsewhere. Between 1900 and 1988 there were 207 conventionally defined wars, in which 78 million people were killed; two-thirds of all nation-states were involved in at least one, and ninety-three states were created – most violently – between 1945 and 1985 (Morgan 1989: 144). Yet in the West we are repeatedly told that this century has been a relatively 'peaceful' one. 'Peace' is clearly defined here as what happens 'at home'; but there is a lengthy feminist tradition of questioning the attribution of 'peace' to the home/household where male tyranny presides.

Enloe's feminist definition of peace is 'women's achievement of control over their lives' (Enloe 1987: 538); she adds that any such peace is fragile and tentative, without the conditions which enable it to be continually re-created. For Enloe, a feminist theorisation of peace requires detailed understanding of women's oppression and its connections to the ways in which gender, and especially the construction of masculinity, inflects with capitalism, colonialism and militarism. A peace meaningful to women would require not just the absence of armed and gender conflict at home, locally and abroad, but also the absence of poverty and the conditions which re-create it. Other vital questions include: what are the connections between constructions of 'national security' and women's safety? How do acts of individual male violence connect with institutionalised state violence?

Which violent conflicts are attributed the title 'war' is not just an issue in relation to women but also for indigenous peoples in colonised countries where various forms of genocidal violence have decimated populations. One of the many legacies of colonisation has been institutionalised violence, and more exploration is needed of how this is gendered; especially the ways in which these legacies connect sexual violence. For example, why are Aboriginal women thirty-three times more likely to be violently murdered than white Australian women? How are we to account for the massive levels of reported rapes – and more recently sexual assault of girls – in South Africa (Vogelman and Eagle 1991; Mabaso 1992)? Neither patriarchal violence nor genocidal colonialism are termed war in mainstream accounts; the power to name war (and peace) is the prerogative of dominant nations

and groups. It is this entitlement which feminist perspectives have sought to challenge.

Militarised Masculinity

Most feminists who have addressed international politics have urged a focus not on war but militarisation, since it is militaristic culture which legitimises violence as a way of resolving conflicts, of establishing and maintaining power hierarchies within and between states. Until recently, the military – both in terms of troops and policy – has been a masculine preserve, and it remains an institution which re-creates and reworks gender relations locally and internationally (Enloe 1987). Glib distinctions between wartime and peacetime are challenged by this perspective, since the power of the military within the politics and economics of nations, and the processes of militarisation, exist whether 'war' is being fought or not. Time-limited armed conflicts must, therefore, be located within wider social processes, which have become increasingly the concern of women from various Third World countries where foreign military bases have been located, and/or where their national state is explicitly militarised. How gender is deployed in the development, and changing forms, of militarisation has become an important arena of feminist investigation.

Enloe (1987) argues that state institutions for organised violence have historically and cross-culturally been dependent on maleness; and that this is the outcome of explicit political choices. The commonality constructed through militarised masculinity has facilitated the overriding of class, status and ethnic differences between troops and officers. The content of recent debates about allowing women in combat roles and ending the ban on 'out' gay men and lesbians within the military merely serve to confirm the historical centrality of heterosexual masculinity in militarisation.

Explicit patriarchal, heterosexist and racist attitudes and behaviour have been found in research not just on the military, but also on the police – the other organisation which state societies invest with legitimate use of violence. In both institutions sexual harassment of female members is institutionalised within organisational culture, leading to serious questions about the responsibilities invested in sections of the military and the police to protect civilian populations. In civil conflicts, and some 'peacetime' contexts, the police have also been implicated as perpetrators of sexual violence, but in many countries it is the failure of the police to act as enforcers of the law with respect to violence against women which has attracted most feminist criticism (see, for example, Campbell 1997; Gregory and Lees 1999; Kelly 1999). It is more than a little ironic that, across

contexts and continents, the justification police traditionally offer for non-intervention in domestic violence has been 'keeping the peace'.

How far the symbols and ideological assumptions which underpin the military are common across societies and cultures is a further area for more detailed research. Are there, for example, a multitude of versions of the songs/poems/rhymes which we are familiar with from US and UK sources?

This is my rifle
This is my gun
One is for killing
The other for fun.

(quoted in Morgan 1989: 154)

Cohn analysed the language of US military strategists, which is replete with sexual imagery and metaphors. She concludes that military discourse contains: 'strong currents of homoerotic excitement, heterosexual domination, the drive towards competence and mastery, the pleasures of membership in an elite and privileged group' (Cohn 1988: 97). Her central theme – the link between sex and death in military discourse – is echoed in much (Western) male philosophy, where heroism and the ultimate courage in death are central preoccupations (Lloyd 1986). Such intellectual voices have offered forms of justification for the use of violence by states and organised religion through the association with both manhood and nationhood. The ideas are especially potent where religion and the state (and religion and insurgent/oppositional groups) are explicitly connected. Morgan notes: 'History is a story of violence – public legitimised violence (men's relationships to other men) and private eroticised violence (men's relationships with women)' (Morgan 1989: 113).

History is also a story of male dominant violent cultures successfully overtaking, not to mention overwhelming and eliminating, other forms. Women's bodies and women as a group have in the process been constructed as the locus or carriers of culture. It is this, coupled with misogyny, which marks them as targets in military conflicts. Women's bodies are constructed as both territory to be conquered and vehicles through which the nation/group can be reproduced. The call by Ian Paisley, in the context of the conflict in Northern Ireland, to loyalist women to 'breed babies for Ulster' is just one example of a recurring theme. This positioning of women as carriers of culture has wider implications. Within any conflict or struggle about cultural 'authenticity' or national identity, gender is always lurking beneath (or closer to) the surface. It is these connections which feminist resistance, in a range of contexts, to religious fundamentalism has sought to highlight.

The relationship between militarised masculinity, violence and gender relations is, however, not confined to state organisations. Morgan (1989) explores the way oppositional, radical/left insurgent movements also draw upon and rework the masculinist values which underpin the structures they are challenging. From her location of involvement in an American far-left group in the late 1960s and her subsequent radical commitment to global feminism, she notes that national liberation movements have consistently been male-led. While small numbers of women may be 'full' and active members, they are invariably expected/required to sexually service men of the group. She maintains that, to date, all national liberation movements have sold out women if they succeeded in overthrowing the incumbent state, and the more statist the 'revolutionary' government becomes the more the reconstituted military returns to its usual masculinist form. Enloe echoes this analysis using the specific example of the Sandanistas in Nicaragua: 'it is interesting to note that when the Sandinistas were the insurgents, there were many women in their ranks. But today, seven years after the new state's creation, while women account for a major proportion of militia members, they have been exempted by the Sandanista regime from military conscription' (Enloe 1987: 35).

Both of these commentaries pre-date the transformation in South Africa, and extensive debates within global feminism as to the benefits, limits and dangers of nationalism for women. It is an open question whether there are now different stories to be told. What is incontestable, however, is the urgency for feminists to observe and record the ways in which large-scale reconstruction within, or of, nation-states and regions involve a realignment, and/or re-creation of, patriarchal power and control, and the similarities and differences in the 'patriarchal bargains' (see Introduction, this volume) which emerge.

Morgan also notes the shift in many localised movements of women in the USA (from civil rights to the ecology movement) who transform their daily individual resistance into loose coalitions of action. Once men become involved the participatory grass-roots structures are transformed, often developing into hierarchical, male-led, self-righteous organisations which increasingly espouse an 'ends justify the means' philosophy. Increasingly, activism is redefined in terms of the investment of manhood – the heroism of 'dying for the struggle' is one element in the resort to, and justification of, violent tactics. These transformations, for Morgan, signal that: 'A politics of hope has become a politics of despair' (Morgan 1989: 169).

The vast majority of women do not take up arms but are desperately trying to survive. Internal movements for peace are frequently led by women, who are committed to finding alternatives to violence. Such movements are invariably responded to with contempt and derision by male

(military) leaders from all sides, and where women's agenda contains an explicit feminism this disparagement rapidly adapts to include overt hostility and misogyny (see McWilliams 1997).

Wars on Women

Helwig, reporting on an international conference, Women Overcoming Violence, held in 1992 in Bangkok, notes:

Women stand in a relationship to violence and power which is probably unique among oppressed groups. Our primary oppressors are, almost invariably, found among our immediate family or our lovers. Terror for women is quiet, pervasive, ordinary; terror happens at home. We know what war is about because war is part of any woman's daily experience. Daughters or sisters or wives, we know about 'loving your enemy' in a particularly direct and painful way. (Helwig 1993: 7)

The route to connections between women, across nationalist and other divisions, was agreement that the most basic, shared, threat was being killed by a member of one's own family. These routine, unremarked, daily encounters with violence and coercion were understood as powerful constraints on women's freedom, including their ability to participate in movements for economic and political rights. That women are most likely to be assaulted by a man known to them, and particularly sexual partners, has been one of the most compelling findings of three decades of feminist research on sexual violence. It starkly illustrates a profound difference in the structure of gender oppression compared to other structures of power; not only are women required to live alongside and respect their oppressors, they are expected to love and desire them. The social relations of the sex war, are – in significant ways – constructed very differently from those in other conflicts, involving trust rather than distrust, 'love' rather than hatred, partnership rather than opposition. The complexity of the issues and questions this reality creates for individual women and for feminist theory and practice has produced some of the most intractable and irascible debates and differences within local and international women's groups and movements.

The defences which men draw on to justify their abuse of female partners and family members range from the disingenuous resort to 'love' to, in militarised contexts, notions of 'defending the fatherland' or even being 'on the front-line'. The Bangkok conference explored many more connections between the 'shadow war' and conventionally defined wars, including the costs to women of national and international conflicts: 70–80 per cent of the world's refugees are women and children; in many

developing countries the military budget exceeds that for health and education combined; the intensification of sexual exploitation to service the military; the lack of sexual safety for women, including the rape of refugees and 'enemy' women. The connections between soldiers who come home and brutalise those close to them and, at a deeper level, between constructions of masculinity, patriotism and violence, and parallel constructions of women as 'other' as linked to nature, land and territory were key themes. Rather than view sexual violence in war as different, this group of women and many feminists before and since chose to see and make connections:² that militarised sexual violence is perpetrated by men who are some women's lovers, sons, brothers and neighbours. That their behaviour towards women in one context is connected to their actions in others.

Rape was used in former Yugoslavia to terrorise populations and inflict maximum humiliation on communities; but it was women³ who carried the shame, who were later shunned and excluded, because they embodied the failure of the militarised men to 'protect' their homeland. Staja Zajovic, from Women in Black Belgrade, notes: 'A patriarchal brotherhood demonstrates its "male strength" through war. However, the rape of their women is not lived as pain in her body but as a male defeat: he could not protect his own property' (Zajovic 1993: 5).

Not only are women required to cope with the damage of sexual assault, but the meaning it has at a symbolic level results in additional layers of material consequences and injustice. 'In Bosnia the women who are raped are feared, hated and despised ... This is all the more extraordinary given the close, fully integrated communities that existed before the conflict and the fact that the perpetrators are previous friends and neighbours, colleagues and teachers of the women they later rape and kill' (Mezey 1994: 589). But is this so extraordinary? It is known men who are most likely to be rapists in so-called 'peacetime', and when women make the difficult choice to name them as rapists they frequently face disbelief and blame from their friends, family and community, including some women. Women in a variety of contexts may chose to opt for immediate self-protection by allying themselves with more powerful men, rather than support (believe) less powerful women and girls; that this happens in the context of armed conflict should come as no surprise to feminists – it is yet another example of the 'patriarchal bargains' women make in circumstances not of their choosing.

In drawing attention to the scale of the atrocities in war, and the injustices which follow, the fact that *all* women who are raped experience levels of shame, risk being disbelieved, blamed or shunned by friends and family disappeared. While more extreme, the responses to women in former

Yugoslavia are not that different from the stories women on crisis lines hear the world over. The choice between silence and stigma is one every woman who has been raped has to negotiate, weighing the costs of each. Self-blame and the absence of justice are also themes which connect work on rape across locations and contexts.

One issue which war rape has highlighted is the cultural meanings which rape embodies. In cultures where honour is still a core value, the meaning of rape for each individual woman and her family is filtered through this discourse. In former Yugoslavia, many still believe that following rape, women's honour, and that of her family, is retrievable only through suicide. Thus countless women face an impossible choice between silence and stigma. For it to be known publicly that you have been 'dishonoured' narrows women's life choices considerably, and anecdotal accounts suggest that many of the women who spoke about their assaults have subsequently survived through prostitution. The alternate choice of silence was a central theme in feminist lawyer Sarah Maguire's (1998) contribution to a recent conference.⁴ Through Lawyers' International Forum for Women's Human Rights she has been working in former Yugoslavia to enable women who have been raped access to justice through the UN war crimes tribunal. Apart from the fact that neither this tribunal nor the one on Rwanda has been adequately funded, there is minimal recognition of the consequences for women of naming as their rapists men who now live in the same or the next village. It is unrealistic, not to mention potentially dangerous, to expect women to testify without making any provision for their protection. Some of the strategies feminist activists are developing to enable women to testify draw on the best elements of legal reform from various jurisdictions; indeed, some of the provisions move far beyond the current legal framework in the UK and most other countries. These efforts have, however, not been reflected in the actions of officials charged with implementing international law. But this is not the only reason why more cases have not been prosecuted. Women in former Yugoslavia are exercising agency in choosing to remain silent. They, like women everywhere, understand that speaking out can have unintended consequences, and may not result in either natural or formal justice.

This 'no-win' situation is echoed in Rwanda, and it could be argued that it is 'worse' since not only has less public attention been paid to the situation, but also the scale of international (feminist) solidarity work has been far less evident. Layika (1996) argues that explicit orders were given not to make the mistake of the 1959 war: sparing women and children. She states: 'the rape of Rwandan women was of a scale that surpasses the imagination' (Layika 1996: 39); there are some areas of the country where every woman still alive has been raped – by gangs and individuals and in

refugee camps (p. 40). The 'punishment' of women continues, since there is limited judicial redress and little sympathy from others: 'people reproach them for having preferred survival through rape ... A wall of silence has been built between them and their families' (p. 40).

Feminist analysis of gender violence during war refuses to name it as fundamentally different from gender violence in other 'contexts'. In the case of former Yugoslavia this has meant foregrounding both 'ethnic cleansing' and sexual violence.⁵ Staja Zajovic comments: 'Ethnic hate is yet another argument which men use to justify violence against women. The hate of women, the oldest hate of all, is the hate of the Other. Violence against women becomes completely justified, especially when hate of the other permeates all spheres of life, becoming even part of state ideology' (Zajovic 1993: 3). Sexual violence in the context of armed conflict intensifies already existing attitudes and behaviours.

More Connections

The violence women experience from men is not confined to conventionally defined conflict situations. Rape and sexual murder have been used as forms of political repression recently in Haiti and Peru,⁶ and 'custodial rape' by police and the armed forces has been an important organising focus in India and Pakistan (Human Rights Watch 1995). Varying forms of permission and legitimation exist prior to emerging armed conflict situations, and persist after there has been some form of resolution. A number of factors have been proposed as distinguishing sexual violence in armed conflict, but few survive detailed scrutiny.

In the reporting of forced pregnancy in former Yugoslavia the connection was seldom made with slavery, where black women were repeatedly raped, forced to bear children by white male slave-owners. This permission which powerful white men afforded themselves (often with the complicity of white women) did not end with slavery, African-American women continue to be differentially targeted for rape. Opal Palmer Adisa, exploring the representation of rape in African-American women's literature, calls it an 'undeclared war'; a war that has spread in the twentieth century to the extent that there is no demarcation to distinguish between battlefields and safe zones (Adisa 1992: 367). Connecting these contexts and understanding the ways in which women negotiate the contradictions of forced pregnancy, and what factors are most salient in their decision-making processes about whether they can mother children conceived in conditions of force and violation, deserve more critical feminist attention.

What armed conflict situations do foster are actions by groups of men, where all participate or some watch and encourage. But even here, there are

other contexts in which sexual violence occurs in planned, organised and relatively public contexts – all forms of gang rape involve the co-operation and participation (even if only as observer) of more than one man. Peggy Reeves Sanday's (1990) research revealed the centrality of gang rape to some US male college fraternities; and both clients and pimps have been known to organise group rapes of prostituted women (Hoigard and Finstad 1992). Recently in Sweden stories have begun to be told of young people's parties which conclude with a mass rape (personal communication, Lundgren 1996). It might seem obvious that in a such a situation of powerlessness women would not blame themselves for the violation, but they do; and their sense of shame is often multiplied by the knowledge that their degradation was witnessed; the damage to trust is compounded by the fact that there were people who could have intervened but did not.

A case which was widely reported in the USA at the time connects the military, organised sexual violence and 'peacetime'. It was referred to as 'Tailhook', and involved organised public sexual harassment and assault of women at a naval social function (see also D'Amico, this volume). Some of the women in attendance, including fellow officers, were forced to move through a double column of men in the hotel corridor who awarded each other the liberty of touching the women and saying whatever they wanted to them. Paula Coughlin, a lieutenant, blew the whistle after watching Anita Hill testifying about sexual harassment by a member of government. In the investigation the 'gauntlet' was described as a 'time-honoured tradition' (Enloe 1993: 196).

Another commonly cited distinction between rape in war and other contexts is that the former is often public, whereas the latter usually occurs in private. This draws too great a distinction between the two circumstances; reality is more complex and messy with some rapes during armed conflicts occurring in private, and some at other times in public or semi-public. Moreover, recent reports of 'honour killings' of young women in Turkey took place in public, as a deliberate statement and warning to all young women (Kelly 1997). There are also many forums in which sex is a public and shared experience between men; for example, elements of the sex industry are based on this wish to act in the company of others who may be strangers or colleagues/friends. Rape by gang and fraternity members are also examples where violence against women is used as a form of male bonding. Conflicts between gangs are often referred to as 'gang warfare' and tend to be understood as disputes about territory; it is seldom only control of public space or forms of illegal activity which are at issue, but also access to/control of women within the territorial boundaries. Strong parallels can be drawn here with the ways some paramilitary groupings control territory and populations.

A further distinction which has been suggested is that during military conflicts men's violence is more ritualised, but sexual violence can be ritualistic in everyday, domestic contexts involving patterns in the acts, words and symbols used. One fascinating connection here is between 'ritual abuse' and political torture. The existence of ritual abuse has been strongly contested in both the child abuse literature and the Western media (Kelly and Scott 1992; La Fontaine 1994). What is remarkable, however, are the similarities between the accounts of child and adult survivors of ritual abuse and the documentation of political torture in military regimes, and by the military in other contexts. For example, Ximena Bunster-Burotto (1994) recounts how the southern cone countries in Latin America explicitly refined (through dedicated sections in the military) gendered patterns of punishment and sexual torture. Many of the elements she outlines – being deprived of sleep, food and drink, being made to witness the abuse and humiliation of family members, gang rape, the use of animals and objects and being offered the 'choice' of damage to oneself or someone else – echo accounts by women and children of ritual abuse (Cook 1995/6; Cook and Kelly 1997). Thus what is recognised and practised as military strategy in armed conflicts or by military regimes is deemed 'incredible' in non-military contexts.

Ritual, in any context, uses the symbolic as a form of power; where this involves sexual violence it is often also invoked to absolve perpetrators from individual responsibility (Lundgren 1995). References to a greater power than the abusive individual have echoes in the defence many soldiers use that 'they were just following orders'. What is being enacted in most of these settings are reinforcements of the primacy of relationships between men, and the accompanying subordination of women which underpins male supremacy. Men affirm one another as men through the exclusion, humiliation and objectification of women. What we need to explore in more depth is whether any hierarchical grouping of men, organised as men, creates conditions in which coercive heterosexuality is promoted and enacted. These groupings would include sports teams, private clubs, gangs, secret societies as well as the military. An important question, which deserves attention, is what room there is in such groupings for dissent, and how many men chose this option.

The Military and the Sex Industry

The connection between the military and the sex industry does not require war to be currently fought, as the last thirty years in South-East Asia attest (Strudevand and Stoltzfus 1992; Troung 1990). Sexual access to women has been explicitly organised by the military for centuries,

demonstrating a fundamental connection between militarism and coercive heterosexuality.

A recent example reported in *International Children's Rights Monitor* involved the presence of UN 'peace-keeping' troops in Cambodia resulting in a 'breath-taking increase in prostitution, in part involving children' (Arnvig 1993: 4). One health official estimated the increase in women and girls involved in prostitution in Phnom Penh from 6,000 in 1991 to 20,000 in 1992. Kane (1998: 7-9) confirms this account and notes that at least a third were minors. She provides another example in which the Italian component of UN peace-keeping forces in Mozambique not only availed themselves of the local sex industry, but became active in organising it (pp. 48-9). As in Bosnia, some of those involved are poverty-stricken, others are women and girls who have been raped by men of their own community and are 'unmarriageable'. These are the most common routes into the sex industry for all women and girls; what armed conflicts do is make survival even more fragile. Arnvig comments: 'The tragedy of Cambodia becoming a part of this sex-market is that it comes just at a time when the country is supposedly on its way to "new" society after more than two decades of violence, destruction and repression ... Someone might argue: but this is not war; this is peace' (Arnvig 1993: 6).

Individual use of pornography within the Western military is not just accepted, but virtually compulsory. Pornographic songs pervade Western military culture, being sung during manoeuvres and before and during combat. French (1992) notes how many of these 'war' songs explicitly equate the mutilation of women with male prowess; the recreational song book of the 77th Tactical Squadron of the US Air Force based outside Oxford includes many lyrics about sadistic sexual violence. Military equipment is often 'decorated' with pornographic imagery. Parallels can be seen here with men's sports, especially rugby and American football. In the context of international debates about the influence of pornography on behaviour, with positions ranging from it having no influence at all to an argument that it is in itself a form of violence, it is surely relevant to ponder on the question why the military goes to such lengths to ensure troops have access to it, especially before they are due to see 'action'.

While the connection between the military and adult prostitution has been well documented, rather less attention has been given to the sexual exploitation of children. Kane (1998) highlights that armed conflicts and displacement of populations create contexts in which children are often separated from their families. This increases their vulnerability to exploitation, and she cites cases of children having to trade sex for food in refugee and resettlement camps. She summarises a recent UN review of the sexual exploitation of children in situations of conflict. In all twelve of the case

studies examined, troops from all sides were implicated in the sexual exploitation of children, and in six cases – Angola, Bosnia, Cambodia, Croatia, Mozambique and Rwanda – the UN peace-keeping presence was associated with an increase in child prostitution (Kane 1998: 46). As with military involvement in adult prostitution in South-East Asia, the process is extended by the emergence of civilian 'sex tourism' to areas where sex with children can be bought easily and cheaply.

These repetitious patterns, which transform local, and sometimes national, economies through the use of women and children's bodies, raise serious questions about military bases, military behaviour, and the 'peace-keeping' and conflict resolution roles of the UN. In the latter case at the very least there ought to be explicit disciplinary rules against involvement of UN troops in prostitution, and consideration ought to be given to including civilian women skilled in supporting women and children in the aftermath of sexual violence as core components of any UN team.

Resistance to their exploitation is emerging throughout South-East Asia. Redress has been demanded by hundreds of Asian women kidnapped into sexual slavery by the Japanese military during World War II (Asian Women's Human Rights Council 1993; Shin 1996),⁷ and by Filipina women, who had worked in the sex industry, following the withdrawal of US troops and bases which resulted in many women being left destitute with children of US servicemen. Finding ways to make the military accountable for the consequences of extensive sexual exploitation, and taking issue with the presumed necessity of prostitution and pornography to the (presumed) heterosexual male military, must be key elements in any feminist response to militarisation.

The Home Front

Men returning from action do not leave the front-line behind. Military men who have been trained as 'lean, mean killing machines' return to their supposedly peaceful homes. Evidence from women in Croatia echoes the experience of women in Northern Ireland, that during armed conflict domestic violence involves many more incidents with weapons; the battlefield and home are not separate as ideology suggests they are. Nor are these effects limited to those living in the 'combat zone': Canadian shelter (refuge) workers noted that during the Gulf War women told stories of their husbands dressing in army uniforms before beating them, frequently after watching the TV news. Serbian and Croatian women have coined the term the 'post TV news syndrome' to describe men who began being violent to their partners after watching news coverage of the war (see also Introduction to this volume).

At the same time, Boric and Desnica (1996) maintain that domestic violence is never more invisible than in wartime. The national agenda shifts to the public sphere, requiring a spurious unity in the face of an external threat. 'Domestic' issues are subordinated to the 'war effort'; and any form of protest is defined as unpatriotic at best and at worst as subversion or treason.

Armed conflict also affects the forms of remedy and protection to which women have access. McKiernan and McWilliams's (1993) research on domestic violence in Northern Ireland outlines the consequences for women where the police become parties to an armed conflict, and 80 per cent of their time is spent on 'security' issues. Other areas of crime are thus under-policed, including sexual violence. In this context there are many areas which are controlled by paramilitaries, and the police refuse to enter them without the back-up of the army. Thus the agency which many women and children seek protection from in a crisis becomes unavailable to significant sections of the community. While paramilitary groups do often create alternative forms of policing, sexual violence is seldom high on their agenda. Even where they do choose to act, the sanctions tend to be forms of violence, and their own members are seldom if ever held accountable for abusing women and children.

What Difference Does War Make?

Armed conflict does make a difference, albeit not the absolute one which has been at times suggested. The limited protections available to women and implicit toleration are replaced by condoning and even an outright policy of sexual violence. There is an increase in the frequency of opportunistic and planned assaults within or close to the conflict zone. More of the violence occurs in public, so that women's violation and humiliation is witnessed by others in their community. These levels of permission constitute something of an 'open season' on enemy women and children, a licence to men to extend their range of violation. Even where sexual violence is not used as an explicit military tactic, implicit permission exists; which is why rape and coerced prostitution have never been properly encoded, or prosecuted as war crimes. 'History has shown that rape, even aggravated rape, in the context of war has been little prosecuted or punished. This is particularly true when the main perpetrators are political leaders whose cooperation is necessary for reaching a peace accord' (Koenig 1994: 131).

The destabilising effects of armed conflict have implications far away from the combat zone, changing priorities for many of the combatant nations. This may in turn result in the minimal policing and protection

afforded to women receding (McKiernan and McWilliams 1993). This may be compensated for, to some extent, where a significant percentage of the male population is 'called up', possibly enhancing women's safety temporarily if they do not reside close to the conflict zone/s. The example of Sri Lanka (Rajasingham 1998) illustrates such contradictory processes. Both displacement and early widowhood have created circumstances in which women have had to ensure their survival, and some have embraced the autonomy which this has afforded them and in the process refused the traditional Hindu placement of widows. At the same time the armed conflict in Sri Lanka (as in many other areas) has generated its own internal logic, with small local paramilitary groups controlling movement of people and goods into and out of particular areas. This has drastically limited women's freedom and mobility, since 'checkpoint rape' is all too common.

To conclude I want to return to the three central questions which were posed at the beginning of this chapter: how does the violence which is an essential part of armed conflict articulate with gender relations? Does militarism construct a particular form of brutal (or brutalised) masculinity? When is a war a war, and what constitutes peace from the perspective of women?

I have endeavoured to show that sexual violence connects 'war' and 'peace' as conventionally defined, and that these conventional definitions rely on a construction of 'war' which women's experiences belie. Nevertheless, armed conflict do accentuate both the construction of a brutalised masculinity, and a suspension – especially within and close to combat zones – of the limited protections from violation afforded to women at other times.

The vast majority of troops are men, and militarised masculinity is constructed through the requirement that, when necessary, troops will use violence against other human beings. While some attention has been given to men who refuse military service, and rather less to the traumatic impact of military action on some men, there is as yet hardly any attempt to discover whether, and how many, men in the military resist and reject the sexual use and abuse of women and children which appears to suffuse military culture. Interestingly, little research has been done on men in any context who choose to eschew violence in their relationships with women and children. Yet these men may have critical insights into how non-violent masculinities can be constructed.

'War' is not easy to define – when did it start? When did it end? Did anyone win? How can we tell? When asked from the perspective of women these questions become even more complex. Some Western historians have argued that periods of national and international conflict are times when

women 'gain', sometimes temporary sometimes permanent rights: for example, the vote in Britain in 1918, access to a wider variety of paid employment, and the link between warfare and welfare. There are two connected problems with this version of history. First, the focus is on the woman of the 'victorious' nation with minimal reference made to the consequences of 'the war' and 'the peace' for women of the defeated nations/groups. Hossain (1998), reflecting on the history of armed conflicts between India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, notes that displacement is not only a matter of physical location, but of much of women's experience. Even defeated combatants are welcomed home as heroes, but raped women are at worst ejected from their families, at best hidden away. The notion that women 'gain' from war involves not only ignoring women who belonged to the defeated side, but also not questioning elements of ideology, which parallel the discourses created in 'war' to recruit women into supporting it. The ending of many armed conflicts, between or within nations, have frequently required women to relinquish certain freedoms and/or forcible removal of what had previously been 'rights' – for example, to employment, abortion, childcare.

Any 'peace' involves a reworking of power relations, not just between nations or parts of nations but between men and women. Attempts are made to conscript women into a 'rebuilding the nation' agenda in which their needs are subordinated to those of repairing the damage to men and 'the society'. One central, but universally neglected, element of this is that violations women experienced during the conflict are silenced, since the male combatants need to be constructed as heroes rather than rapists (Davies 1996).

The centrality of masculinity and nationhood to armed conflicts creates a potent combination which displaces (silences) women's experiences of violation, poignantly illustrated by a former Yugoslavian woman: 'When the rapists came into our room all of us were crying; when some of us came back, all of us were silent, without voice' (Helwig 1993). Any attempt to make sense of state-sanctioned violence, of armed conflict within and between nations, which fails to include and take account of sexual violence in 'war' and 'peacetime' does a profound injustice to women, further contributes to the silencing of their voices, experiences and insights and reinforces the stigma which accompanies being a victim of sexual violence.

Notes

1. The term 'sexual violence' is used as a collective noun to encompass all forms of male violence against women and girls (Kelly 1988).
2. See also Mezey's (1994) discussion, from the perspective of a clinical psychologist,

of being part of an EC investigative commission into 'war rape' in former Yugoslavia. She notes that women were raped by soldiers, paramilitaries and male civilians, and that these (often multiple) rapists were 'normal' men, 'who were later welcomed back into communities as heroes' (p. 584); this reality challenges virtually all of the forensic constructions of 'rapists'.

3. Some evidence is emerging about the rape of men and boys in national/international conflicts. Euan Hague (1997) argues that gender and misogyny are at work in these contexts, through positioning assaulted men and boys as 'feminised victims'.

4. Rape and the Criminal Justice System, London, 14 June 1997.

5. One of the Croatian feminist services uses the term 'genocidal rape' to name the war rapes (Katarina Vidovic, personal communication, 1998).

6. In Peru the Marxist insurgent group Shining Path has specifically targeted feminists and women community organisers; for some of these women, activism has cost them their lives (see Americas Watch 1992).

7. Shin (1996) estimates that 200,000 women from Korea, China, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Taiwan and the Netherlands were involved as 'comfort women', of whom only 10 per cent are thought to have survived.

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