2011 Cummings-Perrucci Lecture

From Global Outrage to Action: Campaigning Against

Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict

Purdue University

Janie Leatherman

Director of International Studies and Professor of Politics

Fairfield University

20 October 2011

Introduction[1]

Sexual violence in warfare is among the darkest legacies of the twentieth century. It continues to ravage societies in the new millennium, destroying the essence of humanity by ripping apart bodies, lives, and families, and putting at risk the next generation, or even the possibility of a next generation. It casts a long shadow over the daily suffering of the victims, the prejudice directed at war orphans and rape babies, and the enduring trauma of broken communities. No part of the world has been unaffected by wartime sexual violence. There is evidence of sexual violence in all of the 31-armed conflicts ongoing in 2010.[2]

Historically speaking, talking about sexual violence in armed conflict has been taboo. But gradually the veil of silence is being lifted. Survivor testimonies, international media coverage, human rights monitoring and reports, the creation of international tribunals, and changes in international law have made sexual violence in warfare a cause célèbre, an outrage. Yet most of us would dismiss the perpetrators as mad, crazy or demonic, a "monster, inhuman, *unlike me.*"[3] The impulse to dissociate helps to buttress the assumption that "I wouldn't do that;" or fortify the desire to look the other way. "This matter isn't my problem." And so dissociation from sexual violence in war suppresses awareness and accountability. The silence that surrounds the topic is a critical element of the disciplinary machinery of war, not a weakness in the structure of the system.[4]

Tonight's talk on "Global Outrage: the Campaign against Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict," is part of a global movement to end violence against women that is joined by a

---

[1] This presentation draws from Janie Leatherman, *Sexual Violence and Armed Conflict* (Polity Press, 2011).

[2] See *Alert 2010, Report on Conflicts, Human Rights and Peacebuilding* (Escola de Cultura de Pau), available at http://escolapau.uab.cat/index.php?lang=en

[3] See Lisa S. Price, "Finding the Man in the Soldier-Rapist: Some Reflections on Comprehension and Accountability," *Women's Studies International Forum* 24, no. 2 (2001): 211.

[4] See Hilary Charlesworth, Feminist Methods in International Law, in *The Methods of International Law*, ed. Steven R. Ratner and Anne-Marie Slaughter (Washington, D.C.: American Society of International Law, 2004), 159-83.

nascent campaign to raise awareness of and end sexual violence against men and boys, too. There are many players in this campaign—international agencies, NGOs, and transnational social movements, with their websites playing a prominent role in galvanizing international awareness and action. Some of the key players include Stop Violence Against Women, UN Women, UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, stoprapenow.org, peacewomen.org, womenpeacesecurity.org, vday.org, Women Building Peace, Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, and campaigns to ban conflict minerals, such as the Enough Project, Global Witness, or the Jewish World Watch conflict minerals campaign.

Talking about sexual violence in war is itself an act of breaking taboo. I chose the title "global outrage" for two reasons: first, because this is a global movement to stop and alleviate the suffering that is found in every part of the world. Second, I chose the term global outrage, because the global campaign is often framed that way. But it is also a curious play on words: outrage is a euphemism employed in earlier historical periods to refer to rape. So, in effect, we are talking about outrage against outrage. Tonight we will take several steps to challenge the silence by mapping (1) why sexual violence happens in war; (2) how it happens and what its impact is; and (3) whether efforts to restore lives and prevent sexual violence can be more effective.

Part I: Why Sexual Violence Happens in War

Sexual violence in conflict does not happen in isolation from society's pre-existing socio-economic and culturally shaped gender relationships. This is a crucial point. The extent of gender based violence (GBV) in society is a predisposing condition for sexual violence in war, and is a principle reason why women and girls in countries with high levels of gender based discrimination and inequality are at a much greater risk of victimization and re-victimization of sexual violence from the onset to the aftermath of violent conflict. GBV involves many forms of human rights violations, such as rape, domestic violence, sexual assault and harassment, sex trafficking, and harmful traditional practices ranging from female genital mutilation, early marriage and bride inheritance to honor killings. Men, women and children can be targets of GBV, and this affects all the social institutions in society, including family and community structures and relationships. GBV intensifies and takes more extreme forms in a crisis, even escalating into a tool of war. In some armed conflicts, the brutality and systematic use of sexual violence rises to the level of a crime against humanity, a war crime and an aspect of genocide.

Silence on sexual violence undergirds the economic, social, cultural and political power structures of patriarchy. Patriarchy is a hierarchical social order centered on dominant or hegemonic forms of masculinity. It requires an investment of time, social organization, and resources [5] (by men and in particular ways by women, too) to sustain such disciplinary practices as honor killings; bride dowry that values men over women; cultural codes on adultery (that fail to differentiate it from rape); practices to ensure the purity of the girl child whether through surveillance, or cutting (such as female genital

---

[5] Carol Cohn and Cynthia Enloe, "A Conversation with Cynthia Enloe: Feminists Look at Masculinity and the Men Who Wage War," *Signs* 28, no. 4 (Summer 2003): 1192.

mutilation); forced marriage or child marriage; and ostracism, marginalization or hate against gays, lesbians and transgendered persons whose identity and/or sexual orientation lie outside dominant mechanisms of social inclusion. Patriarchy operates through hegemonic masculinity from local to global levels, and is a fundamental factor behind broad patterns of gender inequality seen around the world.

Contemporary war amplifies gender injustice in a context of globalized militarism and weak states. Where gender injustice is highest in the world, so too are indices of poverty, hunger, state fragility and war. The region where these factors coalesce most intensively is called an "arc of instability" that runs from the west coast of Africa, including the important oil-producing state of Nigeria across the African continent through the Persian Gulf region and into Central Asia and beyond, reaching Afghanistan, nuclear armed Pakistan, and Nepal. This arc of instability has a heavy concentration of the 20 failed or weakest states in the world that represent a population of 880 million people. Sub-Saharan Africa has an especially high concentration of states in crisis or war, or in a post-conflict period.[6]

Role of Hegemonic Masculinity

Hegemonic masculinity anchors patriarchy globally. It refers to a male-centered order that gives men, instead of women, primary access to power and privilege, a system that functions based on broad social consent and support. Hegemonic masculinity organizes the power relations between women and men, and the political agenda that sustains this hierarchy.[7] Hegemonic masculinity is defined more by its successful claim to authority than its use of direct violence. So, hegemonic males don't need to be engaged directly in violence themselves to assert their authority. However, by linking hegemonic masculinity to masculinist power, hierarchies are created among masculinities that depend variously on complicity, control or disempowerment of males. *Allied* masculinities are empowered (along with women who play that role, too), while *subordinate and marginalized* masculinities are ostracized or exploited along with various types of womanhood and femininity. Access to the inner sanctum of hegemonic masculinity is open, not just to men but even to women--as long as they do not threaten the link between hegemony and masculinist power. If they do, they are expelled from its inner circle.

Hegemonic masculinity is rooted in the development of a Western bourgeois ideology in the nineteenth century[8] that formed a global, racialized hierarchy of masculinities. These were "created as part of the institutionalization of a complex set of race and gender identities sustaining European imperialism—identities that still have a cultural legacy today."[9] There are colonial models of hegemonic masculinity, and also local, traditional

[6] See Commission on National Security in the 21st Century, *Shared Destinies: Security in a Globalized World* (Institute for Public Policy Research, November 2008).
[7] Christine Beasley and Juanita Elias, "Situating Masculinities in Global Politics," Second Oceanic Conference on International Studies, University of Melbourne (5-7 July 2006), 5, available at http://digital.library.adelaide.edu.au/dspace/handle/2440/36063.
[8] R. W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 68.
[9] Charlotte Hooper, *Manly States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 55.

models of masculinity that may compete with or reinforce each other to define the ideal masculine type. Women have also played a role in the imperial expansion of Western societies in their capacity as wives of military men, or colonial administrators, for example. Thus, international affairs have depended on the ways gender relates to hegemonic control.[10]

Hegemonic masculinity is reinforced in part by the opposition it sets up along the lines of race and class (for example, in terms of toughness or physicality). Working class men and Black, Latino, Native American, Asian and other men of color in the United States have a marginalized position in relation to hegemonic males. They are alienated by the gap between the expectations of hegemonic masculinity and the obstacles they face in their own lives to achieve it through the accumulation of wealth or access to power. Consequently, marginalized masculinity "creates a feeling of emasculation and powerlessness in the arenas of class and race, even though dominance is maintained in the arena of gender."[11] Marginalized masculinity is especially threatened in natural or manmade crises. For example, disasters and wars destroy social, political and economic institutions that people depend on for employment, status and prestige in society, and leave women and men with devastating personal, professional and economic losses. Hyper-masculinity provides men with an alternative role model to regain their lost status and aspiration to the power of hegemonic males.[12]

Hyper-masculinity and the Global War Machine

Hyper-masculinity exaggerates non-catastrophic masculinities, draws on excessive forms of toughness, and deploys violence in order to maintain or reassert dominance and control in the limited arenas available under extreme circumstances. Women and girls (and males perceived as weak) become a target for sexual violence because violence over them is socially constructed as a principle means for men to re-establish lost hegemony. As societies edge toward war's abyss, images of hyper-masculinity are deployed to mobilize marginalized men into hyper-masculinity, and drive gender polarization. Men who resist are targeted, too, for emasculation (for example, by forcing them to witness the rape of their wives or daughters, or by being raped and violated themselves), while women and girls are at particular risk.

Patriarchy is not natural; it requires discipline to reproduce and sustain it every day. But patriarchy is also facilitated by its incorporation into or "colonization" of other forms of

---

[10] Cynthia Enloe, *Manuevers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women's Lives*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); and *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*. 1st US edition. (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1990).

[11] Duke W. Austin, "Hyper-Masculinity and Disaster: Gender Role Construction in the Wake of Hurricane Katrina." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association Annual Meeting, Sheraton Boston and the Boston Marriott Copley Place, Boston, Massachusetts (31 July 2008), available at
http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p241530_index.html, 5.

[12] Austin, "Hyper-Masculinity and Disaster," 4.

social organization, such as ethnic cleavages, race and class relations, economic development, militarization, and militarized masculinity.[13] Today, militarized masculinity is part of a war machine organized through globalization.[14] Multinationals negotiate lucrative contracts and concessionary rights in fragile and failed states to skirt accountability or transparency. Social disintegration and chaos facilitate economic exploitation. Access to and control of local resources (like diamonds, coltan, gold, tin, timber, illicit drugs and other commodities) enrich local commanders and political backers and the middlemen that operate the global networks, while guaranteeing profits to multinational corporations. The end-users get relatively cheap technology, whether for cell phones or high tech weapons. War strategies are always political strategies about who remains in control and what assets are theirs.

Sexual violence is one of the most efficient tools of the global war machine for generating chaos and opening the door to practically unlimited exploitation and control. Sexual violence is also efficient because it is a cheap weapon that lends itself readily to the violation of *multiple* taboos, including but not limited to those involving rape. This augments the power of sexual violence. Besides rape, sexual violence also encompasses exploitation and abuse through sexual slavery, forced pregnancy, forced marriage, mutilation, cannibalism, violation of breast-feeding or pregnant and elderly women, the forcing of children to commit rape of others, or family members to commit incest; and of rape and sexual torture of men. In armed conflict, rape is often part of a systematic campaign of terror, resulting in gang rapes and collective rape. Gang rape is especially horrific. It involves multiple perpetrators sexually assaulting a victim and results in devastating physical outcomes (fistulas) that are extremely difficult to repair, if medical assistance is even available; and psychological consequences that not only devastate the victim, but also often destroy his or her ties to family and community.

II. How Does Sexual Violence Happen in War?

Sexual violence in armed conflict happens in a *place,* and involves *violent acts, perpetrators, victims, survivors and impacts* ranging from health to a broad array of social consequences. Sexual violence is also a *tool or strategy* of war that encompasses the *pre-conflict, conflict escalation and post-conflict phases*. It *breaks taboos* thereby violating rules and crossing thresholds that society sets on acceptable conduct. Sexual violence in war is a *runaway norm* because it norms or disciplines members of society to commit public bads or ills, like generating solidarity for genocide. It is a vicious norm that intensifies social harm through many overlapping, and egregious subversive strategies and practices.

Globalization commodifies violence through war machines that de-individualize combatants and reconstruct their identities by replacing family and community. The commodification of violence is achieved through the use of many local technologies.

---

[13] Joan Acker, "Gender, Capitalism and Globalization," *Critical Sociology* 30, no.1 (2004): 17-38.

[14] Danny Hoffman, *War Machines* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).

These include initiation rites and rituals for bullet proofing and other occult practices drawing on local beliefs, superstition, indoctrination and brainwashing for protection in battle; the glorification of violence through Rambo imagery with weapons that convey power; de-sensitizing using drugs, alcohol and forced commission of atrocity that together break down inhibitions for violence. War machines are a political economy of violence that plunder the *productive and reproductive economies* of local communities while they build alternative social structures and mechanisms of belonging, power, status, and wealth accumulation.

Sexual violence is a central tool for the war machine. It enables the subversion of traditional social order and sexual hierarchies by doing things that are taboo, doing it in ways that cross multiple thresholds on violence, and thus elevating the horror (such as violating pregnant women, betting on the sex of the fetus, then removing it and violating it). The heinous nature of such crimes makes it difficult to convey the horrors of sexual violence with words. However, conceptualizing sexual violence as a runaway norm points to (1) the many egregious forms or dimensions of violence it assumes, including torture, branding, mutilation, amputation, incest, and cannibalism; (2) targets of the violence, who often have special standing in society, such as pregnant women, the elderly, or children; (3) forced nature of the agency when children are compelled to commit incest against their parents or relatives; or when child soldiers are indoctrinated to commit war crimes; and (4) the loss of neutrality and safe space, as happens when peacekeepers or other humanitarian workers are violated, or they themselves commit sexual crimes against refugees in what should be a safe space.[15]

Rape is only one type of sexual violence in war, though probably the most widely mentioned. Rape is a sexual assault through penetration using a body part or other object, including vaginal copulation, or oral and anal penetration. The *perpetrators* of rape may be women or men; boys or girls (e.g. coerced as child soldiers). However, most often men are the perpetrators. During the last two decades, most reporting on sexual violence in war has focused on the victimization of females, especially adolescent girls, female-headed households, orphans and unaccompanied minors, and young girls and boys. However, sexual violence against males may be far more widespread than previously thought.[16] Men also are victims of sexual violence indirectly through strategies that feminize and emasculate them, such as forcing them to witness it being done to family

---

[15] What I struggled most with while writing *Sexual Violence and Armed Conflict* was how to communicate the extreme and compounded nature of the brutality, without qualifying what should never be qualified (genocide, for example), understating the scope and depth of atrocity, seeming gratuitous, or risking the dissociation and disengagement of the reader. These aspects of writing and speaking on this topic are daunting. Even to have a dialogue on sexual violence in armed conflict it is necessary to begin by ensuring the space for doing this is safe.

[16] See Health: Rape as a "Weapon of War' Against Men," IRIN, October 13, 2011, accessed on October 18, 2011 at http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?ReportID=93960; see also Will Storr, "The Rape of Men," *The Guardian*, July 16, 2011, accessed on October 18, 2011 at http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2011/jul/17/the-rape-of-men; Eugene Kinyanda, et al, "War Related Sexual Violence and its Medical and Psychological Consequences as seen in Kitgum, Northern Uganda: A cross-sectional Study," *BMC International Health and Human Rights 10:28 (2010)*, accessed on October 18, 2011.

members. Sexual violence is also frequently a component of torture, whether of males or females. The war in Iraq provides substantial evidence of this, including for men.[17]

The *place* where sexual violence is perpetrated is almost always of significance in its own way. Sexual violence in armed conflicts occurs in all manner of locations, including in homes, gardens or fields, at work and in many places considered safe havens, such as hospitals, clinics, schools and religious sites (e.g. churches, mosques, synagogues).

There are some patterns of gendered violence that emerge *across* cultural contexts as societies gravitate toward open violence, which also makes it possible for us to monitor such situations for conflict early warning and prevention. Five factors are particularly salient:

(1) gender polarization;
(2) rise of catastrophic- and hyper-masculinities;
(3) loss of safe space for the women both inside and outside the home;
(4) mounting pressures for women to be sole providers for the household while opportunities to do so (safely) are increasingly scarce; and
(5) the loss of safe havens, such as churches, clinics or schools.

All these factors tend to work in tandem, and are intensified by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the run-up to, during and aftermath of conflict.

First, the intensification of gendered conflict draws tighter boundaries between in and out-group/s, reducing space for everyone, and especially women to be engaged within their own communities, and outside it. Under such threats, the women should stay home. This results in gender polarization--about who leaves to fight (mostly men and boys) and who stays at home (women and other family members she cares for). Although this is a general pattern, in some conflicts, girls may be forced to take up arms or join rebels or become a "girlfriend" or "wife" of a rebel, soldier or commander, to "buy protection" for the family.

Second, as a crisis intensifies, support for noncastrophic masculinity, like regular jobs and status in the community, are often lost. Instead, social pressures emerge to elevate hypermasculinity--exaggerated male roles drawing on dominance, toughness, aggression and violence, with "Rambo," the warrior image promoted by Hollywood, an ideal type. Hyper-masculinity celebrates the woman as "mother of the nation," and her role to "breed" soldiers to carry it forward. Domestic violence increases, while women are at greater risk if they court men from the enemy community, or betray their own by producing baby enemy warriors. Lesbian or bisexual women are also at risk for failing to meet gender expectations, and serving the interests of the enemy. Homosexual men are labeled unpatriotic or un-revolutionary, or acting like foreign imports polluting and weakening the culture. Children of mixed backgrounds are forced to choose sides between their own and their parent's heritage, and mix marriages often crumble into divorce.

---

[17] Ann Jones, *War is Not Over When It's Over* (New York: Metropolitan, 2010).

Third, war creeps up on its victims through gendered threats that begin the loss of safe space. The risks that men and women face may differ. Enemy males are at early risk of demonization, discipline and control that are preludes to genocide: detentions, torture, sexual violence and selective killings, especially of battle-aged men, typically between 15-55 years of age.[18] Eliticide is a form of selective killing that disproportionately affects males who are the educated and prominent cultural, political and business figures.[19] The Rwandan genocide stands out for the early pattern of systematic targeting of elite men, before Tutsi men, women and children were targeted in general. Besides increased risk of domestic violence at home, women face mounting threats in public settings like market places or public transportation. Two stories from the former Yugoslavia illustrate this dynamic. Slavenka Drakulic tells of a Croatian friend's experience on the train going to Belgrade with a dozen young Serbs:

> "The lady is reading a book in the Roman alphabet?" they sneered spotting the book in her hands. "Surely the lady must be a Croat. How about a nice fuck, you bloody bitch? Or would you prefer this?" one asked, sliding the edge of his palm across her neck, as if he was holding a knife.[20]

In another story, a young woman in Bosnia tells about instructions from her father:

> "When he would leave the house, he would give me a gun with three bullets in it. If a soldier comes to the door, I was supposed to kill my mother, my sister and then myself. I would worry should my mother see my sister die, or should my sister see my mother die first, or what if I miss? I only have three bullets. And what if I make a mistake and it is someone else at the door?"[21]

Typically the media also promotes hyper-masculinity, sanctifying their "own" women, and demonizing the other's women for rape and extermination, as do government officials, and cultural leaders. I heard this myself directly from the lips of former Yugoslavia, President Slobodan Milosevic, who rationalized his concerns to an American delegation, explaining that the Albanians were systematically raping Serbian women in Kosovo, while Albanians "reproduced like rabbits."[22]

---

[18] See Adam Jones, *Gender Inclusive*, *Gender Inclusive: Essays on Violence, Men, and Feminist International Relations* (New York: Routledge, 2008), especially Chapter 15 "Genocide and Humanitarian Intervention: Incorporating the Gender Variable."

[19] Jones, *Gender Inclusive,* 172-73.

[20] Slavenka Drakulic, *The Balkan Express: Fragments from the Other Side of the War* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1993), 15.

[21] Jennifer Rawlings, "One Women's Experience of War," 26 March 2007, referring to women she interviewed in post-war Bosnia. Available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j11U0omJwyg

[22] Author's field notes. Interview with Slobodan Milosevic. South Balkans Working Group (New York Council on Foreign Relations), Presidential Palace, Belgrade, Yugoslavia, November 1995.

Fourth, women's workload increases with the onset of conflict, as natural resources or basic goods, including livestock, crops and foodstuffs become scarce, are destroyed and prices skyrocket. The homestead becomes a focus of attack, with family wells poisoned by throwing animals down them, for example. In many conflicts, agricultural and pastoral land has been mined, rendering it useless and also dangerous (for years to come). Attending to daily chores, like collecting water, farming, or bringing goods to buy and sell in local markets poses a deadly risk.[23] Women are also less able to rely on extended family members for assistance who are experiencing the same difficulties. Friends from different ethnic backgrounds become "enemies" despite years of sharing with each other and caring for each other's families.[24] Niches for women to find employment decrease as conflict intensifies. Illiterate women already relegated to the marginal workforce, are further displaced from those niches as men, also increasingly out of work, compete for those opportunities. Out of urgent necessity and lack of alternatives, women are often forced to provide for their families through perilous economic endeavors, such as smuggling illicit goods, or engaging in prostitution, and survival sex, not infrequently with international aid workers or peacekeepers. In this sense, a woman's body is the last thing she has to sell. Selling on the black market or working for survival sex often places the mother and children at risk of trafficking, since networks that move illicit goods in war can also move humans.[25]

The realities of the contemporary war machine also pose difficult questions about agency. While feminist scholars have fought against the "women as victims" frame, alternative theoretical approaches centered on relational autonomy are also inadequate to capture the challenges of sustaining "agency" in extreme and coerced situations. The dearth of meaningful choices to sustain autonomy is exacerbated by the *fifth* factor in the run-up to war, the collapse of safe space. Clinics, hospitals, schools, and market places, as well as sacred sites, like churches or mosques, become targets of violence against civilians. The destruction of health facilities and schools also places new burdens on women for caretaking and meeting basic needs. As food stocks dwindle, women suffer malnutrition first while they prioritize meeting other family members' needs. These strategies are often highly gendered, with men and boys eating first, girls second, and women last.[26] Some alternatives are to send a family member to join combatants and buy protection or get resources this way; risk abduction, sexual slavery or forced labor, including as a child soldier; or navigate war through its licit/illicit economies as a artisanal miner, human "mule" (as women often do in much of Africa), or truck driver.

---

[23] Dyan Mazurana, Angela Raven-Roberts and Jane Parpart, with Sue Lautze, "Introduction: Gender, Conflict, and Peacekeeping," in *Conflict and Peacekeeping*, ed. Dyan Mazurana, Angela Raven-Roberts and Jane Parpart (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), 6

[24] See the powerful film, *We Are All Neighbors*, a 52-minute video on a Muslim/Catholic village near Sarajevo. Produced & directed by Debbie Christie and anthropologist Tone Bringa for Granada Television International. Published by Films Incorporated Video, Chicago, Illinois, 1993.

[25] Mazurana, Raven-Roberts and Parpart, with Lautze "Gender, Conflict and Peacekeeping," 7; Carolyn Nordstrom, *Global Outlaws.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

[26] Mazurana, Raven-Roberts and Parpart with Lautze, "Gender, Conflict and Peacekeeping," 8-9.

Another factor that plays into the vulnerabilities of noncombatants (including to sexual violence) has to do with the geography of contemporary wars: they tend to be highly localized and geographically focused. Wherever there are warzones, there isn't much safe space left at home, school, work or play. The already historic and increasing numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons globally also underscores the imperative to gain more insight into conceptions of safe space and how they can be better protected. In 2010, the numbers of displaced persons from conflict and persecution is estimated at 43.7 million—the highest number in over 15 years. These figures represent 15.4 million refugees and 27.5 million IDPs, with an additional 837, 500 persons waiting for the processing of asylum applications. In addition, the UNHCR estimates that 12 million people are stateless (*UNHCR Global Trends* 2010).[27]

The demographics of refugee and IDP camps generally are gender-balanced. However, one notable exception to this is found in Dadaab, currently the world's largest refugee camp to which Somalis are arriving from as far as 200 kilometers away. Located in Kenya across the border with Somalia, the UNHCR estimates that "80 per cent of the camp's residents are women and children, the remaining 20 per cent are predominantly elderly men or young boys." The absence of male heads of household may be due a range circumstances: they stayed behind to tend to their cattle—their wealth, which they try to save at all costs. They didn't have enough money to come with their family, or they sent their family ahead to relatives, and that started the process of separation. They joined one of the fighting forces, were abducted by a faction, or died from starvation or disease. Fleeing to escape escalating conflict heightens risks of being abducted or killed by prowling gangs, government troops, or by rebel forces setting up road blocks and check points in both urban and backcountry to patrol and control access, and charge fees (or confiscate goods) for passage. Generally the chance to flee from violence depends on access to and availability of transport, and funds to pay for it and the bribes at checkpoints.

Many women will never see their spouse again, and in the refugee camp at Dadaab, one of the consequences of the lack of male heads of household is the increased vulnerability of women to gender based violence. "According to UNICEF, 358 incidents of sexual and gender-based violence were reported at Dadaab between January and June of this year, compared to the 75 reported cases during the same period last year"[28] Thus, flight poses great risks of separating family members from each other, and from their relatives and members of their local community, which in turn brings about the loss of their own safe circle or network. Then reunification also becomes one of the urgent needs for protection.

---

[27] Besides the loss of safe space from conflict itself, climate change will add many more stresses to already-weakened ecological and social systems, especially in already fragile and collapsing states. Experts estimate that by 2030, 132 countries will have an overall ranking of high vulnerability or worse to climate change that will produce slow onset and sudden disasters, further undermining state capacity, aggravating conflicts, displacing survivors, and rendering many people stateless (*2010 Climate Vulnerability Monitor*).

[28] "Somalia: Where are the Men of Dadaab?" *Al Jazeera English*, July 22, 2011, accessed October 17, 2011 at http://www.peacewomen.org/news_article.php?id=3962&type=news.

There are dangers in IDP and refugee camps, for getting water and fuel, or using public facilities. Risks of rape abound, also within the camp, or from sexual exploitation by peacekeepers and other humanitarian workers. War's aftermath only increases the challenges for women and girls especially. There are risks of trafficking, or abandonment by relatives if the woman, girl or husband was raped. Lack of ownership of property also leaves women vulnerable. Men return home with weapons, and grudges to settle, and PTSD that also leads to heightened levels of domestic violence, and the risk of deadly outcomes. The normalization of violence at extreme levels plagues post-conflict societies. Rape may become routine. There is evidence of this in Eastern Congo, where civilian rapes are now increasingly prevalent; or in Sierra Leone in the aftermath of its civil war, where the age of girls raped dropped precipitously, and children were trafficked along with women and men.

Societies face many complex challenges while emerging from a war economy. Contemporary armed conflicts are often deeply enmeshed in a global political economy of violence, including sexual violence as a strategy to clear land, gain access to resources, and control and exploit people. Eastern Congo is one region of the world where conflict minerals like coltan, tin, gold, diamonds, timber among other commodities have fueled the violence.[29] Emerging from war means transforming the war economy into a peace economy, but many stakeholders in the violence resist, because they everything to gain through chaos, and all to lose with peace.

III. From Justice to Rehabilitation and Prevention

The approach of the international community to overcoming sexual violence in war is centered on justice. The drive to end impunity lies at the core of this mission. While holding perpetrators accountable for the crimes they have committed in war is important for the campaign to end sexual violence in war, and gender based violence in general, the challenges are far more complex than this. The aftermath of war poses the crucial question of how societies will be brought back together. Even basic questions like who are the perpetrators and who are the victims are not necessarily clear-cut.

For example, what should happen to child soldiers who are often already adults by the end of conflict? If they committed war crimes, should they be held accountable? In many respects, child soldiers are also victims, brain washed and drugged into committing atrocities. The push by the international community to end impunity, especially for sexual violence, militates in favor of accountability. The International Criminal Court has brought indictments against some of the leaders of the warring factions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and against Josef Kony, and others, who head up the notorious Lord's Resistance Army, based out of Northern Uganda. Meanwhile, the United Nations Security Council takes a protection approach, focusing on women and children in

---

[29] See the *Final Report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo.* United Nations Security Council, S/2009/603.

particular (as though they are one single category), as Security Council Resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888 and others) illustrate.[30]

Communities emerging from warfare marked by sexual violence face many challenges. One of these is the need to weigh the relative emphasis to be given to justice, accountability and punishment versus the need for reconciliation and rehabilitation, especially of young adults who have lost their childhood and chance for education to the war. For some postconflict societies, the solution is to develop a mix of formal and alternative conflict resolution/reconciliation mechanisms, as Rwanda did after the genocide. Uganda has also adopted a multi-tiered system, to allow for reconciliation of former perpetrators with communities following traditional practices.

A global campaign against sexual violence in armed conflict must be centered on both moral and policy advocacy. [31] The moral advocacy needs to identify and raise consciousness about the structural forms of injustice and the networks of power relations that enable sexual violence as a weapon in the new wars. Foucault calls such work the "unblocking" of our own history or escaping our own occupation. This alternative discourse for social justice has to contend with many challenges. These include the close ties between the hegemonic leadership of states and multinational corporations that push policies that hollow out weak states in the global South and collude in the exploitation of natural resources in vulnerable communities. Consumers are part of the international community that needs to stand in solidarity with those who cannot raise their voice, or those who do at great risk. They are part of the sources of capillary power that can confront other forms of power, like the social construction of hegemonic masculinity for aggression and profit making through violence. Transnational social movements working in solidarity are needed to bring moral and policy advocacy to challenge corporate non-responsibility and collusion in the production of social harms that result from supply chains embedded in the violent markets.

Such a campaign has also to put forward an alternative vision of leadership rooted in an ethics of caring. As the well-known philosopher of care ethics, Virginia Held, has argued, the market has to have its own boundary. The ethics of care, with its emphasis on the inter-related values of "sensitivity, empathy, responsiveness, and taking responsibility," provide a means for judging where that boundary should be set. Advocates of the ethics of care have argued that these values pertain not only to the private, reproductive sphere of social life, but are also applicable to political, social and economic life in the public sphere. The ethics of care requires that we care about each other as fellow members of a

---

[30] See Natalie Florea Hudson, *Gender, Security and the UN: Security Language as a Political Framework for Women* (London: Routledge, 2010). See an annotated discussion for exploring the meaning of 1325 at http://www.womenwarpeace.org/1325_toolbox/1325_annotated.

[31] On this point, see Jyl Josephson, "Sexual Citizenship, Sexual Regulation, and Identity Politics," draft chapter in *The Politics of Sexual Citizenship* (unpublished manuscript), presented at the Feminist Theory Workshop, Western Political Science Association, Vancouver, BC, Canada, March 31, 2009.

community, and also of the global community.[32] In contrast to the individualism that underlines rationality and masculinist thinking in hegemonic approaches to international relations, an ethics of care emphasizes persons as "relational and interdependent." This approach understands the interests of Self and Other as intermeshed, and trust as crucial. An ethics of care in the global as in the local context, balances understandings of the reproductive and productive economies and the mutual responsibilities of all members of society to both spheres.

The ethics of care also runs counter to the mainstream approach to international relations that has resulted in cultures of imperialism and neglect, partly by systematically devaluing interdependence, relatedness and the positive involvement in the lives of others distant from oneself.[33] Raising human rights and ending violence against women, and sexual violence as a tool of war against all members of society are all part of a campaign at ending a culture of neglect under hegemonic constructions of aggressive masculinity. This neoliberal system of economic exploitation depends on a mix of toxic masculinities that is producing the global collapse of safe space.

The growing coverage by the global news media, human rights and other nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and international organizations reporting on sexual violence in armed conflict also heightens awareness--often with advocacy and fund-raising campaigns that draw on and exploit images of the victimization of women and girls.[34] Such attention may be partly a function of the attenuation of taboos against speaking out on sexual violence. Normatively speaking, this signals progress in the development of feminist law and global governance. However, it may also risk inviting a backlash against women. At the same time, putting the media and public focus on the prevalence of sexual violence in post-cold war conflicts might also serve as a diversionary tactic. While essentializing women and girls as victims, it directs attention away from the effects of economic exploitation under neoliberal globalization and how sexual violence in armed conflict serves economic interests. And it directs attention away from the one remaining taboo in this arena: wartime sexual violence against men.

Going forward, there is a wide scope for action across many sectors to support communities in conflict zones and post-conflict societies. Foremost among these is the imperative to provide medical assistance, including emergency medical assistance for victims of sexual violence, whether women or men, along with access to basic services.[35] The global campaigns for stopping violence against women need to be reframed to address sexual violence against men, and meet their needs, too. Sexual violence against

---

[32] Virginia Held, *The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, Global* (Oxford & NY: OUP, 2006), 119.

[33] Held, *The Ethics of Care*, 165.

[34] R. Charli Carpenter, "Women, Children and Other Vulnerable Groups: Gender, Strategic Frames and the Protection of Civilians as a Transnational Issue," *International Studies Quarterly* 49, no. 2 (2005): 295-334.

[35] For an example of the needs, see "Colombia: All Victims Deserve Timely Care and Support, *ICRC Operational Update,* April 4, 2011, accessed on October 18, 2011 at http://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/update/2011/colombia-update-2011-04-14.htm.

men is also a gender issue, and ultimately a women's issue—violence against men is about feminization and emasculation of men. Along with medical assistance for reconstructive surgeries, there will be long term needs for psychosocial support. Campaigns to end violence against women need to broaden their agenda to raise awareness about sexual violence against men, too.[36]

The humanitarian sector has made strides in tackling gender-based violence, including by creating codes of conduct among humanitarian workers and UN peacekeepers.[37] Today, the humanitarian response field is also putting attention on operationalizing protection principles.[38] Still, there are unmet needs to make refugee and IDP camps more safe, especially for women and girls to minimize the risks of gender based violence within the camps, and outside its perimeters.

In the justice sector, the international push to end impunity will only work if actions are taken on the ground to complement universal principles. There is a dearth of national laws to end gender discrimination in many countries, while in others, like Sierra Leone, there are gaps between law and implementation, and these gaps undermine justice at multiple levels, whether through the lack of judges, or corruption in the legal system; lack of police, and effective victim protection; or persistent gaps between legal remedies and cultural practices that compel victims to seek alternative solutions, or remain quiet.

While there are some important breakthroughs, much work still needs to be done in the economic sector to end corporate practices that enable or fuel sexual violence in warzones. Although the Frank Dodd Act of 2010 is not perfect, it does begin to call on companies to show due diligence on sources and supply chains of specific resources emanating from conflict zones, such as in the Eastern DRC.[39] Consumers, too, need to find their voice on conflict minerals, and put pressure on corporations to develop supply chains that respect human rights, instead of exploiting their abuse. The new UN Guidelines on Human Rights and Businesses: Protect, Respect and Remedy Framework also puts the spotlight on international business, and will require new strategizing at the corporate level, too.[40] Nonetheless, state fragility is still the central dilemma with a protection regime that ultimately relies on the state to ensure its civilians are not being exploited. It is like asking the fox to check up on how he is doing in the hen house.

---

[36] "Inside Story - The Silent Victims of Rape," *Al Jazeera English*, July 28, 2011, accessed on October 18, 2011 at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IbhrNgetKEw.

[37] For UN Standards of Conduct, see http://cdu.unlb.org/UNStandardsofConduct/WeAreUnitedNationsPeacekeepingPersonnel.aspx.

[38] A 2011 update of *The Sphere Project's Handbook: Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response*, available at http://www.sphereproject.org/.

[39] Salil Tripathi, "Ignore the naysayers, restrictions on DRC conflict minerals remain vital," *Global Matters Poverty Blog, The Guardian,* August 10, 2011, accessed on October 18, 2011 at http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/poverty-matters/2011/aug/10/drc-conflict-minerals-restrictions-useful.

[40] "UN Framework: Guiding Principles for the Implementation of the UN 'Protect, Respect and Remedy' Framework", accessed on October 18, 2011 at http://www.unglobalcompact.org/Issues/human_rights/The_UN_SRSG_and_the_UN_Global_Compact.html.

Absent meaningful enforcement mechanisms and independent monitoring and reporting systems, "not bad" is the fox's likely reply.

Conclusions

Sexual violence in war is a socio-economic and political strategy for terrorizing, controlling, displacing and even eliminating targeted groups. It has the effect of eliminating safe space in society, and making communities vulnerable to multiple instances of victimization throughout a conflict's trajectory, males and females alike. These traumas are intensified by complex victimhood. The gross violation of human rights and crimes against humanity that sexual violence in armed conflicts entails underscores the urgency of concerted and effective international action to prevent it; commitments to enforce international law banning it; and the development of security measures in the context of humanitarian operations to ensure the greater safety of war survivors during conflict and its aftermath. This also requires an ethic of care committed to scaling up the delivery of health and trauma-related service to survivors, and vocational and educational programs that are culturally sensitive and appropriate to support reintegration into their families and communities.