P@X Online Bulletin
Peace Studies Group

Centre for Social Studies – School of Economics – University of Coimbra

October 2004 - Nº3
WOMEN, PEACE AND ARMED CONFLICTS

SUMMARY

Editorial

The award of the Nobel Peace Prize 2004 to Wangari Maathai had the additional value of providing an opportunity to a more intense thought and debate on the specific relation between women, peace and conflicts.

The automatic association stereotype between women and peace, which reflects the essentialist presumed female nature of care, tenderness or material detachment, is defeated by the evidence of women's involvement in the horror places of the dirtiest wars, from the Chechnyan or Israeli suicide attacks to the Abu-Ghraib prison atrocities' execution. The standard of demand must thus be raised, recognising how little one knows about this issue and that reductive stereotypes are, here as always, signs of pure intellectual laziness.

The analysis of women's participation in armed conflicts and the impact these conflicts had in their lives is recent. It began in the eighties as one component of a broader feminist topic of research on peace and violence. And, despite war being a reason for collective and individual stance of women throughout History, only less more than a decade ago did women's needs specificities in armed conflicts and post-war contexts started to be taken into account, mainly at the United Nations (UN) level.

This openness had perverse results: women (together with children) got into this analytical domain as a "particularly vulnerable group", thus reproducing the traditional patriarchal image of the fragile and unprotected woman. The generalisation of this experience of vulnerability led to a minimisation of the recognition of the wide variety of roles that women (such as men) assume take on in these periods. This flaw was recently recognised by the UN. On October 31st, 2000, the Security Council approved Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, Security and Human Rights, which expressed the need to offer an answer to the concerns expressed and felt by women during and after conflicts.

As such, when analysing conflicts and imagining peace, we continue challenged to face the marginalisation and subordination of some groups, in particular women. It is the challenge that this P@x accepts. This is our first thematic issue and for that reason some "normal" contents have been changed in specific sections. We were also privileged to have a more intense collaboration from people outside the Peace Studies Group. It is a way forward.

José Manuel Pureza and Tatiana Moura

P@X Theory
INTERVIEW with MARGARIDA CALAFATE RIBEIRO*, by Tatiana Moura

Portuguese women in the colonial war
THEY HUMANISED THE WAR

Following her PhD thesis entitled *Empire, Colonial War and Post-Colonialism in Contemporary Literature*, at London's King's College, Margarida Calafate Ribeiro decided to deepen her research on Portuguese women's participation in the colonial war, specially of those who lived in Africa for some time, joining their husbands on military missions.

TM – *Little is known or debated about the roles performed by Portuguese women during the colonial war. And suddenly you pick the theme after a literary research…*

MCR – That's right. In my former research I realised that the women who had been in Africa, joining their husbands in the colonial war, only had a fictional face. And it was quite a strong fictional face, within the post-colonial literature corpus, as they really provide an alternative perspective. Both in what concerns novel and poetry. War narratives were transmitted to them, already extremely filtered by a male vision, a war that they assume through received speeches, narratives of attempts to invent life in that rather *sui generis* accompanying.

I thought the fact that those women only had fictional faces was interesting. No one had ever spoken about them; no one had thought whether they had had any important contribution. For that reason, it seemed to me an extremely motivating group to analyse.

TM – *There are nowadays analysis on the diverse roles played by women during wars. However, the focus of your case study, the role of accompanying husbands during war times, seems a unique case. Can we consider this as an exceptional case?*

MCR – It is a unique case in African colonial wars of the XX century; it is not a unique case either in Portuguese History or in universal History. But it is one in recent colonial wars. For example, the closest war to ours, even ideologically, was the Algerian war, and France has really an almost territorial continuity with Algeria, with the Mediterranean in between.

So, it wouldn't be very complicated to take women…but why didn't those women go and ours did?

In some way, facilitating these women's departure, made war disguisable, which was one of the goals. For a man going to war accompanied by his family, a two-year stay becomes a weekly, monthly mission. Thus, things become much more tolerable regarding time and length, they even become less hard humanly speaking. That did not happen in other colonial wars, the British didn't take their wives, for example.

TM – *The general image was that of combatants going into war, as always to protect "their women and children", but now taking them to the war theatre…*

MCF - Precisely, the old war principle: they protect the reproductive family basis. And the women only "displaced their home" from the metropolis to Africa. According to the archive research I did, I can't assert that there was an active, declared policy with that purpose. But there was a certain displacement facility, even for militiamen wifes. That was not only a women's movement, it was a family's one. They were very young women who travelled with their children, often to isolated places. But even in the archives, there was no historical value given to those displacements. That's the reason why my research consists of gathering testimonies from those women.

TM – *What led those women to accompany their husbands? Why did they decide to go to war?*

MCR - The first reason is love, clearly a romantic reason. Above all, and because they could go, women mention care as a very important contribution. They humanised war's inhumanity, even beyond their families. I know cases of people who wrote letters, others taught (as they usually had some education) – both soldiers and in the local schools. And I believe this is a very important reference in their perception of war, as they had a different contact with the population.

P@X Theory

And, as such, they could also pass on something to their husbands. And I believe that in some way they had a very important participation, for the better and for the worse. Maybe this allowed a certain continuity of the situation; maybe women have, in some way and unconsciously, contributed to that disguise of war. But, on the other hand, I also believe that they were fundamental to humanise an extremely inhumane situation, mainly in great isolation, and they were also fundamental to that alternative vision one finds in fiction, because they were not at war, they heard about the war.

TM - *What was the post-war like to these women who accompanied their husbands, the combatants?*

MCR - I think these women's post-war, in the Portuguese case, had a very important component: that of ensuring the continuation of normality, a more or less comfortable return. Usually, she returned first and he a few weeks or months later. Coming back first implied creating the conditions for his good return. So, they came back to prepare the return and guarantee a certain normality. We're talking, in some cases, of university students, militiamen, who didn't finish their degrees. But women did and often they were the ones ensuring the first economic impact of supporting the household.

The Portuguese woman held on and resisted, and did what the State failed to do, welfare state politics, in that way protecting who should be protected, the war veterans, that should for example have had psychiatric counselling …

* *Auxiliar Researcher of the Centre for Social Studies of the University of Coimbra, PhD at the King's College, University of London, with a thesis on Uma História de Regressos: Império, Guerra Colonial e Pós-colonialismo, publicada em 2004 pela Afrontamento.*

Co-editor of *Fantasmas e Fantasias Imperiais no Imaginário Português Contemporâneo* (Porto: Campo das Letras, 2003) and *A Primavera toda para ti - Homenagem a Helder Macedo* (Presença, 2004).

P@X Peace Observatory

Places of war and peace

PLACES OF PEACE

Women Waging Peace is currently an operating program of Hunt Alternatives Fund, which advances innovative and inclusive approaches to social change at local, national, and global levels

(http://www.womenwagingpeace.net)

Women at Work: Preventing Gun Violence, IANSA Women's Network Bulletin

(http://www.iansa.org/women/index.htm)

Conflict Trends, issue 3/2003, "Women, Peace and Security" - a quarterly magazine published by ACCORD, a conflict resolution organization based in Durban, South Africa.

(http://www.unifem.org/index.php?f_page_pid=208)

PeaceWomen Project - A Project of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

(http://www.peacewomen.org/)

Women, War and Peace: The Independent Experts' Assessment on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Women's Role in Peace-building - By Elisabeth Rehn & Ellen Johnson Sirleaf

(http://www.unifem.org/index.php?f_page_pid=149)

PLACES OF WAR

Women Facing War, ICRC, Geneva, 2001

(http://www.icrc.org/WEB/ENG/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/p0798?OpenDocument&style=Custo_Final.4&View=defaultBody2)

Sudan, Darfur: Rape as a weapon of war: sexual violence and its consequences, Amnesty International, July 2004

(http://web.amnesty.org/library/pdf/AFR540762004ENGLISH/$File/AFR5407604.pdf)

Girl Soldiers: Challenging the Assumptions, Rachel Brett, Quaker UN Office Geneva, 2002

(http://www.geneva.quno.info/pdf/Girl_Soldiers.doc.pdf)

Sexual Violence and Armed Conflict: United Nations Response, UN Report. UN DAW (Division for the Advancement of Women), Published to Promote the Goals of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action, April 1998

(http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/public/cover.htm)

Peace builders

NOBEL PEACE PRIZE 2004

The Norwegian Nobel Committee
(http://nobelprize.org/peace/laureates/2004/press.html)

The Green Belt Movement
(http://www.greenbeltmovement.org/)

Tatiana Moura, "The Peace of Small Things", *Diário de Coimbra*, October 20th, 2004
(http://www.ces.uc.pt/nucleos/nep/pdfs/wangari_ING.pdf)

WEDO/UNEP*, Women and the Environment,* Policy Series, New York, 2004.

(http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=67&ArticleID=4518&l=en)

P@X Studies

Terrorist attacks produce a collective feeling of vulnerability. September 11th made Americans feel overwhelmingly vulnerable. March 11th triggered the same feeling on the Spanish population. The wars against Afghanistan and Iraq were justified before the world as ways to put an end to this vulnerability. According to Carol Cohn [1], the spotlight of a model to face vulnerability is the need to make oneself invulnerable: through borders' defence, massive rearmament and even preventive destruction of what could be a threat to one's destruction. This is the strategy of the Bush Administration. A second focus would be to accept the inevitability of vulnerability, concentrating more in the context, creating an environment where increasingly less people face terrorism as their more viable option. This second perspective highlights the fact that we can never become invulnerable and that the quest for invulnerability actually leads to a greater damage, both to the others and ourselves.

What does gender – a set of power and meanings' relationships assigned to men and women – have to do with this? Both men and women can choose the last option. However, in a symbolic way, the quest for invulnerability is coded as strong and *masculine*, whilst the recognition of interdependence and vulnerability, answering based on an attempt to understand the other, is something culturally coded as weak and *feminine*. The gendered elements of these perspectives lead any conventional political leader to avoid the second option, either for not believing in it or out of fear of being disaccredited, accused of not being virile.

There are undoubtedly complex motivations. Notwithstanding this, one can say that it is the domain of the power and wealth accumulation logic that rules international relations that lays beneath this depreciation, the same that makes the logic of life sustainability – the one that assumes vulnerability – invisible and excluded.

But these are not immutable logics. Alterglobalisation movements, women's groups for peace and other social movements are questioning the logic of accumulation. And there are many of us who think it is urgent to defend, expand and universalise the logic of life sustainability.

[1] Carol Cohn and Sara Ruddick, "A Feminist Ethical Perspective on Weapons of Mass Destruction", *in* Steven Lee and Sohail Hashmi (eds.) *Ethics and Weapons of Mass Destruction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (forthcoming).

VULNERABILITY

AND

LIFE

CULTURE

SUSTAINABILITY

Carmen Magallón Portolés

(Director of Fundación Seminario de Investigación para la Paz, Zaragoza)

P@X Studies

It has become increasingly clear that *who (we say) we are* matters in how we conceive of, strive for, and practice security. Similarly how we 'speak' security, name danger and threats as well as safety and well-being implies and indeed informs a particular expression of our identity, which serves to represent 'us' or, in other words, the (supposedly sovereign) subject of security. Taking my departure in the critical challenges posed by reading the representations of insecurity in the narratives of Mayan women in Guatemala in 1995, I suggest that security and identity are concomitant. Any attempt to make sense of the experiences of insecurity and struggles for security expressed by people like Mayan women—whose political identity does not coincide with the dictates of the nation-state where they reside—must therefore take seriously, and critically rethink, the interrelationship between in/security and identity.

Mayan women's multiple insecurities cannot be understood separately from their claims to political identity: what they considered threats and envisioned as promising safety and security depended upon *who they were*. They did not identify themselves with the particular articulation of Guatemalan national identity that prevailed at the time; instead they identified themselves, in part, in opposition to the homogenizing claims of Guatemalan nationalism, stating that their culture and identity (*being Mayan*) were placed at risk by this violent national project. They identified themselves as Mayan *women* whose femininity was defined in part by their roles as guardians and transmitters of the Mayan culture. As women, however, they were particularly vulnerable both to the harms of sexism within their communities (and households) and to the sexualized violence of military tactics. They also identified themselves as poor peasants (*campesinas*) whose connection and therewith access to cultivatable land was vital for their cultural and physical survival. In this regard, poverty related to the neo-liberal economic policies of an export economy and consequent national land distribution was a great threat to their security.

REVISITING THE SUBJECT OF SECURITY

In sum, Mayan women's insecurity was hybrid, contingent, defined in terms of their multiple and shifting identities and tied to many interlocking systems of oppression and domination.

Although, there has been a move within the field of security studies to include identity as a possible subject of security, security problematics like Mayan women's rarely grace the articles, books, conferences, and policy papers that make up security studies in terms of global politics.* For the most part, the 'arrival' of identity into the field of security promises yet another 'level or domain' that could be secured. Calls for attention to identity (or indeed gender) as the 'new' or critical subject of security therefore risk setting the stage for upholding the notion that security is ever possible, and for a never-ending search for a pinning down of that which is to be secured—the subject of security. Yet, Mayan women's articulations of their insecurities resist tidy categorizations. 'Gender security', 'cultural security', or even 'human security', for example, could never capture or represent the fullness of their experiences.

Instead of accepting identity as a somewhat stable or tangible level or entity that could be named and secured, some critical scholars trying to unpack the logic of security, have carefully shown how in various contexts, sovereign power constructs itself through the workings of discourses of danger and insecurity— through the naming of threat, of enemy, of Other, thus producing the very identity that is intended to be secured. The (impossible) securing of a subject relies upon the myth of the subject as already existing and in need of security. Yet, instead of the subject of security being separate and existing prior to the act of 'speaking' or writing security**, it is through the very naming of threat and danger, that the 'subject of security' is formed.***

Focusing on various struggles for safety, security, and indeed identity, Mayan women's narratives further problematizes the interrelationship between security and

Estudos sobre a P@X

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identity by highlighting the very multiplicity of both their identities and their insecurity. Simply put, the interrelationship between security and identity must be seen as complex and contingent. Violence that is poorly understood through the lenses of state-centered security thinking could perhaps be better understood if we began asking questions around the injury that can occur at the confluence of competing identity claims and the efforts at securing subject positions.

Given the above arguments, I suggest then, that by paying careful attention to anomalous accounts of insecurity such as Mayan women's, one can perhaps contribute to a profound rethinking of the concepts and practices of insecurity and identity. My hope is that such reconsideration might offer venues for better understanding, and therewith addressing how political bodies name danger and threat and identify strategies for procuring safety.

This article is based on my work in Guatemala (Stern, forthcoming 2005, *Naming Insecurity-Constructing Identity,* Manchester University Press). Based on partial life-history interviews that I conducted with leaders of different organizations within the popular/Mayan movement on the eve of the Peace Agreement in 1996, this book explores the notions of danger and harm that are meaningful to, and constitute the lives of many Mayan women in Guatemala.

* C.f. Lapid, Y. and Kratochwil, F. (1996) *The Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory.* Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers; McSweeney, B. (1999). *Security, Identity and Interests: A Sociology of International relations,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Buzan *et al.* 1998.

** Campbell, 1992; Waever 1993, 1998.

*** For further discussion of the term subject of security,' see Walker in Krause and Williams, 1999 and also Hoogestein, and Rottem, 2004, "Gender and the Subject of Security", Security Dialogue, Vol. 35(2): 155-171.

NEP's Attic

Book review

Meintjes, Sheila; Pillay, Anu e Turshen, Meredeth (eds.) (2002), *The Aftermath: Women in post-conflict transformation*. London: Zed Books.

Women have, in a historical and stereotyped way, been considered as simple victims, as passive actors of social transformation in the field of conflicts and post-war reconstruction. This books aims at overcoming this approach and at contributing to the creation of a new theoretical framework of women's experiences in war-torn societies.

This book, coordinated by Sheila Meintjes (Witwatersrand University), Anu Pillay (Masimanyane Women's Support Centre and Tshwarnag Legal Advocacy to End Violence against Women) and Meredeth Turshen (Rutgers University), is the outcome of two conferences and a meeting. The general conclusion of these events, where social scientists, activists, international organisations and NGOs from all over the world took part, was that women weren't given the possibility to actively participate in the reconstruction of societies ravaged by conflicts. The perpetuation of the violence and marginalisation they suffer in an unchanged, thus patriarchal, post-war context is a clear evidence of this. For women, as for societies devastated by conflicts in general, the reconstruction process is much long-lasting and demanding than the end of hostilities.

This book contains two main parts. In the first one, composed by six chapters, a new theoretical framework is presented, intending to challenge the way women's participation in post-conflict is analysed. According to the editors, most of the existing approaches have been unsatisfactory, as they focus on humanitarian assistance and political reorganisation in detriment of women's specific rights (right to reproductive health, to higher education, to an active participation in society, etc.). With the aim of filling these approaches' insufficiencies, they propose the analysis of some aspects closely related to women's role in post-war reconstruction. As a starting point, they suggest the deconstruction of the 'woman' analysis unit. Not being a homogeneous and undifferentiated group, it must be contextualised according to other identity elements, such as race, social class, marital status, degree of political participation, economic power, the fact of being combatants or not, etc. By underlining this, the book's editors intend to highlight the immense heterogeneity of post-conflict societies and to emphasize that the failure of international organisations' intervention is partly a result of neglecting each case's particularity.

Notwithstanding the need for a specific and differentiated analysis, there is, in their opinion, a common feature to some conflicts: a dividend for women, in the sense of being aware of their capacities. However, these gains don't become solid enough after the conflict. In fact, during war, new opportunities enable women to assume social roles until then exclusively male

No sótão do NEP

(namely, public office jobs or participation in the political decision-making). Still, there are no structural conditions to consolidate this dividend once the reconstruction phase sets off. One of the main variables at the origin of this peace dividend setback is the persistence, though with different characteristics, of violence against women in the post-conflict stage.

The chapters of the book's first part are characterised by this problematic, that crosses the entire book. According to Codou Bop, "the absence of a political perspective for transforming relations between the sexes may explain the precariousness of the rights women achieve". The incentive to local communities (Meredeth Turshen), the struggle against sexual violence, through legal reforms and women's economic and political empowerment (Tina Sideris) and the encouragement to women's participation in formal peace negotiations (Sheila Meintjes) are suggested as some of the solutions able to change patriarchal relations.

The second part of the book presents some case studies that corroborate the opportunity and relevance of the theoretical framework and, effectively, contest the idea that women are mere 'victims' of armed conflicts. The authors study women's participation during and after conflicts in Haiti, the Balkans and several conflict zones in Asia and Africa. The main element that underlines this analysis is the great diversity and difference of the kind of women's performance in post-conflict situations.

The role played by women's organisations in creating a more just social order in Haiti, the answer of Nigerian *Ogoni* women to the continued violence imposed on them or the use of curses and plagues as way of social protest by Sri Lanka's *Mothers Front*, are some examples of the creativity and informality that characterises women's participation in post-war reconstruction processes.

This book, written and edited by women that conciliate academic work with activism, represents a turning point in the approaches on women and their roles during and in the aftermath of conflict.

By presenting interesting and exemplar cases, *The Aftermath, Women in Post-Conflict Transformation* undoubtedly extinguishes the myth that women are passive victims of armed conflicts.

Katia Cardoso -
Peace Studies Group

NEP's Attic

PEACE STUDIES GROUP (NEP) AGENDA

NEP's Training Course

Lights and Shadows in Post-war Reconstruction Processes

Programme:
October 22nd, 2004

•Session 1
A definição de um standard de reconstrução pós-bélica pelas Nações Unidas
Teresa Almeida Cravo (NEP-CES/FEUC)

•Session 2
O fim do conflito: o que fazer com os ex-combatentes?
Pedro de Pezarat Correia (FEUC)

•Session 3
Do confronto armado para o confronto político: a primazia do modelo democrático
José Manuel Pureza (NEP-CES/FEUC)

October 23rd, 2004

•Session 4
À procura da fórmula para a reconciliação de comunidades divididas
Carlos Martin Beristain (Coordenador do REMHI - Guatemala)

•Session 5
O papel da assistência internacional na reconstrução de países economicamente devastados
João Gomes Cravinho (FEUC)

•Session 6
Conclusions: lights and shadows of the UN model
João Gomes Cravinho, José Manuel Pureza, Teresa Almeida Cravo (FEUC)

Highlights

CONFERENCE ON "The Angolan Multiparty System Building Process" (organised by the Centre for Social Studies and the Angolan Catholic University, supported by the Programa Lusitânia/Instituto Camões)
Luanda, August 19th and 20th, 2004
(http://www.ces.uc.pt/nucleos/nep/pdfs/programafinalUCAN.pdf)

CES Newsletter - CESemCena
September 2004 newsletter '02
(http://www.ces.uc.pt/publicacoes/cesemcena/2/cesemcena1.php)

NEP's Activities

24 de Julho a 1 de Setembro de 2004
Missão do Projecto "Angola: os Meios de Comunicação Social como Ferramenta para a Sociedade Civil"
Mónica Rafael (NEP) e Mabel González (CIP), juntamente com o Instituto Holandês para a África Austral (NIZA), realizaram em Benguela e em Lubango cursos de formação para jornalistas e representantes de ONG angolanas subordinados ao tema "**Processos de Reconstrução Pós-bélica. O Caso de Angola**".
Preparação e realização de um seminário em Luanda com as ONG angolanas parceiras do NIZA, para avaliação do trabalho e definição de passos futuros.

8 de Setembro de 2004
José Manuel Pureza (NEP) participou no Intensive Programme in Peace Studies "Conflict Resolution and European Legacies of War", do European Doctorate Enhancement in Peace and Conflict Studies, no Centre for European Studies, Limerick (Irlanda), com apresentação do seminário subordinado ao tema "Legal Pacifism: a critical view".
(http://www.ces.uc.pt/nucleos/nep/pdfs/IP_Limerick_2004.pdf)

16 de Setembro de 2004
"**Novíssimas Guerras, novíssimas pazes**", Painel organizado pelo NEP no VIII Congresso Luso-Afro-Brasileiro de Ciências Sociais 'A Questão Social no Novo Milénio'.
(http://www.ces.uc.pt/nucleos/nep/pdfs/painelnep.pdf)

17 de Setembro de 2004
"**Experiências locais de construção da paz**", Grupo de Discussão organizado pelo NEP noVIII Congresso Luso-Afro-Brasileiro de Ciências Sociais 'A Questão Social no Novo Milénio'.