LOSSES AND GAINS: WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN ARMED CONFLICT AND THE AFTERMATH

by

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ABSTRACT

Despite international recognition of the roles that women assume during conflict and the specific needs and contributions women make both in perpetuating conflict and ending it, women frequently remain invisible to local, national and international actors working to rebuild the state in the post-conflict period. The contributions of women to conflict as combatants and in other support roles and their contributions "at home" during conflict in sustaining communities, economies and individuals is often unrecognized in demobilisation, demilitarisation and reintegration (DDR) and other reconstruction processes. According to some scholars and development practitioners, women's involvement in formal peace processes helps to overcome this; however, simply adding women to such processes is not enough to ensure their empowerment. This thesis examines the utility of women's organizations and networks as a tool to combat women's marginalisation in the aftermath of conflict and to consolidate the limited gains some women make in times of conflict.

I dedicate this thesis to my family for their support of all my educational

pursuits past, present and future.

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INTRODUCTION

Since the 1980's, a growing body of feminist literature on the subject of women and war has emerged in response to gendered assumptions in literature on conflict.[1] These assumptions purport that the masculine nature of warfare and violence and the feminine nature of pacifism and peace are based on biological differences between the two sexes.[2] Women are often grouped with children as vulnerable, helpless victims, whose vulnerability is itself a justification for armed conflict.[3] When visible, women are placed in the home, giving birth to and raising soldier sons[4] and "keeping the home fires burning". The presumed duties of women in times of war are extensions of their gendered roles as carers and nurturers, and their identities as mothers.[5]

In rejecting these assumptions, feminist scholars seek to make the invisible – women and girls – visible, and explore such themes as how gender roles, power relations and concepts of masculine and feminine are changed

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[1] Martha Thompson, "Women, Gender, and Conflict: Making the Connections," in *Development and Humanitarianism: Practical Issues*, ed. Deborah Eade and Tony Vaux, 226-233 (Bloomfield, C.T.: Kumarian Press, 2007).

[2] Cynthia Cockburn, "The Continuum of Violence: a Gender Perspective on War and Peace," in *Sites of Violence: Gender and Conflict Zones*, ed. Wenona Giles and Jennifer Hyndman, 27 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

[3] Caroline Moser and Fiona Clark, "Introduction," in *Victims, Perpetrators or Actors? Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence*, ed. Caroline Moser and Fiona Clark, 3 (London: Zed Books, 2002).

[4] Haleh Afshar, "Women and Wars: Some Trajectories Towards a Feminist Peace," in *Development, Women and War: Feminist Perspectives*, ed Haleh Afshar and Deborah Eade, 50 (Oxford: Oxfam GB, 2004).

[5] Ibid, 54.

during times of conflict.[6] Within this growing body of literature is an emphasis on

how war negatively impacts women and their vulnerability and victimization both

during and in the aftermath of armed conflict. More recently, increased attention

has been given to the roles of women as both victims and perpetrators of armed

conflict.[7] Feminist conflict literature also examines the contributions that women

can and do make in establishing peace through both formal and informal peace

processes; however, their analysis departs from the traditional views of women

as natural peacemakers because of their passive and peaceful natures. Rather,

feminist scholars assert that the importance of women's contributions to formal

and informal peace processes stem from their gender roles in society and their

unique experiences and needs both during conflict and in the stages of

reconstruction.[8] Although feminist scholars have made great strides in making

women visible and revealing the gendered nature of war, peace processes and

post-conflict reconstruction, many of these issues remain under examined and

require further analysis and research.[9] One such area is that of the

empowerment of women as a result of armed conflict.

Feminist scholars agree that during times of armed conflict, women make

important gains that lead to further empowerment and gender equality. As Dyan

Mazurana and Susan McKay state, "War can simultaneously oppress girls and

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[6] Martha Thompson, "Women, Gender, and Conflict," 226.

[7] Dyan Mazurana and Susan McKay, *Where are the Girls? Girls in Fighting Forces in Northern* Uganda, Sierra Leone and Mozambique: Their Lives During and After War, 121 (Montreal: Rights & Democracy, 2004).

[8] Cynthia Cockburn, "Gender in Armed Conflict and Peace Processes," *Cyprus Review*, 13, no.1 (2001): 71.

[9] Martha Thompson outlines some of these areas in, "Women, Gender, and Conflict," 225-243.

women and expand their possibilities."[10] This occurs because of the breakdown of society and community and the disruption of gender roles that occurs in times of war.[11] The absence of men because of conflict leads to increased responsibilities on women to head the household, earn a livelihood and assume roles in the community that are normally fulfilled by men. In many wars, women are also active as combatants, enabling them to acquire positions of leadership, skills and education that are transferable after conflict. As well, there are increased pressures from the international community on the state (during conflict and in the aftermath) to instate laws and norms enabling equality between women and men, including processes to empower women through education, access to economic resources, and political participation.[12] A survivor of war in El Salvador concludes, "Before the war women were not taken into consideration. Women were only working in the home. But, when war came, women came out of the house to demonstrate their capability. ... [I]t was war which meant that women could be taken seriously and that they could do a lot of things. It made people realize that women are capable of changing our society."[13]

The gains women achieve during conflict are often overshadowed in feminist literature by the severity of the losses women endure.[14] Because of the

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[10] Mazurana and McKay, *Where are the Girls?*, 17.

[11] Nicole Ann Dombrowski, ed., *Women and War in the Twentieth Century: Enlisted with or without Consent*, 18 (New York: Routledge, 1999).

[12] Tsjeard Bouta et al., *Gender, Conflict, and Development*, 56 (Washington, D.C.: The World Bank).

[13] Charlotte Lindsey, *Women Facing War: ICRC Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women*, 9 (Geneva: International Committee of the Red Cross, 2001).

[14] Ibid.

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absence of men, there are increased burdens and responsibilities on women to provide new forms of domestic labour and to assume new responsibilities in the community. Although these responsibilities can be empowering to women, the increased burdens on women also increase their risk of physical harm[15] and can result in the neglect of children.[16] Armed conflict interrupts the day-to-day activities of communities and prevents women and girls from accessing such services as education and medical services, as well as the acquisition of water and food. Armed groups often use physical force to conscript or kidnap women and girls for use in sexual, military and logistical roles. There is also increased prevalence of the use of rape, and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence against women as a tool or weapon of war. The targeting of women in this way is often an extension of the gender inequalities existent in a society or culture before the onset of violent conflict. The rape and sexual abuse of women frequently results in unwanted pregnancies and both physical and emotional injuries. These abuses impede women from returning to their families after their release, and also affect the successful reintegration of women into their communities. The majority of refugees and displaced persons resulting from conflict are women and children. In the camps, women are at an increased risk of physical and sexual abuse, and are further impeded in their ability to access basic necessities such as food, water. Finally, the insecurity and abuse experienced by women during conflict leave deep emotional and psychological

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[15] Judy El-Bushra, "Women, War and Transition," *Gender and Development* 3, no. 3 (1995): 17.
[16] Charlotte Lindsey, *Women Facing War*, 8.

scars that continue to affect women and their children long after the conflict has ended.

Furthermore, many of the gains some women achieve during conflict are often undone in the aftermath.[17] Oftentimes, the end of conflict signals a return to pre-conflict divisions of labour and gender roles for women and men.[18] Despite international recognition of the roles that women assume during conflict and the specific needs and contributions women make both in perpetuating conflict and ending it, women frequently remain invisible to local, national and international actors working to rebuild the state in the post-conflict period. The contributions of women to conflict as combatants and in other support roles and their contributions "at home" during conflict in sustaining communities, economies and individuals is often unrecognized in demobilisation, demilitarisation and reintegration (DDR) and other formal peace processes.[19]

This thesis seeks to examine the empowerment of women through armed conflict, as outlined above. Although the negative effects of war on women are significant, this thesis argues that some women do achieve increases in empowerment as a result of war. Because these gains are often overturned in the aftermath of conflict, there is a need to understand more fully how the limited gains some women make during war can be consolidated in the aftermath of

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[17] Sheila Meintjes et al., "There is No Aftermath for Women," in *The Aftermath: Women in Post-Conflict Transformation*, ed. Sheila Meintjes et al., 7-8 (London: Zed Books).

[18] Meintjes et al., "There is No Aftermath," 9; Cynthia Cockburn, "The Gendered Dynamics of Armed Conflict and Political Violence, in *Victims, Perpetrators or Actors? Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence*, 117-130 (London: Zed Books,, 2002).

[19] Sheila Meintjes, "War and Post-War Shifts in Gender Relations," in *The Aftermath: Women in Post-Conflict Transformation*, ed. Sheila Meintjes et al., 76 (London: Zed Books); Tsjeard Bouta et al., *Gender, Conflict, and Development*, 25.

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conflict. As well, the period of post-conflict reconstruction provides a space and opportunity to increase women's empowerment. This thesis examines women's participation in formal peace processes as a means to promote women's empowerment, and argues that although gains are achieved in some cases, further support is needed to ensure the participation of women and the inclusion of their needs and priorities in the processes of post-conflict reconstruction. This support may be found in grass-roots women's organizations and networks.

To begin, this thesis first examines the concept of empowerment and outlines the complexities of measuring empowerment as both outcome and process; a definition of empowerment and a set of indicators by which empowerment can be measured is established in the context of women's empowerment. In chapter two, the limited gains some women are able to make during times of war are revealed, including increased economic responsibilities, collective action and self-awareness. The losses of empowerment women often suffer in the aftermath of conflict are also examined and related to the trivialization of women's roles and contributions to conflict, increases of violence against women in the aftermath, and the assumptions that underlie a reversal to pre-war gender norms and power relations between women and men.

Chapter three of the thesis examines women's exclusion and inclusion in formal peace processes as a source of both disempowerment and empowerment. Although in some cases women's inclusion in these processes has led to increases in empowerment, further support is needed to enable women to sustain the limited gains some women are able to make during times

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of conflict and to enable further empowerment in the aftermath. The final chapter of the thesis examines the role of women's organizations as a provider of this support through two case studies: Viet Nam and Rwanda.

CHAPTER 1: THE EMPOWERMENT DISCOURSE

Empowerment is a multifaceted concept that is often used to indicate both a process and an outcome of that process.[20] This chapter provides an overview of the empowerment discourse and outlines the complexities of measuring empowerment as both outcome and process; a definition of empowerment and a set of indicators by which empowerment can be measured is established in the context of women's empowerment.

Empowerment and Power

At the heart of the empowerment discourse is the concept of power. Simply put, empowerment is the process of accumulating power;[21] whether this entails having power over someone or something, or having the power to make choices and affect change.[22] Traditional notions of power present the concept as a zero-sum game, in which A is able to exercise power over B. In other words, for A to gain power, B must in turn lose power. Associated with this

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[20] Rekha Datta and Judith Kornberg. "Introduction: Empowerment and Disempowerment," in *Women in Developing Countries: Assessing Strategies for Empowerment*, ed. Rekha Datta and Judith Kornberg, 1 (Boulder Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002); Carolyn Medel-Anonuevo. "Reclaiming the Empowerment Discourse: a Challenge to Feminists," in *Common Ground or Mutual Exclusion? Women's Movements and International Relations*, ed. Marianne Braig and Sonja Wolte, 82 (London: Zed Books, 2002).

[21] Jennifer L. Troutner and Peter H. Smith, "Introduction: Empowering Women: Agency, Structure, and Comparative Perspective," in *Promises of Empowerment: Women in Asia and Latin America*, ed. Peter H. Smith, Jennifer L. Troutner and Christine Hunefeldt, 4 (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2004).

[22] Kartik C. Roy and Jorn Sideras, "Institutions, Globalisation and Empowerment: an Overview of Issues," in *Institutions, Globalisation and Empowerment*, ed. Kartik C. Roy and Jorn Sideras, 12 (Northampton: Edward Elgar Publishing Inc., 2006).

conceptualization of power as *power over* are three main groups of theories on power: consensual theories, conflictual theories and "middle-ground" theories.[23]

Consensual theorists define power as the capacity to achieve outcomes; furthermore, power is formulated by society, through the granting of authority or legitimacy to a person, group or ideology to exercise power.[24] Thus, A has power over B, because B is socialized to recognize the authority of A;[25] in other words, B consents to the authority of A. In contrast, conflictual theories posit that power constitutes the protection of one group's interests against another group through coercion (often violent) and manufactured consensus (the illusion of legitimacy or authority).[26] Power is therefore manifested in the ability of A to get B to do something B would not otherwise do, and is reinforced through A's control over decision-making processes and the ability of A to shape B's interests in such a way that B consents to A's power over B.[27] Middle-ground theorists incorporate tenets from the various theories of each camp and assert that both conflict and consensus create power.[28] The empowerment discourse that emerged in the feminist literature during the 1970's is in part based upon the conflictual theories of power as *power over.* Throughout the 1970 and 1980's, Third World feminists used empowerment as a tool to expose gender differences

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[23] Alsop et al., *Empowerment in Practice*, 230. For an overview of the different theorists of each group, refer to Alsop et al., *Empowerment in Practice*, 238-241.

[24] Ibid, 231.

[25] Ibid, 238.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Troutner and Smith, "Empowering Women," 2-4; Alsop et al., *Empowerment in Practice*, 238.

[28] Alsop et al., *Empowerment in Practice*, 235, 238-241.

in the control over and distribution of resources.[29] These feminists conceived of power as relational, meaning, "... who has power over whom and who has power to influence whom."[30] However, unlike the conflictual theories of power, the ultimate goal of empowerment for feminists was not to gain power over men, but rather, "... to reduce and eventually eliminate the power differential between men and women ...."[31]

During this time period, other feminist scholars began to expand the typology of power[32] and to differentiate between conceptualizations of *power over* and *power to*.[33] *Power to* refers to the ability of an actor(s) to influence or create change; "... it is the power to act, mobilize, reimagine."[34] Within this conceptualization of power is an emphasis on strategies employed by women to gain increased control of resources and increased capacity for decision-making.[35] In the 1990's, the feminist discourse on empowerment amalgamated the two conceptualizations of *power over* and *power to* in an attempt to reconcile the two facets of empowerment as both a process and as an outcome.[36] Srilatha Batliwala explains this understanding of empowerment as manifesting "... a redistribution of power, whether between nations, classes, castes, races,

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[29] Datta and Kornberg, "Empowerment and Disempowerment," 2; Troutner and Smith, "Empowering Women," 5.

[30] Troutner and Smith, "Empowering Women," 5.

[31] Ibid, 4.

[32] Alsop et al., *Empowerment in Practice*, 232-233.

[33] Troutner and Smith, "Empowering Women," 5; Datta and Kornberg, "Empowerment and Disempowerment," 2.

[34] Troutner and Smith, "Empowering Women," 5.

[35] Datta and Kornberg, "Empowerment and Disempowerment," 2.

[36] Ibid.

genders, or individuals."[37]   She further identifies the goals of women's empowerment, which are "... to challenge patriarchal ideology ... ; to transform the structures and institutions that reinforce and perpetuate gender discrimination and social inequality ... ; and to enable poor women to gain access to, and control of, both material and informational resources."[38]

In accomplishing these goals, an actor's agency (the ability to choose and to act)[39] is constrained by opportunity structures. These structures are defined, "... as those aspects of the [formal and informal] institutional context within which actors operate that influence their ability to transform agency into action."[40] Thus, in order for an actor to attain empowerment or to become empowered, an opportunity structure must exist that is conducive to that actor's exercise of agency.[41]   At the same time, the transformative nature of the process of empowerment can itself create the necessary changes in opportunity structures that enable empowerment to occur.[42]   This is accomplished through the realization of two other forms of power: power within and power with.

Power within refers to an affirmation of an actor(s)' self-worth[43]; it is a process of self-awareness that enables people "... to perceive themselves as able and entitled to make decisions."[44] This self-awareness may come through

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[37] Srilatha Batliwala, as quoted in Datta and Kornberg, "Empowerment and Disempowerment," 2-3 and Troutner and Smith, "Empowering Women," 11.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Alsop et al., *Empowerment in Practice*, 11.

[40] Ibid, 10.

[41] Ibid, 16.

[42] Medel-Anonuevo, "Reclaiming the Empowerment Discourse," 85.

[43] Alsop et al., *Empowerment in Practice*, 232.

[44] Troutner and Smith, "Empowering Women," 6.

formal or informal education, the acquisition of skills and capacity building.[45]

Power with refers to collective action through organization and mobilisation of groups of actors for social change.[46] Within the empowerment discourse is an emphasis on the importance of collective action for the achievement of empowerment. Rekha Datta and Judith Kornberg assert, "... empowerment occurs most definitely when women mobilize themselves ...."[47] This is partly due to the fact that in mobilizing themselves, "women become conscious of their power relations and decisionmaking ability ...."[48] In other words, collective action and self-awareness are mutually reinforcing.[49]

Measuring Empowerment

The measurement of empowerment concentrates on the manifestation of the four types of power identified above through quantitative and qualitative analysis of what occurs in the social, cultural, political, and economic spheres. Table 1.1 summarizes these types of power and links each to a sphere of empowerment and a set of indicators by which empowerment can be measured.

Table 1.1

Type of Power	Empowerment Domain	Empowerment Indicators
Power to make decisions	Political	Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament
Power over resources	Economic	Share of women in non-agriculture wage

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[45] Ibid; John Anderson and Birte Siim, "Introduction: The Politics of Inclusion and Empowerment – Gender, Class and Citizenship," in *The Politics of Inclusion and Empowerment: Gender, Class and Citizenship*, ed. John Anderson and Birte Siim, 2 (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004).

[46] Troutner and Smith, "Empowering Women," 6.

[47] Datta and Kornberg, "Empowerment and Disempowerment," 5.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Troutner and Smith, "Empowering Women," 6.

		employment
Power with; collective action	Social	Existence of women's organizations
		Ability of women's organizations to achieve objectives
Power within; self-awareness	Cultural	Levels of female literacy
		Levels of female primary school enrolment
		Levels of female tertiary school enrolment
		Expressions of self-awareness

(Source: Author, Millennium Development Goals Indicators)

Three instruments developed to measure empowerment in quantitative terms by the United Nations Development Program are the Human Development Index (HDI), the Gender and Development Index (GDI), and the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM). Each of these instruments is designed to measure levels of well-being as proxy measures for empowerment.[50] The HDI uses three sets of indicators to determine levels of well-being: life expectancy, knowledge (measured in terms of adult literacy rates and school enrolment), and standards of living (measured in terms of a country's gross domestic product per capita).[51] Of these three, only those indicators related to knowledge are directly related to empowerment, as defined above. The GDI takes stock of the same data as the HDI, but does so in terms of inequalities between women and men, and therefore uses sex-disaggregated data.[52] For both the HDI and the GDI, the data from each set of indicators is standardized and averaged along a scale from zero to one. A high score on the HDI or GDI would indicate a high-level of well-

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[50] Troutner and Smith, "Empowering Women," 22.

[51] Ibid, 22-23.

[52] Ibid, 23.

being for a country, or a high level of equality between women and men respectively. GEM also measures inequality using three sets of indicators:

1. political participation and decision-making power, as measured by women's and men's percentage shares of parliamentary seats;
2. economic participation and decision-making power, as measured by two indicators – women's and men's percentage shares of positions as senior officials and managers, and their percentage shares of professional and technical positions;
3. power over economic resources, as measured by women's and men's estimated earned income.[53]

As with the HDI and the GDI, a high score on the GEM indicates a higher level of equality between women and men for a country over-all; a lower score indicates the reverse. In addition to the mechanisms instituted by the UNDP, other mechanisms to measure empowerment include the United Nations Development Fund for Women's bi-annual report, *The Progress of the World's Women,* and various reports that provide data on the indicators used to measure progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), such as the *Global Monitoring Report 2007,* which provides qualitative and quantitative data and analysis on progress towards those MDGs relevant to gender equality and fragile states.[54] Although these quantitative measurements provide important insights into women's status and equality in a specific country and domain, they fall short in providing a complete picture and understanding of women's empowerment. Qualitative methods are also necessary to ascertain the level

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[53] Ibid.

[54] "Millennium Development Goals Indicators: Official List of MDG Indicators," http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Host.aspx?Content=Indicators/OfficialList.htm; *Global Monitoring Report 2007: Confronting the Challenges of Gender Equality and Fragile States* (Washington D.C.: World Bank, 2007).

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and degree of women's empowerment.[55] These methods may require interviewing actors and groups to learn information that cannot readily be observed, or examining such empowerment issues as the implications and implementation of laws designed to empower women to ascertain whether or not such laws in fact lead to women's empowerment, and what other factors (if any) may have an impact.

The measurement of empowerment is therefore far from simple. Further complications arise from the reality that because empowerment is a process, empowerment therefore occurs by degrees and is relative to the degree of power held by an actor(s) before the process of empowerment began.[56] This raises the question, "how much power is enough?"[57] In answer, some scholars posit that the true measurement of empowerment centres on the issue of choice; in other words, empowerment occurs when there is an increase in the degree to which a person is able to exercise choice and the achievement of freely chosen objectives.[58] The problem with this analysis occurs when an actor chooses to not make a choice leading to an observable action.[59] For example, the choice may be available to women in state x to vote; however, women may choose not to vote. Further investigation is necessary to determine why the women in this

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[55] One such method is a framework developed by Janet Giele in the 1970's, and used by Valentine M. Moghadam in research conducted on women in the Middle East in 1993, 2003 and 2007. See Moghadam, "Women's Empowerment," 4 (footnote 7). See also Alsop et al., *Empowerment in Practice*, Chapter 3 for a discussion of the difficulties of measuring empowerment, and examples of research conducted using a mixed-method approach of quantitative and qualitative data and analysis.

[56] Alsop et al., *Empowerment in Practice*, 30; Troutner and Smith, "Empowering Women," 4.

[57] Troutner and Smith, "Empowering Women," 4.

[58] Alsop et al., *Empowerment in Practice*, 17.

[59] Ibid, 31.

example chose not to vote. It could be because the choice for women to vote exists at the state level, but that the choice to exercise the right to vote is mitigated by disempowerment at the societal level and in the home, where the act of voting by women is unaccepted and leads to rejection or mistreatment of women who vote. Or women themselves may not feel it is their responsibility or duty to vote because of gendered perceptions of the roles of women and men.[60] Such a phenomenon is also evident in processes of demobilisation, demilitarisation and reintegration, as discussed in chapter three of this thesis.

A second complexity in measuring empowerment is that empowerment may exist at one level, and not in another.[61] In the example given above, women had a degree of empowerment in the political domain, but a level of disempowerment in the societal domain affected the ability of women to make use of their empowerment in the political domain. For this reason, feminist scholars such as Nelly Stromquist stress that each domain of empowerment is "... equally important but none sufficient by itself to enable women to act on their own behalf."[62]

Biases in the Discourse

Adding to these complexities are issues surrounding the biases inherent in the discourse, as well as the reality that the empowerment of some can lead to the disempowerment of others. To begin, the empowerment discourse, "... is

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[60] For an interesting discussion on how actors and groups internalize their status in society and then act in ways that reinforce their disempowerment, refer to Alsop et al., *Empowerment in Practice*, 12.

[61] Ibid, 20 and 31.

[62] Troutner and Smith, "Empowering Women," 6.

routed in the Western culture of individualism and personal achievement."[63]

Scholars Jennifer Troutner and Peter Smith explore differences between Western and Third World feminism in their discussion of the empowerment discourse. They explain that "Third World women tend to regard Western feminism as unnecessarily anti-male, totalistic, and revolutionary ...."[64] Conversely, Third World women seek to protect families and communities and not to undermine them.[65] The goals of empowerment must therefore be contextualized to meet the needs and desires of the particular group or individual being empowered.

Furthermore, empowerment for some may in fact lead to disempowerment of others. Many scholars acknowledge that the empowerment of women results in a decrease of male power; however, these scholars also demonstrate that the loss of male power and the increase of female power are potentially beneficial to men and women alike. "When men recognize women as equal partners, there is a qualitative change in gender relations; renewed energy and skills are brought to social and political movements and institutions."[66] As chapter two will later demonstrate, however, not all men perceive a loss of power in such a positive light; in some cases, for instance, a loss of male power and increase of female power actually results in increases in violence against women.[67] As well, it is also possible that empowerment of some women could lead to the disempowerment of other women, based on lines of class, race, religion and

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[63] Datta and Kornberg, "Empowerment and Disempowerment," 4.
[64] Troutner and Smith, "Empowering Women," 20.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Datta and Kornberg, "Empowerment and Disempowerment," 3.
[67] See pages 41-45 of this thesis.

ethnicity.[68] This could then lead to tensions and conflict between groups of women, as some seek empowerment, and others seek to maintain their power based on the above-named divisions.[69]

Despite these complexities (and in addition to them)[70], the empowerment discourse remains prominent in the current development context, particularly in relation to gender and development.[71] This thesis is founded on the concept of empowerment as a process – meaning that power is gained incrementally and over-time. Although women may gain power, they can also lose it. Women may increase their power in one sphere – such as individual empowerment – and lose empowerment in another – such as power over economic resources. In this way empowerment is often fragile and the gains some women make may be modest. This is demonstrated in the following chapter, which reveals how during armed conflict some women are able to increase their power to make decisions, power over resources, power with other women through collective action and power within through self-realization. However, many of these gains are often diminished in the aftermath of conflict and may lead to women's disempowerment in some spheres. The question then becomes, how can the

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[68] Ibid, 4; Cynthia Cockburn, "The Gendered Dynamics of Armed Conflict and Political Violence," in *Victims, Perpetrators or Actors? Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence*, 28 (London: Zed Books, 2002).

[69] Datta and Kornberg, "Empowerment and Disempowerment," 4.

[70] Empowerment has become both a goal and a driver of development, which has led to further dilution and confusion of the concept and ambiguous definitions of the term by international organizations and donor agencies, including the United Nations. See Alsop et al., *Empowerment in Practice*, 2; Troutner and Smith, "Empowering Women," 8 and 12; Medel-Anonuevo, "Reclaiming the Empowerment Discourse," 80.

[71] Datta and Kornberg, "Empowerment and Disempowerment," 4; Troutner and Smith, "Empowering Women," 7-8. One example is the Millennium Development Goal 3, which aims to promote gender equality and empower women. UN Millennium Development Goals, http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals.

gains some women make during conflict be sustained in the aftermath and how can women become further empowered in the post-conflict period of state and social reconstruction? These questions are examined further in chapters three and four.

CHAPTER 2: WAR-TIME GAINS, POST-WAR LOSSES: DOES WAR EMPOWER WOMEN?

Introduction

War often creates space and opportunities for women to make gains in political, economic, social and individual empowerment; however, these gains do not always become consolidated in the aftermath of conflict. This chapter examines the gains some women make during conflict through their engagement in war: these include increased economic responsibilities, collective action and self-awareness. The losses of empowerment women often suffer in the aftermath of conflict are also examined and related to the trivialization of women's roles and contributions to conflict, increases of violence against women in the aftermath, and the assumption that post-conflict reconstruction necessitates a return to pre-conflict norms, including pre-war gender norms and power relations between women and men.

War-Time Gains

During war, women can and do make important gains in the form of political, economic, social and cultural empowerment.[72] These gains are possible because of the fluctuation of gender roles that occurs in times of

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[72] Nicole Ann Dombrowski, "Soldiers, Saints, or Sacrificial Lambs? Women's Relationship to Combat and the Fortification of the Home Front in the Twentieth Century," in *Women and War in the Twentieth Century: Enlisted with or without Consent*, ed. Nicole Ann Dombrowski, 18 (New York: Routledge, 1999).

conflict;[73] during war the lines between public and private blurs enabling an equalization of male and female roles.[74] The empowerment gains that women achieve during conflict are indicated by women's active participation with and support to fighting forces (either state armies or rebel groups), their control over family resources and participation in the market economy, the establishment of formal and informal women's networks, and the expression of self-awareness and individual empowerment by women (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1

Type of Power	Empowerment Domain	Empowerment Indicators During Conflict
Power to make decisions	Political	Voluntary participation in armed conflict in support roles, such as combatants
Power over resources	Economic	Control over family resources
		Participation in the market economy
Power with; collective action	Social	Existence of formal women's networks
		Existence of informal women's networks
Power within; self-awareness	Cultural	Expressions of self-awareness

(Source: Author)

Power To: Women Engaged in War

Over the last decade, the death of female American and British soldiers in combat in Afghanistan and Iraq,[75] the creation of an all female United Nations peacekeeping force, and the rise of female suicide bombers have brought

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[73] Codou Bop, "Women in Conflicts, Their Gains and Their Losses," in *The Aftermath: Women in Post-Conflict Transformation*, ed. Shelia Meintjes et al., 20 (London: Zed Books, 2001).

[74] Dombrowski, "Soldiers, Saints, or Sacrificial Lambs?," 19.

[75] British Broadcasting Corporation, "Woman Soldier Among Afghan Dead," BBC, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/7460617.stm

increased attention to gendered assumptions of violence and to the roles of women in perpetrating war. The engagement of women in war, however, is not a new phenomenon. Women have always participated in war, from the earliest records of armed conflict to the current wars being waged in Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and Asia.[76] Although women's experiences and contributions to conflict vary, commonalities exist across battlefields and cultures.

Women engage in armed conflict in a number of ways. They may serve directly in combat as soldiers; provide training in the armed forces or rebel groups to other combatants; provide logistical support in the form of domestic labour (including the caring and rearing of children) or as porters; act as spies, informants and messengers; serve as intelligence officers.[77] In the economic sphere, women may support the war through their engagement in shadow economies that fuel the conflict, such as drug smuggling or farming food for armed groups.[78] Within society women also engage in conflict through inciting their husbands and other male relatives to fight and providing moral and physical support to soldiers.[79]

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[76] For an interesting examination of the profiles of women engaged in conflict throughout history, see Rosalind Miles and Robin Cross, *Hell Hath no Fury: True Profiles of Women at War from Antiquity to Iraq* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2008).

[77] McKay and Mazurana, *Where are the Girls?*, 24.

[78] Meredeth Turshen, "Engendering Relations of State to Society in the Aftermath," *The Aftermath: Women in Post-Conflict Transformation,* ed. by Sheila Meintjes et al., 85 (London: Zed Books, 2001). For a more in depth discussion of the shadow economies of war and women's involvement in them, refer to Carolyn Nordstrom, *Shadows of War: Violence, Power, and International Profiteering in the Twenty-First Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

[79] Charlotte Lindsey, *Women Facing War,* 9; Haleh Afshar, "Women and Wars," 50; Judy El-Bushra and Cecile Mukarubuga, "Women, War and Transition," 18; Bouta et al., *Gender, Conflict and Development,* 12; Elisabeth B. Armstrong and Vijay Prashad describe how women provided supplies to the fighters and aided the injured in many of the guerrilla wars of the 20th Century in "Solidarity," 234.

The reasons for women's engagement in conflict also vary. Often women are forced to participate in conflict through abduction and coercion. Women have little choice but to engage in conflict in other cases as well. A report by Refugees International explains that the choices for many girls are to "join the military, become a street child, or die."[80] Economically, women may also have no choice but to engage in the shadow economies of war in order to provide for their families in the absence of male economic support. In a number of conflicts, however, women choose to participate in conflict not because of lack of options or coercion, but because they support the end goals of the war or for ideological purposes. For example, many women participated in the genocide in Rwanda, carrying out killings or acting as accomplices to the perpetrators.[81] During the Vietnam War, women also engaged in war out of revenge for family members and friends who had been killed. A former female soldier from the war explains her rationale for joining the army: "In 1968 I volunteered to be a people's soldier, *bo doi*, and I spent five years in the field during the most terrible time of the war. Why? Four people in my family died when the Americans bombed the Hanoi suburbs. I was angry .... I wanted to avenge my family, to kill the Americans for what they did."[82]

In many cases, women engage in conflict because they view the war as a means by which to bring about their own empowerment and changes in power

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[80] Refugees International, as quoted in McKay and Mazurana, *Where are the Girls?*, 23. Bouta et al. also acknowledge that for many women, joining an armed group is the sole means of survival, in *Gender, Conflict and Development*, 12.

[81] Charlotte Lindsey, *Women Facing War*, 9.

[82] Anonymous, as quoted by Karen Gottschang Turner in *Even the Women Must Fight: Memories of War from North Vietnam*, 15-16 (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1998).

relations between women and men. This is particularly true in wars of liberation, such as those fought to end colonialism. As Tsjeard Bouta, George Frerks and Ian Bannon explain, "Various liberation and revolutionary movements have included women's rights and equality for men and women in their programs for political change."[83]

The many liberation wars that women have participated in as combatants during the 20th and 21st Century include those fought in Algeria, Angola, Chad, Cuba, El-Salvador, Eritrea, Guinea-Bissau, Indonesia, Kenya, Korea, Liberia, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Uganda, Venezuela and Vietnam.[84] Through participation in liberation wars, some women were able to achieve specific empowerment gains, including increased participation in decision-making processes, opportunities for leadership, education and the development of skills transferable to the period of post-conflict reconstruction.[85] In Nicaragua, for example, women held positions as commanders of full battalions for the Sandinistas[86] and in the Iran Revolution women also held positions of command in the National Liberation Army.[87] In the

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[83] Bouta et al., *Gender, Conflict and Development*, 12-13.

[84] Turshen, "Engendering Relations," 90; Linda Etchart and Rawwida Baksh, "Applying a Gender Lens to Armed Conflict, Violence and Conflict Transformation," in *Gender Mainstreaming in Conflict Transformation: Building Sustainable Peace*, ed. Rawwida Baksh et al., 16 (London: The Commonwealth Secretariat, 2005); Dombrowski, "Soldiers, Saints or Sacrificial Lambs?," 13; Armstrong and Prashad, "Solidarity," 234.

[85] Mazurana and McKay, *Where are the Girls?*, 17; Etchart and Baksh, "Applying a Gender Lens," 16.

[86] Charlotte Lindsey, *Women Facing War*, 1.

[87] Sorayya Shahri, "Women in Command: A Successful Experience in the National Liberation Army of Iran," in *Frontline Feminisms: Women, War, and Resistance*, ed. By Marguerite R. Walker and Jennifer Rycenga, 186-189 (New York: Routledge, 2001).

Eritrean liberation war, women served both as commandants and as political educators within the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF).[88]

In addition to their combat training, most female participants in armed groups were also trained in logistics and administration, giving them skills that could be transferred to other means of employment in the post-conflict period.[89] Sheila Meintjes explains the utility of this training: "Logistics required a thorough knowledge of topography as well as basic engineering skills. Communications required understanding of complex signal operations, including the way radios and telephones worked."[90] In their seminal work on the participation of girls in fighting forces in Mozambique, Sierra Leone and Northern Uganda, Susan McKay and Dyan Mazurana discovered that many girls joined fighting forces to receive education and skills training and to enhance their opportunities for a career.[91] During the Eritrean liberation struggle, the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) of which many women were a part, provided education to girls and women through Revolutionary Schools and through the integration of education in each military unit.[92] This education focused on literacy, but also taught politics and global issues.[93] As well, many women supporters of the African National

[88] Sondra Hale, "The Soldier and the State: Post-Liberation Women: The Case of Eritrea," in *Frontline Feminisms: Women, War, and Resistance*, ed. by Marguerite R. Walker and Jennifer Rycenga, 354 (New York: Routledge, 2001).

[89] Meintjes, "War and Post-War Shifts in Gender Relations," 65.

[90] Ibid. In practice, however, many women found it difficult to gain employment post-conflict, despite the skills they acquired during war. See Ibid, 66.

[91] Mazurana and McKay, *Where are the Girls?*, 22; 107.

[92] Hale, "The Soldier and the State," 354-356.

[93] Ibid. Admittedly, such examples of education in times of conflict are unique; in most cases, the interruption of formal education is one of the great losses girls suffer as a result of war. See Mazurana and McKay, *Where are the Girls?*, 17; Bop, "Women in Conflicts," 32.

Congress in South Africa who were exiled during the struggle against apartheid received academic degrees in Europe and in Africa.[94]

In addition to these gains in education and skills-training, decision-making and leadership opportunities, there was also a more equalized relationship between women and men in armed groups during liberation wars, including the sharing of power and resources between women and men. For example, in Eritrea men and women lived together in the bunkers as equals in addition to sharing the same skills training.[95] Sondra Hale explains, "Among [the gains women made] were free social relations with men, relaxed social customs and habits – including dress and hairstyles – the lack of social pressure toward marriage and childbearing, the collapse of the conventional gender division of labour, and the like."[96] However, this equality with men was not shared in every conflict. Most often, women were given tasks associated with gendered divisions of labour, despite the fact that they also received combat training.[97] Other times, women would be used in conflict for propaganda purposes, as occurred in the eight-year war between Iran and Iraq, where women were photographed on the front lines and in army processions, and yet did not participate directly in active combat.[98]

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[94] Hannah E. Britton, "South Africa: Mainstreaming Gender in a New Democracy," in *Women in African Parliaments*, eds. Gretchen Bauer and Hannah E. Britton, 63 (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2006).

[95] Meintjes, "War and Post-War Shifts," 65-66.

[96] Sondra Hale as quoted in Turshen, "Engendering Relations," 79. See also Hale, "The Soldier and the State," 354.

[97] Etchart and Baksh, "Applying a Gender Lens", 15; Afshar, "Women and Wars," 44 and 45.

[98] Afshar, 45.

Where more equalized relations between male and female soldiers have occurred, these relations most often come at the cost of the female combatants' identities as 'feminine' beings, either by themselves, their comrades or society. Bouta et al. affirm, "While women benefit when new opportunities open up, they also 'masculinize,' adopting the masculine attitudes and values that prevail in the army, rather than influencing ('feminizing') the army."[99]   Linda Etchart and Rawwida Baksh also demonstrate that "Women in armed forces have necessarily found themselves having to adopt traditionally masculine characteristics in order to be effective, and they have learned to dress and behave like men in order to attain equality and take on combat roles."[100]   This is further affirmed by the testimony of a former female soldier, speaking of her training in Mozambique: "After two months of training I stopped menstruating and so did the other women. We were just like men. We were pleased because we thought it was macho. We wanted to be identified as fighters, as men."[101]

Etchart and Baksh further acknowledge that although women "... may achieve warrior status by exhibiting courage on the battlefield as combatants, and in this way challenge gender stereotyping and become empowered, the gender fluidity here is moving in one direction only and women's status at home as mother and carer is diminished, not enhanced."[102]   Often the cost of participation in conflict is the sexual identity of women as lovers and their ability to have children – not only physically, as the statement by the former soldier who

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[99] Bouta et al., *Gender, Conflict, and Development*, 16. See also Meintjes, "War and Post War Shifts," 73. By the same token, men may also become hyper-masculinized in the armed forces.

[100] Etchart and Baksh, "Applying a Gender Lens", 16.

[101] As quoted by Meintjes in "War and Post-War Shifts," 67.

[102] Etchart and Baksh, "Applying a Gender Lens", 16.

trained in Mozambique revealed – but also socially, through the prevention of women soldiers from marrying and from having time to care for children. Haleh Afshar reveals the complexities female soldiers face when trying to combine their roles as carers and warriors. She explains that women combatants often "find it necessary to prove their commitment and valour all the time."[103] When soldiers do engage in relationships as lovers, as in the case of women fighters in South Africa during the struggle against the apartheid state, "... they did so against the prevailing opinions and had to defend their position by arguing such relationships did not 'weaken' them ...."[104] Moreover, female combatants are often viewed as de-sexed and deviant, which negatively impacts their ability to reintegrate into society post-conflict[105], and also negatively affects their chances for marriage in societies and cultures where marriage is integral to women's status.[106] Conversely, some female soldiers have embraced their femininity during conflict and found it liberating to dress and act in feminine ways[107], while others have celebrated their roles as mothers as a "humanising aspect of their lives."[108]

Women's participation in conflict therefore provides them with opportunities for leadership, education and the development of skills not previously available to them. Women may also experience more equal relations with their male counterparts in armed groups. However, women's engagement in war often leads to their masculinization in order to attain equality with male

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[103] Afshar, "Women and Wars," 46.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Charlotte Lindsey, *Women Facing War*, 2.
[106] Afshar, "Women and Wars," 49.
[107] Ibid, 46-47.
[108] Ibid, 51.

fighters, and exposes them to stigmas that may prevent them from returning to their communities and their successful reintegration into society in the aftermath of conflict.

Power Over: Women as Head of Households and Primary Breadwinners

During conflict, the lines between public and private become blurred; barriers to women's access to and control over resources and ability to make decisions within the household and community erode when faced with the interruptions to normalcy and everyday living that war brings. Despite the existence of conflict, individuals, families and communities must continue to exist. The absence of men due to fighting leads to increased responsibilities for women to carry on as heads of household, breadwinners, and decision-makers in the community. Charlotte Lindsey explains, "Women are challenging, and in some cases redefining, the cultural and social perception of themselves and their former boundaries in society. Women may for the first time have the possibility of working outside the home, being the income earners, main decision-makers and heads of household, organizing themselves with other women and going into the public sphere, which is often the preserve of men."[109]

This is evidenced in the case of Nepal, where traditionally women are prohibited from ploughing land and participating in politics. In the absence of men, women have begun to plough the land in spite of tradition dictating punitive action and social ostracism for women who participate in such work.[110] As well,

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[109] Lindsey, *Women Facing War*, 8.

[110] Rita Manchanda, "Ambivalent Gains in South Asian Conflicts," in *The Aftermath: Women in Post-Conflict Transformation*, ed. Shelia Meintjes et al., 117 (London: Zed Books, 2001).

women have begun to be elected to political office in villages such as Mirule.[111]

Judy El-Bushra found similar patterns of increases in women's empowerment in

her analysis of research conducted on the impact of conflict on women in Sudan,

Somalia, Uganda, Mail, Angola, Eritrea and Rwanda.[112] From the research

conducted through field work and desk studies, she found increases in women's

decision-making power and political participation in each case, as well as

dependencies on women for economic stability in Sudan, Mali and Angola.[113]

Codou Bop also records the economic gains women have made during war in

Africa, and in particular, how women have benefited from and contributed to the

war economy. She explains how women in Brazzaville during the 1998

Congolese civil war profited from providing the militia with food and also profited

from the war booty their sons accumulated.[114] She also records how women

sought to both gain economically and to support the war by selling drugs, such

as occurred in Senegal with the women partisans of the Movement of Democratic

Forces of Casamance.[115]

Women's economic empowerment during conflict, however, also comes

with a price. With the increase of responsibilities shouldered by women in times

of war, comes the negative effect of what Etchart and Baksh call "women's time

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[111] Ibid.

[112] Judy El-Bushra, "Fused in Combat: Gender Relations and Armed Conflict," in *Development, Women, and War: Feminist Perspectives*, ed. Haleh Afshar and Deborah Eade, 152-171 (Oxford: Oxford GB, 2004).

[113] Ibid, 161. See also Judy El-Bushra, "Transforming Conflict: Some Thoughts on a Gendered Understanding of Conflict Processes," in *States of Conflict: Gender, Violence and Resistance*, ed. Susie Jacobs, Ruth Jacobson and Jen Marchbank, 70 (London: Zed Books, 2000).

[114] Bop, "Women in Conflicts," 24.

[115] Ibid, 25.

poverty."[116] In other words, the increase of responsibilities and burdens placed on women in times of conflict come without a reduction of pre-existing responsibilities, leaving women over-burdened and with little time to tend to other matters.[117] For instance, women may not have the time to make use of new opportunities for empowerment available to them, such as increased political participation.[118] The over-burdening of women may also result in their inability to tend to every responsibility. For example, women may be required to leave their children alone at home to look after themselves and to care for younger children, while they are occupied in the fields or outside of the home.[119] Such was the case in Northern Uganda, where the over-burdening of women with responsibilities led to the neglect of children whose behaviour became increasingly "out of control," and contributed to the breakdown of the family unit.[120]

As well, women's economic activities outside of the home may expose them to greater risks of physical injury and harm.[121] This danger is further heightened when women resort to illicit and illegal activities to meet the economic needs of themselves and their families. These activities not only physically endanger women but may also damage their status in society long-term: "The need to develop economic coping mechanisms brings to the fore women's skills

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[116] Etchart and Baksh, "Applying a Gender Lens," 17.

[117] Rehn and Sirleaf, Women, War and Peace, 2.

[118] Bouta et al., Gender, Conflict, and Development, 49.

[119] Lindsey, Women Facing War, 8.

[120] El-Bushra, "Transforming Conflict," 69. For an in-depth analysis of women's time-poverty in the context of development in Africa see C. Mark Blackden and Quentin Wodon, eds., Gender, Time Use, and Poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa (Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 2006).

[121] El-Bushra and Mukarubuga, "Women, War and Transition," 17.

in the management of household resources, but may also force them to engage in activities such as prostitution or illicit trade in drugs and alcohol which place a long-term question mark over their future social acceptance."[122]

Power With: Organizing in Response to War

In times of war, women act together to meet the needs of families and communities. For example, women organize together to distribute food aid, to improve their refugee camps or to offer support to rape survivors.[123] Bouta et al. describe how women's organizations in Burundi, Cambodia, Guatemala, Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia "worked to rebuild core institutions and services, often defining their efforts as 'resisting conflict.'"[124] In addition women worked together to continue services offered in health centres and day-care facilities, as well as providing camps for children, home schooling, and the distribution of food and clothes to the elderly.[125] Women also unite to reinforce their individual economic empowerment, as Zara Mahamane demonstrates with the following example of women in Niger:

> They learned to unite and organise, to take initiatives by working together in NGOs (nongovernmental organizations) in cooperative partnerships for development. They devoted themselves to commercial ventures, to the hotel business and the craft industry. At present they are attempting to restore herds of livestock ....[126]

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[122] El-Bushra and Mukarubuga, "Women, War and Transition," 17.

[123] Cockburn, "Gender in Armed Conflict," 67. See also Elisabeth Rehn and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, *Women, War and Peace: The Independent Experts' Assessment on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Women's Role in Peace-building*, 2 (New York: United Nations Development Fund for Women, 2002).

[124] Bouta et al., *Gender, Conflict, and Development*, 69.

[125] Ibid.

[126] Zara Mahamane, as quoted in Bop, "Women in Conflicts," 25.

Women also organize in opposition to or in support of the war. Armstrong and Prashad demonstrate that in conflicts in Egypt, India, Zanzibar and elsewhere, women led street protests in support of the armed struggles.[127] More often, however, women organize to protest against conflict, as exemplified by the network 'Women in Black.' Women in Black was begun in the late 1980's to protest against the Israeli occupation of territories controlled by Israel since the 1967 war.[128] Women dressed in black and holding signs with the message "Stop the Occupation," written in Hebrew, Arabic and English would stand for one hour every Friday at a major intersection in Jerusalem.[129] The network then spread to Italy, the Netherlands, Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States, where women also gathered to protest against the occupation.[130] In the late 1990's, the concept of Women in Black continued to spread across the world, where the intent behind the protests expanded to meet specific causes, such as protests against the first Gulf War and neo-Nazism in Germany and Hindu fundamentalism in India.[131] One of the most well-known examples of Women in Black comes from the women who gathered every week for eight years in Belgrade to demonstrate against the Serbian state's participation in conflicts in the Balkans.[132] During this time period, other Women in Black groups also demonstrated against the Balkan wars through local demonstrations and the

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[127] Armstrong and Prashad, "Solidarity," 234.

[128] Cockburn, "Gender in Armed Conflict," 68; Gila Svirsky, "The Impact of Women in Black in Israel," in *Frontline Feminisms: Women, War, and Resistance*, ed. By Marguerite R. Walker and Jennifer Rycenga, 243 (New York: Routledge, 2001).

[129] Svirsky, "The Impact of Women in Black in Israel," 243.

[130] Ibid, 244; Cockburn, "Gender in Armed Conflict," 68.

[131] Svirsky, "The Impact of Women in Black in Israel," 244.

[132] Cockburn, "Gender in Armed Conflict," 68.

use of the Internet.[133] Although the successes of the various Women in Black groups in achieving their goals are mixed,[134] the movement nevertheless provides a powerful example of women organizing together to end conflict.

Power Within: Realizing One's Own Empowerment

Through such examples of collective action women become further empowered individually and collectively through self-awareness of their abilities to make change. Rabrenovic and Roskos explain that "Women's participation in collective action is empowering in that it allows them to play a more active role in public life, increases their skills, and turns them from victims to agents actively looking for solutions to their community problems."[135] Such was the case for women in Northern Ireland where "The hardship of coping alone with family needs amid great poverty and increasing militarization created new ties of solidarity among women and contributed to the development of a new sense of independence and self-identity."[136] As well, the collective action of Palestinian women during the *intifada* resulted in personal and political transformations for many of the women, and created the confidence and legitimacy needed for women to participate in the political sphere.[137]

The political and economic empowerment of women during conflict also reinforces women's individual empowerment and their self-awareness of their own abilities and strengths. A female survivor of war in El Salvador notes,

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[133] Cockburn, "The Continuum of Violence," 38; Cockburn, "The Gendered Dynamics," 24.

[134] See Svirsky, "The Impact of Women in Black in Israel," 244.

[135] Rabrenovic and Roskos, "Introduction," 47-48.

[136] B. Aretxaga, as quoted in Simona Sharoni, "Rethinking Women's Struggles in Israel-Palestine and in the North of Ireland," in *Victims, Perpetrators or Actors? Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence*, 94 (London: Zed Books, 2002).

[137] Sharoni, "Rethinking Women's Struggles," 94-95.

"Before the war women were not taken into consideration. Women were only working in the home. But, when war came, women came out of the house to demonstrate their capability. ... [I]t was war which meant that women could be taken seriously and that they could do a lot of things. It made people realize that women are capable of changing our society."[138] Writing of women in Somalia and Somaliland, El-Bushra also found that "Women's experience of coping in spite of extreme difficulties has contributed to an awareness of their key role, and has underscored in their own minds their resilience and capacity for autonomous action."[139] The same is true in Uganda, as Joan Kakwenzire explains: "The multiple roles that women have taken on have engendered a new race of women. They have realised the potential of their own strength and this awareness has led some of them toward a more favourable socio-economic position."[140]

Some academics suggest that the engagement of women in the political and economic spheres during war, as well as the organizing of women together in response to conflict may appear as increases in women's empowerment, but that this not really the case. These scholars argue that what appears as empowerment are in fact coping mechanisms and survival strategies employed by women in times of crises to ensure their survival and the survival and well-

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[138] Charlotte Lindsey, *Women Facing War: ICRC Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women*, 9 (Geneva: International Committee of the Red Cross, 2001). See also Ana Cristina Ibanez, "El Salvador: War and Untold Stories: Women Guerrillas," in *Victims, Perpetrators or Actors? Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence*, 127 (London: Zed Books, 2002).
[139] El-Bushra, "Transforming Conflict," 70.
[140] Joan Kakwenzire, as quoted in Bop, "Women in Conflict," 21.

being of their families and community.[141] Admittedly, the gains some women make in times of war do come because of their attempts to cope with the situation of war and insecurity. Nevertheless women can increase their power whether these gains are intentionally sought after, as in some liberation wars, or whether they result from coping mechanisms and strategies adopted by women in response to conflict. For example, in the case of Sierra Leone, where many women and girls were abducted into armed groups, Mazurana and Carlson reveal that "despite their trauma, women and girls showed tremendous agency. They developed a number of skills and strategies that enabled them to survive and regain control over their lives ...."[142] These coping mechanisms and strategies can be particularly empowering to women as they create self-awareness of women's own strengths and abilities, thereby bolstering women's individual empowerment. This can be further reinforced by the collective action of women, which, although also a coping mechanism and strategy for many women, also builds women's empowerment, as previously discussed.

Through collective action, engagement in war, and increased responsibilities as heads of households and community decision-makers, women in conflict also become further empowered through self-awareness of their individual and collective strengths and abilities. The limited gains that women make in conflict, however, also come with losses, such as the masculinisation of female soldiers leading to their social stigmatisation, women's exposure to increased physical harm because of their increased economic responsibilities,

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[141] Rehn and Sirleaf, Women, War and Peace, 2, 122-123; Giles and Hyndman, "Gender and Conflict," 16; El-Bushra, "Fused in Combat," 161-170.

[142] Mazurana and Carlson, From Combat to Community, 14-15.

and the breakdown of family units because of women's time poverty. Moreover, the gains that women do make during war are often over-turned in the aftermath of conflict, as discussed in the following section.

Post-War Losses

The aftermath of conflict is often viewed as a time of potential transformation, not just for the state, community or society torn apart by conflict, but also for marginalized populations – in particular women – to have access to increased power in the form of political participation, access to and control over economic resources, and increased rights institutionalized in the new structures and laws of the state.[143] Conversely, the aftermath of conflict can also be a time of loss for groups who made empowerment gains in the period of conflict. This section examines the political and economic losses often experienced by women in the post-conflict period; these losses are indicated through the trivialization of women's war-time roles and contributions, the increase of violence against women, and the return to pre-war power relations between women and men.

Table 2.2

Type of Power	Empowerment Domain	Disempowerment Indicators After Conflict
Power to make decisions	Political	Low to no participation in DDR processes
		Low to no participation in formal peaces processes
Power over resources	Economic	Increases in violence against women
Power with; collective action	Social	Isolation
Power within; self-awareness	Cultural	Reversal to pre-conflict gender norms

(Source: Author)

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[143] See chapter three of this thesis.

No Longer Comrades: the Trivialization of Women's War Time Roles

After conflict, women's roles and contributions during the war often become trivialized or overlooked by the state and by women's male comrades in the fighting forces.[144] After the liberation struggle in Namibia, for instance, men "...did not really consider women as part of the liberation struggle," despite the fact that women were actively engaged in the war through the provision of domestic labour to the fighting factions, and also as combatants.[145] Women's contributions to war are often viewed as an extension of their domestic responsibilities and gender roles. Turshen acknowledges how "Men disparage women's...activities as only a natural extension of their nurturing and caring domestic roles as wives and mothers."[146] For example, in Eritrea, women were considered as help-meets during the war and their actions were seen as fulfilment of their traditional roles in society.[147]

In other cases, women themselves seek to trivialize their roles in and contributions to conflict because of the fear of stigmatism and rejection by their communities and society as a whole that their actions during conflict may produce.[148] In assuming active roles in conflict, many women break cultural and normative bounds of femininity,[149] as the above section on the masculization of women in armed forces demonstrates. Furthermore, women who participate in conflict are often the victims of sexual violence and rape. This is extremely

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[144] Turshen, "Engendering Relations," 84.

[145] Bouta et al., *Gender, Conflict and Development*, 18.

[146] Turshen, "Engendering Relations," 90.

[147] Hale, "The Soldier and the State," 352.

[148] Bouta et al., *Gender, Conflict and Development*, 18.

[149] Charlotte Lindsey, *Women Facing War*, 2.

negative in cultures that conflate the value of women with their chastity. In returning to their families and communities after war, women are often rejected by their families and are cast out by their communities.[150] In other cases, women who were victims of rape are forced to make the choice between abandoning children conceived during conflict, and who are seen by society as the children of the enemy, and not returning to their families. By choosing to stay with their children, women place themselves at further risk in the community because they do not have the protection of a family unit. As well, women in such situations may turn to prostitution and other illicit activities in order to provide for themselves. A number of women in such situations choose instead to return to live with those who abducted and raped them in order to have physical and economic protection for themselves and their children.

Women may themselves also choose to trivialize their roles because of the realization of some women that in order to access resources and have social acceptance, they must reject the gains that they had made during conflict.[151] This is evidenced in the experiences of women fighters following the war in El Salvador. Ibanez explains how women had to choose between furthering the empowerment gains they had made during the war or resuming their traditional roles in society; she notes that "some women resigned themselves to reoccupying a traditional role without demanding new rights."[152]

The trivialization of women's roles and contributions in conflict often result in the exclusion of women from formal peace processes and from processes of

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[150] Etchart and Baksh, "Applying a Gender Lens," 24.

[151] Meintjes et al., "There is No Aftermath," 12-13.

[152] Ibanez, "El Salvador," 127.

disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR).[153]   Formal peace processes are most often the domain of those parties who perpetrate war.[154] Typically, women are excluded from these processes because they are not recognized in the aftermath as directly contributing to and participating in conflict. As well, women are excluded from processes of DDR because these processes are limited to combatants. In order to enter DDR programs, a person must prove their eligibility by handing in a weapon, and, in some cases, demonstrating that they are trained to use the weapon by disassembling and reassembling it.[155] For many female participants in conflict, their weapons are taken from them by their male comrades or partners, who use the weapons for their own access to DDR programs.[156] In other instances, the weapons used by women in fighting were not theirs alone and came from a communal source.[157] As well, many women are demobilised before the conflict ends, as occurred in Eritrea,[158] thereby preventing them from access to weapons when DDR processes are implemented in the post-conflict period. Finally, women may choose not to enter DDR programs because of the fear of stigmatization and rejection that may come with formal recognition of their participation in conflict.[159]

As the following chapter will demonstrate, women's inclusion in formal peace processes and the recognition of women's roles and contributions to

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[153] Turshen, "Engendering Relations, 85.

[154] Cockburn, "Gender in Armed Conflict," 62.

[155] Dyan Mazurana and Khristopher Carlson, *From Combat to Community: Women and Girls of Sierra Leone*, 3 (Hunt Alternative Fund, 2004).

[156] Ibid, 20.

[157] Ibid.

[158] Hale, "The Solder and the State," 353.

[159] Bouta et al., *Gender, Conflict, and Development*, 18.

conflict in these peace processes are essential to ensuring that the new state (its institutions and laws) recognize the rights and needs of women in the aftermath of conflict. Moreover, this integration of women and recognition of their roles in conflict can also help to institutionalize the gains in empowerment made by women during conflict; particularly those gains made in political participation and control over and access to economic resources.[160] In addition, the inclusion of women in DDR provides them with opportunities to obtain education and skills training, access to economic resources such as micro-credit loans,[161] access to medical and psychological treatment and support to heal the physical and emotional wounds of war, and also facilitates their reintegration back into society.[162] The trivialization of women's roles and contributions to conflict therefore impedes the institutionalization of women's gains in empowerment in the new post-conflict state, and contributes to their exclusion from processes that could enable their further empowerment, such as DDR. It also robs women of recognition of their contributions during the conflict, which would provide them further legitimacy as empowered actors.

At What Cost? Increased Economic Responsibilities and Increases in Violence against Women

Often-times the economic gains made by women during conflict are sustained in the aftermath. These gains are relative, however, to the economic gains men are able to make, owing to the devastation of economies that frequently occurs after war. Women's economic gains are therefore generally

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[160] Meintjes, "War and Post-War Shifts," 76.

[161] Mazurana and Carlson, *From Combat to Community*, 3.

[162] Bouta et al., *Gender, Conflict and Development*, 18.

tied to the continued dependence on women as head of households and breadwinners in the aftermath. This dependence often occurs because of the preponderance of male casualties and men that do not return to their families and communities after the cessation of violence.[163] As well, often men who return home to their families and communities do not take up their traditional responsibilities of providing for their families through wage labour and other economic employment. This could be because of handicaps and injuries resulting from war, or because the type of employment available is perceived as "women's work."[164] Often, the unemployment of men in the aftermath produces higher levels of alcoholism due to their sense of disempowerment and frustration, which leads in turn to increases in domestic violence and violence against women.[165] As Anu Pillay explains, "The construction of masculinity, which puts pressure on men to provide for their families financially, means that men perceive high levels of male unemployment as emasculating, and this results in violence against women."[166] This situation is often intensified when the work of women is valued and recognized as integral to the survival of the community, *vis a vis* the lack of contributions made by men.[167]

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[163] Rehn and Sirleaf, *Women, War and Peace*, 131.

[164] Judith Gardner, "Section 1: Changing Roles and Responsibilities in the Family," in *Somalia – the Untold Story: the War through the Eyes of Somali Women*, ed. by Judith Gardner and Judy El-Bushra (London: CIIR and Pluto Press, 2004): 104-106.

[165] El-Bushra, "Fused in Combat," 160; Turshen, "Engendering Relations," 84; Thompson, "Women, Gender, and Conflict," 239.

[166] Anu Pillay, "Violence against Women in the Aftermath," in *The Aftermath: Women in Post-Conflict Transformation*, ed. Shelia Meintjes et al., 42 (London: Zed Books, 2001).

[167] Ibid. See also Donna Pankhurst, "The 'Sex' War and Other Wars: Towards a Feminist Approach to Peace Building," in *Development, Women and War*, ed. Afshar and Eade, 18-19 (Oxfam, 2004).

The increase of violence against women as a result of their role as breadwinners is evidenced in Northern Uganda. Following the conflict in Northern Uganda, some men experienced a loss of their male identity when they returned to their families and communities and were no longer able to fulfill their traditional economic roles. The helplessness some men felt owing to their losses in war[168] and the transfer of economic responsibilities from men to women, contributed to a sense of de-masculinzation for many men. This in turn led to high levels of alcoholism among men. El-Bushra explains how "Socialising in the bars with other similarly excluded men was, as they [men] saw it, their only option..."[169] The pervasiveness of alcoholism in addition to the sense of disempowerment and frustration by men in Northern Uganda has in turn led to increases in domestic violence against women.[170] This trend can also occur within refugee camps. El Bushra affirms that within refugee camps some men may be limited in the opportunities available to them to engage in useful and productive activities that benefit their families and the camp as a whole.[171]

While some women experience increased violence in refugee camps or isolation, other women experience increased social and individual empowerment. Meintjes et al. describe how in some refugee camps women are able to create new identities for themselves, obtain increased rights, exercise leadership and find power in organizing together.[172] Women band together to cook, educate their children and engage in small economic enterprises. For example, in

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[168] El-Bushra, "Transforming Conflict," 68.
[169] Ibid, 69.
[170] El-Bushra, "Fused in Combat," 160.
[171] Ibid, 164.
[172] Meintjes et al., "There is No Aftermath," 15-16.

Somalian refugee camps many women earned money through elaborate trade networks.[173] Women are also relied upon in many cases to gather firewood, water and other provisions necessary for the survival of their children and families.[174]

Still, such economic empowerment of women may come at the price of a loss of male companion, emotional support and physical protection. Gardner records that in Somalia this is particularly difficult for women who lack other support networks, or who live in instable settings, such as refugee camps, where they are especially vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse[175] Because of this, "it should not be assumed that because it [economic empowerment] brings a change in power relations at the family level the majority of women prefer to be the sole breadwinner or to live without a male companion."[176] The economic empowerment of women can be both a trigger for violence against women, or can indicate the increased emotional hardship on women in the absence of male support and their increased vulnerability in the absence of male protection in situations of extreme fragility.

While the responses of men to the economic empowerment of women have often been negative, some men have been more accepting than others of

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[173] Amina Mohamoud Warsame, "Crisis or Opportunity? Somali Women Traders and the War," in *Somalia – the Untold Story: the War through the Eyes of Somali Women*, ed. by Judith Gardner and Judy El-Bushra (London: CIIR and Pluto Press, 2004): 123.

[174] These tasks are given to women because they are associated with women's traditional roles and domestic responsibilities (See Cockburn, "The Gendered Dynamics," 26). Although women are frequently abused and raped when collecting firewood and water outside of the camp, these events are often viewed by the camp community as preferable to the risk of death faced by men when they leave the protection of the camp. See for example Amnesty International, "Sudan: Systematic Rape of Women and Girls," 15 April 2004, http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/AFR54/038/2004/en/dom-AFR540382004en.html.

[175] Ibid.

[176] Ibid.

their dependence on women for economic survival. In Somalia, for example, many women have become the head of households and are responsible for decision-making within the home. A survey of men found that "male interviewees say that they have accepted their wives as head of households and obey them, minimising family friction at this time of crisis."[177] However, further research and time is needed to determine whether or not this acceptance is evident of a short-term survival mechanism, or is "a precursor to transformation of the position of women in Somali society."[178]

The Return to Pre-War Power Relations between Women and Men and Underlying Ideologies

The end of conflict often signals a return to pre-war power relations and gender roles for women and men.[179] For example, in many of the liberation wars male comrades expected female combatants to revert to their pre-war gender roles once the conflict ended.[180] As Bouta et al. recognize, for many female soldiers "reintegration tends to go hand-in-hand with the reintroduction of pre-conflict gender relations."[181] In other instances, such as post-conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia and Guatemala, women who were active in the political realm during war were forced to abandon their activities and leadership positions immediately after the conflicts had ended.[182] Although further analysis is required to understand more fully all the factors influencing this phenomenon,

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[177] ACCORD, as quoted in Gardner, "Section 1," 104.

[178] Gardner, "Section 1," 104.

[179] Meintjes et al., "There is No Aftermath," 9; Charlotte Lindsey, *Women Facing War*, 9.

[180] Cockburn, "The Gendered Dynamics," 117; Bouta et al., *Gender, Conflict and Development*, 17-18.

[181] Bouta et al., *Gender, Conflict and Development*, 17.

[182] Ibid, 55.

many scholars assert that the return to pre-war, traditional social orders often result from assumptions that post-conflict reconstruction necessitates a return to pre-conflict norms, including pre-war gender norms and power relations between women and men. For example, Christine Chinkin posits that these pre-conceptions are inherent in post-conflict terminology, such as the terms "reconstruction" and "rehabilitation." She states, "Both concepts assume an element of going back, restoring to a position or capacity that previously existed."[183] She further asserts that although this may be the goal of some in society, "This is not necessarily what women seek. The goal is rather societal transformation, that is, not restored dependence and subordination but rather an enhanced social position that accords full citizenship, social justice and empowerment based upon respect for standards of women's human dignity and human rights that may never have previously existed."[184]

Also perpetuating this reversal to pre-war gender power relations is the reality that in most conflicts the underlying patriarchal ideologies of relations between women and men remains unchanged, even though the gender roles of women and men may change.[185] This can be found in the way in which men view many of the women's contributions during conflict as extensions of women's traditional roles. For instance, El-Bushra demonstrates how in some conflicts, such as in Sudan, "Women's increased economic responsibilities ... result from,

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[183] Christine Chinkin, "Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Rehabilitation," in *Peace Work: Women, Armed Conflict and Negotiation*, ed. Radhika Coomaraswamy and Dilrukshi Fonseka, 218 (New Delhi: Women Unlimited, 2004).

[184] Ibid.

[185] Bouta et al., *Gender, Conflict and Development*, 55; El-Bushra, "Fused in Combat," 161.

rather than challenge, the notion of women as pillars of the family."[186] Thus, "... although gender roles have changed, they have done so in line with existing gender ideologies."[187] Furthermore, women often retain their subordinate position within power structures, despite the increased dependency on women within the family and community.[188] Often this is a result of men's deliberate subversion of the economic, political, and social power some women attain during conflict.[189]

Other scholars, such as Haleh Afshar, purport that in times of conflict ideologies are not changed, but rather are suspended.[190] Former female combatants in Eritrea are witnesses to this reality. With reference to the egalitarian ideology espoused by the liberation movement, they explain that

> society, men and women, continue to use tradition, religion and custom to prevent women from freeing themselves. Superficially, society accepts the [progressive] ideas, but underneath it does not accept equality. ... When they [our relatives] saw us fighting against the enemy, they could accept that. Today, they tell us repeatedly that we must marry, have children, stay at home and take care of our children.[191]

Thus, although gender roles may change during conflict and women may make some gains in economic and political empowerment, the underlying ideologies that mould the relationship between women and men resurface in the aftermath of war thereby preventing the consolidation of war-time gains by

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[186] El-Bushra, "Fused in Combat," 164.

[187] Ibid.

[188] El-Bushra and Mukarubuga, "Women, War and Transition," 17.

[189] Ibid.

[190] Afshar, "Women and Wars," 54.

[191] Sondra Hale quoted in Bop, "Women in Conflicts," 31-32.

women and limiting the possibilities for further empowerment in the post-conflict period.

Conclusion

Conflict may provide new, temporary opportunities for some women to increase their power to, power over, power with and power within. These increases in power, although in many cases modest and fragile gains, include increased political participation through involvement in armed groups and local government, opportunities for decision-making and control over economic resources as head of households and family breadwinners, the organization of informal and formal women's groups through collective action and the realization of individual strength and abilities through coping mechanisms and survival strategies. The increases in power women make during conflict, however, are often decreased again in the aftermath of conflict. This loss of power most often results from the trivialization of women's roles and contributions to conflict, increases in violence against women in the aftermath of conflict, and the assumption by men and some women that the end of war signals a return to pre-war conditions – including gendered power relations, roles and responsibilities. In order to sustain the gains made in conflict, women therefore need to be recognized for their roles and contributions during conflict and have their needs, interests and priorities integrated into post-conflict reconstruction processes. The following chapter examines the participation and integration of women into formal peace processes as a tool for sustaining the limited empowerment gains made

during conflict, and as a means by which to further empower women in the aftermath.

CHAPTER 3: EMPOWERMENT THROUGH FORMAL PEACE PROCESSES

Introduction

The term "formal peace processes" is defined by the United Nations as constituting "... early warning, preventive diplomacy, conflict prevention, peacemaking, peace-building, and global disarmament."[192] Activities included in these processes consist of conflict negotiation, peace negotiations, demobilisation, demilitarisation and reintegration (DDR) programs, constitution-building, elections, reconstruction, truth and reconciliation initiatives, the establishment of a judicial system and the provision of humanitarian aid.[193] Apparent gains in empowerment made by some women during conflict often do not carry on into the post conflict period, as evidenced by the diminished role of women in the post conflict activities. Conversely, the inclusion of women in such processes may contribute to women's empowerment in the aftermath of conflict and the consolidation of the limited gains in empowerment some women are able to achieve during war. This chapter examines women's exclusion and inclusion in formal peace processes as a source of both disempowerment and empowerment. Throughout this analysis, the role of women's organizations in

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[192] Bouta et al., *Gender, Conflict and Development*, 50.

[193] Ibid; "No Women, No Peace: The Importance of Women's Participation to Achieve Peace and Security." NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, April 2004, www.peacewomen.org/un/ngo/ngopub/NoWomenNoPeace.pdf

advancing women's empowerment through formal peace processes is emphasized.

Women as "Natural" Peace-Makers

Central to any discussion of war and peace is an understanding of how these two concepts are gendered and the normative assumptions of the masculine nature of warfare and the feminine nature of peace often purported by scholars of conflict studies and development practitioners.[194] Lucinda Joy Peach reveals that there is a longstanding "association of women with peace and peace movements, rather than war and violence" that dates back to the classical Greeks and Romans.[195] Many scholars have explained the association of peace with women and violence with men through biological differences between the sexes.[196] For example, some essentialist theorists posit, "... that the female psyche is uniquely given to caring and nurturing. Thus ... women would be less corrupt, would assist in bringing about harmony, in seeking negotiation and preventing conflict."[197] However, such an argument is countered by the reality that many women support conflict and act in violent ways, as demonstrated in Chapter Two of this thesis.[198]

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[194] For an examination of the linkages between conflict studies and development studies see Pankhurst, "The 'Sex' War," 12-13.

[195] Lucinda Joy Peach, "Is Violence Male? The Law, Gender, and Violence," in *Frontline Feminisms: Women, War, and Resistance*, eds. Marguerite R. Walker and Jennifer Rycenga, 69, footnote 7 (New York: Routledge, 2001).

[196] Cockburn, "The Continuum of Violence," 27.

[197] Anuradha Mitra Chenoy and Achin Vanaik, "Promoting Peace, Security and Conflict Resolution: Gender Balance in Decisionmaking," in *Gender, Peace and Conflict*, eds. Inger Skjelsbaek and Dan Smith, 132 (Oslo: Sage Publications, 2001).

[198] See also Charlotte Bunch, "Peace, Human Rights and Women's Peace Activism: Feminist Readings," in *Peace Work: Women, Armed Conflict and Negotiation*, ed. Radhika Coomaraswamy and Dilrukshi Fonseka, 42-43 (New Delhi: Women Unlimited, 2004); Cockburn, "Gender in Armed Conflict," 71.

Other scholars point to the different experiences, skills and tendencies of women and men resulting from their gender roles and socialization that result in women's propensity for peacebuilding.[199] For example, some scholars argue, "that women, more than men, are socialized in 'relational thinking,' to think more than men about human relationships and the social consequences of actions."[200] This is often demonstrated by women reaching out across ethnic, class and religious divisions to unite with women categorized as "the other" both during and after conflict,[201] as exemplified by women's organizations in Cyprus and in Northern Ireland.

In Cyprus, Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot women have come together on several occasions to discuss the conflict in Cyprus through a women's perspective.[202] Of significance is the establishment of a Cypriot women's non-governmental organization, Hands Across the Divide (HAD). Through the support of Cypriot women in the Diaspora[203] the group convened in 2002 at a workshop in London to overcome ideological differences and to seek solutions to problems common to both groups; this despite a ban on bi-communal contact.[204] As a result of the workshop, the women in attendance formed close alliances and resolved "... to reinforce each other's efforts for peace-building and for women's

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[199] Ibid, 42-45; Michael Salla, "Women & War, Men & Pacifism," in *Gender, Peace and Conflict,* eds. Inger Skjelsbaek and Dan Smith, 69-71 (Oslo: Sage Publications, 2001).

[200] Brock-Utne, as quoted in Salla, "Women & War," 69.

[201] Afshar, "Women and Wars," 55; Bunch, "Peace, Human Rights and Women's Peace Activism," 48.

[202] For a full history see Maria Hadjipavlou, "Cyprus: Peace is Too Precious to be Left to Men Alone," in *Gender Mainstreaming in Conflict Transformation: Building Sustainable Peace,* eds. Rawwida Baksh et al., 117-131 (London: The Commonwealth Secretariat, 2005).

[203] Hadjipavlou, "Cyprus," 125.

[204] Elsie Onubogu and Linda Etchart, "Achieving Gender Equality and Equity in Peace Processes," in *Gender Mainstreaming in Conflict Transformation: Building Sustainable Peace,* ed. Rawwida Baksh et al., 43 (London: The Commonwealth Secretariat, 2005).

increased representation in public life."[205] These alliances were reinforced at a later meeting in Vienna, where members of HAD met with the NGO Women's Initiative for Peace, which is comprised of women from Greece and Turkey. Maria Hadjipavlou explains the significance of this event: "For the first time, women from Cyprus, Greece and Turkey came together to share common concerns in promoting peaceful relations in the interest of all three countries."[206] Despite ideological divisions, the women "... formed close alliances and developed a joint agenda in support of reunification."[207] The Cypriot example demonstrates women's ability to reach across the divisions of conflict and to find common ground as women.

Similarly, women in Northern Ireland have also bridged the divide between religious groups to work together towards common goals and interests, including peace. Cynthia Cockburn describes how, in Belfast, women's community centres on both sides of the conflict formed an alliance in the early 1990's – the Women's Support Network – to deal with problems common to both groups of women, such as violence against women, living in poor housing and how to deal with police, prisons, government departments and local councils.[208] Cockburn demonstrates how the women "... were able gradually to extend their mutual agenda, the matters they could talk to each other about, from politics with a small 'p', the politics of daily life, to politics with a big 'P', matters of parties,

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[205] Ibid.

[206] Hadjipavlou, "Cyprus," 125.

[207] Ibid.

[208] Cockburn, "Gender in Armed Conflict," 70; Rehn and Sirleaf, *Women, War and Peace*, 79.

representation, borders, state constitutions."[209] Because of the efforts of women

to band together around common issues and concerns – involving such activities

as canvassing and consultations with women and women's groups followed by

lobbying of relevant political actors – these coalitions of women were able to

influence the inclusion of such principles as equality, equity, fairness and

inclusiveness in the Good Friday Agreement.[210] Although the success of the

Good Friday Agreement was mitigated by subsequent events in the history of the

conflict in Northern Ireland, it is nonetheless significant for opening up political

space for new voices to be heard, including the creation of a women's political

party, the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition, in 1996, which in turn resulted in

the election of two women candidates within the first few years of the party's

existence.[211] In both Northern Ireland[212] and in Cyprus, women were able to

reach across the divisions at the heart of conflict and to act collectively for

changes that would benefit both sides in the peace-building processes.

In response to the various theories purporting women's peace-building

abilities – be they natural or based on experience – Christine Chinkin argues

against linking the inclusion of women in formal peace processes with their

peacebuilding abilities. She explains:

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[209] Cockburn, "Gender in Armed Conflict," 70.

[210] Ibid.

[211] Marie Mulholland, "The Challenge to Inequality: Women, Discrimination and Decision-making in Northern Ireland," in *Victims, Perpetrators or Actors? Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence*, ed. Caroline O.N. Moser and Fiona C. Clark, 176-177 (London: Zed Books, 2002).

[212] For a complete analysis of women's involvement in the peace processes in Northern Ireland and history of the conflict, see Mulholland, "The Challenge to Inequality," 164-177; Simona Sharoni, "Rethinking Women's Struggles in Israel-Palestine and in the North of Ireland," in *Victims, Perpetrators or Actors? Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence*, ed. Caroline O.N. Moser and Fiona C. Clark, 85-98 (London: Zed Books, 2002).

There is controversy over whether women negotiate differently from men, whether they speak with a 'different voice' that is inherently better suited to building relationships and connections and commonalities among antagonists and, even if this is so, whether they can bring these skills to the peace table. It is often asserted that women have a special relationship to peace, that those who give life reject violent means of ending it. These claims are also vehemently rejected on the basis that they are empirically and theoretically unsustainable. However it seems unnecessary to engage in this debate. There are other reasons for supporting women's claims to participation in the processes for societal reconstruction.[213]

Instead, women's participation and representation in formal peace processes should stem from the right of women to be present at and considered in these processes, as well as the benefit women can derive from their inclusion. Chinkin explains the justification of women's participation and inclusion in formal peace processes in terms of human rights standards of equality and fairness, the gendered nature of conflict, and the need for women's recognition as agents for change in addition to their status as victims.[214] Human rights standards of equality and fairness dictate the right of women to be included in formal peace processes. For instance, Article 8 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women – which was adopted by 174 states, none of which have made reservations with respect to this article – requires that "women, on equal terms with men and without discrimination, [have] the opportunity to represent their governments at the international level ...,"[215] which includes formal peace processes. In addition, the gendered nature of conflict results in the existence of different needs and priorities for women and men in

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[213] Chinkin, "Post-Conflict Reconstruction," 213.

[214] Ibid, 213-214.

[215] As quoted in Chinkin, "Post-Conflict Reconstruction," 214.

the post-conflict period. Without the inclusion of women and recognition of their specific needs and priorities in formal peace processes, these needs are often overlooked.[216] As well, women must be recognized in peace processes as actors and agents for change and not just as victims. Chinkin explains how "[t]he local conditions, the factors promoting and inhibiting peace are well known to local women and they can bring that knowledge to the peace table. Failure to include these views and ideas can lead to an impoverished understanding of peace and security that focuses on militarism and power supported by force."[217] The benefit of inclusion in formal peace processes for women is demonstrated by DDR processes.

Women in Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration

DDR is important to securing peace in the aftermath of conflict.[218] Each of the three components of DDR involves distinct, yet related goals that when attained in combination can enable the successful disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of combatants into the community.[219] Disarmament is defined by the United Nations as "... the collection of small arms and light and heavy weapons within a conflict zone."[220] Mazurana and Carlson explain the system used to disarm soldiers: "Former combatants are gathered in pre-determined assembly areas, where weapons are confiscated, safely stored, and eventually destroyed."[221] In return for the handover of weapons, the combatants receive "...

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[216] Ibid; Rehn and Sirleaf, *Women, War and Peace*, 79.

[217] Chinkin, "Post-Conflict Reconstruction," 215.

[218] Mazurana and Carlson, *From Combat to Community*, 8.

[219] Ibid.

[220] Kofi Annan, as quoted in Mazurana and Carlson, *From Combat to Community*, 8.

[221] Mazurana and Carlson, *From Combat to Community*, 8.

food aid, shelter, clothing, medical attention, basic education, and orientation programs,"[222] as well as discharge documentation. Demobilization refers to "... the formal disbanding of military formations and the release of combatants from a 'mobilized' state."[223] This stage is also accompanied by the transport of ex-combatants to their local communities.[224] The reintegration component of DDR can be broken down into two stages: initial reinsertion and long-term reintegration.[225] The first stage – initial reinsertion – refers to the relocation of combatants back to their local communities or into a new community. This may require support in obtaining housing, resources and food.[226] Long-term reintegration then refers to the process of transitioning the combatant to civilian life and assisting the community in which the combatant is being reintegrated. Support during this phase often involves "...job placement services, skills training, credit schemes, scholarships, and rehabilitation programs."[227]

As discussed in Chapter Two, often women are excluded from DDR processes because of a lack of recognition of their contributions to war and the restriction of access to DDR programs for combatants only. Women are often unable to meet the conditions for access to programs because they do not have weapons to hand over to authorities, owing to their demobilisation before the end of war, or to their inability to access the weapons they use during war because someone else within the armed group controls who has access to the

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[222] Ibid.
[223] Ibid.
[224] Ibid.
[225] Ibid.
[226] Ibid.
[227] Ibid.

weapons.[228] Two main purposes underlie the requirement that participants in DDR hand over a weapon: the first is to facilitate the demobilization of armed groups; the second is a means of ensuring that not just anyone can enter the program to receive financial or other support, but that the participants of DDR are in fact members of the armed groups.[229] While these two purposes are important, it is also important to ensure that those who are already demobilised have access to programs for rehabilitation and reintegration that form part of DDR. Ensuring that all ex-combatants are able to access DDR is essential not only for purposes of demobilisation and demilitarization, but also to ensure the proper reintegration and rehabilitation of the combatants into society. The reintegration and rehabilitation of ex-combatants in turn helps to reinforce demobilization and demilitarization by providing ex-combatants with options for economic and social stability in civilian life, rather than as part of an armed group.

One way to achieve these goals is to separate out the R from DDR through a division of labour.[230] For example, Simon Arthy suggests that different organizations should be responsible for each component of DDR, thereby allowing for a "... a much more direct linkage between more general community recovery projects and the reintegration challenge."[231] This is particularly salient given the number of local organizations and individuals – particularly women and

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[228] See pages 39-40 of this thesis.

[229] Admittedly, difficulty arises over the use of the term 'members.' Women and girls may have carried weapons or supported armed forces in various roles, and yet may not be considered as members of these groups.

[230] Bouta et al., *Gender, Conflict, and Development*, 19.

[231] Ibid.

women's groups – who provide reintegration and rehabilitation services to ex-combatants.[232]

As well, women may themselves choose not to enter DDR programs because of fears of stigmatization and rejection by their families and communities.[233] The inclusion of female combatants in DDR, however, can provide women with access to economic resources such as micro-credit schemes; education, skills-training, and assistance in gaining employment; housing; and psychological and medical attention. Furthermore, the participation of women in these programs could assist women in overcoming stigmatization and rejection by their families and communities, either through their relocation to other communities, or through the efforts of actors implementing DDR to assist the communities in accepting women who participated in conflict and may therefore be "damaged" by their experiences. As well, the DDR process could provide women combatants with legitimacy by acknowledging their contributions and roles during times of war. In so doing, women would be acknowledged as political actors and agents for change. This could further help challenge patriarchal assumptions of the gender roles of women and men, and the preconception of women's activities as belonging to the private sphere.

In addition to the problems identified above, other difficulties with the implementation of DDR challenge its utility in successfully demobilising, demilitarizing and in particular reintegrating former soldiers into society. For example, in some cases employment opportunities for ex-combatants have not

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[232] See page 61-62 of this thesis.
[233] Ibid, 18.

materialized, leaving them without an alternate means of income.[234] Rocky Williams explains how in some African contexts,

> demobilisation programmes take place within economies that are incapable of absorbing all personnel. Often the financial and employment packages provided to demobilised soldiers do not match the salaries and perks received in the employ of the military. Post-demobilisation training is often incomplete or does not accurately reflect the skills requirements of the economic sector into which soldiers are directed.[235]

Where DDR programs do include women, some programs emphasize micro-credit schemes as income-generating activities for women.[236] Micro-credit, however, "is no panacea."[237] The success of micro-credit is dependent upon an economy in which people have the capital to buy the items made by women with the use of their loans. In addition, research on micro-credit indicates that some women "... are falling into a 'micro-finance ghetto.' Small loans limit them to small purchases .... These purchases can generate immediate income but, without larger loans, the businesses cannot grow."[238] Finally, research also demonstrates that for many women who receive micro-credit loans, the loan itself and the income it generates is often controlled by male relatives.[239] Thus, the utility of giving of micro-credit loans to women as part of DDR is also questionable.

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[234] Stephanie Hanson, "Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) in Africa," Council on Foreign Relations, http://www.cfr.org/publication/12650.

[235] Rocky Williams, "Demobilisation and Reintegration in Society: Human Resources Conversion," The International Development Research Centre, http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-68079-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html.

[236] Mazurana and Carlson, *From Combat to Community*, 18.

[237] Rehn and Sirleaf, *Women, War and Peace*, 127.

[238] Ibid.

[239] Ibid.

Given the difficulties and problems with implementing DDR programs both in general terms[240] and for women and girls in particular, are there alternatives to achieving the goals DDR sets out to achieve? In terms of reintegration and rehabilitation of female ex-combatants, women's networks and organizations may be one such solution, as mentioned earlier. In Sierra Leone, for example, "women as individuals and in groups have been critical to reintegrating former combatants, particularly those excluded from official programs."[241] The various activities undertaken by these women include taking into their homes former child soldiers, providing guidance, sharing of resources, and facilitating skills training and education through the provision of childcare, clothing and food.[242] Through their actions "[w]omen's organizations have also provided models for many of the female ex-combatants; over 65 percent of respondents [to a study survey] said that they would like to join such organizations ...."[243] Although women and girls were largely excluded from the official DDR program in Sierra Leone,[244] women's networks and organizations nonetheless provided resources and assistance to child soldiers and female ex-combatants to enable their reintegration and rehabilitation back into community life.[245] The reliance on local organizations to assist in reintegration and

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[240] For a more in-depth discussion of implementing DDR, refer to Lena Sundh and Jens Samuelsson Schjorlien, eds., *Stockholm Initiative on Disarmament Demobilisation Reintegration: Final Report*, Ministry for Foreign Affairs Sweden, 2006; Nicole Ball and Luc Van de Goor, *Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration: Mapping Issues, Dilemmas and Guiding Principals*, Netherlands Institute of International Relations, 2006.

[241] Mazurana and Carlson, *From Combat to Community*, 4.

[242] Ibid.

[243] Ibid.

[244] Ibid, 4-5.

[245] See also Ibid, 22-23.

rehabilitations may also be useful in engendering these processes for men and women. Bouta et al. attest that

> Reintegration activities [at the community level] could be much better adapted to the different needs and skills of male and female ex-combatants in such areas as security, (reproductive) health, education, employment, and information dissemination. It may ensure that reintegration processes do not contribute to the restoration of pre-conflict gender roles, but instead try to capitalize on positive gender roles during conflict. And it may contribute to more transformative reintegration programs, including information and sensitization campaigns on equal rights for women and men, and on their roles and responsibilities in society.[246]

In sum, DDR programs have the potential to enable women to become empowered economically, socially, culturally and politically. The challenge, then, is in transforming the potential of DDR into reality – be it through formal DDR processes that are inclusive of women and girls and their specific needs, or the build-up and support of local initiatives to help reintegrate and rehabilitate women and girls back into society.

International Recognition of Women in Formal Peace Processes

Over the last decade, the international community has come to recognize the need for women's inclusion and participation in formal peace processes as well as the integration of women's needs, priorities and interests in the aftermath of conflict. At the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, women's organizations were successful in gaining a commitment to include

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[246] Bouta et al., *Gender, Conflict and Development*, 19-20.

women in peace processes.[247]   The Platform for Action adopted at the conference states that:

> In addressing armed or other conflicts, an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes should be promoted so that before decisions are taken an analysis is made of the effects on women and men, respectively.[248]

This assertion further resulted into strategic objective E.1 of the Platform for Action, which requires "… governments and international and regional institutions to '[t]ake action to promote equal participation of women and equal opportunities for women to participate in all forums and all peace activities at all levels, particularly at the decision-making level ….' [and to:] '[i]ntegrate a gender perspective in the resolution of armed or other conflicts.'"[249] Five years later a special session of the United Nations General Assembly – "Beijing Plus Five" – issued a resolution calling for action at the international level to "[e]nsure and support the participation of women at all levels of decision-making and implementation in development activities and peace processes, including conflict prevention and resolution, [and] post-conflict reconstruction …."[250] In that same year the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1325, which recognizes women as victims and agents for change in conflict and post-conflict reconstruction, and calls for their increased protection in conflict and the

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[247] Chinkin, "Post-Conflict Reconstruction," 210; Onubogu and Etchart, "Achieving Gender Equality," 34.

[248] Fourth World Conference on Women, 'Platform for Action,' 15 September 1995, UN Doc. A/CONF. 177/20, paragraph 141.

[249] Chinkin, "Post-Conflict Reconstruction," 210.

[250] Outcome Document of the Beijing Plus Five Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly, as quoted in Chinkin, "Post-Conflict Reconstruction," 210-211 and Onubogu and Etchart, "Achieving Gender Equality," 35.

aftermath, as well as their increased inclusion and participation in resolving

conflicts and post-conflict reconstruction.[251] In particular, the Resolution

reaffirms:

> The important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace-building, and [*stresses*] the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, and the need to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution ....[252]

The Resolution also:

> Calls on all actors involved, when negotiating and implementing peace agreements, to adopt a gender perspective, including, inter alia:
>
> (a) The special needs of women and girls during repatriation and resettlement and for rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction;
> (b) Measures that support local women's peace initiatives and indigenous processes for conflict resolution, and that involve women in all of the implementation mechanisms of the peace agreements;
> (c) Measures that ensure the protection of and respect for human rights of women and girls, particularly as they relate to the constitution, the electoral system, the police and the judiciary....[253]

Finally, the Resolution calls on the Secretary-General to provide the

appropriate training to Member States on the "... protection, rights and the

particular needs of women as well as on the importance of involving women in all

peacekeeping and peace-building measures ...."[254] It also invites Member-

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[251] For a more detailed examination of the significance of Security Council Resolution 1325, refer to Jodie McGrath and Suzanne Taylor, "Canada and United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security," in *Women Building Peace between India and Pakistan*, ed. Shree Mulay and Jackie Kirk, 8-22 (New Delhi: Anthem Press, 2007).

[252] Security Council Resolution 1325, 31 October 2000, S/RES/1325, preamble paragraph 5.

[253] Ibid, paragraph 8.

[254] Ibid, paragraph 6.

States to incorporate this training into national training programmes for military and civilian police personnel prior to their deployment on peacekeeping missions and requires this training for all civilian personnel of peacekeeping operations.[255] These commitments reflect a deeper understanding by the international community that "[i]f women are to play an equal part in security and maintaining peace, they must be empowered politically and economically, and represented adequately at all levels of decision making, both at the pre-conflict stage and during hostilities, as well as at the point of peacekeeping, peacebuilding, reconciliation and reconstruction."[256]

Gender Balance and Gender Mainstreaming in Formal Peace Processes

Evident in these international commitments are the related principles of gender balance and gender mainstreaming. Gender balance "… requires the inclusion of both women and men at all stages and in all roles within peace processes and social reconstruction …."[257] Gender mainstreaming can be defined as

> the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes …. It is a strategy for making women's concerns as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and social spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated.[258]

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[255] Ibid.

[256] United Nations Security Council statement to the press March 8, 2000 as quoted in McGrath and Taylor, "Canada and United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325," 8.

[257] Chinkin, "Post-Conflict Reconstruction," 211.

[258] Christine Chinkin as quoted in Ibid, 211-212.

In other words, gender balance indicates the participation of women in peace processes, whereas gender mainstreaming denotes the integration of a gender perspective in peace processes. Both principles are necessary to ensure the full inclusion of women and their interests, needs and priorities in the processes of reconstruction that both emerge from and constitute formal peace processes; however, there are significant obstacles to the attainment of these principles in practice.

Obstacles to Achieving Gender Balance in Formal Peace Processes

The participation of women in formal peace processes is impeded for a number of political and logistical reasons. To begin, the exclusion of women from formal peace processes often reflects their under-representation in national politics and other political processes prior to armed conflict.[259] For example, the teams established to engage in and carry out formal peace processes are normally comprised of government, diplomatic and/or military personnel. Because women are generally excluded from positions within these power structures, they are consequently excluded from participating in the formal peace processes.[260] Women are excluded in the aftermath of conflict also – such as in DDR programmes – because their combat roles are not acknowledged by men. As well, the aftermath of conflict is frequently marked by the return of women from the public sphere to the private sphere. This can be caused by local custom and tradition that exclude women from political activities; the assumption that

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[259] Ibid; Bouta et al., *Gender, Conflict and Development*, 51.
[260] Onubogu and Etchart, "Achieving Gender Equality," 38-39.

what men want, women will also want; or the reality that women's activities are most often not perceived as being "political."[261]

Women may also be excluded from the conference table because the focus of attention is on getting warring parties to agree to an immediate end to violent conflict rather than on the structural impediments to sustainable peace.[262] Dubbed "the tyranny of the emergency,"[263] this focus is centred on perceptions of peace in negative terms; meaning, an absence of violent conflict associated with war.[264] Donna Pankhurst explains the connotation of negative peace and proposes an alternative conception of peace:

> A 'peaceful' society in this sense may therefore include a society in which social violence (against women, for instance) and/or structural violence (in situations of extreme inequality, for example) are prevalent. Moreover, this limited 'peace goal', of an absence of specific forms of violence associated with war, can and often does lead to a strategy in which all other goals become secondary. The absence of analysis of the deeper (social) causes of violence also paves the way for peace agreements that leave major causes of violent conflict completely unresolved.[265]

A focus on peace conceived in negative terms therefore not only serves as an obstacle to women's inclusion in formal peace processes, but may also prevent the resolution of deeper social issues at the root of violent conflict, and may contribute to continued inequalities and disempowerment of marginalized groups, including women.

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[261] Onubogu and Etchart, "Achieving Gender Equality," 38-39; Chinkin, "Post-Conflict Reconstruction," 212-213.

[262] Chinkin, "Post-Conflict Reconstruction," 210.

[263] Onubogu and Etchart, "Achieving Gender Equality," 34.

[264] Pankhurst, "The 'Sex War'," 11.

[265] Ibid.

Other logistical factors also obstruct women's participation in formal peace processes. Many women may fear for their security when participating in formal peace processes; this may be particularly relevant in conflicts where women were targeted or where incidents of sexual violence were prevalent.[266] As well, women may have difficulty in attending negotiations, peace talks and other activities when they are held at a long distance from the state in which conflict occurred. For example, peace negotiations for conflict in Mozambique took place in Italy, for Cambodia in France, for Bosnia-Herzegovina in the United States of America (USA), and in South Africa for the Democratic Republic of Congo.[267] To participate in such processes would require the financial resources to travel to the location of the negotiations; it may be particularly difficult for women to access resources or to spend them on travel rather than the immediate needs of their families.

Moreover, women – like men – would also need the skills and training necessary to converse with the other negotiators and foreign mediators who guide the formal peace processes.[268] Finally, women's "caring commitments" may further impede their ability to participate actively in the peace processes.[269] During conflict and the aftermath women in particular are burdened with the responsibility of caring for those injured during war in the community, as well as often-times providing for their families economically. As Chapter two of this

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[266] Onubogu and Etchart, "Achieving Gender Equality," 39; Chinkin, "Post-Conflict Reconstruction," 213.

[267] Chinkin, "Post-Conflict Reconstruction," 213.

[268] Rehn and Sirleaf, Women, War and Peace, 79.

[269] Onubogu and Etchart, "Achieving Gender Equality," 39; Chinkin, "Post-Conflict Reconstruction," 213.

thesis revealed, women experience a deprivation of time because of their increased responsibilities. This may impede the ability of women to participate in formal peace processes, as not all women will have the time to travel to or to attend peace activities.

In spite of such potential obstacles many women have participated successfully in formal peace processes. For example, women in Liberia "... organized themselves effectively through two national networks to influence the peace process. After the active participation of women, a long-term sustainable peace process was developed that was inclusive of both women and men."[270] As well, women participated in peace negotiations in Sierra Leone, Sudan, Somalia, Mali and the Republic of Congo.[271] As a result of women's direct participation in the peace processes, "these countries have taken on-board the issues and concerns of women peace activists in their national efforts for reconstruction."[272] However, the inclusion of women at the table does not always necessitate the integration of all women's needs, interests and priorities.

Potential Hazards of Gender Balance

Although it is important to have women present at and participating in formal peace processes, this does not always result in the representation of women's needs, interests and priorities – which may themselves converge – and may in fact further disempower some women.[273] In the case of El Salvador, one third of the negotiators for the FMLN were women and yet the needs and

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[270] Jean Njeri Kamau, "Assessment Report on: Women's Participation in the Peace Process," Economic Commission for Africa, 13 (1999).

[271] Ibid.

[272] Ibid, 14.

[273] Onubogu and Etchart, "Achieving Gender Equality," 36.

interests of women were not brought to the table during the peace negotiations; to the contrary the peace agreements included discriminatory provisions against women,[274] including the exclusion of women from lists of beneficiaries for reintegration benefits.[275] Bouta et al. describe how the female negotiators "regarded themselves as official party negotiators – 'not as representatives of a women's movement' ..." only to later regret "their lack of gender awareness during the peace process."[276] Furthermore, the inclusion of some women in formal peace processes may result in the integration of those specific women's interests and perspectives, but not all women's. The category of women is itself broad, and does not denote the divisions and differences among the individuals who comprise this category: "women's lives are affected by the intersection of gender with their race, ethnicity, class, religion, and other factors ...."[277] The different experiences of women during conflict based on these divisions may also result in different priorities and needs among women in the aftermath.

> [F]or some women there may be very specific health care needs, such as treatment for sexually transmitted disease and other consequences of rape; for others finding information about missing relatives ... who have disappeared may be their foremost concern; for yet others, this may be a case of attempting to restore normalcy for their children; for many, economic survival will be essential. The list is endless.[278]

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[274] Bouta et al., *Gender, Conflict and Development*, 53-54.

[275] Ibid, 54. Note that after negotiations lists were re-drawn to include some women amongst the beneficiaries.

[276] Ibid.

[277] Bunch, "Peace, Human Rights and Women's Peace Activism," 44.

[278] Chinkin, "Post-Conflict Reconstruction," 217-218.

Moreover, just because women are women, does not make all women natural allies;[279] as Bouta et al. attest, "women may not always support opportunities for other women."[280] The inclusion of some women in formal peace processes could therefore lead to intentional disempowerment of other women, based on conflicting identities of race, class and religion. As well, some women in positions of leadership may not advocate for women's empowerment, because they uphold tradition or customs that are disempowering to women. For example, a female government minister in Bosnia Herzegovina attested that "Just because I am a woman ... I will not fight for women's rights."[281] As Charlotte Bunch further asserts, "... it also matters where these women [meaning those who are included in formal peace processes] come from, what their commitment is to women's rights, and what their overall politics represent."[282] Thus, there is a need to ensure not only diversity of women in formal peace processes, but also that there is sensitivity to the needs and priorities of all women, and not just some.[283] Admittedly, ensuring such diversity across all groups affected by the outcomes of formal peace processes would benefit the process as a whole, for women, men and children.[284]

Finally, women themselves may choose not to participate in formal peace processes even when the ability to do so is available to them. As Chapter two demonstrated, some women choose not to participate in DDR because of the

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[279] Bunch, "Peace, Human Rights and Women's Peace Activism," 43.

[280] Bouta et al., Gender, Conflict and Development, 53.

[281] As quoted in Rehn and Sirleaf, Women, War and Peace, 81.

[282] Bunch, "Peace, Human Rights and Women's Peace Activism," 44.

[283] Ibid; Chinkin, "Post-Conflict Reconstruction," 216.

[284] Bunch, "Peace, Human Rights and Women's Peace Activism," 44.

societal implications of their participation, such as stigmatization and rejection. As well, "... not all women's groups want to be at the table if it involves negotiating with the warlords or tyrants who helped create the conflict ...."[285] Achieving gender balance is therefore not as straightforward as ensuring that women attend and participate in the activities that constitute formal peace processes; rather, attention must be paid to ensure that the women who do participate in formal peace processes do not contribute to the disempowerment of other women. Again, this need is pertinent not only for women, but for all actors affected by the outcomes of formal peace processes.

Gender Mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming is often used to offset the difficulties entailed in achieving gender balance in formal peace processes. For example, gender mainstreaming may enable women's empowerment, particularly at the level of international institutions involved in formal peace processes: "Members of the international institutions may be allies for women against local communities resistant to women's empowerment and may be able to assist in accessing resources and in identifying leaders."[286] However, in order to integrate gender considerations into these processes the gendered dimensions of conflict and peace must be recognized and understood by the actors carrying out peace activities. This can be difficult without proper gender balance, without consulting the women affected by the conflict and without gender sensitive training:

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[285] Rehn and Sirleaf, *Women, War and Peace*, 79.

[286] Chinkin, "Post-Conflict Reconstruction," 218; Onubogu and Etchart, "Achieving Gender Equality," 37.

> A bureaucrat who is not versed in gender matters may prove an additional hurdle for local women to overcome in presenting issues and concerns. International agencies may be ignorant of local initiatives and programmes and make no attempt to find out what is happening on the ground. Members of international agencies can be positively harmful to women as when peacekeepers become involved in sexual abuse and trafficking.[287]

To achieve greater inclusion of women in peace processes therefore requires understanding of gender issues, proper training and consultation with women at the community level.

The Role of Women's Organizations

Often women's inclusion and the integration of gender considerations into formal peace processes are through the efforts of women's organizations, in combination with international actors.[288] For example, a group of women in Somalia fought to be granted access to the peace negotiations held in the year 2000. The Somali National Peace Conference was the fourteenth attempt since 1991 to end the civil war in Somalia.[289] Ninety-two women were selected from various clans to participate in the negotiations; however, at the conference the women banded together as a single clan, known as the 6th clan, in an effort to force "cross-clan reconciliation."[290] Through their participation in the negotiations, the clan of women lobbied to have a quota for women in the new legislature, the Transitional National Assembly. Despite opposition from the male delegates at the conference, the 6th clan succeeded in securing 25 seats for

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[287] Chinkin, "Post-Conflict Reconstruction," 218-219; Onubogu and Etchart, "Achieving Gender Equality," 37-38.

[288] Rehn and Sirleaf, *Women, War and Peace*, 79.

[289] Ibid, 78.

[290] Ibid; "No Women, No Peace," 2.

women in the legislature, as well as language protecting the human rights of women, children and minorities in the final conclusions of the negotiations.[291] This group felt it was important to ensure that not only are women from across various ethnic, religious, racial and class divides present in formal peace activities, but that the needs, interests and priorities of all women are integrated, regardless of the presence of women at the table.

Similarly, the integration of both women and gender issues in the formal peace processes and state-building after apartheid in South Africa also resulted largely from the efforts of women's organizations and the women's movement within that country. Like many other liberation wars, the battle for women's rights and empowerment in South Africa was closely integrated with the fight against apartheid.[292] Through their direct participation in this fight, women and women's organizations gained valuable experience and skills for continuing a women's movement after the object of the anti-apartheid movement was met.[293] In addition, South African women learned from the experiences of women in liberation movements in Mozambique, Angola and Zimbabwe that their participation in conflict would not guarantee their involvement in formal politics following the struggle, nor would the roles between women and men change in the aftermath to reflect women's roles and contributions during conflict.[294] Rather

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[291] Rehn and Sirleaf, *Women, War and Peace*, 78-79; "No Women, No Peace," 2.

[292] For a discussion of the links between women's movements and liberation movements see Zengie A. Mangaliso, "Gender and Nation-Building in South Africa," in *Global Feminisms*, ed. Bonnie G. Smith, 69 (London: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2000); Shireen Hassim, "Introduction: Autonomy and Engagement in the South African Women's Movement," in *Women's Organizations and Democracy in South Africa: Contesting Authority*, ed. Shireen Hassim, 3-19 (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2006).

[293] Mangaliso, "Gender and Nation-Building," 65.

[294] Britton, "South Africa," 63.

there was a need for women to unify together before the formal processes of state-building began to ensure the inclusion of women and the integration of their needs and priorities in the new government and state.[295] To this end, a group of over 100 women's groups banded together to form a national women's organization (the Women's National Coalition or WNC) in 1991.[296]

Among the significant achievements of the WNC was the creation of a Women's Charter, which provided "... a detailed platform of action for the movement as a whole."[297] The foremost goal of the Women's Charter was the advancement of women's equality in the new constitution; however, progress to accomplishing this goal was significantly thwarted by the absence of women at the negotiating table.[298] Through extensive lobbying and its connections to the major political parties, the WNC succeeded in having women's voices and interests integrated in the negotiations.[299] The efforts of the WNC culminated in the establishment of the Gender Advisory Committee to the body negotiating the transition from apartheid and the establishment of the new constitution.[300] In addition the WNC also succeeded in ensuring that a female member of each

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[295] Ibid.

[296] Gretchen Bauer and Hannah E. Britton, "Women in African Parliaments: a Continental Shift?," in Women in African Parliaments, eds. Gretchen Bauer and Hannah E. Britton, 13 (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2006).

[297] Britton, "South Africa," 64.

[298] Ibid.

[299] Anne Marie Goetz and Shireen Hassim emphasize the historic ties between the women's movement and the African National Council as contributing to the WNC's ability to influence negotiations and women's representation during the political transition in "Introduction: Women in Power in Uganda and South Africa," in No Shortcuts to Power: African Women in Politics and Policy Making," eds. Anne Marie Goetz and Shireen Hassim, 14 (London: Zed Books, 2003).

[300] Gretchen Bauer and Hannah E. Britton, "Women in African Parliaments: a Continental Shift?," in Women in African Parliaments, eds. Gretchen Bauer and Hannah E. Britton, 13 (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2006).

political party participated in the negotiations: "This proposal has been seen as the first major victory for women in South Africa."[301] As a result of the integration of women, their interests and priorities in the negotiations, the constitution of South Africa "... has one of the broadest and most inclusive equality clauses internationally."[302]

As well, the women who participated in the negotiations also helped to ensure that the choice of political and electoral system for the new South Africa would enable women's political representation.[303] Although the choice of the multimember district electoral system with party-list proportional representation was not made solely out of women's interests, this system is arguably the most conducive to women's representation.[304] Through its leverage within the major political parties, members of the WNC were able "to advance women in their party lists," through affirmative action measures.[305] Today, women in South Africa hold roughly thirty-three percent of the seats in parliament,[306] however, whether or not the inclusion of women in parliament benefits women rights and empowerment is in question.[307] Nonetheless, women's organization in both South Africa and Somalia were vital to ensuring women's representation during

[301] Britton, "South Africa," 64.

[302] Ibid.

[303] Ibid, 65.

[304] Ibid.

[305] Ibid, 66; Mangaliso, "Gender and Nation-Building," 74.

[306] "Gender Empowerment Measure: Seats in Parliament," *Human Development Report 2007/2008* http://hdrstats.undp.org/indicators/281.html

[307] Gertrude Fester, "Merely Mothers Perpetuating Patriarchy? Women's Grassroots Organizations

in the Western Cape 1980 to 1990," in *(Un)thinking Citizenship: Feminist Debates in Contemporary South Africa*, ed. Amanda Gouws, 216 (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2005).

formal peace processes, and achieved important results through these processes that lay the foundation for greater empowerment of women in the post-conflict period.

Conclusion

The inclusion of women and integration of women's needs, priorities and interests is an important factor that must be considered in the activities of formal peace processes. Human rights standards of equality and fairness, the gendered nature of conflict and the need for women's recognition as agents for change in addition to their status as victims necessitates women's participation in formal peace processes. Moreover, "Women's participation in the peace process and mainstreaming their involvement into the peace accords lay the groundwork for engendering post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation."[308] Through this engendering and the participation of women, formal peace processes provide space for the consolidation of the empowerment gains some women make during conflict and have the potential to further empower women in the aftermath. Despite international recognition of the need for gender balance and gender mainstreaming, however, women continue to be marginalized in formal peace processes and are often prevented from participating in these activities by political, logistical and security obstacles. As well, even when some women are able to participate in formal peace processes this does not always lead to the inclusion of all women's needs and priorities, and may even lead to the further disempowerment of some or all women. It is therefore not enough to simply add

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[308] Bouta et al., *Gender, Conflict and Development,* 50-51.

women and stir;[309] "... although conflict may increase opportunities for more gender-balanced political participation ... support is needed to sustain these changes."[310] As the examples of Somalia and South Africa demonstrate, this support can come through women's organizations. The final section of this thesis further examines the role of women's organizations in reinforcing women's rights and empowerment both during and after conflict through two case studies: Viet Nam and Rwanda.

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[309] Chenoy and Vanaik, "Promoting Peace," 137.
[310] Bouta et al., *Gender, Conflict and Development*, 50-51.

CHAPTER 4: WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS AND POST-CONFLICT EMPOWERMENT

Introduction

Throughout this thesis, the role of women's organizations in enabling women's empowerment has been emphasized. Chapter one demonstrated how women can become empowered through collective action and how collective action can in turn help women to realize their own individual empowerment. Chapter two reinforced this connection in times of armed conflict, demonstrating how women often band together in support of, or in opposition to war, as well as to mitigate the negative affects of war on individuals, families and communities, and how this in turn enables women to realize their own capacity and potential for political and economic empowerment. And in the preceding section, women's organizations were found to play a key role in bringing women, their needs and priorities to the table in formal peace processes, and how in some cases, this led to increases in women's empowerment in the aftermath of war. However, this section also demonstrated that formal peace processes are often not enough to consolidate the limited gains some women make during conflict, and the further empowerment of women afterwards. Rather, greater support is needed to reinforce the agenda of women's rights and empowerment in the phases of post-conflict reconstruction.

Several scholars posit that the consolidation of women's war-time gains and the empowerment of women in the aftermath of conflict are dependent upon the existence and maintenance of women's organizations and networks both during and after war.[311] These scholars argue that women's organizations are fluid, and can adapt to the changing needs of women during conflict and in the aftermath.[312] As well, women's organizations "... have the potential to promote women's leadership, to build awareness of women's rights, and to contribute to gender equality."[313] Thus, groups of women who band together during war and in the immediate aftermath to provide such essential needs as child care or to provide psychological support could serve as the building blocks for a larger women's movement to advocate such goals as equal rights for women and the representation of women in government institutions. These organizations can also assist in the building up of a strong civil society within post-conflict states, which is essential to maintaining peace and successfully reconstructing society in the aftermath of conflict.[314] This section examines the roles of women's organizations as a vehicle through which to further women's empowerment in two post-conflict countries: Viet Nam and Rwanda.

[311] Bop, "Women in Conflicts," 33-34; Cockburn, "The Gendered Dynamics of Armed Conflict," 27; Moser et al., "Introduction," 10; Meintjes et al., "There is No Aftermath," 10; Turshen, "Engendering Relations," 79-80; Rabrenovic and Roskos, "Civil Society," 47-49; Bauer and Britton, "Women in African Parliaments," 8-9.

[312] Rabrenovic and Roskos, "Civil Society," 47; Onubogu and Etchart, "Achieving Gender Equality," 43-44.

[313] Bouta et al., Gender, Conflict, and Development, 73.

[314] Bouta et al., Gender, Conflict, and Development, 65-66.

Viet Nam

The history of Viet Nam has been rife with conflict: "Since 1930 [the Vietnamese] have scarcely known peace, fighting French colonialists, the Japanese, then the Americans, then Pol Pot's Cambodian Khmer Rouge and their supporters, and then the People's Republic of China."[315] Throughout these wars, women have lived true to the Vietnamese aphorism that "When the invaders come, even the women have to fight."[316] In the case of the French and American Wars, women's contributions to the conflicts were fuelled in large part by their quest for equality and empowerment within Vietnamese society and politics. These interests were and continue to be articulated today by the Vietnamese Women's Union, which was established as part of the revolution and which is largely responsible for many of the empowerment gains women have made.

The Roots of the Women's Movement

Historically, the experience of women in Viet Nam has been one of subjugation. Owing to nearly a thousand years of Chinese occupation, much of Vietnamese culture and traditions are based in Confucianism.[317] Under this belief system, women had little value and were subservient first to their fathers, then to their husbands, their sons and lastly their mothers-in law.[318] Women were confined to the family, which remains as the basis of Vietnamese society

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[315] Sandra C. Taylor, "The Long-Haired Warriors: Women and Revolution in Vietnam," in *The War that Never Ends*, eds. David L. Anderson and John Ernst, 167 (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2007).

[316] As quoted in Ibid.

[317] Ibid, 168.

[318] Ibid.

today.[319] Under Chinese occupation, women's subjugation was further enshrined in the legal codes of Viet Nam, which included such laws as polygamy and forced marriages.[320] Years after the Chinese occupation of Viet Nam ended French colonisers preserved the laws, customs and traditions of Viet Nam, to the detriment of women.[321] Despite the fact that women had been subjugated for decades before French colonialism, the disempowerment and inequality of women under French rule became a vehicle for political discussion and action in the 1920's.[322] "Vietnamese intellectuals often used gender as a model of analyzing conditions in Vietnam under colonialism. Censorship prevented an open political discourse that might criticize the regime. Thus 'debates on women became primary vehicles for arguing about topics that could not be addressed forthrightly.'"[323] Mary Ann Tetreault further describes how "Women's books – even cookbooks – often featured advertisements for overtly anti-colonial publications, and women's educational and social groups evolved into fora for the public discussion of national issues."[324]

Ho Chi Minh in particular recognized the potential of women as radicals in the struggle against the French: "Women are half the people. If women are not

[319] Taylor, "The Long-Haired Warriors," 168.

[320] Ibid; Mary Ann Tetreault, "Women and Revolution in Vietnam," in *Women and Revolution in Africa, Asia and the New World*, ed. Mary Ann Tetreault, 112-113 (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994).

[321] Tetreault, "Women and Revolution," 112-113; Norman G. Owen, ed., *The Emergence of Modern Southeast Asia: a New History*, 336 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005). It should be noted, however, that during this period women did have some economic control over resources, as they were assigned responsibilities for marketing and finances within the family. See Taylor, "The Long-Haired Warriors," 168.

[322] Taylor, "The Long-Haired Warriors," 169-170.

[323] Tetreault, "Women and Revolution," 111-112.

[324] Ibid, 113.

free, then the people are not free."[325]   In return for their participation the revolution promised women "equal political, social, and economic rights and status under a new regime."[326]   A majority of women responded to these appeals, participating in the revolution as porters and also as combatants.[327] Following the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in 1945, Ho Chi Minh fulfilled the promises of the revolution in the new constitution: "Ho's constitution of 1946 outlawed polygamy and concubinage, promoted the education of women, extended the franchise to women, called for equal pay for equal work, and advocated equal work opportunities."[328]   As well, women were included as policymakers in the communist regime (known as the Viet Minh), were sent to represent Viet Nam at international conferences, and were given rights for land ownership.[329]

In addition, the revolution also endorsed the Women's Liberation Association, which was originally established in 1930.[330] The primary purpose of the association was to "promote women's emancipation and liberation, cultivate sexual equality, promote literacy, educate women in the domestic arts, improve medical care, and teach the writing of Marx and Lenin, Ho Chi Minh, and other Party leaders."[331]   This organization was (and continues to be) the dominant actor for the women's movement in Viet Nam, and actively encouraged women's participation in the revolution as a means to gaining empowerment and achieving

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[325] Ho Chi Minh as quoted in Tetreault, "Women and Revolution," 114.

[326] Ibid, 171-172.

[327] Ibid, 114.

[328] Taylor, "The Long-Haired Warriors," 178.

[329] Tetreault, "Women and Revolution," 114.

[330] Armstrong and Prashad, "Solidarity," 227.

[331] Taylor, "The Long-Haired Warriors," 171.

equality. The endorsement of the association by the Viet Minh resonated with Ho Chi Minh's belief that "Women should not merely take part in the general movement but also build *a revolutionary movement of their own*"[332] (italics in original). The equality and empowerment of women were therefore closely tied to the objectives of the revolution, which in turn served as the foundation for the women's movement in Viet Nam.

Women's Participation in the French and American Wars

According to Vietnamese authorities, 980,000 female guerrillas served in the North and South during the French War, from 1946-1954.[333] Women fulfilled a number of important roles, including as combatants, porters, and inciters of the population to support the revolution.[334] Following the end of the conflict and the division between the Diem regime in South Viet Nam and the ICP in the North, women continued their efforts to advance both the revolution and the women's movement in the North and in the South during the American War. Throughout the war, women's activities were cited as critical in the eventual success of the revolution.[335] In the North women's participation was centered on three key responsibilities: "... to continue production when men went into the army so that the people would be fed, to run family affairs and care for their children, and to fight the enemy when necessary."[336] In the South, women joined ranks with the National Liberation Front (NLF), also known as the Viet Cong, serving as

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[332] As quoted in Armstrong and Prashad, "Solidarity," 239,

[333] Ibid.

[334] Taylor, "The Long-Haired Warriors," 171.

[335] Tetreault, "Women and Revolution," 117.

[336] Taylor, "The Long-Haired Warriors," 172.

combatants, nurses, and cooks and providing agricultural labour.[337] In the North and the South, the Women's Liberation Association, now known as the Vietnamese Women's Union in the North and the Union of Women for the Liberation of South Vietnam in the South, fuelled women's participation in the conflict as a means to empowerment and equality.[338] However, the status of women in the revolution differed between the North and South. In the North women were more accepted by their male comrades; whereas in the South "women had a difficult time gaining the respect of their male peers."[339] However, women in the North and the South achieved positions of political and military leadership, and became powerful symbols of the revolution.[340]

Despite these limited gains, women suffered extreme losses because of the war. Many women in the revolution forfeited opportunities for marriage and having children, as these activities were strongly discouraged by the revolution, particularly the NLF.[341] Women who lost their husbands or fiancés during the war were also encouraged to remain celibate and to not remarry in honour of their male companions.[342] As well, women were often captured as prisoners of war and many were tortured.[343] Today women continue to suffer the effects of

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[337] Ibid, 173, 176-177.
[338] Ibid, 173.
[339] Tetreault, "Women and Revolution," 122.
[340] Ibid, 122-123. For a discussion of prominent women leaders in the revolution and after see Taylor, "The Long-Haired Warriors," 181-184; Armstrong and Prashad, "Solidarity," 226-228.
[341] Taylor, "The Long-Haired Warriors," 173.
[342] Ibid, 177.
[343] Ibid, 176; 179-180.

these events, as well as from ecological and health effects of the war.[344]

Women's Post-Conflict Empowerment

Following the revolution, women achieved important gains in empowerment. For example, prior to the revolution ninety-eight percent of women were illiterate.[345] After the revolution, the government committed to ensuring equal access to education for women and men. By 1986, fifty percent of children enrolled in primary and secondary school were female.[346] Today ninety percent of girls primary school aged are enrolled in school, and seventy-five percent secondary school aged girls are enrolled.[347] In addition to gains in education and literacy, women also benefited from legal reform. As previously mentioned, the 1946 constitution granted increased status and rights to women.[348] Following the revolution a reformed constitution was enacted in 1980. This constitution "... reaffirmed the state's commitment to the equality of women and men in every aspect of Vietnamese society."[349] In 1986 a new family law was also passed, which "extended women's rights in areas that earlier legislation had neglected." For example, the new law "guarantees joint control of common property and requires joint consent to economic transactions ... It provides additional protection for women ... recognizing that women are the usual victims

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[344] Kathryn McMahon, "Women's Politics and Organizing in Vietnam and Cambodia," in *Frontline Feminisms: Women, War, and Resistance*, eds. Marguerite R. Walker and Jennifer Rycenga, 173 (New York: Routledge, 2001).

[345] Tetreault, "Women and Revolution," 124.

[346] Ibid.

[347] "Viet Nam, " *Human Development Report 2007/2008*, http://hdrstats.undp.org/countries/data_sheets/cty_ds_VNM.html

[348] See pages 82-83 of this thesis.

[349] Tetreault, "Women and Revolution," 126.

of family violence ....”[350] Under the revised family law, women and men are also given equal responsibilities and duties within the home, and the responsibility of fathers for their children (including those children born outside of marriage) are strengthened.[351]

Finally, women also achieved gains in political empowerment in the immediate aftermath of the revolution. In 1976, women's representation in the National Assembly was 32.4 percent.[352] Women also were the heads of five ministries within the government after the revolution, and made significant gains in their representation on provincial councils and committees.[353] Within a short-time period, however, women's gains in political representation at the national level made sharp declines. For instance, in just over a decade, the percentage of women elected to the National Assembly fell to 17.5 percent.[354] Tetreault relates the declining representation of women in politics with "the disappearance from public life of the 'grand old women' of the revolution."[355] Today women in Viet Nam account for 25.8 percent of the seats held in parliament.[356]

The Role of the Vietnam Women's Union in Empowering Women

Many of the gains made by women in the aftermath of the revolution can be accredited to the Vietnam Women's Union (VWU), which is "responsible for the political mobilization, education, and representation of Vietnamese women

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[350] Ibid.

[351] Ibid, 126-127.

[352] McMahon, "Women's Politics and Organizing," 173.

[353] Tetreault, 128.

[354] Ibid.

[355] Ibid.

[356] "Viet Nam, " *Human Development Report 2007/2008*, http://hdrstats.undp.org/countries/data_sheets/cty_ds_VNM.html

...."[357] For example, all of the women who have been appointed or elected to government positions have been members of the VWU.[358] As well, "the union works to ensure implementation of laws and has a powerful influence on policymaking."[359] For instance, the VWU is responsible for drafting the revised family law described above.[360] As part of this law, members of the union have a legal responsibility to intervene and bring to attention any cases of family abuse of which they have knowledge. Members of the VWU are also responsible for providing shelter for victims of abuse and taking legal action if victims do not.[361]

At present the VWU has over eleven million members[362] and is organized at each level of society, from the village up to the national level.[363] Any woman over sixteen is able to join, as are special interest groups (i.e. minority and religious groups), and women's sections of trade unions.[364] Among the various activities carried out by the VWU are the following:

> The union publishes books and a national women's magazine, has a weekly television show, and has an international relations department, which maintains relations with women's organizations worldwide. Its research department conducts policy-related research, and conducts leadership training at cadre schools, which teaches women from the local level to act in leadership roles and to conduct

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[357] Mary Ann Tetreault as quoted in McMahon, "Women's Politics and Organizing," 175.

[358] Irene Tinker, "Many Paths to Power: Women in Contemporary Asia," in *Promises of Empowerment: Women in Asia and Latin America*, eds. Peter H. Smith, Jennifer L. Troutner, and Christine Hunefeldt, 51 (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2004).

[359] McMahon, "Women's Politics and Organizing," 181.

[360] Tetreault, "Women and Revolution," 127.

[361] Ibid; McMahon, "Women's Politics and Organizing," 181.

[362] "The Vietnam Women's Union: Introduction." http://www.hoilhpn.org.vn/newsdetail.asp?CatId=66&NewsId=819&lang=EN

[363] McMahon, "Women's Politics and Organizing," 175.

[364] Ibid, 176.

training projects (legal, health, rnidwifery, small-scale income-generating) for poor rural women.[365]

Despite its role in empowering women, however, there are limitations with the VWU as the primary organization for women. For example, funding for the union comes through membership dues, publications, income-generating projects, small government subsidies and international assistance for health and rural development projects.[366] Thus, although the organization benefits from its close ties to the regime, it is not financially dependent upon the regime for its activities. This is positive in the sense that there is a degree of autonomy for the union, but also negative in that the union is dependent upon financial markets and international assistance for funding. As well, the fact that women must pay dues to be part of the union limits poorer women from enjoying the benefits of direct association with the organization, and limits their participation in moving the women's movement forward.

There is also concern with the dominancy of the VWU as the only women's organization in Viet Nam, especially given its political closeness with the regime. Irene Tinker reveals, "... restrictions continue on types of organizations acceptable to the party. Professional groups are accepted, but organizations whose goals are to help others, not its own membership, are generally forbidden because social provisioning is the right and responsibility of the government."[367] Furthermore, "without a strong voice of women's organizations outside the government, women's concerns are those assigned by

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[365] Ibid.
[366] Ibid.
[367] Tinker, "Many Paths to Power," 51.

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the party."[368] There is therefore a need for greater space for women to organize outside of the union, so that the interests of all women – especially poor, rural women – can be brought to the fore.[369]

In sum, the women's movement in Viet Nam was closely intertwined with the objectives of the revolution. Through the revolution and the establishment of the VWU, women have increased in their political status, and have benefited from substantial legal reforms. Although the VWU has played a significant role in the empowerment of women during and after the revolution, there are limits to the organization's utility because of its ties to the regime and the limited access of rural poor women to the union. In addition to these setbacks for the union, women's status in Viet Nam today is also being affected by rapid socio-economic change, and persisting patriarchal ideologies.[370] For example, Tetreault links economic liberation in Viet Nam with recent increases in child and adult prostitution.[371] In addition, although women are active in the economy there is a gendered division of labour in Viet Nam, with women comprising sixty percent of agricultural employment and only fourteen percent in areas such as industry.[372] As well, patriarchy re-emerged in the late 1970's as a form of social control,[373] and today "gender equity within the family is not a reality for most women ...."[374]

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[368] Ibid.

[369] Ibid, 52.

[370] Ibid, 50.

[371] Tetreault, "Women and Revolution," 131.

[372] Ibid, 125; "Viet Nam," *Human Development Report 2007/2008*,
http://hdrstats.undp.org/countries/data_sheets/cty_ds_VNM.html

[373] Ibid.

[374] McMahon, "Women's Politics and Organizing," 181.

The existence of more women's organizations could benefit the status of women, by helping them to further the gains they have made since the revolution, and by changing social and cultural perceptions of women. At the same time, a plurality of women's organizations could create competition between these organizations over which organizations are able to exert influence in state policy and decisions affecting women's rights and empowerment. Moreover, in spite of the limits of the VWU, there is some evidence that its activities are helping to overcome patriarchal ideologies.[375] Nonetheless, more needs to be done to develop leadership in the rising generations, "for whom the wars of liberation are but stories told by elders"[376] and to help further empower women in all four power domains – political, economic, social and cultural.

Rwanda

The history of Rwanda is rooted in colonialism and the political and ethnic divisions, both instituted and aggravated by colonialists throughout its history, culminated in the 1994 genocide. Throughout this history women have been both targets of subjugation and drivers of ethnic hatreds. They are also largely responsible today for the social, economic and political reconstruction of Rwanda.[377] In Rwanda, as in Viet Nam, much of women's strength and gains in empowerment prior to and after the genocide have come through women's organizations. Unlike Viet Nam, however, the women's movement in Rwanda

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[375] McMahon, "Women's Politics and Organizing," 181.

[376] McMahon, "Women's Politics and Organizing," 180.

[377] Elizabeth Powley, "Strengthening Governance: The Role of Women in Rwanda's Transition – a Summary." United Nations Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, 5 (2004).

was not popularized through conflict, but rather, is a necessary component to the reconstruction of the Rwandan state in the aftermath of war.

The Status of Women Prior to 1994

During colonialism, women were subjugated economically, politically and socially, although women did have limited opportunities for cultural empowerment as spirit-mediums, priestesses and traditional healers prior to the introduction of Christianity.[378] Following independence in 1962, the government "articulated a revolutionary rhetoric, claiming to empower the common people who had previously been exploited ...."[379] Unlike the revolutionary government in Viet Nam, however, the government in Rwanda "took little interest in women's empowerment ...."[380] This attitude remained unchanged following the 1973 coup d'état. Villia Jefremovas explains how the subjugation of women was enshrined not just in Rwandan culture and society, but also legally: "[married women] had severely circumscribed rights. They could vote, but their husbands' consent was required for them to engage in commerce, register a business, buy land, act as a witness, or undertake court action .... In principle, unmarried women had full legal status under Rwandan law; however, socially they were wards of their fathers and brothers."[381]

Beginning in the 1980's, however, women began to make limited empowerment gains through their involvement in women's organizations. Under

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[378] Timothy Longman, "Rwanda: Achieving Equality or Serving an Authoritarian State?," in *Women in African Parliaments*, eds. Gretchen Bauer and Hannah E. Britton, 134 (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2006).
[379] Ibid.
[380] Ibid.
[381] Villia Jefremovas, as quoted in Longman, "Rwanda," 135.

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the authoritarian hand of the Habyarimana government, political and social activity was tightly controlled. Despite this, civil society began to form outside of government control.[382] Timothy Longman reveals, "Women, driven by economic necessity, were a primary force behind the development of Rwandan civil society."[383] This economic necessity was a result of an economic downturn; consequently, "... much of civil society organizing focused on economic issues."[384] Because women were not included in government development programs, to assist themselves in economic survival, they created various organizations, such as credit associations, legal aid and women's development groups.[385] During this time period, civil society turned its attention from economic concerns to those of democracy and political reform. Within this movement women were able to achieve positions of leadership through their participation in civil society, eventually becoming leaders of opposition parties in 1991, following the establishment of a multi-party government.[386] One of the most notable political accomplishments for women came in 1993 when Agathe Uwilingiyimana was appointed to the position of Prime Minister of Rwanda. These limited gains for women, however, would be quickly overturned during the genocide in 1994.

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[382] Ibid.
[383] Ibid.
[384] Ibid.
[385] Ibid, 136. See also El-Bushra, "Transforming Conflict," 73.
[386] Longman, "Rwanda," 136.

The Role of Women in the 1994 Genocide

The events leading up to and during the Rwandan genocide have been well documented.[387] Over a period of one hundred days beginning on April 6, 1994, 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus[388] were brutally killed as part of a campaign "organized by a group of powerful government officials, military officers, and businesspeople from the Hutu majority group who sought to use violence to reverse the political reforms of the preceding years and reassert their political power."[389] During the genocide, women were specifically targeted, and sexual violence became a tool of war.[390] As part of the ideology of the genocide, Tutsi women were demonized "as seductresses who would use their sexuality to trick and entrap Hutu men ..."[391] It is estimated that over 250,000 women were raped as part of the genocide,[392] leaving many infected with HIV/AIDS and/or pregnant. As well, the genocide also targeted prominent female political figures, such as Agathe Uwilingiyimana, who was among the first to be killed. In addition to being victims of the genocide, however, women were also perpetrators and inciters of the killing. Women encouraged their male family members to

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[387] See Philip Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You that Tomorrow We will be Killed with out Families* (New York: Picador, 1998); Kingsley Chiedu Moghalu, *Rwanda's Genocide: the Politics of Global Justice* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005); Samantha Power, "*A Problem from Hell:" America and the Age of Genocide* (New York: Basic Books, 2002); Romeo Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil: the Failure of Humanity in Rwanda* (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2004); *Rwanda: The Preventable Genocide*, Africa Union International Panel of Eminent Personalities, http://www.africa-union.org/Official_documents/reports/Report_rowanda_genocide.pdf

[388] Powley, "Strengthening Governance," 4.

[389] Longman, "Rwanda," 136.

[390] Ibid; Kimberlee Acquaro and Peter Landesman, "Out of Madness, a Matriarchy," *Mother Jones* 28, no. 1 (2003) http://www.galegroup.com. See also *Shattered Lives: Sexual Violence During the Rwandan Genocide and its Aftermath,* Human Rights Watch/Africa (1996). http://www.hrw.org/reports/1996/Rwanda.htm.

[391] Longman, "Rwanda," 136.

[392] Acquaro and Landesman, "Out of Madness, a Matriarchy."

participate in the killings, carried out killings themselves and, in some case, organized parts of the genocide.[393]

In the aftermath of the genocide, Rwanda was a nation of widows. Seventy-percent of the population was female,[394] leaving women largely responsible for picking up the pieces within their families, communities and country. Elizabeth Powley explains how "… women immediately assumed multiple roles as heads of household, community leaders, and financial providers, meeting the needs of devastated families and communities. … They buried the dead, found homes for nearly 500,000 orphans, and built shelters. … women in Rwanda were leaders in reconstruction efforts."[395] These activities were made more difficult by the negative impacts of the genocide on women. In addition to the trauma of the genocide, the loss of family members, the pervasiveness of rape with the effects of HIV/AIDS and unwanted pregnancies, and the loss of homes and property, women also had to face further insecurity as a result of their limited legal status. For example, under the law, women did not have legal rights to own property or to inherit property from their husbands.[396] In addition, the genocide had a negative impact on the women's organizations that had emerged prior to 1994 since large numbers of the members and leaders of these organizations were either dead or in exile.[397] Conversely, the genocide also incited a burgeoning of women's organizations in the aftermath to meet the

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[393] Ibid; Powley, "Strengthening Governance," 4.
[394] Ibid.
[395] Powley, "Strengthening Governance," 5.
[396] Longman, "Rwanda," 137.
[397] Ibid.

needs of women and to also enable important gains in empowerment and women's rights in the construction of a new state.

Women's Post-Genocide Empowerment

Following the genocide, survivors of the genocide revived some of the women's groups that had emerged prior to 1994.[398] Although many of the original members of these groups were killed or in exile as a result of the genocide,[399] these organizations were able to take "... a leading role in efforts to help women reconstruct their lives through emergency material assistance, counselling, vocational training, and assistance with income-earning activities. Many organizations provided a space where women could reestablish social ties, seek solace, and find support."[400] As well, women's organizations have been instrumental in promoting women's rights and have trained women to enable them to be able to assume greater political responsibilities.[401] Umbrella-organizations such as Pro-Femmes have successfully lobbied the government for greater rights for women. Among their accomplishments are laws banning discrimination against women and invoking harsher sentences for convicted rapists as well as legal reform to inheritance laws so that women can now inherit property from their husbands.[402]

As well, women's involvement in organizations is also credited with the high numbers of women who have been elected and appointed to positions

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[398] Ibid.

[399] Ibid.

[400] Catherine Newbury and Hannah Baldwin, as quoted in Longman, "Rwanda," 137-138. See also Bouta et al., *Gender, Conflict, and Development*, 103; El-Bushra, "Transforming Conflict," 73-74.

[401] Ibid, 138.

[402] Ibid; El-Bushra, "Transforming Conflict," 75.

within the government. Currently, women hold 45.3 percent of the seats in parliament.[403] Longman explains how "experience in civil society has become an important basis for entering politics."[404] A growing problem for women's organizations in Rwanda today is that many of its leaders have left civil society to assume political positions in public office.[405] Because of this, women's organizations are sometimes left without strong leaders – this can then weaken civil society as a whole.[406] In addition, "... women's groups have actively promoted the legitimacy and importance of women holding office."[407] Not only has this encouraged women to become politically active, but it has also impacted the government's support for women's representation in politics through quota systems and the establishment of women's councils at the community level.[408]

Women's organizations have also been instrumental in helping to heal the wounds of the genocide in Rwanda, thereby maintaining peace and furthering security.[409] For example, women's organizations in Rwanda are recognized for "inter-ethnic cooperative income generating activities; work in and outside of prisons; inter-ethnic associations; ... and inter-ethnic solidarity and complicity ...."[410] As well, women have played key roles in encouraging male counterparts to leave rebel groups and to reintegrate into society.[411] The work of women's

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[403] "Gender Empowerment Measure: Seats in Parliament," *Human Development Report 2007/2008* http://hdrstats.undp.org/indicators/281.html
[404] Longman, "Rwanda," 138.
[405] Ibid.
[406] Bauer and Britton, "Women in African Parliaments," 28.
[407] Longman, "Rwanda," 139.
[408] Ibid; Bouta et al., *Gender, Conflict and Development*, 73; Kamau, "Assessment Report," 8-9.
[409] Powley, "Strengthening Governance," 7.
[410] Ibid.
[411] Ibid.

organizations in providing psychosocial support to both victims and perpetrators of the conflict is also integral to helping heal ethnic tensions and rebuild trust amongst the population.[412] Finally, the increased responsibilities and gains in empowerment experienced by women in the ten years following the genocide have also furthered women's realization of their own abilities and individual empowerment.[413]

Despite these advances, however, there is concern over the growing authoritarianism of the current Rwandan government and its implications for civil society and women's organizations to function effectively. This is largely owing to a lack of communication between government and civil society, which impedes the ability of organizations to influence the policies of the state.[414] Although women are well represented within the government and laws strengthening the rights and status of women are in existence, this may not be enough to ensure that women's issues are integrated and represented within the government, as previous sections of this thesis have demonstrated. While many of the female politicians have strong connections to the women's organizations in civil society, government discipline may prevent the female representatives from prioritizing these relationships and gender considerations over the other priorities of the current government.[415]

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[412] El-Bushra, "Transforming Conflict," 74.

[413] Powley, "Strengthening Governance," 6; Acquaro and Landesman, "Out of Madness, a Matriarchy;" El-Bushra, "Fused in Combat," 163.

[414] Longman, "Rwanda," 145-149; Bouta et al., *Gender, Conflict, and Development*, 73-74; Powley, "Strengthening Governance," 11.

[415] Longman, "Rwanda," 149; Bauer and Britton, "Women in African Parliaments," 22.

Conclusion

Through an examination of the women's movement in Viet Nam and Rwanda, this chapter has demonstrated that women's organizations are often successful in achieving gains in women's empowerment both during and after conflict. In the case of Viet Nam, the success of the Women's Union can be partly attributed to its connections with the regime. In Rwanda, the plethora of women's organizations that emerged following the genocide also benefit from their close ties to those women in the government who came from civil society. However, in both countries the authoritarian nature of the state may serve to undermine the capacity of women's organizations to make additional gains for women's empowerment. The question then becomes how to strengthen the capacity of women's organizations in authoritarian regimes. In today's global context, the answer may lie with transnational and global women's movements as well as pressure from external organizations.

Gretchen Bauer and Hannah Britton, for example, demonstrate how "women's organizations and movements in Africa have been profoundly influenced by a global women's movement."[416] Through exposure to other countries' women's movements while in exile, as well as through international meetings and conferences, women in Namibia, South Africa, Uganda and Rwanda benefited from the sharing of experiences, best practices and lessons learned to strengthen their own women's organizations and movements.[417] In other cases, such as Uganda, "Donor agencies have also had a significant

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[416] Bauer and Britton, "Women in African Parliaments," 17.
[417] Ibid.

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influence ... changing donor strategies that emphasize nongovernmental activities to a greater extent than in the past have also contributed to the extraordinary growth in women's political participation and representation."[418] As the control of authoritarian states over travel and information sharing is weakened through the processes of globalization, perhaps more women will have opportunities to network and learn from the experiences of other women's movements, which in turn may serve to strengthen their own movements and organizations. Likewise, access of international actors such as donor agencies or other development actors to fund women's organisations in authoritarian states may further strengthen women's organizations at the local level, which may in turn lead to increases in women's empowerment.[419] Thus, the influence of a global women's movement, as well as external actors such as donor agencies, are areas for further examination for their capacity to promote women's empowerment and to strengthen the ability of grass-roots organizations to do the same.

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[418] Ibid.

[419] See for example Cindy Clark et al., "Where is the Money for Women's Rights? Assessing Resources and the Role of Donors in the Promotion of Women's Rights and the Support of Women's Organizations," Association for Women's Rights in Development (2006); Joanna Kerr, "The Second Fund*her* Report: Financial Sustainability for Women's Movements Worldwide," Association for Women's Rights in Development (2007); Lydia Alpizar Duran, "Introduction: Building Feminist Movements and Organizations – Learning from Experience," in *Building Feminist Movements and Organizations: Global Perspectives*, eds. Lydia Alpizar Duran, Noel D. Payne and Anahi Russo, 1-11 (London: Zed Books, 2007).

CONCLUSIONS

This thesis has examined the losses and gains to women's empowerment during armed conflict and in the aftermath. Through careful analysis the thesis has demonstrated that although the negative affects of war are significant, some women are able to make limited gains in empowerment during armed conflict. These gains include greater political decision-making power, increased economic responsibilities – which can be both positive and negative in terms of women's physical safety and time poverty –, the establishment of women's networks and groups, and self-realization of women's individual capacities and abilities. However, these limited gains are often undone in the aftermath of conflict as a result of the trivialization of women's roles and contributions to conflict, increases of violence against women in the aftermath, and the assumption that the end of conflict necessitates a reversal to pre-conflict gender norms and relations between women and men. How then can the gains women make during conflict be consolidated in the aftermath? Furthermore, how can women benefit from the space and opportunity for empowerment and change existent during post-conflict reconstruction? In answer to these questions, this thesis examined two vehicles for empowerment: women's inclusion and representation in formal peace processes and women's organizations and networks.

In examining formal peace processes as a means for women's empowerment, this thesis found that these processes do present an opportunity

to engender the processes of post-conflict reconstruction and to enable women to both consolidate war-time gains and to expand these gains in the aftermath. However, obstacles and challenges to women's participation and representation in formal peace processes challenge the ability of women to make empowerment gains through these processes. Even when women are able to overcome the political, logistical and security factors that impede their inclusion in peace processes, their participation does not always lead to the inclusion of all women's needs and priorities, and may even lead to further disempowerment for some women. Further support is therefore needed to ensure the participation of women and the inclusion of their needs and priorities in post-conflict reconstruction.

An analysis of women's organizations as a source of this support in Viet Nam and Rwanda revealed that these organizations could serve as a vehicle through which women are able to make concrete gains in empowerment. Moreover, the role of women's organizations in furthering women's empowerment is evidenced throughout the thesis – for example, collective action is itself an important part of women's empowerment and contributes to the attainment of individual empowerment, as demonstrated in chapters one and two. As well, women's organizations have been successful in bringing women to the table in formal peace processes and ensuring their needs, interests and priorities were represented in the cases of Somalia and South Africa.

However, as the analysis of women's organization in Viet Nam and Rwanda also demonstrate, the nature of the state regime may negatively impact

the ability of women's organizations to contribute towards women's empowerment, particularly when the state is authoritarian. In such cases, a plurality of women's organizations may not exist, limiting the representation of women in "official" women's organizations. Or, lines of communication between government and civil society may be suspended, thereby thwarting the ability of women's groups to lobby or otherwise influence government policies. From these case studies new questions emerge, such as how to strengthen women's organizations in authoritarian states, and the role of the global women's movement and external actors – such as donor agencies – in both strengthening women's organizations and enabling further empowerment gains for women through pressure on governments.

The issue of strengthening women's organizations is also part of broader research questions pertaining to civil society organizations and civil society in general. Given the challenges faced by civil society organizations in authoritarian states, what can be done to strengthen these organizations? How much power and influence should civil society have within a state, regardless of the nature of that state (i.e. democratic versus authoritarian)? Civil society is often heralded as an essential component of a democratic state and the existence of a variety of civil society organizations is often used as an indicator to judge levels of freedom within a country. Yet debate exists over the democratic nature of these organizations; for instance, issues over transparency and accountability can diminish claims that civil society represents the interests of citizens of a state. As well, is it fair that some groups, who represent one set of

interests, are given influence when the interests of others are not equally represented or heard by institutions that are able to affect change and make decisions? These are important questions when advocating civil society organizations – including women's organizations – as vehicles for social change.

Ultimately, the research and findings presented in this thesis speak to many issues. In focusing on the empowerment gains some women achieve because of conflict in addition to the losses they suffer during war, this thesis expands the picture of women as victims of armed conflict to include women as perpetrators and beneficiaries of conflict. As well, the emphasis on women's gains and the examination of how to solidify these gains during the aftermath of war, may help to mitigate, in some small way, the losses women endure. This will only occur, however, if women are given the space and the opportunities to challenge unequal power relations between women and men during the processes of peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction, and if their roles and contributions during conflict are more fully recognized and valued by society in the aftermath. In the end, armed conflict does, in some cases, provide an opening for increases in women's empowerment both during conflict, and in the aftermath.

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