

# WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVES ON HUMAN SECURITY

Violence,  
Environment,  
and Sustainability

Edited by  
Richard Matthew,  
Patricia A. Weitsman,  
Gunhild Hoogensen Gjorv,  
Nora Davis, and  
Tera Corinne Dornfeld

## Women's Perspectives on Human Security

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Patricia A. Weitsman, Gunhild Hoogensen Gjørsv, Nora Davis,  
and Tera Dornfeld

# Women's Perspectives on Human Security

*Violence, Environment, and Sustainability*

Edited by

RICHARD A. MATTHEW,  
PATRICIA A. WEITSMAN,  
GUNHILD HOOGENSEN GJØRV,  
NORA DAVIS,  
AND TERA DORNFELD

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# Contents

Acknowledgments vii

Chapter 1 Women's Voices

*Perspectives on Violence, Environmental Threats, and Human Security*

Gunhild Hoogensen Gjörv, Richard A. Matthew, Tera Dornfeld, and  
Patricia A. Weitsman 1

PART 1: CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

Chapter 2 Women, War, and Identity

*Policies of Mass Rape in Bosnia and Rwanda*

Patricia A. Weitsman 27

Chapter 3 Women and Human Security

*Women, Small Arms, and Light Weapons*

Rachel Stohl 47

Chapter 4 Feminism, Rape, and War

*Engendering Suicide Terror?*

Mia Bloom 63

Chapter 5 Women, Human Security, and Countering Violent Extremism

Joana Cook 97

Chapter 6 The Challenges for Gender Awareness in Civil-Military Operations

Gunhild Hoogensen Gjörv 126

Chapter 7 Fieldwork in the Land of Savages, Victims, and Saviors

*Lessons from the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo*

Holly Dunn 154

PART 2: ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC SECURITY

---

- Chapter 8 The Tehri Dam Project in India  
*Impact on Women's Household Food and Economic Security*  
Vandana Asthana 183
- Chapter 9 Reimagining Citizen Science for Women's Human Security  
*Shifting Power with Critical Pedagogy and Feminist Perspectives*  
Tera Dornfeld and Nina M. Flores 207
- Chapter 10 Women Building Sustainable Communities  
*Comondú, Baja California Sur, Mexico*  
Martha Adriana Márquez-Salaices and Manuel Ángeles 235
- Chapter 11 Women and Financial Inclusion  
Elissa McCarter LaBorde 265
- Chapter 12 Reflections and Looking Ahead  
Richard A. Matthew, Gunhild Hoogensen Gjørv,  
Nora Davis, and Tera Dornfeld 287
- Contributors 297
- Index 303

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This collection is a tribute to a former professor at Ohio University, Dr. Patricia A. Weitsman. Before her passing, Dr. Weitsman was an editor of this collection and the author of the chapter titled “Women, War, and Identity: Policies of Mass Rape in Bosnia and Rwanda.” She was a leading political scientist and scholar of security studies and international relations theory. To honor her and her work, this entire volume will be dedicated to our dear friend, Patricia.





## Chapter 1

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### Women's Voices

*Perspectives on Violence, Environmental Threats, and Human Security*

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GUNHILD HOOGENSEN GJØRV, RICHARD A. MATTHEW,  
TERA DORNFELD, AND PATRICIA A. WEITSMAN

For much of the twentieth century, the field of international relations (IR) was shaped in large measure by questions about war and peace, stimulated or amplified by the experience of World War I and World War II. The field developed largely within the English-speaking world, and an Anglo-American perspective came to dominate understandings of IR globally. During the Cold War, as the field grew rapidly, a close relationship developed between several IR scholars and the national security practitioner community around the shared aspiration of developing strategies that would make a third world war unlikely but also winnable should deterrence fail. An enormous amount of research focused on war and peace at three levels of analysis—individual, state, and system—an approach advocated by Kenneth Waltz in his highly influential study *Man, the State and War*. Even as the field expanded to encompass important areas such as trade

and development, human rights, and international organization and governance, security was widely perceived as its most foundational concern, its *raison d'être*. Moreover, very influential students of Waltz, such as Stephen Walt and John Mearsheimer, along with many other realists, argued that restricting the concept of security to war and issues related to war was important because it made possible useful, cumulative research and effective policymaking.<sup>1</sup>

Other perspectives—liberal, Marxist, critical—incrementally created space within the discipline to provide alternative approaches to thinking about IR that were—and continue to be—increasingly embraced. The conversations among these schools of thought has become the core of many IR textbooks and survey courses. From these ongoing conversations, a set of preponderant (but not uncontested) prescriptions have emerged: prevent war, build peace, encourage trade and development, promote human rights, protect the environment, preserve sovereignty, and invest in international institutions.

While the familiar debates among realists, liberals, Marxists, and critical theorists of multiple persuasions have been fruitful and insightful, the field of IR has been simultaneously disrupted and challenged by scholars who have focused on ideas, practices, and values largely excluded from mainstream IR. Mainstream prescriptions, rooted in an Anglo-American worldview, have been revised, interrogated, and challenged by critical feminist, ecological, postcolonial, and militarist perspectives questioning the dominance of neoliberal structures and priorities.<sup>2</sup> Although echoes of these disruptive discourses can be found in any period of human history, and they appeared in compelling and influential forms in the 1970s even as the Cold War seemed a virtually permanent condition, they began to gather considerable support and momentum only after the Cold War had come to a muddled conclusion. Throughout the 1990s, as the international system experienced dramatic transformations, a *theoretical turbulence* emerged in the field. Latent and critical voices that were previously forced to the margins took advantage of the opportunity the end of the Cold War provided to rethink security and other topics and to disrupt the theoretical landscape of IR.

Prominent among these disruptive discourses are feminism, postcolonialism, environmentalism, and human security. They have often been considered in straightforward terms of the particular issues and insights

they bring into IR. For example, an environmental perspective has been integrated into mainstream IR themes, yielding a revised set of themes: *sustainable* development, *environmental* security, *environmental* rights, and so on. Such revised themes are critical elements in global environmental politics, a subfield of IR. These couplings are very productive for both theory building and policy impact. We believe the field of IR has been enriched in this way, and much remains to be achieved by continuing this work. Increasingly, however, scholars are noting and embracing the importance of intersectionality in their analyses, where, for instance, a “strictly environmental” lens provides an incomplete picture and needs to be expanded through discourses of gender, race, ethnicity, orientation, age, and religion that expose power dynamics and inequalities related to the environment that otherwise might remain unnoticed.

These intersecting discourses are in illuminating ways in dialogue with each other, and we believe this dialogue is important to continually capture and reflect upon. Indeed, some of the contributors to this volume have been engaged in earlier attempts to do this, producing *Landmines and Human Security* (2004), *Global Environmental Change and Human Security* (2009), and *The Social Ecology of the Anthropocene* (2016). A similar volume was generated through a workshop at the Arctic University of Norway exploring the relevance of human and environmental security through engagements with gender and indigenous analyses of power in the Arctic setting: *Environmental and Human Security in the Arctic* (2014). These volumes all seek to explore the rich and varied interplay between global phenomena such as climate change and war and the rich local contexts and complex power dynamics through which they are experienced. Hence, climate change, for example, is a statistically significant change in global weather patterns identified and validated through big data extending over centuries and simultaneously a phenomenon experienced in very different ways by indigenous people in the Arctic, communities displaced by drought, investors assessing new mining opportunities, women tending small farms, and so on.

Research has demonstrated that people engage in diverse strategies to ensure human security.<sup>3</sup> This volume contributes to understanding processes of women's agency and presents diverse examples of people taking measures—even within limited or restricted capacities—to mitigate human insecurity. Traditionally, women are characterized as those who have no or little agency, those who are victims, those who are deserving of protection

and are the “beautiful souls.”<sup>4</sup> Women’s agency is a core focal point of this book, illustrating the various ways and contexts in which women operate to increase security. Their actions can range from efforts to avoid physical violence to remain neutral in conflict settings to being cooperative or collaborative.<sup>5</sup> Civilian agency and women’s agency within is often strategic, ranging from survival to intentions of influencing specific interests and agendas that may favor one side or another in a conflict or crisis situation.<sup>6</sup> One of the challenges in understanding women’s agency is to nuance what the term “woman” means and the diverse experiences embodied within this category influenced by gender, ethnicity, race, class, orientation, and so on.<sup>7</sup>

This volume contributes to this ongoing exploration of global phenomena, the contexts in which these phenomena are experienced, and the intersectionalities that shape vulnerability and power in those particular contexts. It has its roots in a workshop held years ago at the University of California, Irvine, organized by Patricia A. Weitsman with support from Richard A. Matthew. Women researchers, including many early career scholars, were invited to the workshop to share their perspectives on the varied experiences of (in)security of women in relation to both conventional security threats and to the threats being explored through two other disruptive discourses: human security and environmental change and security. The results were intriguing, and a book was planned—but abandoned as Dr. Weitsman was compelled to shift her attention to a more personal struggle. Then, years later, after Dr. Weitsman’s tragic death, the early papers were rediscovered, a new editorial team was assembled, old authors agreed to update their work, new authors were added, and this new volume was produced.

#### A FOCUS ON WOMEN’S EXPERIENCES

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This new volume contributes to an understanding of the experiences and contexts of women in relation to conventional and unconventional threats and the growing repertoire of solutions to these threats that women are creating, demanding, and sharing. Reflecting a foundational premise of human security, across chapters we see arguments supporting the importance of understanding security from the bottom up, in direct opposition to so-called traditional, state-based security studies. Starting “locally” makes visible the different power dynamics that exist between women and men, and between

women themselves, as well as other factors or identities that come into play in local contexts. Of course, there are many conceivable ways of investigating security in relation to these differences. For example, human rights discourse has evolved in part by examining the particular forms of vulnerability and indignity experienced by some of humankind's most marginalized communities and subgroups: certain religious and ethnic groups, the poor, children, indigenous peoples, farmworkers, migrants, refugees, and others. Within this global complex of identities struggling for dignity and freedom, women as a "category" still occupy a remarkable and unique position. Distributed relatively evenly across the earth's settled domains, constituting half of the human family, they exist as a group in positions of marginalization across a range of well-documented variables—from property ownership and political representation, through participation in the informal economy and living on the front lines of environmental disasters and epidemic outbreaks, to being the preferred target of particular forms of organized violence such as systematic rape campaigns and sex trafficking.

Current data on literacy, violence, and trafficking help demonstrate these disadvantages and insecurities:

- In almost all regions of the world, women's literacy rates are lower than men's. Indeed, adult global literacy levels reveal that 89 percent of men but only 81 percent of women are literate.<sup>8</sup> Viewed from a different angle, nearly two-thirds of all illiterate adults are women. This gap is not uniformly distributed across the planet but varies enormously from one country to the next. For example, the literacy rates for men and women over age fifteen in the Philippines are 96 percent for men but 97 percent for women; in China, 98 percent for men but 95 percent for women; in India, 81 percent for men but 61 percent for women; in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 78 percent for men but 50 percent for women; and in Afghanistan, 52 percent for men but 24 percent for women.<sup>9</sup> Differences in literacy rates reflect particular histories, cultures, and power relationships, but in every case illiteracy is clearly a disadvantage from almost every perspective imaginable—including income, health, and freedom.
- Approximately 49 percent of trafficked persons are grown women, another 21 percent are underage girls (totaling 70 percent females), 12 percent are boys, and 18 percent are men.<sup>10</sup> When sexual and

labor trafficked persons are disaggregated, it becomes clear that the majority of sex-trafficking victims are women. However, it should be noted that a fully reliable global estimate of the total number of trafficked persons is not available due to the difficulty of obtaining data on a “hidden population.”

- One in three women has experienced physical and/or sexual violence, most likely at the hands of a close partner, and over half of the homicides of women are committed by intimate partners.<sup>11</sup> Further, and important considering the fluid and evolving understanding of what it means to identify as a woman, 21 percent of TGQN (transgender, genderqueer, or nonconforming) college students have suffered sexual assault.<sup>12</sup>

As long as women are still globally placed in positions of marginalization, they will be subjected to insecurities as a category called “women,” whether individuals identify as such or not. We acknowledge—as do Holly Dunn, Joana Cook, Tera Dornfeld and Nina M. Flores, Vandana Asthana, and Gunhild Hoogensen Gjorv in this collection—that the notion of women, as a single group, is a contested concept. While such identity-based insecurity is not in any sense restricted to women, the scale here is unique, and it embodies much variation. In this volume, the category “woman” is not used as a closed predetermined category but one of many identities and experiences that have been subject to discrimination, diverse inequalities, and lack of power. Moreover, the conditions experienced by women, both in terms of identifying as a woman and facing identity-based insecurities, is in constant flux. What it means to be and to identify as a woman also fluctuates; we see today how appropriate it is for “woman” to be defined by an individual herself rather than a societal constraint imposed upon her. Nonetheless, the social construction of women as a category exists and becomes institutionalized in policy leading to empirical vulnerabilities. As with other marginalized groups, as one form of oppression is successfully challenged, others emerge. But the converse is true as well: new forms of empowerment continually emerge and take root and scale. While much work has been done in the past several decades, it remains theoretically interesting and practically important to understand women in relationship to security—especially given the deepening inequalities, rapid pace of change, and new threats ranging from drug-resistant disease to cybercrime to workplace inequality and

sexual harassment (which is being given a long-awaited focus at the time of publication) that are shaping the early decades of the twenty-first century. The numbers behind these vulnerabilities are significant, and this volume aims to present some of the stories next to these numbers to share the lived experiences of complex gender-based vulnerability and empowerment.

With so much focus on women's security, some argue that men and/or other gender identities are sometimes left on the sidelines, with little gender analysis examining the assumptions about security that men's lives embody.<sup>13</sup> There is much work to be done to examine the ways in which men are both tools and targets of war by virtue of the fact that they are men, the forms in which men's sexuality and the taboos associated with heteronormative assumptions play significant roles in the ways in which men experience and participate in violence, and why.<sup>14</sup> Such analyses are often very useful in support of increased women's security. But as much as these analyses are and will be increasingly important, this volume is informed by the sentiment that an explicit focus on women's experiences of security is still warranted.

The chapters in this multidisciplinary volume come from a diverse range of authors and contexts focusing on the relationship of women to, and the perspectives of women on, (1) the security contexts of violence, war, and postwar situations as well as (2) questions within environmental and economic security, including natural resource management, climate change science, and sustainable development (see Asthana, Dornfeld and Flores, and Martha Márquez-Salaices and Manuel Ángeles, this volume). These works contribute to the crucial processes behind expanding our understanding of IR and security in general. We need to be cognizant of the changing ways in which women have been understood as a category, subjected to insecurities (contributing to insecurities), made to be victims, and have empowered themselves and/or others, and within what sorts of limitations. We need to recognize the many ways in which women provide powerful and transformative change through local and incremental insights as well as a more comprehensive understandings of security. We understand these insights as the critical elements of disruptive discourse.

#### DISRUPTIVE DISCOURSE

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There are many origins and watersheds in political thought. In terms of the focus of this volume, the late twentieth century provided many



examples of efforts to insert the voices and experiences of women and the environment into global discourse. Some particularly influential examples include the United Nations (UN) International Women's Year and Conference in 1975, the UN Decade for Women in 1976–85, the 1987 Brundtland Commission report, and the Beijing Conference of 1995. The early years after the Cold War were, insofar as these forms of disruptive discourse are concerned, notably creative and energetic. In 1992, the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, fueled by science, placed the environment at the top of the global agenda and with it a vocabulary that is now universally employed: “sustainable development,” “climate change,” “earth rights.” That same year, J. Ann Tickner published *Gender in International Relations* (1992), and V. Spike Peterson published the edited volume *Gendered States: (Re)Visioning International Relations* (1992), both studies introducing gender perspectives into mainstream IR that quickly wove themselves into undergraduate and graduate programs across the United States and eventually to many other countries around the world. Two years later, in 1994, the United Nations Human Development Report introduced an approach to operationalizing the concept of human security. Suddenly a vast space was visible within the academy receptive to new voices, research agendas, courses, aspirations, and policy recommendations. This did not transform the intricate architecture built over decades around a conventional understanding of war and peace, but it placed this problematic in a much richer and more inclusive context, unsettling its authority and eroding its dominance, engaging relevant insights while simultaneously broadening the purview of security.

#### FEMINIST DISCOURSE

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Jean Bethke Elshtain wrote that femininity is often connected to life giving, masculinity with life taking.<sup>15</sup> IR grew up around the experiences and perspectives of men, the life takers. As Tickner and Cynthia Enloe argued, while both traditional realist and liberal idealist paradigms are highly patriarchal, they have hidden this bias behind the language of a universal, rational, utility maximizing “human.” The problem is that this universalized human inevitably excludes the variety of ways women experience war and peace. Hence, the particular forms of violence and vulnerability associated with women's experiences had been ignored, and the concept of security left

incomplete. This universalization also prevented the understanding of how women's (and men's) experiences are influenced by intersections with race, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender identification, where it is possible "to speak of the simultaneity and mutual co-constitution of different categories of social differentiation and to emphasize the specificity of the experiences shaped by these interactions."<sup>16</sup>

Women's security and insecurity are dependent upon complex intersections of context, history, gender, and power. This complexity is well illustrated by experiences of women in Afghanistan, whose disempowerment and, thus, insecurity Western audiences have heard much about. While stories of insecurity are often widely disseminated, without actually learning from these same women about their own perceptions of security and power in a particular context, it is not possible to know all the ways in which their experiences are unique and also how these particular women have adapted to and even shaped changes in power structures. Though Afghanistan has been ranked as one of the harshest countries in the world for women to live in,<sup>17</sup> the experiences of women in and across Afghanistan differ remarkably depending on the region in which they live, the ethnic group they belong to, and their political/economic status, among other things. For example, women's experiences can differ if they are in urban or rural environments, making it difficult to generalize about all "Afghan women." Some women and girls, with the assistance of local and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), have been able to learn to read and write in the safety of each other's homes. In addition, in a small but increasing number of cases, particularly at the local level, women possess knowledge about important political leaders and activities. Although not part of the dominant public space, they may be able to influence decision-making in their communities.<sup>18</sup> Many, however, continue to face enormous hurdles, from various forms of violence and lack of general and maternal health care, education, and mobility.<sup>19</sup> But it does demonstrate that we really need to know the specifics of power, of lack of power, and of needs in specific contexts and support activities where women are able to make a difference. In this case, feminist and gender security studies increase the recognition of women as nonstate security providers, even when confronted with large challenges such as limited political power.<sup>20</sup> As we see, from difference arises identities intersecting with oppression to produce unique conditions to which women are adapting to gain or regain power.

Exploring (in)security through the experiences of women has become an important trend in scholarly literature as well as in practice and policy, including the programs and initiatives of the UN's Women, Peace and Security agenda. Such research and analysis confirm again and again the importance of consulting with women to learn what power structures they depend upon and which are imposed upon them, what power they contribute to these structures, and what empowerment is further needed within a given context. It is an uphill battle, but the importance of women being "at the table" in peace negotiations, conference meetings, and presentations is gaining widespread support. As Canadian prime minister Justin Trudeau stated when asked why he sought gender balance and adequate female representation in his cabinet: "Because it is 2015."<sup>21</sup>

Recent UN analyses of women and poverty, as one example, demonstrate the positive impact that would result if more women contributed equally to the economy, increasing gross domestic products around the world.<sup>22</sup> The nature of the power that women have, as well the ways in which further empowerment is possible and necessary, have been the focus of much gender/feminist security literature. And there have been concrete gains. United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 helped to put the role of women and security on the international map: women's perceptions of security constituted an issue important enough for the Security Council to recognize as essential to international peace and security. This resolution not only identified women as victims of armed conflict but also emphasized that women need to be at the table to effectively create peace and security.

#### HUMAN SECURITY DISCOURSE

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The development-assistance programs crafted after World War II focused largely on helping to grow the economies of the many countries emerging from colonialism or otherwise marginalized in the global economy, through programs of trade and investment in infrastructure. By the 1960s, this economic focus had become the source of considerable contention. One particularly influential line of thinking is associated with the work of Amartya Sen, Martha Nussbaum, and their many colleagues and focuses on linking human development to capabilities and opportunities. A core idea that emerged from this was that economic growth and income generation may

be important elements to support human development but that our focus should be on helping people increase their capabilities, expanding the opportunities available to them, and enabling them to have the freedom to make choices in their own best interests. This set of linkages has come to be known as human development and in the 1980s began to have a broad and deep influence in the UN and development communities. For example, it led to the creation of the Human Development Index, a measure of life expectancy, educational attainment, and income that is now used worldwide as a measure of development progress. It was also the platform for the Human Development Reports that are produced by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) annually as an assessment of where the world stands, where progress has been made, and where challenges remain.

The concept of human security, which is often attributed to the Pakistani economist Mahbub ul Haq, emerged from this broader discussion about human development. Ul Haq, along with other economists such as Sen, were key contributors to the 1994 UNDP Human Development Report, which introduced the idea of human security to the global community. This report organized human security into two domains: "It means, first, safety from such chronic threats as hunger, disease and repression. And second, it means protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life."<sup>23</sup> The authors of the report continued to identify four key dimensions of human security: it is universal, its components are interdependent, it is easier to protect through prevention than intervention, and it is people-centered.<sup>24</sup> And the report listed seven areas of concern: economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political.

A decade after the popularization of the term "human security," the Commission on Human Security contributed to further solidifying the concept by arguing that a core concern of international politics was to protect "the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfillment."<sup>25</sup> This definition embodies ideas associated with one of its members, Sen, who has linked development to freedom and defined the conditions for development in terms of "economic opportunities, political liberties, social powers, and the enabling conditions of good health, basic education, and the encouragement and cultivation of initiatives."<sup>26</sup>

The academic response to the concept of human security has been mixed, as one might expect from any disruptive discourse. Tariq Banuri, for example, contends that "security denotes conditions which make people feel

secure against want, deprivation, and violence; or the absence of conditions that produce insecurity, namely the threat of deprivation or violence. This [the 1994 UNDP report] brings two additional elements to the conventional connotation (referred to here as political security), namely human security and environmental security.”<sup>27</sup> In contrast, many argue that its all-encompassing nature and inclusivity tends to “hobble the concept of human security as a useful tool of analysis.”<sup>28</sup> However, Roland Paris also notes that “definitional expansiveness and ambiguity are powerful attributes of human security. . . . Human security could provide a handy label for a broad category of research . . . that may also help to establish this brand of research as a central component of the security studies field.”<sup>29</sup>

In the policy arena, the concept has been ignored by some countries, such as the United States, which prefer to maintain state security as the appropriate focus of their foreign and defense policy. On the other hand, it has contributed to the articulation of both the 2000 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and been embraced and operationalized by some countries. For example, in the 1990s and early 2000s, in response to these goals, Canada focused some of its foreign policy on protecting people from extreme forms of violence. At various times, it has invested in humanitarian assistance, peacebuilding, and conflict prevention and played a leadership role in campaigns to improve human security through banning land mines, human trafficking, and child soldiers. Most notably, Canada played a critical role through its support of the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty. Japan provides a rather different example of a country linking foreign policy to human security, investing in strategies and projects that focus on capacity building and development assistance and on achieving the MDGs and SDGs, all areas in which Japan has been a major contributor.

The concept of human security has also been invoked in efforts to protect and empower women. For example, in 2000, the international community passed UNSCR 1325, which specifically acknowledged the fact that many women experience security differently, that these experiences need to be recognized and addressed when understanding conflict (including sexual violence against women during times of conflict), and that women need to be participants in peacemaking efforts.<sup>30</sup>

One example of peacemaking efforts lies in a story of an Iraqi woman who has provided shelter to Iraqi widows, honor-killing escapees, rape survivors, and runaways whose lives became qualitatively and quantitatively

worse after the 2003 intervention. This service has been increasingly central to the creation of security for individuals in the region.<sup>31</sup> Such cases make it clear that a better understanding of, and interest to protect, women's security has geopolitical repercussions. In this case, power in Iraq was uncritically relinquished to extremely conservative and violent forces that both set back women's freedom and security and have given rise to such forces as Daesh (otherwise known as the Islamic State).<sup>32</sup> Respecting and abiding by UNSCR 1325 and its subsequent related resolutions is not just a matter of using the right rhetoric at the right time but also has implications on the ground for peace and reconciliation processes.

Feminist security studies also has been critical of human security literature, questioning assumptions about what constitutes "human" in human security.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, the human security agenda has relied heavily on Sen and Nussbaum's "capabilities approach."<sup>34</sup> As Natasha Marhia argues, the notion of "human" has often assumed the capacity to make a choice, to actively engage in a particular, political manner, to which not all individuals have access.<sup>35</sup> The universalized properties of "human" have often reflected a "universal man" who embodies heteronormative assumptions, which is acontextual and ahistorical—existing in the same manner for all places for all time. Feminist security studies contest these and other assumptions embodied within particularly liberal assumptions of the "human," exposing the importance of context, history, and power in how we have determined what is quintessentially human and what is not.

Several chapters in this volume address the unique roles women play within diverse local contexts and discuss the nuances that undergird the identities of "women." For example, Asthana, Márquez-Salaices and Ángeles, and Dornfeld and Flores all highlight the multiple forms of knowledge women possess about nature and natural resources—knowledge that is unique to their local context. Rachel Stohl's work reveals the layers of complexity that exist with the dichotomy of the role of victim versus agent within the home when she examines how women are not only harmed by small arms and light weapons but also navigate challenging circumstances to fight for political change. Elissa McCarter LaBorde champions the value of women's contextual knowledge and the nuance of lived experiences after disasters or in the midst of recurrent conflicts. She presents stories of women in Iraq, Jordan, and several other contexts as financial agents whose decisions have far-reaching impacts for their families. The authors within reflect women's

experiences as curators of their own knowledge and advocate for use of this data to strengthen human security policy. Critically, Dunn reminds us to be cautious in regards to the use of women's data and collection of data "from" women, showing how research agendas may or may not faithfully portray the identity those same women have created for themselves.

Gender and feminist studies have contributed more than four decades' worth of scholarship on the concept and theorizing of peace and security, while human security research arrived on the global stage later.<sup>36</sup> These two bodies of scholarship developed somewhat independently in the 1990s,<sup>37</sup> and it was not until more recently that these two streams of security thinking began engaging one another.<sup>38</sup> In many respects there are very natural linkages between the human security and the gender and feminist security literatures in that both have attempted to reorient the focus of security toward the individual or community level, making visible the experiences of insecurity and production of security occurring among nonstate actors. Whereas gender and feminist security literature has often been criticized for being too theoretical and distant from concrete policy agendas, human security literature has often been criticized for being very policy-focused and lacking theoretical substance. A core strength of much of the gender and feminist security literature has not only been theoretical, however, but also its empirical basis, examining "real life" issues relevant to individuals and developing theory through bottom-up, individual-experience-based analyses.

In short, human security discourse has catalyzed different policy agendas, triggered resistance, and received mixed reviews from academics, including feminist scholars. However, over more than two decades, it has become a part of the theory and practice of IR, challenging, reshaping, and supplementing more traditional views of security. Today much of human security scholarship and practice (although by no means all) has moved along a trajectory similar to that of feminism, confronting values of inclusion and equality and advocating freedom from violence in all forms. While women's diverse experiences of human insecurity linked to conflict and violence have been the most common focus, as illustrated by the efforts of UNSCR 1325, insecurity in relation to poverty, health and education deficits, and the environment have also attracted attention. Similar to feminist research, today's human security agenda seeks among other goals to eradicate extreme poverty, promote gender equality, empower women and other marginalized groups, combat disease, achieve environmental security, forge global

partnerships for development, design global strategies to combat threats, emphasize peacekeeping and peacebuilding, strengthen democracy and the rule of law, and protect human rights.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY DISCOURSE

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Environmental issues have played an important role as a disruptive discourse challenging the content of IR theory and practice and changing the way people think about war, trade, and development—but the environment is rarely considered as an important intersection with human and feminist security approaches. Environmental security emerged mainly in response to the 1987 Brundtland Commission report, *Our Common Future*, and the first Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992—two events that dramatically elevated environmental change on the global agenda. Intellectually it builds on a problem familiar to earlier generations—establishing an equilibrium between human needs and behavior on the one hand and ecological constraints and processes on the other. Some past societies achieved a satisfactory balance—but others, famously, did not. At the same time, the challenges of balancing these two variables today is unlike any earlier challenge by virtue of the sheer enormity of anthropogenic environmental change. The unprecedented character of our current challenge is well captured in the trending concept of the Anthropocene.<sup>39</sup>

Since the early 1990s, environmental security scholars have explored many of the processes through which human behavior leads to environmental stress, along with the adverse social effects of this stress, including great demands for support in response to disasters; the displacement of tens of millions of people by drought, flood, and fire, many into protected areas and across borders; the scale of corruption in sectors such as agriculture, energy, mining, forestry, and water; the rapid mobilization of desperate people into actions such as rioting; and the escalation of the differential social impacts of climate change and other forms of environmental stress into tension and violent conflict. While there is still considerable controversy around arguments linking environmental change to insecurities, the general trend of increasingly sophisticated research connecting big data to local histories and geographies is growing support. The intuition connecting environmental stress and various security outcomes, including violent conflict, is validated, widespread, and increasing.



This research has informed considerable policy activity along with many other forms of civic engagement in critical sectors including human security; economic development; water, agricultural, mining, and energy policy; public health policy; conflict mediation and peacebuilding activities; and poverty-reduction programs. It is noted throughout the many security assessments and policy statements produced by countries, institutions, and regional bodies of all sizes—from China to Norway to Fiji and Sri Lanka—and including the European Union, the World Bank, the UN environment and development programs, and many NGOs, such as the International Institute for Sustainable Development, Conservation International, and Oxfam.

As women represent the majority of the world's poor, they are disproportionately affected by climate change and its negative health impacts.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, the daily burden on women worldwide to acquire water, food, and energy for survival demonstrates their unique direct relationship and dependency on natural resources, a detailed case of which is documented in this volume (see Asthana). Adding to work that has introduced intersections between environmental and human security, such as the environmental consequences of war and in particular intersections with feminist approaches, documenting, for instance, the role of women in environmental preservation, chapters in this volume by Márquez-Salaices and Ángeles and Dornfeld and Flores tackle questions regarding the formal and informal participation of women in the development of sustainable economies and climate change science.<sup>41</sup>

#### CHAPTER-BY-CHAPTER OVERVIEW

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There are significant gender dimensions to traditional questions in IR and human security. Several chapters in this volume focus on the diverse impacts on women's lives and well-being manifest in conflict and postconflict situations and the corrective measures that can be taken from a human security perspective. In line with other recent work, this volume highlights traditional questions related to women's experiences and human security, such as how women and girls are victims of gender-based violence in conflict and postconflict situations (see Stohl, Hoogensen Gjørvi, Weitsmann, Cook, and Dunn within).<sup>42</sup> Similarly, both this volume and others works have documented women's agency in policymaking and peacebuilding (see Stohl, Hoogensen Gjørvi, and Cook within).<sup>43</sup> Across the chapters in this volume,

the ways in which women can be or are powerful contributors to a broader and more comprehensive understanding of security are presented. Several chapters reflect upon policy implications and solutions and how women can create these solutions through historical and future roles. This text further adds novel solutions to this discussion, such as the analyses of the potential of citizen science and microfinance (see Dornfeld and Flores and LaBorde). The contributors bring a variety of disciplinary backgrounds to these issues, listening to, learning from, and systematically documenting women's diverse experiences using a variety of empirical methods, including action-based, participatory, and feminist research practices (Asthana, Dunn) and developing novel approaches such as social ecology and informal scientific opportunities (Asthana, Márquez-Salaices and Ángeles, Dornfeld and Flores).

The first section of the volume contributes insights and research on the impacts of violence against women and the continued challenges to altering patterns of conflict and violence that specifically target women in different contexts.

Patricia A. Weitsman analyzes how identity politics explicitly uses gender constructions as well as ethnicity, race, or religion to affect policies of sexual violence in wartime. She examines policies that range from forced impregnation to gendered forms of torture and assesses those ideas in the context of the mass rapes in the former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s and Rwanda in 1994, with the goal that improved analysis about these processes can assist in ensuring a better quality of life for those who have suffered from these policies.

Rachel Stohl analyzes the negative effects of small arms and light weapons on the lives of women in a range of environments. These effects include murder, sexual violence, intimidation, and loss of opportunities. Stohl argues that gender perspectives and gender-mainstreaming initiatives based on continued data collection are necessary in small arms legislation nationally and internationally to help prevent violence against women.

Mia Bloom investigates further the relationship between women and violence in the context of rape and war and its effect on promoting suicide terrorism, which exploits stereotypes of women as passive and nonviolent, explores women's motivations to participate in violence, and examines the ways in which masculinist organizations debate and justify women's recruitment. Thus, the role of women in the issue of suicide terrorism captures the unique position of women as both targets and perpetrators of violence.

Joana Cook's chapter focuses on the ways in which the role of women is underestimated in countering violent extremism. Cook looks at the ways in which women who are active in civil society are working toward alleviating poverty and illiteracy and increasing access to education and health care, which among other activities contribute to building security and reducing extremism.

Gunhild Hoogensen Gjørv examines women's activities in peace and security by focusing on the ways in which the role of gender advisers developed within the militaries of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Afghanistan from 2001 to 2014. Using feminist security studies theories, she exposes the tensions inherent in assumptions about what the category "woman" brings to military operations and to the communities impacted by these operations. She draws on recent evaluations of attempts to implement UNSCR 1325 in NATO and Norwegian military operations in the Afghanistan context, as well as from her own interviews and discussions conducted in Afghanistan with a select number of Afghan women.

Holly Dunn turns our attention to sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where she argues that it is important to further unpack what we mean by concepts such as "wartime rape" and "gender-based violence" as well as examine more closely methodologies in sexualized violence research, claiming that more in-depth or "immersive" fieldwork is needed, integrating positionality and reflexivity into research designs.

The second section contains several chapters that address environmental and economic security. These chapters focus on environmental threats to women's lives from a public policy perspective and navigate the relationship between environmental and economic development.

On the basis of such uncritical assumptions about who is human and who is not, human security discourses have been used to support political agendas where Western security becomes dependent upon non-Western security—or, rather, "our" security relies on "their" development and security.<sup>44</sup>

Vandana Asthana's work based on case studies in India exposes the vulnerabilities women face in light of climate change, where their food and economic security is highly dependent upon the environment and possibilities for agricultural development. Their vulnerability is increased when access to education, political power, and land management is socially constructed in favor of masculine paradigms. At the same time, being responsible for both

indoor and outdoor work, women are responsible for the survival of their families, for food, water, and economic security.

Tera Dornfeld and Nina M. Flores build on the characterization of climate change as a “superwicked problem” and claim that the tool of “citizen science” can provide much-needed data, which can serve to provide a more complex and complete picture regarding the contextual effects of climate change as well as possible mitigation measures. The authors examine citizen science in both theoretical and practical terms, including insights from critical pedagogy, proposing concrete approaches to ensuring that citizen science is more inclusive for particularly disadvantaged women who have insights that would normally go unheard.

Martha Adriana Márquez-Salaices and Manuel Ángeles use theories and methods of social ecology to examine the interrelations between economy and nature. They investigate the development of sustainable economies in northwestern Mexico, calling for a better integration of input from local stakeholders. Through social ecology, the authors show how local interactions with the environment and nature inspire different actions that potentially transform communities into equitable and sustainable spaces.

Elissa McCarter LaBorde's chapter uniquely draws upon traditional questions of security in war-torn areas alongside emerging financial tools and technologies. Specifically, advancing the analysis of women's economic vulnerabilities and potentials, LaBorde analyzes microfinance, or “financial inclusion,” as a development tool and the possibilities for women in situations of perpetual poverty, war-torn areas, and postdisaster situations. She finds that women borrowers have been the principal drivers behind the developmental impact of microfinance—women as agents of change, rather than the victims, requiring savings. The author nevertheless calls for more research into why women are still very vulnerable to poverty and have reduced access to financial measures to provide for their own, their family's, and their community's economic security.

## NOTES

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1. Walt, “Renaissance,” 213.
  2. Parashar, Tickner, and True, *Revisiting Gendered States*.
  3. Jose and Medie, “Understanding Why”; Rubin, “Rebel Territorial Control”; Parashar and Shah, “(En)Gendering”; Hoogensen Gjørsv, “Virtuous Imperialism.”
  4. Elshtain, “On Beautiful Souls.”

5. Baines and Paddon, "This Is How."
6. Smith, "Remaking Scale."
7. Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins"; Vastapuu, "Hope Is Not Gone."
8. UNESCO, "Adult and Youth Literacy."
9. CIA, *Literacy*.
10. UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking*.
11. UN Women, "Progress."
12. Cantor et al., *Report on the AAU*.
13. Carpenter, "Recognizing Gender-Based Violence."
14. See, e.g., Duriesmith, "Manly States."
15. Elshtain, *Women and War*.
16. Lutz, Vivar, and Supik, "Framing Intersectionality," 2.
17. See, e.g., GWIPS and PRIO, *Women and Peace Security Index*.
18. World Bank, *Citizens' Charter*.
19. Azarbaijani-Moghaddam, "Seeking Out"; UNAMA/OHCHR, *Injustice and Impunity*.
20. UNDP, *Human Development Report 2015*.
21. Ditchburn, "Because It's 2015."
22. UN Women, "Progress."
23. UNDP, *Human Development Report 2015*, 23.
24. UNDP, 22.
25. Commission on Human Security, *Human Security Now*.
26. Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 5.
27. UNDP, *Human Development Report 1994*, 163–64.
28. Krause, "Key"; Paris, "Human Security."
29. Paris, "Human Security," 102.
30. UNSC, "Resolution 1325."
31. Sengupta, "Finding a Path."
32. Sengupta.
33. Hudson, "'Doing' Security"; Marhia, "Some Humans."
34. Sen, *Development as Freedom*; Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development*; Sen, "Development."
35. Marhia, "Some Humans."
36. In this collection, we also at times refer to "gender and feminist theories and studies," as not all analyses examining genders are necessarily feminist nor are processes of gendering. Feminist approaches can be distinguished by not only a focus on gender (which historically has been focused on the category of women narrowly conceived) but also by a political interest and agenda for change in favor of gender equality.
37. Blanchard, "Gender."
38. Hoogensen and Rottem, "Gender Identity."
39. Matthew et al., *Continuity and Change*.
40. UNFPA, *State of the World Population*; World Commission on Environment and Development, *Gender, Climate Change, and Health*.
41. Reardon and Hans, *Gender Imperative*.

42. Boyd, *Search*; Reardon and Hans, *Gender Imperative*; Truong, Wieringa, and Chhachhi, *Engendering Human Security*.
43. Boyd, *Search*; Reardon and Hans, *Gender Imperative*.
44. McRae and Hubert, *Human Security*; Duffield and Waddel, "Securing Humans"; Marhia, "Some Humans"; Hoogensen Gjørø, "Virtuous Imperialism."

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Part 1

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*Conflict and Violence*

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## Chapter 2

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### Women, War, and Identity

#### *Policies of Mass Rape in Bosnia and Rwanda*

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PATRICIA A. WEITSMAN

Understanding war—its causes, its prevention—is a quest that has driven scholars and practitioners for millennia. This has culminated in a voluminous literature that has facilitated our knowledge in profound ways. Detailed studies have provided us with a comprehensive list of indicators that flag when military conflicts are likely to occur and have outlined the diplomacy required to prevent it. One theme that pervades these studies, as diverse as they are, is the necessary condition of a self and an “other.” Although these in-groups and out-groups are defined differently depending on the study (democracies versus nondemocracies, allies versus nonallies, economic-trading partners versus non-economic-trading partners, native ethnic populations versus nonnative ethnic populations, and so forth), in the absence of two or more differentiated and hostile groups, war simply could not occur.

One essential question in the study of war thus necessarily becomes how do warring parties identify themselves, and how do they distinguish

themselves from the group with which they are in conflict? In other words, how does identity promote conflict, and how does war in turn shape identity? These are questions that get at the heart of the war experience and require answers that go beyond any singular discipline. No one book or article could comprehensively address these questions either. What I seek to do here is to explore the answers to these questions in a very specific context—namely, to examine the policies undertaken by governments during wartime that promote or prohibit forced impregnation or maternity, in order to explore the ways these governments seek to define identity to construct the self versus the other. It is worth mentioning that while my article investigates the politics of sexual violence via forced maternity, it is equally important to view policies of forced sterilizations in the same light, although it is beyond the scope of this project to do both. I proceed as follows. The next section of the paper examines the policies of sexual violence in the civil wars in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda in order to understand the connection among the ideas that underpin the policies. I then conclude with some thoughts about the causes and consequences of identity politics, gender, and war.

#### GOVERNMENT “IDENTITY” POLICIES DURING WARTIME

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There are a number of ways in which government “identity” policies manifest during wartime. These policies often entail the limiting of rights or civil liberties of some segment of the population, such as restricting their movement or requiring them to bear some mark of their identity either on their persons or on their identification papers. In addition to policies that serve to make explicit the differences between the “self” identity and the “other,” government policies sometimes go further by seeking to craft a national identity through invasive policies of social or genetic engineering. This may entail policies of forced maternity and the production of new babies whose identities are connected to their fathers. Alternatively, a government or military group may attempt to eradicate complete decimation of a group whose identity is constructed as the enemy.

##### Greater Serbia, Early 1990s

The end of the Soviet era brought significant restructuring and realignment within the region that had been the Eastern bloc throughout the Cold War. The future of Yugoslavia was uncertain. In July 1991, Slovenia

and Croatia declared their independence, bringing about war between Croatia and the Yugoslav state and, to a lesser extent, between Yugoslavia and Slovenia. By early 1992, a shaky peace was forged, but shortly thereafter Bosnia-Herzegovina declared independence. This culminated in civil war among Serbs, Croats, and Muslims in Bosnia that lasted for several years. The atrocities that occurred during the war were very hard to comprehend. Somewhere in the neighborhood of two hundred thousand people died, two million people were left homeless, and tens of thousands of women and girls were raped. During the years of the civil war, there was no refuge—in the United Nations (UN) safe haven of Srebrenica, more than eight thousand men and boys were massacred.<sup>1</sup> Mass graves continue to be uncovered. Many of the missing were never found, and some families were never reunited.

An additional legacy of the war in the former Yugoslavia was the violence committed principally against Bosnian Muslim women by the Serb militias.<sup>2</sup> In August 1992, two reporters, Roy Gutman and Ed Vulliamy, were able to gain access to the Omarska camp, located in the north of Bosnia.<sup>3</sup> They emerged with stories of the atrocities being committed in the camp:

Omarska was a place where cruelty and mass murder had become a form of recreation. The guards were often drunk and singing while they tortured. A prisoner called Fikret Harambasic was castrated by one of his fellow inmates before being beaten to death. One inmate was made to bark like a dog and lap at a puddle of motor oil, while a guard and his mates from the village jumped up and down on his back until he was dead. The guards would make videos of this butchery for their home entertainment. But the most extraordinary hallmark of the carnage was its grotesque intimacy. People knew their torturers, and had often grown up alongside them.<sup>4</sup>

Extreme forms of torture included forced cannibalism, castrations done in the most humiliating and painful ways possible (e.g., tying testicles with wire to the back of a motorcycle that took off at high speed, ordering a prisoner to bite off the testicles of another, and so forth), and beatings of all imaginable kinds, frequently to death.<sup>5</sup> At this one camp alone, thousands perished May through August 1992, the months the camp was open. It closed after reports were broadcast about what was occurring there. Yet camps of this kind were established throughout Bosnia, and in addition to

the tortures, beatings, and castrations, at Omarska as well as all over Bosnia, women were segregated, held, and repeatedly raped day after day for months. One such camp at Foca, a small town in Bosnia, was almost exclusively constructed as a rape camp. In the summer of 1992, dozens of women were held there:

The Serbs had a fairly regular procedure. They usually transported a new batch of . . . prisoners to a temporary detention center where some of the women—most often the younger ones—were raped for the first time, frequently by more than one soldier. After a day or two, the prisoners were trucked to one of the main rape camps. These included Foca High School and Partizan Sports Hall (“Partizan” for short), which was a gymnasium near the central police station. Those who went first to the high school stayed anywhere from several days to several weeks. From there, most were transferred to Partizan, where roughly seventy-five people . . . were trapped at any one time. . . . The Serbs . . . aimed to impregnate as many women as possible, certainly for the added trauma this would produce, but also to expend the procreative capacity of Muslim women on Serb-sired babies. The Serbs regularly taunted their victims while they were being raped: “Now you’ll have Serb babies.” Forty of the women and teenagers in Partizan became pregnant.<sup>6</sup>

Not only was mass rape a critical element of the war in the former Yugoslavia, but forced impregnation and forced maternity were as well. Principally Bosnian Muslim women were the targets, although Croatian women and Serbian women also were sexually violated during the war. According to the final report of the UN Commission of Experts established pursuant to UN Security Council Resolution 789, there were about 162 detention sites in the former Yugoslavia where people were sexually violated, although this may be an underestimate.<sup>7</sup> At rape camps across the country, Bosnian Muslim women were held, repeatedly raped by numerous men, and then either killed or detained for additional sustained sexual torture. Some women were raped by as many as forty men in one night; some women were gang-raped in this way day after day for months at a time:<sup>8</sup>

The strategy of mass rape and forced impregnation was a clear policy dictated by the Serb authorities. Despite denials by the Serbs, the rape camps were established in nearly identical ways—even down to the

layout of the camps—throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the patterns of rape were the same. Further, the rapes occurred in noncontiguous sections of Bosnia simultaneously.<sup>9</sup> In the words of one survivor, Rasema, who identified her neighbor as one of the three men who raped her, “I said, ‘Sasha, remember your mother. Remember your sister. Don’t do it.’ He said, ‘I must. If I do not they will hurt me. Because they have ordered me to.’”<sup>10</sup>

The mass rapes of men and women in the former Yugoslavia were undertaken with the intention of humiliating, degrading, and torturing the victims. They were also undertaken with the clear purpose of forcibly impregnating women and ensuring the children were carried to term. In her testimony against Serb leader Radovan Karadzic and General Ratko Mladic in July 1996, Irma Oosterman, a member of the prosecution investigation team, said, “The soldiers told often that they were forced to do it. They did not say who forced them to do it, but they were ordered do it.” Her testimony continues, “they wanted to make Serb or Chetnik babies. The pattern was, yes, all over the same.”<sup>11</sup>

Further evidence that forced impregnation and maternity were goals of the Serbian authorities is provided by survivors’ accounts. Narratives provided by hundreds of women held at camps around Bosnia suggest that women were repeatedly raped and then, once impregnated, held until abortion was no longer an option. In the words of one survivor of the Doboï camp:

They said that each woman had to serve at least ten men a day. . . . God, what horrible things they did. They just came in and humiliated us, raped us, and later they told you, “Come on now, if you could have Ustasha babies, then you can have a Chetnik baby, too.” . . . Women who got pregnant, they had to stay there for seven or eight months so they could give birth to a Serbian kid. They had their gynecologists there to examine the women. The pregnant ones were separated off from us and had special privileges; they got meals, they were better off, they were protected. Only when a woman’s in her seventh month, when she can’t do anything about it anymore, then she’s released. Then they usually take these women to Serbia. . . . They beat the women who didn’t get pregnant, especially the younger women; they were supposed to confess what contraceptives they were using.<sup>12</sup>



These accounts were repeated by many survivors. One survivor of a rape camp at Kalinovik where about a hundred women were held and gang-raped recounted that the rapists continually told the women, "You are going to have our children—you are going to have our little Chetniks" and that the women who became pregnant were left alone.<sup>13</sup>

It is widely accepted by scholars and practitioners of international politics that the use of mass rape, forced impregnation, and forced maternity were policies implemented as part of the broader Serbian goal of ethnic cleansing and even genocide.<sup>14</sup> While policies of mass rape may be used to humiliate and degrade a population to such an extent that people leave en masse, thereby advancing the goal of ethnic cleansing, rape with the intent of forcing women to bear children cannot be similarly construed. To do so is tantamount to accepting the view of identity that is being perpetuated by the rapists—that it is paternally derived—and denying the cultural and genetic connection between mother and child. Serbian policies of forced impregnation were undertaken with the sole purpose of generating "Serbian" babies. Women detained and forced to endure repeated gang rapes with the intention of impregnating them were repeatedly told that they were being raped in order "plant the seed of Serbs in Bosnia," to give birth to "little Chetniks," to deliver a Serb baby, and so forth.<sup>15</sup> The soldiers who participated in these rapes told their victims over and over again that they would be forced to bear children of the enemy, that abortion would be denied to them, that they would be detained until termination of the pregnancy was out of the question, and that they were implementing these policies of forced impregnation and maternity on orders from their superiors.<sup>16</sup>

The critical question in this context becomes what constitutes identity and under what assumptions about identity were the Serbs operating? The most important set of assumptions is that identity is biologically derived and that women are vessels for transmitting paternal identity. The belief that Bosnian Muslim women would give birth to little Chetniks assumes away the maternal contribution to the child's biological makeup, as well as her role in the child's upbringing, should enforced maternity result, should the child survive, and should the child not be placed in an orphanage or abandoned. This gives rise to another assumption that pervades both the thinking about the policy of forced impregnation and enforced maternity as well as the representations of the policies in the media and beyond—namely, that biology trumps culture, nature over nurture. While hard data is

scarce, in many of the cases of forced maternity the mother of the child raises him or her. However, the learning and culture associated with the mother's child-rearing is allegedly negated by the biological fact of the child's paternity. In many if not most cases of forced maternity, the identity of the father is unknown, either because the woman did not know her victimizer or, more likely, because there were so many rapists that it is impossible to know who the source of the impregnation actually was. In such cases, it would be logical to see the maternal connection as paramount in forging the identity of the child. Yet this is generally not the case—these children are represented in their own countries and by the media as “genocidal babies,” “little Chetniks,” “children of hate,” or “children of shame.”<sup>17</sup> In other words, the identity of the children continues to be linked to their rapist fathers, even if the paternal identity is completely unknown, even if the child never meets the father, even if the child is cared for and raised by the child's mother. This is a powerful message about identity and how it is perceived, constructed, and imagined. All that matters is the ethnic identity of the father and the shame surrounding the conception. This reveals an additional assumption about identity that underpins the policies of mass rape, forced impregnation, and maternity: that women's contributions to the makeup and raising of their children are rendered meaningless in the face of the act of sexual violation that took place at conception. The lifelong responsibilities of raising a child are in essence negated by the acts of violence that culminated in conception. This degrades both the experiences of women as well as the legacies of the violence, the war babies. As I will discuss below, this gives rise to egregious infringements on the human rights of these children from birth throughout their entire lives.

These policies of enforced impregnation and maternity privilege biology, yet the biological roots of identity on which the policies are predicated are actually socially constructed. Even if a child is born of and raised by a Bosnian Muslim, his or her identity nevertheless is linked inextricably to the biological father. Yet racially Bosnian Muslims and Serbs are both Slavs and have virtually no genetic or biological distinctions. So, in this case, even the construction of biological difference is social and not material.<sup>18</sup>

The assumptions that underpin the policy of rape warfare, forced impregnation, and forced maternity are that women's worth derives from their relationships to men and that the shame of victimization is far worse than the perpetration of the crime. Many Bosnian Muslim women who were

raped during the civil war, even if not impregnated, were shamed and out-cast by their own families.<sup>19</sup> This has important implications not only for identity but for gender politics as well. Shaming the victims more than the perpetrators indicates that women's value derives from "purity"—in other words, her relationship to men to the extent that she has not engaged in sexual intercourse and that in the event of violation, again, her value is inextricably linked to the interposing of a man's body onto her own. In essence, a woman's identity never really stands alone—it is always be juxtaposed by her sexual relationships to men, whether coercive or consensual. These assumptions must be in place to support a policy of mass rape. If not, this policy loses its coercive power and may not be as successful in driving families apart or securing the end of ethnic cleansing.

Finally, the assumptions that are inherent in the policies of forced impregnation and maternity witnessed in the wars in the former Yugoslavia have a grave effect on the human rights of the babies born of the violence. This can be seen in a number of ways. First, the grievous impact on undermining the human rights of these children can be witnessed in the large incidence of infanticide and the acceptance of it as a natural product of the savagery of their conception.<sup>20</sup> Second, the language used to describe the children is all derogatory labels that are linked to the rapist fathers. These labels stay with the children throughout their lives—again, their identity is inextricably linked to their biological fathers. This means that a cloud of shame hangs over them by virtue of circumstances beyond their control. Third, in the aftermath of the civil war, the Bosnian government refused to allow these children to be adopted overseas since they were seen as an important means of repopulating the country.<sup>21</sup> In other words, escape from the stigma of their birth was impossible.

The assumptions that underpin policies of mass rape, forced impregnation, and forced maternity are important as they represent how identity is perceived and constructed. These assumptions also inform us about gender inequities and the ways in which the human rights of war babies are violated from the moment of their births.

#### Rwanda, 1994

From April 1994 to July, hundreds of thousands of Tutsi Rwandans were killed. By the end of the genocide, more than three-quarters of the Tutsi population was dead.<sup>22</sup> Unlike the industrial killing of the Holocaust, Tutsis

were murdered with primitive weapons, often by people they knew.<sup>23</sup> Close to a million people lost their lives in the one hundred days of mass slaughter.<sup>24</sup> The viciousness of the attacks and the fact that for each death there was often more than one killer suggest a hatred that is very nearly impossible to comprehend.

Participation in the killing was widespread—including the political and civil elite—and there was virtually no place the targets of terror could seek refuge. Children taken to friends' houses for protection were killed by their keepers. Neighbors killed neighbors; churches, hospitals, and schools all became slaughterhouses.<sup>25</sup> Fleeing Tutsis were tracked relentlessly until found and put to their deaths.<sup>26</sup>

At the peak of the genocide, when tens of thousands of corpses lay decomposing on the streets of Kigali, the capital, the government turned its attention to Butare Province. After encountering resistance, a different tactic was employed. Announcements were broadcast of an impending Red Cross visit and called for refugees to gather at a local stadium for sanctuary and supplies. After the women were separated out, the men were attacked en masse, hacked by machetes until not one was left alive. One Tutsi woman, who was taken by the Interahamwe (a Hutu militia) to observe the mass slaughter and be the one to tell the tale to God of the Tutsis' demise, witnessed innumerable atrocities, particularly committed against women's bodies, such as the spearing of a baby as it emerged from its mother's body and a multitude of rapes with foreign objects, such as machetes and spears and the burning of women's pubic hair afterward.<sup>27</sup> Pregnant women were sliced open, and their fetuses removed.<sup>28</sup>

The Hutu government promoted indiscriminate violence against Tutsis, calling for the killing of Tutsi men, women, and children. As one survivor recollected, "All the day this was the only thing the radio played. What you heard on the radio, you never think it could be wrong. They told you, 'Kill, kill, kill! The enemy must die! Babies! Don't spare the elders. Don't loot before, kill first.'"<sup>29</sup>

The Rwandan genocide contained a particular gender component as well. This was true in two ways. First, it is one of the few recorded instances of genocide in which women were very active in the killings. While most of the individuals on trial with the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) were men, some of the most notorious offenders were women.<sup>30</sup> Second, the propaganda campaigns leading up to the genocide

and the sexual violence perpetrated during those fateful days were directed against Tutsi women.<sup>31</sup>

For several years leading up to the genocide, newspapers and radio stations broadcast messages of hate designed to inflame the Hutus against the Tutsis. In March 1992, the government's radio station, Radio Rwanda, warned of an impending attack on Hutu leaders by Tutsis in the district of Bugesera. This was a false report designed to spark massacres of Tutsis. The propaganda continued to escalate. Newspapers contained cartoons designed to underscore the messages of hate and violence the government was trying to foment. This language was picked up and repeated by Hutus throughout Rwanda.<sup>32</sup>

One element of the propaganda targeted Tutsi women in particular. The messages included statements about Tutsi women's alleged promiscuity and their feelings of superiority toward Hutu men, whom they were said to consider unattractive and lower-class. Radio broadcasts told Hutus to be wary of Tutsi women. Tutsi women were depicted as seductive spies who believed themselves to be too good for Hutu men.<sup>33</sup>

Once the genocide started, mass rape was one of its key components.<sup>34</sup> Some witnesses observe that nearly every Tutsi woman and girl who survived the genocide was sexually molested.<sup>35</sup> The rapes were systematically undertaken, principally by the Interahamwe.<sup>36</sup> Many who did not survive the genocide were raped as well. Some of the women were penetrated with tools of all sorts—spears, gun barrels, bottles, or the stamens of banana trees. Women's sexual organs were mutilated with machetes, boiling water, and acid, and their breasts were cut off. According to one study, Butare Province alone has more than thirty thousand rape survivors. Many more women were killed after they were raped.<sup>37</sup>

Pauline Nyiramasuhuko, the minister for family and women's affairs, was sent to her hometown of Butare to quell the city's revolt against the genocide campaign. As the women were rounded up for slaughter, Nyiramasuhuko commanded the militiamen to be sure they raped the women before they were killed.<sup>38</sup> She also used rape to reward the soldiers for their killings, urging them on time after time.<sup>39</sup> According to witnesses, Nyiramasuhuko's commands to rape generated a collective sadism in Butare. One woman survivor, for example, was taken as a sex slave by her neighbors who tortured her nightly under the conditions that prevailed during Nyiramasuhuko's supervision.<sup>40</sup> This survivor "remembered two things most of all:

the stamens from the banana trees they used to violate her, leaving her body mutilated, and the single sentence one of the men used: 'We're going to kill all the Tutsis, and one day Hutu children will have to ask what did a Tutsi child look like.'<sup>41</sup> As in the former Yugoslavia, women were often held in separate quarters, beaten, and repeatedly gang-raped for days on end. Some women were taken as sexual slaves and held for years by the Hutu militiamen. This made Rwanda home to something more than genocide. The torture and mass rape that were a part of the atrocities went beyond merely instrumental killing. It also meant that new children came into the world in the wake of the disaster—thousands of babies were born as a consequence of these rapes.<sup>42</sup>

The systematic rape that took place during the widespread killing in Rwanda was undertaken with the express purpose of degrading, humiliating, punishing, and torturing Tutsi women. For example, Jean-Paul Akayesu, the mayor of Taba Commune in the Prefecture of Gitarama, was found responsible for the multiple rapes of over thirty women that took place under his auspices as well as the degradation of numerous women, including public disrobing and forcing women to engage in humiliating activities while naked in public.<sup>43</sup>

Jean de Dieu Kamuhanda, who held the office of minister of higher education and scientific research in the interim government, was responsible for representing government policy in regard to postsecondary school education and scientific research. During the genocide, he supervised killings during the month of April and personally led attacks by soldiers and the Interahamwe against Tutsi refugees in Kigali-Rural Province and at the parish church and adjoining school in Gikomero, where several thousand people were killed. During the attack on the school, the militia selected women from among the refugees, carried them away, and raped them before killing them. During the criminal tribunal proceedings, "Witness GAG" testified that during the shooting she ran toward the classrooms because her four-year-old child was there. She hid there with four other women, while others escaped outside the classroom:

From behind the blackboard, she was able to see the killings from the side, and she saw the killers standing at the classroom's doors slashing people as they ran out. The attackers put beautiful girls aside and she heard the girls cry out later. The attackers specifically told them "we are

going to rape you and taste Tutsi women,” to which the girls replied “instead of raping us, it is better that you kill us once and for all.” In cross-examination, the Witness explained that despite a lot of noise in the area she was able to hear people praying as they fled and even what the girls said. The attackers were dressed in either military or Interahamwe uniforms, with rags on their heads like savages. Mostly Tutsis were being attacked. The attackers found the Witness, her child and the four women. One of the attackers told her to give him her watch and money, while three girls were ordered to the side to join the other pretty girls. The Witness explained that the attacker asked to see her ID and then told her to show it to the other men. The other men looked at it and said that she was going to die. They slashed her breast and her head until she was unconscious. She awakened at 5:00 pm outside the classroom on top of dead bodies.<sup>44</sup>

Another account stated:

Witness GEP asserted that during a different massacre supervised by Kamuhanda, about 20 girls were selected and led away in a vehicle while the killings continued. The witness said that Kamuhanda left after the departure of the girls. The witness later learned the women and girls were taken to a camp where all of them, with one exception, were raped and killed by the attackers.<sup>45</sup>

Rape was a significant component of the Rwandan government’s campaign of hatred against the Tutsis.<sup>46</sup> Nearly 70 percent of the women raped contracted HIV. Rwandan president Paul Kagame said, “We know that the government was bringing AIDS patients out of the hospitals specifically to form battalions of rapists.”<sup>47</sup> This differentiates the mass rape in Rwanda from the Serbian case. In Rwanda, rape was a part of the destruction of Tutsi women; it was not undertaken with the express purpose of impregnating them, although as many as ten thousand babies were born as a consequence of the rape campaigns.<sup>48</sup>

The identity politics involved in the Rwandan genocide are complex. There are two broad schools of thought regarding the significance of the distinction between the Hutus and the Tutsis: one highlights the difference in the two groups, while the other emphasizes their sameness. Proponents of the first school of thought argue that the two identity groups have different

physical characteristics—for example, Hutus are generally shorter, and the two groups have different blood factors such as the sickle cell trait—and that they have different cultural memories and/or historical origins.

The school of thought that argues that the Hutu/Tutsi distinction is insignificant asserts that the difference between the two groups is principally economic and cultural but not genetic, particularly as the two groups have integrated, intermarried, and cohabitated. In fact, all of the major clans in Rwanda include Hutus and Tutsis (and the Twa). This perspective holds that the difference between Hutus and Tutsis stems principally from social selection and privilege, endowed on the Tutsis by the Belgian colonizers in the colonial and precolonial era. This school of thinking about identity emphasizes the role of colonization in constructing the rift between Hutus and Tutsis.<sup>49</sup> During colonization, the Hutu/Tutsi difference became racialized: Tutsis were constructed as nonindigenous to Rwanda, and Hutus as indigenous.<sup>50</sup> The links between the two groups are manifest in the fact that while “Hutsis” of mixed parentage were often saved, the Tutsi members of their families were slaughtered.<sup>51</sup>

The identity assumptions that underpinned the mass rapes in the Rwandan case were somewhat different from the Bosnian one. While thousands of children were born of rape in Rwanda, forced impregnation was not the deliberate plan of the government. The propaganda campaigns prior to the genocide emphasized that Tutsi women were scornful of Hutu men and mere agents of their Tutsi brothers and fathers. This culminated in widescale torture of Tutsi women that took many forms:

Assailants sometimes mutilated women in the course of a rape or before killing them. They cut off breasts, punctured the vagina with spears, arrows, or pointed sticks, or cut off or disfigured body parts that looked particularly “Tutsi,” such as long fingers or thin noses. They also humiliated the women. One witness from Musambira commune was taken with some 200 other women after a massacre. They were all forced to bury their husbands and then to walk “naked like a group of cattle” some ten miles to Kabgayi. . . . When the group stopped at nightfall, some of the women were raped repeatedly.<sup>52</sup>

Gender and ethnicity both played a key role in the mass rape of Tutsi women. In the interviews that followed the genocide, most of the survivors described how their assailants remarked on their ethnicity before, during, or after the



rape. Some of the comments included remarks such as “We want to see how sweet Tutsi women are,” “You Tutsi women think that you are too good for us,” “We want to see if a Tutsi woman is like a Hutu woman,” “If there were peace, you would never accept me,” and “You Tutsi girls are too proud.” One rape survivor described how, after being raped, her assailant said, “Now the Hutu have won. You Tutsi, we are going to exterminate you.” He then took her inside, put her on a bed, and held one leg, while another held her other leg. “He called everyone who was outside and said, ‘You come and see how Tutsikazi [Tutsi women] are on the inside.’ Then he cut out the inside of my vagina. He took the flesh outside, took a small stick and put what he had cut on the top. He stuck the stick in the ground outside the door and was shouting, ‘Everyone who comes past here will see how Tutsikazi look.’”<sup>53</sup> One Rwandan aid worker, responding to a question about the reasons for the mass rape, said, “Hutu men wanted to know Tutsi women, to have sex with them. Tutsi women were supposed to be special sexually.”<sup>54</sup>

The identity politics that underpin the mass rape in Rwanda derived from two principal sources: the view of Tutsi women as sexual objects requiring subjugation and the patriarchal structure of society. Many of the rape survivors from the Rwandan genocide were held as sexual slaves—sometimes collectively, sometimes as the private property of one individual. Some were held for days, others for years. The violence directed against these women was shattering. Again, more than ten thousand children were born as a consequence of these rapes, with some women held as sexual slaves bearing more than one.<sup>55</sup> As one journalist said, “Tutsi women were made for sexuality and beauty, for royal courts. That’s how we were educated. People from the north . . . wanted to take Tutsi as mistresses because they were forbidden to have them.”<sup>56</sup> The patriarchal structure of society also was critical in allowing policies of mass rape to prevail. Women were largely the dependents of male relatives and life centered around their roles as wives and bearers of children. Prior to the genocide, women were most valued for the number of children they could produce, that number in Rwanda (6.2 per woman) being one of the highest in the world before 1994.<sup>57</sup> Once rendered unmarriageable by sexual violation, these women saw their societal value become marginal.

The children born of these assaults also become an important prism for understanding the dynamics of identity politics. These children are labeled “unwanted children,” “children of bad memories,” “children of hate,”

“genocidal children”—all names that reflect their identity being inextricably linked to their fathers.<sup>58</sup> Many of the children were referred to by derogatory terms, such as “little killers,” “child of hate,” “the intruder,” and so forth.<sup>59</sup> The stigma attached to these babies from birth culminated in large-scale abuses of their human rights. Infanticide rates were extremely high, mothers abandoned many of the children at birth, and others neglected their children after birth, allowing them to die.<sup>60</sup> For many of those women who kept and are raising their children, anger and resentment culminated in child abuse.<sup>61</sup> As these children grow up and become aware of the fact that their fathers were rapists whose identities are impossible to establish, life becomes even more difficult. In the words of one mother, “When people kill your family and then rape you, you cannot love the child.”<sup>62</sup> With their mothers’ shame, their families’ ostracism, and many relatives killed in the genocide, the future of these children does not look very hopeful.

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The rape policies in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda have a multitude of causes. Central among these are the way identity and gender are constructed. It is not enough to understand either case exclusively in terms of ethnicity, race, or religion. The identity politics in play stem from the construction of group identity as well as the perception of women in the culture where such policies are implemented. In patriarchal societies where a woman’s value is derived from her standing as a wife, mother, sister, or daughter, sexual assault not only obliterates her self-esteem—which may be universally true, regardless of the hierarchy of society—but it also destroys her place in her own community.<sup>63</sup>

The consequences of mass rape are manifold as well. Forced impregnation or maternity guarantee painful and difficult decisions for a woman and will be public markers of her experience. If she abandons her child, she may well bear that trauma throughout her life, in addition to the trauma of the act of sexual violation itself and the period of pregnancy that followed. If she raises her child, she may never overcome her feelings of ambivalence regarding him or her because of the memories the child may bring up. The central issue becomes how to ensure that the rights of the rape survivor are not secured at the expense of the children she bears. These children, as we know from earlier cases in World War I, World War II, the Vietnam War, the Gulf War (1990–91), and other conflicts, have a cloud of shame

that follow them their entire lives, despite the fact that they are themselves blameless.<sup>64</sup>

The policies of mass rape culminated in a large number of infant births. In the former Yugoslavia, enforced maternity was an explicit goal; in Rwanda, mass rape was undertaken as a particular gendered form of torture. In both cases, the human rights of the mothers and the children have been severely violated. The identification of the children with their paternity arises from specific constructions of identity and the importance of biology in understanding it. In addition, policies of mass rape and forced impregnation are developed and implemented based on specific concepts of identity and understandings of gender. As we learn more about the way in which identity politics drive policies of mass rape, forced impregnation, and indeed any policies of social transformation, we may be able to do more to facilitate the quality of life for those left in the wake of its destruction.

#### NOTES

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1. McGrory, "Ten Years On."

2. It is important for me to note here that while my focus is on the rape and forced impregnation of Bosnian Muslim women, there were numerous rapes committed against women of other ethnic groups as well as of men. The principal targets of the sexual violence were Bosnian Muslim women, but by no means were they the only victims.

3. Askin, "Omarska Camp."

4. Vulliamy, "Middle Managers."

5. Gutman, *Witness to Genocide*.

6. Barkan, "As Old as War Itself," 61. See also Gutman, 164–67.

7. UN Commission of Experts, *Final Report*, 4–5. This report details the sexual violence committed in fifty-seven counties across Bosnia-Herzegovina, nineteen counties in Croatia, and several in Serbia.

8. One woman who had been held at Bosanski Brod, a Croatian camp that principally held Serb women, described the experience of one woman who was raped by forty-one men before being shot in the head. UN Commission of Experts, *Final Report*, 13. It is also possible to read the narratives of the women who have testified at the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia (ICTY). There were sixteen from Foca alone who testified in 2000. The documents and transcripts are available at [www.un.org/icty](http://www.un.org/icty).

9. Sharlach, "Rape as Genocide," 97. Upon collecting statements from survivors, even individuals who had not believed that the rapes were systematic became convinced that it was indeed true. See also "Mass Rape in Bosnia," at <http://www.barnsdle.demon.co.uk/bosnia/rapes.html>; Salzman "Rape Camps," 348–78; Scott, "Systematic Rapes"; Deutsche Presse-Agentur, "Mass Rape in Bosnia"; and Fisher, "Occupation of the Womb," 91–133.

10. Rodrigue, "Women."

11. ICTY, Case No. IT-95-18-R61, Case No. IT-95-5-R61 (1996). “Chetnik” refers to a member of various Serbian nationalist guerrilla forces in the Balkans, especially during World War II.
12. Kadir, quoted in Stiglmayer, “Rapes in Bosnia-Herzegovina,” 119.
13. Fisk, “Rape Victims.” See also Fisher, “Occupation of the Womb,” 110–11.
14. There is a voluminous literature that frames the issue in this way. See a discussion in Weitsman, “War Babies,” 1–14. There are a number of scholars who object to this language, myself included. See especially Carpenter “Surfacing Children,” 428–77.
15. Fisher, “Occupation of the Womb,” 111.
16. Fisher, 133.
17. Weitsman, “War Babies,” 5.
18. Boose, “Crossing the River Drina.” Boose’s argument is extremely interesting—that ultimately Bosnian Muslim identity was linked to the Turks by the Serbs despite the fact that in reality there is no connection. But the constructed memory and association of them by the Serbs culminated in the dreadful sexual violations witnessed in the war.
19. This was true for Kosovar Muslims as well. Williams, “In Kosovo.”
20. See Weitsman, “War Babies,” 22, esp. footnotes 13 and 14.
21. Weitsman, 1.
22. Kuperman, “Provoking Genocide,” 61.
23. Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*.
24. Estimates vary as to how many Rwandans were killed, but the number that appears most frequently is eight hundred thousand.
25. Landesman, “Woman’s Work”; Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 7.
26. Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*, 325–27.
27. Landesman, “Woman’s Work.”
28. Sharlach, “Gender and Genocide in Rwanda,” 395.
29. As reported by Sharlach, 397.
30. See the ICTR’s website at <https://unictr.irmct.org/en/tribunal>; Landesman, “Woman’s Work”; and Sharlach, “Gender and Genocide in Rwanda,” 387–99. Another noteworthy gender component is that 70 percent of the surviving population in Rwanda is female. Thus, women will be instrumental in rebuilding the country as well. See Nowrojee, *Shattered Lives*, [https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/1996\\_Rwanda\\_%20Shattered%20Lives.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/1996_Rwanda_%20Shattered%20Lives.pdf).
31. Weitsman, “War Babies,” 6.
32. Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*, 67–85.
33. Nowrojee, *Shattered Lives*.
34. See Boyer, “Rape Policy in Rwanda.”
35. Nowrojee, *Shattered Lives*; Sharlach, “Gender and Genocide in Rwanda,” 393.
36. IPS News, “Women Survivors.”
37. Landesman, “Woman’s Work.”
38. Landesman.
39. Nyiramasuhuko’s case in the ICTR. The case minutes of her trial are available on the ICTR website, <https://unictr.irmct.org/en>, at case # ICTR-98-42 (2015).
40. Landesman, “Woman’s Work.”

41. Landesman, "Woman's Work."
42. Wax, "Rwandans Are Struggling"; Olojede, "Genocide's Child"; Lorch, "Rwanda."
43. Judgment in the Case of Jean Paul Akayesu, ICTR website, [www.ijrcenter.org](http://www.ijrcenter.org), case # ICTR-96-4 (2001).
44. Judgment and Sentence of Kamuhanda, ICTR website, [www.ijrcenter.org](http://www.ijrcenter.org), case # ICTR-99-54A (2005).
45. Judgment and Sentence of Kamuhanda. Most of the individuals convicted by the ICTR have been found guilty of charges of organizing and overseeing systematic rapes, perpetrated by themselves and/or their subordinates. [www.ijrcenter.org](http://www.ijrcenter.org), case # ICTR-99-65A, 2005.
46. For a comprehensive discussion of the policy aspect, see Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*.
47. Landesman, "Woman's Work."
48. Wax, "Rwandans Are Struggling."
49. Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 41-75; Kuperman, "Provoking Genocide," 63.
50. Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 76-102.
51. Prunier, *Rwanda Crisis*.
52. Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*, 215.
53. Nowrojee, *Shattered Lives*, 32.
54. Human Rights Watch / International Federation of Human Rights Leagues interview with a member of the Association des femmes chefs de familles, Kigali, March 28, 1996, as quoted in Nowrojee.
55. Wax, "Rwandans Are Struggling."
56. Nowrojee, *Shattered Lives*, 12.
57. Nowrojee, 12.
58. Lorch, "Rwanda"; Nowrojee, *Shattered Lives*, 39; Wax "Rwandans Are Struggling."
59. Wax, "Rwandans Are Struggling"; Olojede, "Genocide's Child."
60. Nowrojee, *Shattered Lives*, 40; Schull and Shanks, "Rape in War."
61. Wax, "Rwandans Are Struggling"; Olojede, "Genocide's Child."
62. McKinley, "Legacy of Rwanda Violence."
63. Williams, "In Kosovo."
64. See Weitsman, "War Babies," and the other chapters in Carpenter, *War Babies*.

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## Chapter 3

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### Women and Human Security

#### *Women, Small Arms, and Light Weapons*

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RACHEL STOHL

Small arms and light weapons (SALW) impact women around the world in a profound way, whether they live in a war zone or in a state of degraded peace. Both the direct impacts of SALW such as death, injury, psychosocial trauma, and the increased burden of care imposed on women when people close to them are injured and disabled and the indirect impacts such as the loss of educational, economic, and social opportunities have a significant gender dimension often overlooked by researchers and policymakers. A comprehensive examination of women and human security would be incomplete without an analysis of how these weapons impact the lives of women. Thus, this chapter examines the range of negative impacts of small arms and light weapons on women in conflict, postconflict, and nonconflict situations, including murder, sexual violence, intimidation, and loss of opportunities.

A definition of the weapons that cause so much suffering for women around the world is necessary before beginning an examination of the



consequences of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and their misuse. While the international community has no universal definition of small arms and light weapons, the definition proposed by the United Nations (UN) is used for all practical purposes. The UN defines small arms as revolvers and self-loading pistols, rifles and carbines, assault rifles, submachine guns, and light machine guns. Light weapons are classified as heavy machine guns, handheld underbarrel and mounted grenade launchers, portable antitank and antiaircraft guns, recoilless rifles, portable launchers of antitank and antiaircraft missile systems, and mortars of calibers under one hundred millimeters.<sup>1</sup> More simply stated, SALW are those weapons able to be carried and used by an individual or a small crew. In this chapter, in particular, the kinds of small arms most often impacting women are guns—from pistols and revolvers to semi- and fully automatic rifles.

SALW target individuals. These weapons are proven tools of violence in both conflict and nonconflict situations. Indeed, women are equally at risk from small arms during times of peace and conflict.<sup>2</sup> SALW are simple to use, durable, portable, easily concealed, and extremely lethal. Because these weapons also have legitimate military, police, and civilian uses, they are low in cost, widely available, and responsible for hundreds of thousands of deaths and injuries every year. The persistent nature of SALW—that is, the fact that they remain in circulation after an armed conflict has ended—can contribute to the renewal of ceased conflicts or the eruption of new violence in neighboring countries and regions. SALW are also tools of criminal violence, including armed robbery and assault. Moreover, SALW can disrupt development and interfere with the rebuilding of postconflict societies. These weapons have terrorized populations and have been used in rapes, forcible displacements, and torture.

Because of their ubiquitous nature, SALW impact women in a variety of ways. Women's differing opinions on small arms, armed conflict, and arms control are indicative of the different ways in which women, as opposed to men, are affected by small arms, armed conflict, gun violence, and arms control efforts. Wendy Cukier's research has highlighted this "significant gender split in attitudes toward firearms."<sup>3</sup> Cukier found, for example, that women have been less likely to want to own guns than men in areas with high crime. Further, in industrialized countries, "women are less likely to own guns and more likely to support strict regulations."<sup>4</sup>

Although statistically most victims of gun violence are men, women suffer disproportionately as victims of small arms in comparison to their roles as owners and users (since most small arms users are also men).<sup>5</sup> There are, of course, examples of women as owners and users of guns. The January 2006 mass murder of six former coworkers and the subsequent suicide of a former postal worker in Goleta, California, is an unfortunate reality of gun violence and misuse conducted by women. In general, however, women are victims of the misuse of small arms, regardless of whether they were acquired legally or illegally.<sup>6</sup> However, the policymaking processes related to arms control (and, to a lesser extent, violence prevention) are inherently dominated by men, due to women's underrepresentation in these forums.<sup>7</sup> And, although more and more women around the world are becoming involved in gun-violence issues—from prevention of gun violence to treatment of gun injuries—decision-making remains overwhelmingly male-dominated.

This chapter, therefore, will examine the impact of weapons misuse on women in peacetime, during conflict, and in postconflict situations. It will conclude with policy recommendations, drawing on existing policies and processes—such as UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325—as well as identifying crucial ways to increase women's inclusion in the political decision-making process and for women to become better protected from small arms misuse.

#### IMPACT OF WEAPONS MISUSE ON WOMEN: PEACETIME

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When thinking about small arms and women in terms of human security, one most likely first thinks of the role of small arms on women in conflict. However, small arms can seriously impact a woman regardless of where she lives—in a conflict zone or in a nonconflict zone, in a developing country or in a developed one. In addition, guns need not be fired to pose a threat to women; the mere presence of a gun can threaten and intimidate women.<sup>8</sup> Recent studies suggest that greater availability of small arms (those that are made possible by laxer gun-control laws) leads to greater victimization of women, whether or not an armed conflict is taking place and whether or not the country is rich or poor. Gender-disaggregated studies of gun violence in industrialized countries have detected a close correlation between increased small arms availability and increased female victimization, and indeed, as Vanessa Farr analyses, “such studies highlight

the real daily experience of firearms-related violence among women, even in otherwise stable societies.”<sup>9</sup>

Even in recent studies, gendered perspectives on small arms violence are often missing from research, analysis, and policy development. Early small arms work often cited inaccurate statistics such as “80% of the victims of armed violence are women and children.” While this statement may be true to certain conflicts, in general the statistic is actually quite misleading.<sup>10</sup> When a gendered breakdown of gun-violence victims is conducted, data show that men, especially young, poor men, are the largest group victimized by gun violence. Indeed, accepted gun-violence statistics recognize that men are the victims in over 90 percent of gun-related homicides and in 88 percent of firearm suicides.<sup>11</sup> In addition, data also show that men are the most likely perpetrators of gun violence, regardless of country, and that males are overwhelmingly the gun owners and users in a population.

Statistics also show, however, that when women are killed, they are usually killed by men and that guns are the most common tools of violence used. In general, research has found that women are most likely to be murdered by an intimate partner (50 percent of women killed are murdered by someone they know) and that intimate partner is most likely to use a firearm to commit the crime.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, the guns used in intimate-partner homicides are most often legally owned and registered, making the point that women are as much at risk from legal small arms (that they may even own themselves) as they are from illegal small arms. In South Africa, for example, legally owned guns claim the life of one out of every five murdered women. That is equal to “four women a day, or one every six hours,” who are killed by legally owned firearms.<sup>13</sup> Although it is not often addressed, women in peaceful areas suffer from small arms violence within their families and communities, just as women in conflict areas do.

As demonstrated above, guns in the home are particularly dangerous to women. Recent studies have observed that gun possession drastically increases a woman’s chance of being killed by her intimate partner. In particular, Farr reports that guns kept at home can be lethal regardless of whether they are owned by a woman or a man.<sup>14</sup> In a “study of mortality among women who purchased handguns in California,” the data showed that “owning a gun increases a woman’s chances of being killed by her intimate partner by a staggering 50%.”<sup>15</sup> Wendy Cukier emphasizes this point

in her own research, which found that in Turkey firearms are increasingly being used by husbands to harm or kill their wives.<sup>16</sup>

Gun violence, whether it occurs in peaceful or in conflict areas, presents increasing costs to the communities and the countries in which it occurs. States must absorb the costs of medical treatment and long-term care as well as the financial burden on health systems forced to spend resources on gun violence as opposed to other health issues. These costs can be staggering. In the United States, for example, gun-related violence has been estimated to cost approximately \$155 billion annually.<sup>17</sup> In developing countries, the toll on the economy can be even more significant. Brazil annually spends approximately 10 percent of its gross domestic product on the aftermath of firearms violence, Venezuela spends approximately 11 percent, and Colombia and El Salvador each spend approximately 25 percent.<sup>18</sup>

While the state, the economy, and the health-care system all are drained by gun violence, women are especially affected. In many cases, women take on the responsibility of caring for the victims of gun violence, often with devastating impacts on their own productivity in society and their relative contributions to the family. In addition, women are often left out of the decision-making processes that determine the types and level of care that is available for gun-violence victims and that develop prevention strategies.

#### IMPACT OF SALW ON WOMEN: ARMED CONFLICT

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While SALW in peaceful areas present a plethora of dangers for women, conflict exacerbates these dangers and creates new challenges for women, whether they are victims or perpetrators of armed conflict. In general, conflict is an especially dangerous situation for the most vulnerable populations in a society. Death and injury are always risks for women in conflict, with women making up a quarter of conflict deaths worldwide in 2000.<sup>19</sup> However, women are not only indirect victims of gun violence in conflict. In recent conflicts, women have been attacked by guerrilla fighters “to an unprecedented extent.”<sup>20</sup> Robert Muggah and Eric Berman found in particular that “women . . . suffer particular forms of arms related sexual violence and intimidation—precisely because of their gender.”<sup>21</sup> SALW contribute to the perpetuation of sexual violence, massive breaches of international humanitarian law, and sustained abuses of human rights against girls and women. Research has uncovered how the misuse of guns facilitates and adds a lethal

element to the sexual violence women experience during armed conflict. The threat of a gun may indeed increase the threat of rape in conflict areas.<sup>22</sup> Further, in refugee camps, which should be a place of safety, many women and girls are routinely gang-raped or otherwise sexually abused. At the Dadaab refugee camp in northern Kenya, for example, 75 percent of reported rapes and sexual assaults occurred at the hands of one or more armed assailants.<sup>23</sup>

Women are not just victims of armed conflict, however. Today's modern conflicts have given rise to more and more women serving as combatants in armed conflict, particularly in guerrilla or liberation armies. From South Africa to El Salvador, women and girls have actively participated in at least twenty recent conflicts, either as combatants or in support positions.<sup>24</sup> In some countries, such as Sri Lanka, units of armed groups are made up entirely of women and girls. Women are believed to represent a third of the Tamil Tigers' fifteen-thousand-person force, and in Nepal women are estimated to make up one-third of the Maoist insurgents.<sup>25</sup> Women do participate in conventional armed forces as well. In Colombia, women are used by government-supported paramilitary units to infiltrate guerrilla groups that have high percentages of women in their ranks.<sup>26</sup>

Even if women are not direct participants in armed conflict or direct victims of SALW injuries, small arms still impact their lives in other ways. Women are sometimes forced into arms trafficking during armed conflicts or resort to it for financial reasons, due a lack of other economic opportunities.<sup>27</sup> Women were actively involved in arms smuggling in countries with persistent conflicts, such as Sierra Leone, Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe.<sup>28</sup> Unfortunately, in many of these countries, women themselves are trafficked along the same routes as arms. Research conducted by Refugees International uncovered witnesses who claimed that "the people who own the brothels in Liberia are the same ones who are drug runners and arm dealers."<sup>29</sup> Thus, as policy recommendations are developed, arms trafficking must be addressed in conjunction with human trafficking and trafficking in other resources, such as diamonds and timber.

#### IMPACT OF SALW ON WOMEN: AFTER CONFLICT

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Unfortunately, the negative consequences of small arms and light weapons in the lives of women do not end when the guns fall silent. SALW continue to profoundly impact women in postconflict societies, as women still suffer

direct SALW violence, are hindered in attempts to receive aid and support, and are excluded from decision-making processes.

Violence continues even after an armed conflict is over, especially violence against civilians, due to the SALW that remain in circulation. One study that examined injuries during and after conflict in the Kandahar Province of Afghanistan in 1996 found that small arms injury levels decreased by only 30 percent following the conclusion of active fighting.<sup>30</sup> Criminal violence is often widespread in postconflict areas, as the massive amounts of small arms that remain are easily obtainable by those that would use them for malevolent purposes. After the civil war in Mozambique ended, “women were raped at gunpoint, homes were robbed by armed thieves,” a phenomenon that occurred because of easy accessibility of guns.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, in Rwanda, local leaders and medical professionals attribute the rise in the incidence of rape after the 1994 conflict to the widespread availability of small arms throughout the Great Lakes region of Africa.<sup>32</sup>

An additional consequence of postconflict situations rife with surplus guns is that domestic violence occurs at higher rates in the aftermath of armed conflicts. Elisabeth Rehn and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf found that although researchers knew domestic violence occurred during peacetime, they were not aware that the rate of domestic violence actually increased during and after an armed conflict.<sup>33</sup> Farr attributes the rise in levels of domestic violence involving firearms to the fact that “the vast majority of gun owners are men and much of the violence that is encouraged in times of war is transferred to the domestic sphere when conflicts formally end.”<sup>34</sup> Rehn and Sirleaf attributed the increase in domestic violence to many factors, such as “the availability of weapons, the violence male family members have experienced or meted out, the lack of jobs, shelter, and basic services” and found that the trend occurred in both developing and industrialized countries.<sup>35</sup> For example, three members of the US Army Special Forces killed their wives within six weeks of returning home from duty in Afghanistan in 2002.<sup>36</sup> Comparably, during the mid-1990s in Cambodia, government-conducted surveys discovered that approximately 59 percent of Cambodian women reported “being abused by their husbands who have retained weapons and small arms they used during the war.”<sup>37</sup> Yet another study found that “75 percent of Khmer women experienced domestic violence, a rate higher than pre-war.”<sup>38</sup>

Although this chapter has focused particularly on the danger of guns, women are also particularly at risk from land mines in postconflict situations. Land mines are often placed in unmarked rural areas and are left behind after conflicts end. They significantly impact women in agricultural areas, where women are responsible for farming and tending the fields. In Africa, for example, “women account for 80 percent of the food production” and are most frequently the victims of these leftover land mines.<sup>39</sup> These indiscriminate weapons only reveal themselves when the fields where they were laid during war are cultivated to help feed the war-torn population. One study of the border areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan found that in Bajaur, Pakistan, thousands of land mines had been left after being placed by the Soviets during their conflict in Afghanistan. The study revealed that “women and girls constitute almost 35% of mine victims there, injured while fetching fodder for animals, crossing agricultural fields, and carrying out their daily activities.”<sup>40</sup> However, like many other aspects of postconflict SALW programs, mine awareness programs occurred in mosques and schools, where only men and boys were present. Women and girls were expected to receive the information from their male family members.<sup>41</sup>

To address the negative effects of leftover weapons in postconflict societies, many areas adopt disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programs. These programs often provide incentives, such as money or skills training for soldiers to turn in their weapons. However, women and girl soldiers are often unable to receive the benefits that male combatants receive, as the particular situation of women combatants is not considered when DDR programs are developed. In many instances, girls cannot participate because “men often gather up the old weapons from the girls and take them in for the cash reward.”<sup>42</sup> As Rehn and Sirleaf also point out, DDR programs based on weapons collection fail to help women “since most women forced into combat or support functions do not own weapons—even if they used them.”<sup>43</sup> In other instances, DDR programs were held for long periods away from women’s homes and did not allow women to care for their children in these cantonment areas. Men were at an advantage to take part in these programs, as they could leave their children with their wives while they were gone awaiting DDR assistance.<sup>44</sup> Exclusion from DDR programs limits the ability of women to obtain new skills and often much-needed cash in order to help them become productive members of society and provide for themselves and their families.<sup>45</sup>

There have been instances where women not only participated in DDR programs but were also actually responsible for carrying out particular aspects of the DDR programs. For example, the United Nations Development Programme's "Weapons for Development" collection program was carried out by women supported by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). As Rehn and Sirleaf described it, "in Gramsche, women went door to door collecting weapons and preaching the danger of small arms under the slogan, 'One Less Weapon, One More Life.' In Elbasan, women collected 2332 weapons and 1801 tons of ammunition. In Diber sixty-five women of various ages, professions, occupations and organizations collected 2407 weapons and 855 tons of ammunitions."<sup>46</sup> Although women have successfully implemented these effective programs, they are still mostly excluded from DDR planning processes.

It is not just DDR programs that benefit from the input of women. Part of the toll that small arms place on women is the burden of care for the war-wounded and other gun-violence survivors in their families and communities. As a result, women understand the particular nuances and complexities of gun violence and its long-term impacts on societies differently than their male counterparts. Thus, programs that address varying aspects of small arms are much more successful when they include women's contributions. In general, women are more likely to favor tighter gun control, which limits death and injury, and women also have the experience and understanding to address the demand for weapons and to help remove them from circulation.<sup>47</sup>

In order to ensure the contribution of women in these processes, additional research and information must be collected. While the contribution of women in rebuilding postconflict societies is qualitatively apparent, additional data is needed to quantify that contribution. There is a tremendous need for better gender-disaggregated data on armed conflict and victims of small arms violence. This data will quantify what has become common knowledge—that women are crucial contributors to institutions and processes concerning armed conflict and arms control. However, to date, women's leadership and expertise have been underutilized and underrecognized in every context. Without the involvement and equal participation of women in the planning and creation of these types of programs, their political advancement and physical safety will continue to go unrealized.



## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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The policy recommendations needed to address small arms and light weapons are as varied as the many different impacts of SALW proliferation on women. Small arms proliferation is a multidimensional issue, and thus the recommendations for dealing with these weapons must also encompass a variety of measures and perspectives. Policies are needed at the local, national, regional, and international levels to give women a voice and ensure their protection from small arms violence. UNSCR 1325 was adopted in 2000 to encourage women's "equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security."<sup>48</sup> But while UNSCR 1325 may be a useful tool for mainstreaming gender into discussions of peace and security issues, the resolution does not raise the issue of small arms specifically, even though Article 13 has allowed advocates to bring SALW issues to the table in broader discussions on conflict. Thus, different strategies must be undertaken to incorporate gender perspectives into policies that address SALW proliferation and misuse. Below is a list of recommendations—by no means exhaustive—that allow for gender perspectives to assist in the fight against small arms proliferation.

### Improve National, Regional, and International Small Arms Laws and Policies

For implementing laws that prevent convicted violent offenders from possessing guns, ensuring that law enforcement officers understand the gendered implications of gun violence, and developing criteria for legal arms exports, laws must be improved at all levels. Policies that address small arms usually fall into one of three categories: controlling the supply of weapons, taking weapons out of circulation, and addressing the demand for weapons. It is crucial that all three of these aspects be addressed in order to effectively reduce the negative impacts of weapons proliferation and misuse. To control supply, criteria describing legitimate purchasers of weapons can help ensure that small arms do not end up in the hands of human rights abusers or those who are likely to misuse weapons. Removing surplus or obsolete weapons from government arsenals or postconflict areas can prevent weapons from being stolen from their legal owners and being used for criminal violence. Lastly, eliminating the reasons individuals want to acquire weapons, such as lack of security and personal safety, can lessen the potential harm these

weapons do in families and communities. Policies that support these three aspects must be developed and supported at every level, reinforcing strict standards and universalizing best practices.

In terms of international law, the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), which entered into force on December 24, 2014, has the opportunity to make substantial progress in these areas. The treaty is the culmination of nearly two decades of advocacy, led in large measure by a group of Nobel Peace Prize laureates including Óscar Arias, Eli Wiesel, and Betty Williams. Early discussions led in 2001 to a nonbinding UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (PoA). A subsequent series of meetings, discussions, and UN resolutions culminated in 2013 with a resolution to adopt the ATT. The general objective of the treaty is to bring transparency to the international arms trade by requiring UN member states to monitor and report on the end users of SALW. There is a particular focus on eliminating transfers wherever there is a significant risk that weapons would be used in ways that would violate humanitarian law, support terrorism, or be implicated in gender-based violence. While the arms trade is a complex area and there is resistance to the ATT, particularly in the United States, this treaty provides a comprehensive framework for bringing transparency and accountability to international arms flows that, while technically legal, have often ended up being used in ways that indicate clear threats to human security.

#### Mainstream Gender in National, Regional, and International Small Arms Processes

Without gender mainstreaming, policies to control SALW may only have nominal success in reducing the impact of the weapons on women. Law enforcement, as well as society in general, must understand the different ways in which men and women view and use weapons. Research initiatives, as well as policy, must take into account these complex perspectives on gun violence. In particular, the attitudes of men with regard to guns must be taken into account and addressed through national, regional, and international policymaking processes. The behavior of men and boys in regard to guns has often been attributed to socialization, coming-of-age, and cultural traditions. However, addressing through policy discussions the often dangerous attitudes men can have toward guns may provide breakthroughs in overcoming violence and lead men on the path toward more peaceful behaviors.

Addressing these attitudes is crucial to mainstreaming gender into programs around the world. For example, programs in countries such as South Africa, Nigeria, and India and in Latin America are focusing on “alternative views of manhood” in order to channel violent attitudes and behaviors into constructive, peaceful solutions.<sup>49</sup>

#### Prevent Gun Acquisition by Those with a History of Family Violence

As women are at risk from intimate-partner violence when a gun is in the home, strategies should be undertaken to prevent small arms from finding their ways into the hands of those with a history of violence. Some countries have already adopted such policies, which should be universalized. For example, in Canada, the current and former spouses of a potential buyer must be notified about an impending purchase before a gun license is issued. Both South Africa and Australia have regulations against issuing gun licenses to individuals with a history of family violence. US federal law prohibits gun possession while an individual is subject to an intimate-partner-violence restraining order, and eleven states have similar laws preventing gun purchase or possession under the same circumstances.<sup>50</sup> These standards should be expanded to other countries but also developed at the international level, with globally accepted standards that can be used to encourage the development of strong national laws worldwide.

#### Give Women a Seat at the Table

While women clearly pay the largest price for rampant SALW proliferation, they are often absent from the decision-making table when strategies to control this proliferation are discussed. As a result, women often take part in the implementation of programs that ultimately do not reflect their needs or the needs of their communities. Any program that involves changes to national laws, disarmament programs, or even development initiatives should include the perspectives of nongovernmental actors, particularly women. Including women in the long-term rebuilding of a society ensures their political involvement in the future. A good example of an organization that is influential in discussion around small arms control and that has explicitly integrated the perspectives, knowledge, and concerns of women’s experiences is the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA). Established in 2001 with global membership, it has a particular focus on ending gun violence against women and promoting the participation of women

in disarmament and other peacebuilding activities. Among its achievements, IANSA played a significant role in providing input into the 2001 PoA.

#### Include Women in DDR Processes

Even though Article 13 of UNSCR 1325 calls on “all those involved in the planning for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration to consider the different needs of female and male ex-combatants and to take into account the needs of their dependents,” women are often left out of the planning of DDR programs. In order to ensure that women are equal stakeholders in postconflict societies and are able to successfully implement rebuilding programs, women need to be included in weapons collection and weapons-for-development programs from the beginning. Women are the economic backbone of many societies and are traditionally the main force behind community-building and development.<sup>51</sup> Women’s inclusion and involvement in DDR programs are critical for effective reintegration of ex-combatants, elimination of cultures of violence, and the rebuilding of postconflict communities.

#### Improve Data Collection

One of the challenges posed by SALW researchers in general is the lack of quantifiable data on the impacts of the weapons. The lack of data is even more problematic when examining the gendered effects of SALW violence. While some country-specific data exists, which can be used for drawing general lessons and developing policy recommendations, international gender-disaggregated data is essential for establishing norms and standards. Both direct impacts—death and injury—as well as indirect ones, such as lack of economic and social opportunities, must be documented, analyzed, and studied. Without a complete picture of the consequences of SALW on women, it will be impossible to adequately address the resulting issues effectively in the appropriate forums.

#### NOTES

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1. UN General Assembly, *Experts on Small Arms*.

2. Cukier, “Gendered Perspectives,” 36.

3. Cukier, 32.

4. Cukier, 32.
5. Cukier, 36.
6. Cukier, 29, 30.
7. Cukier, 33.
8. Buchanan et al., *Missing Pieces*; Amnesty International, IANSA, and Oxfam International, *Impact of Guns on Women's Lives*.
9. Farr, "Gendered Analysis," 148, 161.
10. Buchanan et al., *Missing Pieces*, 67.
11. Buchanan et al., 67–68.
12. Cukier, "Gendered Perspectives," 28.
13. Mathews et al., "Every Six Hours."
14. Farr, "Triple Jeopardy," 15.
15. Wintermute, Wright, and Drake, "Increased Risk," 281–283.
16. Cukier, "Gendered Perspectives," 29.
17. Miller and Cohen, "Costs."
18. Waters et al., *Economic Dimensions*, 14.
19. Murray et al., "Armed Conflict," 348.
20. Turshen, "Women's War Stories," 2.
21. Muggah and Berman, "Humanitarianism under Threat," 15.
22. Turshen, "Women's War Stories," 7.
23. Muggah and Berman, "Humanitarianism under Threat," 24.
24. Vickers, *Women and War*, 19.
25. Goldstein, *War and Gender*, 12.
26. Muggah and Berman, "Humanitarianism under Threat," 19.
27. Johnston et al., *Putting a Human Face*, 14.
28. Farr, "Triple Jeopardy," 22.
29. Refugees International, "Liberia."
30. Cukier, "Gendered Perspectives," 26.
31. Rehn and Sirleaf, *Women, War, and Peace*, 114.
32. Amnesty International, *Lives Blown Apart*, 34.
33. Rehn and Sirleaf, *Women, War and Peace*, 14.
34. Farr, "Gendered Analysis," 21.
35. Rehn and Sirleaf, *Women, War, and Peace*, 14.
36. Rehn and Sirleaf, 15.
37. Hynes, "On the Battlefield," 438.
38. Hynes, 438.
39. Ashford and Huet-Vaughn, "Impact," 191.
40. Hynes, "On the Battlefield," 439.
41. Hynes, 439.
42. Mazurana, *Women in Armed Opposition Groups*, 69.
43. Rehn and Sirleaf, *Women, War, and Peace*, 116.
44. Mazurana, *Women in Armed Opposition Groups*, 65.
45. Douglas and Hill, *Getting It Right, Doing It Right*.
46. Rehn and Sirleaf, *Women, War, and Peace*, 115.

47. Rehn and Sirleaf, 115.
48. UN Security Council, Resolution 1325, 1.
49. Buchanan et al., *Missing Pieces*, 74.
50. Buchanan et al., 21.
51. Mazurana, *Women in Armed Opposition Groups*, 56–71.

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## Chapter 4

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### Feminism, Rape, and War

#### *Engendering Suicide Terror?*

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MIA BLOOM

In February 2015, the Jordanian government executed a woman for the first time, Sajida Atrous al-Rishawi, who had been in jail for almost ten years after her role as an accessory to killing sixty people when she and her partner blew up a wedding at a hotel in Amman on November 9, 2005.

Rishawi appeared on television after her arrest and admitted her role in the grisly attacks. Her monotone speech and lack of emotion sparked a debate regarding the role of female suicide bombers. Rishawi had been sent by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq, the group that eight years later metamorphosed into the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).<sup>1</sup> It is worth noting that ISIS is now one of the few terrorist groups that do not utilize female suicide bombers, although ten years after Rishawi's failed attack virtually every terrorist group in the world, secular or religious, has used women with deadly efficacy.

Terrorists have successfully exploited gender stereotypes and conventional wisdom that women are gentle, submissive, and nonviolent. Women



evade most terrorist profiles because they are perceived as wives and mothers or victims of war-torn societies, not bombers. But terrorist organizations have increasingly employed women to carry out the most deadly attacks. Muriel Degauque, a thirty-eight-year-old Belgian convert to Islam, also detonated herself in Iraq the same day as Rishawi's failed attempt.

According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), women in Africa and the Middle East suffer most from inequality.<sup>2</sup> In one area, however, women seem to be making their mark in achieving parity with men—as suicide bombers. Based on my study of suicide bombings in Chechnya, Sri Lanka, Israel and the Occupied Territories, Lebanon, Morocco, Egypt, and Iraq, 34 percent of attacks since 1985 have been carried out by women.<sup>3</sup> The common stereotype exploited by terrorists in order to magnify their cause is that women are gentle, submissive, and nonviolent. On the one hand, despite the prejudices describing women as good wives and mothers, they are still capable of murder by engaging in suicide terrorism.<sup>4</sup>

Historically, women have been involved in conflict in supporting roles. Most often, women's primary contribution has been to perpetuate the conflict by giving birth to many fighters and raising them in a revolutionary environment. As one scholar points out, "Society, through its body of rules and its numerous institutions, has conventionally dictated [women's] roles within the boundaries of militancy. Assisting in subordinate roles is welcomed and encouraged. Actually fighting in the war is not. Yet women have demanded to be integrated in all aspects of war including frontline fighting."<sup>5</sup>

According to international relations theories, women are more likely to choose peaceful mechanisms for conflict resolution than men—suggesting that women may be inherently more peaceful in their attitudes toward international conflict and are more predisposed toward moderation, compromise, and tolerance.<sup>6</sup> In an action that previously seemed highly unlikely because of the notions of women as *victims* of war rather than as perpetrators, women are using their bodies as human detonators for the explosive material strapped around their waists. To complicate the notions of femininity and motherhood, the improvised explosive device (IED) is often disguised under the woman's clothing to make her appear as if she is pregnant and thus beyond suspicion or reproach. The advent of women suicide bombers has transformed the revolutionary womb into an exploding one. Approximately twenty-nine groups use the tactic of suicide bombing, and

women have been operatives in more than half of them in the Middle East, in Sri Lanka, Turkey, Chechnya, Nigeria, and Colombia.<sup>7</sup>

Why? Motives vary: revenge for a personal loss or a desire to redeem the family name, to escape a life of sheltered monotony and achieve fame, to respond to extremism and occupation, or perhaps even to level the patriarchal societies in which they live. What is incredibly compelling about how and why women become suicide bombers is that so many have been raped or sexually abused either by the representatives of the state or by the insurgents themselves. Targeting women through rape in war has many unintended consequences, which I have explored elsewhere.<sup>8</sup> Beyer states, "There is a difference between men and women suicide attackers: women consider combat as a way to escape the predestined life that is expected of them. When women become human bombs, their intent is to make a statement not only in the name of a country, a religion, a leader, but also in the name of their gender."<sup>9</sup>

The female suicide bomber is not a new phenomenon. The Syrian Socialist National Party (SSNP), or Parti Populaire Syrien (PPS), a secular, pro-Syrian Lebanese organization, sent the first female suicide bomber, a seventeen-year-old Lebanese girl named Sana'a Mehaydali, to blow herself up near an Israeli convoy in Lebanon in 1985. Out of twelve suicide attacks conducted by the SSNP, women took part in five of them. From Lebanon, female bombers spread to other countries: Sri Lanka, Turkey, Chechnya, Israel, Iraq, Somalia, and Nigeria. The upsurge in the number of female bombers has come from both secular and religious organizations and increasingly jihadi groups, which had eschewed women's participation in any sphere and now have enthusiastically adopted the tactic and adjusted their ideology or theology *ex post facto* to justify the adaptation.

Israel's restrictive checkpoints and border policy proved fairly effective against Palestinian insurgent organizations inside the Occupied Territories. Since the mid-1990s, it has been almost impossible for unmarried men under the age of forty to get permits to cross the border into Israel—for any reason. Terrorist groups have looked further afield for volunteers, including women and even children. Women do not arouse suspicion like men and blend in more effectively with civilians. It has been observed that "attacks perpetrated by women have tended to be those where the terrorist planners needed the perpetrator to blend in on the Israeli 'street.' These female terrorists . . . westernize their appearance, adopting modern hairstyles and short skirts."<sup>10</sup>

The use of the least likely suspect is the most likely tactical adaptation for a terrorist group under scrutiny. Violent extremist organizations have adopted suicide bombing not only because of its tactical superiority to traditional guerrilla warfare but also because suicide bombing, especially when perpetrated by women and young girls, garners significant media attention. There has been a significant public relations boon to sending, for example, eighteen-year-old Ayat Akras into the Supersol supermarket to set off a bomb or ten-year-old girls to blow up a mobile phone market or chicken markets in Yobe or Borno State.<sup>11</sup>

Young women combating Israel by blowing up their bodies is a powerful image that generates more press than male perpetrators. The image of women, defying tradition to sacrifice their lives for the Palestinian cause, has drawn attention to the plight of the Palestinian people. "Suicide attacks are done for effect, and the more dramatic the effect, the stronger the message; thus a potential interest on the part of some groups in recruiting women."<sup>12</sup> The al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades have drawn propaganda mileage from their female bombers. This tactic makes the groups appear more threatening since it has erased the "imagined" barriers between combatants and noncombatants and between terrorists and innocent civilians. Finally, the involvement of women in terrorist violence makes the conflict appear unstoppable and multigenerational (as women are the ones who raise and foster the next generation of militants).

The underlying message conveyed by female bombers is that terrorism has moved beyond a fringe phenomenon to the mainstream and that the insurgents are all around you. Akras's death demonstrated that the Palestinian secular militant groups are not all composed of religious fanatics who necessarily believe they will be granted entrance to paradise or because God will reward them with seventy-two virgins (*houris*). Nor are the organizations' leaders gripped by a burning desire to have all females hidden behind black veils. This is a political war, not a religious war, and the suicide bombings are being carefully planned and executed as a part of a precise political strategy.<sup>13</sup>

Initially female bombers were only employed by secular organizations. The campaign by Chechnya's Ansar al-Mujahideen provided the first hint of a blurring of a religion-inspired militant organization and the use of female operatives. The resulting "growth in the number of Chechen female suicide bombers signaled the beginning of a change in the position of fundamentalist

Islamic organizations regarding the involvement of women in suicide attacks—a change that [has since] become devastatingly apparent.”<sup>14</sup>

By September 2012, even the Taliban, the least egalitarian of the militant movements, used female operatives. Women have punctuated the suicide bombing campaigns by al-Qaeda affiliates, such as al-Shabaab, and even groups affiliated with ISIS, such as Boko Haram. The use of women by violent extremist organizations can mobilize operatives by tapping into half the population but also because using women effectively shames men into participating. This has parallels to right-wing Hindu women who goad men into action through speeches saying, “Don’t be a bunch of eunuchs.”<sup>15</sup> This point is underscored by the bombers themselves. A propaganda slogan in Chechnya reads, “Women’s courage is a disgrace to that of modern men.”<sup>16</sup> Before Ayat Akras blew herself up, she taped her martyrdom video and stated, “*I am going to fight* [emphasis added] instead of the sleeping Arab armies who are watching Palestinian girls fighting alone,” in an apparent jab at Arab leaders for not being sufficiently proactive or manly.<sup>17</sup> And online female recruiters for al-Qaeda challenged men’s masculinity for allowing women to do their job for them.

#### INDIVIDUAL MOTIVATIONS

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When men conduct suicide missions, they are allegedly motivated by religious or nationalist ideology, whereas women are more often portrayed as being motivated by very personal reasons. In Chechnya, the female operatives called Black Widows have allegedly lost a loved one and are mobilized by their personal tragedy (although not every Chechen or Dagestani bomber is a widow). One such example was Zarema Mazhikhoyeva, a widow from Ingushetia who was arrested on July 10, 2003, on the street Tverskaya Yamskaya Ulitsa carrying a homemade bomb: “Mazhikhoyeva [admitted to having been] recruited by Chechen rebels as a suicide bomber, in exchange for \$1,000 in compensation to her relatives to repay for jewelry she had stolen from them. . . . When the rebels sent her to Moscow to carry out her mission, she changed her mind and got herself arrested by police.”<sup>18</sup>

Mazhikhoyeva was the first female suicide bomber to be captured alive. When the court convicted her and sentenced her the maximum twenty years without any leniency for her choice not to carry out the attack, she shouted, “Now I know why everyone hates the Russians!”—adding that she would

return and “blow you all up.”<sup>19</sup> This is a powerful image that resonates among the wider Chechen community. Even though Mazhikhoyeva did the right thing, she was not granted any lenience, and the judicial process radicalized her further rather than making her a candidate for deradicalization or countering violent extremism. Certainly Mazhikhoyeva’s experience does little to incentivize other women who might consider changing their minds at the last moment.

Among the first few Palestinian women, there appeared to be a theme of personal loss—that becoming a martyr is the sole possible expression of outrage. Some of them were possibly motivated by the desire to recover family honor. Tamil women allegedly raped by the members of the Sinhalese security services and military at checkpoints joined the Tamil Tigers unit called the Black Tigresses, while Kurdish women allegedly raped in Turkey by the military joined the Kurdish Worker’s Party (PKK). The most shocking example comes from Iraq, where one woman, Samira Ahmed Jassim, arranged the rape of eighty Iraqi women throughout Diyala Province (of whom thirty-two became successful bombers prior to Jassim’s arrest). Thus, the constructed roles of women within patriarchal societies provide an added impetus because of the traditional honor code in which women are blamed for having been victimized in the first place. This may be why this kind of abuse not only leads to women having few options *but* to join militant organizations, and why these women perceive militancy and martyrdom as the only way to restore the family honor.

Revolutionary women in radical secular organizations have engaged in anticolonial and revolutionary struggles. Female terrorists have emerged in virtually every terrorist organization starting in the 1960s, such as the Red Brigades in Italy, Germany’s Baader-Meinhof Faction, the Japanese Red Army, and the Black Panthers and the Weathermen in the United States. Women have even been leaders in their own right and have played vital support roles in the Algerian Revolution (1958–62), the Iranian Revolution (1979),<sup>20</sup> the 1982 Lebanon War, the First Palestinian Intifada (1987–91), and the al-Aqsa Intifada (2000). Women have supported revolutions, constructed the identities and ideologies of their children, and funneled arms and ammunition to men. In a few instances, women have been on the front lines of combat demonstrating that their revolutionary and military zeal is no less than that of the men. Even al-Qaeda has used women since August 2004 and has tried to recruit women through its website al-Khansaa and later via its affiliates in Somalia, Iraq, Pakistan, and Afghanistan.

BACKGROUND: WOMEN AND TERRORISM

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The history of female terrorists extends for well over a hundred years, with female anarchists leading the way in Russia at the turn of the nineteenth century. Palestinian women have been associated with radical groups for more than forty years. Dalal Maghribi was involved in one of the worst terrorist incidents in Israel's history when more than thirty passengers were massacred in a bus hijacking in March 1978. In 1970, Leila Khaled was caught after attempting to hijack an El Al flight to London. In her book, she explained a woman's rationale. For Khaled, violence was a way of leveling the patriarchal society through revolutionary zeal—the women would demonstrate that their commitment was no less than those of their brothers, sons, or husbands. Strategically, women were able to gain access to areas where men had greater difficulty because the other side assumed that the women were second-class citizens in their own society—dumb, illiterate perhaps, and incapable of planning an operation.<sup>21</sup> Said Khaled in an interview with the Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera*, “We [Palestinians] are under attack . . . [and] women are ready to sacrifice themselves for the national struggle for the respect of just rights.”<sup>22</sup> Men gain prestige and status from sustained militancy, while “women gain status if they go beyond what is expected and achieve martyrdom or are wounded, carry out incredibly heroic acts, or abide by high moral standards.”<sup>23</sup>

According to some authors, women have been radicalized because the Israel Defense Forces and the Israeli security apparatus Shin Bet have deliberately targeted them in gendered ways so as to exploit the patriarchal divisions within their society.<sup>24</sup>

Suha describes a[n] incident—one among many, she says—when she was traveling between the West Bank cities of Nablus and Ramallah. She says an Israeli soldier forced her and a man to sit in the dirt at a checkpoint for an hour. He gave them no reason for the delay. “He started by verbally abusing me. The way he was looking at my ID card was humiliating, not to mention the [sexual] passes (that Israeli soldiers) make at us women,” she says. “Life is worth nothing when [we] are being humiliated on a daily basis.”<sup>25</sup>

In Turkey and Sri Lanka, women's militant activism has a different history—women have participated fully even during the early stages of the political

resistance and at all levels. Tamil women in Sri Lanka fought on the front lines and had their own military units in the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The female fighters of the LTTE were allegedly more effective than the men and even make up front-line tank assault units in addition to a special unit of suicide bombers. Palestinian women's participation as suicide bombers or those in Chechnya emerged within the last few years and against all expectations.<sup>26</sup> In the past, only secular nationalist organizations such as the LTTE, the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, and the PKK permitted women to be suicide bombers. Islamic religious organizations, such as Hamas, initially refused female martyrs and turned at least one woman away (Darine Abu Aisha, who joined one of the secular groups and committed the act on its behalf). As I discuss below, the perception of women fighting jihad has changed over time partially in response to the pressures from the women themselves and partially as a tactical innovation as penetrating security checkpoints became more challenging for male operatives.

Although a traditional structure dominates all of the societies in which women participate in terrorist activities, the degree to which women participate actively or in support roles varies from place to place—and their involvement has been evolving in real time. Nevertheless, women's roles on the front lines of battle remain the exception rather than rule.

#### PALESTINIAN SHAHIDAS

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The militant involvement of women has had an extreme effect on the existing cultural norms of Palestinian society. Palestinians have a cultural set of rules that describe and limit gender roles. These rules have dictated the separation of the sexes and prescribed that women restrict themselves within the private space of the home. Through violence, women have placed themselves on the front lines, in public, alongside men to whom they are not related by blood. This results in a double trajectory for militant women—convincing society of their valid contributions while at the same time reconstructing the normative ideals of the society.<sup>27</sup> Palestinian women “have torn the gender classification out of their birth certificates, declaring that sacrifice for the Palestinian homeland would not be for men alone; on the contrary, all Palestinian women will write the history of the liberation with their blood, and will become time bombs in the face of the Israeli enemy. They will not settle for being mothers of martyrs.”<sup>28</sup>

Wafa Idris, the first Palestinian woman who perpetrated an act of suicide terrorism, on January 27, 2002, belonged to a secular organization. She was a twenty-seven-year-old aid worker for the Palestinian Red Crescent Society from the al-Am'ari refugee camp near Ramallah. Her death was allegedly accidental. She was carrying a backpack with explosive materials on her way to deliver it to someone else, but it detonated when she got stuck in a revolving door.<sup>29</sup> The public reaction to her death inspired other women to emulate what she did and transformed her into a cult heroine. It was noted that "the bomb in her rucksack was made with TNT packed into pipes. Triacetone triperoxide, made by mixing acetone with phosphate, is ground to a powder. In a grotesque parody of the domestic female stereotype, it is usually ground in a food mixer, before being fed into metal tubes."<sup>30</sup> With it, she killed one Israeli civilian and wounded approximately 140 others.

The military wing of Fatah, the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, took responsibility for the attack three days later. Birzeit University students appealed for more women to emulate Idris. Commenting on Idris's death, women students were quoted as saying, "The struggle is not limited strictly to men. . . . It's unusual [for a Palestinian woman to martyr herself], but I support it. . . . Society does not accept this idea because it is relatively new, but after it happens again, it will become routine."<sup>31</sup>

Idris's death caused a great deal of publicity throughout the Arab world. In an editorial titled "It's a Woman!" the Egyptian newspaper *Al-Shaab* proclaimed:

It is a woman who teaches you today a lesson in heroism, who teaches you the meaning of Jihad, and the way to die a martyr's death. It is a woman who has shocked the enemy, with her thin, meager, and weak body. . . . It is a woman who blew herself up, and with her exploded all the myths about women's weakness, submissiveness, and enslavement. . . . It is a woman who has now proven that the meaning of [women's] liberation is the liberation of the body from the trials and tribulations of this world . . . and the acceptance of death with a powerful, courageous embrace.<sup>32</sup>

The al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade even set up a special unit to train female suicide bombers and named it after Wafa Idris.<sup>33</sup> "We have 200 young women from the Bethlehem area alone ready to sacrifice themselves for the homeland," according to one al-Aqsa leader.<sup>34</sup> After Idris's death, Palestinian



women began begging the Islamic authorities to be more involved in armed conflict. Matti Steinberg describes how Hamas's bimonthly publication—dedicated to women—was replete with letters to the editor from Palestinian women requesting permission to participate directly in the conflict and asserting their right to be martyrs.<sup>35</sup>

The Islamic leadership initially opposed women's involvement and banned women from becoming suicide bombers on their behalf; only a handful of clerics endorsed the operations. The Saudi High Islamic Council gave the go-ahead for women to be suicide bombers in August 2001 after a twenty-three-year-old Palestinian mother of two was seized by Israeli security as she brought explosives to Tel Aviv's central bus station. Religious leaders in Palestine disagreed about the role of women in martyrdom operations. A theological debate rages as to whether women should or could be martyrs, and the organizations have been adaptable with regard to permitting women's participation. Some Palestinian leaders gradually accepted women as "shahidas."<sup>36</sup>

Isma'il Abu Shanab, a Hamas leader in Gaza, said, "Jihad against the enemy is an obligation that applies not only to men but also to women. Islam has never differentiated between men and women on the battlefield."<sup>37</sup> Another Hamas leader, Sheikh Hassan Yussef, concurred: "We do not act according to the opinion of the street or of society. We are men of principle. . . . A Muslim woman is permitted to wage Jihad and struggle against the occupation. The Prophet [Muhammad] would draw lots among the women who wanted to go out to wage Jihad with him. The Prophet always emphasized the woman's right to wage Jihad."<sup>38</sup> And according to Jamila Shanti, head of the Women's Activities Division of the Palestine Islamic Movement:

The issue of martyrdom [operations] has gained much popularity in Palestinian society. There is no difference between the martyrdom of sisters and the martyrdom of brothers, because the enemy [Israel] does not differentiate between firing on men and firing on women. . . . Islam does not prohibit a woman from sacrificing herself to defend her land and her honor. . . . Jihad is a personal imperative for her and no one can prevent her from waging it, provided . . . she avoids *fitna* [in this case, inappropriate behavior]. Perhaps these activities require the woman to wear a particular garment in order to mislead the enemy, and therefore she may have to relinquish part of her veil when she goes to martyrdom.<sup>39</sup>

Hamas's former spiritual leader, Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, argued that women's appropriate role in the conflict was in supporting the fighters. "In our Palestinian society, there is a flow of women towards Jihad and martyrdom, exactly like the young men. But the woman has uniqueness. Islam sets some restrictions for her, and if she goes out to wage Jihad and fight, she must be accompanied by a male chaperon."<sup>40</sup> Sheikh Yassin further rationalized his reservations—not because of shariah (Islamic law), but because women martyrs were unnecessary: "At the present stage, we do not need women to bear this burden of Jihad and martyrdom. The Islamic Movement cannot accept all the Palestinian males demanding to participate in Jihad and in martyrdom operations, because they are so numerous. Our means are limited, and we cannot absorb all those who desire to confront the Israeli enemy."<sup>41</sup>

This situation is alarmingly true. Most of the militant organizations in Palestine cannot fill positions for martyrdom operations fast enough. Nasra Hassan observed this fact years ago.<sup>42</sup> After January 2002, when Wafa Idris blew herself up in downtown Jerusalem, Yassin categorically renounced the use of women as suicide bombers or assailants. In March 2002, when another female bomber from Fatah carried out an attack in a Jerusalem supermarket, Yassin said that Hamas was far from enthusiastic about the inclusion of women in warfare, for reasons of modesty. Unlike other organizations, Hamas refrained from using women in front-line roles but has not hesitated to use them as conduits for money, suicide bombers, and ammunition.

Sensing the increasing support for women martyrs and bowing to public pressure and demands, Sheikh Yassin amended his position, saying that a woman waging jihad must be accompanied by a male chaperon (*mahram*) only "if she is to be gone for a day and a night. If her absence is shorter, she does not need a chaperon." In a second statement, Yassin granted a woman's right to launch a suicide attack alone only if it does not take her more than twenty-four hours to be away from home. This point underscores the irony of Yassin's position, since the female martyr will be away from home for much more than twenty-four hours if she succeeds in her mission.<sup>43</sup>

Yassin and Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, an Egyptian Islamist theologian, found religious justification to allow women's involvement in suicide missions. In the case of Darine Abu Aisheh, she is reported to have applied first to Hamas as a volunteer but was turned down, and 'Itaf'Alayan attempted to carry out a suicide attack in Jerusalem but was arrested; she was eventually

released after the signing of the Oslo Accords.<sup>44</sup> In January 2004, Hamas finally sponsored a female bomber, Reem Riashi, a mother of two. Yassin's endorsement of Riashi and encouragement of other Hamas women was part of a campaign to launch Hamas's own line of female suicide bombers. While Yassin pointed out that it was Hamas's armed wing that decided where and when attacks would take place, his comments included quotes from the videotape that Riashi recorded before carrying out her attack, about how she hoped her "organs would be scattered in the air and her soul would reach paradise."<sup>45</sup> Yassin added:

The fact that a woman took part for the first time in a Hamas operation marks a significant evolution for the Izz Eddin al-Qassam brigades. The male fighters face many obstacles on their way to operations, and this is a new development in our fight against the enemy. The holy war is an imperative for all Muslim men and women; and this operation proves that the armed resistance will continue until the enemy is driven from our land. This is revenge for all the fatalities sustained by the armed resistance.<sup>46</sup>

The Islamic organizations justified shifting their ideological support in favor of women's activism. Sheikh Ali Abu al-Hassan, chairman of the Religious Ruling Committee at Egypt's al-Azhar University, stated that suicide attacks by women were permitted, even though the grand sheikh of al-Azhar, Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi, had ruled against them. "The martyrdom operation carried out among the Israelis by the young Palestinian woman [Idris] is an act of Jihad permissible according to the Shari'a, and on this there is no disagreement," stated Sheikh Abu al-Hassan. "If the enemy has conquered and plundered a single inch of Muslim land, Jihad becomes a personal duty of man, woman, slave, and master. [In such a case], the woman wages [Jihad] without her husband's permission, the slave without his master's permission, and the debtor without his creditor's permission."<sup>47</sup> It is interesting to note that each of the relationships mentioned, women, slaves, and debtors are all subordinate positions in society.

Sheikh Tantawi then reversed his original opposition and on November 2, 2003, stated that suicide bombers who are defending their land are seen as martyrs in shariah. "Anybody blowing himself up in the face of the occupiers of his land is a martyr," said Tantawi. He stressed, however, that Islam did not allow the killing of innocent civilians and children but only invaders and aggressors.<sup>48</sup>

In an interview with Al Jazeera television, Shi'a cleric and the spiritual head of Hizb'allah, Sheikh Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah, stated, "It is true that Islam has not asked women to carry out Jihad, but it *permits them* [emphasis added] to take part if the necessities of defensive war dictate that women should carry out any regular military operations, or suicide operations," he said. "We believe that the women who carry out suicide bombings are martyrs who are creating a new, glorious history for Arab and Muslim women."<sup>49</sup>

Thus, the theological refusal of militant Islamic organizations to permit women's participation in suicide bombing has evolved. Although Hamas initially rejected the use of female martyrs, Yassin began to shift his ideological opposition slowly and partly in response to Palestinian women's demands: "We have entered a new phase of history, in which Palestinian women are willing to fight and to die a martyr's death as the men and youths do. This is from the grace of Allah. But, meanwhile, women have no military organization in the framework of the [Islamic] movement. When such an organization arises, it will be possible to discuss wide-scale recruitment of women."<sup>50</sup> Hamas lagged behind the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), which in early 2003 launched a campaign to recruit women and upgraded its operational capabilities by introducing a new modus operandi to elude Israeli efforts to profile and thwart suicide attackers. The PIJ focused its recruitment efforts in the northern part of the West Bank, Jenin in particular, and established a well-trained network of operatives, including some highly skilled women. Two female PIJ operatives carried out suicide bombings in 2003. The PIJ's first success was Hiba Daraghmeh, a nineteen-year-old student from al-Quds Open University from Tubas. On May 19, 2003, she detonated an IED strapped to her body in front of a shopping mall in Afula, killing three civilians and injuring eighty-three. Both al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade and the PIJ claimed responsibility for the attack. On October 5, 2003, Hanadi Jaradat, a law student from Jenin, walked into Maxim's, a crowded seaside restaurant in Haifa, and killed nineteen civilians while injuring dozens more after first finishing a meal.<sup>51</sup>

According to reports, Jaradat wore the explosive belt around her waist in order to feign pregnancy. This tactic unites women suicide bombers in places as diverse as Turkey, Iraq, Nigeria, Somalia, and Sri Lanka. Police reports in Turkey have emphasized caution with regard to Kurdish women who may appear pregnant because of the fact that several female

PKK fighters disguised themselves this way in order to penetrate crowds of people more effectively and avoid detection, assuming—quite rightly—that they would not be frisked or subjected to intense scrutiny. The first female PKK bombing in June 1996 killed six soldiers using this tactic. Later that year, on October 29, while policemen fruitlessly searched for a female police officer to search her, Otas Gular detonated an IED worn around her waist, killing herself and several police officers—the same method that had been employed four days earlier by Laila Kaplan in Adana, Turkey.<sup>52</sup> Anoja Kugenthirarsah feigned pregnancy for weeks in order to gain access to a military installation in Poovarasakulam near Vavuniya in April 2006 when she tried to kill the head of the Sri Lankan military, General Sarath Fonseka.

The trend toward female suicide bombers has been contagious. In 2002, Indian security forces twice went on high alert, in January and again in August, to guard against possible attacks by female suicide bombers. The suspects sprang from the Pakistan-based Islamic organizations Jaish-e-Mohammed and Laskar-e-Tayyba, both associated with al-Qaeda. Wherever there is a threat of terrorism and suicide terrorism, women appear to be playing an increasing role. In March 2003, the London-based newspaper *Asharq al-Awsat* published an interview with a woman calling herself “Um Osama,” the alleged leader of the women mujahedeen of al-Qaeda. The al-Qaeda network claimed to have set up squads of female suicide bombers under orders from Osama bin Laden to target the United States. The women bombers purportedly include Afghans, Arabs, Chechens, and other nationalities. One recalled: “We are preparing for the new strike announced by our leaders and I declare that it will make America forget . . . the September 11 attacks. The idea came from the success of martyr operations carried out by young Palestinian women in the occupied territories. Our organization is open to all Muslim women wanting to serve the (Islamic) nation . . . particularly in this very critical phase.”<sup>53</sup>

Even al-Qaeda employed women bombers. An indication of its ideological shift was the capture of two young women in Morocco en route to a suicide attack. Within weeks of the US invasion of Iraq, on March 29, two women (one of whom was allegedly pregnant) perpetrated suicide attacks against the Coalition forces. Al Jazeera television reported on April 4, 2003, that two Iraqi women who vowed to commit suicide attacks had videotaped their intentions: “We say to our leader and holy war comrade, the hero commander Saddam Hussein that you have sisters that you and history will

boast about." In a separate video, another woman, identified as Wadad Jamil Jassem, assumed a similar position: "I have devoted myself [to] Jihad for the sake of God and against the American, British, and Israeli infidels and to defend the soil of our precious and dear country."<sup>54</sup> The number of female bombers in Iraq doubled annually until 2007, when it rose eight times the number of the previous year in Diyala Province as a result of the deliberate use of gendered violence to recruit women for "martyrdom operations."

A report in the Russian newspaper *Pravda* suggested that Chechen rebels, with the assistance of Arab trainers, had trained large numbers of women for terrorist attacks.<sup>55</sup> We can observe the role played by women in Chechnya and the Islamic fatwas (religious rulings) that have sanctioned women's martyrdom there. Chechen women have proved to be models for Palestinian women, and so both conflicts have influenced and infected each other. The phenomenon indeed appears to be spreading. And the number of Dagestani and Chechen female suicide bombers continues to plague the Russian security services, including in the days before the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi.

#### BLACK WIDOWS IN CHECHNYA

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Chechen leaders of Ansar al-Mujahideen did not initially expect women's participation in militant activities. At the outset of the Chechen resistance, female insurgents played support roles: they supplied medical aid, food, and water to the men, carried weapons and ammunition across enemy territory, and played an important role in maintaining the guerrillas' morale during battles. According to survivors' reports, at the 2002 Dubrovka Theater siege in Moscow, women and men had different roles: the men took care of the explosives and intimidation, while the women distributed medical supplies, blankets, water, chewing gum, and chocolate, although at times the women allegedly toyed threateningly with their two-kilogram bomb belts. Women's most relevant role historically has been to raise children, form their character, and make them strong so that they became mujahideen when they grew up.

Things changed, however, because of military losses and the ideological influence of Islamic volunteers from abroad. Dozens of terrorists from Europe and North Africa, willing to help Chechen insurgents, poured into the region and influenced the Chechen ideology regarding women suicide

bombers. Shamil Besayev, Chechen separatist leader, incorporated women into his dedicated suicide terrorism unit, Salakhin Riadus Shakhidi. The first Russian Black Widow (*shahidki*), Khava Barayeva, killed twenty-seven Russian special forces troops on June 9, 2000:

Using women as suicide bombers in crowds is a new method in . . . subversive activities. The “Black Widows” are sisters, mothers or wives of Chechen men that have been killed in battles with federal troops. “Black Widows” choose to die as a bomber in order to show the strength of the resistance. They can wear kamikaze bomb-belts, or drive a truck that is full of explosives. Chechen guerrillas are inspired with the image of Khava Barayeva—the first to walk the way of martyrdom. Chechen rebels portray her as a hero, and they write poems and songs about her.<sup>56</sup>

Suicide terrorism has become the Chechen terrorists’ method of choice, evidenced by the growing number of attacks. Suicide attacks typically involve women, alone or as part of a group. Of the seven suicide attacks by Chechen separatists against Russia in 2003, six were carried out by women.<sup>57</sup> In total, the attacks killed 165 people. On October 23, 2002, a band of Chechen militants including eighteen women seized the Dubrovka Theater in Moscow—taking the audience of more than seven hundred people hostage and threatening to blow everyone up—themselves included. The rebels and 129 hostages were killed by the subsequent Russian “rescue” in which the Russians pumped a gas derived from fentanyl into the theater to incapacitate the insurgents.

Since then, “women represent over 40 percent of suicide bombers in Russia, and over 90 percent of them hail from the country’s North Caucasus region. Female terrorists from that region, including Chechnya and Dagestan, have carried out suicide bombings since 2000.”<sup>58</sup>

According to one analyst, the key factor that made Chechen women turn to terrorism was the failed operation at the Dubrovka. In the First Chechen War, hostage-taking operations—for example, Shamil Besayev’s 1995 raid on Budennovsk—were pivotal episodes for the outcome of the war. Besayev launched what appeared to be a suicidal operation against a Russian target, yet emerged victorious, with few casualties, and gained safe passage out. The raid resulted in widespread international media attention for the Chechen cause and outspoken Russian public criticism of the war as Russians blamed their own government for its incompetence and heavy-handed

tactics. In 2002, the Chechens who took part in the Dubrovka hostage-taking may have hoped to duplicate the success of Besayev's raid seven years earlier. The operation may have been intended to take hostages rather than kill civilians, to regain some measure of sympathy from the West—the support from which had diminished since the beginning of the American global war on terror in 2001.<sup>59</sup>

However, the events at the Dubrovka Theater produced little sympathy for the Chechen cause abroad and none whatsoever in Russia. The response of the Russian security apparatus, to gas both hostage-takers and hostages and then slaughter all the hostage-takers, probably persuaded many Chechens that the only remaining solution was to engage in suicide bombings of the type that the Arab extremists in Chechnya have long favored. In the aftermath of the failed hostage-taking at the Dubrovka Theater, a new wave of suicide attacks plagued Moscow civilians and Russian soldiers.

There appears to be a growing lethality in the Chechen resistance to Moscow, toward more terrorist attacks on traditional Russian territory and an increasing involvement of suicide bombers, which is changing the character and dynamic of the conflict. In the short term, these attacks have led to increased Russian domestic support for the war against Chechnya, but over time they may gradually undermine the willingness support the war.

One of the more devastating suicide bomb attacks, in December 2003, destroyed government headquarters in Grozny and killed eighty people. On May 14, 2003, at an Islamic festival in the village of Ilishkan-Yurt in Gudermes, a suicide truck bombing killed seventy-two people, and a female operative, Shakhidat Baimuradova, blew herself up. Pretending to be a journalist, she detonated a bomb hidden in a video camera in a crowd of people close to the head of the Chechen administration, Akhmad Kadyrov. As a result, twenty-six people were killed and 150 wounded. According to the Russian Interior Ministry, Baimuradova was one of thirty-six suicide bombers that were trained by Besayev.<sup>60</sup>

The trend in Chechnya was to take the fighting from the Chechen homeland to the Russian heartland. On July 5, 2003, there was a double bombing at the Tushino airfield northwest of Moscow during the fourth annual Krylya rock concert, killing fifteen, and a failed attack in which Zulkhan Yelikhadzhieva blew up only herself. On July 9, Zarema Mazhik-hoyeva, a twenty-three-year-old Chechen was arrested before being able to detonate the 1.5 kilograms of military-issued explosive in her purse at a café



on Tverskaya-Yamskaya Street. Mazhikhoyeva claimed that she deliberately botched her mission, but an explosives expert died trying to defuse her bomb.

These events were just the tip of the iceberg in a systematic campaign of urban terrorism, which continued well past the end of active fighting in Chechnya. That week in July 2003, the Russian authorities also discovered a cache of explosives and suicide belts in a house in the village of Tolstoptsevo, nineteen miles southwest of Moscow. According to the general prosecutor's office, "the design and components of the devices were identical" to those used in the incidents on July 5 and July 9.<sup>61</sup>

During four months in 2003, seven suicide attacks, all but one of which was carried out by women, spread fear across Russia, killing 165 people. Most Chechens, however, have not embraced the "cult of martyrdom," as have, for example, Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. In Kurchaloi, there are no posters or graffiti celebrating Yelikhadzhiyeva's martyrdom. People in Chechnya have professed shock and horror about female suicide bombers. However, one of the earlier female bombers, Elza (Luisa) Gazuyeva, who on November 29, 2001, killed herself and a Russian commander, Geidar Gadhiyev, the man who had ordered her husband's death, is revered. Thus, it is possible that Chechens discriminate between women who attack military targets to avenge the death of loved ones and those who target airline passengers and children.

Amanat Nagayeva brought down a Volga-Aviaexpress Tu-134 flying from Moscow to Volgograd, which crashed about one hundred miles south of Moscow. Satsita Dzhibirhanova downed a Sibir Airlines Tu-154 en route from Moscow to the Black Sea resort of Sochi near the southern city of Rostov-on-Don on August 22, 2004. Preliminary analysis of the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) indicated that the explosive they used was hexogen, according an FSB spokesman. That was the same substance used in a series of Russian apartment building bombings in 1999, which Russia cited as partial justification for launching the second war against Chechen separatists and helped propel then Russian prime minister, Vladimir V. Putin, to victory in his first presidential bid in 2000 with 52 percent of the vote because of his get-tough policies against terrorism. However, rumors persist that the FSB was involved in the attacks. According to a *Los Angeles Times* report, "the bombings, by triggering Russian outrage, brought political benefit to Putin, because of a notorious incident in which FSB agents

were caught in September 1999 placing what appeared to be explosives in an apartment building in the city of Ryazan.”<sup>62</sup>

Amanat Nagayeva’s younger sister Roza killed herself and ten people outside a Moscow subway station (the attack was claimed by the Islambouli Brigades), and several more female militants were involved in the takeover of Middle School No. 1 in Beslan in September 2004. (Maryam Taburova, the fourth woman, who roomed with the three militants, remains at large.) The shock of women’s increasing involvement has intensified exponentially since the attack in Beslan. I argued in my book *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror* (2005) that this event might be the turning point that turns public opinion against the resistance or minimally forces the Chechen resistance to rethink its casualty strategy.

Most of the Chechen attacks against Russia have involved Black Widows wishing to avenge the deaths of family members. In total, female bombers have taken part in more than thirty major attacks since the outbreak of the Second Chechen War, although not all the women were really widows. Reports suggest that the Nagayev sisters were divorced because they were unable to have children, a major stigma in Chechen society. Regardless, the sisters did lose their brother Uvays, who was beaten to death by Russian soldiers.<sup>63</sup>

Female Chechen suicide bombers are a serious threat. Previous acts of insurgent violence perpetrated by men were primarily aimed at military targets and took place in the North Caucasus and did not aim to kill large numbers of Russian civilians. The attacks by female suicide bombers have reversed these patterns. The vast majority of the attacks by female suicide bombers have been aimed at infrastructure (trains, planes, subways) as well as locations where large groups of civilian gather (plays, rock concerts, sporting events). While female bombers are not likely going to change the course of the war, the trend has important implications for Russia’s leadership, which was forced to provide what it has always promised—security for Russia’s citizens from terrorist attacks. Female bombers may even have a negative effect on the prospects for democracy in the region by exacerbating a call-and-response bloodbath between Chechen civilians and Russian security forces. Imran Yezhiyev, of the Chechen-Russian Friendship Society in Ingushetia, stated, “Suicide attacks were an inevitable response to the “most crude, the most terrible” crimes Russian forces had committed against Chechen civilians during the war. When Russian soldiers kill children

and civilians and demand payment for the return of their bodies, many in Chechnya are outraged and vow revenge. One woman, Elvira, whose fifteen-year-old son had been killed by Russian troops who then demanded five hundred dollars to return his corpse, stated, "Oh, yes, I want to kill them. Kill Russians, kill their children. I want them to know what it is like."<sup>64</sup>

Stories about Russian soldiers laughing as they charged Chechen fathers three hundred rubles (nearly fifteen dollars) not to rape their daughters circulate widely throughout Chechnya, adding credibility to the notion that Russian counterterrorism tactics have morphed into a cruel, sadistic justification for violence against women. According to Human Rights Watch, more than eighty thousand Chechens and six thousand Russian troops have died. President Putin's strong-arm tactics have turned Chechnya into an anarchic wasteland where Russian soldiers roam freely, dispensing summary justice in house-to-house raids and skirmishing with armed rebels. According to the human rights organization Memorial, Russian soldiers engaged in violence against both women and men in Chechnya, although Russian government officials are loath to admit any culpability or prosecute soldiers who violate women's rights.

Sergei V. Yastrzhembsky, Putin's senior adviser on Chechnya, suggested in the newspaper *Sobesednik* that Islamic extremists coerce Black Widows to become suicide bombers: "Chechens are turning these young girls into zombies (*zombirovaniye*) using psychotropic drugs. . . . I have heard that they rape them and record the rapes on video. After that, such Chechen girls have no chance at all of resuming a normal life in Chechnya. They have only one option: to blow themselves up with a bomb full of nails and ball bearings."<sup>65</sup>

There is no evidence to support this proposition that the Chechen women have been drugged, and most official reports from the Russian government regarding Chechnya are highly suspect. The government's refusal to allow Western journalists access exacerbates this problem as does the fact that firsthand field research is too dangerous.

There is a concern among moderate Islamic scholars about the rise of Islamist activists who have no formal religious education or authority who write self-described fatwas that are highly regarded by their followers and have a lot of support among the larger population. Beginning in 2001, we have observed Islamic fatwas that have sanctioned women's participation in martyrdom operations.

The Islamic theological debates regarding women suicide bombers might mislead the reader into thinking that martyrdom is an exclusively Islamic phenomenon. The cases presented in this chapter should prove that there is a spectrum of religious affiliation and degree of religiosity. In some cases, the religion of the bomber was incidental, notably among the secular organizations. Sri Lanka provides an important example of a secular non-Muslim group engaged in suicide bombing and one where the use of women was perfected and very effective.

#### NON-ISLAMIC FEMALE "MARTYRS"

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The most notorious female insurgents have emerged from the Tamil Tigers of Sri Lanka. In contrast to the Palestinians, they have not been stigmatized because of their gender: they are trained and prepared like men, given arms, and taught how to use them, and they regularly go on suicide missions. Women appear more willing to sacrifice and, as we have noted, they are better able to avoid detection. The critics of the LTTE claim, however, that women are chosen because they are more malleable and easier to control.<sup>66</sup> From 1987 to 2009, roughly 35 percent of LTTE suicide attacks were perpetrated by women or involved female bombers as part of a team.<sup>67</sup> One scholar commented:

The "phenomenon" of the LTTE female suicide bomber has raised several important, timely and difficult questions for feminist inquiry, offering, from the particular context of Sri Lanka, a rich analytical site for an understanding of the overlay of violence, militarism, patriarchy and gender. The issues of autonomous choice, agency, feminist politics, cultural role models, and the gendered nature of sacrifice/martyrdom have accrued around the figure of the female suicide bomber.<sup>68</sup>

Tamil society, like that of Chechnya and Palestine, is a traditional one, and some women perceive the LTTE as an entity that affords them greater equality. "We are given moral support by our leader [Velupillai Prabhakaran] and we have reached this position only because of him."<sup>69</sup> It has been said that women in combat

belong to a totally new world, a world outside a normal woman's life. . . . They have taken up a life that bears little resemblance at all to the ordinary existence of women. Training and carrying weapons,

confronting battle conditions, enduring the constant emotional strain of losing close associates, facing death almost every day, are situations that most women not only wish to avoid, but feel ill at ease with. But not the women fighters of the LTTE. They have literally flourished under such conditions and created for themselves, not only a new women's military structure, but also a legend of fighting capability and bravery.<sup>70</sup>

Women joined the LTTE because they lost a loved one or because of a degree of community peer pressure. Tamil sources related to me how one woman joined after her boyfriend was arrested, killed and the corpse left in the village market for the public to see. Another source told me that one night she was alone at home thinking and listening to LTTE's songs; the next day she and a few of her friends left their school to join. Once a girl in a village joins there is a snowball effect of others wanting to join the organization.<sup>71</sup>

The most famous among the women was an operative named Dhanu, who hid her explosive beneath her sari, giving her the appearance of pregnancy, and went to meet Indian prime minister Rajiv Gandhi on May 20, 1991. When he clasped her hand as she respectfully kneeled before him, she detonated the device, killing both of them and several bystanders instantly. Dhanu became a heroine and symbol of the LTTE. The story of Dhanu reached mythic proportions. The perceived heroism of this woman, who committed suicide for her people and her faith, is used as an example to win over new recruits.<sup>72</sup>

Dhanu, not unsurprisingly, was the sister of a well-known LTTE cadre. This marks one of the most effective means of predicting whether women will be involved or not in organizations employing terrorist tactics. The sisters, daughters, and wives of well-known militants are often a cornerstone of the organization.

In addition to women already part of the organizations, some women join militant groups because of their experiences. When women began to join the LTTE in the mid-1980s, some were allegedly rape victims of either the Sinhalese security apparatus or of the Indian Peacekeeping Force, which had entered the country in 1987 and remained until 1990. Dhanu herself was rumored to be the victim of rape, although other sources claim that it was her mother who was raped by members of Indian security services during the Indian intervention and that she was avenging her mother when she killed Prime Minister Gandhi. In all likelihood, Dhanu's chief motivation

was being related to a well-known cadre, but the effectiveness of the myth for recruiting purposes demonstrates the construction of honor in the society and the ways in which terrorist groups can capitalize on the inferior position of women in their society.

According to some interpretations of Hindu faith (as is the case in Islam), once a woman is raped, she may not get married nor may she have children. Fighting for Tamil freedom may have been the only way for such a woman to redeem herself. The idea of sacrifice is ingrained in Tamil culture. Women are taught from an early age to subordinate themselves to the needs or desires of men. The self-sacrifice of the female bombers is almost an extension of the idea of motherhood in the Tamil culture. Tamil mothers make great sacrifices for their sons on a daily basis, feeding them before themselves or the girl children, waiting on them, and so on. Acting as a human bomb is an understood and accepted offering for a woman who will never be a mother. Family members often encourage rape victims to join the LTTE.<sup>73</sup>

Was Dhanu seeking to avenge her mother, achieve status within her culture, or express her personal outrage? It is impossible to know for sure. However, the abuse of women is a factor that has changed little during the decades of civil war in Sri Lanka. According to one report, in one typical search at a checkpoint, a woman was ordered to raise her hands:

One of the officers pointed a gun at her threatening to shoot her. She started crying and shouted in Sinhalese "*Mata Wedithiyanna epa. Mata lamayek innawa*" ("Don't shoot me. I have a child.") She was then ordered to raise the top part of her dress and also ordered to raise the brassiere. Thereafter she was told to take down the lower part of her garment including the knickers up to her knees. She was asked to undress after which she was thoroughly "checked."<sup>74</sup>

The woman was mistaken for a Tamil because of her clothing and proved to be Sinhalese. Nevertheless, authorities dismissed her mistreatment when they discovered that she was a sex worker (and thus not entitled to privacy and dignity).

There have been massive human rights abuses in the north and east in the Tamil areas.<sup>75</sup> According to Darini Rajasingham-Senanyake, government violence had been organized and routinized through a systematic campaign of disappearances, turning a blind eye toward the use of rape, checkpoint

searches aimed at dehumanizing Tamils, widespread torture, and the elimination of whole villages in remote areas.<sup>76</sup> Rajasingham-Senanyake adds that “check point rape and murder are well documented in Sri Lanka, in this context militant groups who infiltrate camps have little difficulty in recruiting new cadres from deeply frustrated and resentful youth, men and women, girls and boys.”<sup>77</sup> The motivations for women to join the LTTE range along a spectrum from their personal experiences to the experiences of the Tamil community as a whole. Witnessing rape, witnessing or hearing about rape from other villagers, and the army’s killing of Tamil youth (girls and boys arrested by the Sri Lankan Army), plus the feeling of helplessness in not being able to defend against the Sri Lankan Army, are the main reasons girls joined the LTTE.<sup>78</sup> Such tactics only emboldened the LTTE and solidified their control of the city of Jaffna.<sup>79</sup> Civilian deaths caused by the government made the LTTE stronger and soured the Tamil population on government assurances of political devolution and equal rights. The government forces have not been mindful to differentiate civilian noncombatants from combatants and militants.

As bombers, women are better able to avoid detection since they might pass through security checkpoints more easily than Tamil men, their dresses and saris allowing them to hide IEDs more easily. “Women are less threatening in public places because of the cultural taboo, it is [more difficult] for male soldiers or police to frisk a woman, therefore women get through security points more easily than men.”<sup>80</sup> In an interview with an ex-LTTE cadre, Bernard-Henri Lévy reported that women’s training includes hiding a hand grenade in their vaginas.<sup>81</sup>

In Sri Lanka the abuse of women is linked to the phenomenon of suicide terrorism since violence had an appreciable impact on women in the society. Violence against women has been exacerbated during the long years of armed conflict and rape and sexual harassment by armed forces, and use of child soldiers and female suicide bombers are all examples of extreme violence. At the same time, women are not represented in the official peace process or in positions of leadership at the local or national levels:

There are no women in leadership positions in trade unions. Women’s multiple roles and time constraints often limit their aspirations but norms of male leadership, and in the case of politics, the present pervasive environment of political violence are also barriers to participation. The

fact that Sri Lanka has had the first woman Prime Minister and a woman President for eight years has not made an appreciable difference.<sup>82</sup>

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When analyzing female suicide bombing, specifying the terrorist organization and the larger society from which the women come become important factors in the analysis. Boaz Ganor of the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) says, "If you analyze the motivations of women who commit such attacks, it's the same as the men: they believe they are committed, patriotic, and this is combined with a religious duty. Many were not trained or prepared psychologically for the suicide attack."<sup>83</sup>

However, the reasons for women's participation vary greatly from country to country. Past experience shows that there is generally no single overriding motivation but rather a number of overlapping motivations working in concert: "These motivations interact with the potential attacker's emotional predispositions, creating an explosive mixture that needs only some traumatic event to release all its hidden destructive energy. A skillful terrorist operative can easily identify a candidate in this emotional state, and coolly manipulate her into becoming a weapon for his organization."<sup>84</sup>

Though individual women's motivations are different, I have encountered some similarities among the women in the cases I examined. Similarities exist between the cases reviewed in this chapter. In Sri Lanka or in Turkey, female members of the terrorist organizations were encouraged to participate in suicide bombing and occasionally coerced by peer pressure or even outright pressure. Both the Tamils and the Kurds share common features, such as belonging to traditional societies where women's roles are deterministic and static. The LTTE and the PKK offered women the opportunity that no other arrangement in society could offer them: a degree of gender equality and ability to feel that their participation could make a difference in society. Both groups were commanded by charismatic, unchallenged leaders who trained women to kill and die for the cause. Women were also eager to prove their devotion to the group or were dictated to do so, as has been pointed out earlier concerning Sri Lanka.

According to several of the preliminary studies that have been done on Palestinian female bombers, they represent a new model of suicide attackers. Many women now fit the established profile of a Palestinian suicide



bomber who once did not because of their gender: one a seamstress, one an ambulance worker, two in college, one in high school, one a law school graduate, and one mother of two who left families stricken and shocked.<sup>85</sup> Some analysts have suggested that these women were misfits or outcasts in their society. An article on the Israeli government website states:

Any hint of impropriety, no matter how minor, can have serious consequences for the woman involved, even prompting male family members to murder her in a so-called “honor” killing. Such personal motives have been well exploited by the terrorist organizations when they approach women in order to recruit them for suicide attacks. Recent intelligence information, gathered by Israeli liaison and coordination officials, have identified a clear effort . . . to recruit as suicide terrorists those young women who find themselves in acute emotional distress due to social stigmatization.<sup>86</sup>

Barbara Victor postulates this hypothesis when she links the first four Palestinian suicide bombers as having been placed in positions where the act of martyrdom was their sole chance to reclaim the “family honor” that had been lost by their own actions or the actions of other family members.<sup>87</sup> Allegations abound that the first female Hamas suicide bomber, Reem Riashi, was coerced by both her husband and lover as a way of saving face after an extramarital affair.<sup>88</sup> Thus, at some level, many of these women were motivated by highly charged emotional and personal reasons.

However, looking beyond these first four women, we cannot denude the political content of their involvement. The suicide bombers who brought down Russian jets in August 2004 were women who were unable to have children, a source of stigma in Chechen society. Finally, there is evidence that the women who, having been raped, would previously had ordinarily killed themselves (to avoid bringing shame on the family) are now being moved into the Black Widows. During the First Chechen War, there was a significant rise in women who committed suicide—including many who were expecting. The numbers of women who committed suicide dropped during the Second Chechen War. According to Valerie Zawilski, the same women who previously would have committed suicide were being funneled into the insurgent organizations.<sup>89</sup>

It is important to emphasize that women and men are ultimately motivated by a combination of factors that include the political, ideological,

religious, and personal, and thus what motivates women cannot be viewed as inherently different than the motivations of men. Even the strategy of using sexual violence to coerce women into becoming suicide bombers is increasingly crossing the gender barrier. More and more young boys and men are reporting that they were sexually molested as a way of shaming them into a martyrdom operation. In Pakistan, the TTP routinely abuses the young boys they are about to send off on a special operation. As explained to this author, when the Pakistani Taliban are “done” with a boy, they pass him around the group for sexual gratification before sending him on a suicide mission.

The selection of women for suicide operations and the methods used to persuade them are similar to those employed for men, across a range of countries and cultures and by both secular and religious organizations:

Taking advantage of candidates’ innocence, enthusiasm, loss of focus and often personal distress and thirst for revenge, “persuaders” subject women as well as men to intense indoctrination and manipulation. They offer the would-be bombers a sense of direction, as well as seemingly magical solutions to their problems, overlaid with national or religious symbolism, and promises of concrete [financial] rewards for them and their families, in the next world if necessary.<sup>90</sup>

#### Gender Equality Progressed or Regressed?

In describing his sister Darine Abu Aisha’s death, her brother stated, “She [was] a real man,” and that “the role of women in Palestinian society is not only to cry and keep the household, but to participate in such acts.”<sup>91</sup>

Are women suicide bombers portents of gender equality in their societies? Unlikely. Fanaticism and death cults generally do not lead to liberation politics for women. Women may exhibit courage and steely resolve as terrorists, but if they are part of a system that affords them unequal status, then feminism does not apply.<sup>92</sup> The Chechen Black Widows, according to Russia’s elite Alfa antiterrorist unit, which monitored the Moscow siege, were not permitted to detonate their bombs without a specific command from their male leader. Palestinian female cadres are not welcomed into the paramilitary terrorist factions, which remain dominated by men. Even in the al-Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades, women are not welcomed by the ranks of the male fighters. In Sri Lanka, while women constitute 30 percent of the suicide attackers and form crucial conventional fighting units, there

are few women among the top leaders. In fact, the LTTE has attempted to compel married Tamil women, including former female cadres, to adopt more traditional and conservative forms of dress (the sari and head coverings) and stop wearing trousers in the LTTE-controlled areas. One observer says that “those who send these women [bombers] do not really care for women’s rights; they are exploiting the personal frustrations and grievances of these women for their own political goals, while they continue to limit the role of women in other aspects of life.”<sup>93</sup>

There is a difference between the lower-ranking female operatives in terrorist groups and women who are planners and leaders, such as Ulrike Meinhof, who provided the intellectual and ideological backbone of the Baader-Meinhof faction. The assassination of Czar Alexander II in 1881 was an operation organized by a woman. Many other nineteenth-century revolutionaries were female. Nevertheless, women’s participation as suicide bombers has not equalized their societies.

We can draw similarities to the roles women have played in revolutionary movements in Iran, Palestine, and Algeria, and yet women were not included in the leadership of the successor regimes after independence from colonial rule or after revolutions. Palestinian women differ from the female bombers from other countries because they seemingly have options; they could have had a future, yet they chose to die as martyrs for the sake of their communities. The women suicide bombers in Sri Lanka and Turkey have few, if any, career options; many of them are unsophisticated and poorly educated and simply follow their leadership blindly. The participation of women in Palestine poses a challenge to understanding why educated women react in this fashion.

The challenge to understanding women’s roles in political violence lies in the fact that women, by operating under such archaic notions of gender—which assume that they are less warlike or cite stereotypes about motherhood—all reinforce the inequalities of their societies rather than confront them and explode the myths from within. The traditional patriarchy has a well-scripted set of rules in which women sacrifice themselves, and the patriarchal ideal of motherhood is one of self-denial and self-effacement. Although the woman is portrayed as supportive, this is accomplished when she gives up herself and her sense of self. The motivation to become a martyr is a twisted ultimate fulfillment of patriarchal ideals. These phenomena do not challenge the patriarchy but are clear examples of it: women

are more socially vulnerable, especially because widows and rape victims are stigmatized, so it is therefore not surprising that these women are recruited. These victims of their society are more easily devalued, while at the same time their deaths are easily exploited. If women want to equalize the society, playing the stereotypical female is decidedly not the way to accomplish this task. Rather, placing the women in leadership roles and giving them the opportunity to have a greater say in their futures might be a better way to level the unequal societies in which they live.

## NOTES

A version of this chapter appeared in Mia Bloom, *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), and parts are included in Mia Bloom, *Bombshell: Women and Terrorism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

1. Weiss and Hassan, *ISIS*, 221.
2. UNDP, *Arab Human Development Report 2002*.
3. Bloom, *Bombshell*.
4. Beyer, "Messengers of Death."
5. Frazier, "Abandon Weeping."
6. Sahliyeh and Deng, "Determinants," 701.
7. Van Natta, "Big Bang Theory," sec. 4-1.
8. Bloom, "Rape as a Strategy."
9. Beyer, "Messengers of Death."
10. Fighel, "Palestinian Islamic Jihad."
11. Scott Atran argues that as a result of Akras's martyrdom, Saudi Arabia sent one million dollars to fund the al-Aqsa Intifada.
12. Claudet, "More Palestinian Women."
13. Usher, "At 18."
14. Schweitzer, "Fundamental Change."
15. Basu, "Hindu Women's Activism."
16. Sudakov, "Shamil Besaev."
17. Copeland, "Female Suicide Bombers."
18. Medetsky, "Court."
19. Meyers, "From Dismal Chechnya."
20. After the Iranian Revolution, the clerical regime created informal cadres of women to fight the war, though the Islamic Republic could not bring itself to employ women martyrs. Gerecht, "They Live to Die."
21. Khaled, *My People Shall Live*.
22. Baum, "Leila Khaled."
23. Peteet, *Gender in Crisis*.
24. Simona Sharoni and others have alleged that Palestinian women were sexually humiliated in order to force them to inform or collaborate with the occupation authorities. See Sharoni, *Gender and the Israeli Palestinian Conflict*. Sharoni discusses how the Palestinian honor

code is used against them to extract concessions or force collaboration. Allegations also exist concerning women raped in Israeli jails (anonymous Palestinian source, name withheld).

25. Zoroya, "Woman Describes."
26. Paz, "Suicide Terrorist"; Abdullaev, "Suicide Attacks," 3.
27. Frazier, "Abandon Weeping."
28. According to Dr. Samiya Sa'ad al-Din, in Bloom, "Female Suicide Bombers," 98.
29. Agence France Presse, April 12, 2002.
30. Foden, "Death."
31. *Kul al-Arab* (Israel), February 1, 2002.
32. *Al-Shaab* (Egypt), February 1, 2002.
33. Claudet, "More Palestinian Women."
34. Usher, "At 18."
35. Matti Steinberg, interview with the author, September 2002.
36. Beaumont, "Woman Suicide Bomber Strikes."
37. Middle East News Online, 2002.
38. *Al-Shaab* (Egypt), February 1, 2002.
39. *Al-Shaab* (Egypt), February 1, 2002.
40. Yassin, interview, January 31, 2002.
41. Yassin, interview, January 31, 2002.
42. Hassan, "Arsenal."
43. Yassin, interview, January 31, 2002; Yassin, interview, February 2, 2002.
44. Arin Ahmad is another woman who was caught after she changed her mind and refused to detonate her explosive device. Levy-Barzilay, "On Suicide Bombers and Humanity."
45. Regular, "Mother of Two."
46. Regular.
47. Hassan, interview, January 31, 2002.
48. "Egyptian Grand Skaykh: Islamic Law Sees Suicide-Bombers as Martyrs," IMRA, November 3, 2003, <https://web.archive.org/web/20110603231345/http://www.imra.org.il/story.php3?id=18722>.
49. "Scholars Defend Suicide Attacks," *Dawn*, April 2, 2002, <https://www.dawn.com/news/28064>.
50. Yassin, interview, January 31, 2002.
51. Burns and Myre, "Suicide Bomber Kills at Least 19."
52. For a full list of names of women suicide bombers, see Zedalis, *Female Suicide Bombers*, 3–6.
53. Arab News, "Bin Laden."
54. Cited in Kupchinsky, "Smart Bombs' with Souls."
55. Sudakov, "Shamil Besaev."
56. Sudakov.
57. BBC News, "Inside a Chechen Bomber's Mind."
58. Kostro and Riba, "2014 Olympics."
59. Fredholm, "New Face."
60. Lilya Tsingiyeva, chairwoman of the Chechen Interior Ministry, told Interfax. Sudakov, "Shamil Besaev."

61. Meyers, "Female Suicide Bombers Unnerve Russians."
62. Holley and Murphy, "Russians Say."
63. Meyers, "From Dismal Chechnya."
64. Matthews, "So Warped by Hate," 8.
65. Meyers, "Female Suicide Bombers Unnerve Russians."
66. Interviews with the author, (names withheld), Batticaloa, Sri Lanka, November 2002.
67. Davis, *Women in Modern Terrorism*, 74.
68. De Mel, *Women and the Nation's Narrative*.
69. Harrison, "Up Close."
70. Ann, *Women Fighters of Liberation Tigers*, ii.
71. Tamil sources, personal correspondence with the author, November 26, 2003.
72. Rotberg, *Creating Peace*. After the assassination of Gandhi, Dhanu's father, A. Rajarattinam, was posthumously honored by Prabhakaran for having contributed to Tamil culture and public service. Narayan Swami, *Inside an Elusive Mind*; Cutter, "Tamil Tigresses."
73. Tamil sources, personal correspondence with the author, November 26, 2003.
74. De Mel, "Body Politics," 12.
75. In July 1997, three national Sri Lankan human rights commissions established in 1994 found that there had been 16,742 disappearances since July 1988.
76. Darini Rajasingham-Senanyake, interview with the author, Colombo, Sri Lanka, October 25, 2002.
77. Rajasingham-Senanyake, "Dangers of Devolution," 62.
78. Tamil sources, personal correspondence with the author, November 26, 2003.
79. Rotberg, *Creating Peace*, 9.
80. Sherine Xavier, director of the Home for Human Rights in Colombo, as cited in Cutter, "Tamil Tigresses."
81. Lévy, *Réflexions*.
82. Jayaweera, "Monitoring and Evaluation."
83. Boaz Ganor, discussions with the author, November 2003.
84. Figchel, "Palestinian Islamic Jihad."
85. Israel's security forces are aware of more than twenty cases in which women were involved in sabotage activity against Israeli targets. Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Role of Palestinian Women"; Copeland, "Female Suicide Bombers."
86. Israeli Security Sources, "Blackmailing."
87. Victor, *Army of Roses*. However, family shame can be misconstrued based on a variety of factors. If this was a key explanatory variable, then we should expect to see more suicide bombing among females which we do not (yet) observe.
88. McGreal, "Palestinians Shocked."
89. Valerie Zawilski, interview with the author, April 12, 2004.
90. Schweitzer, "Fundamental Change." The financial incentives are real and amount to from ten thousand to twenty-five thousand dollars to compensate the martyrs' families.
91. Contenta, "Student."
92. Foden, "Death."
93. Foden.

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## Chapter 5

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### Women, Human Security, and Countering Violent Extremism

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JOANA COOK

Extremism is not new, nor is it unique to specific regions, actors, or ideologies. However, in recent years, extremism and violent extremism in particular have gained increased attention from policymakers, practitioners, and academics alike due in large part to the emergence of the Islamic State (also known as ISIL, ISIS, or IS), continued threats from al-Qaeda and other Salafi jihadi groups, and lone-actor attacks inspired by them. Such groups have in some cases expanded beyond acts of violence, engaging in larger governance and state-building exercises where they themselves have tried to contribute to human security. When undertaking this work in areas under their control, groups posit themselves as governing alternatives, which further problematizes addressing the terrorist organization. The threat from such organizations has elicited responses on many fronts, including the judicial, policy, law enforcement, and military. These responses have also attempted to include new actors (such as women) in various upstream, preventative approaches to countering violent extremism (CVE).

Drawing on existing literature, this chapter will demonstrate how human security can offer numerous useful points to consider in CVE work on two levels. First, it will highlight the roles that women have taken in civil society that support different components of human security and how this can help inform how women may be already directly or indirectly contributing to, or can be further engaged in, CVE work. Secondly, it will also consider what aspects of human security, such as economic, personal, community, and political streams, can contribute to CVE work most strongly, thereby broadening the scope for the roles that women may have in the CVE field. However, it will also acknowledge possible tensions and conflicts that may arise by bringing these two fields closer together. This chapter focuses on the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region to demonstrate the increasing links between women, human security, and CVE.

This chapter contains three sections. The first will focus on human security, including a general overview and operational definition of the term “human security.” Human security will be highlighted as an important driver for women’s increased consideration in the wider field of security and demonstrated through their practical roles in civil society. This will finally consider how efforts that lend to human security are being increasingly engaged in by some terrorist groups to bolster their legitimacy and govern populations under their control. In the second section, the current status of women in CVE will be discussed. The third section will draw women, human security, and CVE together, analyzing links and lessons learned from women and human security that inform our understanding of the importance, breath, and integration of their current and potential roles in CVE.

## HUMAN SECURITY

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Human security itself will not eradicate violent extremism or terrorism—it is well known that poverty, education levels, and access to employment (for example) are not often the primary factors that influence an individual’s choice to become a terrorist or violent extremist.<sup>1</sup> However, as approaches to challenging violent extremism and terrorism broaden and deepen, areas such as prevention, community resilience, political participation, and responsive government institutions are often promoted. That is, there is increasing attention to proactive, preventative efforts to reduce the factors and drivers that can lessen the pool of those who may engage in violent extremism.

There has been a significant shift in security studies in recent decades that has moved from state-centric security to also emphasize security of the individual. Traditional views of security focused on ensuring territorial integrity of sovereign states, largely through the use of state militaries.<sup>2</sup> Stephen J. Del Rosso Jr. noted that “security studies and the security establishment have long been focused on foreign and defense policy mechanisms to avoid, prevent, and if need be win interstate military disputes.”<sup>3</sup> Security studies have generally focused on traditional “hard” concepts of security, though this began to expand over time, and concepts such as human security emerged in the 1990s. Gary King and Christopher J. L. Murray stated that this occurred as it was recognized there should be a “shift from the state to the individual and [that it] should encompass military as well as nonmilitary threats.”<sup>4</sup> This included previously existing areas such as humanitarian aid, peace operations, and sustainable development.<sup>5</sup>

Emphasizing the individual level, human security broadly addresses security in terms of economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political security,<sup>6</sup> though there are various interpretations of what human security extends to. Security and development approaches to human security must engage civil society, encourage access to policymakers, and create spaces for debate and deliberation. Human security also provides the “conditions (physical safety, rule of law and sustainable institutions) that are integral to development.”<sup>7</sup> George MacLean takes this further and defines human security as “security of the individual in his or her personal surroundings, community, and environment,” which includes several elements, including “personal security for the individual from violence or harm; access to the basic essentials of life; protection from crime and terrorism . . . political corruption . . . and absence of human rights; freedom from violations based on gender; rights of political and cultural communities; political, economic, and democratic development” and so forth.<sup>8</sup> Human security needs may also differ according to gender, while human security efforts can affect gendered persons differently, emphasizing the importance of a gendered lens in program design, execution, and evaluation.

Human security also plays a role in addressing sources of insecurity through emphasizing public security: establishment of rule of law and instruments for law enforcement, institution building, finding alternative legitimate livelihoods to criminal activity, and dealing with illegal armed groups.<sup>9</sup> As Mary Kaldor notes, human security is multilateral and must include a

wide array of actors that span from the United Nations (UN) to regional networks (e.g., the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe [OSCE], the African Union). Kaldor also states human security must contain a “bottom-up approach” that contains notions of “partnership,” “local ownership,” “participation,” and gender sensitivity, where local communities and those most affected by zones of insecurity are also viewed as the best sources for intelligence and from which to gain knowledge and understanding.<sup>10</sup> The roles that women and women’s groups can and do play in contributing to human security, as well as the impacts that a lack of human security can have on women, are important to acknowledge in this context.<sup>11</sup> While human security does not detract from the need for state-level security, it does provide an important component in a comprehensive approach to security that emphasizes the individual level.

The concept of human security is deliberately protective and recognizes that people and communities are fatally threatened by events well beyond their control, such as a violent conflict or a terrorist attack. Therefore, relevant bodies are urged to “offer protection which is institutionalized, not episodic; responsive, not rigid; preventative, not reactive.”<sup>12</sup> Human security is a long-term project that focuses on mitigating the factors that may lead to insecurity. Sabina Alkire also notes that “the strategies that are associated with *providing* human security identify the threats and then seek to prevent threats from materializing, mitigate harmful effects for those that eventuate, and help victims cope. . . . Human security is a condition that results from an effective political, economic, social, cultural, and natural environment.” As such, processes in areas of governance, participation, transparency, capacity building, and institution building are also vital in this process.<sup>13</sup> A number of these same processes can be considered in CVE, which is discussed further below.

Human security has, however, often remained a focus secondary to traditional hard security approaches. In the post-9/11 world that has been characterized by a predominance on law enforcement, intelligence, and military means to address terrorism, human security has been viewed as “unclear” or even “irrelevant.”<sup>14</sup> This has, however, seemed to reverse as considerations of other contributing factors that encourage, prolong, or facilitate extremism are examined more closely.<sup>15</sup> There is also an increased understanding of the distinct gendered impacts that occur where violent extremism is prominent

and how strategies to challenge extremism must also be more considerate of gender.<sup>16</sup> How the human security agenda opened the door for the women, peace, and security agenda will now be explored to lay the groundwork for how women's roles can be considered in terms of their roles in CVE.

#### Human Security: Encouraging Opportunities for Women in Security

The human security agenda, when combined with a preexisting trend to advance the rights of women, encourages a closer examination of the roles of women in security. The 1979 Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women emphasized the importance of eliminating the barriers that would restrict women from full and equal participation in all aspects of life. This precursor to UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 (2000) emphasizes that the nondiscrimination of women in human rights positively affects their social and economic contributions to the advancement of their country and is linked to the cause of peace.<sup>17</sup> It created an important platform by which to extend the women and security agenda. According to Natalie Florea Hudson, "human security, and the Human Security Network more specifically, provided the legitimization that the Security Council needed to include issues, such as women, into its work in the late 1990s."<sup>18</sup> This included both women's rights and gender equality as areas of focus. It was within this context of efforts to advance human security that opened the door to women's considerations in international security. A combination of the human security agenda and a strong women's network contributed to the adoption of UNSCR 1325 resolution on women, peace, and security in October 2000.<sup>19</sup>

UNSCR 1325 itself specifically emphasizes the role of women in international peace and security. It stresses "the importance of women's equal and full participation as active agents in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace-building and peacekeeping" and calls on member states to include women at all levels in the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, while also integrating a gender perspective. Both the human security agenda and the 1325 agenda begin to shift a state-centric understanding of security to human-centered security.<sup>20</sup> This also encourages a serious examination and consideration of how to bring women into all aspects of security, from prevention and negotiation to policy and practice, and has since been visible most clearly in the eighty-three national action plans on women, peace, and security established by countries around the world since 2005.<sup>21</sup>

Women's considerations in international security were advanced through the parallel advancement of the human security and women's rights through the 1990s and were based on an understanding that not only did conflict disproportionately affect women but also that women were essential and active agents to include in all aspects of conflict resolution and prevention. An emphasis on human security, combined with the explicit points in UNSCR 1325, provides a strong history and basis for also including women in all aspects of security, including CVE and counterterrorism.

#### Women and Civil Society: Programming That Fosters Human Security

Women and women's groups have long been on the periphery of traditional hard-security practices generally associated with the military, security, and law enforcement agencies. However, such actors and organizations have participated significantly as leaders and activists in civil society in areas such as the promotion of human rights and women's rights and have long worked within spheres of political, economic, and democratic development. Such work is often more aligned with traditional social norms and values related to women's roles and as such is often viewed as more socially acceptable, and it has proven an important way for women to affect issues of societal importance. These roles are also deeply interconnected with the promotion of human security and increasingly overlap with the field of CVE.

Women in the MENA region have mobilized in civil society to advance their citizenship status and the civil, political and social rights, and obligations that go with it. Civil society organizations "protect citizens from abuses of state power; they play the role of monitor and watchdog; they embody the rights of citizens to freedom of expression and association; and they are channels of popular participation in governance."<sup>22</sup> International civil society extends these same points to a global level and can include international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and transnational advocacy networks.

Women have participated in civil society in programs that help foster and positively contribute to human security in far greater numbers than they have in areas of hard security. For example, in the Persian Gulf region, women's participation in the police forces ranges from almost nonexistent or largely restricted to family units, such as in Saudi Arabia, to upward of 10 percent of the police forces in Bahrain.<sup>23</sup> However, their participation in civil society is much more significant where women often dominate the

nongovernmental sector due to accessibility, work-life balance, and cultural acceptance.<sup>24</sup> Their participation in these countries, while varied and unique to each case, had largely been in areas such as democratic and political reforms (including social development), broader public policy, and gender equality.<sup>25</sup> There has also been an emphasis on education, particularly advancing women's education. Education of women directly affects human security factors such as health, good agricultural practices, fertility rates, and child mortality rates, while also ensuring their children are educated.<sup>26</sup> This has also been a significant focus for governments and external donors to the MENA region, and female literacy rates there have increased from just below 30 percent in 1970 to 72 percent in 2011.<sup>27</sup> Education is only one example where civil society, national governments, and the international community have successfully worked together to advance an area of shared interest. Reflecting on successes of joint partnerships can also inform cooperation in areas of mutual interest related to CVE.

Drawing on cases from Jordan, Egypt, and Palestine, Nadje al-Ali notes that women activists tend to get mobilized around issues related to modernization and development, such as the alleviation of poverty and illiteracy, raising legal awareness, increasing women's access to education, work, health care, and political participation, and, to a lesser extent, women's reproductive rights and violence against women. Goals and priorities in this field can include income-generating projects and credit loan programs, legal assistance workshops, setting up networks to research and campaign around different issues and raising awareness about them, and designing and disseminating gender training packages among NGOs. Many of these activists have also been challenged by those who question their "authenticity" and cite their "Western-ness" to oppose them. The role of religion in such work also varies by group and region and has either been viewed as an asset or sidelined in preference of a secular framework.<sup>28</sup> Women's political activism and focus on human rights were also visible across the region during the Arab Spring, when women were on the front line of peaceful protests in countries from Yemen to Syria and to Libya and Tunisia, demanding reform. Each country in the region is unique, with a distinct history and context, and must be analyzed individually. However, women's active participation in and support of these fields that contribute to human security appears to resonate across most MENA countries. As will be demonstrated, many of these same activities, such as campaigning, networking, and political participation, also positively lend to their roles in CVE.



### Terrorist Groups and Human Security

Nonstate actors have long focused on “governing” areas they control and the populations within, perhaps none more so recognized in recent years than the Islamic State. These groups foster differing aspects and levels of human security through things such as food distribution, health care, jurisprudence, job creation, and provision of security at a local level. Groups have done this to gain credibility and legitimacy in the eyes of local populations and to contribute to their strategic aims.<sup>29</sup> Such initiatives have in some cases drawn an increase of support for them, particularly when such services cannot be provided by the state or other actors such as international aid organizations or in periods of prolonged instability and conflict. This also points to the importance of considerations of human security when challenging such groups and how strong civil societies that can assist and support human security may in fact help challenge and discredit groups or assist in recovery once groups are expelled or managed.

While those who traveled to Syria and Iraq from 2014 did so largely to join one of the many groups fighting on the ground including ISIL, earlier in the post-2011 Syrian conflict many individuals who traveled to Syria did so to provide humanitarian assistance and to defend civilians who were suffering from humanitarian abuses carried out by the government of Bashar al-Assad.<sup>30</sup> In June 2014, when ISIL declared itself “a state,” one area it focused on was drawing people with skills in the field of medicine, education, and engineering to provide the services that a state traditionally provides for its citizens.<sup>31</sup> There were also clear efforts to promote the benefits of these jobs, including salaries, wives, or housing that would be provided to those who came. Many of these were provided (though often to different degrees) for locals who joined. Anne Speckhard and Ahmet S. Yayla have noted that fear of rape by Assad’s forces in some cases acted as an “inducement” for some to join the Islamic State as a better alternative, and local women in some cases viewed marriage into the Islamic State as a means of avoiding starvation and assisting their families.<sup>32</sup> From this perspective, human security considerations were inherent as part of the group’s governance aims, drew off a preexisting sympathy pool of individuals who wanted to assist civilians suffering from the conflict (some of whom had become further radicalized or disillusioned by the conflict), and drew both international and local persons to join the group. Furthermore, for some joining or supporting

the Islamic State, this was seen as a means to avoid personal violence or to access resources required for survival. Therefore, both the contribution of such services to assist others in need as well as how the contribution those services are perceived to positively influence one's "citizenship" in the "state" demonstrate how these may enhance the recruitment and retention of members to the organization.

As provision of services became embedded in the larger governance structure and public image of the organization, this contributed to two things. First, the group was able to maintain the perception to those outside of areas under its control that services such as health care and education and secure sources of food would be available. This provided more "pull" factors, also expanding the pool of those willing to travel, such as mothers with children or families who may have otherwise been deterred from traveling. Second, for those from the area that had been suffering from the humanitarian disaster driven by the Syrian conflict, such provision of services may have appeared attractive and, for a suffering population, some semblance of reprieve.<sup>33</sup>

An earlier example was provided by al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in 2011 in the areas of Ja'ar and Zinjibar in Yemen.<sup>34</sup> These areas had generally extended past the reach and scope of the central government. When the Arab Spring emerged in 2011, the government withdrew what few forces were present there, and the provision gap was quickly filled by AQAP. AQAP controlled these areas for nearly a year, during which it established a police station and a women's literacy center, distributed food aid, established water projects, delivered electricity, and controlled garbage and sewage management.<sup>35</sup> These lessons in governance were also shared between branches, as was seen in a number of letters found in 2011 in Timbuktu, Mali, between top Yemeni AQAP operative Nasser al-Wahaishi and Algerian national Abdelmalek Droukdel. Wahaishi explained, "Providing these necessities will have a great effect on people, and will make them sympathize with us and feel that their fate is tied to ours."<sup>36</sup> AQAP later seized, held, and governed the city of Mukallah in 2015. In Somalia, al-Shabaab has been noted to also fill humanitarian gaps left by humanitarian aid organizations forced to leave or whose presence has been restricted in the country.<sup>37</sup>

These examples have not expanded on the abhorrent human rights abuses, terrorist acts, violence, and other negative aspects of such groups. However, they have aimed to highlight that when there is a distinct gap

in provision of key elements of human security by the central government or other actors, in particular in terms of food, health, and community security, this can provide a window of opportunity for extremist groups to expand or secure a foothold. This may be done through the provision of such services, which may also gain them legitimacy from local populations and contribute to their broader strategic aims. This may prolong acceptance or even increase support for a group where human security deficits are otherwise present and increase the attraction of the group to a broader demographic of potential supporters such as families or women. For those who join these groups to provide services, this may also positively influence their perceived “citizenship” (membership) in the “state” (group). Also, even though populations may otherwise largely reject these terrorist groups, for those that struggle to achieve even basic survival or have faced continued conflict or insecurity, the provision of various services or stability inherent in such public works may overshadow the ideology that they bring with them or at least lessen resistance to them. Human security considerations are therefore one area (among many) that plays an important role in challenging such groups and preventing their success in specific sites.

In sum, the concept of security has increasingly widened and deepened to consider security at the individual level, highlighting the importance of human security. Human security is long-term and preventative, should be institutionalized, and requires local buy-in and support, and bottom-up approaches are often noted to have the most success. Alongside this, there has been a long-term emphasis on addressing discrimination against women, which, alongside the human security agenda, internationally recognized their roles in the field of peace and security through UNSCR 1325. Human security has helped open the door for women in the wider field of security, highlighting importance of roles they have played in civil society to advance many areas of human security (e.g., advancing human rights, education, and democratic participation). Problematically, the provision of aspects of human security is also increasingly seen in practice by several terrorist organizations such as ISIL, AQAP, and al-Shabaab, lending to their support, recruitment, success, and longevity. The next section will focus on the current status of women in CVE, specifically highlighting the contributions that can be made in this field as drawn from experience in human security efforts.

WOMEN AND COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

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The literature on CVE is growing, interrogating diverse areas and topics.<sup>38</sup> CVE in an operational sense consists of “proactive actions to counter efforts by extremists to radicalize, recruit, and mobilize followers to violence.”<sup>39</sup> As such, more specific streams of effort may also be referred to as “counterradicalization” and emphasize efforts to dissuade individuals from joining or supporting a group.<sup>40</sup> Already, extensive research has deepened the understanding of the contributing factors that inform radicalization processes that lead to violent extremism and terrorism, where things such as ideology, grievances, personal networks (particularly in areas dealing with prolonged conflict), and quests for personal meaning hold particular importance.<sup>41</sup> CVE often considers various levels of analysis, including “individual, group, network, organization, mass movement, socio-cultural context, and international/interstate contexts.”<sup>42</sup> More thematically, the interrogation and study of CVE efforts range from examining the susceptibility of individuals to extremist ideology, to what makes a person take up violence, how communities can become more resilient to extremist ideologies and actions, and how an increasingly wide array of partners and actors can work together to challenge extremism in areas ranging from ideological buy-in to action (among others).<sup>43</sup>

Many early steps taken to deal with terrorism and violent extremism were largely punitive or based on hard security, engaging military or law enforcement as the primary method for dealing with threats. While these remain important and necessary, it has been widely recognized that primarily military and law-enforcement-based approaches to responding to terrorism and violent extremism will not succeed in the long term and much more must be done socially, politically, and legally to address the various contributing factors that lend to the appeal, longevity, and success of violent extremist organizations. These also include areas such as prevention, disengagement from groups, and resilience of communities following an attack. There is also an increasing emphasis on the roles that women can play in all areas of CVE.

## Women and CVE: A Review

Women’s roles in relation to CVE have generally been distinguished between traditional roles in the private/family sphere and those in the public

sphere where their roles within the community are often framed in terms of “peacemakers” or “drivers of change.” In the private sphere, women are generally viewed in terms of their roles as mothers, wives, and family members, where they can spot and react to extremism in the family. For example, according to Dr. Edit Schlaffer of Sisters Against Violent Extremism (SAVE), mothers play roles in “early warning and early intervention in the process of violent radicalization as an effective security and engagement strategy.”<sup>44</sup> In a further example, the US deputy coordinator for homeland security and multilateral affairs, Anne Witkowsky, noted that “due to their positions in their families, women can exert a stabilizing influence and empower individuals to be able to resist violent extremist propaganda and radicalization that can lead to terrorism.”<sup>45</sup> President Barack Obama often emphasized the roles of families (versus specific roles for mothers and fathers) and noted that families play an important part in CVE efforts: “We have to recognize that our best partners in all these efforts, the best people to help protect individuals from falling victim to extremist ideologies are their own communities, their own family members.”<sup>46</sup> Similar themes are reflected in the United Kingdom, where early versions of the government’s Prevent counterextremism program focused on women in religious settings, families, and communities in more expansive and problematic ways.<sup>47</sup>

SAVE also noted the capacity of women to spot and react to extremism in their families ranges greatly based on levels of education, local awareness, and geographic remoteness. It reports that in relation to religious radicalization, mothers, “especially those with less formal education, struggle to recognize the warning signs, as they may perceive their children as merely becoming more religious and often consider the change to be positive.”<sup>48</sup> While such points are helpful for expanding the roles of women in CVE, there is a worrying trend that they remain focused on specific communities (i.e., Muslim) and in traditional roles (e.g., mother, peacemaker), which may serve to reinforce stereotypes for women in this field or limit their other potential roles.

In relation to CVE where women’s roles in the family or community are focused on, labels such as “peacemakers” are often emphasized. Fionnuala Ni Aolain succinctly states in relation to the most stereotypical roles in CVE:

When women come into view they typically do so as the wives, daughters, sisters, and mothers of terrorist actors, or as the archetypal

victims of senseless terrorist acts whose effects on the most vulnerable (women themselves) underscores the unacceptability of terrorist targeting. Women remain marginal to the conversations in which definitions of security are agreed upon and generally peripheral to the institutional settings in which security frameworks are implemented as policy and law.<sup>49</sup>

Such generalizations can deflect from negative roles that women may also play in the family by encouraging extremism or acting as extremist actors themselves, highlighting the need to approach such stereotypes in this field with nuance and caution. This approach also may neglect the additional diverse community, security, political, judicial, or other leadership roles that women may hold and contribute to.

In the public sphere more generally, women have played diverse roles in CVE around the world in four primary strands of CVE work: prevention, intervention, disengagement, and interdiction.<sup>50</sup> This work has been both directly focused on CVE and indirectly focused where it supports other areas such as community resilience and cohesion. For example, Naureen Chowdhury Fink of the Global Center on Cooperative Security noted that women can bring important capacities to CVE efforts, drawing on work they are already carrying out in development, peacebuilding, communications, and education. While these may not all be labeled as CVE, they “address the drivers and conditions conducive to terrorism.”<sup>51</sup> Adnan N. Ansari, director for programs of the US-based Muffehun (an organization that focuses on CVE) helpfully distinguishes between “CVE-relevant” efforts that could create “stronger, more resilient communities” and those that are “CVE-specific” that directly targeted the “root causes” of violent extremism.<sup>52</sup> Such a distinction could also help avoid securitizing women’s diverse work in their communities, while recognizing preexisting efforts that may contribute to CVE (yet may be motivated for various reasons to avoid a CVE label).

For security practitioners, partnering with community organizations can also bring several benefits to CVE work, and women’s civil society or women-linked groups also fall within this scope. Humera Khan, the executive director of Muffehun, has noted that such groups can “engage with issues, groups, and individuals of interest, which public authorities might not be able to on their own; provide contextual knowledge; help bypass community

gate-keepers; benefit from on-the-ground legitimacy and existing networks of contacts and influence; and act as force-multipliers.”<sup>53</sup>

Civil society organizations not only provide an important link between security practitioners and the community but can also contribute valuable networks and skills to CVE-efforts. Women also feel equal to men as responders to terrorism but may engage different frames to demonstrate agency in this field, emphasizing diverse areas such as their roles in the home (mothers, wives), equality, or how as women they may have unique views and approaches to engage in CVE.<sup>54</sup> This demonstrates how women may engage in diverse ways and means of influencing or leading important CVE efforts, including those in more traditional security-related roles, in civil society and other public roles, or in the domestic sphere.

The OSCE has noted that including women as “policy shapers, educators, community members and activists” is essential to prevent terrorism. It further notes that women can “provide crucial feedback on the counterterrorism efforts of the international community, pointing out when preventive policies and practices are having counterproductive impacts on their communities,” and that they are “effective undertakers of initiatives and shapers of narratives to counter violent extremist and terrorist propaganda and may carry special weight with women audiences.”<sup>55</sup> Women have also been said to be able to demystify the life of a terrorist by speaking about the hardships involved, such as those of separation, insecurity, loss of income, and anxiety about a covert life.<sup>56</sup> In addition, women who are victims or survivors of terrorism are said to compel media attention and public sympathy, making them “a powerful voice for use against terrorism and violent extremism.”<sup>57</sup>

However, there are still many shortfalls when considering women in CVE. When merging both legal and practical understandings of how women fit into this picture, “the legal quandaries that result from the use of law as a management tool to address terrorism [has] not generally garnered a feminist response.”<sup>58</sup> This highlights a gap that exists in feminist responses and contributions to legal approaches to counterterrorism and CVE. Women have also largely lacked in policymaking roles related to CVE, again reflecting more traditional roles they may play in civil society. Lori Poloni-Staudinger and Candice D. Orbals note that women typically do not occupy governmental positions with authority over terrorism policymaking, such as heading departments of defense, security, or finance.

Instead, they often lead more “feminine” ministries linked to family, education, or social services and more generally only constitute 20 percent of legislatures globally. Women also are more generally represented in local political positions than national ones,<sup>59</sup> informing where and how they may more frequently inform and contribute to counterterrorism and CVE policies. This may also detract from women’s perceived ability to contribute positively to legal and policy responses to counterterrorism and CVE if these are understood as distinct from work they are doing in ministries and fields more aligned with human security concerns.

One report that surveyed women’s roles in CVE summarized the following points: Counterterrorism interventions have tended to ignore gender perspectives; however, women’s roles—as “policy shapers, educators, community members and activists”—in CVE have started to be recognized. The capacity of women to react to extremism varies greatly. Additionally, various initiatives funded by international government and NGOs aim to support women’s roles in preventing violent extremism, including by working with local grassroots women’s organizations. There are also mixed messages on the desirability of using stereotypes (such as emphasizing women’s maternal role) in counterterrorism narratives.<sup>60</sup> A more recent report by Iffat Idris and Ayat Abdelaziz highlights that many challenges still exist in promoting women in CVE, including a lack of country- and institution-specific resolutions and strategies that consider women, women’s limited representation in security agencies, and a lack of research on women in CVE.<sup>61</sup>

Yet groups that have engaged in work on areas that support human security have already contributed to challenging extremism in their societies more broadly, which can also reduce the occurrences of violent extremism. A report by the International Civil Society Network (ICAN) that focused on Islamic extremism notes that some women’s organizations are “directly engaging with communities . . . challenging the monopoly of religious authorities over definitions and interpretations of Islamic text, and infusing universal human rights norms into the discourse. Many are pressing for equality under the law.” The report notes that often women’s groups face challenges such as less access to resources, structures, and outreach capabilities than the extremist groups themselves. This can further affect long-term planning ability and international recognition for their work. Furthermore, their work was often labeled as a “women’s issue” and “disconnected from clear peace- and security-related debates and decisions.”<sup>62</sup>



Across the MENA region, there have also been increasing pressures on women as extremist groups have influenced social norms, laws, and national constitutions through political parties and religious authorities.<sup>63</sup> This also has implications for women, and women's groups, to address areas of human security. Examples include Egypt in 2012, where constitutional debates aimed to reduce the minimum marriage age to fourteen and apply limitations on freedom of movement of women, and Libya in 2011, where an equality provision was removed from the constitution. Drawing from these examples, ICAN points out four ways by which women in the MENA region challenge extremism. First, they challenge the monopoly of religious authorities over definitions and interpretations of Islamic text. Second, they infuse rights-based approaches to religious discourse and texts. Third, they protect gender equality under the law. Fourth, they deradicalize youth and provide livelihood alternatives.<sup>64</sup> Many of these themes reflect and traverse those defined within human security and that have further been linked to CVE work and are already engaged in by women in civil society in the region.

Also, when not locally owned by the community, when imposed by external actors, or when relying solely on gender norms, initiatives that have focused on women in specific communities to counter violent extremism have also had negative impacts. In the United Kingdom, for example, the Muslim community has proved a prime example of this, where in some cases there has been increased marginalization of Muslim communities that may be viewed as "problem communities" and may put "increased pressure on women within those communities to keep silent about their rights."<sup>65</sup> The Prevent counterterrorism strategy in the United Kingdom is one such example. Early editions of this program (Contest 1 in 2004, Contest 2 in 2009) were heavily criticized for "demonizing the Muslim population as a whole and creating and perpetuating anti-Muslim racist stereotypes; for securitizing the race-equality agenda," among other things.<sup>66</sup> While this strategy was based on a Western context, the same lessons could be applicable to other cases. As a result, when communities feel increased external pressure or when projects are imposed externally or from the top down, this may limit their ability to engage in CVE work and actually prove counter-productive to CVE aims.

Consequently, terrorism and counterterrorism narratives can both mobilize and reinforce stereotypes around men, women, and sexual minorities.

These stereotypes may be “heavily racialized and include, for example, ideas about Muslim women as passive, subordinate, moderate, and maternal.”<sup>67</sup> When focusing on specific groups, such as Muslim women, such stereotypes can either “sideline Muslim women in efforts to combat violent extremism or lead to their inclusion in ways that may perpetuate these stereotypes, such as focusing on the role of women as mothers to combat terrorism or portraying women as inherently peaceful.”<sup>68</sup> The use of these stereotypes can be extremely harmful and cause backlash and marginalization and affect cohesion in the community. Broadening the scope for organizations and activities that fall under CVE can also be problematic where the work of an organization may not be understood to benefit a CVE agenda, and their funding may be negatively impacted. Such groups may also face challenges or repercussions from their community if work that had previously been viewed in development terms, for example, is now “securitized” and viewed instead as CVE-linked, particularly in environments where CVE work is viewed as problematic. Areas that have a problematic history of counterterrorism efforts (e.g., drones strikes and extraordinary renditions) may also be more likely to view CVE efforts as one and the same or with great suspicion or mistrust. Many groups may thus choose to reject CVE labels in their work, even as they may be positively contributing to efforts.

There is an increasing focus on the roles that women can play in both violent extremism and in CVE and a growing understanding of the diverse agency women may demonstrate in both spheres. There has also been a recent and welcome increase in the literature on women and security more broadly, which has expanded on regional and country case studies, policy, human rights, and other thematic aspects of this field, which are helping accelerate focus on women’s contributions to CVE.<sup>69</sup> However, government efforts still tend to be overwhelmingly based on gendered stereotypes, which may limit the support and variety of roles for women in CVE practices and leave them marginal to larger CVE efforts. External actors such as governments may try to mobilize women based on these stereotypes, as may women themselves in various organizations if it is perceived to open up access to funding or resources. Furthermore, there have been negative repercussions from CVE initiatives when imposed as “top-down” rather than “bottom-up” organic approaches, where actors impose a “solution” on a community without working with the community to adequately understand the local context and dynamics of communities or the impacts of their

approach. One important way to start considering women's roles in CVE first is to focus on locally owned civil society organizations where women have developed their own roles, as they best see fit, to positively influence change in their communities. Their work often has human security benefits, which often work toward parallel aims with CVE.

## HUMAN SECURITY AND CVE: LINKS AND LESSONS LEARNED

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Women and women's groups who focus on areas linked to human security have an increasing stake and interest in challenging violent extremism and terrorism, particularly when it negatively affects the work they are trying to achieve. This section will begin by pointedly outlining the general links that overlap human security and CVE. Second, it will highlight lessons learned in the integration of women into human security that can be considered in reference to their contributions to CVE.

### The Links

Both human security deficits and violent extremism pose a threat to the state and its population, though the severity of these threats can change over time. Both also require a diverse range of means, tools, actors, and political responses to address them. At the most basic level, effective human security and CVE practices both rely on strong, accountable, and responsive political institutions that acknowledge and reflect the various interests of their communities. This means understanding the population and the diversities within it and ensuring their needs and concerns are responded to. Additionally, it is important that citizens feel that they can participate and effect positive change in their communities at both the political level and in practical programs and initiatives as well as feel investment in and ownership of such work.

The human security trajectory can act as a guide for the introduction and promotion of women in various security practices. Human security acted as the basis for the wider thematic inclusion of women in peace and security, as seen with UNSCR 1325. The resolution subsequently prompted national-level considerations of how women can be active participants in all areas of security. This is demonstrated in national action plans on women, peace, and security around the world, where inclusion of CVE and counterterrorism concerns are increasingly visible.

Many areas of human security are increasingly viewed as components of a comprehensive approach to counterterrorism and CVE. Indeed, while human security is often viewed as complementary to state security policies, Kaldor argues, this may in fact begin to reverse: as the world becomes more interconnected, classic state security policies may instead complement more urgent human security tasks.<sup>70</sup> Recognizing the interdependence and dynamic relationship of these areas is an important step in more closely working together and aligning efforts, goals, and interests among state and civil society actors.

There are also many similarities to be drawn between human security and CVE that inform the roles women may contribute to CVE in government programming. For example, at the state level, Alkire notes that both develop “systematic, comprehensive, durable, and coordinated institutional responses to selected threats that involve multiple actors and range from research to field action.” Also, “preparedness and response mechanisms use legal, political, sectoral, and economic as well as authorized military instruments.”<sup>71</sup> That is, states respond to both human security and CVE concerns through various tools, institutions, and specific response mechanisms that may largely mirror each other.

There are number of ways that human security and terrorism are linked, further increasing the scope for their efforts to work either together or complementing each other. For example, according to Cindy R. Jebb and Andrew A. Gallo, there is presently a crisis of legitimacy around the world where there are also severe human security concerns where terrorist groups may spark political movements. Second, while military and law enforcement will continue to play a crucial role in CT efforts, terrorism is not just a military problem and must be addressed primarily with nonmilitary means.<sup>72</sup> For terrorist groups that may have political motivations rooted in real grievances (which is never an excuse for violence), considerations of human security also help us understand the contextual basis of legitimacy that these groups may try and gain support from and help understand how to help delegitimize such groups.<sup>73</sup> The authors promote a human security framework for addressing terrorism as it provides “a multi-dimensional approach that offers decision-makers a set of useful tools to employ in the operational environment.”<sup>74</sup> As state-building projects as seen in Iraq and Afghanistan demonstrated, areas as diverse as counterterrorism, CVE, reconstruction, stabilization, security sector reform (SSR), democratic governance, and

humanitarian relief must be addressed comprehensively and in a unified fashion. Both traditional military actors and those with a focus on human security have increased incentive to work harmoniously together and inform each other. Many organizations that focus on democratic governance or humanitarian aid often already integrate gender considerations into all aspects of their work. This knowledge may also inform areas focused on physical security in stability or reconstruction efforts, such as military or policing initiatives, broadening the scope for preexisting or emerging women's civil society roles and groups to contribute.

Jebb and Gallo also note ten guiding principles of a human-security-lens approach to counterterrorism. They state a human security approach could help diagnose the problem in terms of the changing dynamic of a terrorist organization and the context in which it operates; identify opportunities that empower local stakeholders, including women; collaboratively determine achievable outcomes; acknowledge that assessments are hard and progress is not always clear-cut; understand trade-offs and manage risk; be ready for full-spectrum operations; be self-aware of adverse effects; value human capital; continually professionalize and assist in professionalizing other militaries; and prepare future leaders both at home and abroad.<sup>75</sup> These points highlight not only the role of human security in counterterrorism (where women may already actively contribute) but also how human security can inform or guide CVE or counterterrorism practices where gendered considerations pertaining to women are important.

Civil society can also play an important role in challenging violent extremism and terrorism—for example, by helping implement the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and addressing the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism. As noted previously, women have traditionally been more active in civil society. Some points that civil society may address include, for example, promoting dialogue and mediation, supporting victims of terrorism, contributing to capacity-building activities, promoting a culture of human development, and pursuing and reinforcing development and social-inclusion agendas.<sup>76</sup>

A strong civil society and active participation in civil society have also assisted some communities in challenging extremism internally. One case in the United States pointed out that, for example, there are dozens of national and regional organizations that work in areas of civil rights, human rights, interfaith dialogue, education, charity, public diplomacy, political activism,

and other religious and secular activities. As a result, “despite the post 9/11 scrutiny of the American Muslim community, American Muslim groups have devised sophisticated grassroots campaigns on counter-terrorism, anti-extremist ideology, and methods in conflict prevention with various law enforcement authorities.”<sup>77</sup> In this example, a robust civil society, and widespread participation in it, positively affected the community’s role in shaping CVE initiatives, working more efficiently with law enforcement, and developing internal solutions and approaches to CVE based on members’ knowledge of their community. Many of these areas that link human security and CVE provide clear points of entry for preexisting and evolving roles women have in civil society.

### The Lessons

A number of themes can be drawn from women’s entry and roles in the broader sphere of security, as facilitated by the promotion of the human security agenda and applied to considerations of the promotion and integration of women in CVE.

First, women, particularly those in civil society, have played important roles in addressing human security concerns that can be drawn on in CVE work. They have worked significantly on areas such as human and women’s rights, development, and other areas viewed as important in both the human security and CVE contexts. Many of the frames of reference they may engage in development work (e.g., mother, community member) are frames that they themselves may engage to support their inclusion in CVE work (though relying solely on such stereotypes can also prove problematic or limit the scope or roles in which women may engage). Human security also positively results from a number of areas, including accountable, transparent, effective political, economic, and social environments—areas that can also positively lend to CVE work. Human security–focused work that can also encourage community resilience to violent extremist ideology as an alternative way of addressing grievances may be promoted—for example, through political means. Just as by fostering and developing women as leaders and practitioners in these fields, practitioners of security can also positively influence women’s participation in security practices through similar training and support.

Second, many lessons that have been learned from previous experience in the sphere of human security are currently applicable to CVE. For

example, it is important to have strong, positive relationships with diverse local stakeholders that can provide contextual knowledge and inform how projects are positively or negatively affecting the community. Many organizations that have established such relationships through development and human rights work, for example, may also be more aware of impacts that may emerge in the community to inform CVE practices. A central tenet of development work is to “do no harm,” and such a theme is easily extended to CVE. Reviewing skills and tools in the human security sphere that may be applicable to CVE, such as advocacy, public engagement and consultation, and others, may inform how to effectively make concerns of communities known or to engage policymakers and ensure that both community and CVE interests interact harmoniously. Local communities are also often best placed to address challenges related to sensitive areas such as gender roles, culture, and religion (which have proved problematic when externally imposed), and women have demonstrated they can engage and challenge these arguments on various levels in their own communities.

Third, long-term, successful projects that support human security can guide and inform effective partnerships among local, national, and international governmental and nongovernmental actors. Both human security and CVE involve a large body of diverse stakeholders, and by examining areas that have had particular success in the MENA region—for example, improving levels of women’s education—lessons can be drawn as to how to integrate and diffuse CVE policies across appropriate bodies and actors. As UNSCR 1325 noted, women should play significant roles in the peace and security context, and many national action plans have been drawn up around the world to ensure that women are integrated into all aspects of peace and security. Such plans should be easily extendable and inclusive of the CVE sphere. Work that has been carried out in areas such as peace building can inform CVE work at the local, national, and international levels.

Fourth, local stakeholders have played a key role in implementing programs that have focused on human security. Local actors understand and have distinct knowledge of local power dynamics, relationships, and challenges and can speak to both positive and negative impacts of policies and actions, ensuring they do not negatively affect the community. A diverse range of community actors that are identified and engaged can ensure a community is more comprehensively supported and have proven

some of the strongest allies and effective conduits among policymakers, practitioners, and the community. Such considerations should extend to women in CVE, ensuring that diversities in a specific community related to socioeconomic status and ethnic background, for example, are considered and reflected in this engagement to ensure representative actors are consulted and included.

Fifth, lessons can be learned about what has negatively affected communities, policies, and practices in human security work and thus should be avoided in CVE initiatives. These could include addressing harmful stereotypes, ensuring distinct gender analysis is carried out, and including certain actors (such as women) in decision-making bodies that will influence and inform program design and implementation. Many development programs have learned that if you focus efforts and funding on a single group, this will often cause either positive or negative responses from other communities. Similarly, CVE efforts that home in on specific populations may not only alienate that community but also produce other unintended consequences.

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Human security has emerged as an important concept as definitions and considerations of security continue to evolve. A combination of the human security agenda and UNSCR 1325 have also opened the door for greater consideration and engagement of the roles of women in the field of security. Human security has also emerged as an area that can be exploited by terrorist groups that may benefit from a deficit in human security. However, women have actively and positively contributed to fostering human security, particularly through their roles in civil society, as seen in the MENA region. Many of these same skills can be applied as important components of CVE work. However, perceptions about the roles that women should take in countering extremism and terrorism have to be challenged, both by nontraditional security groups and the practitioners and policymakers who design and implement programs, as they often still view women in limited, racialized, or gender-specific terms. Human security is meant to provide security of the population, and in many ways CVE and counterterrorism does as well. It is well known that women's contribution to human security is crucial, and it is time we started thinking the same way for all components of security.



## NOTES

1. See, e.g., sec. 3.1 in Nasser-Eddine et al., "Countering Violent Extremism."
2. King and Murray, "Rethinking Human Security," 588.
3. Del Rosso, "Insecure State."
4. King and Murray, "Rethinking Human Security," 589.
5. Shinoda, "Concept of Human Security," 14.
6. US Department of Homeland Security, "Strategy for Countering Violent Extremism."
7. Kaldor, *Human Security*, 195, 97.
8. MacLean, *Changing Perception*.
9. Kaldor, *Human Security*, 191.
10. Kaldor, 193.
11. Kaldor, 188.
12. Alkire, "Conceptual Framework," 2.
13. Alkire, 4 (italics in original).
14. Shinoda, "Concept of Human Security," 20.
15. See Cook, *A Woman's Place*, for more discussion of this in the case of the United States.
16. See, e.g., Center for Human Rights and Global Justice, *Decade Lost*.
17. UNSCR 1325 was a landmark UN resolution on women, peace, and security. It highlighted and affirmed "the importance of [women's] equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security." UN Security Council, Resolution 1325.
18. The Human Security Network (HSN) is a group of foreign ministers from thirteen countries that was formed to promote the concept of human security as a feature of all national and international policies. Established in 1999, HSN members are Austria, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Greece, Ireland, Jordan, Mali, Norway, Slovenia, Switzerland and Thailand, with South Africa as an observer.
19. Hudson, *Gender*, 15.
20. Cohn, Kinsella, and Gibbings, "Women," 135.
21. Peace Women, "National Action Plans."
22. Moghadam, "Engendering Citizenship," 66.
23. Cook, "Women's Role," 3.
24. OECD/CAWTAR, *Women in Public Life*.
25. OECD/CAWTAR.
26. Jebb and Gallo, "Adjusting the Paradigm," 217.
27. OECD/CAWTAR, *Women in Public Life*, 28–29.
28. Al-Ali, "Gender and Civil Society," 217, 19–21.
29. This is discussed further in Joana Cook, Haid Haid, and Inga Trauthig, "Jurisprudence beyond the State: An Analysis of Jihadist 'Justice' in Yemen, Syria, and Libya." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*. Published ahead of print, June 10, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2020.1776958>.
30. Briggs and Silverman, "Western Foreign Fighters," 13, 16; Neumann, "Syrian Foreign Fighters."

31. Islamic State Media, "Return."
32. Speckhard and Yayla, "Eyewitness Accounts."
33. While governance work and provision of services only constitutes one component of the group's strategy, it remains important for the longevity of the group as well as for keeping the population under its control cared for to some level. This should not necessarily be mistaken for acceptance or support of the group by the local population, which often do not otherwise support these groups. For a more comprehensive understanding of ISIL's strategy based off their own documents see, Reuter, "Terror Strategist."
34. A broader discussion of AQAP's governance project is seen in Cook, *Our Fate Is Tied*.
35. Associated Press, "Al-Qaida Papers."
36. This focus on public works has also been discussed by a number of scholars who focus on terrorist groups, which is discussed in Kendall, "How Can Al-Qaeda?"
37. Fasih, "Soft Measures, Real Harm."
38. Initial research for this section was carried out as part of an independent report by the author for Public Safety Canada (PSC) titled *Moving beyond "Terrorists" and "Victims"*. The author would like to acknowledge and thank PSC for its support.
39. US Department of Homeland Security, "Strategy for Countering Violent Extremism."
40. It should be noted that CVE does not have strict definitional or operational boundaries. Specific programs or efforts may directly be referenced as CVE, while others may play a CVE function even if not referenced as such. Actors may choose to utilize this label for reasons such as access to funding and resources or may choose not to in cases where it may be viewed as inappropriate or dangerous for program implementers.
41. For access to a wide range of sources see, Borum, "Radicalization into Violent Extremism I"; Borum, "Radicalization into Violent Extremism II"; Nasser-Eddine et al., "Countering Violent Extremism"; Hofmann and Schmid, "Selected Literature"; Stephens, Sieckelinck and Boutellier, "Preventing Violent Extremism"; and Gielen, "Countering Violent Extremism."
42. Borum, "Radicalization into Violent Extremism I."
43. For a review of literature on CVE, see Nasser-Eddine et al., "Countering Violent Extremism."
44. GCTF-OSCE, "Workshop on 'Advancing Women's Roles.'"
45. Center for Human Rights and Global Justice, *Decade Lost*, 21.
46. Obama, "President Obama Speaks."
47. Cook, "Avoiding the Pitfalls of Prevent."
48. SAVE, "The Roles."
49. Ni Aolain, "Situating Women," 1086.
50. GCTF-OSCE, "Workshop on 'Advancing Women's Roles.'"
51. GCTF-OSCE.
52. Ansari, "Interview."
53. GCTF-OSCE, "Workshop on 'Advancing Women's Roles.'"
54. Poloni-Staudinger and Orbals, *Terrorism*, 80–82.
55. OSCE, "Preventing Terrorism."
56. Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation, "EU Workshop," 8.

57. Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation, 8.
58. Ni Aolain, "Situating Women," 1086.
59. Poloni-Staudinger and Orbals, *Terrorism*, 70–72.
60. Carter, "Women," 2.
61. Idris and Abdelaziz, "Women."
62. International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN), "Extremism as Mainstream."
63. ICAN.
64. ICAN.
65. Center for Human Rights and Global Justice, *Decade Lost*, 23.
66. Rashid, "Giving," 580. See also Brown, "Promise and Perils."
67. Center for Human Rights and Global Justice, *Decade Lost*, 26.
68. Center for Human Rights and Global Justice, 26.
69. Some sources include Chowdhury Fink, Zeiger, and Bhulai, *A Man's World?*; Idris and Abdelaziz, "Women"; Satterthwaite and Huckerby, *Gender*; and Winterbotham and Pearson "Different Cities."
  70. Kaldor, *Human Security*, 196.
  71. Alkire, "Conceptual Framework," 6.
  72. Jebb and Gallo, "Adjusting the Paradigm."
  73. Jebb and Gallo, 213.
  74. Jebb and Gallo, 210.
  75. Jebb and Gallo, 218–19.
  76. UN, Resolution 60/288.
  77. Huda, "Conflict Prevention."

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## Chapter 6

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### The Challenges for Gender Awareness in Civil-Military Operations

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GUNHILD HOOGENSEN GJØRV

In 2000, the United Nations Security Council passed UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, a breakthrough resolution for the most important political forum that addresses global peace and security. The Security Council explicitly recognized the linkages between human security “on the ground” and state-based and international security initiatives that focused on military behavior and attitudes toward women.<sup>1</sup> It outlined an understanding of what security for women means in conflict and post-conflict situations. The meaning of security in UNSCR 1325 was framed broadly and in complex terms; it not only put in place provisions to protect civilians (particularly women) from harm but also established a framework of norms toward preventing violence against women in conflict and emphasized the crucial role of including women in peacemaking processes. The resolution explicitly emphasizes the importance of mainstreaming gender perspectives in peacekeeping operations through increased recruitment and involvement of women in operations as well as overall training. Combined,

these processes were designed to reshape, expand, and greatly improve the understanding of security in conflict zones that takes gendered violence in conflict situations seriously.

UNSCR 1325 and the subsequent nine resolutions that define the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda demonstrated a rhetorical and practical recognition that what happens in everyday life has significance for a complex security perspective rooted in human security and affecting national and international security.<sup>2</sup> Putting this wisdom into practice has been another matter, however, and the results have not been as rapid as was originally hoped.<sup>3</sup>

The commitments made in UNSCR 1325 were soon followed by events that tested the resolution's effectiveness. In the fall of 2001, one of the longest-standing contemporary international military conflicts began with an invasion spearheaded by the United States following the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia. The resulting operations in Afghanistan to purportedly dismantle al-Qaeda and the Taliban and to pursue Osama Bin Laden officially ended in December 2014.<sup>4</sup> The War in Afghanistan was one of the most complex, heavily "boots-on-the-ground," and costly civil-military operations (in lives as well as aid and military costs) in modern times. It involved combined and joint military operations, diplomatic/political initiatives, and a multitude of civil-society projects (largely by nongovernmental organization, or NGOs), constituting a vast international effort imposed upon a diverse and divided Afghan society.

These efforts should and cannot be understood as a coordinated or integrated mission carried out in unison by all actors involved. Indeed, Afghan lives, spaces, and politics were contested on many levels, by many different actors, including widely differing perspectives among participating intervening nations and their ministries, various Afghan authorities, diverse militaries, and humanitarian and development organizations. Often there was little recognition for, understanding of, or respect for the differing mandates competing on the ground.<sup>5</sup> After almost twenty years of war, Afghanistan still struggles to claim significant successes in securing a stable and ideally democratic state, as power in many different regions has fallen to the Taliban, the primary competitor of the current Afghan government.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine some of the complexities of civil-military interaction when international forces stage a significant intervention, probing the extent to which military forces are able to interact with



local and international civilian actors and to implement UNSCR 1325 in an acute zone of conflict. Increasingly, scholars and military practitioners have recognized that for peacemaking to be successful, militaries must incorporate gender awareness as a crucial tool that not only recognizes women's variable agency in postconflict reconstruction and peacebuilding but also creates an environment where grassroots political agendas may be brought to the highest echelons of political decision-making. Since the late twentieth century after the Cold War, militaries have been increasingly asked to reenvision missions and operational planning, to respect and engage practically with civilian communities, and to bring a gendered analysis and praxis into their operations. This chapter will examine two challenges faced by international armed forces in host countries where they are not only often unfamiliar with the culture and the conflict itself, but where civilians also can have a powerful impact on the success or failure of the military mission. In this context, it explores military imaginaries and civilian/women's agency. Using selected examples from civil-military interactions in Afghanistan (2001–14), I will examine how military imaginaries and civilian agency contribute to the struggle to integrate "gender" into operations as a whole. These two issues are by no means the only problems faced by militaries implementing principles and practices generated from UNSCR 1325. Internal struggles within military structures themselves, including the marginalization and feminization of civil-military functions and activities in operations, the disconnect between the US Marine Corps female engagement teams (FETs) and their commanders and operational planners, and the lack of training, purpose, and understanding given to FET operatives, have contributed to negative outcomes for these initiatives.<sup>6</sup> However, I wish to complement the above work by focusing on the two challenges of military imaginaries and civilian agency that also require more attention and that permeate and influence the civil-military interface.

The chapter draws from experiences in Afghanistan but is relevant beyond this conflict. Civilians often have a complicated relationship with the use of force by their own military forces, but it becomes particularly challenging when interacting with intervening international forces. The more we know about the complex perceptions civilian communities have of international/foreign military actors, those militaries can at very least reduce harm, and at best they might be able to help move the political agenda along. The latter pertains to precisely what UNCSR 1325 purports

to defend: the transmission of everyday (including specifically women's) political security concerns, articulated by local actors, to national and international decision-making bodies. Experiences in Afghanistan demonstrate how UNSCR 1325 implementation was a struggle.

The hoped-for milestones articulated in various international political agreements and summits that took place during the Afghanistan intervention (thirteen conferences thus far from Bonn 2001 to Bonn 2019) have largely not come to fruition.<sup>7</sup> There have been some positive results in the advancement of women's mobility and rights, although these must be seen in the context of the complexity of the intervention as a whole and the specific dynamics around gender in Afghanistan. The role of Afghan women and women's rights in this conflict was complicated, complex, and highly political. Though originally a counterterrorism mission that became Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), it was quickly realized that little to no infrastructure and services existed to provide basic human security (such as education, health, food, employment) and that the mission had to expand to provide support to "reconstruct" the country. The notion of rebuilding or reconstructing Afghanistan was often captured in the images of oppressed Afghan women who *finally* (as Afghan women's experiences were ahistorically portrayed) were able to move beyond their homes, go to school, and participate in politics.<sup>8</sup> Although the civil-military operation was not focused solely on women's rights, this issue encapsulated the reconstruction mentality.<sup>9</sup> Reviews of gender awareness in military operations in Afghanistan and what this meant for the operation and for the community in question have been mixed.<sup>10</sup> Using attempts at implementing UNSCR 1325 as the springboard for discussion, this chapter examines how militaries have been taught about the civilian environment through gender-awareness measures. It will assess what has resulted up until the end of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) operation that ended in 2014 and how civilian agency and the perception of the military image by civilians needs to be better understood and incorporated into operational planning in the likely event militaries are again deployed to complex, and complicated, conflict zones.

#### USING A GENDER-INFORMED, MULTIACTOR, HUMAN SECURITY LENS

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Human security takes the analyst to the level of analysis of the individual or human being and her community in pursuit of a complex understanding

of how security is perceived and how it operates from this level—that is, from the bottom up. In other words, the concept of human security is intended to draw attention to the security dynamics taking place at the level of civilians, noncombatants, or nonstate actors.<sup>11</sup> The focus on individuals has been both liberating and problematic. On the one hand, security analysts could break free of a restricted and narrow analytical approach rooted in abstract assumptions regarding the nature of states and, in turn, what threatens states and how states respond.<sup>12</sup> This narrow “traditional” security approach is difficult to reconcile with contradicting realities among civilians, where state-based concerns about nuclear confrontation (for example) are far less relevant in comparison to “everyday security” matters such as economic, health, personal, and food insecurities. The recognition of such everyday insecurities through the popularization of the human security concept in the 1994 Human Development Report of the UN Development Programme (UNDP) was therefore a welcome breakthrough.<sup>13</sup> At the same time, however, human security has often been burdened with its liberal heritage, universalizing and quantifying what it is to be human, often predicated upon Western ideals and imaginaries to the political benefit of Western or minority-world interests.<sup>14</sup>

Human security perspectives have been developed and explored in various contexts, from examining their relevance to the Arctic, the environment, and indigenous peoples to development and conflict issues.<sup>15</sup> Within the context of complex civil-military operations, I rely upon a multiactor security approach to facilitate a human security focus—what I have also called “positive security”—that privileges security perceptions of nonstate individual and community actors and nonviolent or non-force-based practices, valuing the inputs of these perspectives as equal to that of traditional state perspectives.<sup>16</sup>

The roles of nonstate actors in war becomes clear in highly politicized scenarios where control of the state is contested and many actors, state and nonstate, compete for power or take sides with possible power brokers. The relationship between the political and military machineries in this context cannot be underestimated because it is a crucial factor in the development of conflict. The “political,” however, refers not only to state-based bodies and actors but also includes the political goals of nonstate actors vying for power,<sup>17</sup> including civilians, which necessarily means including women. In a complex emergency, the host nation and various regional and local nonstate

actors use conflict to achieve political goals as do international intervening actors such as troop-contributing nations. Not all actors involved in the complex emergency are politicized in the same way. For example, development-oriented NGOs may reflect political agendas (gender, education, democracy) without overtly “choosing sides” as armed opposition groups or intervening states might do. The media also reflects political biases in the reporting of crises, having the capacity to influence the public (local actors or international actors) to varying degrees. Then there are those whose politics are impartial or neutral, at least where the warring parties (combatants) are concerned. For example, humanitarian NGOs, which are distinct from development or other more directly politically inclined NGOs, struggle particularly to maintain a necessary political distance from other actors to have better access to populations they deem most vulnerable; indeed, humanitarian, apolitical arguments are often used to assist women and children who are often presupposed to be core victims of conflict. This is often the case particularly with women and children, who, as a category, often have some of the fewest resources available to build up their own capacities and capabilities. The “women and children” category can be too narrow, however. Instead, a gender perspective within a multiactor security approach can heighten the potential to encourage and promote women to arenas such as peace tables, while simultaneously ensuring that vulnerable men and boys are adequately recognized and protected.<sup>18</sup> Thus the so-called average person or people (local populations) are central to conflict in diverse ways; they increase our understanding of how these diverse civilian roles contribute to understanding who is doing what and where peace-building capacities exist and why. Civilians, men and women, are often the focus of many other actors in the conflict (humanitarian, development, political, military) either as beneficiaries of humanitarian or development aid or as citizens/subjects who are convinced, influenced, coerced, or forced to be a part of the political agendas that inevitably shape a conflict. Such attentions demonstrate that local populations are not passive or apolitical recipients of such influence but rather that they can and do play significant roles in providing a sense of security, stability, and direction for their communities and society as a whole.

Each of these actors embodies a set of values that they prioritize and that inform their vision of the political and their perception of security.<sup>19</sup> Some actors, both military and civilian, engage in positive security-oriented

projects or activities—creating security, for example, through increased opportunities to employment, shelter, and justice mechanisms—to attempt to build trust between communities and the state. These activities aim to contribute to a semblance of security necessary for people to further develop capacities to build upon and stabilize their lives both during and after conflict. Other people or groups might create insecurity (political and military actors with regime-changing or state-building goals, for example) to force change toward an alternative system that prioritizes their own values and political projects, creating a different vision of the political, a different framework for security. Thus, perceptions of security depend upon the political agenda or political vision—and the positionality—of the different actors. Gender and feminist security studies research has focused explicitly on the ways in which such perceptions differ according to gender and why this matters.<sup>20</sup> Experiences in Afghanistan illustrate the challenges all actors face in both meeting their own goals and responding to international commitments (to the degree that these are relevant to them) in a complex civilian environment, of which gender awareness is pivotal.

Thus, multiple actors, both armed and unarmed, are relevant and impact the conflict. However, military forces are unique among these actors in that they are capable of and mandated to use deadly force. They wield a power that simultaneously allows them an ethical privilege of choice and responsibility to use force in a measured way not only toward other warring parties (often asymmetrically matched) but also among and within civilian communities in which they are inevitably intertwined. Military actors and operations thus greatly influence civilian communities—first and foremost due to their capacity to kill and destroy things—but also due to the imaginary linked to the state and international system that militaries necessarily provide security.<sup>21</sup> Their very presence in a civilian environment raises questions about when and how they might display force or not, whether this force generates either a sense of security or of threat among civilian communities, and how civilian actors may or can respond. These responses often differ according to gender.

#### SNAPSHOTS FROM AFGHANISTAN

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The focus of the international community on Afghan women arrived close on the heels of the military intervention at the end of 2001. One week after

the attacks of September 11, the US House of Representatives and Senate passed a joint resolution justifying the use of the US armed forces in self-defense against terrorist attacks.<sup>22</sup> Less than three weeks later, OEF was engaged, combining air and ground (special and conventional) forces.<sup>23</sup> Just a week after the 9/11 attacks, on November 17, 2001, the now famous speech of First Lady Laura Bush was broadcast, expressing concern for the tragic circumstances of Afghan women and children and explicitly connecting Afghan women's freedom to the military intervention: "Because of our recent military gains in much of Afghanistan, women are no longer imprisoned in their homes."<sup>24</sup> Thus gender, and more specifically women, was tightly entwined in the framing and justification of the military effort from the beginning. The "military intervention / women's rights and empowerment" connection has since been—and still is—a complicated, controversial, and challenging relationship.

The threshold for success in the area of women's rights in the Afghan intervention was low, given the miserable departure point for women during the Taliban regime (1996–2001) but prior to it as well. In comparison to international standards, virtually any movement toward increased freedom and rights for women could be claimed as a success. Nevertheless, a number of interim and postintervention evaluations have indicated that certain real and substantial successes were achieved, particularly in the areas of women's health and education.<sup>25</sup> Many Afghan women and proponents of women's rights continue to fight an uphill battle to maintain what few achievements were obtained during this period. Though critiques of the intervention itself have been more than warranted, it is important to note that many Afghan women used the opportunity to fight for their rights during this period, and although these women are often from the urban elite, many have had access to international resources not readily available before.<sup>26</sup>

Reflecting the increasingly complex and intertwined civil-military effort, part of the focus on Afghan women's rights was filtered through military initiatives and activities, most of which were driven by political pressures to implement UNSCR 1325. The military activities included mixed units of female and male soldiers, such as CIMIC (NATO Civil-Military Cooperation) teams that worked with local Afghan communities to identify needs and design responses (e.g., Norway deployed mixed CIMIC teams in 2003 and 2004, before the FET initiatives), and later on sending out

all-female teams (the FETs) for the purpose of specifically making contact with Afghan women.<sup>27</sup> The FETs were designed with an instrumental goal of facilitating military objectives, including intelligence gathering and force protection, by establishing relationships of trust with local people.<sup>28</sup> The military goals also reflected a broader political objective: to establish a particular power structure in a given region that the intervening powers supported. In this case, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and a select number of UN member states deployed troops that could employ force with the intention of securing power for the interim and thereafter elected governments led by presidents Hamid Karzai and Ashraf Ghani, respectively.<sup>29</sup> The early focus on women's rights was woven into the broader political objective, and it integrated human security and women's security issues into a state-centric security agenda.<sup>30</sup>

This is not the first time the human security agenda had been employed to serve the foreign and defense policy interests of minority-world (so-called Western) powers.<sup>31</sup> Human security has been vulnerable for decades to manipulations by minority-world politicking with largely Global North powers employing resources to address human security issues "over there," largely in the Global South, for the purpose of ensuring better state security "over here" (in the Global North).<sup>32</sup> I have referred to this as "virtuous imperialism," where the motivation to address gross human insecurities, particularly in conflict zones, comes with the additional if not primary goal that those insecurities be managed in accordance with Western values or the values of the intervening state, thereby also ensuring its own state security.<sup>33</sup> In 2001, Lloyd Axworthy, a former Canadian Liberal Party foreign minister, acknowledged that helping others in other parts of the world can minimize unrest and the potential for terrorist attacks in "our" (Western) own backyard.<sup>34</sup> The same mentality can be argued to apply in Afghanistan through the focus on women's empowerment and rights. The issue has been driven by a top-down, state-based agenda on gender, and despite the attempts to implement measures in Afghanistan with an "Afghan face" or with Afghan "local ownership" of such developments for women, the bottom line is that not unlike Laura Bush's claim in 2001, it is the West or minority world that perceives itself as saving Afghan women.<sup>35</sup> In this sense, it can be clearly argued that gender has been co-opted to strengthen the liberal traditional/patriarchal state. Within this environment where motives of different actors are so politicized, how

can military actors promote a gender-aware human security that reflects a bottom-up approach advocated by gender and feminist security studies scholars? Can militaries be “gender aware” and operate accordingly?

MILITARY ACTORS: ROLE, IMAGINARIES,  
AND UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT

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Experience has shown that military as well as political leaders need to be aware of who and what is influencing security and security perceptions in areas of operations. In practice if not in principle, civil-military interaction includes the operationalizing of a multiactor security perspective. It demands a complex knowledge about the different actors in a theater or area of operations, which necessitates gender awareness. Gender awareness makes more visible the power dynamics between different actors, which are by no means equal. As noted already, military actors hold a particularly powerful position by virtue of their sanctioned use of force. Their power is also secured in the military imaginaries and identity as a socially valued, male-dominated, masculinist institution.<sup>36</sup> They are, however, also weakened by their very “military-ness”—as an armed, (and in the case of peace operations) foreign actor, they often have little to no sense of the dynamics of the civilian environment in which they become embedded, and they rarely are able to establish relationships of trust with local communities. In overcoming this weakness, there has been a modest recognition that it is important to include if not prioritize the roles and security perceptions of citizens who can be influential (in a helpful or detrimental manner) during all phases of an operation. Despite the passing of UNSCR Resolution 1325 in 2000, it still took a number of years for the gender action plans to materialize (let alone get implemented) and for political and military leaders to give a more concerted focus upon women as potential security actors.<sup>37</sup>

What does this all mean for the military practitioner attempting to integrate a gender perspective? Often the “how” of integrating gender perspectives implies a series of formalities or checklists drawn from protocols generated through often superficial and top-down training that are prescriptive but that often are not able to delve deeply into problematic or harmful sociopolitical practices that are otherwise exposed through a gender-aware lens.<sup>38</sup> This does not mean that such checklist practices do not have their value, at least insofar as gathering basic data about the society with which



the military will engage. Typical tasks would include gathering gender-disaggregated data about political participation, gender-based violence, refugees, and prisoners; assessing risks for men, women, girls, and boys; or mapping needs in specific local communities.<sup>39</sup> However, there is little room for further analysis, particularly regarding the potential and limitations of military interaction with civilian women in the first place. Gender analysis exposes to what degree military actors can be expected to be effective or influential in creating trust and security among and with local actors, not least because of the military imaginaries in civilian perceptions.

The perception civilians have of military actors is central to any potential success that can be achieved in the civil-military interface. The imaginaries of militaries affect the way in which their actions are perceived as legitimate or not. The perceptions civilians have of militaries can set broader questions about the ability of militaries to cast a wider security net beyond the application of force. The ability to use force is the *raison d'être* that has played a central role in the development of military culture, the concept of militarization, and, not least, civilian responses to military actors.<sup>40</sup> It is an occupation that is often veiled in secrecy and beyond the reach of civilian culture and norms, as it is charged with the defense of the nation and, to that end, will engage in activities not normally condoned by civilian cultures.<sup>41</sup> The range of perceptions about the military are often linked to the qualities embedded within the idealized and hegemonic masculinities of the military.<sup>42</sup> The particular ways in which masculinity is cultivated in the military fosters a different culture that develops beyond civilian norms, including the relative acceptance of death (for one's country) as well as being able to kill without penalty. Thus, the military can be perceived as an illegitimate actor with regard to many ways it engages with civilians in complex operations and due to the real and perceived imaginaries of what the military represents.<sup>43</sup>

These same militaries are bound by the obligations of UNSCR 1325 and the subsequent national gender action plans to integrate gender awareness into their operations. How are militaries able to gain trust of civilians, not least women who may not be accustomed to contact with military actors? A certain level of skepticism may be present among civilian actors. When militaries attempt to be gender aware, is it due to a deep commitment to make women's lives better, to improve women and men's participation in the greater political arena, and promote equity? Formal integration

of gender awareness into military operations will, unlike Barbara Bush's claim in her radio address about women in Afghanistan, not likely radically change women's lives. But the integration of UNSCR 1325 itself can, at a minimum, halt the perpetration of structural practices that do harm. This would mean that militaries do not necessarily have to provide services (such as humanitarian or development "projects"), but they can instead acquire a well-developed awareness regarding the gendered impacts of their daily operations. The way they move in the area of operations and the impact of their presence and interaction with different people needs to be part of operational planning. This can be additionally difficult because the perceptions of militaries by civilians can shift over time. Minimizing harm to the local communities, grounded in solid understanding of how security perspectives are gendered in specific contexts, is central to a military contribution to the political success of an operation.

#### CIVILIAN AGENCY: WOMEN AS AGENTS

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Considerable practical and scholarly efforts have focused on the need to protect civilians in conflict zones.<sup>44</sup> The protection of civilians in conflict is necessarily a top priority for both political and military authorities. The challenge with this focus is ensuring that civilians are protected but not simultaneously rendered passive and that their agency is not disregarded. In the 2016 publication *Protecting Civilians from Violence*, women (along with children) were identified only insofar as they were victims.<sup>45</sup> Women and children are heavily represented as victims in conflict zones. However, there is considerable research in feminist and gender security studies that also identifies the ways in which women are also active agents who are themselves working to protect their communities and/or acting as champions for particular political interests that may or may not be complementary to intervening, national government, or international goals.<sup>46</sup> For military actors, the protection of civilians must be paramount. However, these forces need to be, at the same, fully cognizant of the range of agency civilians have—from little to no capacity, to a variety of "control," to more significant local/regional power and opportunity.<sup>47</sup> Militaries would benefit from knowing more about respecting and distancing and/or assisting the abilities and agency of often ignored or marginalized civilian actors, namely women. This is essential for the promotion of women's activities in peacebuilding

measures as required by UNSCR 1325 and for minimizing harm inflicted on local societies. It also minimizes potential backlash against military activities by local communities. Finding how this balance can be achieved depends on the conflict's context; it also requires gaining an understanding of how peace operations develop in that context.

Global peace operations or, rather, internationally (including UN) supported military interventions like that in Afghanistan are not static processes, and their nature, mandates, and goals have changed over time.<sup>48</sup> In contrast to "traditional" peacekeeping roles that were developed prior the end of the Cold War, interactions between civilians and militaries in highly politicized contexts like the Afghanistan intervention reveal that intervening militaries are not playing the role of "neutral" peacekeeping forces between consenting conflicting parties.<sup>49</sup> Instead, they are an integral part of the political agenda in the country that is affected, and they support a specific government actors and a particular structure of governance: in short, they are parties to the conflict. At the same time, civilians—internationals as well as host-nation individuals—are potentially political actors as well, including women. Examining the roles civilians play in war and identifying the responsibilities warring parties (official and extralegal) have to them is crucial to understanding the civil-military interface that in turn informs planning. Essential here is an inquiry of civilian or women's *agency* in conflict: What are women *doing* during conflict, and how do they as *actors* affect both war and peace? What are the various ways in which women's agency can be understood? For the purposes of this chapter, I define civilian, and more specifically women's, agency as nonviolent/noncombatant activities and engagements, including nonviolent resistance and/or explicit or implicit political support for a side in the conflict. Women can and do engage in violence as well, but this would move them out of the category of "civilian" and into that of "combatant." While protecting women, children, and other vulnerable civilians, it is important to also inquire as to what women's (civilian) agency looks like in this particular context, to ask to what extent it has affected the progression or regression of conflicts, and, further, to explore in what ways understanding women's agency on the ground can better help move states and nonstate actors toward peaceful solutions.

This is central to UNSCR 1325, but it is not unproblematic. Inquiring about the political roles of women and their agency has potentially high-risk consequences. To acknowledge roles of women in processes of war is to

acknowledge their agency, which in turn politicizes their roles by acknowledging power at the individual civilian level and possibilities for change and dissent to—and profound transformations of—social norms and overarching orders, particularly to war strategies.<sup>50</sup> This can be dangerous both to status quo configurations of power and to civilians on the ground, as acknowledging civilian agency may imply a removal of moral and ethical barriers around the imaginaries of “the civilian.” The categorization of “women and children” as *only* innocents in war to be protected, or to be understood, implicitly or explicitly in neutral terms becomes problematized. Exposing agency can both empower women and in certain circumstances put women at risk because they are no longer just “passive victims.” However, not acknowledging women’s potential and actual agency reduces human security. It ignores the priorities of civilians who are doing what they can to ensure their own security and that of their communities in the midst of the conflict situation. This is an impasse that can be difficult to overcome, not least for military actors who may have questionable legitimacy among civilian actors and who commonly have taken sides in a conflict.

Some of these tensions were exposed in a Norwegian radio program that examined the impacts of FET forces by interviewing Afghan women.<sup>51</sup> The FET program was an initiative originally designed by the US Marine Corps to assess needs for aid and to gather intelligence.<sup>52</sup> The fact that military units such as FETs directly target women as information sources has been contentious. The role of the FET can, of course, appear very instrumental, as one military source put it: you use gender information to get what you need, and you understand how they behave to find out how to deal with them.<sup>53</sup> The relationship between militaries and locals are far more complex, however. These dynamics of power exist, but it is important to be aware that different types of power can operate on both sides in many ways. There are indeed civilians who no longer have the ability and capacity to act on their own behalf and who are helpless, vulnerable, and powerless. Many civilians are made so by war, by society and its cultural and gender norms, or by the context in which they find themselves. It is important for military agents to be aware of and discern who among the civilians might fall into such a category. But not all citizens are “the vulnerable,” and, more specifically, not all women are vulnerable. In the same radio program mentioned above, an NGO representative expressed concern that local civilians and particularly women were put at grave risk by the military and the FET,

as locals could be potentially targeted by opposing warring parties (e.g., the Taliban) after speaking with international militaries. In contrast to that argument, however, the program ended with a conversation with an Afghan woman who stated that she did what she could to inform ISAF of what she saw, heard, and understood about her surroundings because she felt her security depended upon its presence.<sup>54</sup> Not all of the radio respondents shared her view, though, as other women made the decision to not speak with militaries, also for reasons of their own security. Herein lie significant tensions.

Initiatives such as UNSCR 1325 demand an acknowledgement of civilian agency, particularly by women, by recognizing women's experiences and practices of security and insecurity as well as demanding women's agency in all levels of peace negotiations.<sup>55</sup> To bring civilians to the peace table means having a full understanding of civilian activities before and during war that become highly politically relevant to negotiations and peace processes.

#### IMPLEMENTING GENDER

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NATO militaries, the ones most active in the intervention in Afghanistan, were increasingly exposed to gender terminology and definitions throughout the first decade of the twenty-first century, beginning largely with UNSCR 1325 and then later seeing the UN resolution integrated into military doctrine, most recently in the 2017 Bi-Strategic Command Directive 040-001, titled "Integrating UNSCR 1325 and Gender Perspective into the NATO Command Structure."<sup>56</sup> NATO militaries were provided with instructions and guidance in regard to how to implement gender awareness as a means to the end of establishing stability and security. It was unclear, however, about how this would be operationalized. The definition of "gender" in the directive provided insight into how gender is constructed, with the expectation that with some training, militaries otherwise well equipped to conduct gender analysis can sufficiently integrate the concept into their activities, with the end result that gender could become "mainstreamed." Gender awareness and analysis focused on support to civilian authorities, entailing contact with local communities and NGOs, and further focused on stabilization and peace-keeping rather than high-intensity operations, though civil-military activities have been demonstrated to be equally relevant to the latter.<sup>57</sup>

The complexity of different civil-military contexts is compounded by gender dynamics that affect information and intelligence gathering,

psychological operations, patrolling, training of local forces, the use of interpreters, the impact of raids and combat operations and any possible resulting resistance, and support for the mission and international militaries in general. The military practitioners who have been operating in the civil-military interface that have had experience in trying to operationalize gender are many, such as CIMIC teams, gender field advisers (GFAs), and FETs. All of these are within the category of civil-military interactions: "Civil-military interaction refers to the range and nature of contact, from co-existence to coordination, and/or cooperation between national (local) and international (foreign) civilian (ranging from government officials to NGOs both humanitarian and development, to local populations) and military actors in a crisis situation."<sup>58</sup> Often the roles in the civil-military interface, which involve nonkinetic (nonlethal) tactics, are feminized and devalued in the military system. These roles are not recognized for their impact on winning battles or the war, increasing the possibility of marginalization if militaries turn toward what are perceived as more military (force-oriented) tasks.<sup>59</sup> The role of gender advisers, FETs, or CIMIC practitioners in military operations crosses various borders in feminist security studies, straddling efforts to mainstream gender perspectives into military planning and operations, while also operating under assumptions about women and war and women's assumed capacities to be caregivers and be caring, peaceful, and unaggressive. What has been also highlighted as increasingly controversial is when militaries are more open about their information collection, are willing to share information as well, and wish to talk to those who are perceived to know best, such as local residents, to gain information. This attempt at openness is often met with suspicion due to the persistent imaginaries of militaries. This is well exemplified in the debate about women, women's rights, and the protection of women and the extent to which the military should or should not interact with female (or others who may be deemed "vulnerable") citizens of a population.

#### MILITARIZATION OF CIVILIAN SPACE?

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As long as militaries will continue to be deployed to "out-of-area" settings (outside of their own national territories and as part of international interventions), they need a better understanding of the civilian environment from a nonenemy perspective to increase their capacity to minimize harm

to local communities. Indeed, assumptions about the role of civilians may also be complicated and problematic even in near-area operations.<sup>60</sup> In either case, though militaries are focused on eradicating an enemy (and gathering intelligence for that purpose), they also need to know about avoiding or minimizing contact with culturally sacred or important sites, schools and day care centers, health-care facilities, additional infrastructure, and civil-society organizations. Secondly, they may also gather information about needs in the civilian environment and either share this information with other civilian actors (civil society) or address immediate needs themselves, though militaries engaging in such projects in international operations has become increasingly controversial.<sup>61</sup> This requires extensive interaction between militaries and both male and female civilian actors who are not part of an enemy profile but who are active within their own social and political spaces. However, though militaries require contact with civilians not least in an attempt to gather information to minimize harm to the operation, contact with the military can be problematic for the civilians themselves. For some, the attempt by militaries to increase their understanding of the civilian environment and civilian/women's agency can be perceived as a militarization of civilian space, it may put civilians at risk for attack by polarized armed actors, and it moves away from the original objectives of UNSCR 1325 and the WPS agenda, whereby an increased focus on peaceful conflict resolution should be the objective.<sup>62</sup> The power inequity between militaries and civilians has increasingly come under scrutiny, particularly in the way that military thinking and culture permeates civilian environments, with militarized values trumping civilian priorities. This has been examined in literature that looks at levels and depth of militarism.<sup>63</sup>

At the same time, as Annica Kronsell argues, we are witnessing processes of denationalization and democratization in militaries through cosmopolitan ethics.<sup>64</sup> In other words, militaries (at least in NATO and/or Western/minority-world countries) are moving in directions influenced by civilian norms or ethics. These cosmopolitan ethics reflect universalized human rights thinking, not least universalized women's rights. The influence of these ethics has developed considerably since the turn of the twenty-first century when minority-world/NATO militaries have been deployed to nonnational territories or out-of-area operations. Cosmopolitan ethics have enabled processes of UNSCR 1325 implementation as they are consistent with supporting human rights during operations, including gender equality. They have

imposed an obligation and responsibility on militaries to be aware of, if not support, civilian environments during operations.<sup>65</sup> To a certain degree, this has been interpreted by militaries as taking responsibility for multiple societal activities, including development projects, and even going so far as facilitating governance.<sup>66</sup> Perhaps, though, it has been the issue of gender and gender awareness that has gained the most attention and benefited from this move toward cosmopolitan ethics and apparent “civilizing” of the military, as opposed to “militarizing” of the civilian space. The cosmopolitan move is not without its problems, however. In some respects, there has been pushback.

Since the withdrawals of Western/minority-world/NATO militaries from Afghanistan (and Iraq), there has been increased talk about militaries “getting back” to military tasks, not least as a response to the complex counterinsurgency (COIN) approach, heavily laden with civil-military interaction activities, that defined the Afghanistan and Iraq interventions.<sup>67</sup> An example of the move away from a civil-military approach was the Norwegian contribution to the bombing of Libya under the Responsibility to Protect mandate of UNSCR 1973, which was considered a success in part because it involved limited military engagement over a short time frame with no interconnected civilian commitments on the ground.<sup>68</sup> This intervention was praised for being quick, uncomplicated, and successful insofar as the airstrikes achieved the goal of the *military* mission. Impacts on civilians were not part of the success equation, other than providing assurances that civilians were not targeted. It was not possible to ensure that civilians were not killed, however, and indeed some civilians could have been killed if they found themselves in areas where they were deemed to be military targets.<sup>69</sup> In this sense, if Western/minority-world militaries were previously moving in a direction of cosmopolitanism and democratization, some of the same militaries can be understood to be rejecting that move and remilitarizing. The move to “military tasks” threatens to reduce military responsibility, awareness, and obligation to civilians and to women in particular. In other words, the pushback is pushing out gender as well.

#### THE CHALLENGES OF INTEGRATING GENDER AWARENESS

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The role of the gender concept and how it is supposed to inform and improve international operations has often been unclear, particularly for practitioners on the ground. This has led to differing perceptions of the value



of a gendered approach or gender awareness for practitioners, some stating that it is merely a political tool, while others have seen clear benefits for their tasks and the overall operation. In evaluations of military functions that implement UNSCR 1325 such as GFAs and FETs, it has been demonstrated that these functions have not had the hoped-for impacts for either local communities or for the operations in question.<sup>70</sup>

Thus, for all the attention that is given to gender and gender-based rights by military practitioners, the functions and effects have been far less than ideal, and they raise the question as to whether these GFA, FET, and CIMIC activities are able to effect positive outcomes for women in local communities in general or only insofar as such outcomes assist the operation or mission itself. The focus on military imaginaries and civilian agency is thus important as a backdrop to the ambitions of militaries to implement gender awareness to understand the potential for what is possible and what is not probable or advisable. Given these roles and values and norms of militaries and their institutions, combined with the political agenda specific to an intervention, it is crucial to critically examine the ways in which gender is “used” during operations—whereby it is assumed that militaries need access to different parts of the population (through FETs), that female soldiers themselves are somehow “naturals” at doing gender work (a common assumption), and that gender awareness is used to obtain information and situational awareness over an area of operations, if not also contribute to traditional intelligence gathering. Are there any lines that need to be drawn about how far gender should be taken by military actors, and if gender awareness continues to be a goal, can military actors—particularly women within these militaries—be useful in this work?

Civil-military interaction in general, as well as when specifically oriented toward gender issues, is problematic because of who the military actors are and who civilian actors perceive the military to be. The actors make a difference, and militaries are at a significant disadvantage because of the power they wield and the politics they represent. Contact between military/political actors and local populations/civilians becomes more and more contentious the more volatile a conflict becomes. Conversations between military and civilians could pose a threat to the lives of everyday Afghans and local populations more generally. Talking to civilians can be construed as “using” civilians, and more specifically women, for intelligence, which will place them in danger if the military is not there to protect them afterward.

This argument has been used with regard to CIMIC officers interacting with NGOs, interacting with civilians in general and women specifically, and military patrols that travel near NGO projects (and worse, taking pictures of the projects or claiming some sort of ownership/connection to projects), and FETs talking to women. The critique also covers civilian aid agencies or donor-nation ministries that cooperate with the military and that, by virtue of this contact, can also put civilians in danger (such as the US Agency for International Development or the US Department of Agriculture cooperating with the US military).

The experiences of local populations in times of crisis are important to understand; they provide lessons to be learned about human security. When we look at the experiences in Afghanistan, it seems that at times there appears to be a devaluation of the perceptions of and roles for local populations in multiple civil-military discussions largely preoccupied with who has the authority and legitimacy to do what in a given area. Little is said (or acknowledged) about the ways in which local populations might perceive the different actors, many of whom are international, that have become part of the geopolitical and concrete spaces of their home territories and part of their national consciences.<sup>71</sup> Local civilians are themselves negotiating their way through the civil-military interface, making decisions to the best of their ability (which may often be limited) about whom to trust, when, and why. Some make the choice to work in close cooperation with intervening militaries and might be themselves perceived as threats or “the enemy” (at least to opposing forces). Others make choices to cooperate with insurgents or opposing forces, which also affects their own security and the security of their surroundings. Still others attempt to negotiate a path in between, which may still be a political path, but it may constitute one that draws less attention to them with the hope that their own security may be enhanced. The choices of civilians during times of conflict are of paramount importance. These choices are often gendered, whereby women have different and/or more limited room to maneuver than do men. This does not exclude women from all spaces, but as in Afghanistan, one cannot overestimate what is possible.<sup>72</sup> Some civilians might possibly be influenced by “hearts-and-minds” tactics employed by one or all of the warring parties (though less likely by international/foreign troops as trust levels are low or nonexistent), or they may be influenced by their own local political dynamics, or a combination of both. The choices taking place in local communities,

often being made in relation to individual/local/gendered perceptions of security, play a significant role in the success of an operation and the long-term success of governance in a region or nation.

A TEMPORARY CONCLUSION:  
GENDER AND MILITARY NOT PROBLEMATIZED

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Being gender aware and knowledgeable about gender roles means to have a more complex picture of security that reflects the whole of society, not just parts of it. It also means that one avoids stereotyping, such as “women have no power,” “men have all the power,” “all women are vulnerable,” or “no men are vulnerable.” Where women may have no, or limited, power in public spaces, they may have increased power otherwise, or at least some power in private spaces and within and among family settings to which men may often not have access, although we cannot forget that this private women’s power can still be extremely limited at times.<sup>73</sup> In spaces of reduced power, which include many countries beyond the well-known context of Afghanistan, women may have access to networks and markets that are essential in building/rebuilding communities, and they must also be recognized for the security roles they play in ensuring to the best of their ability that families are taken care of and removed from harm. It is also important to recognize the ways in which men’s power is diminished within their own societies, where joblessness can have an overwhelming impact on the vulnerabilities of men and reduce their freedom and sense of contribution to their families and communities, resulting in (potentially) increased violence both at home and in the community through insurgent recruitment or criminal activity. Research demonstrates that there are few differences between men and women regarding their attitudes toward war.<sup>74</sup> But what gender perspectives expose are the constructs in which we categorize men and women, where we place them as a part of our politics of social order, particularly within acute violent conflict. Though men’s and women’s opinions may not differ so much, their opportunities to participate differ vastly. Given the diversity of roles that women and men play and the attendant power that is associated with all of these roles, one does not obtain a clear picture of the civil situation in conflict without having the analytical clarity that gender awareness brings to a situation.

Gender awareness in the military has been largely operationalized in such a way that, at best, military actors look to find ways to provide support

to different civilian groups. In other words, the interaction is unidirectional, whereby civilian agency is reduced or ignored. Though support may be (after careful analysis) relevant in some circumstances, such measures do little to prioritize civilian agency and to provide openings to bring civilians, not least women, to the peace table. Understanding civilian agency, both as a part of gender awareness programs and as broader civil-military training, can assist in curtailing “virtuous imperialism” whereby militaries assume that they provide support to the civilian environment where civilians are assumed to be relatively passive. In other words, a focus on civilian agency can help to limit and provide boundaries around the role of militaries; it can simultaneously make space for intervening actors to more easily recognize those who wish to be at the peace table.

In large part due to the enormous costs and efforts commonly resulting in minimal military or political success, the type of intervention like that which occurred in Afghanistan is not likely to occur again, at least not in the near future. However, interventions as a whole do not seem to be on the downturn. Militaries will be deployed, and interventions will engage the civilian interface. Awareness about the effects and meaning of this engagement on both the operation itself and the local host population should be first and foremost in operational planning and the broader political agenda, but it is not. Until there is a cessation of military operations as a whole, it remains crucial to institutionalize the implementation of UNSCR 1325 within and throughout militaries. This includes integrating it with a broader, gendered civil-military understanding of the impact of operations on civilian environments, how civilian environments and actors affect operations, and what civilian environments—particularly those about and around which women have particular knowledge—“bring to the table” for peacemaking processes.

## NOTES

1. Kirby and Shepherd, “Reintroducing,” 252.

2. Bilgic, “Real People.”

3. Kirby and Shepherd, “Reintroducing.”

4. See “Afghanistan: Resolute Support” at <http://www.rs.nato.int>. It was followed up in 2015 by the Resolute Support mission, which as of 2020 was still active. That mission was not part of the original strategy developed since 2001.

5. Hoogensen Gjørsv, *Understanding Civil-Military*.

6. Hoogensen Gjørsv and Stuvøy, “Gendering Human Security”; Cook, “Counterinsurgency”; Azarbaijani-Moghaddam, “Seeking Out.”

7. Godal et al., "En god alliert."
8. Stout, "Nation Challenged"; Cloud, "To Veil the Threat"; Nguyen, "Biopower"; Wimpelmann, *Protecting*; Suhrke, *We Shall*; Hozyainova, *Sharia*.
9. Wimpelmann, *Protecting*.
10. Lackenbauer and Langlais, *Review*; Azarbaijani-Moghaddam, "Seeking Out"; Fleming, "Genderrådgivere."
11. UNDP, *Human Development Report 1994*; Hoogensen and Rottem, "Gender Identity"; Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy, *Human Security*; Wibben, "Human Security."
12. Walt, "Renaissance"; Williams, *Security Studies*.
13. UNDP, *Human Development Report 1994*.
14. Duffield, *Development*; Hoogensen Gjørsv, *Understanding Civil-Military*; Kirby and Shepherd, "Reintroducing."
15. Cooke et al., "Indigenous"; Stuvøy, "Human Security"; Hoogensen Gjørsv et al., *Environmental and Human Security*; Thomas, "Global Governance"; Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy, *Human Security*; Human Security Research Group, *Human Security Report 2013*.
16. Hoogensen Gjørsv, "Security"; Hoogensen Gjørsv, *Understanding Civil-Military*.
17. Smith, *Utility of Force*.
18. Carpenter, "Recognizing Gender-Based Violence."
19. Wibben, *Feminist Security Studies*.
20. Hoogensen and Rottem, "Gender Identity"; Hoogensen and Stuvøy, "Gender"; Sjoberg and Gentry, *Mothers*; Wibben, "Human Security"; Shepherd, "Making War Safe."
21. Smith, *Utility of Force*.
22. Please see US Government Printing Office, <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-107publ40/html/PLAW-107publ40.htm>.
23. Please see Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), "War in Afghanistan," <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/war-afghanistan>.
24. Bush, "Radio Address."
25. Godal et al., "En god alliert"; TLO, "Dutch Engagement."
26. Suhrke, *We Shall*; Hozyainova, *Sharia*.
27. Hoogensen Gjørsv, *Understanding Civil-Military*.
28. Cook, "Counterinsurgency."
29. List of presidents of Afghanistan: <http://www.mapsofworld.com/list-of-presidents-afghanistan/>.
30. UN, "Agreement."
31. Shepherd, "Making War Safe."
32. Shepherd.
33. Shepherd.
34. Shepherd; McRae and Hubert, *Human Security*.
35. Berry, "Symbolic Use."
36. Enloe, *Globalization*; Kronsell, *Gender*.
37. Lackenbauer and Langlais, *Review*.
38. Groothedde, *Gender Makes Sense*.
39. Groothedde.
40. Schofield, *Militarization*.

41. Durant, *Greening*.
42. Whitworth, *Men*.
43. Hoogensen Gjør, *Understanding Civil-Military*.
44. Kjeksrud, Beadle, and Lindqvist, *Protecting*.
45. Kjeksrud, Beadle, and Lindqvist.
46. Stern, "We"; Scharffscher, "Disempowerment"; Parashar and Shah, "(En)gendering."
47. Singh, "Rethinking."
48. DPKO, *United Nations Peacekeeping Operations*.
49. Dwan, "Evolution."
50. Bleiker, *Popular Dissent*.
51. Reinert Omvik, *Informater*.
52. Bumiller, "Letting Women"; McBride and Wibben, "Gendering of Counterinsurgency."
53. Hoogensen Gjør, Interviews.
54. Reinert Omvik, *Informater*.
55. UNSC, "Resolution 1325."
56. NATO, *Bi-Strategic Command Directive 40-1*; NATO, *Bi-Strategic Command Directive 040-001*.
57. NATO, AJP-9; Gjør, "Bruk av CIMIC."
58. Hoogensen Gjør, *Understanding Civil-Military*.
59. Hoogensen Gjør and Stuvøy, "Gendering Human Security"; Hoogensen Gjør, *Understanding Civil-Military*.
60. E.g., hybrid threat/warfare scenarios within NATO member states. See, e.g., Resilient Civilians, <http://site.uit.no/hybrid/>.
61. Gompelman, *Winning Hearts*; Hoogensen Gjør, *Understanding Civil-Military*.
62. Shepherd, "Making War Safe."
63. Whitworth, *Men*; Enloe, *Globalization*.
64. Kronsell, *Gender*.
65. NATO, AJP-9; NATO, AJP-3.4.9.
66. Ten Berge, *Good Governance*.
67. Friis, Reichborn-Kjennerud, and Håvoll, "Revising COIN."
68. Rygg, "Norsk luftmakt."
69. *Ny Tid*, "Innrømmer at Norge."
70. Lackenbauer and Langlais, *Review*; Azarbaijani-Moghaddam, "Seeking Out"; Fleming, "Genderrådgivere."
71. Azarbaijani-Moghaddam, et al., *Afghan Hearts*.
72. Azarbaijani-Moghaddam, "Seeking Out."
73. Azarbaijani-Moghaddam.
74. Aharoni, "Studying Gender."

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## Chapter 7

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### Fieldwork in the Land of Savages, Victims, and Saviors

*Lessons from the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo*

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HOLLY DUNN

“The town [Minova], in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), is the site of one of the darkest episodes of sexual violence in a country that the UN has called the ‘rape capital of the world,’ a place where one study estimated that 48 women are raped every hour,” *The Guardian* reported in 2015.<sup>1</sup> “Rape capital of the world” and “48 women are raped every hour” are two phrases that have circulated—and continue to be used—in the international activist community and the media since they were initially spoken and written, respectively.<sup>2</sup> International activists, the media, and researchers have directed the spotlight on the topic of wartime rape, culminating in the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence held in London 2014. Yet the phrases quoted above provide only a reductive glimpse of women’s lived experiences of conflict and transition, one that emphasizes first and foremost

rape. While remaining supportive of the goal to end sexual violence in the eastern DRC, one of my interlocutors, who had worked with local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in South Kivu Province for many years, confided that she was aware of NGOs that inflated the number of sexual violence cases, and violence more broadly, in order to justify their projects.<sup>3</sup> The international focus on wartime rape and sexual violence has indeed created perverse incentives on the ground, a phenomenon I address later in this chapter. While scholars are increasingly exploring the limitations surrounding the dominant gender-based violence in the conflict-research agenda, including the point raised by my interlocutor, much work remains to be done.<sup>4</sup>

Problematically, little recognition of women's varied experiences of conflict and transition has accompanied international actors' intense interest in ending wartime rape and prosecuting offenders. Additionally, as a result of—and reinforcing—the first point, there is a dearth of good data on gender-based violence against women. Researchers have recognized certain problems with data collection, such as barriers to reporting because of cultural taboos and fears of reprisals,<sup>5</sup> but concern for good data is too often reduced to debating the accuracy of prevalence studies—those focused on determining the rate of sexual violence or rape at a given moment of time. Few empirical studies thoroughly address the myriad of conceptual, methodological, and ethical difficulties related to researching a notoriously silenced and taboo topic.<sup>6</sup> Scholars have reductively misinterpreted people's experiences of gender-based violence to align with an externally defined hierarchy of harm, with wartime rape at the apex.<sup>7</sup> This has produced perverse incentives for claiming rape and the commodification and commercialization of rape narratives.<sup>8</sup>

In this chapter, I grapple with the questions of what constitutes “good data” on the topic of gender-based violence and conflict and how can it be produced. I contend that research on gender-based violence in conflict and transition would benefit from more reflexive and immersive fieldwork that draws upon situated understandings of concepts and integrates positionality and reflexivity into the design. To advance this research agenda, I draw upon Makau W. Mutua's savages-victims-saviors (SVS) metaphor as a reflexive heuristic for integrating Global North–Global South power dynamics into my analysis and for exploring methodological approaches to questioning rather than reinforcing assumptions about gender-based violence in Uvira, South Kivu.<sup>9</sup> This chapter is not limited to the analysis of sexual violence or wartime atrocities but adopts a broader understanding of gender-based

violence developed from the harms and disputes identified by local communities in Uvira.

This chapter further emphasizes the importance of a reflexive methodology and conceptual clarity for improving our ability to access women's everyday concerns that may otherwise be misunderstood or overlooked in research on women's human security when the focus is on collecting data on rape. Feminist scholarship has emphasized the need for holistic, rather than traditional, approaches to human security. Traditional approaches tend to focus on direct physical harms and on strengthening or reforming law enforcement and the military.<sup>10</sup> These priorities typically stem from international (often Western) actors as a part of what has elsewhere been labeled "virtuous imperialism."<sup>11</sup> By contrast, centralizing "gender consciousness"—an appreciation of gendered differences in conceptualizing and advancing security—has the potential to allow scholars to incorporate the actual concerns of men and women,<sup>12</sup> thus enabling them to focus on security from the bottom up.<sup>13</sup> To advance this potential, I illustrate the importance of reflexive fieldwork using the SVS metaphor and my own fieldwork. While the lessons I highlight below stem from my research in Uvira, they are equally relevant to other contexts where unidimensional analyses are hegemonic.

In the following section, I outline some of the political dynamics of conflict and gender-based violence in the DRC and the relevance of the SVS metaphor. Next, I explore methodological concerns, noting the prioritization of prevalence studies and the insufficient use of positionality and reflexivity in studies of gender-based violence and conflict. I then elaborate my argument for the importance of immersive fieldwork that draws upon situated understandings of concepts and integrates positionality and reflexivity into the design. I also examine problems pertaining to conceptual ambiguity and "slippage." Slippage can refer to multiple distinct terms being used interchangeably—such as gender-based violence and sexual violence. I close by acknowledging the difficulties of immersive fieldwork but highlighting how it can advance research and writing that does not reduce people to savages, victims, or saviors.

#### THE EASTERN DRC AND THE SVS METAPHOR

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The eastern DRC has been devastated by protracted violence, armed conflict, and political instability, with varying levels of intensity, since the Rwandan genocide of 1994. Prior to a recent reduction in United Nations

peacekeepers, it was home to the largest UN mission, the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) (previously, MONUC).<sup>14</sup> Violent conflict in the DRC is complex, with local, regional, and global dimensions.<sup>15</sup> The dominant narrative of conflict in the DRC centralizes conflict minerals as the cause, sexual violence as the consequence, and state building as the solution.<sup>16</sup> Rape in the eastern DRC has come to define war and instability, garnering the attention of the international media, NGOs, celebrities, and scholars alike.<sup>17</sup> Maria Baaz and Maria Stern provide crucial insights into the “singular focus” on sexual violence reflected in the number of reports, articles, news stories, and documentaries focused solely on this topic.<sup>18</sup> The publicity of this violence incites moral outrage and invokes a call to do something,<sup>19</sup> a moral mission to comprehend and end wartime rape in Congo, which is not a new trend in international relations with the DRC.<sup>20</sup>

While recognizing the importance of the aforementioned aspects of violence in the DRC, Séverine Autesserre and others problematize reductionist analyses, elucidating the variety of negative consequences of violent conflict, including other forms of violence against women, children, and men.<sup>21</sup> Yet studies examining the variety of gender-based harms experienced by women in the DRC remain inadequate. With the media, NGO, and academic attention coalescing around an interest in wartime rape, the eastern DRC proves a pertinent case for exploring the limitations of current research on gender-based violence in conflict and transition as well as showing how research can better capture the many forms of gendered harms against women in order to improve their human security.

The way the international media, organizations, activists, and even some scholars engage with wartime rape in the eastern DRC in important ways reflects Mutua’s SVS metaphor, which I will draw upon throughout this chapter to explore underlying power relations between the researcher—and the group of international actors of which he or she is often perceived to be a part—and the population and participants in locales of research and intervention.<sup>22</sup> This metaphor also helps illustrate how women’s human security concerns—and its victims and perpetrators—come to be defined by international actors according to dominant narratives,<sup>23</sup> and a human rights framework prioritizing physical integrity,<sup>24</sup> rather than women’s own diverse voices.

In the SVS metaphor, Western/Northern actors perform the savior role, intervening to protect the victim who has been violated by the savage

state or culture.<sup>25</sup> Kai Koddenbrock illustrates how Western policy actors have imagined a backward and barbaric DRC and instilled those images in policy papers that circulate more broadly.<sup>26</sup> Additionally, media reports have recycled familiar colonial tropes.<sup>27</sup> The perpetrators of wartime rape—commonly described in media reports as barbaric and brutal in their violent practices—are the ultimate savages.<sup>28</sup> The conflict and to a certain extent the country and its people come to be defined by those particularly egregious acts of sexual violence in a relatively essentialized, racialized, and reified manner.<sup>29</sup> Western media, organizations and scholars characterize “other(ed)” violences as “backward” and “barbaric” to help draw attention to the gravity of the situation and to make sense of it.<sup>30</sup>

By contrast, the sufferer of wartime rape in the eastern DRC is the quintessential victim. As outlined above, by reinforcing unidimensional rape-victim narratives, the media and other international actors are implicated in the construction of the model victim subject. Additionally, this focus can eroticize victimhood and create voyeuristic spaces and tendencies.<sup>31</sup> These problems have resulted in the “feminisation of victimisation,” where women are almost exclusively defined by their position as victim.<sup>32</sup> It has also played into the creation of the “hegemonic victim subject,” where Third World women are “portrayed as victims of their culture,” which can reinforce problematic stereotypes based on static interpretations of culture.<sup>33</sup> The SVS metaphor captures the relational aspects of these North-South gender dynamics. Certainly this has been the case in many accounts of sexual violence in the DRC, where the media and international organizations have circulated around the eastern provinces attempting to find the most depraved story, a phenomenon that has been aptly labeled “rape tourism.”<sup>34</sup> Through these reporting and documenting practices, victimhood itself has become gendered and sexualized. Further, this has meant that men as victims and women as perpetrators are often absent from analyses of both sexual violence and gender-based violence.<sup>35</sup>

The “barbaric” assaults on women’s bodies and dignity elicit a response from the savior, the “good angel who protects, vindicates, civilizes, restrains, and safeguards.”<sup>36</sup> The saviors, including the UN, Western governments, international NGOs, Western charities, and international financial institutions, offer the “freedom” to create a better society but one necessarily based on Western-centric values and ideology.<sup>37</sup> The idea of the savior reflects the virtuous imperialism of Western definitions of, and responses

to, human security threats, which tend to exacerbate divisions between “us” and “them”—the “other.”<sup>38</sup> Women’s human security is reduced to protection from and justice for wartime rape, an act associated with backward others, for which the saviors must provide a solution. Women’s voices are essentially silent on the international scene, unless they can provide a narrative of wartime rape to spark moral outrage.

More recently, scholars have begun to problematize international focus and framing of wartime rape in the DRC, often portrayed in a way that is disconnected from women’s experiences of rape and other forms of violence.<sup>39</sup> Reflecting on these problems, I sought to design a research project that actively avoided participation in essentializing and voyeuristic practices. My broader research project was an examination of everyday disputes and harms—such as those involving domestic violence, land boundaries, witchcraft, and inheritance—and the justice mechanisms available for redress. This paper focuses on concerns related to gender-based violence beyond the dominant rape narrative. The following section specifically explores the importance of one’s methodological approach for obtaining data that reflects the nuance of people’s lived experience and everyday threats to security and justice.

#### GETTING THE NUMBERS RIGHT

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Research, theory, and practice on gender-based violence in conflict and transition have made impressive strides in recent decades. Researchers have begun to more thoroughly document and analyze the rates, variation, and effects of sexual violence in war.<sup>40</sup> However, there have been a number of concerns raised about research methods, particularly related to prevalence studies. One study that systematically examined prevalence studies of gender-based violence in complex emergencies—humanitarian crises resulting in an extensive breakdown of authority and considerable international response—noted methodological problems related to study design, sampling technique, response rates, and recall period.<sup>41</sup>

Research in the DRC provides a useful example of these difficulties.<sup>42</sup> Certain statistics, often the most shocking, gain publicity and become widely circulated. As noted above, the study that found that “48 women are raped every hour” in the DRC made headlines in numerous international, well-respected news outlets, such as *The Guardian* and the BBC.<sup>43</sup> This trend



has also been noted elsewhere. In Liberia, for example, local and international NGOs, the international media, and UN agencies published reports with estimates that 75 percent, or 90 percent in some cases, of women suffered conflict-related rape.<sup>44</sup> At the same time, Dara Kay Cohen and Amelia Hoover Green found that patterns of sexual violence during the civil war differed greatly from the publicized accounts.<sup>45</sup>

Findings sometimes overlap and are at other times in tension. One study, based on data collected solely from Panzi Hospital in Bukavu, found that the majority of sexual violence perpetrated in South Kivu was by militarized actors.<sup>46</sup> However, this study does not take into consideration who does and does *not* have access to this hospital and how one gains access. As I discuss below, the commodification of rape narratives—meaning social services in exchange for “sharing” one’s experience of sexual violence—is increasingly recognized and critiqued, meaning individuals may believe that sharing a more “brutal” or “tragic” account is more likely to get them access to services. Additionally, it is possible that militarized actors do indeed perpetrate more physically damaging acts of rape, potentially making their victims more likely to seek medical care at Panzi. However, it remains unclear whether the statistics from the study reflect broader trends.

A different study provides nationally representative data on individual women’s history of rape, rape in the prior year, and history of intimate partner sexual violence.<sup>47</sup> While this study importantly finds high rates of intimate partner sexual violence, something previously less recognized in popular media accounts of sexual violence,<sup>48</sup> it does not provide insight into who was perpetrating it or why. In other words, its insights into rape as a weapon of war narrative are limited.

Numbers can help us understand some aspects of a particular phenomenon but are inadequate in their ability to provide conceptual clarity and context-specific concepts due to the methods employed to obtain those numbers. Furthermore, underreporting and misreporting (in order to obtain much-needed resources or care) create uncertainty around what insights the numbers can ever provide.<sup>49</sup> Finally, there is no indication that prevalence studies provide much understanding into how women interpret and make sense of their broader experiences of gender-based violence or how they challenge the permissive political and social structural factors.

RESEARCHER ROLE AND LIMITATIONS

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## Positionality and Reflexivity: Perceptions and Building Relationships

While acquiring some data in conflict situations may be relatively easy, building trust and gaining the respect of local actors in order to obtain *good* data is a far more difficult venture.<sup>50</sup> The way I conceptualize good data here is that the process of data collection, analysis, and writing maintains the humanity—rather than essentializing and thus dehumanizing—of communities being researched and the individuals participating in the study. Immersive fieldwork can be useful in achieving this goal but requires reflexivity throughout research design, beginning with the development of the research question, through to the publication phase.<sup>51</sup>

Many social scientists imagine the possibility of objectivity in research, placing themselves outside of the research process as a neutral, disembodied observer.<sup>52</sup> However, those of us who recognize human-subjects research as intersubjective need to reflect on how our interactions and social standing may be perceived by participants and how this in turn affects those interactions. Positionality—where the researcher stands *vis-à-vis* participants—is based on a variety of aspects of one's identity, such as age, gender, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation, combined with one's personal biography.<sup>53</sup> Donna Haraway argues for grounded knowledge that recognizes the power associated with one's positionality and within the interactions and relationships between researcher and participants as crucial to the production of knowledge.<sup>54</sup> On a general level, researchers can be aware of their authority to decide research questions, design, analysis, and publication. Specific to my research, the SVS metaphor can be useful in thinking through power dynamics in some contexts, such as the DRC, where the dominant narrative of the conflict has outlined clear savages, victims, and saviors.

Unfortunately, the dominant narrative's framing of the *savages* in the DRC has reinforced a belief among international actors, including some researchers, that immersion is too dangerous. The highly publicized rates of rape and sexual violence mean the DRC is seen as particularly unsafe for women. Naturally, *all* researchers should be cautious in unstable contexts. However, thinking about the SVS metaphor to challenge the dominant narrative means breaking down the accessible perception of the eastern DRC being divisible into groups of savages and victims and recalling that reports

of violence in one locale do not mean the country is contaminated. Immersion and reflexivity can be techniques for challenging, or refining, the dominant narrative but remain limited in practice. For example, when I went to a wedding in Bukavu—home to numerous international organizations—my presence was met with some surprise. One guest said, “Whites do not usually get close to us. It is like they’re scared of us.” While there are a number of researchers who do immersive fieldwork, the vast majority of expatriates are associated with international organizations that are less likely to integrate due to security protocol,<sup>55</sup> which shapes local perceptions of the savior category generally.

Indeed, participants’ perceptions can also adhere to the SVS metaphor. It is undeniable that research participants hold assumptions about researchers based on certain aspects of their identity, which can change over time,<sup>56</sup> and who they are perceived to represent. In Uvira, most foreign outsiders fit within the savior economic complex—peacebuilders, humanitarian and aid workers, and even the international media and researchers can fit this category—typically (if we are being optimistic) pushed from a moral imperative to help the victims. However, through immersion, one can begin to change perceptions of foreigners as saviors, although not without some risk. Kimberly Huisman, for example, writes about the difficulties and expectations created by becoming “too close” or “too friendly” with participants after a long-term process of building relationships.<sup>57</sup> In that case, participants’ perception of Huisman changed from her being a researcher to being a friend, and she found herself torn between the friend/confidant role and that of researcher.<sup>58</sup> Put differently, the researcher’s identity is co-constructed with participants and others in the field,<sup>59</sup> and this can create new research concerns. At the same time, if researchers can help change local perceptions about the savior category, they may be able to gain access to additional or alternative information that they would not have otherwise.

Researchers in the DRC may need to find innovative ways—beyond or in addition to immersion—of clarifying their position outside the savior-economic complex. In contexts where humanitarian intervention has increased, as in the eastern DRC, the presence of foreigners may elicit expectations of assistance, and it is the researcher’s responsibility to mitigate these false expectations.<sup>60</sup> Navigating these expectations is not straightforward, making it difficult to assess individuals’ motivations for participating in research—a desire to contribute to the research or the expectation of

compensation.<sup>61</sup> I also encountered this belief in the majority of my group interviews, regardless of how clearly I had explained that as researcher I could not provide compensation. I would instead offer to provide Fantas for everyone present, even if they chose not to participate.

#### Expecting the Expected: Don't You Want to Talk to Rape Victims?

Other difficulties arose from local perceptions of my role as Western, female researcher. As already noted, the eastern region of the DRC has experienced an influx in Western researchers, NGOs, and donors demanding accounts of violence, seeking in particular the most depraved descriptions of rape.<sup>62</sup> Thus, to engage with reflexivity, it would be insufficient for me to solely consider how my personal characteristics shaped access to participants and the data generated. I also had to consider those who came before me and those who *appear* like me—the broader savior group. In other words, my white, female, Western identity has a unique history of impact that shaped people's perceptions of me. Being aware of this was disconcerting but not surprising. New participants and acquaintances often perceived me as belonging to this group, at times making it necessary for me to actively resist participating in the commodification of rape narratives.

The desire to help rape survivors has created a situation of perverse incentives: rape stories for aid or what I refer to as the savior-economic complex. The commodification of rape narratives in the eastern DRC is increasingly evident, as women are “encouraged” to claim and narrate rape in order to receive medical and legal services,<sup>63</sup> as well as contribute to combatting this “epidemic” of wartime rape by participating in research.<sup>64</sup> Notably, incentivizing rape claims by facilitating access to humanitarian assistance was also observed in Sierra Leone,<sup>65</sup> another country known internationally for wartime sexual violence. In these contexts, it can be difficult to conduct research on wartime rape without reproducing and reinforcing the commodification of wartime rape. Even though a researcher may explain that there is no compensation or obligation to participate, the perverse outcome of interventions has been to create expectations around narration. Thus, the researcher cannot be sure of the participant's true desire or purpose for participation, which not only reinforces this perverse research economy but may also fundamentally skew the data.

Additionally, local NGO representatives, key informants, and other locals highlighted a general concern that the increased awareness around

rape may entice some women to make claims against men in order to obtain compensation. In one particular mediation case brought by the family of a young, pregnant woman, the accused vehemently denied any sexual interaction with the woman.<sup>66</sup> Observers and mediators at this process, both male and female, were torn. They were sympathetic to his situation as there is a sense that false claims are frequent, but at the same time they wanted to give the woman the benefit of the doubt. I did not make any attempt to discern who was telling the truth in this case. More poignant is the development of a *perception* by some that all humanitarian efforts are being given to women and, furthermore, that this can be unjustly manipulated in gendered ways.

Scholars have not only observed gendered manipulations of the commodification of rape narratives but have also begun to acknowledge local concerns that the high number of projects directed at sexual and gender-based violence against women may actually be perceived as negatively affecting men.<sup>67</sup> My research participants and others voiced an apprehension toward the possible negative effects for men (and their families) of prioritizing sexual and gender-based violence against women. For example, some state officials assumed my research was focused on gender-based violence against women and wanted me to be aware that, to paraphrase, “all this focus on women’s issues was discriminating to men.” He rightly pointed out that women could be abusive and that men could be raped. More research is required to further explore the ways that the commodification of rape narratives has threatened some men’s security in their everyday lives and relationships. Furthermore, this phenomenon may have implications for whether male survivors come forward about experiences of sexual violence, but it is not presently known if this would enhance or reduce their willingness to report incidents.

The *prevalence* of incidents resulting from perverse incentives is not as important as the need to contemplate how they may affect our data as well as people’s experiences and perceptions of humanitarian aid. Conducting fieldwork in an environment where I was at times perceived as belonging to the savior category led to some interactions being guided by interlocutors’ expectations about what I was doing and what I was interested in. For example, after a brief meeting with a local NGO director to discuss local justice practices, I was asked if I wanted to interview the rape survivors participating in this NGO’s agricultural activities. After making abundantly clear that I was not in a position to interview survivors (lacking institutional review board approval, interviewing skills on this subject, resources for survivors,

and a personal comfort level), I accepted an invitation to visit the group's cultivation activities. I arrived, shocked to find a row of women and one man queued up outside a one-room building, waiting to be interviewed about their experiences of rape. The intent behind this NGO director's bait-and-switch, I believe, was based on the assumption that I could facilitate access to funds, but I would need to collect rape narratives in order for this to happen. This fits with recent findings that local women's organizations use the discourse on wartime rape to become visible in international networks and gain access to international funding.<sup>68</sup> Thus, based on their own strategies and understandings of what international actors are looking for, informants may unintentionally shape our research agenda and findings. Without immersion and reflexivity, we risk remaining ignorant of these dynamics and producing some misguided data.

#### WAR, RAPE, AND GENDER: WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?

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Above I have highlighted how a focus on rape by both scholars and international actors has created perverse incentives and the necessity of immersion and reflexivity for the creation of good data. In this section, I draw out a particular conceptual problem—how rape, sexual violence, and gender-based violence have been used interchangeably.<sup>69</sup> This has reaffirmed the prioritization of wartime rape and blinded scholars to diverse experiences of everyday gender-based violence that persist through conflict and transition.

The concept “wartime rape” has garnered insufficient critical analysis. What makes rape that occurs during times of war wartime rape? The definition is problematic, first, because there is little consensus regarding what constitutes war. The standard definition of civil war, for example, is “an internal conflict with at least 1,000 combat-related deaths per year. In order to distinguish wars from massacres, both government forces and an identifiable rebel organization must suffer at least 5% of these fatalities.”<sup>70</sup> This has been repeatedly challenged; for example, the clear line dividing combatant and noncombatant is breaking down, and civilians, rather than identifiable combatants, are increasingly targeted.<sup>71</sup> However, the conceptual problem does not end with defining war; even if a definition were to be agreed upon, *wartime rape* remains an ambiguous concept. Is it the fact that rape happened during an armed conflict sufficient? Does it depend on whether the perpetrator was part of an armed group? Should it be defined as part of a

strategic campaign?<sup>72</sup> Do perpetrators have to be in uniform? Acting under command? Few social scientists have pursued an agenda of *defining* what precisely constitutes wartime rape. And while I do not undertake this task in this chapter, it bears noting in these opening remarks on conceptual clarity.

While definitional precision is important for scholars engaged in dialogue and debate on the subject, regardless of how one defines wartime rape, it is positioned at the top of a hierarchy of harms. In this section I want to explore the bottom of the hierarchy of harms—everyday forms of sexual violence, including rape, and gender-based violence, which tend to garner less attention during conflict and instability. However, my research—in addition to others—suggests that these other gendered harms are experienced regularly and are important aspects of people’s lives in conflict and transition.<sup>73</sup>

#### But I Was Told That Rape Is the Problem

In order to outline the types of problems that generally arise in the community, I organized group interviews—with chiefs and elders (all men); teachers, NGO workers, and other community leaders (both men and women); and mothers. Due to my hypervisibility in the contexts where I was conducting fieldwork, previous attempts at individual interviews often drew a crowd of observers or curious neighbors, making some interviews difficult. As I was not asking about participants’ personal experiences during fieldwork in 2015, the group setting facilitated a more lively and inclusive discussion. During these meetings when participants discussed the types of conflicts or harms that were locally pertinent, they frequently mentioned rape. In some instances, they revealed that rape perpetrated by bandits or unknown armed men typically happened in the fields. However, those were not the only, or even primary, instances of sexual violence; participants’ concerns were also directed at rape perpetrated by community members. This issue often elicited a hearty group discussion. Here I received conflicting messages. Often the group demonstrated a surprising (for me) amount of support for dealing with the situation amicably between families, through reconciliation, marriage, and financial support or some combination of these. Although I was aware that this was a common way of dealing with harms—one often subject to criticism from those who fit into the savior category—it was interesting that these solutions remained the norm and were generally accepted, given the increased international and local pressure to prosecute sexual violence generally and rape specifically. Additionally, my

data did not suggest any clear difference in ideas on this topic between men and women or between elders and youths—two potentially important axes of difference.

Through my research I was able to highlight local concerns about everyday (i.e., nonmilitarized) forms of rape and sexual violence within the community. Thus, early on in my study I believed that I was capturing a nuance largely, although not completely, missed in other research. However, I, too, at some points fell back on the simple narrative with which I was familiar. Despite entering the field aware of some of the problems with research on wartime rape, the cross-cultural and linguistic hurdles made some interpretations of interviewee responses seem more evident because of the expectations I still held to a certain degree. Only through rigorous engagement and reflexivity with my fieldnotes, iterative data analysis in the field, and reading *intertextually*—across different sources of data, including less formal data collected through immersive participant observation—was I able to interpret and disaggregate further the different meanings of rape in the accounts being provided.<sup>74</sup>

Through the above processes, it became evident that different harms were being discussed under the rubric of rape and that they needed to be distinguished to develop a clearer picture of how participants framed and understood the problem. First, while rape by armed forces (government or otherwise) was mentioned, it was never framed as a tactic or weapon of war. Instead, participants were more likely to refer to bandits or unidentifiable armed men attacking women (usually women, in participants' narratives) while they were working in the fields or traveling to and from the fields. These attacks evoked anger and some despair rather than a desire for reconciliation; people generally did not believe that any form of justice would be attainable.

By contrast, participants informed me that rape of *girls* (under the age of eighteen) within the community can and should be addressed via reconciliation. Notably, the perpetrator should pay the *dot* (dowry), marry the girl, or at least take care of her financially if she becomes pregnant as she would be viewed as less marriageable within the community. This was how participants framed and understood the problem. Their framing makes many human rights advocates uncomfortable and seems to pit culture against human rights, reinforcing women as victims of savage culture.<sup>75</sup> At the same time, in a context where people have become highly aware of movements to



prosecute sexual violence, the avoidance of pursuing prosecution, or another form of punishment, for rape perpetrated against girls was confusing to me.

Through critical reflection, intertextual reading, and repeatedly returning to this point of confusion, I had to acknowledge that I also had preconceived notions about what forms of sexual violence were *likely* to surface and how they would be understood; statutory rape, an issue I had never seen addressed in writing on gender-based violence in the DRC, was not on my radar. But as this immersive research developed, participants began to shed light on this point of confusion. When we were discussing *viol* (rape), participants were often referring to statutory rape—consensual sexual acts with a minor—which was still being translated as *viol*.<sup>76</sup> Nuance was lost in the translation from Kiswahili, and other local languages, to French and only became clear when I was able to tease out the apparent inconsistencies with further questions and read alongside data collected via participant observation in mediation processes and through my daily conversations with interlocutors. My continual debriefing with my research assistants, one male and one female with combined language skills in Kiswahili, French, English, Kibembe, and Kifulero, was essential. This type of conceptual clarification would not necessarily become evident in surveys or even through interviews, which may not provide the space for concept clarification via dynamic discussion with interlocutors to understand how they use and understand particular terms.

The above clarifications were interesting in light of legal developments. NGOs, law enforcement, and state officials have made efforts to propagate the 2006 rape law—an amendment to the penal code outlawing various forms of sexual violence, including rape, sexual slavery, and forced marriage, among other acts—part of which was to change the age of consent from fourteen to eighteen, thus redefining as illegal a part of everyday life. However, to confuse matters, the family code continues to permit marriage of women as young as fifteen.<sup>77</sup> Participants often recognized that sex with a girl under the age of eighteen is legally defined as rape. However, they viewed this act as categorically distinct in instances when a young woman consented.<sup>78</sup> For older teens, the perceived harm was that they would be unmarriedable—marriage being a major part of women's role and, at times, power as wives and mothers. An additional harm related to the teen become unsuitable for marriage is that this prevents her parents from receiving the *dot*, which could otherwise change the meaning of the act from sexual

relations out of wedlock to a legitimate marriage act.<sup>79</sup> For this harm, then, reconciliation and restitution were accepted and advocated. However, I found acceptance shifted to disapproval and disgust as the age of the young woman shifted to that of girl. Thus, by beginning the data analysis process of intertextual reading while in the field and doing so in a reflexive way, I was able to improve my understanding by exploring tensions instead of brushing over them.

#### Gender-Based Violence: Beyond the Dominant Narrative

As highlighted in the previous section, the study of gender-based violence in war and transition tends to centralize rape of women, while often using the terms “gender-based violence,” “violence against women,” and “sexual violence” interchangeably.<sup>80</sup> In times of war and transition, scholarship and activism have tended to reduce the concept of gender-based violence to the act of rape. This has served to create a hierarchy of harms, where rape is defined as the worst form of sexualized crime, and also to ignore the variety of gender-based harms that occur by giving the impression that rape is *the* form of gender-based violence.<sup>81</sup> International law reinforces the aforementioned hierarchy by defining which harms come to be understood as “extraordinary” and deserving of international attention, such as wartime rape, rendering other harms invisible.<sup>82</sup> Additionally, foreign states, if at all interested in gender-based violence in conflict, generally define it as a peace and security concern, centralizing the “rape as a weapon of war” framing.<sup>83</sup>

The internationally constituted hierarchy results in neglecting other gender-based harms. Not only are various forms of direct gender-based violence, such as forced marriage, ignored but so is “normal” or “everyday” sexual and gender-based violence against women, including intimate-partner sexual violence.<sup>84</sup> This trend is problematic because women suffer an increase in “ordinary” violence during conflict that is often reasserted during transition.<sup>85</sup> Additionally, the structural and socioeconomic dimension of gender-based violence is underemphasized in research and policy.<sup>86</sup> Again, the DRC is exemplary as the dominant narrative of the consequence of conflict, as defined by the international media, NGOs, and scholars, is sexual violence against women and girls.<sup>87</sup> Researchers who develop contextual nuance may be more attuned to underlying structural issues—for example, patrilineal inheritance practices mean divorced women may not

have access to land, family goods, or even their children. By considering the complex network of social and structural forces, we may be less prone to simplistic analyses and solutions.

During conflict and transition, everyday life, activities, and disputes, although altered, continue. Research on the gendered dimensions of the continuation and disruption of the “everyday” is in need of development. Stepping out of the SVS framing requires researchers to actively question the dominant victimhood narrative. My research suggests a number of gender-based harms against women, which have not garnered the same attention as wartime rape, have important impacts on everyday lives and livelihoods in Uvira. Local ongoing acceptance of domestic violence—including spousal rape, which was not explicitly prohibited in the 2006 rape law—is one pertinent example. Although by no means uniformly accepted, the belief that a man can hit or beat his wife in private, if doing so does not leave marks and in order to teach her a lesson, is not limited to the poor or uneducated. A legal professional at one point explained to me that he had never hit his wife but, then again, he never “had to.” He was suggesting that in certain circumstances physical abuse might be warranted.

Another important area of everyday gender-based harms stems from inheritance and land ownership practices. Generally, women in the eastern DRC have limited inheritance rights through their family or through marriage. Within the family, adult sons typically inherit when their father dies. Conventionally, daughters do not inherit anything from their father regardless of their age. Challenges to gendered inheritance practices have developed from within the eastern DRC. One “progressive” chief informed me that if inheritance disputes arise between adult children, he equates two daughters to one son in terms of what they inherit. He described his attempts to slowly improve women’s land inheritance practices by beginning to give portions of land to daughters or require that sons share their land with their sisters. He explained that making these changes at a slower pace was likely to be met with less resistance.

Similarly, wives rarely inherit their husband’s property if he dies; sometimes, if they have no male children under the age of eighteen, the wife may inherit, but in other instances—depending on local and family tradition—the inheritance goes to the husband’s brother if he has no adult sons. My research captured common confusion over the pros and cons of civil versus traditional—both monogamous and polygamous—marriage in regard to

inheritance rights. While international and local NGOs have raised awareness about the benefits of civil marriage, which challenges gendered inheritance practices, these benefits were less clear for the *deuxième bureau*.<sup>88</sup> These women understand themselves to be entitled to treatment similar to that of the first or legal wife (one who has had a civil marriage) but have no such protections under the law, although they do customarily.<sup>89</sup> For the *deuxième bureau*, civil marriage, rather than promoting equality, is actually discriminatory and leaves her and her children—both boys and girls—with little to no rights to support or inheritance.

Given these inheritance norms and practices, women tend to be dependent on their relationship with male relatives or their husbands. Although these issues are central to research in nonconflict contexts, they receive far less attention than wartime rape in South Kivu. This indicates a need to rethink our preconceived notions about what the problems are in conflict and transition and how they should be addressed based on a more profound relationship with the populations being affected. This is especially pertinent for scholar and practitioners exploring the potential of advancing structural equality during periods of transition.

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Although there may be numerous routes to producing *good* data, I propose here the importance of immersive fieldwork that integrates reflexivity from the very beginning of the project. Context is crucial to developing a situated understanding of concepts and their relevance to the population as well as for conducting research that promotes the development of strong data. Exploring positionality and reflexivity in context-specific ways will help researchers generate data that is sensitive to power relationships and interrogates the researcher's expectations and assumptions. Researchers must develop an understanding of the sociopolitical terrain in which they are conducting research and reflect upon not just their own position but also how like-positioned interveners might influence their data collection. To be sure, reflecting on these issues helped me to develop a contextually informed understanding of rape and to begin to understand everyday forms of gender-based violence that remain understudied. Although immersive fieldwork may not be the only way to obtain nuanced data and conceptual clarity, it has the potential to help researchers in the creation of knowledge that better reflects people's experiences and concerns. Importantly, those who cannot or choose not to engage in more

immersive fieldwork can draw on that research as well as consider more collaborative endeavors to advance the field.

Immersive fieldwork in conflict situations is expensive, time-consuming, and extremely difficult, but the payoffs can be immense. I recall one particularly terrifying bus ride from Uvira to Bukavu on the Ngomo Road, along the edge of the mountains above the Ruzizi River. As I crawled across one of my key informants to move away from the window overlooking the deadly drop, my ridiculous behavior was met with laughs, jokes, support, and even praise: “You see, this is normal life here! Now you can go back and tell them that you have seen the real Congo!” I have no idea how more or less “real” my experience in the DRC has been. However, I can say that I have continually sought to be a researcher, not a savior. As such, I try to respect the requests of those on that bus—as well as those I met in restaurants and bars, those waiting in line with me at the Western Union office, and the *motaris* who drove me over decrepit roads and through the bush when the roads were impassable—to share the experiences that have been shared with me. My goal has been to write in an analytic way that recognizes not savages and victims but humans.

## NOTES

1. *The Guardian*, June 13, 2015.
2. Statement by Margot Wallstrom, the UN’s special representative on sexual violence in conflict, to the UN Security Council on April 27, 2010, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=34502#.VIdTcVcfcb8>; Peterman, Palermo, and Bredenkamp, “Estimates and Determinants,” 1064.
3. Interview by author, April 11, 2015, Uvira, DRC.
4. E.g., Freedman, “Treating Sexual Violence.”
5. Leatherman, *Sexual Violence and Armed Conflict*.
6. Kirby, “How Is Rape a Weapon of War?”
7. Ni Aoláin, “Women, Security, and the Patriarchy.”
8. Freedman, “Treating Sexual Violence”; Baaz and Stern, *Complexity*.
9. Mutua, “Savages, Victims, and Saviors.” The research in this chapter is part of an ongoing study of justice in transition in South Kivu. The chapter is based on five months of immersive fieldwork in Uvira with regular travel to Kiliba and Makobola. I conducted thirty-five semiformal interviews with disputants, magistrates, judges, and other legal professionals. I also held ten group interviews with different sections of the population and informal group interviews with customary justice mediators. I observed legal proceedings at the Tribunal de Paix, Tribunal de Grande Instance, and the Tribunal Militaire as well as customary and informal dispute-resolution processes.

10. Ni Aoláin, Haynes, and Cahn, *On the Frontlines*; Hoogensen Gjør, "Virtuous Imperialism."
11. Hoogensen Gjør, "Virtuous Imperialism."
12. Ni Aoláin, Haynes, and Cahn, *On the Frontlines*.
13. Hoogensen Gjør, "Virtuous Imperialism."
14. Koddenbrock, "Recipes for Intervention."
15. See, e.g., Autesserre, *Trouble with Congo*; Gebrewold-Tochalo, "Conflict Systems"; Lemarchand, *Dynamics*; Prunier, *Africa's World War*; Prunier, *From Genocide*; Stearns, *Dancing*.
16. Autesserre, "Dangerous Tales."
17. While recognizing that sexual violence during conflict takes a variety of forms, such as forced pregnancy, prostitution, and abortion, I generally use the term "rape" in this chapter. Much of the literature employ "rape" and "sexual violence" interchangeably (e.g., Carlsen, "Rape"). While it might make sense to use the term "sexual violence" here as it encompasses a wider variety of harms, I use the term "wartime rape" to highlight its rhetorical power, employed by activists, practitioners, policymakers, and scholars to emphasize the importance of this issue. See Freedman, "Treating Sexual Violence," and Kirby, "Ending Sexual Violence."
18. Baaz and Stern, *Complexity*.
19. Zalewski and Runyan, "Taking Feminist Violence Seriously."
20. Ruffer, "Testimony of Sexual Violence."
21. Autesserre, *Trouble with Congo*; Autesserre, "Dangerous Tales"; Baaz and Stern, *Complexity*; Laudati, "Beyond Minerals."
22. Mutua, "Savages, Victims, and Saviors."
23. Autesserre, "Dangerous Tales."
24. Ni Aoláin, Haynes, and Cahn, *On the Frontlines*.
25. Mutua, "Savages, Victims, and Saviors."
26. Koddenbrock, "Recipes for Intervention."
27. Baaz and Stern, *Complexity*.
28. Baaz and Stern.
29. E.g., Koddenbrock, "Recipes for Intervention."
30. Freedman, "Treating Sexual Violence."
31. Henry, "Fixation."
32. West, "Rethinking."
33. Kapur, "Tragedy."
34. Baaz and Stern, *Sexual Violence*, 6. See also Baaz and Stern, *Complexity*, 7.
35. Interdisciplinary scholarship is increasingly problematizing the simplistic narrative of women as victims of rape perpetrated by men: Mazurana et al., "Girls"; Carpenter, "Recognizing Gender-Based Violence"; Cohen, "Explaining Rape"; Holmes, "Postcolonial Politics"; Jones, *Gender Inclusive*; Lewis, "Unrecognized Victims"; Sharlach, "Gender and Genocide"; Sjøberg, "Women and the Genocidal Rape"; Wood, "Ethical Challenges"; Ferrales and McElrath, "Beyond Rape."
36. Mutua, "Savages, Victims, and Saviors," 204.
37. Mutua.
38. Hoogensen Gjør, "Virtuous Imperialism."

39. Freedman, "Treating Sexual Violence."
40. E.g., Cohen, "Explaining Rape"; Wood, "Armed Groups and Sexual."
41. Stark and Ager, "Systematic Review."
42. Freedman, "Treating Sexual Violence."
43. Adetunji, "Forty-Eight Women Raped"; BBC, "DR Congo."
44. Cohen and Hoover Green, "Dueling Incentives."
45. Cohen and Hoover Green.
46. Bartels et al., "Militarized Sexual Violence."
47. Peterman, Palermo, and Bredenkamp, "Estimates and Determinants."
48. Peterman, Palermo, and Bredenkamp.
49. Baaz and Stern, *Complexity*, and Leatherman, *Sexual Violence and Armed Conflict*, use the term "overreporting." I avoid this because I am uncertain as to whether those who make false rape claims outweigh the number who never report rape; thus, it is unclear whether rape is actually overreported.
50. Thomson, Ansoms, and Murison, *Emotional and Ethical Challenges*.
51. See Berger, "Now I See It."
52. Haraway, "Situated Knowledges."
53. Berger, "Now I See It"; England, "Getting Personal."
54. Haraway, "Situated Knowledges."
55. Autesserre, *Peaceland*.
56. Nilan, "Dangerous Fieldwork"; Thomson, Ansoms, and Murison, *Emotional and Ethical Challenges*.
57. Huisman, "Does This Mean?"
58. Huisman.
59. Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, *Interpretive Research Design*.
60. Lake, "Building the Rule of Law."
61. Lake.
62. Lake.
63. Freedman, "Treating Sexual Violence"; Lake, "Building the Rule of Law."
64. E.g., Gettleman, "Rape Epidemic Rises."
65. Utas, "Victimcy."
66. In this case she was not specifically claiming rape, but it was a mediation process that I witnessed in person that reflects the broader arguments and claims that are being made.
67. Freedman, "Treating Sexual Violence."
68. Jean-Bouchard, "(In)visible Subject."
69. "Gender-based violence is 'violence that is targeted at women or men because of their sex and/or socially constructed gender roles.'" Women's Caucus, cited in Carpenter, "Recognizing Gender-Based Violence," 83.
70. Collier and Hoeffler, "Greed and Grievance," 565. See also Singer and Small, *Resort to Arms*; Singer and Small, "Correlates of War Project."
71. E.g., Kaldor, *New and Old Wars*; Kaldor, "In Defence."
72. See Ruffer, "Testimony of Sexual Violence," for an examination of the problems with this definition.

73. E.g., Ni Aoláin, "Exploring." See also Manjoo and McRaith, "Gender-Based Violence and Justice."
74. See Srivastava and Hopwood, "Practical Iterative Framework"; Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, *Interpretive Research Design*.
75. See Kapur, "Tragedy"; Mutua, "Savages, Victims, and Saviors."
76. The use of "consensual" here may be viewed as problematic given broad legal consensus in the West that individuals under the age of eighteen cannot legally consent to sexual relations. I am using it here in the common form, simply meaning that she agreed to participate.
77. D'Errico et al., "You Say Rape"; Ruffer, "Testimony of Sexual Violence."
78. I have not found there to be a uniform age at which sex with a minor is considered acceptable, but mid to older teens is often the case.
79. See also Jean-Bouchard, "(In)visible Subject."
80. Ferrales and McElrath, "Beyond Rape"; Henry, "Fixation."
81. Buss, "Rethinking"; Henry, "Fixation"; Kirby, "Ending Sexual Violence."
82. Buss, "Rethinking"; Henry, "Fixation."
83. Kirby, "Ending Sexual Violence."
84. Kirby; Ni Aoláin, "Exploring."
85. Ni Aoláin, "Exploring." See also Manjoo and McRaith, "Gender-Based Violence and Justice."
86. Ni Aoláin, "Exploring"; Rimmer, "Sexing the Subject."
87. Autesserre, "Dangerous Tales."
88. Literally this means "second office" but refers to the status of women who have relationships with married men. These relationships vary from solely sexual in nature to traditional marriages.
89. This point has also been recognized by Mbambi and Faray-Kele, "Gender Inequality."

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Part 2

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Environmental and Economic Security

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## Chapter 8

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### The Tehri Dam Project in India

#### *Impact on Women's Household Food and Economic Security*

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VANDANA ASTHANA

The complex interplay of water, energy, and food security has a vital impact on peoples' lives and livelihoods as these are critical to poverty reduction, reduced vulnerability, and societal growth. Population growth, modernization projects, and unsustainable agricultural practices in a growing economy like India's have increased competition over these resources, exposing vulnerable groups to growing physical, social, and economic risks. Exacerbated by the pressures of climate change, exposure to these risks has wide-ranging impacts on critical livelihood sectors and communities with less capacity to adapt. Women in particular experience these impacts in a unique way as a result of sociohistorical processes of a gender-stratified society. Millions and millions are presently fighting battles of survival itself in the hills, deserts, marginal degraded lands, flooded plains, and slums and squatter settlements of cities across the world. Mostly referred to as the "bottom billions" in United Nations (UN) and other documents, these women



and girls are the most deprived of all poor and marginalized people. These women are not a homogenous group. The lives of South Asian women are, for example, very different from those of African or Latin American women due to gaps in income and differences in culture. Nevertheless, certain commonalities shape women's conditions in rural, urban, and hill areas of the Third World and in particular South Asia.

These women make up the approximately 70 percent of the world's poor, do most of the agricultural work, bear unequal responsibility for household food security, carry a disproportionate burden for harvesting water and fuel for everyday survival, and rely on threatened natural resources for their livelihoods.<sup>1</sup> Without resources to cope with existing challenges, the conditions in which they live out their daily lives are very likely to continue worsening. Because these women depend so profoundly on the natural environment for subsistence and survival and because access and management of resources are socially constructed based on perceived and ritualized differences in labor, power and property, they are more vulnerable to depletion of the environment than their male counterparts.<sup>2</sup> Their vulnerability also varies across space and community due to differences in exposure, sensitivity, and ability to respond to the challenges of household economic and food security. Women experience heightened levels of insecurity unique to their gender owing to their subjugated social position, limited education, and restricted economic and political freedom and social capital. These threats are both structural (relating to their gender-stratified social structure) and situational (related to environmental change, conflict, or forced migration). As these pressures combine, women experience challenges to their well-being.<sup>3</sup> Wherever they live, they are bound together by their tremendous work burden, unequal access to these natural resources, and exclusion from important decision- and policymaking forums.

Women in mountain societies constitute a very significant proportion of the work force in food production and play a critical role in providing household and economic security.<sup>4</sup> They are key players in managing and sustaining their natural resources and environments. A study undertaken by the International Center for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) on the "feminization" of agriculture and natural resource management demonstrates that in some mountain regions of India women undertake 4.6 to 5.7 times the agricultural work men carry out.<sup>5</sup> Their significant role in household food and economic security is due to their more intimate relation

to and dependence on natural resources such as water, fodder, fuel wood, and minor forest produce. The life of mountain women is so linked with the environment and the ecosystem that surrounds them that any degradation or destruction of the environment has an adverse effect on their survival and basic needs, subjecting them to further marginalization and dislocation from resources for survival.

This chapter is a case study analysis of the mountain women in the hill state of Uttarakhand whose daily lives and livelihoods depended on the close relationship with the environment that surrounded them and who lost their economic and food security as a consequence of a large multipurpose hydroelectric project, the Tehri Dam. Two major factors influenced the selection of this area. First, the Garhwal region is famous all over the world for the movement spearheaded by women against the destruction of the Himalayan forests and is considered an icon of ecofeminist movements.<sup>6</sup> This spirit remains alive in the region today and is also symbolic of the aspirations of the many Third World women whose voices remain unheard in the corridors of power. Second, this region is characterized by female-headed households. Emigration of men due to a lack of economic development and employment opportunities puts the burden of running and providing for the household on women. With a patriarchal society like India's, this region in particular provided the opportunity to conduct research on women's attachment to place and its surrounding ecosystem. The objectives of the study were (a) to examine the contribution of women to their household security in the Garhwal Himalayas prior to the building of the dam, (b) to detail the vulnerabilities of their water-food-energy insecurity and the consequences of displacement and forced migration, and (c) to explore the effectiveness of strategies women adopt as active change agents.<sup>7</sup> A qualitative research approach was used to interview twenty-five women who were selected based on the purposive sampling method and diverse in class and socioeconomic standing.<sup>8</sup> Interviews were conducted in the old town of Tehri and villages totally and partially affected by the dam.<sup>9</sup> A narrative approach was adopted, drawing from Annick T. R. Wibben's work *Feminist Security Studies: A Narrative Approach*, which engages feminism and security studies with different themes and topics to provide a distinct feminist approach to security studies.<sup>10</sup> Although the focus of her book is more international in scope, my main goal was to work "through and beyond security studies to explore possible spaces where an opening of security, necessary to make way

for feminist insights, can take place.”<sup>11</sup> This approach helped me understand how the memorable experiences of these women establish terms of reference for their pre- and postmigration experiences in the cultural politics of dam building. It also helped me to explore their deeply neglected sentiments of place attachment, identity, and dependence within the utilitarian model of harnessing a river and its ecosystem. The specific aim of the research was to assess the impact of security or insecurity on women in the region based on their narratives of past and present lived experiences with managing household needs.

#### WOMEN, ENVIRONMENT, AND HUMAN SECURITY

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Feminist environmental discourse draws attention to the close relationship between humans and the ecosystem. The core concern of ecofeminism is to remind society that we form an integral part of the physical environment and that the health and security of the environment needs consideration. The security of one is contingent upon the security of the other. The feminist discourse adds to the human security perspective by including narratives about gender equity, women emancipation, and environmental sustainability. Thus, ecofeminism becomes a widely discussed lens to view gender issues and the environment.<sup>12</sup> While there are different approaches to understanding women’s relationship to nature, ecofeminists such as Vandana Shiva and Carolyn Merchant contend that both women and nature have been degraded, devalued, and dominated within the patriarchal model.<sup>13</sup> This discourse links the important interconnections between domination and oppression of women and nature,<sup>14</sup> both of which have been viewed as exploitable, and significantly undervalued, resources.<sup>15</sup> It also has at its core the notion that women’s emotional connection with the earth has been forged through her biological functions grounded in her intuitive ethics of caring and preserving. Therefore, like nature, they are also producers, nurturers, and sustainers. Challenging the “essentialism” of this unitary category of “woman,” other feminist perspectives focus on location, class, gender, and structural inequality. Critics such as Bina Agarwal argue that this unique relationship of women and nature is based more on the constructed sociopolitical inequalities, class, division of labor, traditional norms, and marginalization in larger structural systems and not essentially biology or patriarchal ideology.<sup>16</sup> She argues that women in developing countries are

the local experts who rely on nature to survive; therefore, destruction of the environment results in elimination of women's method for survival.<sup>17</sup> She points to the "material sources of dominance" and the importance of "women's lived material relationship with nature."<sup>18</sup> Thus, these women experience environmental change in a specifically gendered way. In spite of their philosophical differences, these scholars are united in their concern for gender equality and socially constructed ideas of what men and women ought to be. They unanimously concede that women and nature are connected by some mechanism unique to their gender, the difference lying in their ascribed roles, behavioral patterns, and attributes:

Women have brought a different perspective to the environmental debate. Because of their experience base, poor women's lives are not compartmentalized and their work is not seasonal. They therefore relate to the nexus from a much broader and more holistic perspective. They understand more clearly than policy makers that economics and environment are compatible. Their experience makes this clear to them because the soil, water and vegetation, which the poor require for their basic livelihoods, need specific care and good management. Women from the South do not separate people from the natural resource base.<sup>19</sup>

In most subsistence-based societies of the Global South where everyday existence is characterized by significant interaction with natural resources, these women play a crucial role as producers, providers, and managers of food, energy, and water for their households.<sup>20</sup> Their work consists of managing a self-sufficient microeconomy of the household under acute resource constraints requiring considerable skill, experience, and knowledge; however, as the World Food Programme reports, women are generally the first to sacrifice food intake to ensure nutritional security of their children and male heads of households.<sup>21</sup> Their economic security is further complicated due to insufficient access to critical resources that are constrained by geographic location, absence of resources, or macrodevelopment policies such as megadams.

Development projects such as the Tehri Dam multipurpose project in Garhwal, which displaced a large number of people from the mountain communities, put women at increased risk due to deeply embedded structural inequalities and situational challenges. Shiva describes this as "mal-development"—a top-down project essentially forced on the people that

further impoverishes the existing poor, leading to degradation of the environment, reduction in biodiversity, loss of land, and forced migration.<sup>22</sup> This form of development, according to Shiva, accounts for the “death of the feminine principle,” which is tied to conservation, preservation, nurturance, diversity, and a holistic approach.<sup>23</sup> The violation of this principle leads to inequality, injustice, exploitation, and violence. Thus, ecofeminism not only makes a significant contribution to the existing critiques of development but by bringing gender into the discourse also makes it consistent with the existing narrative of “human security,” silence about women’s rights, gender-specific effects of environmental insecurity on women, and its effects on their health and reproductive systems, vulnerability, and power relations. The focus, however, is not to promote the idea of being antidevelopment but to condemn development that exists in its most corrupt, bureaucratic, elitist, inequitable, and oppressive form, as is visible in most Third World countries. The following section showcases the region in which the dam development took place as well as the daily lives of the Garhwali women who resided there.

#### GARHWALI WOMEN IN UTTARAKHAND

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Uttarakhand is a poor but scenic hill state in the Central Himalayan Region of India. It was created in 2000 after a statehood agitation highlighted the mountain character of the region as geographically and culturally different from the plains of Uttar Pradesh. The people of Uttarakhand demanded a hill state in which their control over rivers, land, forests, and development would actually mean livelihood security for the population and in which women, who constitute half of the population and act as the pillars of the hill economy, would face fewer hardships. Uttarakhand is primarily an agricultural state, and 75 to 85 percent of the population depends for its livelihood on agriculture, the majority of which is rain fed.<sup>24</sup> People in the hills are primarily engaged in subsistence agriculture, animal husbandry, and seasonal processing of fruit. Sixty-five percent of the area is covered with forests, and most of the population is dependent on these forests for its livelihood. The mountain area is underdeveloped, constrained in industrial growth and infrastructure, with few industries willing to invest in such an industrially backward region. People have little recourse in terms of employment except farming, government jobs, or daily wage labor in the private sector. Due to

the low standard of living, high unemployment rate, lack of investment and capital formation, poverty, drudgery, and high cost of living, the hill region is regarded as one of the most underdeveloped regions of the country.<sup>25</sup> As a consequence, most men migrate to the plains in search of jobs in private companies, including work as truck drivers, or enlist in the army,<sup>26</sup> resulting in "truncated families, with women, children and the old left behind."<sup>27</sup> In such a money-order economy, the task of planning the household and the community is left to the women.<sup>28</sup> Women take care of household needs, trudge long distances to get water, work on the land, get fuel and herbs from the forests, and earn additional income for the household by running side businesses.

Due to the emigration of males from the region, women are responsible for both inside and outside household work. Despite their illiteracy, poverty, and drudgery, they have exhibited great potential as leaders. The Chipko Movement that began in the 1970s to preserve the forests of the sub-Himalayan region saw the active involvement of women who were able to successfully prevent felling of trees. In 1975 and 1978, in the villages of Reni, Gopeshwar, and elsewhere, women took the lead in protecting the forests. The women demanded decision-making powers in the management of the forest as they had a day-to-day relationship with the forest, collecting fuel, fodder, and water. Similarly, the active engagement of women from 1966 to 1971 in the antiliquor movement compelled the government to ban the sale of alcohol in the Uttarakhand area.<sup>29</sup> The movement for the creation of the state of Uttarakhand and the anti-Tehri Dam movement also had the support and participation of almost all the hill women of region. While this participation has no direct bearing on women's contribution to household security, it does reveal their attachment to place and the freedom and visibility outside the household domain.

Women constitute the backbone of agriculture and the entire economy of the mountain state of Uttarakhand.<sup>30</sup> However, one woman commented:

The women of Uttaranchal are the backbone of this economy. Most men in the region migrate to the plains in search of jobs to earn a livelihood. We manage our homes, children, the old, cattle, fuel, water—everything. We take part in protests and movements but we still have to do the household work. It's double duty for women, but no one recognizes that.<sup>31</sup>

These hill women form the invisible workforces and cornerstone of the family's household security.

## WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO HOUSEHOLD FOOD AND ECONOMIC SECURITY

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Women in this region are accustomed to a significant amount of resource control and a voice in the decisions of the house and the community. With their practical experience and traditional skills, women manage and sustain the natural resources that are the basis of survival for their families and communities. Women's traditional roles in the region are characterized as water collectors, crop growers, food preparers, and fuel gatherers. Their daily lives revolve around performing three major tasks: fulfilling basic needs, household maintenance, and income generation.

### Basic Needs and Subsistence Tasks

Women handle 78 percent of the work burden in the major tasks of growing food and collecting water, fodder, and fuel wood. Although agriculture is a household enterprise, women in Tehri bear most of the workload. Women reported that outside the household they participated in preparing fields for farming, growing crops, weeding, leveling, harvesting, threshing, and storing food grains for household food security. Growing food crops is essentially a woman's task, and women are the major producers of food. They produce vegetables in the kitchen garden for meeting basic needs and walk several hours to collect water from streams, which they carry back in pots held on their heads. In the afternoons, they generally collect fuel wood and fodder, which takes them about four to five hours a day. Even today in the rugged Himalayan terrain, daughters-in-law carry head loads of thirty-five to forty kilograms for five kilometers one way for two to three hours, and in many cases the hours vary based on distance, altitude, and time spent in the forests.<sup>32</sup> The natural environment provides livelihood support to the women in this region. It also provides them with herbs and plants with medicinal value. Biomass plays a crucial role in meeting daily survival needs of the vast majority of rural households led by women in the region. Seventy-five percent of the rural energy comes from biomass. Food, fuel wood, fodder, fertilizer, organic manure, forest building materials (timber and thatch), and medicines (herbs) form the different kinds of biomass used by women. An important aspect of this biomass-based subsistence economy is that it is mostly nonmonetized. These resources, and even food to a certain extent, are all gathered freely from the immediate environment.

### Household Tasks

Many women consider themselves primarily responsible for preparing meals three times a day to feed the family and the elders, which takes five to five and a half hours indoors on a daily basis. Home management includes preserving, processing, and preparing food, yet women in these households are often the last ones to eat, taking less than other family members. Beyond this daily routine, they consider washing clothes, cleaning utensils, mopping floors, cleaning the home, and caring for the children and elderly as part of their daily household tasks. Household work also includes caring for and feeding livestock, bathing animals, cleaning the cow sheds, and generating milk from the cows. These tasks generally take two and a half hours a day.<sup>33</sup> Women, therefore, are at the forefront of household chores and share the bulk of domestic responsibility.

### Income-Generating Tasks

Mountain women have traditionally engaged in small-scale entrepreneurial activities based on the use of natural resources.<sup>34</sup> This nondomestic forest economy is crucial to meeting household subsistence needs. Income-generating activities include producing livestock products such as milk, curd, cheese, and butter for sale, producing and processing biomass-agriculture, directly selling fuel wood and fodder, making village crafts and other nontimber forest products for local markets. Nontimber production includes weaving, stitching, preserving fruit and pickles, collecting and preparing honey, beeswax, and so forth, thus contributing to the budget of the family.

By performing these tasks, women contribute directly and indirectly to household food and economic security in many ways: processing animal products, ensuring energy security, producing food, and engaging in unpaid household activities. As head of household, they are the breadwinners of the family. Most men who have not migrated to the plains prefer to remain unemployed or work as part-time wage laborers and spend their income gambling, drinking, and smoking. On the contrary, women's income is used for the collective welfare of the family.<sup>35</sup>

In managing household food and economic security, women are generally overburdened. While caste, religion, and class do not really affect the work burden of these women, differences prevail in social status. Daughters-in-law have to work longer hours than daughters or



mothers-in-law. Daughters have to work hard too, as they are considered future daughters-in-law. While mothers-in-law work around six hours a day, daughters work eight hours a day, and daughters-in-law work around sixteen hours.<sup>36</sup> They all complain of back and joint pains and scars on backs and shoulders from the loads they carry. Literature reveals that these rural women face higher risks of morbidity and mortality due to strenuous physical activity.<sup>37</sup> There is also evidence to suggest that when households experience food shortages, women tend to go without so that their children may eat, with all the health implications this brings for them.<sup>38</sup> Often being the last to eat in the family, they lack proper nutrition. As a result, health data reveal that many women are anemic. Women are also more prone to accidental death due to the long distances and steep slopes that they tread while collecting biomass and water for household needs, and they lack nutritional requirements for the heavy loads and strenuous work they undertake. Yet these women in Garhwal work for long hours and contribute immensely to household nutritional and economic security.<sup>39</sup> The development of the multipurpose dam project and economic and social breakdown caused by displacement has brought about a worsening of their already low status and high vulnerability.

#### THE CONVENTIONAL MODEL OF DEVELOPMENT: THE TEHRI DAM PROJECT

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Due to their daily interactions with nature, the Garhwali women visualized a state where they could effectively guide the sustainable development of the region in a way that benefits livelihoods, promotes the local economy, and provides household security.<sup>40</sup> Awareness created by the Chipko Movement encouraged village women to demand that their state pursue a green development path where “denuded forests would be reforested, where fuel wood and fodder would be plentiful in their village forests, where community ownership of these forests would provide their men with forest products-based employment near their villages instead of forcing them to migrate to the plains, where afforestation and watershed development would revive their dry springs and rain-fed rivers and where the scourge of drunken violent men would be overcome.”<sup>41</sup>

However, in the nation’s quest for modernity, hydropower development became an important area of economic growth. For generation of electricity, facilitation of irrigation, and creation of a conservation reservoir, a rock-and-earth-filled dam 260.5 meters tall was envisaged on the confluence of

Bhagirathi and Bhilangna rivers. The dam was conceived in 1949, and the Planning Commission granted consent to build the dam in 1972. The building of the dam was followed by huge protests in the form of rallies, demonstrations, and nonviolent actions such as fasts, in which women participated in huge numbers. As protests gathered momentum in defense of livelihoods and traditional ecologies, many women were beaten and faced arrest. The government, on the other hand, justified this multipurpose project with the potential to provide twenty-four hundred megawatts of power, to irrigate six thousand square kilometers, and supply 270 million gallons of drinking water to Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, and Uttarakhand.<sup>42</sup> In addition to these benefits, the Tehri Hydro Development Corporation (THDC) brochure mentioned integrated development of the Garwhal region. This included construction of the New Tehri town with provision of all civic facilities; improved communication, education, health, and tourism; development of horticulture and fisheries; and afforestation of the region. The dam construction began in 1978 amid police protection. It affected the old Tehri town and 125 villages, of which 37 were fully submerged and 87 partially submerged.<sup>43</sup> Estimates are that around eighty-five thousand people were forced to move in both rural and urban locations.<sup>44</sup> But the THDC-painted messages on rocks alongside the roads to the dam continued to read, "Nation before Self."

The modern state and the insensitivity of the regime constructing large developmental projects created conditions where women have been the greatest sufferers. These projects characterized by formal, centrally managed systems, displaced informal, decentralized, and participatory structures of common property resources (CPRs) that structure household economic and food security of women.<sup>45</sup> Such conditions push huge numbers of women into marginal environments where a critically low level of water supplies, shortage of fuels, and overutilization of arable lands have deprived them of their livelihoods, cultural identity, and sense of well-being. The following section looks at vulnerabilities of women created by the dam and its impact on the availability of and access to water, fuel, and food for household needs and supplemental income.

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#### LIVED EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN IN POSTDISPLACEMENT PROCESSES

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Garhwali women in the partially and fully submerged villages and old town of Tehri headed households that were mostly subsistence-farming

communities that produced just enough for them to survive in the region, as the topography did not allow them to market or reap surplus produce. Thus, women had free access to these resources, which they claimed by traditional rights,<sup>46</sup> while men migrated to the cities to ensure a more adequate livelihood. As women were forced to move to resettlement sites allotted by the government, they were separated from the natural environment and community structures. Forced migration affected them in several different ways, discussed below.

#### Loss of Access to Common Property Resources and Supplemental Income

Within resettlement sites, women complained about the lack of access to CPRs that not only constituted a major portion of their survival strategies but also led to a loss of supplemental income for the family. Maina Devi from Malideval complained:

I used to make some extra money by selling wood and milk in the nearby hotels on the highway. The fodder for my cattle was free. Today I have not only lost my land but also the extra household income for my kids. In the hills, even though we had on average very small land holdings we could still produce enough to meet the needs of our family.<sup>47</sup>

Research in this study demonstrated that women's income at this level mainly fulfills the household and nutritional needs of the family.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, the loss of CPRs also constituted a loss in household security. Yet these aspects of women's needs often receive no consideration in state policies as the gains that women make from CPRs are not valued in a market economy.

There was also a marked difference in the living conditions of communities in their earlier places of residence and the present sites of relocation. In the predisplacement site of old Tehri, the Bhagirathi was not only a free-flowing river but also a sustainer in terms of providing residents fish, drinking water, and water for irrigation. The town of Tehri never experienced scarcity of water,<sup>49</sup> but a resettled woman from New Tehri observed:

If you came to my house in old Tehri, we could cook you food, go down by the river and get cold water to drink. You did not need a fridge. However, in this town, there is no water for three days. Water is stored in a tank before it is pumped up. The filtration process is inadequate.

Then the quality of water is bad. It smells in the tank. Although tankers and hand pumps are there but you have to go and get it. The tanker arrives while I stand here, but how does one living at a height come down and get it. I see the water but I cannot take it. Water in the taps comes only once a week.<sup>50</sup>

This comment depicts the condition of many women who lived in the old town of Tehri by the riverside where water was easily accessible. The new town of Tehri has been constructed at a height of two thousand meters, and water has to be pumped from the river at two different points to reach the town. Women experience great difficulty in accessing water, as the water pumped to the tanks reaches the taps at times, only once a week, and at other times for a couple of hours in the morning. Apart from water scarcity, storage of water for days leads to many waterborne diseases in the new town.

Water is a key issue even for the women resettled in the plains, where in spite of land compensation there is no water to irrigate the crops. On the question of how they met their household needs, Rani Nautiyal responded:

We have been given land but if we have no water, how we can grow crops, irrigate the land and produce food? The government assured us that all amenities would be provided to us before we moved. To this day, we await fulfillment of those promises.<sup>51</sup>

The loss of free access to water, fuel wood, roof slate, and building stones left families frustrated. Many families also sold their lands. A woman from Athoorwala in Hardwar District complained:

I was given land as compensation but agriculture is very difficult here because no irrigation is possible. We have to pay [for] water to irrigate our fields and we do not have any money. The local environment is completely different from my village. Pashulok and Athurwala are in the plains of Hardwar District. The flora and fauna, the landscape and the fertility of the soil are not like our mountain region. There we had free water from the river to irrigate our fields and here we have to pay Rs.50 for an hour for getting tube well water. There I went with my friends to collect water in my *bantha* [traditional pot to carry water] from streams, and herbs and fuel wood from the forests but now we have to buy everything from the market.<sup>52</sup>

Despite the hard work and overload to meet daily needs in the hills, women felt less vulnerable, freer, and more emotionally stable. Leaving a labor-intensive and demonetized economy, they were suddenly exposed to the challenges of cash economy in these resettlement colonies, which resulted in a loss of food and household economic security.

#### Loss of Crop Diversity and Food Security

Garhwali women experienced tremendous loss in their genetic pool of crop diversity and indigenous plant varieties as a result of displacement. These women lived in a region with tremendous crop diversity and due to the emigration of men were the primary cultivators of the region. To them, mountain farming comprised forests, croplands, livestock, and households as the four components in organic linkages with each other. The cropping pattern of this region is characterized by mixed/multiple cropping. Besides rice and wheat, they grow crops such as *mandua*, *jhangora*, *urd*, *jwar*, *bajra*, *taur* beans, and *ramdana*. Along with these varieties of crops, fruit cultivation is also carried out in the villages. The main fruits are tangerines, oranges, nuts, peaches, plums, apricots, apples, and many varieties of citrus. Most women have a kitchen garden where they grew some vegetables and fruits for home consumption. Nearly 90 percent of the total cropped area in the villages is devoted to subsistence food crops, mainly grown for domestic consumption and the local market. Large-scale commercial cash crops occupied a very negligible portion of the cropped area. However, resettlement in the plains has pushed women from a subsistence economy into a consumer and market-oriented economy, where the crop diversity is lost and there is hardly any free water to irrigate the crops.<sup>53</sup> The prospect of cash earning for livelihood expenses is limited. One woman, representative of the many I interviewed, observed:

The quality of land is very different here from the hills so we cannot produce the same crops. Earlier except for salt and sugar, we never bought anything from the plains. We had a twelve-crop food economy. Now we are forced into a consumer economy where we have to buy everything. We have lost our entire food culture and food security.<sup>54</sup>

These women complained that the self-sufficient and self-reliant traditional system of mountain farming in Garhwal was lost and so is its genetic pool. For example, there had been more than one hundred indigenous varieties of

rice and plants providing food, wild fruit, buds, flowers, seeds, spices, condiments, pulses, lentils, oilseeds, grains, and so forth. A multicropping pattern that constituted the basis of nutritional security and soil fertility became nonexistent in the resettlement sites.

#### Loss of Community Cohesion

Women experienced a sense of social disarticulation in the resettlement sites when they were forced to move due to the submersion of villages. The social-support networks that existed with their kin and other villagers were disrupted. These networks had been built up especially by women to meet household and livelihood needs. They provided small loans of food and cash or labor exchange and tided poor families through periods of shortage. Lost were community networks that helped cope with poverty through personalized strategies, informal loans, exchange of food, clothing and durable goods, mutual help with farming, building houses, and caring for children.<sup>55</sup> The absence of these multifunctional yet virtually invisible social security networks represents the loss of valuable social capital that compounds the loss of natural and man-made capital through acts of displacement.<sup>56</sup>

#### Poor Health and Lack of Well-Being

Women also experience a lack of well-being. However, their sense of well-being is not just related to physical needs but also involves social, cultural, economic, political, and psychological support systems. Confined to the four walls of the house through fear of moving out in an alien environment, many women become depressed, stressed, and lonely. They miss their forest walks for fuel wood and fodder, which was also the time they spent with friends who shared their daily activities. These day-to-day activities were a source of their well-being, freedom, and autonomy to run their households. A young woman from the resettlement site mentioned:

I used to get up at 4 am in the morning. I would make chai [tea] and start with the household chores. I would go to the spring to collect water; I would make breakfast and send my children to school. I would then give fodder to the cattle and then with some of my friends from the village, I used to go to collect wood and fodder from the forest. That was the time I spent talking to friends. In the afternoon, I would work in the fields and in the evening cook dinner for the family. I was busy and

I could just wander out of my house anywhere I wanted. Here, I still get up at 4 am and finish my household chores but I have no place to go and no friends to talk to and nothing much to do. The environment in the plains is different from the hills. I do not feel safe. Women in this area do not work in the fields; it is considered inferior; so, I am confined to the walls of this tin shed I live in.<sup>57</sup>

Their loss of place took away the identity and freedom that they experienced in their original homes. Additionally, in many resettlement colonies, poor water quality commonly leads to waterborne diseases among women and children.

#### Lack of Power in Decision-Making

In the mountain villages, women are an integral part of agricultural practices that also include decision-making powers over agricultural production and practices, including control over resources. However, in the plains, hired laborers are required to perform various agricultural tasks. In the resettlement sites, it is mostly men who negotiate hiring and supervision of the activities, and women feel marginalized and disempowered in this process. Their participation in day-to-day routine practices is negligible, and the confinement to their household limits their space of social interaction. As they are pushed to the margins, their poverty and low social status also makes their involvement in decision-making less likely.

In the interviews conducted, women complained of lack of basic amenities such as water, loss of land rights, not having enough stored food, lack of supplemental income, and absence of a sense of well-being. The conversations also reflected their deeply felt sentiments, symbolism, and identities tied to place that were neglected in the utilitarian model of river development. Women believed that despite the heavy workload in the hills, they were better off managing household economic and nutritional security more efficiently in predisplacement villages than in these resettlement sites. "Men and women are affected differently by dam projects. Women are harder hit by resettlement than men are, since they are more likely to earn their living from small businesses located at or near their residences. Women may also be affected disproportionately in rural areas since they are more often dependent on common property resources."<sup>58</sup> The testimonies of women attest to the worsening conditions at resettlement sites.

STRATEGIES OF RESILIENCE: RECLAIMING SUSTAINABLE  
LIVELIHOODS FOR HOUSEHOLD ECONOMIC AND FOOD SECURITY

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Despite these challenges of managing the household economic and food security in the new environment, these hill women have started to adapt. Women in the Athurwalla site have been asked to stay out of the reserved forests in their area. Forming groups of four and five, these women resist the forest rangers. Finding opportunities when the ranger is away, they go to the forests to collect fuel and fodder for their households and families. There are times they are caught, scolded, and asked to leave, but they continue to look for opportune moments to enter the forest to collect the fodder for the livestock and fuel wood for their kitchens. Other women have formed self-help groups that allow them to get training in weaving, handicrafts, and livestock rearing to add to family income. In some of the partially displaced villages where some families remain, women have trained with the help of nonprofit organizations in profitable animal husbandry activities for better productivity. For example, creation of milk cooperatives allows them to get a better rate for their milk in the market. Nonprofit organizations have also come to train women in fodder treatment and preservation, appropriate feeding practices, and agroprocessing programs to improve their lives and livelihoods. Microfinance provides an opportunity for small loans to women's groups that allow them to diversify their income to meet food and livelihood needs through small businesses. Challenges of water availability and food and energy security remain, but women in the partially submerged villages and resettlement sites are moving forward as active agents of adaptation in rapidly changing contexts. They negotiate, contest, and resist discourses and policies that disadvantage them. They actively interpret, give meaning to, and adapt to global changes in local contexts "in ways that are appropriate, sustainable and culturally specific."<sup>59</sup> Women are struggling to sustain or revive local economies and environments, diversify cropping patterns while negotiating different power structures and evaluating and finding new means of meeting household economic and food security needs.

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The study demonstrates that the Garhwali women interviewed bore significant responsibility for managing critical productive resources such as land, water, livestock, biodiversity, fodder, fuel, and food for everyday



sustenance. They also contributed work and energy toward income generation and carried out a disproportional amount of daily labor compared to men in the household and community spheres. Living in a fragile mountain ecosystem where landslides, erosion, steep agricultural fields, and slopes were common and accessibility to basic infrastructure and human development was minimal, these women already faced tremendous vulnerability. Yet they were the breadwinners in many households, and if their work were monetized, they would contribute even more significantly to household economic security than men. However, the building of the dam further increased their vulnerability and risks. They were removed from a familiar nonmonetary environment and exposed to an environment that was geographically and culturally different from the hills, leading to a loss of security. They also experienced a loss of the person-to-place bond that had evolved over time through their emotional connection with their landscape in which they went to collect fodder, fuel wood, and water. The physical landscape constituted their identity, and the inability to create a similar environment added to their stress.

This case study analysis is a microcosm of the many Third World women who experience impoverishment in food, energy, and livelihood security as a consequence of megadevelopment projects promoted by the state. Forced to move under conditions of deprivation and marginalization, these women lose their social networks, cultural identity, sense of well-being, and existing modes of production. These processes of involuntary displacement are therefore surrounded by “physiological, psychological and sociological components” that destabilize their traditional cultural practices with a “reordering of space, time, relationships, norms and psychosocial-cultural constructs.”<sup>60</sup> The shifts in these traditional practices result in newer practices, which are negotiated and renegotiated in the sociocultural setting of an environment that emerges only after the breakdown of earlier routines and practices. This change makes it very difficult for women to adapt in a new and hostile environment where the dependence and attachment to place that provided them with household and economic security ceases to exist. The research demonstrates that as people experienced new realities, women experienced marginalization in the process, causing household and economic disruption. This experience can be traced back to the structural processes of gendered division of labor, which was evident in the study.

State institutions and policies are insensitive to women's contribution to the household because it is nonmonetized. Women's role in ensuring agriculture and household food security remains largely unrecognized in policy and resource allocation in developing societies. The voices and concerns of rural women are rarely heard at the national and global levels. Even at the local level, the efforts to balance leadership roles while caring for family and household constrains rural women's voices and decision-making roles and their enormous contribution to agricultural production, marketing, and livelihoods.<sup>61</sup> Women's contribution to the workforce has either not been calculated, or its benefits have been disproportionately enjoyed by men.<sup>62</sup> Processes of development and nation building are not gender-neutral; a gap exists in the ways in which distribution and calculation of benefits of development are accomplished.

Acknowledgement of women's contribution to household, food, and economic security should be the first step in the direction of change. Their household food security cannot be seen in isolation from factors such as government policies and the social environments in which they live.<sup>63</sup> These resources are key in their home-based, self-employment, entrepreneur activities and daily budgets. Government policies need to recognize the contribution of women and provide them with socioeconomic and psychological support. Policies should address specific needs of women; they should facilitate food and economic security by offering solutions for women's household fodder and energy demands, including access to credit and technology. In addition to contending with gender discrimination, women face a lot of hardship living in the mountains, but they are distinctive in their "rich knowledge and diversified skills in managing natural resources, high contribution to the wellbeing of their households and community, and their resilience to face the global challenges."<sup>64</sup> Empowering women as environmental stewards based on the valuable indigenous knowledge they possess about managing their environments and their context-specific skills developed in response to mountain and plain conditions will help them cope with structural inequalities and situational pressures that have resulted in household food and economic insecurity as a consequence of the Tehri Dam project. Since women perform mundane but life-sustaining chores, their empowerment should also include the right of decision-making about agricultural production, access to productive resources, and control over income and leadership in the community—moving away from technocratic top-down policies to bottom-up participatory and gender-inclusive ones.

## NOTES

1. UN Women Watch, *Fact Sheet*; Terry, "No Climate Justice"; Mitchell, Tanner and Lussier, *We Know What We Need*.
2. Masika and Joeques, *Environmentally Sustainable Development*; UNEP, *Poverty and the Environment*.
3. Goldsworthy, "Women."
4. FAO, *State of Food*.
5. Nellemann, Verma, and Hislop, *Women at the Frontline*, 17.
6. Guha, "Dietrich Brandis."
7. This is not to deny men's daily experiences with water, but with women in this area being tied to households and men mostly migrating to the cities, the emphasis on women appears more relevant.
8. Bernard, *Research Methods*.
9. These were the villages of Mallideval, Sirain, and Chaam, whose populations were later relocated in the resettlement sites of Pashulok, Athhoorwala, and New Tehri. The chapter draws from previous ethnographic research conducted in 2004 and 2005 prior to submergence of these villages and Old Tehri town and in 2009 and 2010 during partial submergence of these villages and announcement of allocated resettlement sites as people started to relocate. It was followed up by more research and site visits from 2012 to 2014 after they had started residing in these resettlement sites. Their condition did not improve, and they still faced similar challenges as in the past years.
10. Wibben, *Feminist Security Studies*.
11. Wibben, 9.
12. Warren, *Ecofeminist*.
13. Shiva, *Staying Alive*; Merchant, *The Death of Nature*.
14. Asthana, "Forced Development."
15. Perkins and Kuiper, "Introduction."
16. Agarwal, "Gender and Environmental Debate."
17. Agarwal.
18. Agarwal, 151.
19. Antrobus and Bizot, "Towards," 27.
20. UNEP, *Fall of Water*; UNFPA, *State of the World Population*. This subsistence-based relationship affects rural women greatly, but their urban counterparts also expend a lot of time managing these resources for their household in urban slums.
21. World Food Programme, *Annual Report*.
22. Shiva, *Staying Alive*.
23. Shiva.
24. Maikhuri et al., "Agriculture Uttarakhand," 151.
25. Pande, *Drudgery*, 46.
26. Krishna, "Economic Profile"; Mittal, Tripathi, and Sethi, "Development Strategy."
27. Bose, "Demography," x.
28. Since most men are migrants and work in the cities, they send a money order to the women at home for monthly expenses. It is a kind of remittance economy where

migrating men out of the region are absent for nine to ten months of the year. It has fostered independence in women as well as community cohesion in the villages.

29. Pathak, "Uttarakhand."
30. Tuteja, *Agricultural Profile*, 3.
31. Interview by author with Garwhali woman, July 27, 2010, Tehri.
32. Sidh and Basu, "Women's Contribution."
33. Basu and Sidh, "Work Status."
34. Baer, *Women's Participation*.
35. Asthana, "Forced Displacement."
36. Sidh and Basu, "Women's Contribution."
37. Doyal, *What Makes Women Sick*; Rawat, "Deforestation"; Basu and Sidh, "Work Status."
38. Buckingham-Hatfield, *Gender and Environment*.
39. Choudhary and Parthasarathy, "Gender."
40. Asthana, "Forced Displacement."
41. Chopra, *Uttarakhand Development*, 7; Chopra "Untold Story of Uttrarakhand."
42. Mittal, Tripathi, and Sethi, "Development Strategy."
43. HRC, *Report of Expert Committee*.
44. Paranjpye, *Evaluating the Tehri Dam*.
45. CPRs are resources owned and maintained by the community and society rather than a private individual. They are also referred to as the "local commons" and consist mostly of natural resources such as water, land, forests and fodder in an area that are available to the people residing in that area.
46. Rawat, *Migration and Structural Change*.
47. Maina Devi, interview by author, August 12, 2009, Pashulok.
48. The income from husbands is accounted for more in outdoor needs such as sending kids to school, buying of seed and fertilizer, and so forth.
49. The old town of Tehri was six hundred meters from the river, so women had easy and free access to its water for drinking and irrigation purposes.
50. Mala Devi, interview with author, August 5, 2006, New Tehri.
51. Renu Nautiyal, interview with author, August 12, 2009, Pashulok.
52. Anonymous, interview with author, July 11, 2010, Athoorwala.
53. This region is famous for *barahnaja* (twelve grains), a sophisticated intercropping system of rain-fed hill farming. In a single year, farmers grow twelve crops in different seasons.
54. Anonymous, interview with author, August 6, 2009, Pashulok.
55. Asthana, "Forced Displacement."
56. Bennett and McDowell, *Displacement*.
57. Beena Dobriyal, interview with author, July 10, 2010, Athoorwala.
58. World Bank, *Relocation Component*, 2/9.
59. Verma, *Gender, Land and Livelihoods*; Ferguson and Gupta, "Culture, Power, Place"; Moore, "Contesting Terrain."
60. Scudder, "Development-Induced," 13.
61. IFAD, *Report of the Third Global Meeting*.

62. Agarwal, Bina; Elson, "Talking to the Boys."  
 63. Hoddinott, *Operationalizing*.  
 64. Leduc and Shreshta, "Gender and Climate Change," 7.

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## Chapter 9

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### Reimagining Citizen Science for

### Women's Human Security

### *Shifting Power with Critical Pedagogy and Feminist Perspectives*

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TERA DORNFELD AND NINA M. FLORES

At the time of this writing, we find ourselves on a planet experiencing the most powerful hurricanes ever recorded, engulfed by massive wildfires the world over, and besieged by flooding on an unprecedented scale. Without question, the climate is changing.<sup>1</sup> From scientists to celebrities, from acknowledgement by the Barack Obama administration to speeches by Pope Francis in Rome, from protests in the street to criticism of the current US president's short-sighted decisions regarding the environment, there is a worldwide agreement that climate change is the preeminent threat of our lifetime. To both study and solve urgent problems related to climate change, we propose a new approach to the use of citizen science, which is the collection of scientific data by a dispersed network of citizen volunteers.<sup>2</sup> In this chapter, we show that citizen science is useful; however,



we contend that the philosophy behind it could be reimagined to serve what we see as an equally pressing need: women's human security. When it comes to women's human security, we envision a practice of citizen science that specifically assumes women as agents of their own knowledge production—along with accounting for the many intersections their identities hold—by amplifying their individual voices in efforts to shape climate change policy.

To this extent, we argue for breaking down existing power dynamics that maintain science as an exclusive pursuit.<sup>3</sup> In this chapter, we apply feminist framing to critique this system positing that power—that is, the power to produce knowledge and inform policy—should not be held exclusively by the most privileged. However, we want to be clear that while we argue for a decentering of power, this should under no circumstances be misinterpreted as synonymous with a rejection of scientific expertise. To be clear, we stand with all who have shown undeniable evidence that the climate is changing. Instead, we believe that we must unlearn the rigid expectation that *only* knowledge gained through formal training counts. We cannot afford to ignore women as agents of their own knowledge production, especially in the face of a changing climate.

From the outset, we seek to bring new voices into the human security dialogue rather than see science and security as one-size-fits-all endeavors. We view distinguishing between the ways that women and men experience and understand the world as fundamental. We acknowledge the role of sexism in shaping these experiences and define sexism as a system of advantage and oppression based on being that gives unearned advantages to men and perpetuates oppression against women. However, within the category of women, aspects of identity—ability, age, class, caste, ethnicity, gender expression, immigration status, location, race, religion, sexuality, and more—intersect to produce infinite possibilities for the experiences and knowledge that women hold. It is precisely because of these intersections that we see citizen science as a necessary tool for engaging multiple ways of knowing.

In this chapter, we have made deliberate choices in our word use. We have chosen to assume women as producers of their own knowledge. Thus, we are not asking to *give* women power but to recognize that women have always produced tacit knowledge. We say “tacit” knowledge to convey deliberate accumulation of knowledge based on life experiences. This contrasts a Western scientific paradigm, which typically excludes non-Western knowledge and ideas. We acknowledge that when it comes

to exclusion, we could have spoken to Global North versus Global South dynamics; however, we focus on the dominance of the Western scientific paradigm. Throughout our writing process, we as authors have discussed our word choices; we aimed for reflexivity regarding some of those choices by including this paragraph.

We structure this chapter to ultimately show why women's voices should be heard through citizen science to address climate change. We begin by tying the two together—discussing why climate change impacts are of critical importance to women yet how current responses to climate change may not include women.<sup>4</sup> For example, policy responses may not take into account the unique burdens placed on women, such as women who work to collect water,<sup>5</sup> or include women in developing climate change solutions.<sup>6</sup>

Ultimately, we recognize that citizen science is a Western concept that erases the work of indigenous knowledge systems by relegating them to a position of “other.” We review the current uses of citizen science to study climate change and recognize several critiques. Specifically, we make critiques that position citizen science as perpetuating a reliance on professional scientific knowledge as the sole input for decision-making. To this extent, we critique areas of the tool's application: we see a need to center women within the existing practice of citizen science and ultimately argue for an assumption that women are agents of their own knowledge production. In doing so, we recognize existing efforts such as participatory action research (PAR) and co-created citizen science projects in which citizens are stakeholders in the research process rather than simply data collectors. Critiques of citizen science support our contention that a reimagined citizen science must be open to starting the process with women's knowledge. In this way, both data and policy debates could highlight the intersections of women's many identities by capturing the nuances of their lived experiences and ways of knowing.

Indeed, to counter women's exclusion, we present a new approach to citizen science that centers on women. Our proposed reimagination of citizen science draws on feminist perspectives and critical pedagogy and serves to counter both gendered power imbalances that often characterize professional science and gendered hierarchies of knowledge production.<sup>7</sup> In our efforts, we join colleagues from across disciplinary milieus who theorize and report on examples of citizens as authorities in decisions that affect their own security. Specifically, we make our contribution to this larger discussion

by examining how a reimagination of citizen science promotes women's human security in the face of superwicked problems such as climate change.

#### CLIMATE CHANGE IS A SECURITY THREAT

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Women should be at the forefront of climate change data and policy. The climate is changing.<sup>8</sup> Climate change's catastrophic impacts render it the greatest threat of our lifetime. However, climate change is often framed as a scientific problem and, therefore, academically trained scientists are privileged experts, called upon to undertake study and weigh in on policy solutions.<sup>9</sup> When scientists are credited as the sole experts holding knowledge about the changing climate, then tacit knowledge—that which is cultivated through daily experiences and generational histories—is not considered valid data and, further, is unlikely to inform policy. Such a practice leads to a system where debates concerning the future of the people occurs above the heads of the very people about whom the data and policies are meant to reflect.

We see an immediate need to consider women's tacit knowledge when it comes to climate change. Women are done a disservice, and potentially put in danger, when their lived experiences cannot be heard through data and factored into policy decisions. Water is one place where it is critical to start listening to women. This is because fluctuations in water availability are the most immediate repercussion of climate change and burden women who are often positioned as providers of both potable water and agricultural crops.<sup>10</sup> Women's burdens may manifest as daily struggles: increases in the time spent finding water, growing food, and caring for family members who become sick from compromised water supplies as well as stress resulting from these tasks (see Vandana Asthana's chapter in this volume).<sup>11</sup> Extreme weather events, such as flooding and severe storms, present further challenges as women's lives and livelihoods are compromised by high-intensity, destructive events.<sup>12</sup>

While fluctuating water availability is an important consequence of climate change, it impacts everyone differently. When scientists fail to acknowledge different effects for men and women, their research may not capture the unique and also diverse implications a changing climate has for women. For example, as Virginie Le Masson notes, in one research site "men did not raise any concerns about access [to] water, yet almost all the women . . . said that availability and access to water is one of their main daily

challenges.”<sup>13</sup> Further, though most women in her piece expressed concern about water, it should be acknowledged that their individual experiences surrounding water access might differ, and certainly would differ globally, across climate-impacted locations.<sup>14</sup> For this reason, though we utilize the category of “women” in order to separate women’s experiences with climate change from those of men, we reiterate that women are not a homogenous group. Therefore, we seek to recognize the abundant knowledge women hold from their experiences with a changing climate. By assuming women have agency in knowledge production and by working directly with women in many contexts, researchers can better understand the diverse challenges faced by individual women. This is held in contrast to believing everyone is insecure in the same way or simply that “women” as a group are different from men.

#### Climate Change: Further Study Is Needed

The myriad of ways in which climate change challenges women’s human security demonstrates that climate change proves difficult to solve precisely because its impacts are felt in so many different ways.<sup>15</sup> In part to grapple with its complexity, policymakers have framed climate change as a problem of uncertainty.<sup>16</sup> The uncertainty frame has led policymakers and scientists to prescribe scientific study as the first step to solving the problem. In this way, scientific study has become the only means of gaining more information or, perhaps, a more favorable understanding of climate change. This dominance—a belief in science as the only way to clarify uncertainty surrounding climate change—is, however, built on the belief that the only way to gain a clear and objective understanding of superwicked problems is through the Western scientific method.<sup>17</sup>

Stemming from the hard sciences, study of climate change follows the Western scientific method of hypothesis-driven data collection. Here, a scientific professional poses a research question called a *hypothesis*. The hypothesis is based what is already known and thus is stimulated by existing scientific knowledge, validated through the peer-review publishing process. The hypothesis is systematically tested through experimentation. Often, experimentation requires extensive schooling to learn experimental procedures that will be recognized as valid by the scientific community as well as to access extensive financial resources for experimental supplies. When experimentation ends, analyses use statistical proof to find support for or

fail to reject a null hypothesis. Hypotheses such as “The events we are seeing have been caused by climate change” can be used to understand popular questions such as “Is the phenomenon of climate change actually happening?” and “Do human actions contribute to climate change?”<sup>18</sup>

Current studies, testing hypotheses following the Western scientific method, are of great utility. However, from the process of hypothesis-posing, experimentation, and analysis, we aimed to show that Western science often exists in a very exclusive milieu, built upon a foundation of similar ideas and procedures. While we do not seek to question the rigor or importance of Western science, we do suggest that additional question-posing, data collection, and analyses might add depth, nuance, and variety to climate change study. In this way climate change study might be more robust and thus better-poised to account for the dynamic nature of superwicked problems.

For example, when it comes to natural resource management, a pertinent focus for climate change research, natural resource managers, and professional scientists has been conducting thoughtful studies showing similarities between Western science and indigenous knowledge. Often termed “traditional ecological knowledge” (TEK) in this field, TEK has been shown to include foci similar to Western scientific studies. Similarities include species-abundance counts and outcomes of various protection schemes for habitats and for species. Further, these studies show the utility of combining data from both sources.<sup>19</sup>

In praising a long-needed recognition of indigenous knowledge, Arun Agrawal also cautions against making comparisons between the traditional and the scientific.<sup>20</sup> Agrawal calls for interrogation of the practice of labeling all other knowledge as indigenous and thus marking it as not Western. Creating such dichotomy may ask indigenous knowledge to be something it is not and to follow the ontology and epistemology of the Western scientific method, treating the indigenous as valid only when it becomes Western.

We also want to acknowledge the power and hierarchy built into these dichotomies. Western-based narratives about indigenous populations are steeped in a deep and troubling history shaped by imperialism, colonization, and settler colonialism. There is a well-documented history of the global effects of these forces as well as the efforts to eradicate indigenous ways of living—for instance, by “civilizing” and indoctrinating indigenous children through religious education.<sup>21</sup> The trajectory to Westernization relied on a dichotomous myth of civilized versus “savage” that erased or ignored the

abilities, contributions, and knowledge held by indigenous populations.<sup>22</sup> It is here that we return to Agrawal, who asks for consideration of multiple domains of equally valid knowledges.<sup>23</sup> We draw on Agrawal's critique when we reimagine citizen science to value women's tacit knowledge, not as "other" or only when it is like Western science but for its own contribution to understanding and solving climate change-related problems.

## CITIZEN SCIENCE

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Citizen science complements the current policy response to climate change by collecting scientific data using a dispersed network of trained citizen volunteers.<sup>24</sup> In this way, professional scientists believe that citizen science is also a way to democratize science because it is sharing research power with the people. However, because of the "further study is needed" mandate, citizen science often remains entrenched in offering more scientific proof for climate change through the Western scientific method. This shapes citizen science's ultimate aim: citizen science becomes a tool for data collection, following the Western scientific method. Therefore, citizen science does not truly democratize science because, though it is sharing research power, the only sharing is the work required to collect data. In this way, the role of citizen scientists, within the world of professional scientists, is replicating the procedures of Western science. In the following section, we examine citizen science's contribution to ecological research, including climate change research, to establish a baseline from which we then hope to push citizen science.

### Citizen Science Projects, in Theory

Both Rick Bonney and his colleagues and Jennifer Shirk and hers describe three models for citizen science projects: contributory, collaborative, and co-created.<sup>25</sup> Categorization of projects into one of the three models is based on conceptualizing citizen science projects as a series of steps, following the scientific method of research project design and data collection. Projects are categorized by how many of the specific steps in which volunteers participate, including choosing a research question; reviewing relevant literature; developing hypotheses; creating data-collection protocols; collecting, analyzing, and disseminating data; and asking follow-up research questions.<sup>26</sup> Below we describe the three project models.

**Contributory.** In contributory projects, scientists determine and carry out nearly every step of the scientific research project. Thus, scientists' research interests are reflected throughout the entire course of the project. Scientists' interests begin to manifest at the inception of the research project when they select the research question that will define the aim of the research project as well as the data-collection methods that determine which data will be considered valuable to answering the research question and which will not. Also, during the early stages of the project, scientists undertake the majority of their engagement with volunteers, including recruitment and training. In the later stages of the research project, volunteers usually work on their own, collecting their own dataset and then sending their data to scientists. At later stages of the project, scientists also work alone. They analyze data, publish peer-reviewed articles, and provide data to policymakers.

By engaging a widespread network of volunteer data collectors, contributory projects are well suited to addressing phenomena that manifest at broad geographic or temporal scales. These projects also generate massive amounts of data. With respect to climate change, they greatly aid in fulfilling the prescription to use scientific study to resolve remaining uncertainties surrounding climate change and then make those data available to policymakers.

**Collaborative.** This type of project is an intermediary between contributory and co-created projects. These projects function much the same way as contributory projects, with scientists determining research questions and data collection. Additionally, they train and recruit volunteers in the early stages of the project. While volunteers still collect data on their own, these projects differ from the contributory in that volunteers may also have the opportunity to join scientists during other steps of the research project. They may collaborate to analyze data or disseminate research findings during the later stages of the project.

**Co-created.** During co-created projects, scientists allow citizens to assist in all aspects of the project. In the early stages of the project, citizens work with scientists to develop the project's research question. As citizens are involved in posing the research questions, co-created projects are often focused on an ecological process that is happening in the local context. Like contributory projects, scientists train citizens to collect data; however, in co-created projects, scientists dedicate much more of their own time to

training their citizen volunteers, often in more advanced collection methods.<sup>27</sup> As such, citizens may be entrusted with more sophisticated data-collection responsibilities. Scientists' commitment to training and co-creation also means that in the later stage of co-created projects, scientists continue to work with citizen volunteers. The following excerpt from Bonney et alia highlights this point: "While the scientists are seen as experts, both groups work together to share ideas."<sup>28</sup> Together they analyze data, disseminate findings, and ask follow-up research questions. In co-created projects, data remain in the communities rather than scientific journals; however, data are *not* based in local knowledge, and there is still a long way to go with regard to valuing and including local and indigenous knowledge.

In practice, the majority of projects are contributory.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, in our subsequent discussion of citizen science in practice, we focus our attention on contributory projects. Later, we look to these projects as a starting block from which to begin our reimagination of citizen science.

#### Citizen Science Projects: Examples of the Contributory Model

Indeed, as currently practiced, professional scientists aggregate the citizen-collected data, using those data to understand natural phenomena that occur on geographic or temporal scales that would be too large to be studied by a single scientist.<sup>30</sup> Citizen science has been very successful. It has generated enormous amounts of useful data, revealing insights on diverse phenomena including species-level shifts in the timing of migratory events, often due to climate change,<sup>31</sup> celestial body characterization,<sup>32</sup> sea turtle nesting ecology,<sup>33</sup> invasive plants,<sup>34</sup> and visualization of the evolutionary process.<sup>35</sup>

Commendably, Evolution MegaLab was able to mobilize over six thousand volunteers from fifteen European countries to document color variation (polymorphism) among snail shells, which scientists were able to use as evidence of snail evolution as a result of a changing climate.<sup>36</sup> This and other projects demonstrate that studying the ecological effects of a changing climate is possible via citizen science because of its ability to aggregate wide-ranging data collected by citizen scientists.<sup>37</sup> These examples offer evidence of how citizen science has thrived and show that it is most often successful as a contributory project where it can meet scientists' needs by producing large quantities of nearly identical data to answer their research questions.



### Citizen Science Projects: Success of the Contributory Model

Indeed, contributory projects are designed to meet the needs of scientists who, in their role as trained experts, lead the research team. Scientists determine the research question they want to answer and which types of data will be needed to answer that question. After these decisions have been made, each volunteer will be trained to replicate a simple data-collection procedure that will yield his or her individual, but nearly identical to other volunteers', dataset. For example, the Birdhouse Network engages thousands of volunteers to monitor birdhouses.<sup>38</sup> The data collection procedure included counting the number of eggs laid and recording the dates on which eggs are laid and chicks emerge.

By focusing on data that are nearly identical as well as simple to collect, scientists can have confidence that the resulting data are both valid and reliable. Data can be considered valid because the data themselves are so simple (e.g., number of birds) that there is little doubt that they correctly capture the truth (the actual number of birds) about what is happening in a specific context. Data can be considered reliable because data-collection procedures are so simple; scientists design simple procedures to achieve high certainty that citizen volunteers' data reflect actual differences among measured phenomena, not volunteers' techniques used to make the measurements. With valid and reliable data, scientists can make comparisons across vast geographic or temporal scales. Further, valid and reliable data can be used in a wider context; they can be published in peer-reviewed articles as well as used to inform policy decisions.<sup>39</sup>

Much of the conversation surrounding citizen science is devoted to discussions of how to ensure the reliability and validity of volunteer-collected data.<sup>40</sup> Citizen science journal articles recommend training volunteers to collect simple, quantitative data that answer simple questions that leave little room for interpretation.<sup>41</sup> These simple, quantitative data may even be checked against professional scientists' data to ensure their validity.<sup>42</sup>

Many scientists had hoped that participation in a citizen science project would lead to an increase in knowledge that extended beyond that of the study topic,<sup>43</sup> extending to higher-level learning about global-scale processes and policy as well as the scientific method. However, for the citizens, data collection, especially through contributory citizen science projects, is a very limited undertaking. *Because* the data collected are simple and *because*

the citizens will have short-term interaction with scientists, their learning is often limited to basic information about the study topic.<sup>44</sup> Contributory projects are designed to meet scientists' needs and in doing so have become very popular. More broadly, we see that contributory projects are also favorable because they easily align with the larger system of Western science.

#### Citizen Science Projects: Success within a Larger System

Scientists may choose contributory projects for many reasons, but we contend that the choice is linked to maintaining an exclusivity of the scientific practice, producing new knowledge, or fulfilling grant requirements. In this way, contributory projects allow scientists to survive within the very competitive expectations of professional Western science, suggesting, perhaps, that the decision to exclude women and non-Western data is not even given a second thought. However, it is an opportunity to draw on the experience of social scientists, whose disciplines may encourage more consideration of multiple ways of knowing.

Indeed, scientists may engage in contributory citizen science projects to protect the scientific process and maintain exclusivity of their own success. Indeed, some scientists may feel that the scientific process is sacred ground and should not be traversed by volunteers.<sup>45</sup> Dana Rotman and colleagues report that professional "scientists saw citizen science projects mainly as an opportunity to facilitate large-scale data collection."<sup>46</sup> Especially in a time in which the validity of science is constantly called into question by climate-change deniers and their ilk, a pressure to establish credibility of science may require distancing science from what it is *not*.

Preference of contributory projects may also be the result of "publish or perish" situations. In these situations, scientists are pushed to collect as much data as possible and publish those data as quickly as possible. In such a time constraint, a scientist may choose to forgo extensive interaction with volunteers. Further, in the academic world, where there is pressure to publish and, in turn, find funding to be able to conduct and then publish their work, some scientists may only include volunteers to fulfill a grant's outreach requirement.<sup>47</sup> In this way, scientists may not actually seek to prioritize interaction with citizen volunteers. These reasons, and likely more, support Rotman et alia's findings: "In most cases scientists preferred to have volunteers remain within the ascribed role of field data collectors; cases where volunteers were engaged in other roles were few and exceptional."<sup>48</sup>

### Challenging Power Relations within Citizen Science

When we see the pressure to include volunteers in a limited scope, it also becomes clear how volunteers can be thought of as an amorphous group. In this way, we currently see no incentive for professional scientists to prioritize citizens and their knowledge and, further, to stand up to systems of oppression, such as a professional science that profited from keeping down women and minority voices. It is here where we intentionally change from use of the term “volunteer” to “citizen.” We make this departure because part of challenging the power relations within citizen science is even challenging the language used: if they are simply volunteers, they are simply brought into the fold of an existing project, whereas being a citizen connotes agency. From this point forward, you will notice us using “citizen” intentionally.

#### AREAS OF EXCLUSION: POWER RELATIONS IN CITIZEN SCIENCE

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The empirical literature has shown how citizen science thrives within the Western scientific paradigm. However, when we step outside that paradigm, we can see that there are major areas of exclusion in citizen science and thus a reimagining of this tool could bring real change and empowerment, especially for women. To challenge power relations within the system of Western science, we use feminist framing to reveal power relations that have led to the exclusion of women and their data. We believe exclusion within citizen science as it is currently practiced is epitomized in three ways. First, a reliance on contributory projects, where data fulfill a scientist’s research agenda, often means that acceptance of a homogeneous volunteer base is appropriate. In this exclusion, women’s voices are not invited into the system. The second exclusion manifests as the limitation of citizen science in valuing tacit knowledge. The third exclusion is the hierarchical relationship between citizens and scientists.

In these exclusionary processes, concerns and knowledge that lie outside of the scientific community can be neglected. We argue that this is to the detriment of the scientific community, especially as many scholars have demonstrated that women are intimately connected to the natural world and cultivate unique knowledge.<sup>49</sup> Knowledge that is rooted in local experiences, and indeed captures the variety of experiences held by individual women citizen science contributors, has the potential to bring depth to the

global political and scientific communities' search for understanding of climate change. Further, women's tacit knowledge is necessary if governments seek to produce policies that specifically address the gendered outcomes of climate change.<sup>50</sup> Here we describe the exclusionary practices of contributory projects and use them as starting blocks from which citizen science can break from the scientific system, becoming a platform for the voices of women, their concerns, and their knowledge rather than exclusively that of scientists.

#### First Area of Exclusion: Women's Voices

If reliance on contributory projects continues, and it may because of the value to scientists within the system, we at least seek to include a greater diversity of women in citizen science. Indeed, the majority of citizens in citizen science represent a narrow sliver of the global population.<sup>51</sup> The average participant is middle-aged, white, and has an upper-level education.<sup>52</sup> From studies that have published on the gender ratio of citizen participants, the percentage of women is roughly equal to that of men.<sup>53</sup>

Although the participation of privileged white women in citizen science does involve women with scientific research projects, the voices of women who are not affluent, are not Western, and are People of Color are largely absent, presenting several significant limitations. In practice, it is clear who contributes to citizen science projects and who is left out, whether intentionally or through a constellation of factors that might limit one's ability to participate: time, language, family responsibilities, economic status, rights of women, and more. However, when white Western voices and ideas dominate citizen science, a tool with a name that intentionally suggests inclusion, then we reinforce the notion that knowledge is only the right of the world's elite and that even knowledge creation through citizen science remains out of reach for most of the world's population. Thus, Harding's questions in the title of her 1991 book *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge?* remain relevant today.<sup>54</sup>

Critiquing the lack of diversity in citizen science is not new. Indeed, lack of diversity among citizen science participants has been the subject of theoretical commentary in the citizen science literature,<sup>55</sup> and it was a focal point at the inaugural citizen science conference. Further, it was the topic of deliberative dialogue at the inaugural citizen science conference that led to formation of the Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity Working Group.

## Second Exclusion: Women Are Not Seen as Agents of Knowledge Production

When citizen science takes the form of a contributory project, scientists hold the power to ask the initial research question. This question then determines data-collection methodologies, which data are valid, analyses, and dissemination of results. When women, who are often excluded from top academic jobs, do not occupy the position of the powerful—the principle investigator—then they do not dictate the initial research question.<sup>56</sup> When women are in positions of power, they may be more apt to ask research questions that explicitly concern the unique security needs of women.<sup>57</sup> Of note, in co-created projects, while questions focus on the local community, focus is often limited to the ecological processes within the community, excluding a focus on women's human security.

Power to make decisions within the confines of traditional citizen science is one important way to champion women's human security. However, we also argue for citizen science to assume the validity of knowledge, research methods, and analyses beyond Western science. This is important because leaving little space for women's tacit knowledge in the practice of citizen science is an underutilization of their abilities and reinforces the belief that only scientists' data matter.

While co-created projects may seem like the mechanism through which local data can be included in citizen science projects, in reality, if data are destined for use beyond the context in which they are collected, those data are often held to the same standards of reliability and validity as scientific data. Thus, they are only valued if they are exactly like scientific data. These standards may remove the very connections to local beliefs or insider knowledge that make the data so valuable in the first place.<sup>58</sup> For this reason, we ask citizen science to value multiple ways of knowing in its pursuit to solve superwicked problems such as climate change.

## Third Exclusion: Hierarchical Relationship between Citizens and Scientists

In the previous exclusions, we have already challenged power relations by noting the absence of women and the disregard for ways of knowing that exist beyond the Western scientific paradigm. In a final exclusion, we acknowledge the hierarchy that exists within Western science and within

citizen science relationships. In doing so, we argue that women's tacit knowledge must be seen as foundational to discussions and policymaking around human security.

### We Are Not the First Ones to Name These Exclusions

We draw inspiration from research projects already in existence that include work with photovoice, Gardenroots, and PAR. An early example of considering multiple ways of knowing is seen in Caroline Wang and Mary Ann Burris's use of photovoice.<sup>59</sup> In their piece, photovoice asks participants, women of a rural village who had not had a voice in policymaking, to participate in data collection and ask research questions. The women were given cameras and asked to take pictures of what, in their daily lives, needed attention by policymakers. Training on a tool and freedom to choose the subject of pictures as well as assurance their photographs would reach policymakers invited women to participate in policymaking by setting the agenda and having a seat at the table.

We also wish to recognize an innovative project launched through the Gardenroots initiative created by the residents of Dewey-Humboldt, Arizona, in conjunction with the Superfund Research Program Center at the University of Arizona.<sup>60</sup> Community members had asked if was safe to eat food from their gardens, which were near the contaminated Iron King Mine Humboldt Smelter Superfund site. When it came to choosing research questions and undertaking data analysis in the project, the professional science was led by the university. As the project was formed, participants were invited to collect their own data, sampling irrigation water, soil, and vegetables. Results were presented by pairing individual gardens' arsenic levels with associated health risks for eating different types and quantities of vegetables. In this way, community members could make their own decisions about the quantity and variety of food they would eat, essentially taking their own risks.

Finally, a discussion of empowerment in research must necessarily include mention of PAR. The practice of PAR positions the researcher as a facilitator sharing power with the community, so that together they define research questions and methods. The practice also positions the researcher to learn from the community, where data collection is iterative, such that a cycle of data collection is followed by critical reflection and subsequent data collection. The results are advocacy focused, often designed to stay in the

community in terms of local information generation or policy change. However, citizen science is not PAR, and we have not seen examples of PAR in relation to climate change study but would welcome information on this important work.

From the examples presented, we demonstrate the possibility of citizen science work that welcomes women as data collectors and as having multiple sources of knowledge. These projects produce valuable and scientifically recognized data that have been used to make change at the level of individual lives all the way to official policy. We can draw on these projects for inspiration but, at the same time, seek to push citizen science even further.

#### REFRAMING THE CITIZEN-SCIENTIST RELATIONSHIP WITH CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

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A further push we see is with respect to identifying the power within citizen science as an educational tool. Identifying the educational potential of citizen science is not new. Indeed, citizen science practitioners have long seen the potential for citizen science to instruct participants on scientific methods and thus increase scientific literacy. However, we make our departure here when we use concepts from critical pedagogy to question how power operates within the citizen-scientist relationship and thus the hierarchy of knowledge production. Indeed, both Western-based instruction and the Western scientific method make claims about knowledge—which knowledge should be taught, and which knowledge is valid. Such an implication typically ignores knowledge production falling under categories such as women’s tacit knowledge, indigenous knowledge production, and TEK.

By beginning with acknowledgement of the educational potential of citizen science, this section should resonate with current citizen science practitioners. Indeed, citizen science practitioners have long realized the potential educational opportunities that accompany citizen inclusion in data collection.<sup>61</sup> While collecting data, participants can “learn while doing.”<sup>62</sup> Thus, citizens will gain an understanding of both data-collection techniques and the study topic.<sup>63</sup> However, we see potential for looking beyond teaching scientific skill sets and, instead, focusing on shifting the citizen science relationship to allow for the exchange of information and knowledge between

scientists and citizens. Here we turn our attention to pushing citizen science, especially the educational component, further by reframing projects through critical pedagogy.

We draw on the work of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire to ground our understanding of the relationship between teacher and student and, in context of citizen science, to rethink the dynamic between scientists and citizens. While much of Freire's work is relevant to our reimagination, we focus here on the concepts of student-teachers, teacher-students, and dialogue.<sup>64</sup> The terms "student-teachers" and "teacher-students" are used to reinforce the nonhierarchical relationship between students and teachers. Critical pedagogy is also used when analyzing power dynamics in education. For one means of addressing power in the classroom, Freire describes a system of problem-posing education in which teachers and students use a dialogue-based learning environment in which each person is seen as a coinvestigator of problems, ideas, and solutions.<sup>65</sup> Through this model, students engage in dialogue as a mechanism to situate their tacit knowledge as valuable for deepening consciousness and developing creative interventions with their realities.

Although Freire did not focus explicitly on women when he wrote *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in 1970, there are clear implications for women and security when it comes to reducing hierarchical power relations.<sup>66</sup> By considering citizens and scientists within Freire's framework of teachers and students, we see the relationship between them as mutually constituted and mutually beneficial. For instance, regarding an issue such as climate change, women may have as much to learn from the scientists as the scientists have to learn from them. Although we use the term "women" in a general sense here, we want to reiterate our consistent position that our new approach to citizen science accounts for the intersecting elements of women's identities (age, class, caste, immigration status, ethnicity, ability, religion, location, and more). Our approach has the potential to center all women's knowledge and shift the power dynamics between citizen and scientist. In this way, we acknowledge women as citizens, as scientists, and numerous other categories that all lend to perspectives worth including as we seek understandings related to climate change.

With this approach, the exchange of information is nonhierarchical, meaning that women are seen as agents of their own knowledge production and the information presented by women (e.g., their experiences interacting



with the natural world, including their burdens and innovative solutions they have realized in the face of a changing climate) is seen as valid along with information presented by scientists (e.g., large-scale cause-and-effect relationships and technical solutions and instruments). When women, in turn, take an active role in developing projects, their role shifts from simply gathering data for a scientist to being an equal creator of knowledge. When scientists apply women's tacit knowledge to policy recommendations, women are more effectively included in solutions. Additionally, through applying critical pedagogy to citizen science, we anticipate changing the citizen-scientist relationship, meaning that women citizens and scientists may work together on proposing creative interventions to their local realities.

It is worth noting that this discussion is occurring at the same time as contested scholarly debates on global-level education trends and reforms. Although we are drawing from critical pedagogy, we have made an intentional decision not to focus on formal K-12 education programs within our work on citizen science and education for two main reasons. First, our focus is not explicitly on youth but instead education. Second, although we do see potential in citizen science as a component of formal youth science education, we recognize that many nations often have little choice when it comes to making decisions about education. For instance, developing countries are often required to follow the demands of loan conditions from the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, which reduce local control of services.<sup>67</sup> These conditions may also require governments to conform to approved Western-based policies on economics, social issues, and education,<sup>68</sup> leaving little freedom to pilot new citizen science programs with students.

Further, we note that although critical pedagogy is known around the world, it is not typically a feature in Western-based schooling. Western schooling prioritizes the banking model of education, where students memorize information from teachers, who are positioned as the authorities or experts who hold knowledge. Students are then tested on their ability to regurgitate this information on tests. We see evidence of this banking model in the current practice of citizen science. Learning is most commonly defined as whether the participants have acquired information from scientists about the study topic or about the scientific method.<sup>69</sup>

THEORY TO PRACTICE: REIMAGINING CITIZEN SCIENCE

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Applying critical pedagogy to citizen science moves us closer to acknowledging and addressing the role of power in the hierarchical relationship between citizens and scientists. Our analysis of critical pedagogy leads us to reimagine citizen science as a way to improve women's human security through education and justice. We see problem-posing as a way to develop new solutions to the world's superwicked problems, such as climate change. When informed by critical pedagogy, citizen science has the potential to reveal pressing security concerns arising from climate change by centering women's tacit knowledge and linking women with scientists as equal creators of problem definitions, data, and local policy interventions.

We propose a nonhierarchical relationship between citizens and scientists that allows space for multiple knowledges to study and create policy related to climate change. Although we are not suggesting this will eliminate power imbalances, we do believe that this mutual relationship may produce opportunities to elevate women's voices from problem definition to the policy change. Previously we discussed three areas of exclusion seen currently in citizen science. Now, to address these exclusions, we propose practical changes to citizen science: assuming women as producers of their own knowledge, changing the relationship between citizens and scientists, and disrupting hierarchies of knowledge production.

We must engage more women as knowledge producers, in particular Women of Color from the Global South and the developing world. To this extent, when it comes to considering a greater diversity of participants, we ultimately seek a broader recognition of all who create and hold knowledge, which has value as both local information and as contextual experience drawn from the many intersections their identities may hold. These data may take forms outside traditional science, such as women's stories and unconventional observations.<sup>70</sup> For instance, the knowledge held by those already affected by a changing climate will be invaluable for creating problem definitions more appealing to all stakeholders as well as solutions appropriate to local contexts.<sup>71</sup> Further, assuming women are producers of knowledge challenges existing power dynamics that privilege the voices of scientists.<sup>72</sup>

### Changing the Relationship between Citizens and Scientists

By bringing together citizens and scientists, citizen science functions as a third space for interaction.<sup>73</sup> We envision these third spaces serving as Freire-inspired sites for women and scientists to share power—for instance, by mutually constituting the meanings of the data. To do so, we seek to fundamentally change the citizen-scientist relationship through the application of Freirian concepts. For instance, borrowing from the student-teacher/teacher-student model of sharing power and knowledge, we see citizen science as practice in which to use dialogue to build shared understandings. Additionally, facilitation of dialogue also speaks to the concerns of feminist scientists by creating a scientific relationship that relies on mutual exchanges of information and using the data for the benefit of the site in which they were collected.<sup>74</sup>

We see additional benefits from the fact that some exchanges of information could take place in both virtual and physical third spaces. For instance, citizen science practitioners have developed an extensive network of websites to communicate with current and prospective citizen participants about when and where citizen science projects will occur. We support building on these existing networks to create new pathways for dialogue between women and scientists, perhaps through video-sharing accounts for virtual questions and answers, photo-sharing accounts for photographic data illustrative of local conditions,<sup>75</sup> or live forums to discuss data, results, and implications. Most importantly, we encourage a relationship between scientists and citizens based on the idea that data are not exclusive to the realm of professional science.

### Disrupt Hierarchies of Knowledge Production

By centering women, the knowledge they produce, and the many intersections their identities may hold, we see this reimagining of citizen science as a way of both disrupting hierarchies of knowledge production and valuing unique security threats to women. In this way, explicit threats to women become a component of a larger security-building agenda. With respect to climate change specifically, research questions may turn toward women's health, women's ties to both nature and the economy, or current or existing adaptations undertaken by women (e.g., see Asthana, this volume).<sup>76</sup> In this way, citizen science can expand its scope beyond the concerns of scientists to also reflect the concerns of citizens.

Additionally, we see immense potential in using this reimagination of citizen science for disrupting knowledge hierarchies in another way: bringing this knowledge into academic journals and professional reports. Following Agarwal's call, women's own knowledge and data could reach a critical mass in the professional literature.<sup>77</sup> A critical mass could be key to building on the foundation of feminist scientists such as Agarwal, Bhagwati Uniyal, and Vandana Shiva, who have long championed the unique and often-neglected importance of women's knowledge.<sup>78</sup> In this way, scientists play a crucial role in amplifying women's voices, taking their knowledge and ideas into the realm of policy and making changes for women's human security as well as serving as champions of the validity of previously unheard voices and knowledge.

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In this chapter, we argued that more women are needed in positions of scientific power. We proposed expanding the current limits of citizen science to counter threats to women's human security, especially when it comes to climate change. Together, women's tacit knowledge, professional scientists' knowledge, and ways of knowing in between can form a wide spectrum of data that are used to define problems, collect data, and craft solutions that account for the unique security challenges facing a diverse array of women. By bringing together scientists and women stakeholders, we want to stimulate new conversations about women's human security that not just think of women as not men but that also leverage unique situations and experiences held by women at the intersections of gender, race, class, and education.

Building this type of holistic security comes from amplifying women's voices and data to inform decision-making. By infusing single-dimension scientific knowledge with women's diverse interpretations of tacit knowledge, we move closer to creating policy solutions for today's most pressing problems. Indeed, a reimagined citizen science could prepare women with the tools necessary to develop solutions locally, move toward regional-level conversations, and continue building with both policymakers and scientists who are researching these issues at a global level. Shifting power dynamics could lead to a more democratic practice of citizen science that is conducted for the people, by the people. In this context, women, as both citizens and scientists, have the potential to take an active role as key drivers of long-term security plans that promote sustainability and peace.

## NOTES

1. Oreskes, "Beyond the Ivory Tower."
2. Bonney et al., *Public Participation*.
3. E.g., Petts and Brooks, "Expert Conceptualisations"; Pimbert and Wakeford, "Overview."
4. See Dankelman, "Climate Change," for a full review.
5. Le Masson, "Exploring Climate Change"; NIH, "Health Impacts."
6. Denton, "Climate Change Vulnerability."
7. Blickenstaff, "Women and Science Careers"; Rosser, "Female Friendly Science."
8. Oreskes, "Beyond the Ivory Tower."
9. See, e.g., Oreskes, "Beyond the Ivory Tower," a review of scientific papers discussing climate change. Stone, *Policy Paradox*; Keller, *Science*.
10. WWAP, *United Nations*.
11. Asthana, this volume; Dankelman, "Climate Change"; NIH, "Health Impacts"; WWAP, *United Nations*.
12. Dankelman, "Climate Change"; NIH, "Health Impacts."
13. Le Masson, "Exploring Climate Change."
14. Le Masson.
15. E.g., increased temperatures, increased disease-harboring vectors, increased airborne concentrations of toxic chemicals (see NIH, "Health Impacts"), and changes to biodiversity (see Parmesan and Yohe, "Globally Coherent Fingerprint").
16. A "wicked problem," following Rittel and Webber, "Dilemmas," and then a "superwicked problem," following Levin et al., "Playing It Forward." Ascher, Steelman, and Healy, *Knowledge and Environmental Policy*. For a discussion of framing, see Keller, *Science*, and Stone, *Policy Paradox*.
17. Keller, *Science*.
18. See discussion in Ascher, Steelman, and Healy, *Knowledge and Environmental Policy*.
19. See extensive work by Berkes and colleagues, including Berkes, Colding, and Folke, "Rediscovery," and Olsson, Folke, and Berkes, "Adaptive Comanagement."
20. Agrawal, "Dismantling."
21. Devens, "If We Get the Girls."
22. Jojola, "Indigenous Planning." See, e.g., Dunn, this volume.
23. Agrawal, "Dismantling."
24. Bonney et al., *Public Participation*.
25. Bonney et al.; Shirk et al., "Public Participation."
26. From Bonney et al., *Public Participation*.
27. Evans et al., "Neighborhood."
28. Bonney et al., *Public Participation*, 40.
29. Bonney et al.
30. Dickinson, Zuckerberg, and Bonter, "Citizen Science"; Dickinson et al., "Current State of Citizen Science"; Miller-Rushing, Primack, and Bonney, "History."
31. Evans et al., "Neighborhood"; Bonney et al., "Citizen Science."
32. Raddick et al., "Galaxy Zoo."

33. Dornfeld et al., "Ecology."
  34. Gallo and Waitt, "Creating."
  35. Worthington et al., "Evolution MegaLab."
  36. Worthington et al.
  37. Dickinson, Zuckerberg, and Bonter, "Citizen Science."
  38. Described in Bonney et al., *Public Participation*.
  39. Miller-Rushing, Primack, and Bonney, "History"; Shirk et al., "Public Participation."
  40. See, e.g., Bonney et al., "Citizen Science"; Buesching, Newman, and McDonald, "How Dear"; Cohn, "Citizen Science"; and Delaney et al., "Marine Invasive Species."
  41. Cohn, "Citizen Science"; Devictor, Whittaker, and Beltrame, "Beyond Scarcity."
- Such data collection includes recording counts and dates, as detailed in the description of the Birdhouse Network in Bonney et al., *Public Participation*.
42. E.g., Delaney et al., "Marine Invasive Species"; Galloway, Tudor, and Vander Haegen, "Reliability."
  43. Trumbull et al., "Thinking Scientifically."
  44. E.g., Galloway, Tudor, and Vander Haegen, "Reliability"; Gallo and Waitt, "Creating"; Worthington et al., "Evolution MegaLab."
  45. Following Rotman et al., "Dynamic Changes."
  46. Rotman et al., 6.
  47. Silvertown, "New Dawn."
  48. Rotman et al., "Dynamic Changes," 6.
  49. E.g., Agarwal, "Participatory Exclusions"; Uniyal and Shiva, "Traditional Knowledge."
  50. E.g., as discussed in Dankelman, "Climate Change"; Denton, "Climate Change Vulnerability."
  51. Following Pandya, "Framework."
  52. See, e.g., the empirical work of Brossard, Lewenstein, and Bonney, "Scientific Knowledge"; Evans et al., "Neighborhood"; Jordan et al., "Knowledge Gain"; Trumbull et al., "Thinking Scientifically"; and Van Den Berg, Dann, and Dirkx, "Motivations."
  53. Jordan et al., "Knowledge Gain"; Van Den Berg, Dann, and Dirkx, "Motivations."
  54. Harding, *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge?*
  55. E.g., Pandya, "Framework."
  56. Blickenstaff, "Women and Science Careers."
  57. For the importance of women conducting science for women, see, e.g., Acker, Barry, and Esseveld, "Objectivity and Truth."
  58. Gadgil et al., "Exploring the Role."
  59. Wang and Burris, "Empowerment."
  60. See Ramirez-Andreotta et al., "Building."
  61. Bonney et al., *Public Participation*.
  62. Dickinson et al., "Current State of Citizen Science."
  63. Brossard, Lewenstein, and Bonney, "Scientific Knowledge"; Delaney et al., "Marine Invasive Species"; Evans et al., "Neighborhood"; Jordan et al., "Knowledge Gain."
  64. Freire, *Pedagogy*.
  65. Freire.
  66. Freire.

67. Steger, *Globalization*.
68. Heyneman, "History."
69. E.g., Galloway, Tudor, and Vander Haegen, "Reliability"; Gallo and Waitt, "Creating"; Worthington et al., "Evolution MegaLab."
70. Loseke, "Lived Realities"; Ottinger, "Buckets of Resistance."
71. Dankelman, "Climate Change."
72. Stone, *Policy Paradox*; Keller, *Science*.
73. E.g., Barton, Tan, and Rivet, "Creating Hybrid Spaces."
74. Acker, Barry, and Esseveld, "Objectivity and Truth"; Zinn, "Insider Field Research."
75. Like Wang and Burris's photovoice (Wang and Burris, "Empowerment").
76. E.g., see Asthana, this volume.
77. Agarwal, "Participatory Exclusions."
78. Agarwal; Uniyal and Shiva, "Traditional Knowledge."

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## Chapter 10

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### Women Building Sustainable Communities

*Comondú, Baja California Sur, Mexico*

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MARTHA ADRIANA MÁRQUEZ-SALAIQUES  
AND MANUEL ÁNGELES

In the municipality of Comondú, Baja California Sur (BCS), in northwestern Mexico, agricultural and ranching activities have negatively impacted the environment. These activities threaten socioeconomic sustainability and the quality of life for the region's population, affecting rural women in particular. The existing economic model in the region also reflects a lack of coordination among organizations, agencies, and the people themselves—once more, chiefly the women. In this chapter, we present the results of work done through collaborative-action research with a women's group in Ejido 5, a rural community in Comondú. Our research investigated the building of sustainable communities through a socioecological approach. We looked to the socioecological framework as a complement to human security because the approach that we explore specifically champions participatory mechanisms. These mechanisms seek out diverse ways of

knowing, often held by women and those with less political power, and use that knowledge to better understand the interactions between human and environmental systems. Our results underscore why we view the socioecological approach as a necessary complement to current thinking on human security. Further, it aims to demonstrate that women's empowerment is an absolute requirement to mobilize and organize society toward a nonlinear and gender-equal sustainability management.

The municipality of Comondú has a total land area of 12,547.3 square kilometers, which accounts for 17 percent of the total area of BCS; this makes it the second largest municipality in the state and the eighth largest in the nation. The municipality is divided into two regions, the Valley of Santo Domingo and the Central Pacific region. The valley's main activities are agricultural, an area that has boomed since 2000 through the production of legumes and vegetables for the international market; livestock, fisheries, and aquaculture have also flourished recently. Additionally, the magnificent beauty of the region's mountain ranges and seasonal whale-watching activities in coastal towns have expanded nature tourism and created hope for further development.<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless, the benefits of economic growth have been garnered mainly by a small class of landowners, with little spillover to the general population. During the last quarter century, overall employment conditions have been such that from 1990 to 2010, the year of the last census, the population in the region decreased from 74,346 to 70,816. Many people of working age have been drawn to then-booming Los Cabos and to La Paz, the state capital. Two thirds of the population live in the municipal capital, Ciudad Constitución, in the middle of the valley.<sup>2</sup>

To understand more about the recent trends in population decline, we must examine the history of Comondú. The Valley of Santo Domingo was opened to settlers in the 1940s, when the Mexican government launched a colonization program with two ends in mind: "first, to populate this little-inhabited region and thereby forestall perceived annexation attempts by the United States, and second, to respond to the demands for land by farmhands from the center of the Republic—demands that could not be met in their hometowns."<sup>3</sup>

The policy and the drive for colonization began in earnest when Governor Agustín Olachea (1946–52) instituted a series of policies related to

irrigation (the drilling of deep wells), the delivery of agricultural machinery (as well as supplies and seeds), and credit (establishment of credit unions). In a similar fashion, technical personnel, drillers, teachers, and doctors were sent to meet the needs of the region and were key to the creation of seventy-three agricultural colonies for the settlement of people coming to the Valley of Santo Domingo from across the entirety of Mexico. The Green Revolution cemented the economic growth of the region with its modernizing model. Development extended into the Central Pacific region (see map 1) and subsequently brought forth the creation of *ejidos*, the traditional Mexican form of communal property.<sup>4</sup> However, overextraction of water and the misuse of the land brought about the salinization of the water wells that had previously sustained agriculture and cattle-raising, while the increased use of pesticides led to the pollution of the soil.

In the past, a pattern existed where land-use practices resulted in the environmental destruction of agricultural lands. A similar model continues to operate today, where these practices operate under a scheme of increased use of technology in export agriculture. The view of nature as an “input” for the production chain, rather than as an element of the socioecological system, continues to deplete environmental resources. Crucially, these environmental resources are needed for the survival of the people living in the valley as well as the Central Pacific region. In terms of social conditions, the latest United Nations (UN) Human Development Index (HDI) reports that Comondú is in fourth place among the five municipalities extant in BCS. The state itself is fourth in the national ranking of states, which is led by Mexico City with a value of 0.830 (similar to Andorra’s), while BCS’s HDI value makes the state similar to Bulgaria.<sup>5</sup>

In the context of these statistics and recent Latin American research on human security, the reality is that in Latin America—where few if any of the UN’s Millennium Development Goals have been met, and ancestral poverty and increasing inequality prevail—communities are unsustainable in many ways.<sup>6</sup> To increase sustainability in farming communities, we propose that the human security approach needs to be complemented with emerging theoretical schemes and practical, strategic courses of action that may enhance the welfare of the population at large. Concretely, the aim of the research was to look into the possibilities of building sustainable communities through a socioecological approach in which women’s empowerment is

a key requirement to mobilize and organize society toward a nonlinear and gender-equal sustainability-management system. In this chapter we present some results of work done through collaborative-action research with a group of women in Ejido 5, a rural community in Comondú.

We bring to our work a deep regard for the different kinds of knowledge about the interactions of groups in relation to nature and the community. We specifically seek to incorporate these diverse knowledges in the construction of new possible courses of sustainable action. By seeking these knowledges, we can begin to understand how the people of Comondú, particularly rural women, view ecological and human processes. To allow for different kinds of knowledge to be recognized, we have elected to use a qualitative methodology following the participatory action research approach proposed in Stephen Kemmis and Robin McTaggart's critical emancipatory model.<sup>7</sup> The lens used is that of Latin American social ecology, a transdisciplinary field of research and practice founded by Eduardo Gudynas, a researcher at the Uruguayan National Research and Innovation Agency as well as a research associate at the Department of Anthropology at the University of California at Davis. Gudynas's research examines the environmental and social impacts of current South American development strategies and looks for alternative paths to sustainability based on the rights of nature. Gudynas is the first Latin American thinker and activist to be appointed Arne Naess Professor of Global Justice and Environment, which recognizes an ongoing commitment to deep ecology.<sup>8</sup> Gudynas has been at the forefront of indigenous peoples' struggles to gain official recognition of their right to their ancestral lands and has been a critic of government policies of dependence on the extraction of mineral wealth from those lands.

#### REFLECTIONS ON SUSTAINABILITY

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Most people in Comondú face enormous social, economic, political, and environmental challenges, which together have created a multidimensional crisis. We consider the crisis to be the product of a socioecologically unsustainable, growth-dependent economic model that has profoundly shaped our social, production, and power relations, including our way of doing and using science, for over half a millennium. This model—capitalism, now in its neoliberal, financialized manifestation—requires a radical transformation:

to go from what Kenneth Boulding called a “cowboy economy,” in which land and all other environmental resources are seen as inexhaustible, to a “space-ship economy,” where resources are by definition limited.<sup>9</sup>

Indeed, the current model of capitalism, based on an inexhaustible supply of resources, is in fact pushing the Earth to its limits. Examples of how the planet is fast approaching these limits are numerous. Indeed, in a document presented at the 2012 Rio+20 Conference on behalf of the British charity Oxfam, Kate Raworth decries the lack of follow-through on commitments made twenty years earlier in the original Rio Summit.<sup>10</sup> Referring to the work of Johan Rockström and his colleagues, Raworth points to nine “environmental boundaries” now being broached or threatened: those having to do with climate change, freshwater use, nitrogen and phosphorous cycles, ocean acidification, chemical pollution, atmospheric aerosol loading, ozone depletion, biodiversity loss, and land-use changes.<sup>11</sup> While the dimensions of these global problems are becoming better understood, there is still a lack of adequate and universally agreed-upon indicators, as the Sitglitz Commission stressed several years ago.<sup>12</sup> Underscoring Oxfam’s concern with both environmental and social justice, Raworth insists that there is a two-way street between ecological predicaments and social problems, as they tend to reinforce each other.<sup>13</sup> The sufficient provision of food, employment opportunities, clean water, sewage systems, and other resources required to fulfill human needs and rights is not available in many countries, predominantly in the Global South but also in certain areas of the Global North.

Therefore, the ways out of our present unsustainable conditions demand more than the dated discourse of the three pillars that defined the Brundtland Commission report of 1987, which, while it may have been useful in the 1980s, has been overtaken by the debt-driven consumption surge of the early 2000s as well as by the continued profitability of global extractivism.<sup>14</sup> Elmar Altvater has argued that against the increasing pressures to “improve competitiveness” in globalized space (an ever-present feature of the current economic model), corrective measures such as a reduction in fossil fuel consumption can only happen as a result of collective (i.e., social) action.<sup>15</sup>

For Gudynas, the ambiguous positions that the Brundtland Commission report espoused on the relations between growth, development, and nature led over time to a plethora of (differentiated) approaches to



sustainability—weak, strong, social, superstrong, and so forth.<sup>16</sup> In particular, Gudynas stresses that *superstrong sustainability* includes the consideration of social, cultural, aesthetic, religious, and other valuations in addition to economic and ecological matters. Gudynas's superstrong sustainability is based on a biocentric conception of the relationship between humans and nature and a concern for human quality of life based on community empowerment in the management of environmental resources.<sup>17</sup>

Preventing the continued deterioration of ecosystems involves many different dimensions, including maintaining the integrity of biodiversity as well as individual quality of life.<sup>18</sup> Amartya Sen proposes that “development” refers to an increase in the worth of human life rather than the wealth of the nations in which human beings live, as this is just one component of life itself.<sup>19</sup> Consequently, the interdependence between the environment and development needs to include not only environmental conservation and economic “progress” but also a concern for human rights, population, housing, food security, and gender. As Leticia Delgado-Cobas has noted, “the challenge of sustainability is for individuals and institutions to act with concern for the present and the future, sharing equally in the resources on which the survival of human and other species depend.”<sup>20</sup> Thus, a new, alternative development model must be built by an active citizenry so as to be able to meet “present and future needs equally among the various cultures.”<sup>21</sup>

From the perspective of *superstrong sustainability*, people-based community building becomes participatory and consultative by necessity, and politics have a larger role than the administrative duties typically seen in nation-states. Thus, Armando Páez G. maintains that to be significant, visions of an ecological society must take a political form—politics being seen as a democratic exercise that brings proposals, discussions, and rational explanations and results in face-to-face decisions.<sup>22</sup> Politics, then, must be an agent for transformation.

This requirement calls for understanding and finding solutions to problems related to political participation in building sustainable lives—a very sensitive issue, especially for women and girls. Women are frequently excluded from participation, owing to their low decision-making power in the home, community, labor market, and government. The result is that they are afforded too few chances to improve their

overall situation, which sets the stage for continuing disparities from one generation to the next.<sup>23</sup>

#### CONSIDERATIONS ON LATIN AMERICAN SOCIAL ECOLOGY

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Latin American social ecology has emerged in recent years as part of Latin America's efforts to engage in new environmental-systems thinking. This approach embraces a set of ethical principles and methodologies from different socioecological visions of sustainability based upon neoclassical economics and the positivist disciplinary stances now prevailing in many parts of the world. The origins of social ecology may be traced to the Chicago school of human ecology of the early part of the twentieth century. This strand of urban sociology saw the city as a laboratory for the (qualitative) study of human nature through naturalistic methods based on ecology and biology.<sup>24</sup> The most prominent framework that grew out of this school is the Burgess model, where the city was seen as an ecological system and urban expansion was understood as the result of the competition for space between early and late settlers, with outcomes depending on economic levels and other social characteristics.<sup>25</sup>

Although this and other schools of human and social ecology have been created and/or proposed,<sup>26</sup> a new, uniquely Global South-inspired social ecology has been developed at the Centro Latino Americano de Ecología Social (CLAES),<sup>27</sup> with Eduardo Gudynas as its main voice.<sup>28</sup> This new model of thought speaks to a broad concept of social ecology, defined as the study of the interactions of human and environmental systems. Per Gudynas, both systems are equally important, and so are their interactions, as is the relationship between social ecology and his conceptualization of sustainability. As Martha Adriana Márquez-Salaices has explained, Latin American social ecology seeks to build sustainability on the basis of new ways of valuing nature and organizing society, founded on autonomy, self-sufficiency, self-defense, and community self-management.<sup>29</sup> The construction of this approach to sustainability through Latin American social ecology depends crucially on horizontal communication, rather than the vertical version that Gudynas finds in conventional approaches to sustainability, as well as community participation.<sup>30</sup> That is to say, sustainability must mean a profound transformation of production and consumption processes as well as the power structures that they are embedded in, through participative management of

natural resources. Deep sustainability “is not restricted to economic or ecological value” but goes beyond them to propose multiple forms of valuation (social, economic, ecological, cultural, biotic, etc.).<sup>31</sup>

Most relevant to the project described in this chapter is how Latin American social ecology discusses “participation.” Indeed, this approach differentiates between two types of participation: superficial and deep.<sup>32</sup> Superficial participation is characterized by the unidirectional action of the external agent, who forms a group and proposes a possible joint project, with the group being “part of” the joint work. In marked contrast, deep participation is characterized by the agent “taking part in” the work of the local communities involved in political actions. Gudynas and Graciela Evia have defined deep participation as profound involvement with others in seeking answers to common problems, “not to make the opinions of the few [i.e., the external agent] the view of the majority, but to rediscover majority opinion and question the views of the few.”<sup>33</sup> This is done through a process of interactive approximations, whereby both the external agent and the community group modify their initial perceptions and inferences. An example might be the community and external agent working together to rediscover the natural and socially constructed built components of the community’s environment and mode of life. In this process of rediscovery, all opinions must be listened to, as all knowledges are valid. Gudynaas and Evia add that “the external agent might think she knows her truth, but must respectfully listen to all truth.”<sup>34</sup>

We find it useful to contrast deep participation with the profound failings in the Comondú municipality’s development model. Indeed, in contrast to deep participation, the kind of participation promoted by Comondú’s government is based on an individualistic rationale that does little to foster coordination among organizations, agencies, and the people themselves to construct a sustainable community. Deep participation would be characterized by the full political and social participation of all members of the community in decision-making processes that rest on socioecological justice—for example, how to improve quality of life by securing a supply of basic foodstuffs while applying ecological principles in local agricultural practices.<sup>35</sup> In our research, a content analysis of news stories found that the government promoted a more superficial participation in political, economic, and social programs.<sup>36</sup> This type of participation occurs because many of these programs are created and managed by the federal government and transferred to the community without real local engagement. We

propose that deep participation could lead to local solutions that advance community members' own welfare programs and create greater capacity for autonomous organization and environmental conservation. Additionally, direct involvement of the community could lead to the development of new socioecological paradigms.

A new paradigm developed directly with local actors would reflect the type of "sustainability" defined above. This conceptualization would cut across all aspects of life, rather than just the pursuit of economic or environmental advantages. Seeing actors as constructors of sustainability in a new socioecological paradigm would place nature as part of a system of socioecological interdependence. In this way, nature would be at the center of the discussion and, as such, would generate new approaches to environmental valuation. Specific to Comondú, new approaches would emphasize the high-entropy character of the agricultural model that grew out of the Green Revolution, appealing to the incommensurability of nature and transgenerational responsibility. This would be of importance to Comondú in terms of achieving a more rational use of water and adopting agricultural practices free of environment-poisoning chemicals, while keeping in mind the needs of our descendants. In keeping with the postulates of Latin American social ecology, our research seeks answers to social questions and to the empowerment of the women's group of UMAFOR 302, as discussed below.

According to Enrique Leff, to be open to superstrong sustainability is a way to a "new dawn"<sup>37</sup> that involves the deconstruction of some of the ideas that formed the basis of an "actually existing modernity,"<sup>38</sup> guided by the ideas of progress and limitless growth. In contrast, a new dawn would work through deep ecology and a continuing dialogue between knowledge and environmental rationality, leading to sustainable communities in a healthy planet. The new social ecology examines the relations between people and local environmental systems from an ethically committed praxis. This means that in social ecology, practitioners will "ask" the people how they "see" the environment, rather than relying on the description of a technician who is removed from the local context.<sup>39</sup>

#### STUDY RATIONALE

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Many studies have been made, plans drawn up, and research projects financed by institutions, academic and otherwise, within the various cities

and municipalities of BCS. Citing the importance of Comondú as the main agricultural and ranching center of the state and, as such, an important foreign-exchange earner, these studies have sought to shed light on the environmental impact of the economy in the municipality, focusing primarily on soil exhaustion and the loss of water supplies. This is important because agriculture accounts for only 5 percent of the state's gross domestic product but absorbs close to 80 percent of its water.<sup>40</sup> The unbridled quest for private economic gain by a few propertied families has been made evident through research that documents the parallel degradation of ecosystems and resulting public health issues. However, few (if any) studies or programs fully include the social dimension, meaning how the population earns its living, how people work and rest, and what means are at their disposal. Instead, when the social components of environmental degradation are addressed, they focus on general descriptions at the municipal level, often through the use of national or international socioeconomic indicators in order to comply with the letter of federal financing programs. They rarely go beyond the municipal to the community level and seldom (if ever) address the everyday life of small communities. This study seeks to correct this omission.

#### THE PRAXIS OF SOCIAL ECOLOGY IN EJIDO 5, COMONDÚ

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In a social ecological approach, knowledge can take many forms, and different ways of knowing related to people's interactions with nature may create new paths toward a sustainable future. In this project, we can capture an alternative approach to knowing by engaging in participatory research. The participatory practices that inform this type of research are such that results both come from and go directly back to the people who need them and can best use them.<sup>41</sup> A primary aim of participatory research is to promote the self-organization of marginalized groups—in our case, rural women. In Comondú, the aim is to enable them to make their voices heard in their own communities, and beyond, by making proposals in search of economic avenues that will alleviate the precarious conditions of their lives, demanding accountability as well as support from local and state authorities, and participating in municipal-level commissions. Our own involvement in support of these processes took place at two levels: (a) field work in the sphere of the interacting group, comprising visits, meetings, and interviews, all directed by agendas of discussion in accordance with the interests of the community,

and (b) the work of analyzing findings and disseminating results as well as building relations with institutions.

Our work with the group of women in Ejido 5 is characterized by three basic dimensions: scientific research, action, and advocacy. Following the tenets of the participatory research embedded in social ecology, we follow the requirement that both research and practice be done from an ethical standpoint.<sup>42</sup> We list the stages of the research in table 1 (appendix) and report on the entire research method below. We also include discussion of how we entered into the community and results of the interactive process, relying on the terminology employed in Gudynas and Gudynas and Evia.<sup>43</sup>

#### ENTRANCE AND DIAGNOSTIC ANALYSIS OF REALITY OF COMONDÚ

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The Association of Forestry Producers of Comondú, a nongovernmental forest management unit (UMAFOR, for its Spanish acronym) that aims to achieve sustainability through orderly planning of forest activities and efficient management of forest resources, was selected as our case study. UMAFOR 302, the designation of this specific forest management unit, is composed of 857 farmers and their families and covers an area of more than 2.34 million hectares (see map 2, appendix). The main factors affecting the population of this UMAFOR are (a) the overuse of timber resources as wood for charcoal production, (b) overgrazing by land-intensive, nomadic livestock, and (c) the absence of planning and technical assistance. These conditions lead to low incomes, little economic diversity, and the emigration of the younger population to big cities or to the United States, seeking a better quality of life.

The first step in our work was to understand the perceptions held by local forestry producers and the overall population about environmental problems in the area. Interviews, guided by a standard fifty-two-item questionnaire were conducted with fifty-two members of six of the ten communities located in the UMAFOR (see table 2, appendix). A large proportion of respondents were involved in religious groups, but no responses were recorded for involvement in political activity, likely due to the negative connotations that the word “political” carries.

When asked which aspects of the environment came to their mind first, respondents recalled beautiful landscapes and pristine forests, followed by nature protection and conservation. Environmental problems were of

concern for over 66 percent of respondents. Almost 40 percent said that health care was the foremost issue in their minds, again followed by environmental protection. The reduction of poverty levels was an important issue for 25 percent of interviewees; interestingly, this is roughly the proportion that does not own their home. The lack of maintenance and proper illumination of green areas was also seen as an important problem. Additionally, 73 percent of respondents thought that individual actions, in general, did not have important consequences for the environment; fewer than 25 percent thought that individual actions did have consequences. However, a very high proportion of those interviewed saw human action as being responsible for environmental damage, while 25 percent thought not. Further, more than 50 percent of the answers indicated that people saw themselves as responsible for environmental harm, and only 2 percent thought they were not. Still, in acting for the improvement of the environment, over 80 percent reported that they would not wait to see what others would do; thus, perhaps tellingly, only 12 percent thought that only collective actions would be useful.

Almost 66 percent believed that the condition of the environment had remained constant in recent years; over 25 percent said it had improved, and only 10 percent saw it as worse. The solutions to practices harming the environment were seen to lie in stricter laws, environmental education programs directed at the entire population, and mandatory payments for environmental costs, in that order. Finally, the groups provided suggestions to the Comondú municipality for improving environmental conditions, ranging from increasing the presence and attention of the authorities in the communities, to working on the problem of waste collection and management, to enforcement of existing laws.

These preliminary, questionnaire-guided interviews showed the rather complex and, at times, contradictory perception of forestry producers in relation to the municipality's environmental problems. More than half of respondents had a general concern for environmental problems. Although respondents reported that they would not personally wait to protect the environment, the solutions they suggested to protect the environment placed responsibility on policy and education—actions directed by the government. Further, respondents showed contradictory perceptions regarding the assignment of responsibility for environmental degradation and whether such degradation had occurred in the first place.

To gather additional information and decide on the location of our participatory intervention, we conducted in-depth interviews with the association's board and community representatives. From the information provided in meetings with board members such as the president of the Comisión Ejidal Santo Domingo (the commissariat of ejido land tenants) and the secretary and the treasurer of the association, our initial choice was Ejido Santo Domingo since it is the largest in size and population. However, owing to reported negative experiences from a recent community land management project funded by a La Paz nongovernmental organization (NGO) as well as the construction of a new greenhouse financed by the National Forestry Commission (which offered temporary employment to members of the community, mostly males), no interest was shown in our research project. We then approached Ejido 5, where the women and families of the local registered forestry producers agreed to participate. They had no paying jobs, had free time in which to participate, and were eager to explore opportunities to improve their low-income status. Sixteen women constituted our participation group (see table 3, appendix).

We held three discussion sessions. These discussions focused on (1) a diagnostic analysis of the kinds of knowledges that the women participants had about the interactions of the community with nature, (2) their ways of organizing the assignment of different tasks, and (3) their feelings about the valuation of nature.<sup>44</sup> These discussions were guided by the following set of questions: (1) "What kinds of production projects has the community been involved in?"; (2) "What were their positive aspects?"; and (3) "What were their negative aspects?"<sup>45</sup> From these discussions, the women participants shared the following information:

1. Participants had experience with the development of sustainable projects such as greenhouses, planting cacti, backyard gardens, and animal husbandry. The community had good relations with the Agricultural Industrial Unit for Rural Women, a rural development initiative of the Mexican federal government that seeks to improve living conditions in poor rural areas. However, that organization does not allow new members. Therefore, participants proposed the creation of a more inclusive project to strengthen ties within community and with the government.



2. The main issues participants faced were financial and/or market-related in nature. For example, participants shared that projects ran out of capital due to lack of formal marketing strategies that would ensure the sale of their products. This central issue led many participants to converge on a main practical issue, the development of organizational capabilities, as well as addressing challenges to bring projects to fruition. Crucially, as Latin American social ecology is not only about the environment but also about the attitudes, actions, practices, and policies required for a more sustainable future, the answer to questions of organizational development were necessarily considered from the perspective of the actors—the women—who participated in this research.
3. Respondents were aware of the existence of a recent biometric study done by a private consulting firm specializing in forestry studies (and paid for by the Regional Association of Forestry Producers). Participants expressed a need to learn the study's results, as they feel that their current knowledge of local flora and fauna is inadequate for them to become leaders in sustainable management.
4. Considering existing federal guidelines for the submission of proposals for the constitution of Community Forestry Enterprises (Empresas Forestales Comunitarias, or EMCs), the group of participants identified potential new projects. In the group's opinion, these projects had the greatest potential to (1) serve as instruments for the women's appropriation of the management of their forestry resources, (2) build social capital, and (3) help them organize to promote the direct management of forest resources and environmental services by the community.<sup>46</sup> In undertaking new production projects that would meet the goals listed above, the participants sought support from the Regional Association of Forestry Producers of Comondú as well as directly from the appropriate government agencies. Support would assist in the creation of production associations and the appointment of a resource manager. Replies have so far been positive, indicating an understanding outside the community (as well as inside) of the need to promote the role of community members, especially

women, as forest research managers. In doing so, there is an implied understanding of the need for alternative, gender-equal employment opportunities in this geographic area. Further, positive replies recognize the importance of developing the organizational potential of women. In this case, establishing sustainable production projects would allow women to have opportunities and power beyond their traditional roles. Prior to women taking power as resource managers, women's roles were limited to acting as housewives, performing household chores, and raising children or working as laborers in low-status and poorly paid jobs. Most women in the group had very low formal education levels and depended entirely on their spouse's income.

The answers provided by women participants during our research as well as the replies of government agencies to the women's requests have created a new, jointly held perspective in which the work and experience of women is held to be necessary to (1) allow solutions to socioecological problems to emerge from the community itself, (2) break away from the inertias of both welfarism and rampant individualism, (3) bolster the sense of community, and (4) build women's autonomies in multiple dimensions: economic, political, and personal.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, as David Barkin and Daniel Tagle Zamora affirmed, there are signs that creation of enterprises by women's groups such as EMCs requires and fosters further realization of women's talents. Indeed, participation in an EMC renders women well positioned to further cultivate five fundamental principles of development: autonomy, solidarity, self-sufficiency, economic diversification, and sustainable management of regional resources.<sup>48</sup> Here, we emphasize the role of women, as equity is a central tenet of sustainability.

#### THE INTERACTIVE PROCESS

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Following the three discussion sessions with the group of women, we moved to the second phase of our research. The second phase, the interactive process, is the central element of the praxis of the new social ecology. This interactive phase aims to foster empowerment in the participants. In our case study, data focused on the interactive processes in which the women's group of Ejido 5 was engaged in the production of knowledges. Women produced

knowledge through planning, action, observation, and reflection. During the following research-initiated activities, we collected data through workshops, training, meetings, and interviews carried out during field trips. Data were collected as field notes, photographs, and voice and video recordings. Research occurred, and thus women were engaged, in the following settings: a community bank program, specialized training, meetings, a field trip, a focus group, and interviews. Findings from theoretically illuminating settings are described below:

1. *Community Banks Program.* Through the formation of a collective savings program, the members of Ejido 5 women's group built opportunity, strengthened social networks, gained access to financial services, and assured a more financially secure future for themselves and their families.<sup>49</sup> The program could serve as the basis for inclusive participation and as a platform for the self-management of production projects. We would especially look forward to projects oriented toward the social economy and responsible consumption. Though the bank strategy came from outside the community, the program was adapted to meet community needs by the women's group. As a reflection of their needs, the program is becoming part of the dynamics of the community. In this way, we believe that it can become part of the foundation for community participation.
2. *Field Trip.* The Association of Forestry Producers of Comondú sponsored travel to the town of Jiménez, Chihuahua, for a meeting with oregano producers from the Association of Forestry Producers of Chihuahua. Two members of the women's group took part in the trip with the goal of gathering technical information on oregano production, the use of wild oregano, and the extraction of essential oils. Participants believed the activity would bring the community knowledges derived from the experiences of small forestry producers in Chihuahua. The oregano producers were of interest as they had applied scientific practices to the management of environmental resources. This field trip included meetings, workshops, informal talks, and exchanges of experiences between visitors and hosts.<sup>50</sup> After the field trip, we utilized similar intra- and intergroup exchanges of information and knowledge as part of the deep-participation processes for our own research with the women's group.

3. *Training.* Participants regularly attended workshops, conferences, and talks on climate change through the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation.<sup>51</sup> as well as conferences and workshops on conservation practices and reforestation, production, forestry, and environmental regulations offered by the Gender Perspective and Cultural Mission of the National Forestry Commission of Mexico.<sup>52</sup>
4. *Focus Group.* The Ejido 5 women's group participated in a focus group in September 2015 to discuss their concerns about their environment. The focus group was used to create a situation where all knowledges were equally valid and answers were sought by listening to the knowledge of others. Next, in the results section, we present the focus group as an important element in the process of creating the women's unified understanding of the environmental, social, and natural components that must be considered for the socioecological and economic sustainability of their region.

## RESULTS

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From phase two's interactive process, the women of Ejido 5 created an action plan:

1. The renovation of the existing women's meeting house in the ejido.
2. A commitment by the group to weekly meeting attendance. Regular attendance would ensure completion of the following: cleanliness of the meeting house, appointment of a board of directors, drafting the group's rules and regulations, following-up on project proposals, and organizing meetings with the ejido commission. Above all, weekly meetings were a strategy for holding the group together.<sup>53</sup>
3. The formation of a women's assembly for the ejido.
4. The foundation of a community forestry enterprise.
5. A system for reporting on the group's production projects.

The group also decided to pursue financial, technical, and material resources from groups in positions of power. This included obtaining financing from the chairperson of the ejido council, the state, and NGOs for the renovation of the women's meeting house as well as securing a visit of a cultural mission from the Secretariat of Public Education (Secretaría de Educación Pública). Finally, the Association of Forestry Producers of Comondú made a commitment to provide seeds and training for oregano production, a business plan, and marketing.

We followed the action plan over the next year and a half (September 2015 to March 2017). During this time, we observed the cultivation of concrete actions/products:

1. The creation of the cooperative Sociedad Cooperativa Especies y Derivados del Valle S.C. de R.L. de C.V., which has allowed the women to obtain credit for to finance the development of their Community Forest Company.
2. The foundation of the El Porvenir community bank, which is a source of financing for the EFC.
3. The establishment of a cultural mission to preserve the ejido's environment, an initiative of the women's group. We believe the cultural mission is of great intrinsic value for the community.
4. The field trip to facilitate knowledge exchange with producers in Chihuahua. This activity helped the women's group obtain technical information on oregano production and develop ways to use wild oregano.
5. Upon return from the Chihuahua field trip, the ejido's board of directors refused to grant the women permission to harvest oregano in the patch of forest they had initially chosen. The problem was that only one of the women held ejido land herself; all others were wives of ejido landholders. The men had denied the women permission to use "their" lands (although ejido land is communal, not individual, property). However, a private donor enabled the women to gain access to land elsewhere in the forest. This was one of the worst observed instances of gender-based discrimination against the women. In spite of difficulties, the extraction of essential oils

from wild oregano is now the basis of their sustainable Community Forest Company.

6. The women's group received specialized training by experts from Ciudad Constitución and Mexico City. In spite of this, the need remains for a long-term formal training program with an emphasis on environmental education.
7. A business plan was developed by the group through a long-term cooperation agreement with the Ciudad Constitución Institute of Technology (Instituto Tecnológico Superior de Ciudad Constitución). The plan now serves as the guide for the operations of the EFC.<sup>54</sup>

#### FINAL COMMENTS

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During the first phase of the field work, we discovered that environmental problems were related primarily to health/pollution issues. However, these issues were considered unrelated to deforestation and overexploitation of timber resources. Interestingly, these are problems that we (and other researchers) see as very important in the study area. In the first phase of the field work, we were able to show that respondents do not assume personal responsibility for environmental damage. Further, they consider their actions as isolated from those of others, although they acknowledge that human activity is making irreversible damage to the environment. Finally, respondents propose corrective measures for environmental problems, posing them as suggestions for the authorities to carry out. Therefore, while researchers link environmental degradation to both human actions and negative impacts for human health, the mitigation of environmental harm does not appear to be linked by respondents to health hazards, nor do they see themselves as responsible for mitigation strategies.

During the first phase of the research, we observed diverse attitudes with respect to the role of the individual and the government. On one hand, participants did not trust outside organizations and government agencies; on the other hand, they demanded assistance from those organizations and agencies. We see this contradiction as a result of the assistance-based model that does not empower people to create their own production projects.

Instead, people are made to rely on the government and other “outsiders.” Therefore, we believe there is need to develop individual and collective potentials and capacities for improving productivity and overcoming dependence on aid, especially in the case of women.

Building on the idea of empowerment initiatives, we consider the process of structuring a community bank that occurred during the second phase of research. Perhaps seen by some as a sterile business transaction, we imbued the act of bank creation with meaning: the women were able to define themselves. Through the act of creating the bank, they became a group; they took on responsibilities and recognized the strength that comes from working in unity. The women claimed power outside the home and, further, were able to translate power into the funds that they put toward production products.

The women clearly enumerated the necessary components of a community that would build a better quality of life: education, clean environment, social justice, and gender equality. Now these elements are integrated into their regular meeting agendas and are realized through the consolidation of the group as a community forestry enterprise. This organization contributes to the socioeconomic development of the ejidos and communities as well as to the conservation of forest resources.

We believe it is important to recognize that the work of the women’s group has been limited, especially because the women feel they were victims of abuse of authority and political corruption. From these limitations, the women saw a need to create new participatory mechanisms. The mechanisms the women envisioned would empower them as well as lead to sustainability. Empowerment and sustainability are co-occurring for these women as well as in theory, especially considering the five fundamental principles that undergird this research: autonomy, solidarity, self-sufficiency, productive diversification, and sustainable management of regional resources.<sup>55</sup> We found evidence of the co-occurrence of empowerment and sustainability measured as the number of activities that they were able to engage in over the year and a half of our research. Even the denial of permission to collect wild oregano in certain parts of the nearby forest by its male keepers did not deter them: they simply went elsewhere and carried on.

Nonetheless, greater development of relationships with receptive government agencies, NGOs, and universities is needed for influencing public debate in favor of future projects. Further, such relationships are needed for

shaping shared consciousness that put community's values and ideologies directly into actions that increase empowerment, sustainability, and rational use of environmental resources. Building on rationality serves, in turn, to break the inertia toward the assistance-based model. In this way, the community is led by women on its path toward greater self-sufficiency. Indeed, without an assistance-based model and disintegrating individualism, a sense of community emerges. As Victor Toledo asserts, "if the depletion of natural resources is the result of the lack of organization in society, loss of social solidarity, the triumph of individualistic values over community values, the weakening of the will that resists the predatory forces of the economy, then environmental policy should be directed towards the reorganization of society, as organization is a source of power."<sup>56</sup>

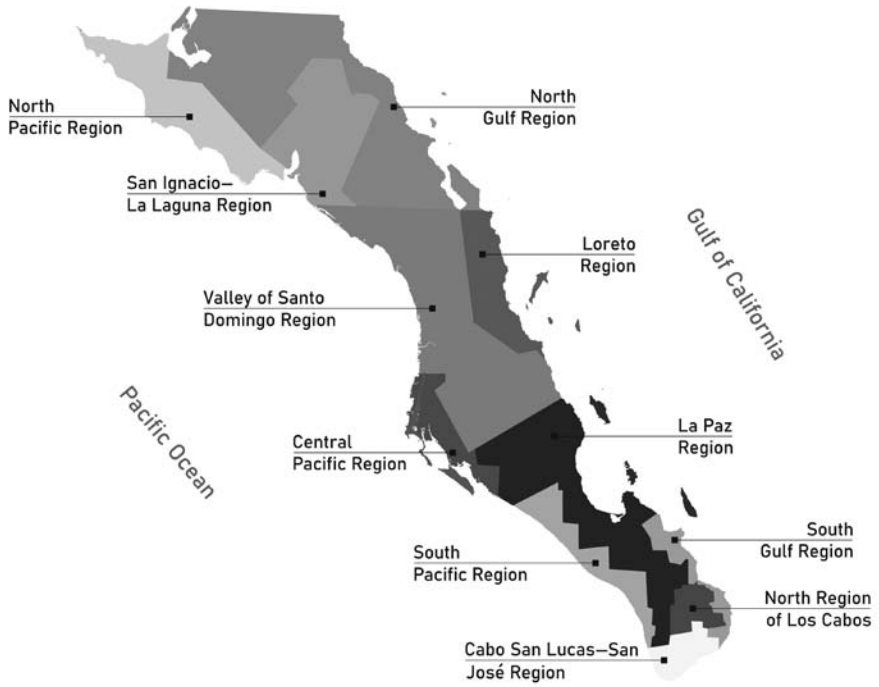
It is therefore necessary to strengthen processes that build community relations in Comondú and to outline alternative actions to mobilize and organize society toward gender-equal, sustainability management. Our empirical findings demonstrate that for the population of the UMAFOR 302, and especially for the women in our group, the Millennium Development Goals are far from being achieved. The women remain underschooled, poor, and dependent and, as such, not socially or environmentally empowered. On the other hand, the participatory action process in which the women were engaged through our research yielded important results. Our results, in agreement with the work of Natalia Ariza, suggest the need to complement human security concerns with the new Latin American social ecology approach.<sup>57</sup> Indeed, by linking Latin American social ecology to human security, we are able to engage, especially with women, who largely remain off the radar of most national or international aid agencies. Locally, these same groups often—as was true in our case—lack adequate job opportunities or even possibilities of futures different from the generations that preceded them. Their roles as housewives and homemakers, in a strongly patriarchal setting, combined synergistically with high poverty levels. Still, our research showed that though a community faces adverse circumstances, women's engagement and sharing of their knowledge-fostered empowerment and sustainable initiatives. Our results show the viability of combining the wider aims and procedures of the human security approach with the more local, almost intimate methodologies propounded by Latin American social ecology.



APPENDIX

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MAP 1: Regions in Baja California Sur



MAP 2: Location of UMAFOR 302 Comondú, B.C.S.



TABLE 1. Phases in the praxis of the new social ecology

First phase	Insertion analysis and diagnosis of the reality: the interacting group is selected; its problems and needs are identified and explored.
Second phase	The interactive process: in which the basic tools are research, advocacy and action, and deep involvement made through participatory action research.
Third phase	Dissemination training: intended to share the information generated in the practice with the interacting group for purposes of discussion whether in the community or in other areas.

TABLE 2. Responses to questionnaire in Comondú communities

<b>When speaking of the environment, which of the following is the first thing that comes to mind?</b>		<b>Involvement in groups:</b>			
1	Beautiful landscapes	41%	1 Religious group	46%	
2	Nature protection	35%	2 Social group	28%	
3	Pollution	18%	3 Business group	22%	
4	Quality of life	4%	4 School	4%	
5	Natural disasters	2%	<b>Personal actions in relation to the environment:</b>		
<b>How much do environmental issues concern you?</b>		1	Try to act without caring what others do	81%	
1	A lot	77%	2	Try to act but believe that it only works if others also act	12%
2	Some	21%	3	Do not try because others do not	4%
3	A little	2%	4	Do not know what to do or do not care about the environment	3%
<b>How would you run environmental issues in Comondú communities?</b>		<b>Changes in environmental conditions in the municipality:</b>			
1	Improving health	37%	1	Believe that the environmental situation in the city remains the same as in recent years	62%
2	The protection and conservation of the environment	24%	2	Believe it has improved	28%
3	Reduction of poverty	22%	3	Thinks it is worse	10%
4	Education	10%	<b>Most effective for solving environmental problems, in order of importance:</b>		
5	Peaceful coexistence among citizens	7%	1	Stricter laws	25%
<b>Main environmental problems in the Comondú community:</b>		2	Environmental education programs directed at the entire population	23%	
1	Sanitation/refuse management	44%	3	Make citizens pay the environmental costs	19%
2	Cleaning up green areas and parks (they mentioned street lighting)	30%	4	Fines for causing damage	15%
3	Air pollution	26%	5	Better application of existing law	12%
<b>Is individual action important for the solution of environmental problems?</b>		6	Does not answer	4%	
1	Believe their individual actions have no important consequences for the environment	73%	7	None of them	2%
2	Believe their individual actions have important consequences for the environment	25%	<b>Personal responsibility for the environmental quality of their community:</b>		
3	Did not answer	2%	1	Believe they are responsible for the environmental quality of the town	54%
<b>Impact of human activity on the environment:</b>		2	Consider themselves somewhat responsible	27%	
1	Agree that human activity can lead to irreversible damage to the environment	73%	3	Think they are a little responsible	17%
2	Agree in that environmental degradation can be stopped by changing our way of life	23%	4	Do not regard themselves as responsible	2%
3	Agree that that human activity is usually in harmony with the environment	4%			

TABLE 3. Characteristics of women's group

Age		
Youngest		24
Oldest		65
Education		
No formal education	4	24%
Have completed some or all secondary education	8	47%
Have completed some or all higher secondary education	5	29%
Housing Situation		
Own house	14	82%
Live in collective quarters	3	18%
Occupation		
Laborer	1	6%
Homemaker	16	94%

## NOTES

1. Secretaría de Promoción y Desarrollo Económico, *Datos básicos*.

2. Gobierno del Estado de Baja California Sur, *Información estratégica*. Comondú registers over fifteen hundred towns, of which only three (Ciudad Constitución, Ciudad Insurgentes, and Puerto San Carlos) have over twenty-five hundred people, the minimum Mexican standard for an urban area. In this sense, Comondú is a rural municipality (*municipio*) that has a population density of about five persons per square kilometer. However, 88 percent of the population lives in those three towns (Márquez Salaces, *Análisis crítico*, 3).

3. Urciaga García, "La agricultura."

4. The Green Revolution was a child of the Mexico Agricultural Program set up in Mexico in 1941 under the supervision of Norman Borlaug (later a Nobel Prize winner) and with financing from the Rockefeller Foundation. By the 1960s, the program was credited with very important increases in agricultural production through the use of hybridized seeds and "lavish doses of fertilizers, pesticides, and irrigation" (Philpott, "Book Review"). Perversely, it also led to a decrease in food crops as farmers switched to production for export, as remains the case in Mexico and elsewhere.

5. UNDP-Mexico, *El índice*.

6. Ariza, "La aplicabilidad"; Aya, "Seguridad humana;" Guíñazu, "Ciudadanía;" Morillas Bassedas, "Génesis y evolución."

7. Masters, "History."

8. For a concise view of the differences between deep ecology and social ecology, see Bookchin, *Social Ecology*.

9. Boulding, *Economics*.

10. Oxfam states that its purpose is "to help create lasting solutions to the injustice of poverty. We are part of a global movement for change, empowering people to create a future

that is secure, just, and free from poverty. We challenge the structural causes of the injustice of poverty, and work with allies and partners locally and globally." Oxfam International, "Our Purpose"; Raworth, "Safe and Just Space."

11. Rockström et al., "Planetary Boundaries."

12. Stiglitz, Sen, and Fitoussi, *Mis-measuring*.

13. Raworth, "Safe and Just Space."

14. Brundtland, "Report."

15. Altvater, "¿Existe un Marxismo ecológico?"

16. Brundtland, "Report"; Gudynas, "Ambiente."

17. Márquez Salaices, *Análisis crítico*, 25–26, based on Gudynas, "Ambiente," 14. The main features of these and other approaches to sustainability are discussed in Marais, *Annual Report*. The reader will note that Gudynas's deep sustainability differs from that of Arne Naess, as the former includes, and the latter excludes, a strong commitment to social justice. We address Gudynas's social ecology in the next section of this chapter.

18. Gudynas, "Ambiente."

19. UNDP, *Orígenes del enfoque*.

20. Delgado-Cobas, "La huella ecológica," 459.

21. Delgado-Cobas, 459 (emphasis ours).

22. Páez G., "Del desarrollo."

23. Marphatia, *Creating an Enabling Environment*.

24. Lutters and Ackerman, *Introduction*; Harding and Blokland, *Urban Theory*.

25. Harding and Blokland, *Urban Theory*.

26. Cf. Bookchin, *Social Ecology*.

27. CLAES is an independent nongovernmental organization dedicated to the research, action, and promotion of social ecology. Founded in 1989, it is headquartered in Montevideo, Uruguay.

28. Gudynas was born in Montevideo, Uruguay, in 1960. He has published several articles in his areas of expertise in various magazines and books. His monograph *Ethics, Environment and Development in Latin America* is often cited as a main source of the new social ecology.

29. Márquez Salaices, *Análisis crítico*.

30. Gudynas, "Ambiente."

31. Gudynas, "Desarrollo," 80.

32. Gudynas and Evia, *Ecología social*.

33. Gudynas and Evia, 184 (our translation).

34. Gudynas and Evia, 184. The case study that is the centerpiece of this chapter is an example of this.

35. Adame and Rendón, "Hacia una cultura de la sustentabilidad."

36. The analysis included 820 issues of the newspaper *El Sudcaliforniano* published from January 2011 to December 2014, dates available in print at the time of the study and that largely coincide with the period of the municipal and state administration (2011–15). A total of 6,070 notes in the newspaper's Comondú section were analyzed. *El Sudcaliforniano* is the newspaper with the largest circulation in the state.

37. Leff, *Discursos sustentables*.

38. Echeverría, *Las ilusiones*.
39. Gudynas and Evia, *Ecología social*.
40. Ángeles, Gámez, and Bórquez, "Neoliberalización"; State Energy Program 2011–2015, cited in Dirección de Energía y Telecomunicaciones, *Programa estatal*; State Program for Comprehensive Prevention and Waste Management for the State of Baja California Sur, cited in Gobierno del Estado de Baja California Sur, *Programa estatal*; Development Options in the Oasis of Los Comondú, Baja California Sur, Mexico, State Climate Action Plan in B.C.S. Water Resources, cited in Ivanova and Eritrea, *Baja California Sur*; Recovery Valley Aquifer Santo Domingo, cited in Ivanova and Wurl, "Recuperación del acuífero".
41. Rabinowitz, "Section 2."
42. Gudynas and Evia, *Ecología social*.
43. Gudynas, "Ambiente;" Gudynas and Evia, *Ecología social*.
44. Márquez Salaices, *Análisis crítico*, 71.
45. Márquez Salaices, 137.
46. Márquez Salaices, 73.
47. Faria, Moreno, and Nobre, *Las mujeres*.
48. Barkin and Zamora, "La significación."
49. The program is based on a methodological guide provided by the Philanthropiece Foundation, a nongovernmental organization from Boulder, Colorado, that works in communities in the Mayan community of Chajul, Guatemala, and in Baja California Sur.
50. Márquez Salaices *Análisis Crítico*, 73.
51. In Mexico, it should be understood as a set of strategies that simultaneously promote mitigation and adaptation through an integrated land management that promotes low-carbon "sustainable rural development" and therefore points to a convergence between environmental and development agenda.
52. Here, in the training section, environmental regulations pertain to the prevention and reduction of the incidence of forest pests and diseases that have economic, ecological, and social effects on the country. The Gender Perspective and Cultural Mission of the National Forestry Commission of Mexico is an educational project serving rural populations living in poverty with that seeks to promote the integral development of the community through job training, the teaching of literacy, basic education, recreation, and culture.
53. Márquez Salaices, *Análisis crítico*, 79.
54. Márquez Salaices, 89–90.
55. Barkin and Zamora, "La significación."
56. Toledo, "La sociedad sustentable."
57. Ariza, "La aplicabilidad."

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## Chapter 11

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### Women and Financial Inclusion

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ELISSA MCCARTER LABORDE

Imagine a world where everyone had a bank account and could save money in a safe place, where even the most vulnerable *economically active poor* could quickly apply for small loans that are affordable and do not require heavy forms of collateral to invest in their future and could send money home to relatives easily and at low costs.<sup>1</sup> That is the promise of microfinance, now evolved as an industry into “financial inclusion.” Giving people access to the right financial tools is not the silver bullet to end poverty, but microfinance has proven to be one of the most effective ways to promote human resilience and mitigate the risks that the poor face on a daily basis.

Yet there remains a persistent gender gap in access to and use of financial products by women, who stand to benefit from them the most. The gender gap exists in developed as well as developing countries and in all regions of the world. But particularly for poorer women in developing countries, it increases their vulnerability to income shocks and inhibits them from saving, building assets to help secure their future, and caring for themselves and their children.

Women make up approximately 83 percent of the estimated two hundred million microfinance clients around the world. Investing in women,

literally, has proven the most effective way to increase individual family expenditures on health and education, improve nutrition and food security, protect against emergencies, and begin the slow process of tackling the gender inequalities that hinder development in so many countries around the world. Because women are often left as the head of households, particularly in times of conflict, providing women with the right financial tools has a spillover effect on entire communities trying to rebuild.

From a human security perspective, the well-being and resilience of people in many countries depends on their financial capacity and sustained livelihood to address chronic threats such as hunger, poverty, illness, natural disaster, and conflict. Access to financial tools that help families build assets, smooth consumption, and weather financial shocks are crucial. The term “consumption smoothing” refers to the fact that low-income households do not actually live on “less than two dollars a day”; rather they live on three dollars one day and perhaps none the next several days, so that income averages out to about two dollars. Because income is highly unpredictable, financial tools allow families to even out consumption patterns across a week or a month and thus avoid the stark choices of either going to a moneylender or a friend to borrow money or simply doing without.<sup>2</sup>

This chapter examines how financial inclusion of women can positively impact human security in situations of chronic poverty and after disasters and conflicts. Drawing mostly upon personal experience with projects familiar to the author, it looks at the pivotal role that women play as risk managers and agents of development in each of these settings. It also looks at the limitations of financial products alone in addressing vulnerability, increasing gender equality, creating upward mobility, and dealing with long-term economic growth. While the benefits of inclusive financial systems in addressing income inequality and promoting economic growth are now widely recognized, there is still relatively little research on the specific barriers that limit access to finance for women relative to men. More research is needed if we are to help the poor, especially women, move beyond subsistence living to become full social and economic participants in their country.

#### THE FINANCIAL INCLUSION MOVEMENT

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Financial inclusion is a state in which everyone has access to the formal financial sector and can use the financial services he or she needs to capture

opportunities and reduce vulnerability. Over the past forty years, financial inclusion has evolved as an industry from microfinance—from a few small development projects providing microcredits as a subsector within the financial system, to a global and national policy goal to provide vast numbers of the world's poor with a full range of financial products and services such as loans, savings, remittances and money transfers, mobile payment options, and others. Since the early days of experimentation with microcredit and group lending schemes modeled after indigenous forms of savings groups, practitioners have learned a wealth of information about how poor families in informal economies of developing countries actively manage their financial lives. Stewart Rutherford's financial diaries from Bangladesh are perhaps the most cited and known body of literature that documents how very poor households have a multitude of financial relationships.

One of the most remarkable findings from Rutherford's work is the prominent role of women in using formal, semiformal, and informal insurance schemes and other ways to save for the household. His study measured financial transactions of forty-two households over one year to get an in-depth understanding of money-management behavior. Families in the study used no fewer than four financial instruments and some more than a dozen, representing over eight hundred dollars—equivalent to two-thirds annual of their income.<sup>3</sup> Thanks to this and similar studies that take an in-depth look at how the poor need and use financial services, providers have been able to better design and adapt their services to truly be “demand driven.”

The Global Findex Database, established by the World Bank Group and recognized as the most comprehensive source of indicators monitoring the usage of bank accounts, including mobile accounts, in over 140 economies around the world, reveals the existence of a persistent gender gap in ownership of accounts and usage of savings and credit products.<sup>4</sup> In 2017, approximately 63 percent of adults in developing countries reported having an account at a formal financial institution, up from 53 percent in 2014. However, there remains a nine-percentage-point gap in access between men and women that has not changed despite the overall gains. Thus, while men and women have made gains, women have not closed the gap in access, and it has actually widened in some regions, such as the Middle East and North Africa. Furthermore, much of the gains in new account openings are driven by mobile account openings, specifically in payments, rather than in more value-creating products such as savings, credit, or insurance. With

the explosion of digital financial services in some markets, particularly easy digital consumer credit, it raises new concerns about widening the gender divide when often women are not the owners of smart phones and they do not have the freedom, security, and privacy to conduct transactions through a digital wallet. A World Bank publication on financial inclusion and legal discrimination against women suggests that women face systemic barriers to accessing formal financial services that are not explicitly legal discrimination but result in bank lending policies and laws around property ownership that inadvertently exclude women from access. For example, in Pakistan banks require two male guarantors who are not family members and do not permit women guarantors; women often do not have the required collateral (e.g., land ownership) that could substitute for guarantors.<sup>5</sup>

Specialized microfinance banks and other informal providers have been able to tailor products and target services to women quite successfully. In fact, many microfinance institutions tout a female customer base as high as 80 to 100 percent. These targets are most often achieved by hiring female loan officers and providing loans to a group of women based on a group guarantee rather than other forms of collateral or personal guarantors, which can often exclude women borrowers. There is also growing recognition that financial services must be accompanied by nonfinancial services, such as financial literacy training, small business advice, and coaching. Consumer protection and transparency, as part of a larger social performance framework, is also at the forefront of industry discussion today. The dialogue may have changed slightly, but the promise of financial inclusion remains simple: *Providing access to a range of financial services to poor people, who are left out of the formal financial sector, brings the power of choice and the ability to change one's life for the better.*

#### FINANCIAL INCLUSION AND IMPACT

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In its most basic form, microfinance allows poor people to start or grow a small business, save for future needs, cope during emergencies, smooth income flows needed to manage daily household expenditures, and protect against shocks. Over the past forty years, the poor have established a proven credit rating. The top tier of microfinance institutions on average maintain repayment rates of 97 to 98 percent, annual loan losses lower than 2 percent, and financially attractive returns of 15 to 20 percent.<sup>6</sup> The State of the

Microcredit Summit Campaign report for 2014 reports over two hundred million microfinance clients, 83 percent of whom are women.<sup>7</sup>

In 2013, more than fifty national-level policymaking and regulatory bodies publicly committed to financial-inclusion strategies for their countries.<sup>8</sup> The Alliance for Finance Inclusion (AFI) continues to gather central bankers on an annual basis to encourage national plans that will advance financial inclusion frameworks for all citizens. Policymakers have acknowledged that financial inclusion can help improve inequalities and spur economic growth. There is ample evidence that demonstrates a direct correlation between the degree of financial inclusion of a country and the social and economic well-being of its citizenry. In recent years, researchers and practitioners alike have taken a closer look at the measurable impact that microfinance interventions have had on tackling poverty and improving individual quality of life. Relatively new evidence from randomized control trials (RCTs), deemed to be a more accurate method to track impact as a result of specific interventions that would not have occurred otherwise, support overall the claim that inclusive financial systems are an important component of social and economic progress.<sup>9</sup> There is a small but growing number of RCTs and quasi-RCTs (approximately thirty published) that point to a positive impact as measured by a variety of indicators, such as improvement in business income among self-employment business activities, household consumption smoothing, and increased well-being.<sup>10</sup> Several studies—both recent and more dated—point to the relatively greater development impact that financial inclusion of women has compared to men. For example, a RCT in rural western Kenya found that female market sellers with access to savings accounts were able to deal with health shocks, increase expenditures on food for the family (by 13 percent), and increase investments in their businesses (by 38 to 56 percent), yet a parallel study with male bicycle-taxi drivers in the same town did not show similar impacts.<sup>11</sup> One of the most widely cited earlier studies is by World Bank economist Shahidur Khandker. Tracking microfinance and poverty indicators in Bangladesh since 1991, Khandker showed that among the earliest microfinance borrowers, poverty rates decreased by more than twenty percentage points, over half of which was attributed to microfinance. Moreover, Khandker showed in his rerelease of the study in 2005 that this substantial impact *was entirely the result of female borrowing*, as he found *no returns to male borrowing*.<sup>12</sup>

Despite a renewed focus on the impact that financial inclusion has on individuals' financial well-being, impact measurement will likely continue to

be a subject of debate. While RCTs may offer the most scientific method of measuring impact to date, they are expensive and difficult to administer and raise both practical and ethical questions around withholding services from a control group for an extended period of time. In addition to RCTs, there are hundreds of studies that vary by scope, scale, geography, and methodological approach; some are well known and documented, and others are less so. Overall, the body of published studies shows that, by and large, positive findings outweigh the negative or inconclusive ones.<sup>13</sup> Over the years, the provision of financial services to the poor has allowed clients to gain the means necessary to keep themselves out of poverty,<sup>14</sup> created jobs and additional days of employment,<sup>15</sup> increased rates of school enrollment for boys,<sup>16</sup> has sometimes increased rates of school enrollment for girls,<sup>17</sup> led to greater female control of assets—but not always,<sup>18</sup> had a substantial impact on children's health and nutrition,<sup>19</sup> and helped smooth income and provide coping mechanisms for HIV/AIDS-affected households.<sup>20</sup>

ADDRESSING HUMAN SECURITY RISKS:  
A PERSONAL LOOK AT CUSTOMERS

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The potential impact of financial inclusion becomes most apparent when one looks at the individual stories of women customers who have seized the opportunity to access financing. These women are often the most vulnerable to human security risks and the unreported change makers in their communities. The poverty line is not static, and most often a poor family will hover above or below the poverty line for long periods of time or indefinitely. Without a cushion, even a small emergency—death of livestock or family illness—can tip a family so far under the poverty line that it can take months or even years to build income back up. In this light, women often play the crucial role of risk managers.

In the past sixteen years of my career in financial inclusion, I have personally witnessed many inspiring stories of women who have been able to creatively use financial tools to invest in a small business activity, save money over time, and better secure their families' future. Most of the settings in which I have worked are in the context of postdisaster situations or recurrent conflicts. In 1997, Catholic Relief Services launched a micro-finance program targeting group lending to women as a way to build resilience in two towns severely hit by an earthquake. This was on the heels

of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, which had also devastated families' savings. Banks failed, industries (and jobs) collapsed, and infrastructure was destroyed. Families were still living in metal boxcars more than ten years later, weathering the bitterest winters and the most burning summers. One of the more memorable customers was Tikush, an Armenian woman in her late forties who lost her entire savings when the Soviet Union fell apart and then sold the rest of her assets after the earthquake of 1988. Tikush found herself digging for food in the trashcans on the streets when, in desperation, she decided to borrow her cousin's car and became a taxi driver. With her first microfinance loan, she repaired its engine and started a taxi service. The first and only female taxi driver I ever knew in Armenia, Tikush became a long-time customer whom we saw grow into one of the most outspoken community leaders in the town. I encountered similar stories as I left to start a microfinance program in the aftermath of the 1999 earthquake in Turkey.

#### WOMEN IN POSTCONFLICT SITUATIONS

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In my current position with Global Communities and Vitas Group, the largest network of microfinance companies in the Middle East, I have witnessed many more stories that demonstrate that same resilience among customers, even in the face of conflict.<sup>21</sup> Some of these stories follow.

##### Ghada—Lebanon

Ghada is a mother of five children who works a small farm in the town of Al-Zeera, Lebanon. Ghada was left with only the farm after her husband died and no other support network to help her. After years of conflict and continuing instability in the country that put the local economy at a standstill, she was deemed one of the poorest and most destitute widows in the town at the time of his death. But Ghada had drive and ambition. With her first microfinance loan from Vitas Lebanon, Ghada was able to buy seedlings and hens. With subsequent loans, she bought fertilizer and irrigation equipment. Slowly Ghada cultivated several plots of land on the farm and today tends to her olive and apple trees, a variety of vegetables, and eggs from hens, and she herself rides the tractor she bought to till the land for each growing season. Because of sustained access to financial services when she needed them, gradually she has been able to diversify and secure a year-round income that both supports her family and provides high-quality, local produce to her community.



## Aziza—Jordan

Aziza was fully dependent on her husband's meager income, which stopped after he was laid off from a shoe factory where he worked in Jordan. The family was stuck in a very desperate financial situation, and Aziza began to look for a way she could help. She applied for a women's capacity-building loan from Vitas Jordan, which financed a training course on small self-employment and largely home-based activities for women. With additional financing she started her own home-based fashion-design business, and over time her income began to surpass her husband's previous level. Aziza and her husband now work together in a fashion-design and shoe-manufacturing business that has secured a stable source of income for their family. In the process, Aziza says she has learned that she can be a real financial partner and remarks that more than anything else, she is grateful for the self-confidence and self-reliance she has gained.

## Dhafaera—Iraq

Dhafaera, a nurse in the city of Najaf, decided to open a clinic adjacent to her house to improve prenatal and postnatal care for women. With her first loan in 2002, she set up the facility and later purchased additional equipment and expanded to accommodate additional beds. Little did she know at the time, but her clinic would eventually provide critical assistance to the casualties that resulted from a spate of violent fighting in August 2004, when local hospitals became so overcrowded and understaffed that they could no longer accept the injured. Dhafaera continues to serve approximately fifty women in her clinic each month.

## Tania Isabella—Colombia

Forty years of armed conflict in Colombia tore entire communities apart, and over three million Colombians were internally displaced since 1985.<sup>22</sup> It also destroyed the structure and composition of the nuclear family, women being the principal victims after losing their fathers, husbands, and sons to the war. This has brought about a change in the perception of women culturally, as Colombian women not only accept greater responsibility but also voice their rights in a manner more similar to men.<sup>23</sup> In Colombia, Global Communities has provided basic humanitarian needs as well as shelter and psychological assistance to those persons fleeing violence and instability. Global Communities also provided access to credit through a wholesale

lending facility to microfinance institutions in the country. Tania Isabella was one of the typical borrowers of Fundación Mundo Mujer, a Women's World Banking affiliate in Barranquilla that was one of the early institutional borrowers of Global Communities. Tania Isabella had lost her father and two brothers in the war. She and her mother were displaced to Barranquilla, where she participated in a Global Communities–sponsored trade fair and received initial training and a small grant to help her start a business making beaded necklaces and other small handicrafts. Once she had established a base, she was able to qualify for her first loan, and after just two years she was employing seven other young women in her community.

Because women are most often the ones left behind to hold families together, they involuntarily assume a huge responsibility of rebuilding entire communities. While this causes alarming stress on poor women, it also presents unique opportunities to promote gender equality and gender justice in the context of postconflict reconstruction and during a country's transition to peace.<sup>24</sup>

#### FINANCIAL INCLUSION AND DISASTER RECOVERY

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The year 2005 marked one of the worst series of natural disasters in recent memory. What started with the December 26, 2004, tsunami in Asia, which left over three hundred thousand dead and devastated whole swaths of land visible even in satellite images, was followed by Hurricane Katrina in the United States and a massive earthquake in Pakistan. Today these headline news disasters have come to be expected—as earthquakes decimate major cities in the more vulnerable developing countries such as Haiti and Nepal—and the effects of climate change are being felt increasingly as recurrent natural disasters, such as the droughts in Ethiopia and floods in Bangladesh. These events have fired up the debate over climate change adaptation and how best to achieve it. In recent history, using microfinance delivery channels to reach those affected has proven to be an important tool in disaster-recovery programs and for supporting the resilience of poor families most affected.

For example, in January 2006, Global Communities conducted a whirlwind tour of its activities in Indonesia and Sri Lanka to assess results of its relief and recovery programs one year after the tsunami. In interview after interview, beneficiaries said they wanted first and foremost the means

to reestablish a productive livelihood—for the stream of income needed to get them back on their feet and for the emotional security and sense of dignity that it returned to them.<sup>25</sup>

One of Global Communities' partners in Sri Lanka, the Agromart Foundation, was a national-level nongovernmental organization (NGO) that provided integrated services (including microfinance) principally to women entrepreneurs in rural communities. Agromart provided its members with initial grants to reestablish their activities and later microfinance loans to buy additional equipment and raw materials necessary to gradually build their businesses back up.

MRS. KANTHILATHA, SRI LANKA

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Mrs. Kanthilatha had been a borrower of Agromart since 1995. Having lost her husband fifteen years earlier, leaving two sons for her to support alone, she started a small business doing lace work. Before the tsunami hit, she had six employees with six machines and produced materials of extremely high quality for export. The waters destroyed all her machines, raw materials, and the house that she was building. Agromart launched a recovery program in stages to help her get back on her feet. First, she received a grant for purchasing a zigzag-and-overlock machine, next cloth and thread materials, and finally an iron. Although she was far from the same level before the tsunami, in less than a year she was back in a position to borrow capital again to grow the business.

While this story is a powerful illustration of how financial tools can make or break an individual's recovery from disaster, microcredit is usually not an appropriate immediate response after a major crisis. There is a greater need for grants, donations, and humanitarian aid in the immediate aftermath of natural disasters to help victims get back on their feet. Ideally, the grants would be in combination with insurance products already in place to mitigate the risks in disaster-prone areas (see below for more on microinsurance). Financial services providers require a degree of stability in currencies, market activity, and existing financial infrastructure to be successful. Time is required to move from immediate relief (including savings or asset-building strategies) to development activities, in which access to finance plays an integral part. That said, when financing is structured and managed appropriately, I have seen microfinance institutions offer loans to

rebuild and restart livelihoods that have made the difference in a family's future and its ability to recover.

#### MICROINSURANCE AND CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION

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Vulnerability to risks make poor people especially susceptible to the adverse effects of climate change. Microinsurance is an increasingly important product in many countries that offers a promising approach to help mitigate some of these risks. Microfinance providers typically offer microinsurance in partnership with a specialized insurance company, often backed by a reinsurer, in order to most prudently manage this very specialized type of financial product. Though credit life (coverage of the loan balance in case of death) is still the most commonly offered product, increasingly microfinance providers are expanding coverage to include bundled packages for life, disability, funeral, and some health care (such as hospitalization and limited preventive care). Insurance also has great potential to address some of the effects of climate change on severe weather patterns (drought) and to develop alternative crops when the traditional crops of farmers become threatened as a result of changing climates. For example, two RCTs in India and Ghana that studied weather index-based insurance schemes reported a strong positive impact on farmers with better-assured returns as a result of shifting from subsistence to riskier cash crops.<sup>26</sup> A study in Kenya pointed to weather-indexed insurance as a powerful way to mitigate risks after natural disasters. In the aftermath of serious drought, farmers had to sell fewer assets (64 percent less), missed fewer meals (43 percent less), and were less dependent on food aid (43 to 51 percent less.)<sup>27</sup>

Despite its positive impact, microinsurance remains limited as a product offering, particularly when compared to microcredit. There are many reasons, but chief among them are the fact that insurance is much more complicated a product to sell and to service, it requires significant scale in numbers to keep premiums affordable, and the uptake is difficult for poor customers who often do not understand it, who mistrust it, and who have limited willingness or ability to pay premiums. That said, with new technologies and renewed interest of reinsurers and some of the bigger carriers, partnerships between insurers and microfinance providers, where each handle a part of the business within their capacity to offer it, have yielded some very good models for more to follow in the future.

## EMPOWERING WOMEN

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Part of the appeal of financial inclusion strategies as a development tool is not only its ability to increase overall family welfare but also its potential to empower women. There are also whole schools of thought on gender and finance, and due to the complexity behind gender imbalances, many questions remain over the extent to which financial access really empowers women.<sup>28</sup> Most studies try to measure empowerment using a number of proxy indicators, such as increased involvement in major family decision-making, wider participation in public action, greater physical mobility, increased participation in political and social events, and larger awareness of their political and legal rights. Some studies have revealed a negative impact of microfinance, such as increasing the burden of workloads, upsetting the balance of family that leads to increased divorce rates or domestic violence, and women serving only as conduits of loans to their husbands.<sup>29</sup> Many of these cases, singled out because they are so alarming, have since been refuted by other researchers conducting other case studies that prove the exact opposite—for example, reductions in domestic violence, improved family relations, and testimonies that if given a choice, most women would gladly accept an increase in workload simply to have the choice in itself.<sup>30</sup>

To truly encourage women's empowerment, access to finance must be coupled with other, nonfinancial interventions that *enhance women's capacity to transform choice into action*.

## MOVING WOMEN UPMARKET

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Credit alone does not empower. Financial inclusion must be part of a larger strategy that requires the participation of all stakeholders, including men, to effect change in gender relations. Among microfinance borrowers, women typically have smaller loan sizes than men and, due to collateral constraints, find it more difficult to graduate from group to individual loans that offer larger amounts with more flexibility to grow their businesses. Women in general have more limited business networks to rely upon and limited access to market information. As a result, women often lack the knowledge and skills to innovate and respond to market opportunities and threats and as a result hold weak market positions. They also tend to stay in the same types of businesses that can remain low-return, lead to saturation, and hit a "glass ceiling."<sup>31</sup>

Not all women customers are entrepreneurs by choice or have the ambition and desire to move up in the circles of business. But the few who do often face barriers that go beyond access to finance. The reasons we find fewer female small and medium enterprise (SME) owners are complex.<sup>32</sup> In addition to the more obvious cultural barriers and gender roles according to a given country, industry sector can also play a factor. A survey by the International Finance Corporation (IFC) in the Middle East found that more often women-owned SMEs are in the service industries, where banks have difficulty quantifying output because there are no physical assets (machinery, etc.) to serve as a basis for loan assessment. The garment sector, however, was identified by banks as a growth area and could help address the gap at least for women engaged in that industry. The IFC also found that women reported access to finance as less of a barrier to entry than the combination of women's lack of confidence and the banks not making themselves approachable.<sup>33</sup> A more recent baseline survey conducted by the IFC in 2011 and 2012 to assess the market size and credit gap for women-owned SMEs reveals many of the same challenges. It estimates the credit gap for women-owned SMEs at roughly \$278 billion, or 30 percent of all SMEs worldwide. Common constraints include financial barriers to obtaining loans—such as lack of collateral—as well as nonfinancial barriers such as social and cultural norms that have a gender bias and limited access to business education opportunities or networks.<sup>34</sup>

#### Maya Clients—Turkey

In my experience working in Turkey with the Foundation for Support of Women's Work, which launched Maya Enterprise for Microfinance, women microfinance borrowers valued above all the “softer side” of microfinance, where the support networks that it creates for women are sometimes more attractive than the financing itself. In our survey of women in Istanbul and Kocaeli regions, Turkish women were more likely to move up in business if their starting point was higher; in other words, women with a higher level of education and a slightly larger or more established business from the outset were more likely to grow their businesses successfully through microcredit. Clients whose husbands were less conservative in attitude, who came from a wealthier or more educated background, or else were able to engage consistently in the nonfinancial support activities offered to them—such as computer courses, skills training, trade fairs, and psychosocial counseling

provided by NGOs—proved more likely to advance as business leaders, and became key role models for other women in their microfinance solidarity group. Interestingly, even though these women clients qualified for bank loans at lower rates, they did not dare go to a bank. They simply did not perceive themselves as bank clients, nor did the banks actively market their services to them.<sup>35</sup>

#### Vitas Clients—Romania

The experience with Vitas in Romania, where religion and culture are less of an obstacle to women's participation than in the Middle East, reveals similar attitudes. Even with relatively higher education, income levels, and social acceptance by husbands and society at large, many businesswomen in Romania do not go to banks. Vitas started as a specialized SME lending institution based in Timisoara, targeting a proportion of women owners of medium-sized businesses as part of its market strategy. It has a portfolio outstanding of approximately nine million dollars and an average loan size between five thousand and twenty thousand dollars, with women making up 42 percent of all active clients.

#### Ana Jorz—Romania

Ana Jorz has done embroidery as a hobby for almost forty years. Since 1990, she has supported herself exclusively with her craft. Ana started out making traditional clothing for folk dancers and singers in Romania and has gained such fame among these groups that she no longer needs to advertise locally. Rare for many of her generation, she has embraced technology to get the word out: today, Ana's Facebook page has over two thousand friends and brings in orders from Algeria to Egypt to Australia. In 2012, Ana took out her first-ever loan from Vitas Romania to purchase machines that would automate some of her embroidery. Three years later, and three loans later, Ana has seen her business grow and has gained a level of financial independence that she never thought possible. While banks would not have considered Ana as a business client, in her words the value of her relationship with Vitas was not only financial but more "human" support: "Vitas has been a help to me, because they believed from the beginning that I create art and recognized the value of tradition which continues through my work."<sup>36</sup>

## INVESTING IN WOMEN IS GOOD BUSINESS

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Ultimately, empowering women requires fundamental changes within each country context and necessitates more direct policy instruments that can replace the rules sustaining gender inequality and establish incentives that will improve access to and quality of education as well as offer opportunities for professional advancement.

Fundamental change such as this does not happen easily or quickly. At least in the near term, there are some bright spots, and the financial inclusion agenda offers one platform for change. Integrated service delivery of financial and nonfinancial services (such as financial literacy training, business skills development, market linkages, etc.) is making a comeback. Armed with better market-research methods and simplified, practical impact information that feeds back into developing better products and services, we realize that the key to improved service delivery is what we knew from the beginning: *know your customer*. The extent to which we can make gender relevant to the market—the still untapped market that women entrepreneurs represent—depends on how well we establish appropriate incentives to encourage recruitment of women in the ranks of boards, management, and clientele. It is also crucial that we do a better job encouraging financial service providers to work in coordination with, and not in isolation of, the market linkages that will help lift its clients—those with the potential and desire to move up—beyond small income-generating activities. Microfinance institutions should not turn a blind eye to *what they are investing in*: making good business investments and being conscious of the most promising sectors are crucial to long-term economic growth. In this sense, renewed efforts in consumer protection and social-performance management have begun to move the dialogue away from growth for the sake of growth and more toward quality of service provision.

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The fact that women microfinance borrowers have been the key drivers behind the social impact of the industry to date presents an opportunity for us to reexamine our own gender assumptions and begin to see women not as victims in need of help but as social and economic agents of change. Women customers, more than men, have proven to be a sound investment leading to



positive outcomes in the areas of health, nutrition, poverty alleviation, and rebuilding fragile societies. These are the same areas we must address if we wish to promote greater human security for both men and women.

Most women remain in low-return businesses and hold weak market positions, making it even more difficult for their voices to be heard. To fully realize the potential of women as stronger risk managers, peacemakers, business leaders, and change agents, we must take advantage of the “market forces” that are finally bringing the formal financial sector and informal providers closer together and make a concerted effort to address market imperfections that exclude women from the benefits.

Moreover, it is not enough to simply offer credit for subsistence-level income-generating activities. While the “poverty lending approach” to financial inclusion has its place and its merit, we must do more. Full financial inclusion should mean a more sophisticated range of products and services that capitalize on financial infrastructure and advances in technology, make it easier to reach the remote areas, invest in the more productive enterprises that will contribute to economic growth as a whole, and work in tandem with other services and interventions to help advance its clients up the financial ladder.

To achieve full financial inclusion for women that acknowledges both their potential as economic actors and the central role they play in society, there must be better policymaking, more targeted research, and a way to translate research into marketing, product offerings, and delivery channels that more easily reach and better serve women. First, policymakers must change laws that inadvertently prevent equitable access for women. This includes laws around land title, property ownership, and guarantors. Policymakers and regulators should offer incentives for banks to target women specifically as a customer segment and improve microfinance regulations that would allow more types of providers to reach more women with a full range of financial products (loans, savings, insurance, transfers, etc.) as well as nonfinancial services. Second, governing boards, including board members who represent commercial shareholders, must steer financial institutions in a more productive manner by allowing for lower or more patient returns on investments if they want to encourage more risk-taking and innovation. A true double bottom line (when social and financial goals are equally weighted) can only happen when corporate governance directs management to achieve it. This is not to say the financial inclusion of women

is more “social” or entails more “risk”; on the contrary, a growing body of research proves that women in the ranks of board, management, and clients makes for a more profitable, and smarter decision-making, business. That goes for Fortune 500 companies as well. But serving women well requires investment. To encourage this kind of investment, governing boards must not lose sight of the need for gender diversity, particularly at the board, senior, and middle-management levels, and make this part of regular discussions in the boardroom.

Finally, bank managers and financial service providers in general must understand that women-owned businesses are a special segment of the market and require a specific value proposition to serve them well. Opening a special unit or window for women customers has proven to be one way of explicitly developing and marketing well-designed financial products tailored to women.<sup>37</sup> Many providers lack good research methodology and the tools they need to really segment their markets and understand the particular obstacles to serving women clients well. More research is needed, not only to validate policy decisions and improve legislation but also to inform the design of better products and services that can be made available to women. When one-third of SME owners are women and an estimated eight to ten million formal SMEs around the world are fully or partially owned by women, this presents is a significant untapped opportunity for the financial services industry. The time to act is now.<sup>38</sup>

## NOTES

1. The term “economically active poor” is one we use frequently in financial inclusion to describe the poor who are actively doing an income-generating activity and have some basis for repayment capacity to take out loans, as opposed to someone who is destitute.

2. For more information about “consumption smoothing” and spending patterns of poor households, see Collins et al., *Portfolios*.

3. Rutherford, “Money Talks.” See also the full book as an outcome of the early financial diaries: Collins et al., *Portfolios*.

4. Global Findex Database at <http://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/globalfindex> and Demirguc-Kunt and Klapper, “Global Findex Database 2014.”

5. Demirguc-Kunt, Klapper, and Singer, “Financial Inclusion.”

6. The Mix Market compiles financial and portfolio data on an annual basis and groups MFIs by size, maturity, and region. See [www.mixmarket.org](http://www.mixmarket.org).

7. Microcredit Summit Campaign, *Report 2014*. MicroCredit Summit Organization. <https://www.microcreditsummit.org/socrs/>. Note that data in this report was collected in 2013 and is from the end of December 2012.

8. AFI, *2013 Maya*; AFI, *2014 Maya*.
9. Cull, Ehrbeck, and Holle, "Financial Inclusion."
10. Bauchet et al. "Latest Findings."
11. Dupas and Robinson, "Savings Constraints," 163–92.
12. Interestingly, Khandker's first release of the study showed a significantly higher return from female versus male borrowers, and his rerelease of the study in 2005 with updated data did not show any returns from male borrowing. See Khandker, "Microfinance and Poverty," 263–86.
13. Goldberg, "Measuring."
14. Todd, *Poverty Reduced*.
15. Dunn and Arbuckle, "Impacts of Microcredit."
16. Barnes, "Microfinance Program."
17. Chen and Snodgrass, *Managing Resources*; Todd, *Poverty Reduced*; and Holvoet, "Differential Impact." Helen Todd's study of SHARE Microfin Limited, a microfinance institution in Andhra Pradesh, found no relationship between poverty status and school attendance for boys but found that poor clients were more likely to send their girls to school, concluding that education of girls has more to do with attitudes than income. Similarly, Nathalie Holvoet's study in South India found that women's membership in group-based lending methodologies strongly affected girls' enrollment in school, whereas girls' and boys' education was unchanged by individual female-versus-male borrowing, illustrating the importance of support networks that build knowledge and awareness among women and help close the gap in education due to promale bias.
18. Todd, *Women at the Center*. Other studies have indicated that women often turn their loans over to their husbands, which thus negates empowerment unless there is individual control over a loan. However, Todd finds that even in the case where women do not have control, women are better off. See Todd, *Women at the Center*.
19. Two evaluations by Freedom from Hunger, an organization that combines credit with education in all of its programs, indicates a positive correlation between better-educated women and child nutrition, maternal and child health, children's enrollment in school, and women's participation in decision-making. See MKNelly and Dunford, "Ghana," and MKNelly and Dunford, "Bolivia."
20. Barnes, "Microfinance Program." Barnes' study of Zambuko in Zimbabwe, where 40 percent of client and nonclient control groups were most likely affected by HIV/AIDs, shows positive impacts of microfinance on borrowers' household income, investment in boys' education to prepare them for future, and group support mechanisms, but it also showed a need to better understand appropriate terms and conditions for financial products that avoid placing undue pressure of debt on families.
21. The personal stories are from customers in what is today Vitas Lebanon, Vitas Jordan, Vitas Romania, and Vitas Iraq, all microfinance companies on whose boards of directors the author sits and where she represents Global Communities' and Vitas's interests as principal shareholder.
22. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. See <https://www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/202003-twice-invisible-internally-displaced-women.pdf>.

23. Global Communities (formerly CHF) Colombia Office. Staff interviews with three directors of MFIs in Colombia: Jose Luis Noguera (FMM Barranquilla), Ana Mercedes Semanate (Agencia Metrocentro Barranquilla), and Daniel Ospino (Agencia Municipio de Soledad), November 2005.

24. For an excellent overview of women in conflict and policy recommendations, see Rehn and Sirleaf, *Women*.

25. Based on notes from personal interviews in Sri Lanka and Indonesia by Jennifer Hyman, former director of communications. See also Global Communities, "One Year after the Tsunami," <https://www.globalcommunities.org/node/37167>.

26. Karlan, Osei-Akoto, Osei, and Udry, "Agricultural Decisions."

27. Janzen and Carter, "After the Drought."

28. The term "gender" refers to the perceptions or expectations of men's and women's different roles in a given culture or location that we learn at an early age and that are often influenced by class, age, ethnicity, and religion. For a somewhat dated but still relevant analysis of gender and how it can be incorporated into microfinance programming, see Murray and Boros, "Guide," and the Gen Finance resource center at [www.genfinance.info](http://www.genfinance.info).

29. For more discussion on negative implications of microfinance on women, two comprehensive academic studies include Johnson, "Gender Norms," 1355–74, and Kabeer, "Conflicts over Credit," 63–84. Linda Mayoux has also written a number of articles critical of microfinance as an empowerment tool without addressing larger policy issues at the same time.

30. Cheston and Kuhn, "Empowering Women"; Hashemi, Schuler, and Riley, "Rural Credit."

31. Fraioli Kuhn, "Chipping Away."

32. The definition of "micro" versus "SME" varies by country and is usually defined by loan size, number of employees, and business turnover as indicators. As one example, the European Commission has defined microenterprises as having zero to nine employees and less than ten million euros in annual turnover, requiring loan sizes of no more than twenty-five thousand euros, whereas SMEs have 10 to 249 employees and between ten million and fifty million euros in annual turnover. See the European Commission, "User Guide to the SME Definition."

33. From an interview by the author with Carmen Niethammer, program manager for Gender Entrepreneurship Markets Private Enterprise Partnership–Middle East and North Africa (PEP-MENA), International Finance Corporation (IFC), World Bank Group, March 2006.

34. IFC, "Women-Owned SMEs."

35. Survey conducted by Maya Enterprise for Microfinance, a microfinance organization in Turkey launched under the auspices of the Foundation for Support of Women's Work. 2003.

36. Ana Jorz, interview by Vitas Romania staff, in Caras-Severin, Romania, August 2015.

37. From January to June 2015, while traveling for work, I encountered two such approaches that were paying off in terms of tailoring and marketing services to women. Etihad Bank, a Jordanian commercial bank and partner under Global Communities and Overseas

Private Investment Corporation guaranty facility, has opened a special unit within its SME department to market its products to women-owned SMEs. It has even featured a “woman client of the year” and established separate marketing materials, loan officers, and relationship managers to cater to women. Similarly, on my last visit to Pakistan, I had the opportunity to visit Tameer Bank, a microfinance bank based in Karachi. Among its hub-and-spoke model of branch network, it has special small-service points around the branches that are only for women customers. This allows them to be more culturally sensitive to the more conservative Muslim women who may want to discuss their financing needs and business challenges in a women-only environment. Both of these initiatives require up-front investment and a conscious decision to make women a core market segment.

38. International Finance Corporation (IFC), “Women-Owned SMEs.”

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## Chapter 12

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### Reflections and Looking Ahead

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RICHARD A. MATTHEW, GUNHILD HOOGENSEN GJØRV,  
NORA DAVIS, AND TERA DORNFELD

In our introductory chapter, “Women’s Voices: Perspectives on Violence, Environmental Threats, and Human Security,” we discussed the possibilities embodied within some of the disruptive discourses of international relations (IR): feminism, environmentalism, and human security. While these “disruptions” have been criticized for drawing attention away from the constitutive issues of war and peace, they do open the field up to richer and more inclusive contexts, problems, and data. In our view, these disruptions ultimately have encouraged, and continue to enable, a broadened view of security.

A book on women’s voices in human, economic, and environmental perspectives on security necessarily represents only a step in a lengthy quest to better understand the ways in which gender matters in the rapidly evolving realm of security affairs. These are perspectives that earlier scholars of security did not represent or foresee, in part because they did not consider problematic the extent to which a universalized “human” perspective assumed an equal experience of threat and power among men, women, and children.



A complex architecture of values, beliefs, institutions, and practices determine the gender biases of today that shape considerable threat and vulnerability around the world. Widespread changes such as urbanization are challenging women with new and dynamic settings rife with both opportunity and danger. Forces of global change, including the expansion of market capitalism and the awkward growth spurts of democracy, are having a similar impact on the condition of women. The full dimensions and social impacts of global economic, sociopolitical, environmental, and climate change are still imperfectly understood, but it is quite evident that in many contexts women will continue to bear the brunt of the many adverse impacts such as displacement, loss of livelihoods, infectious disease, and diffuse civil violence that these changes are generating.

This volume's findings represent a mixed story. In many ways, women's experiences of the structures of political, social, and cultural life around the world reflect the bleak continuity of gender-oppressive scenarios. This is a story we have heard in the security narratives focused on the unique experiences of women. This volume highlighted how paths such as fair trade or sustainable development that *should* offer opportunities to challenge the existing social order in many ways do not. In fact, certain developments, such as the growing access of women to microfinance loans, have been in some sense transformative, but this empowerment typically exists on a small scale, while representation in the formal financial sector remains limited.

In this concluding chapter, we briefly review the broader question of what the human security conditions are for women and why. Many of the authors built on continued evidence of the precarious position of women, while also exploring the potential and existing avenues for empowerment. Then we summarize some of the insights and tensions that arose across chapters. Finally, we call for more data, of all kinds, and imagine where better data might take us.

#### WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES OF HUMAN (IN)SECURITY

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Addressing the condition of human security, Patricia A. Weitsman showed how national and cultural identity construction can culminate in sexual violence against women in wartime and the ongoing discrimination against children born of rape in wartime. These findings suggest that as we deconstruct the ways governments manipulate identities, we will better understand when

and why women are most vulnerable to sexual violence in wartime. Similarly investigating more specific power dynamics, Mia Bloom examined the ways in which women are manipulated into roles of both victims and perpetrators of violence. Finally, Rachel Stohl analyzed how small arms and light weapons heighten women's vulnerabilities to violence, but she also promisingly discussed the great potential of integrating women and girls into policymaking.

This volume also revealed unique opportunities for empowerment and continued limitations on empowerment as well as situations where empowerment and agency are already underway. Some chapters addressed the potential of gender-sensitive research methods. For instance, Tera Dornfeld and Nina M. Flores discussed a feminist interpretation of the public-powered volunteer data-collection movement, "citizen science." Holly Dunn examined how researchers should critically assess the terminology and epistemology used to better understand women's situations when undertaking research in violent contexts. Pushing to empower women in a more practical context, Elissa McCarter LaBorde analyzed microfinance as a development tool and, in doing so, brought understanding to how women operate as agents of change. In this same vein, Gunhild Hoogensen Gjorv pushed our understanding of the role and implications of gender sensitivity when it comes to the global military presence. Vandana Asthana's chapter examined the profound gender disparities in India in terms of income, education, and health and illustrated the ways in which environmental issues, especially those related to the food-energy-water nexus, all disproportionately affect women's experiences. In combination, these chapters explored the possibilities and limitations of civilian agency—what women do, or how they are limited, when they find their security challenged and must turn to various avenues for voice and empowerment. The insights provided across these contexts, including the insecurities intersecting with environmental issues, reveal a variety of possibilities for women to claim agency.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC SECURITY INSIGHTS

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Climate change is no longer experienced only by those in arid interior zones, the Arctic, or low-income island nations or by those without defense systems. Climate change is increasingly experienced by all, no matter where their geographic location or status in life. For several authors, the security of women and girls is intricately linked to environmental security, both of which serve as

positive disruptors of traditionalist IR thought. The environment is the context in which both peace and conflict occur, and many of the situations that threaten security are related to local and global shifts in climate.

The authors of this volume recognize the interconnectedness between women's experiences, security, and the environment. Demonstrating such interconnectedness, the examples in McCarter LaBorde's chapter provide a vivid picture of how several real women's lives were nearly devastated following environmental disasters. Further, Martha Adriana Márquez-Salaices and Manuel Ángeles engaged in participatory research using a social ecological framework to investigate and support women of Comondú, Baja California Sur, in building personal capacity. These chapters provided a glimpse into how it might feel to have access to land denied and what motivates people to adapt or resist. Finally, through Asthana's description of the Tehri Dam project, a rich before-and-after portrait of life in the mountains was portrayed. In this way, the struggles of women losing security related to food production, supplemental income, physical well-being, and community-connections construction are deeply felt.

Overall, the authors offered powerful narratives that reflect women's roles as change agents (Asthana), citizen scientists (Dornfeld and Flores), united, politically active farmers (Márquez Salaices and Ángeles), and powerful economic actors (McCarter LaBorde). Reflecting this volume's call for frequent and rich empirical data, Dornfeld and Flores posited that "pushing on" the existing methodology of citizen science, focused on ecological data collection, could better showcase women's local ecological knowledge rather than focusing solely on the knowledge of distant expert scientists. McCarter LaBorde provided firsthand accounts from women's engagement with microfinance practices, detailing stories of the transformative power of a small loan and how offering financial tools to women in times of environmental distress will bolster women's and their families' resiliency. In this way, we are bringing attention to the need to understand civilian agency. Civilian agency therefore creates ties between the chapters addressing conflict-based human security issues and those about the environment.

#### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

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Alongside the emergence of positive, disruptive voices in the field of IR came the importance of context or, put differently, stories alongside statistics.

Chapters in this volume remind us of the critical importance of engaging with the human experiences that contribute to the security of a particular geography and how these relate to bottom-up solutions. Several authors highlighted the greater accuracy and complexity obtained through context-based partnerships and research. Joana Cook noted how partnerships with local women-led civil groups help counter violent extremism by bringing contextual knowledge, contacts, influence, and points of access.

Several chapters also presented the myriad of structural dynamics that live in relation to a particular context as well as the complexity that comes with reporting stories and phenomena across contexts, geographies, and time. Tensions between contextual immersion and traditional IR solutions are often leading us to the familiar argument for bottom-up solutions to security dilemmas.

Cook argued for the importance of organic, context-based approaches in understanding terrorist groups' motivations and grievances. She discussed how including women from local civic society organizations in counterterrorism efforts can address the core concerns of terrorist groups that top-down measures are unable to engage with. Although, broadly speaking, the participation of women resonates, and the shared activities, such as campaigning, networking have led to positive solutions, Cook simultaneously noted that violent extremism is handled uniquely by different countries with different histories and religious perspectives across the countries of the Middle East and North Africa.

Stohl described a different top-down model—disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programs. Most often these programs, which incentivize soldiers to exchange weapons for money or training, do not consider women as combatants; however, at times, women have implemented and benefited from them. Hoogensen Gjørsv pointed out the relevance of understanding the political and social dynamics within local communities, and the roles women have within them, to the conduct of international military operations. These examples underscore the importance of learning unique and culturally relevant solutions through contextual immersion.

Dunn's narrative provided a poignant example of local norms interacting with foreign financing policies. She demonstrated that local justice practices for situations of rape were acceptable to many community members, despite external pressure from international organizations to prosecute perpetrators that was strong—pitting “cultural norms against human rights.”

Weitsman's chapter presented the atrocity of systematic rape in Bosnia and Rwanda. The chapter reminds us of how this unique geography lived in constant relation to a government's wartime agenda and policy of forced impregnation—an agenda executed across contexts, aimed at altering individual definitions of identity and constructions of the self. This chapter also paid careful attention to the temporal scope of these experiences, demonstrating how over time this large-scale government policy, aimed at influencing political and cultural identity, lasted and affected the children born from these policies and their stigmatization and the abuse of their human rights.

Other chapters took a broader look across data to show similarities across contexts. Stohl's provided substantial evidence on how "small arms can seriously impact a woman regardless of where she lives—in a conflict zone or a nonconflict zone, in a developing country or in a developed one." She also highlighted connections between different black-market geographies where "in many of these same countries, women themselves are trafficked along the same routes as arms." Here we see the impact of violence from small arms as almost ageographic, while at the same time noting two linked geographies—human trafficking and the trafficking of small arms.

While the citation of broader trends in and of themselves can galvanize support by demonstrating the breadth of a problem or a promising solution, a focus on broad trends can also create recursive relationships. Dunn cautioned us against a traditional interpretation of reports and metrics, stating that in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo the presence of foreigners may elicit expectations of assistance," thereby unintentionally "incentivizing rape claims by facilitating access to humanitarian assistance." These examples bring to the surface the tension between what can be gained and lost from noting trends across contexts and the primary importance of providing rich contextual information on its own or as critical evidence of those trends.

#### A CALL FOR MORE DATA AND CONTEXTUALLY BASED THEORY

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In the substantive research areas covered by this book—women both as targets and purveyors of violence; women as providers of security, political, and social engagement; the environment; and development—there is still more to do. We need to continue to document gender-specific and contextualized (in)securities to make women's diverse experiences visible. At

the same time, however, we need to continue to explore the broader gender linkages in security, looking at the ways in which the security of women is related to more recent trends in gender and how gender impacts conceptions and understandings of security at the human, national, and international levels.

It is well established now that we cannot speak of security in terms of a “universal man,” a concept that neglected specific women’s experiences. Nevertheless, this idea is still the default in most settings—whether they be cultural norms, policies, or subjects in scientific studies. Given the continued dominance of non-gender-aware security perspectives despite the political commitments to “women, peace and security,” it becomes obvious that we need to illustrate even more clearly how women’s experiences of security are unique but also how women’s and men’s security needs are linked and how insecurity of the one often increases the insecurity of the other. To this extent, we need to learn more about men’s roles, how men can be and are supportive of women’s security, and how women create and support security for both women and men in their communities. Men and boys will be more secure when their mothers and sisters are more secure, as in not overburdened, beaten, raped, or otherwise threatened. Stohl’s chapter pointed out that “addressing through policy discussions the often dangerous attitudes men can have toward guns may provide breakthroughs in overcoming violence and lead men on the path toward more peaceful behaviors.”

This volume sought to show the alarming relationship between gender identity—particularly the category of “woman”—and different forms of security. However, looking forward in terms of who is considered a woman, we see that gender is increasingly recognized as a fluid concept and intimately related to the idea of identity.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, as what it means to experience life as a woman expands, we learn from recent analyses that in large part due to harassment, 41 percent of transgender or gender-nonconforming adults in the United States have attempted suicide (compared to 4.6 percent in the overall population and 10 to 20 percent of lesbian, gay, and bisexual adults.<sup>2</sup> In seeking security for women, it is critical to remember that the definition of “woman” is evolving and for women on the cusp of this change, human security vulnerabilities are unique and significant. These initial numbers suggest that in further evaluation of the experiences of trans or gender-nonconforming individuals, we may see unprecedented levels of vulnerability and insecurity. A first critical step in research is to continue development

of a basic statistical picture as well as contextual insights of women who are transgender or are gender-nonconforming. Although certain categories (i.e., male and female) are documented globally, other gender identities have not yet been accounted for, including how they are treated within existing and emerging policies.

This volume demonstrates that the concepts of human security and gender analysis have tremendous explanatory and normative power. We hope this work contributes toward encouraging even more scholarship and activism in the future. A human security agenda seeks to advance knowledge but also to empower the insecure, including individuals in traditional and nontraditional gender-identity categories.

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These findings are important in the context of the larger security landscape. With the end of the Cold War, scholars shifted their focus from the geostrategic landscape to less conventional threats such as environmental challenges, terrorist networks, humanitarian crises, and identity politics.<sup>3</sup> This shifting emphasis from state-centered security to human security has opened avenues of research, prominent among them being the disruptive discourses of feminism, human security, and environmentalism—areas that had largely been ignored by traditional security studies.

Pathbreaking scholarship in international security by feminist and gender studies scholars such as Jean Bethke Elshtain, J. Ann Tickner, and Cynthia Enloe, followed by advances made by Laura Sjoberg, Laura Shepherd, Maria Stern, Annick Wibben, Swati Parashar, and Charli Carpenter, among others, opened the door to issues of particular concern to women and/or exposed the importance of understanding security through a gendered lens. This volume hopes to build upon this work as well as works beginning to explore intersections between women's lived experiences and environmental security.<sup>4</sup>

The chapters in this volume hopefully bring further evidence of the importance of these discourses in relation to current security questions and practice. They show us that the profile of a suicide terrorist cannot be constrained by gender, that the war experience extends to sexual violence and emanates from the way identity is constructed, that small arms and light weapons are not merely vehicles for advancing national interest but have consequences on the daily peacetime lives of women, that environmental

issues often have disproportionate negative effects on the lives of women, and that development policies may empower women in some ways but can undermine them in others. This volume effectively connects critical themes of security to the well-being of women's lives around the globe.

The intellectual and social impacts of disruption are entering a new phase of strength and support globally. The focus of the intellectual movement in IR and policymaking may no longer be aligned with the norms of large institutions but instead may come from the diverse voices of those fighting for representation, equality, and change, such as Malala Yousafzai's voice in shaping the UN Millennium Development Goals.

Similarly, the innovation and diffusion of powerful information and communication technologies that have made it harder to centralize power on a sustained basis and that have empowered civil society in ways that are unprecedented offer a growing repertoire of tools available for advancing human security. However, these same tools can also empower actors willing to exploit and marginalize women.

The chapters in this volume may help us understand what we are seeing—challenges to the societal constraints placed on women and girls. This book argued that the more empirical and contextual data we have, the stronger the basis for solid analysis and policy decision-making. The book presented various struggles and solutions in diverse contexts, but the relationship between women's experience and power is far from resolved. Questions on constraints to freedom—tackling assault, education, political representation, and freedom of expression—remain. We have seen gains in literacy and life expectancy in the abstract and in some contexts, but these were often designed or driven by opportunities in technology and need for a larger skilled workforce. These gains have not translated into greater political representation and power.

Though these chapters on women's voices, security, and the environment were gathered a while ago, this compilation is coming out at a unique and exciting moment in time. Of late, there has been a sense of nostalgia for well-worn and familiar oppressive norms and policies—the “good old days”—and some have documented this as a backlash to the empowerment of diverse voices and a rejection of international agendas focused to support for women and girls, human security, and environmental sustainability. However, the world has also witnessed a great mobilization on behalf of women and girls around political agendas, demanding change in cultural



norms and sexual harassment and assault. Over the past few years, we have seen cases and moments such as the story of Malala, Iceland's equal pay law, demonstrations in the United States such as the Women's March, and the #MeToo movement. We have seen policy changes in countries such as Pakistan and India regarding rape accusations and punishments, though action behind these policies are still weak. This may mean that the whole process of empowerment and vulnerability has specific and unique geographic moments. Because the fields of women and gender security studies and environmental security created a theoretical turbulence in the field of IR that has enriched and expanded the field, these current voices, movements, and moments will demonstrate over and over that they are the present and the future.

#### NOTES

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1. Howard, "Social Psychology of Identities."
2. Haas, Rodgers, and Herman, "Suicide Attempts."
3. For a review, see Weitsman, "Book Award Reward."
4. E.g., Reardon and Hans, *Gender Imperative*.

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Holly Dunn is an assistant professor at the University of South Florida in the School of Interdisciplinary Global Studies. She completed her PhD in political science at the University of Minnesota. Dr. Dunn's fieldwork is in Uvira, Democratic Republic of Congo, where she studies justice practices in the context of transition from war to peace. She explores how and where people seek justice for "ordinary" harms and disputes in the ruins of war. In particular, she focuses on the formation of legal consciousness through legal reform activities in contexts defined by legal pluralism. Are informal justice practices abandoned? Do people internalize the precepts of liberal legalism? Further, Dr. Dunn is interested in analyzing and reflecting on the strengths and weaknesses of various approaches to studying conflict and gender-based violence. Her research is supported in part by funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

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**Elissa McCarter LaBorde** is a seasoned executive manager with twenty years' experience in leading organizations that are dedicated to designing financial products and services for low-income customer segments. She currently serves in the dual role of vice president of development finance for Global Communities, a nonprofit international development organization, and chief executive officer of Vitas Group, a for-profit holding company founded by Global Communities. Vitas Group is the largest commercial network of financial services companies in the Middle East and employs over thirteen hundred local professional staff in the region. Prior to Global Communities, she spent seven years in the field starting up financial services companies and has lived and worked in Armenia, Benin, France, Turkey, and Zimbabwe. Ms. LaBorde is the author of two books on mergers in microfinance and continues to publish articles and opinion pieces that span a number of topics related to financial inclusion. She has a master's degree from Georgetown University School of Foreign Service and the Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris. Since 2009, she has also served as an adjunct professor at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies.

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# Index

- Abdelaziz, Ayat, 111
- Afghanistan, 143; civil-military interactions in, 128; gender issues in, 129; Kandahar Province, 53; small arms violence in, 53; snapshots from, 132–35; terrorist groups, 68; US operations in, 127, 132–35, 138; women's experiences in, 9, 129, 132–35, 138, 139, 145
- African Union, 100
- Agarwal, Bina, 186–87, 227
- Agrawal, Arun, 212–13
- Agricultural Industrial Unit for Rural Women, 247
- Agromart Foundation, 274, 275
- Ahmad, Arin, 92n44
- Aisha, Darine Abu, 70, 73, 89
- Akayesu, Jean-Paul, 37
- Akras, Ayat, 66, 67, 91n11
- al-Aqsa Intifada, 68
- al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, 66, 70, 71, 75, 89
- Alayan, 'Itaf, 73–74
- al-Azhar University Religious Ruling Committee, 74
- Alexander II, 90
- Alfa antiterrorist unit, 89
- Algeria, 90
- Algerian Revolution, 68
- Ali, Nadje al-, 103
- Al Jazeera television, 75, 76–77
- al-Khansaa, 68
- Alkire, Sabina, 100, 115
- Alliance for Finance Inclusion (AFI), 269
- al-Qaeda, 63, 67, 76, 97, 127; women in, 68, 76
- al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), 105, 106
- al-Quds Open University, 75
- al-Shaab*, 71
- al-Shabaab, 67, 106
- Altvater, Elmar, 239
- Ansar al-Mujahideen, 66, 77
- Ansari, Adnan N., 109
- Aolain, Fionnuala Ni, 108–9
- AQAP. See al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula
- Arab Spring, 103, 105
- Arctic University of Norway, 3
- Arias, Óscar, 57
- Ariza, Natalia, 255
- Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), 57
- Asharq al-Awsat*, 76
- Assad, Bashar al-, 104
- Association of Forestry Producers of Chihuahua, 250
- Association of Forestry Producers of Comondú, (UMAFOR 302), 243, 245–46, 248, 252, 255
- Atran, Scott, 91n11
- Australia, 58
- Autesserre, Séverine, 157
- Axworthy, Lloyd, 134
- Baader-Meinhof Faction, 68, 90
- Baaz, Maria, 157
- Baimuradova, Shakhidat, 79
- Banuri, Tariq, 11–12
- Barayeva, Khava, 78
- Barkin, David, 249
- BBC, 159
- BCS. See Mexico: Comondú, Baja California Sur
- Beijing Conference, 8
- Berman, Eric, 51
- Besayev, Shamil, 78, 79
- Beyer, Clara, 65
- Bin Laden, Osama, 76, 127
- Birdhouse Network, 216
- Birzeit University, 71
- Bi-Strategic Command Directive 040–001, 140
- Black Panthers, 68
- Black Tigresses, 68
- Black Widows, 67, 77–83, 88
- Boko Haram, 67
- Bonney, Rick, 213, 215
- Borlaug, Norman, 259n4
- Bosnia-Herzegovina: Bosnian women, violence against, 29–34, 38; civil war, 29–34; Croats, 29, 30; Dobož camp, 31–32; independence, 29; Kalinovik camp, 32; Muslims, 29–34; Omarska camp, 29–30; rape camps, 30–34, 38, 41, 42; Serbs, 29–34; Srebrenica, 29
- bottom billions, 183–84



- Boulding, Kenneth, 239  
 Brundtland Commission report, 8, 239–40  
 Burris, Mary Ann, 221  
 Bush, Laura, 133, 134, 137
- Cambodia, 53  
 Canada, 10, 12, 58, 134  
 capabilities approach, 13  
 Catholic Relief Services, 270  
 Centro Latino Americano de Ecología Social (CLAES), 241, 260n27  
 Chechen-Russian Friendship Society, 81  
 Chechnya, 67, 68, 77–83, 88; Dagestani, 67, 77; Kurchaloi, 80; suicide bombers, 64, 65, 66–67, 70, 77–83; women, 66–67, 77–83  
 Chipko Movement, 189, 192  
 CIMIC. *See* North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO): Civil-Military Cooperation  
 citizen science: areas of exclusion within, 218–22; challenging power relations within, 218–22; citizen-scientist relationship within, 222–24, 226; co-created projects, 214–15; collaborative projects, 214; contributory projects, 214, 215, 216–17; critical pedagogy and, 222–24; data collection, 214–16, 222–23; definition of, 209; gendered imbalance in research, 209, 217; hierarchical relationships within, 220–21, 226–27; human security and, 207–27; journal articles, 216, 217; lack of diversity in, 219, 225–27; philosophy behind, 208; projects, 213–15; purpose, 213; reflexivity and, 209; reimagining, 225–27; research question, 214, 220; success within a larger system, 217–18; volunteer network, 207, 214, 216, 217, 218; women and, 207–27  
 Ciudad Constitución Institute of Technology, 253  
 civilian agency, 4; women as agents, 137–40  
 civil-military operations: challenges of integrating gender awareness, 143–46; gender awareness in, 126–47; implementing gender in, 140–41; militarization of civilian space, 141–45; role of civilians, 141–45; women as agents, 137–40  
 civil society programs, women and, 102–3  
 climate change, 3, 289–90; access to water, 211–12; citizen science projects, 215; hypothesis-driven data collection, 211–12; security threat of, 210–13  
 Cohen, Dara Kay, 160  
 Cold War, 1, 2, 8, 28, 128, 138, 294  
 colonialism, 10, 39  
 Columbia, 65, 272–73  
 Comisión Ejidal Santo Domingo, 247  
 Commission on Human Security, 11  
 common property resources (CPRs), 194–96, 203n45  
 Community Forest Company, 252, 253  
 conceptual ambiguity, 156  
 Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 101  
*Corriere della Sera*, 69  
 countering violent extremism (CVE), 97–119; generalizations regarding, 108–9; human security and, 98–106, 114–19; initiative approaches, 113–14; literature on, 107; women and, 100–101, 106–14; women in counterterrorism interventions, 111, 115–16  
 counterinsurgency (COIN) approach, 143  
 cowboy economy, 239  
 CPRs. *See* common property resources  
 Croatia, 29  
 Cukier, Wendy, 48, 50–51  
 CVE. *See* countering violent extremism
- Daesh, 13  
 Daraghme, Hiba, 75  
 DDR. *See* disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programs  
 Degauque, Muriel, 64  
 Delgado-Cobas, Leticia, 240  
 Del Rosso, Stephen J., Jr., 99  
 democratic governance, 115–16  
 Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), 5, 154–72; Bukavu, 160, 172; domestic violence, 170; forced marriage, 168–71; gender-based violence in, 154, 156, 158–60, 166–71; inheritance practices, 169–71; Minove, 154; South Kivu Province, 155, 160; SVS metaphor and, 156–59, 170; Uvira, 155, 156, 170, 172; Western perceptions/narrative, 157–59, 161–62, 169–71  
 Devi, Maina, 194  
 Dhanu, 84–84, 93n72  
 digital finance services, 268  
 disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programs, 54–55; exclusion from, 54; women and, 54–55, 59  
 disruptive discourse, 2, 7–8, 287  
 DRC. *See* Democratic Republic of Congo  
 Droukdel, Abdelmalek, 105  
 Dubrovska Theater, 77, 78, 79  
*Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror* (Bloom), 81  
 Dzhibirkhanova, Satsita, 80

- Earth Summit, 1992, 8  
 ecofeminism, 186–88  
 Egypt, 103, 112  
 El Al, 69  
 El Porvenir community bank, 252  
 Elshtain, Jean Bethke, 8  
*El Sudcaliforniano*, 260n36  
 Empresas Forestales Comunitarias (EMCs), 248–49  
 Enloe, Cynthia, 8  
*Environmental Human Security in the Arctic*, 3  
 epidemic outbreaks, 5–6  
 ethnic cleansing, 32  
 Evia, Graciela, 242, 245  
 Evolution MegaLab, 215
- Fadlallah, Muhammad Hussein, 75  
 Farr, Vanessa, 49–50  
 Fatah, 71, 73  
 feminist/feminism, 2; citizen science and, 207–27; discourse, 8–10; discourse, environmental, 186–88; scholarship, 156; security studies, 13; suicide bombers, 63–91  
*Feminist Security Studies: A Narrative Approach* (Wibben), 185  
 FETs. *See* United States Marine Corps female engagement teams  
 field research: building relationships during, 161–63; false expectations, 162–63; interviews, 163–65; positionality, 161  
 financial exclusion, 268–70  
 financial inclusion: empowering women, 276; gender gap, 265; group lending, 267; microcredit, 267, 274; microfinance, 265–84; movement, 266–68; randomized control trials (RCTs), 269–70, 275; women and, 265–84  
 Fink, Naureen Chowdhury, 109  
 First Chechen War, 78  
 First Palestinian Intifada, 68  
 Foca High School, 30  
 Fonseka, Sarath, 76  
 Foundation for Support of Women's Work, 277  
 Francis (pope), 208  
 Friere, Paulo, 223, 226  
 FSB. *See* Russian Federal Security Service  
 Fundación Mundo Mujer, 273
- Gadhiyev, Geidar, 80  
 Gallo, Andrew A., 115–16  
 Gandhi, Rajiv, 84, 93n72  
 Ganor, Boaz, 87  
 Gardenroots, 221  
 Gazuyeva, Elza (Luisa), 80  
 gender awareness: challenges of integrating, 143–46; implementing gender, 140–41; in civil-military operations, 126–47; military and, 146–47  
*Gendered States: (Re)Visioning International Relations* (Peterson), 8  
 gender field advisers (GFAs), 141, 144  
*Gender in International Relations* (Tickner), 8  
 Gender Perspective and Cultural Mission of the National Forestry Commission of Mexico, 251, 261n52  
 genocide, 32; Rwanda, 34–41, 156  
 Germany, 68  
 Ghani, Ashraf, 134  
 Global Center on Cooperative Security, 109  
 Global Communities and Vitas Group, 271, 273–74  
*Global Environmental Change and Human Security*, 3  
 global environmental politics, 3  
 Global Findex Database, 267  
 Global Summit to End Sexual Violence, 154  
 Green, Amelia Hoover, 160  
 Green Revolution, 237, 259n4  
*Guardian, The*, 154, 159  
 Gudynas, Eduardo, 238, 239–40, 241–42, 245, 260n17, 260n28  
 Gular, Otas, 76  
 Gulf War, 41  
 Gutman, Roy, 29
- Hamas, 70, 72–75  
 Harambasic, Fikret, 29  
 Haraway, Donna, 161  
 Harding, Sandra G., 219  
 Hassan, Ali Abu al-, 74  
 Hassan, Nasra, 73  
 Hinduism, 85  
 HIV, 38  
 Hudson, Natalie Florea, 101  
 Huisman, Kimberly, 162  
 human, definition of, 13  
 Human Rights Watch, 82  
 human security, 2, 4, 12; academic response to, 11–12; citizen science and, 207–27; concept of, 11, 12, 100; definition of, 98–101; discourse, 10–15; encouraging opportunities for women in, 101–2; environment and, 186–88; globalism of, 11; international lens, 129–32; Japan and, 12; literature, 13; microfinance and, 270–71; operationalizing, 8; programming that fosters, 102–3; terrorist groups and, 104–6; women and, 47–59, 97–119, 186–88, 288–89

- Human Security Network, 101, 120n18
- Hurricane Katrina, 273
- Hussein, Saddam, 76–77
- hypothesis-driven data collection, 211–12
- Iceland, 296
- identity: -based insecurity, 6; defining, 32–33, 38–39; government policies of, 28–42; patriarchal societies and, 41; rape and, 34, 38–42; self-esteem and, 41; violent extremism and, 97–119; war and, 27–42; women and, 27–42
- Idris, Iffat, 111
- Idris, Wafa, 71–72, 73
- IED. *See* improvised explosive device
- IFC. *See* International Finance Corporation
- impregnation, forced, 28, 30–34, 41–42; termination of, 32
- improvised explosive device (IED), 64, 75, 76
- Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity Working Group, 219
- India: agriculture and food security, 184–85, 201; Athoorwala, 195; basic needs and subsistence tasks, 190; biomass, 190–91; common property resources (CPRs), 194–96; community cohesion, loss of, 197; crop diversity, loss of, 196–97; food security, loss of, 196–97, 201; Garhwal region, 185, 187–89, 196–97, 199; gender roles, 183–201; Gopeshwar, 189; Hardwar District, 195; health issues, 197–98; household tasks, 191, 198; income generating tasks, 191–92, 194–202; mental health issues, 197–98; migration, forced, 194–96, 200; mountain societies, 184, 185, 191–92; natural resources, 185, 189, 194–97, 199–200; power, loss of, 198; Reni, 189; resettlement sites, 194–96, 197–98; small arms and light weapons, 58; strategies of resilience, 199; suicide bombers, 76; Tehri, 194–95; Tehri Dam project, 183–201; Uttarakhand, 185, 188–89; water quality, 194–96; women's contribution to household food and economic security, 190–92, 199–200
- Indian Peacekeeping Force, 84
- indigenous knowledge, 212–13
- infanticide, 41
- Interahamwe, 35, 36, 37
- International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA), 58–59
- International Center for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), 184
- International Civil Society Network (ICAN), 111–12
- International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), 35, 37–38; Witness GAG, 37–38
- International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia (ICTY), 42n8
- International Finance Corporation (IFC), 277
- International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT), 87
- international relations (IR), 1–2, 3, 64; environmentalism and, 3; field, 1–2; gender and, 8–10; mainstream themes, 3
- International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), 129
- IR. *See* international relations
- Iran, 90
- Iranian Revolution, 68
- Iraq, 63–64, 143; Diyala Province, 68, 77; Najaf, 272; peacemaking efforts, 12–13; rape campaigns, 68; terrorist groups, 68; US invasion of, 13, 76
- Iron King Mine Humboldt Smelter Superfund site, 221
- Isabella, Tania, 272–73
- ISIL. *See* Islamic State
- ISIS. *See* Islamic State
- Islam: Bosnian, 29–34; extremism, 111–12; fatwas, 77, 82; gender roles, 71–73, 74, 75; jihad, 64–65, 67, 70, 72, 73, 74, 75, 97; Salafi, 97; shariah, 73, 74; Shi'a, 75; stereotypes regarding, 112–13; women martyrs and, 70, 72–75, 77, 82–83
- Islambouli Brigades, 81
- Islamic State, 13, 97; of Iraq and Syria (ISIS/ISIL), 63, 67, 97, 104, 106; women in, 104–5
- Israel and the Occupied Territories: Afula, 75; checkpoints and border policy, 65; Gaza, 72, 80; Haifa, 75; Jenin, 75; Jerusalem, 73; Palestinians, 65, 66, 68, 69, 70–77, 80, 90; suicide bombings, 64–66, 70, 75, 80; terrorism and gender, 69, 70; Tubas, 75; West Bank, 80
- Israel Defense Forces, 69
- Italy, 68
- Izz Eddin al-Qassam brigades, 74
- Jaish-e-Mohammed, 76
- Japan, 12, 68
- Jaradat, Hanadi, 75
- Jassem, Wadad Jamil, 77
- Jassim, Samira Ahmed, 68
- Jebb, Cindy R., 115–16
- Jordan, 63, 103, 272
- Jorz, Ana, 278
- Kadyrov, Akhmad, 79
- Kagame, Paul, 38
- Kaldor, Mary, 99–100, 115

- Kamuhanda, Jean de Dieu, 37–38  
 Kaplan, Laila, 76  
 Karadzic, Radovan, 31  
 Karzai, Hamid, 134  
 Kemmis, Stephen, 238  
 Kenya, 52, 269  
 Khaled, Leila, 69  
 Khan, Humera, 109  
 Khandker, Shahidur, 269  
 King, Gary, 99  
 Koddenbrock, Kai, 158  
 Kronsell, Annica, 142  
 Krylya rock concert, 79  
 Kugenthirarsah, Anoja, 76  
 Kurdish Worker's Party (PKK), 68, 70, 76, 87
- landmines, 54; mine awareness programs, 54;  
 women and, 54  
*Landmines and Human Security*, 3  
 Laskar-e-Tayyba, 76  
 Latin American social ecology, 238; assistance-  
 based model, 253–54, 255; community banks  
 program, 250, 252, 254; considerations on,  
 241–43; Ejido 5, Comondú, 244–53; equity  
 and, 249; field trips, 250, 252; focus groups,  
 251; interactive, 249–53, 257t; phases in the  
 praxis of, 257t; responses to questionnaire,  
 258t; sustainability, 241–42, 249; training, 251,  
 253, 257t  
 Lebanon, 271  
 Lebanon War, 68  
 Leff, Enrique, 243  
 Le Masson, Virginie, 210  
 Lévy, Bernard-Henri, 86  
 Liberalist perspective, 2, 8  
 Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE),  
 83–87; female fighters in, 70, 83–87, 90; male  
 fighters in, 70; rape victims in, 85; reasons for  
 joining, 84, 86  
 Liberia, 160  
 Libya, 103, 112, 143  
 literacy, 5, 9, 105  
*Los Angeles Times*, 80–81  
 LTTE. *See* Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
- MacLean, George, 99  
 Maghribi, Dalal, 69  
*Man, the State and War* (Waltz), 1  
 Marhia, Natasha, 13  
 Márquez-Salaices, Martha Adriana, 241  
 Marxists, 2  
 maternity, forced, 28, 30–31, 42; connection to  
 children's fathers through, 28, 33, 39–42  
 Matthew, Richard A., 4  
 Maxim's, 75  
 Maya Enterprise for Microfinance, 277  
 Mazhikhoyeva, Zarema, 67–68, 79–80  
 McTaggart, Robin, 238  
 Mearsheimer, John, 2  
 Mehaydali, Sana'a, 65  
 Meinhof, Ulrike, 90  
 Memorial, 82  
 Merchant, Carolyn, 186  
 #MeToo movement, 296  
 Mexico: colonization, 236; Comondú, Baja  
 California Sur (BCS), 235–55; Comondú,  
 history, 236–37; Ejido 5, 235, 239, 244–45,  
 247–55; environmental damage, 245–49;  
 gender-based discrimination, 252–53; land  
 use practices, 237–38; La Paz, 236, 247; Los  
 Cabos, 236; maps, 256f, 257f; Mexico City,  
 237, 253; natural resources, 238, 245–49;  
 oregano production, 252–53; Secretariat of  
 Public Education, 252; sustainability, 238–41;  
 Valley of Canto Domingo, 236–37; water use,  
 237; women's empowerment projects, 237–38,  
 244–45, 245–53  
 microcredit, 267, 274  
 microfinance, 265–84; Aziza, 272; Dhafeera,  
 272; empowering women, 276; Ghada, 271;  
 human security risks, 270–71; moving women  
 upward through, 276–78; Mrs. Kanthilatha,  
 274–75; repayment rates, 268; small and  
 medium enterprise (SME) owners, 277–81;  
 women clients, 265–66  
 microinsurance, 275  
 Middle School No. 1, 81  
 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), 12,  
 255, 295  
 mine awareness programs, 54  
 Mine Ban Treaty, 12  
 Mladic, Ratko, 31  
 Mufflehun, 109  
 Muggah, Robert, 51  
 Murray, Christopher J. L., 99  
 Mutua, Makau W., 155, 157
- Nagayeva, Amanat, 80, 81  
 Nagayeva, Roza, 81  
 Nagayeva, Uvays, 81  
 NATO. *See* North Atlantic Treaty  
 Organization  
 natural resource management, feminization of,  
 184, 189–90  
 nature, women's relationship to, 186–88, 247–49  
 Nautiyal, Rani, 195

- Nigeria, 58  
 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO),  
 100, 134, 140; Civil-Military Cooperation  
 (CIMIC), 133, 141, 144, 145  
 Norway, 133, 139  
 Nussbaum, Martha, 10, 13  
 Nyiramasuhuko, Pauline, 36
- Obama, Barack, 108, 207  
 Olachea, Agustín, 236–37  
 Oosterman, Irma, 31  
 Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), 129, 133  
 Organization for Security and Co-operation in  
 Europe (OSCE), 100, 110  
 Orbals, Candice D., 110  
 Osama, Um, 76  
 Oslo Accords, 74  
 Oxfam, 239, 259n10
- Páez G., Armando, 240  
 Pakistan, 89, 268  
 Palestine, 68, 69, 103; al-Am'ari refugee camp,  
 71; gender roles, 70; military involvement  
 of women, 70–72; Ramallah, 71; shahidas,  
 70–77; suicide bombers/bombings, 64–66,  
 70, 71, 80, 87–88  
 Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), 75  
 Palestinian Islamic Movement, Women's  
 Activities Division, 72–73  
 Palestinian Red Crescent Society, 71  
 Panzi Hospital, 160  
 Paris, Roland, 12  
 participatory action research (PAR), 209,  
 221–22  
 Parti Populaire Syrien (PPS), 65  
 Partizan Sports Hall, 30  
*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Friere), 223  
 Pentagon, 127  
 Peterson, V. Spike, 8  
 Philanthropice Foundation, 261n49  
 photovoice, 221  
 PIJ. See Palestinian Islamic Jihad  
 PKK. See Kurdish Worker's Party  
 political security, 12  
 Poloni-Staudinger, Lori, 110  
 postwar situations/peace: gender and, 7, 8;  
 global peace operations, 138; involving women  
 in peacebuilding activities, 137–38  
 Prabhakaran, Velupillai, 83, 93n72  
*Pravda*, 77  
 Prevent, 112  
*Protecting Civilians from Violence*, 137  
 Putin, Vladimir, 80–82
- Qaradawi, Yusuf al-, 73
- Radio Rwanda, 36  
 Rajaratnam, A., 93  
 Rajasingham-Senanyake, Darini, 85–86  
 rape/sexual assault: age and, 167–68, 175n76,  
 175n78; camps, 29–34; children of, 32–34, 39–  
 42; cultural genocide through, 32; false claims,  
 174n49; marriage and, 168–69; mass, 27–30,  
 36; rubric of, 167; spousal, 170; statutory,  
 167–68, 175n76; systemic campaigns, 5, 36–38,  
 167; TGQN (transgender, genderqueer,  
 or nonconforming), 6; victim shaming,  
 34, 41–42; wartime, 18, 154–55, 157–59, 163,  
 165–67, 170, 173n17
- Rasema, 31  
 Raworth, Kate, 239  
 RCTs. See financial inclusion: randomized  
 control trials  
 realists, 2, 8  
 Red Army, 68  
 Red Brigade, 68  
 Red Cross, 35  
 Refugees International, 52  
 Rehn, Elisabeth, 53, 55  
 Riashi, Reem, 74  
 Rio+20 Conference, 239  
 Rio Summit, 239  
 Rishawi, Sajida Atrous al-, 63, 64  
 Rockefeller Foundation, 259n4  
 Rockström, Johan, 239  
 Romania, 278
- Russia, 77; Beslan, 81; Budennovsk, 78; Grozny,  
 79; Gudermes, 79; Moscow, 77, 78, 79, 80,  
 81; Rostov-on-Don, 80; Sochi, 80; terrorist  
 attacks, 69, 77–83, 88; Tushino airfield, 79;  
 Tverskaya Yamskaya Ulitsa street, 67, 80  
 Russian Federal Security Service (FSB), 80  
 Russian Interior Ministry, 79
- Rwanda, 28, 34–41; Bugesera, 36; Butare  
 Province, 35, 36; colonialism, role of, 39;  
 genocide, 34–41, 156; Gikomero, 37; Hutu,  
 35–41; identity politics, 38–40, 43n18;  
 Kabgayi, 39; Kigali, 35; Kigali-Rural Province,  
 37; mass rape, 36–37, 39–40, 42; Musambira  
 commune, 39; Prefecture of Gitarama, 37;  
 propaganda campaigns, 35–36; small arms  
 violence in, 53; Taba Commune, 37; Tutsi,  
 34–41
- Salakhin Riadus Shakhidi, 78  
 SALW. See small arms and light weapons  
 Sasha, 31

- Saudi Arabia, 91n11, 102  
 Saudi High Islamic Council, 72  
 savages-victims-saviors (SVS) metaphor,  
   155–57, 161–62; Eastern DRC and, 156–59, 170  
 Schlaffer, Edit, 108  
 Second Chechen War, 81, 88  
 Sen, Amartya, 10, 11, 13, 240  
 Serbia, 28–34  
 sex trafficking, 5, 52; age and, 5–6; gender and,  
   5–6  
 sexual harassment, 7  
 Shanab, Isma'il Abu, 72  
 Shanti, Jamila, 72  
 Sharoni, Simona, 91n24  
 Shin Bet, 69  
 Shirk, Jennifer, 213  
 Shiva, Vandana, 186, 187–88, 227  
 Sibir Airlines Tu-154, 80  
 Sirleaf, Ellen Johnson, 53, 55  
 Sisters Against Violent Extremism (SAVE), 108  
 Sitglitz Commission, 239  
 slippage, 156  
 Slovenia, 28–29  
 small arms and light weapons (SALW), 56;  
   attitudes toward, 48–49; Australia, 58;  
   Canada, 58; collection programs, 55; data  
   collection, 59; definition of, 47–48; domestic  
   violence and, 53; family violence and, 58;  
   gender perspectives on, 49–51, 57–59;  
   impact of misuse in peacetime, 49–52; impact  
   on women after conflict, 52–55; impact  
   on women in armed conflict, 51–52; India,  
   58; laws and policies, 56–57; Nigeria, 58;  
   recommendations for, 56–59; smuggling,  
   52; South Africa, 50, 58; Turkey, 51; United  
   States, 49–51, 58; women and, 47–59  
 SME. *See* small and medium enterprise owners  
*Sobesednik*, 82  
*Social Ecology of the Anthropocene, The*, 3  
 Sociedad Cooperativa Especies y Derivados del  
   Valle S.C. de R.L. de C.V., 252  
 Somalia, 68  
 South Africa, 50, 58  
 Speckhard, Anne, 104  
 Sri Lanka, 52, 83, 89–90, 274; Jaffna, 86;  
   Poovarasakulam, 76; Tamil, 68, 70, 85–87;  
   Vavuniya, 76; violence against women, 85–87  
 Sri Lankan Army, 86  
 State of the Microcredit Summit Campaign,  
   268–69  
 Steinberg, Matti, 72  
 sterilization, forced, 28  
 Stern, Maria, 157  
 suicide bombers, 63–91; Chechen, 64, 65, 66–67,  
   70, 77–83; Columbia, 65; Egypt, 64; feigning  
   pregnancy, 75–76, 84; feminism and, 63–91;  
   Iraq, 63–64, 65; ISIS, 63; Israel and the  
   Occupied Territories, 64, 65, 88; Lebanon,  
   64, 65; men, 67; Morocco, 64; Nigeria, 65, 75;  
   Palestine, 64–66, 70, 71, 80, 87–88; reasons  
   for becoming, 65, 67–68, 69; sexual abuse  
   and, 65; Somalia, 65, 75; Sri Lanka, 64–65, 75;  
   Turkey, 65, 75–76  
 superstrong sustainability, 240  
 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), 12  
 SVS metaphor. *See* savages-victims-saviors  
   metaphor  
 Syria, 103, 104–5  
 Syrian Socialist National Party (SSNP), 65  
 Taburova, Maryam, 81  
 tacit knowledge, 208, 210, 213  
 Taliban, 67, 89, 127, 140; female operatives, 67  
 Tamil Tigers, 52, 68, 83–87  
 Tantawi, Sayyid, 74  
 Tehri Dam project, 183–201; construction of,  
   193–94; Planning Commission, 193; strategies  
   of resilience for those affected by, 199; water  
   quality, 194–96  
 Tehri Hydro Development Corporation  
   (THDC), 193  
 terrorism, 63–91; gender stereotypes, 63–64;  
   profiles, 64; suicide bombers, 63–91; women  
   and, 63–91  
 TGQN (transgender, genderqueer, or  
   nonconforming), 6, 293  
 Tickner, J. Ann, 8  
 Tikush, 271  
 Toledo, Victor, 255  
 traditional ecological knowledge (TEK), 212, 222  
 transgender, genderqueer, or nonconforming  
   (TGQN), 6, 293  
 Tribunal de Grande Instance, 172n9  
 Tribunal de Paix, 172n9  
 Tribunal Militaire, 172n9  
 Trudeau, Justin, 10  
 TTP, 89  
 Tunisia, 103  
 Turkey, 90; Adana, 76; Kurds, 68, 87; small  
   arms and light weapons, 51; suicide bombers,  
   65, 75–76; ul Haq, Mahbub, 11; women  
   microfinance borrowers, 277–78; women's  
   military activism, 69–70  
 UMAFOR 302. *See* Association of Forestry  
   Producers of Comondú

- UNDP. See United Nations (UN):  
 Development Programme  
 United Kingdom, 112  
 United Nations (UN), 29, 48, 100;  
 Collaborative Programme on Reducing  
 Emissions from Deforestation and Forest  
 Degradation, 251 Commission of Experts,  
 30; Decade for Women in 1976–85, 8;  
 Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM),  
 55; Development Programme (UNDP),  
 11, 55, 64, 130; Global Counter-Terrorism  
 Strategy, 116; Human Development Index, 11,  
 237; Human Development Report, 8, 11, 130;  
 International Women's Year and Conference,  
 1975, 8; Organization Stabilization Mission  
 in the Democratic Republic of Congo  
 (MONUSCO), 157; Programme of Action  
 to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit  
 Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in  
 All Its Aspects (PoA), 57; Security Council  
 Resolution (UNSCR) 789, 30; Security  
 Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, 10–13,  
 49, 56, 59, 101–2, 106, 114, 118, 120n17, 126–29,  
 133, 135–40, 142, 144, 147; Security Council  
 Resolution (UNSCR) 1973, 143; Weapons  
 for Development collection program, 55;  
 Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda,  
 10, 127, 142  
 United States, 196, 293; Agency for International  
 Development, 145; Department of  
 Agriculture, 145; House of Representatives  
 and Senate, 133; September 11 attacks, 76, 127,  
 133; small arms and light weapons, 49–51, 58;  
 Special Forces, 53; terrorist groups, 68, 76  
 United States Marine Corps female  
 engagement teams (FETs), 128, 133–34, 139,  
 141, 144  
 University of Arizona, 221  
 University of California at Davis, 238  
 Uniyal, Bhagwati, 227  
 Uruguayan National Research and Innovation  
 Agency, 238  
  
 Victor, Barbara, 88  
 Vietnam War, 41  
 virtuous imperialism, 147, 158–59  
 Vitas Jordan, 272  
 Vitas Romania, 278  
 Volga-Aviaexpress Tu-134, 80  
 Vulliamy, Ed, 29  
  
 Wahaishi, Nasser al-, 105  
 Walt, Stephen, 1  
 Waltz, Kenneth, 1–2  
 Wang, Caroline, 221  
 war: causes of, 27; identity of parties involved,  
 27–42; preventing, 27; understanding, 27;  
 women and, 7, 8, 27–42, 63–91  
 War in Afghanistan, 127–28  
 Weathermen, 68  
 Weitsman, Patricia A., 4  
 Western scientific method, 212; areas of  
 exclusion, 218–22; hierarchical relationships  
 within, 220–21  
*Whose Science? Whose Knowledge?* (Harding), 219  
 Wibben, Annick T. R., 185  
 Wiesel, Eli, 57  
 Williams, Betty, 57  
 Winter Olympics, 77  
 Witkowsky, Anne, 108  
 women: citizen science and, 207–27; civil  
 society programs and, 102–3; definition of,  
 4; experiences, 4–10; financial inclusion and,  
 265–84; generalization of, 9–10; identity  
 and, 27–42; insecurity, 9, 10; postconflict  
 situations, 271–73; power dynamics, 4–5;  
 security, 9, 10, 13; terrorism and, 69–70; war  
 and, 7–8, 27–42, 63–91  
 Women's March, 296  
 Women's World Banking, 273  
 workplace inequality, 6  
 World Bank and International Monetary Fund,  
 224, 267–69  
 World Food Programme, 187  
 World Trade Center, 127  
 World War I, 1, 41  
 World War II, 1, 10, 41  
  
 Yassin, Ahmad, 73, 75  
 Yastrzhembsky, Sergei V., 82  
 Yayla, Ahmet S., 104  
 Yelikhadzhuyeva, Zulikhan, 79  
 Yemen, 103, 105  
 Yezhiyev, Imran, 81  
 Yousafzai, Malala, 295–96  
 Yugoslavia, 28, 29, 30, 41  
 Yussef, Hassan, 72  
  
 Zamora, Daniel Tagle, 249  
 Zarqawi, Abu Musab al-, 63  
 Zawilski, Valerie, 88