Gender and Global Security: A Feminist Challenge to the United Nations and Peace Research

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The Core Assertions of the Feminist Challenge

For many years, feminist peace researchers have been calling attention to the links between the position of women in society and the continued tolerance of social and gender violence and the war system. They argue that these conditions are not separate phenomena. That they are interrelated, interdependent, and reciprocally caused.[1] In recent years these arguments have gained credence in the larger realms of women's studies and to some small, but encouraging, degree in peace research and strategic studies. The preparation and follow-up of the U. N.'s Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995 has brought considerably more attention to the issues and some consideration to the arguments about the interrelationship between sexism and the institution of war. The challenge is the consequence of these feminist theories and the development of the women's movement over the past quarter century that culminated in the "Beijing Process," an unequivocal acknowledgment of women's equality and a commitment to the politics to bring it to full reality.

The arguments set forth in this essay derive from this "Beijing Process," especially from inquiries initiated by the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women and UNESCO's Culture of Peace Programme, particu-

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1. Betty Reardon, *Sexism and the War System* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1996).

larly those aspects of the programme that address women's contributions to the possibilities for a culture of peace. These inquiries have involved U. N. personnel, peace researchers, and leaders of women's peace movements. Many who have participated in this Beijing Process acknowledge that they share some core assumptions about world security that lead us to put forth the four assertions which lie at the heart of the analysis presented here.

First and foremost among them is that the world security establishment's *addiction* to militarized international security undermines rather than assures global human security. In essence, it is a system designed to maintain the security of states, and insofar as the security of human beings--of human society--is instrumental to that end, only then is human security, the well being of people an interest of the state system. On the basis of this assumption, feminists project the necessity to undertake a twofold task: to *redefine* and *demilitarize* security.

The second assertion that traditional gender roles have assigned the main functions and maintenance of *quotidian* security to women while excluding them from participation in the exercise of power over national and global security, argues, as well, that this arrangement has made women more vulnerable to the violent consequences of militarized security, insecure by all the criteria of security outlined in the definitional discussion of security that appears below. The substance of daily life, the domestic and social chores upon which everyday human life depends, the functions that make all other human activities possible are women's work. Public decisions of life and death are not.

Socially constructed gender roles have assigned the daily maintenance of fundamental human security to women but have excluded them from security policy discourse as they are from most decision-making on public policy. Gender assigns public matters to men, and excludes private matters from

public responsibility. This public/private dichotomy has been compared to the national sovereignty line in the interantional system which permits states to violate the rights of its citizens without international interference. Thus it is that security policy has been viewed, until recently, as a *public* concern, a matter of state, allowing interests of state to supersede *private* human interests and domestic violence against women to be seen as private affairs or "unfortunate incidents." [2] Even though there is mounting evidence that "domestic violence" against women increases in societies in armed conflict, rape has been recognized as a deliberate strategy of war, and women comprise the largest proportion of war casualties, national security matters are men's affair. Fundamental human security is not. Thus, women's personal security is constantly at risk in a global security system comprised by highly militarized sovereign states controlled by men.

The third assertion further emphasizes the extreme lack of fundamental security in the daily lives of most of the world's peoples, especially women who suffer more of the effects of deprivation and the multiple forms of violence which characterize the state system. The exclusion of women's perspectives on public issues and women's experience of maintaining quotidian, fundamental human security is a major obstacle to policy making for comprehensive, authentic human security. The United Nations in its peace and security functions and peace research in its inquiries into obstacles and approaches to global security, by failing to integrate gender perspectives into these functions and inquiries, have failed to achieve the comprehensive approach that authentic human security requires.

Finally, feminist peace researchers and women peace activists affirm the role of the United Nations in the development of the global women's movement

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2. The phrase an "unfortunate incident" was used by a Japanese official to describe what is now known as "the rape of Nanjing" or "the Nanjing Massacre" of 1937. The phrase was employed as the title of a BBC film on war crimes committed during World War II. The film included an account of the conscription of the "comfort women."

of which this security challenge is an integral part. Although "peace" was literally "tacked on" as one of the themes of the 1975 International Women's Year and, subsequently, the 1975-1985 International Decade for Women, and in spite of its being ignored and, in some instances, repressed in the programs and discussions of the decade, the peace theme none-the-less opened possibilities for women to become involved in public, international discussions of peace and security. Out of these discussions has come the articulation of the feminist security challenge to the U. N. and to peace research. It is a challenge, feminists assert, to the way in which the United Nations involves itself in global security,[3] and certainly it is a challenge to the peace research community which has given only minimal attention to the links between gender and security, or between sexism and war, continuing to limit consideration of feminist security theory, indeed most gender issues, to the area of "women and peace," generally excluding this theory from studies of the conceptualization and politics of security policy. In its present phase the feminist challenge is becoming a challenge to the war system itself, to the political institutions which uphold it and the scientific inquiries which have failed to fully explore it.

The Terminology and Perspectives of the Challenge

To present a clear explanation of the challenge, it is important to clarify terminology, particularly those terms which designate the differences among the four perspectives which have given rise to its present articulation. These represent both different perspectives and the historical evolution of gender issues as they have been addressed by U. N. policy and feminist scholarship. The four perspectives which have served as the channels through which the feminist challenge has developed are: a status of women perspective, the feminist perspective, a gender perspective, and the perspective of the feminine

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3. "Gender and the Agenda for Peace," a report of a U.N. Experts Group Meeting, Division for the Advancement for Women, United Nations, New York, 1994.

principle. Each of the four has contributed a significant dimension to understanding how women's role in society has such a strong influence on the actual security of a society. A status of women perspective has led to acceptance of the fact of the universality of the unequal status of women and men. A feminist perspective demonstrates the structural basis of the inequality. A gender perspective reveals the realities of the disproportion of resource distribution and social burdens that result from women's subordination. A feminine principle perspective facilitates exploration of the psychocultural roots of the subordination and the structures which perpetuate it.

From the very founding of the United Nations, which, in the charter, asserts that equality between men and women is an essential component of peace, the "status of women," a code phrase for gender inequality, has been a focus of concern. This concern has facilitated the consideration of women's perspectives on many global issues. It arose out of the observation that whatever sources of well-being there are in the world, women have less of them; less opportunity, fewer resources of any kind. From this perspective, compensatory policies are necessary, especially in the area of legal reforms, suffrage, property rights and such circumstances subject to change by law. Gradually the concern came to address the inclusion of women's perspectives and participation in U.N. activities related to what are generally perceived to be women's concerns, the realms in which women's work is done, the functions and tasks of quotidian human security. Thus it was that the U.N. Development Decades became a period in which women's relationship to economic issues and problems came to be more systematically addressed, but did not necessarily lead to the inclusion of more women in macroeconomic policy making, next to national and international security the main power arena and thus a male preserve. The status of women perspective has avoided any analysis or even acknowledgement of patriarchy, and tends to aim toward the achievement of

equality and reform within existing structures. Indeed, to this day the terms "patriarchy" and "feminism" are not welcome in the official language of the world organization, which is still very much a creature of the patriarchal state system.

Until the preparations for the International Women's Year in 1975, this status of women view was the U.N. perspective on all gender issues. At that time the international feminist challenge began to emerge. The feminist challenge asserts that not only do women have a lower legal status, but that this status is characterized by systematic economic deprivation, social discrimination, cultural subordination and political oppression. A feminist perspective sees these problems as rooted in patriarchy; thus, the U.N. premise of the equality of men and women requires that sexist social structures as well as discriminatory behavior must be challenged and, where necessary, the systems that uphold them, indeed, the very cultures from which they arise, must be changed. The feminist perspective, overtly political, gave rise to the international movement toward women's full equality, *de facto* as well as *de jure*. Thus, the feminist challenge, calling for structural and cultural as well as the legal changes required for full gender equality, was posed within the arena of the United Nations, but the organization continued for some time to hold to the "status of women" perspective, and efforts continued to be compensatory while the struggle for women's inclusion in the policy ranks continued.

Feminists, seeing that the facts of discrimination were one way of shedding light on the patriarchal reality, began to work for including gender as a factor in all U.N. data gathering and policy making. A gender perspective is comparative and clarifying. Gender refers to the socially constructed, culturally determined roles of men and women. A gender perspective requires that all policies and the consequences of all policies be analyzed in terms of how they affect both gender roles and the men and women who carry them out,

inquiring into the specific and different consequences public policies and socio-economic conditions produce for men and women, respectively. By introducing gender and gathering gender disaggregated data, the full discriminatory circumstances of women began to be revealed, accounting for the gradual but cumulative strengthening of U.N. policies intended to achieve authentic equality between men and women. The realities revealed by increasing amounts of gender-specific data made a great contribution to the policy goals set forth in the Platform for Action produced by the 1995 Beijing Conference. The world organization has now undertaken gender mainstreaming intended to take gender into account in all its policy making and programs.

The term "feminine" can be even more controversial than "feminist." Since concepts of femininity and masculinity are culturally determined, the term is often rejected in analytic and political discourse on grounds that it perpetuates stereotypes and does not factor into the universal realities of women's secondary socio-economic status. So, the concept of the feminine is not integral to the U.N. or most other international discourse on gender issues. However, it is becoming conceptually significant to feminist thinking about global security, particularly for prescriptive purposes, as it tends to help in the articulation of the human elements missing in present thinking about global security. Those familiar with the theory of eco-feminism, particularly the work of Vandana Shiva, will appreciate how the feminine principle that relates to and complements the masculine principle, the two together making up the total of humanness, has been continuously eroded and devalued by mainstream development policy. The consequences have been destructive to the environment, indigenous people and the economic autonomy of women.[4]

Feminists would argue the same regarding security policy. Aspects of the feminine that politics have ignored and/or denigrated need to be reintegrated into the security discourse. Women's participation in civil society has been a

4. Vandana Shiva, *Staying Alive* (London: Zed Books, 1989).

route through which the feminine is reintroduced into discussions of various public matters, including global issues and global policies. This reintroduction of the feminine is most readily apparent in the agenda and language of the Global Social Summit, a U.N. conference held in Copenhagen in 1993. Conceived and convened by Juan Samovia of Chile, one of a growing number of male diplomats who are moving the U.N. discourse into the realm of "human security," the summit expressed notions of security previously designated by the feminist approach, particularly with respect to the natural environment and human survival needs. Factors that reflect such an approach are assessed in the Human Development Report and its Human Development Index.[5] The feminine is that which, in emphasizing the well-being of living creatures and systems, works with, rather than manipulates, the natural order in efforts to provide for quotidian human security. It seeks ways in which human societies can live in complementarity to nature rather than seek to control it in efforts to fulfill survival needs through the "development process". It advocates the development of alternatives to weapons-based security so destructive to the environment and human well-being.

At this stage, especially since the 1992 Rio conference that produced the U.N. blueprint for environmental policy in its final document, "Agenda 21," the world organization refers to this process as "humanly sustainable development." However, both the concept and the practice of sustainable development leave too wide a margin for exploitation of the natural order in the interest of economic growth to be truly reflective of the feminine principle. Development policy continues to demonstrate an imbalance between masculine and feminine principles. The masculine principle of the assertion of controlling energies against obstacles or problems still prevails, though far less so than it does in security policy. Some feminists, however, continue to argue that the ecological

5. United Nations Development Program (UNDP), *Human Development Report.* (Oxford University, Press, New York, 1997).

thinking inherent in the application of the feminine principle offers very constructive possibilities for security systems conceptualized as systems to sustain and enhance life.

Vulnerability and Comprehensive Security

The feminine principle accommodates to the vulnerabilities of living creatures and social systems rather than attempting to eliminate them. When the feminine principle is applied to security, the core policy discourse is about how to achieve security so as to sustain and enhance the life chances of the most vulnerable, how to arrange relationships so that the vulnerability of one member or part of the system is not exploited to the advantage of another. This latter approach to vulnerability, i.e. the elimination of one's own and the exploitation of another's, is one of the characteristics of the present security system, which serves to undermine human security in general and women's security in particular because it is the state, not the citizenry, for whom invulnerability is sought. Indeed, the entire system is made more vulnerable as the approach ignores the most fundamental principle of maintaining systems; the weakening of any component weakens the entire system. Human security is not a zero sum game.

The feminine principle calls us to challenge these state-centered notions of security and to question the concept and components of security, as defined within the interstate system. Security as "international security," the feminist challenge argues, is unattainable within the present system in which states attempt to achieve invulnerability to other states. So arms are piled upon arms, and the cycle of "technical improvement" escalates to protect the state, maintaining the illusion that invulnerability, even if it does not exist at a given moment, is ultimately attainable through sufficient deterrents and defense. The feminist challenge argues that since vulnerability is inherent in all living

systems, security systems should accommodate to and plan for vulnerability, trying to overcome those circumstances that make people and states vulnerable to each other. We need to contemplate the complementary rather than competitive aspects of maintaining security. We need to look toward enhancing positive possibilities and mutually beneficial relationships.

A feminist definition of security is the expectation of human well-being[6] rather than the assurance of invulnerability. It accepts that total and constant security may be unattainable. Thus, feminist security strategies are directed toward maintaining the highest possible level of well-being while reducing the avoidable hardships and sufferings of all members of human societies. The assurance it seeks to offer is that public policy will be guided by these goals. In questions of security, perception is sometimes more important than experience or reality. People tend to feel secure or insecure, depending more on how they perceive their environment than whether they are or are not, in fact, secure. Authentic security is determined by the degree to which the security system attends to the real threats to well-being, the limits and lacks of the four basic security sources noted below.

For years states have cultivated perceptions of insecurity in the face of other states among their citizens. Because of the threat of bodily harm to many women, not only in dark or unpopulated public spaces, but even, and especially, in their own homes and communities, most women live with both the perception and the reality of personal insecurity. Their fundamental, quotidian protection needs do not stem exclusively or even primarily from enemies of the state. Indeed, women are often raped by the very armies that are defending the interests of their respective states, and by police responsible for the security of their communities. Women are the main victims of domestic or what is termed "intimate" violence from partners and familiars. It is well

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6. Betty Reardon, *Women and Peace: Feminist Visions of Global Security* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1993).

recognized that violence against women is the most common form of violence perpetrated by both state and nonstate actors.[7]

The expectations of well-being that comprise authentic human security derive from four fundamental sources of security which are in the areas of environment, survival needs, dignity and identity, and protection from harm.[8] Our environment must have the capacity to sustain our lives. Our fundamental physical needs must be filled for us to survive. We must experience human dignity and respect for our identities. Insults or potential insults to human dignity and human identities are major sources of insecurity, not only of persons, but of groups, and states, as vividly demonstrated by the epidemic of ethnic and religious wars. Finally, we need to be protected from harm. Women do not enjoy this protection, as is readily evident from widespread, excessive violence against women that goes unprevented and unpunished. Protection from harm, however, is the fundamental human security need that has over-taken all of the other security needs in the present militarized security system. The protection this system provides focuses on one primary possibility of harm, one that is among the most preventable, harm from others in the inter-state system, rather than on the harm that results from natural disasters, structural inequities, human rights violations, or racism and sexism. The states which control the international security system do not cultivate the perception of threat from these sources of harm; nor, the 1993 declaration against it and the Beijing Platform for Action notwithstanding, violence against women, as they do of that from enemies and adversaries. Thus, the system renders us less capable of dealing with these other sources of harm, diminishing capacities to fulfill the other three needs of authentic human secu-rity, and leaving women in a perpetual state of real insecurity.

7. Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence Against Women, United Nations, New York, 1993.
8. Reardon, *Women and Peace.*

The United Nations: Arena for the Development of a Gender Perspective on Security

The United Nations has become the main venue for the emergence of the global women's movement. Its major world conferences on various global issues, including human rights, population, and the environment, have provided a forum for the airing of women's perspectives on and the gender dimensions of all these issues, at the same time expanding the terrain of what constitutes security and providing an arena for feminist mobilization. The specialized agencies in interactions and collaborations with nongovernmental organizations have been vehicles for communication and solidarity among the women of the world as they seek to have a voice in making the policies with which the member states will address these issues. The interactions between the inter-state system and global civil society have become steadily more significant over the past quarter century, beginning with the 1972 Stockholm conference on the environment.

The world-wide women's movement that produced the feminist security challenge is in many respects a product of the four world conferences on women that took place from 1975 to 1995. The World Conference on Women in Beijing marked the convergence of women's movements from all over the world into one coherent, but still highly diverse, global movement, the product of twenty years of international networking and growing solidarity among a vast and varied number of women's initiatives for equality and peace. While there is as yet no one common agenda, there are important areas around which there is common understanding and mobilization. Most women's organizations, with the exception of those belonging to conservative interpretations of relig-ions, and so-called "communalist" or "integralist" forces, are supporters of the U.N. instruments intended to assure the human rights of women; the 1980 Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women

(CEDAW), the 1985 Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, the 1993 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action. As was readily evident at the forty-second session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women held in New York in March 1998, more and more segments of the women's movement are converging around issues of violence and peace with the advocacy of disarmament and demilitarization, human based security, and a culture of peace.[9] The peace issue has finally evolved into one that draws together even women from nations, ethnic groups, and political factions openly and actively hostile to each other. Indeed, women's heroic struggle to prevent and halt violence in such situations is becoming legendary. The United Nations has been instrumental in bringing the stories of these struggles to public attention through the world conferences and the simultaneous nongovernmental fora; and in the intervening periods through various projects and experts group meetings. Most significant of all were the nongovernmental fora that were held parallel to the four intergovernmental conferences on women.

The first of these was the International Women's Tribune convened in tandem with the first intergovernmental World Conference on Women held in Mexico in 1975. It began a process of the articulation of women's peace discourse through the United Nations in a cycle of request, resistance, and the challenge of reconceptualization of these issues in women's and feminist perspectives. A similar process unfolded in the international peace research community over the same period. These processes have intertwined to produce the present feminist security challenge.

Women's first tactics in their attempts to persuade the security establishment to reconsider its reliance on armed force were to "request an audience" to plead for reason and change, a tactic employed by the women who sought

9 . Recommendations from the Caucus on Women in Armed Conflict to the Forty-second Session of the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women, March 2-13, 1998.

to meet with heads of states in their efforts to prevent several of the wars of this century from World War I to the Persian Gulf War. Although their appeals went unheeded, generally dismissed as the pleas of mothers fearing the loss of their sons, women continue even now in some circumstances to make such requests, appealing to leaders and citizens to consider alternatives to war and violence. In the peace research community, the appeal was a request to include women's issues in the considerations of factors of peacelessness, and to acknowledge that patriarchy was one of the major structures of violence which the field sought to comprehend in its structural analysis of the sources of war and other forms of violence. Although only the feminist researchers have put the substantive issues onto their research agendas, requests for "a place at the table" come in the form of applications for places in the plenaries of the professional meetings and the commissions that deal with a range of structural and security issues. These requests have generally been isolated to "women's" issues in single plenaries, and some women researchers occasionally participate in panels on other issues, but not so much to present a feminist view of the subject of discussion, as to move a bit closer to "gender balance."

In 1975, some women's peace groups requested member states to put peace issues on the agenda of the intergovernmental conference in Mexico City. Some requested to have programs on peace in the plenary sessions of the parallel nongovernmental forum, the Tribune. With one exception these requests were rejected. A panel on disarmament was included in the Tribune because of the advocacy and participation of Sean McBride, a Nobel laureate strongly committed to mobilizing publics in favor of disarmament. The panel was made more acceptable to the United Nations by the inclusion of a second male U.N. staff member, Noel Brown. Beside the chair there were two women on the panel, a major breakthrough since women were not then considered to be

competent to discuss issues of disarmament.

This panel had some significance to the rest of the movement because it helped to identify an international network of women concerned with the issues of peace and disarmament that extended beyond the traditional women's peace organizations. There were ten years intervening between the first and the third World Conferences on Women. Peace received little or no attention at the mid-decade conference in Copenhagen in 1985. However, the 1985 Nairobi end-of-decade conference featured a center from which emerged the strong women's voice of a growing international civil society.

The Peace Tent was such a center where many of the rules of the war system were broken as women from states who were in hostile relations to each other had the opportunity to talk with each other, dealing with issues that ordinary citizens were not acknowledged to understand, issues states had deemed not to be in the purview of women's concerns. The Peace Tent caused such a stir, such controversy, that the organizers of the intergovernmental conference requested the late, legendary Dame Nita Barrow of Barbados, President of the Forum, to close down the Peace Tent because it was said to be a source of discord and disorder. In an act of resistance to patriarchal authority which has become characteristic of the women's peace movement, Dame Nita responded, "If you close the Peace Tent, we will close the whole Forum." That would have been a great source of embarrassment to the host state and to the United Nations.

The Peace Tent stayed open at the Nairobi Forum, and the intergovernmental document, *The Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,* clearly stated that peace was integral to the other two themes of the decade and a necessary foundation for the achievement of all the goals of equality and development. Peace remained a key issue of concern for women's movements, which from the time of Nairobi maintained and extended an active

global network that made many later advances possible. The acts of resistance women were undertaking to rally other citizens to oppose the excesses of militarism within their nations were now being moved to the international arena as networks of solidarity grew among the wider peace movement, regularly intersecting with women's movements. Requests were accompanied by various forms of resistance such as the civil disobedience which frequently accompanies demonstrations and rallies to express opposition to militarist policies. American citizens engaged in such acts during the Great Peace March that filled the streets of New York in 1982 on the eve of the U.N.'s Second Special Session on Disarmament. Women were particularly active in the international movement for nuclear disarmament which grew and flourished during the height of the Cold War in the 1980s, many of them marching across borders. As at the Peace Tent, women from opposite sides of the "iron curtain" linked arms in solidarity against the nuclear threat. Women in Black, which first appeared when Israeli and Palestinian women engaged in weekly public vigils against military occupation, began to appear at other sites of hostilities such as the former Yugoslavia. Resistance was the major mode of the eighties, carrying on strategies that emerged from the frustrations of the requests refused in the seventies. From mid-decade on, reconceptualization also became an important strategy as women refused to accept doctrines of deterrence, the necessity of forward-based defense, and low-intensity conflict spawned by regional tensions intensified by the Cold War.

Work on reconceptualization of security was pursued by feminist peace researchers, some of them maintaining theoretical conversations with "sisters" working in or with the U.N. system with specialized agencies or sectors of the Secretariat, and with NGO's who had concern with the issues of both peace and women's human rights. The years between Nairobi and Beijing were a period of low-key but steady persuasion by feminists within the U.N. system,

often in collaboration with NGO's, within the context of a growing interagency cooperation on women's issues, undertaken to increase the effectiveness of limited U.N. resources. The groundwork was laid for the convening of the Experts Group Meeting, "Gender and the Agenda for Peace," in December 1994, called explicitly to review the Secretary General's "An Agenda for Peace," his 1992 message to the General Assembly on peace and security issues, from a gender perspective. The meeting addressed the question of whether gender had relevance to issues of conflict, peace, and security. For the first time avowedly feminist scholars and activists were invited to present their research and experiences in a series of discussions which produced a report with strong and challenging critiques of the Agenda and U.N. peacekeeping operations and practices.[10] It drew attention to the interrelationships among forms of violence, challenged the conventional wisdom in regard to the efficacy of violence for achieving political purposes, and chided the Security Council for too readily resorting to the use of force authorized under chapter seven, rather than first exhausting the nonviolent dispute settlement possibilities of chapter six of the U.N. charter, when confronting decisions about threats to the peace. The peacekeeping efforts of the United Nations, it was said, were not *peacekeeping,* but *peace enforcement.* They had become another form of militarized security. The feminine elements within the charter, which made possible forms of negotiation and non-violent conflict intervention, were not being adequately exploited.

Among the report's recommendations was the suggestion that the next Secretary General should be a woman. Needless to say, the report was not received with enthusiasm. Although not officially endorsed, the report was ultimately released. Expert reports are not official U.N. documents, but they are usually circulated by the U.N. with a document number. This one was not, but there were many people who knew about it, so by the time the

10. "Gender and the Agenda for Peace."

Commission on the Status of Women met in March of 1995, some of the con-
ceptual language of the report was working its way into various of the docu-
ments NGO's were using to lobby this intergovernmental body, hoping to
affect the drafts being prepared for Beijing. However, the main recommenda-
tions and conclusions of the report did not get into the Beijing Platform for
Action. The Beijing Platform contains significant chapters on violence against
women, and the related issues of women in armed conflict, but it does not
address the fundamental problems of the inadequacies of the international
security system that were posed by the experts in this first overt expression
of the feminist challenge to the United Nations.

A Feminist Analysis of Women's Resistance to Militarism

The Gender and an Agenda for Peace meeting was one of a set of two
United Nations Experts Group Meetings held as preparation for the Beijing
Conference.[11] The other, "Women's Contribution to a Culture of Peace," organ-
ized by UNESCO in Manila in April 1995, endorsed the critique of U.N.
peacekeeping and security policies set forth in the Gender and an Agenda for
Peace report, and argued that we must look deeper than systems and policies.
We must probe the cultural roots of violence and war. Working from the
previous report's assertion of interrelationships linking all forms of violence,
the Manila meeting addressed itself to diagnosing the global culture of violence
in which the present international security system is embedded, positing some
characteristics of a culture of peace, the vision of which could provide direc-
tions and guidelines for alternatives to the costly and violent war system.[12]

The meeting also reviewed some of the peace actions women are undertak-
ing in various parts of the world. Given the limits to the parameters of their

11. A volume of papers selected from among those presented at the two meetings is to be
jointly published by UNESCO and the Division for the Advancement of Women under the title
of *Toward a Women's Agenda for a Culture of Peace*.
12. "Women's Contribution to a Culture of Peace," a report of a UNESCO Experts Group
meeting, UNESCO, Paris, 1995.

political power, the actions they are pursuing to resist militarization and the variety of military abuses that are rife throughout the system demonstrate significant potential for an overall strategy to roll back the militarization of security. A feminist analysis of these actions reveals patterns of resistance to militarism and reconceptualization of security that provide the foundation for a wider, more far-reaching challenge to militarized security. The nature of the requests now emerging from this reconceptualization point the way towards strategies for demilitarization and conversion to "human based security."

Most women's peace actions are very specific and taken in response to particular situations toward which the activists strategize, seldom considering their relevance to the rest of the movement. Indeed, a good deal of the international networking is more for purposes of solidarity than for global strategizing. The task of the analyst is to interpret these specific actions in context of some generalized patterns so that they are useful to the larger movement for demilitarization. While there is some distinction between analysis and action, each is integral to the other in the formulation and pursuit of the feminist challenge. Applied feminism is a form of praxis. Most feminist activists think in both analytic and strategic terms. Theory and practice are part of an integrated process of change that is consistent with the holism from which the feminine principle arises. Few feminist activists have the opportunity to publish their thoughts and experience. Those who do have that opportunity have an obligation to acknowledge the theorizing of the activists, as well as, their consuming and costly struggle. When feminist theory is published, the reader should be aware that it is communally derived. It is not the work of one brilliant theoretician who has a unique insight. Feminist theory derives from feminist practices that seek to maximize participation and complementarity. I did not invent the categories I use here to describe women's resistance. The categorization is but my description of the patterns

that emerge from the consistency of principle, purpose and action that charac-
terize women's struggles for peace. I use the term "militarism" to denote the
object of women's peace actions to indicate that militarized security is seen as
the consequence of a belief in the efficacy of hierarchically arranged, coercive
power used for political purposes.

The movement is not against the military *per se*, which, when performing
its functions under the governance of civil authority and for the benefit of the
people of the society they serve, fulfill a constructive social purpose. While the
movement regrets the necessity of the military, it acknowledges that until
alternatives are in place, it may be necessary to maintain some national mili-
tary forces. In the meanwhile, the excessive and often exclusive resort to
armed force when other alternatives are available (i.e., the Security Council's
overemphasis on Chapter 7 of the U.N. Charter while seeming to ignore the
diplomatic possibilities of Chapter 6) must be reduced. Demilitarization refers
not only to reducing resort to armed force and the number of armed forces
nations maintain. It also refers at this point in history to assuring that the
military is controlled by and in the service of the civil arm of the public
authority, and to reducing the multiple abuses of power that have come to
characterize   militarized   security   systems.   Militarization   connotes   the
overprivileging of the military and the application of military authority to
political issues and problems. Demilitarization refers to a whole range of
strategies and processes intended to move society from "military based to
human based security."[13]

I observe five categories of violence and violation that have given rise to
women's resistance to militarism: military abuse of civil society, abuses within
the military, abuses of military power, dereliction of public responsibility, and
military violence against women. Women are acting not only to resist these
abuses but to overcome them. I hope we can learn from the way these actions

13. Recommendations from the Caucus on Women in Armed Conflict, 1998.

were conceived, pursued, and assessed ways to develop a more coherent and consistent program for demilitarization.

Abuses by the military of civil society are for the most part abuses against civil populations, usually, but not exclusively, undertaken when military gain either political control or an inordinate degree of influence in the political process. One group to act against this form of abuse, not so well known perhaps as the Argentine Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, were the Chilean women who resisted soon after the military takeover of 1974. As is well known, the mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires demonstrated, starting in the mid-seventies, against the "disappearances" of their children. These disappearances were, in fact, murders in most cases. We see in this particular example inordinate courage; a number of these women themselves were "disappeared," * and they knew they were taking this risk. Their actions serve to demonstrate that the feminine principle is not "softness" or compliance to force as it is often defined in popular discourse. It is a distinct form of courage that complements rather than contrasts with the masculine in an affirmation of life itself, in the unarmed defense of particular human lives, even at the risk of one's own individual life or well-being. Military security distorts as it exploits the masculine manifestation of courage to risk self for an abstract principle such as justice or the nation, or an ideology. The state and others who control military force take to themselves the right to define the abstract principle, generally determined by their own political agendas, and demand the risk of self from populations under their authority or command. Much of women's resistance to military abuse is resistance to this distortion, especially in their resistance to the dehumanizing aspects of military training.

Another aspect of these kinds of feminine risks is politicizing a ritual

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* The verb disappear as applied to these cases is used in this form to indicate that the victims were the objects not the subjects of the action.

function that gender roles assign to women in war and armed conflict, mourn-
ing the losses of the warriors. In taking to public protest rather than lamen-
tation, the Madres transformed their personal anguish into a political energy,
into a political force to be reckoned with. We now see a similar phenomenon
among African women from areas of armed conflict whose resistance is taking
on a more political dimension, applying to war what women have ultimately
done to achieve other social and political changes, work their way into the
political process. Still woefully underrepresented in political decision making,
women now seek as much to be politicians as to influence them; this political
drive is a resistance to the male dominance of politics some feminists see as
responsible for militarizing security.[14]

The Chilean Association of the Relatives of the Detained and Disappeared
antedated the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, and in many ways was even more
courageous, because the situation they resisted was at that point just emerg-
ing in early 1974, exemplifying the anticipatory nature of some of these acts of
resistance to abuses by the military. It is this anticipatory aspect which is
being brought to bear on proposals for demilitarization that stress the conse-
quences of military force and urge consideration of nonviolent approaches to
threat and conflict.

There is also an element of the reclaiming of history and the application
of masculine concepts of justice[15] in resistance to abuses by the military. An
example of this is the claims of the "Comfort Women." What is significant
here is not only the challenge to abusive military behavior and policy of sexual
enslavement. There is also a challenge to the right of the state to control
history. The comfort women, in laying claim to justice, also claim women's

14. Hanna-Margret Birchenbach, "Balancing Cooperation and Critique: Preliminary Considera-
tion of a Feminist View of the Agenda for Peace." Paper prepared for U.N. Experts Group
Meeting, New York, December 1994.
15. This distinction is based on the work of Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice,* whose
research revealed a difference in the criteria and principles used by men and women in
making moral decisions.

right to their own history, history as public record, painful as it is. Presenting this challenge also required the social and psychological risks of coming forward, stepping out of the security of anonymity. These were risks taken in cooperation with Japanese women members of NGO's and the Diet. In this campaign to properly acknowledge and compensate the crimes against those who were sexually enslaved by the Japanese military, Japanese women demonstrated women's notion of power as responsibility. Responsibility is an important theme throughout these actions of resistance. Women's resistances in most cases are calling public authorities to acknowledge that they are responsible and accountable to the citizenry.

Abuses within the military have also targeted women. "Tailhook" has become a kind of shorthand for sexual abuse of women in the military. This 1991, incident began a series of revelations of sexist abuse in the U.S. military, many cases of which continue to be hidden and rationalized by military authorities. Tailhook (the name of the association whose gathering was the scene of the incident) was a case of excessive sexual harassment of female officers attending an annual convention of an association of U.S. Naval Air Force officers. Exposing this abuse of the personal dignity and security of these female officers was another in the series of acts of courage that are now revealing this particular category of abuse of power within the military. The women who made the reports did so at the risk of hard won military careers.

A number of cases recently reported in the media have revealed systematic sexual abuse in the Marine Corps and the U.S. Army by training officers, forcing women trainees into sexual relationships. These particular acts of violence against women in the military are part of a general pattern that may have existed since women have been enlisted in the military. Regular harassment and not infrequent rape have been documented, mainly by victims who after long struggles "go public" for purposes of personal healing and for

prevention of an ongoing form of military sexual abuse.[16] This documentation demonstrates that in spite of claims of gender equality, the U.S. military maintains a large degree of the misogyny which feminist scholars have long argued to be part of the military ethos. One suspects the condition also exists in the militaries of other countries. The standard analyses of sexual harassment which the press has applied to these cases are not adequate to truly understanding the source of this form of abuse which lies at the heart of the war system itself.

Of all the challenges of abuses within the military, one of the most interesting and instructive is the Soldiers' Mothers' Movement in Russia.[17] Some of these women actually went to Chechnya and took their sons home from the war. Others hid their sons so that the army couldn't conscript them. This resistance movement developed a potentially significant strategy of using the military law to confront the military establishment. Both military and civil law were broken in the process of training Russian recruits. The Soldiers' Mothers' Movement studied the laws of conscription and military conduct as part of their struggle against the military. Their motivations were not just to save their sons from going to war, but to save them from brutalization. Recruits were subject to a form of training which broke down their sense of humanity and restraints on inhumane behavior. Many young men were physically and psychologically abused by their officers. One ultimately killed a superior officer. His trial broke the scandal open, and the Movement gained more public support. They began to train all of the members of the Movement in the law, and forms of civil disobedience of laws they consider to be unjust and undemocratic. Their campaigns have opened up some interesting possibilities for a transition strategy to demilitarized security that echoes the theme of public

16. Donna M. Dean, *Warriors without Weapons: The Victimization of Military Women* (Pasadena, Md.: The Minerva Center, 1997).
17. Elena Zdravomyslova, "Peaceful Initiatives: Soldiers' Mothers' Movement in Russia." Paper prepared for UNESCO Experts Group Meeting, Manila, April 1995.

responsibility. Holding the military more responsible to respect fundamental human rights, and accountable for infractions of both military and civil law may well be one route to demilitarizing the military itself and assuring its position as being in service to, not in defiance of, control by the principles of civil law that uphold "civilized" societies.

State abuse of military power intensifies calls to public responsibility. A significant number of women's resistance actions have been in response to the state's use of excessive military force or pursuit of a militarized policy when alternatives are available. Such policies are believed to indicate excessive and inappropriate influence of the military within the civil government. Initiatives and campaigns such as The Women's Pentagon Action in the United States, the Greenham Common encampment in the United Kingdom, and others are challenges to a security strategy carried out by the military, but actually decided and enforced by the civil sector of governments. Recent demonstrations against the possibility of U.S. millitary action against Iraq are also examples of this form of resistance which involve both women and men, but tend to be organized by women who give a good deal of their time to voluntary organizations and endeavors. The American peace movement calls the statements of such demonstrations "speaking truth to power," and, while somewhat in the mode of request, are viewed by the participants as demands upon the estrablished authorities. Women's resistance of this kind has a long history, from Lysistrata on, including the ones previously mentioned that attempted to prevent military action in this century. Though they failed in their missions, they did not fail to pursue their cause to call the decision makers to responsibility.

Military violence against women is a more recent focus of the challenge. The women's movement in its present phase is focused very much on eliminating violence against women. The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence

against Women put forth by the World Conference on Human Rights held in Vienna in 1993 has been the political measure and conceptual guide for these efforts. The declaration was itself the product of a world-wide campaign to persuade the United Nations to designate gender violence as a violation of international human rights standards and to acknowledge that women's rights are human rights. Newly defined as a distinct form of violence against women not specifically addressed by the declaration nor adequately by the Beijing Plan of Action, military violence against women is bringing more women into a campaign to demilitarize security. The definition, in enumerating the various sources of this type of violence, demonstrates the breadth of the problem arising from the permeation of contemporary adversarial politics by violent conflict.

> Military violence is any abuse of human rights, personal dignity, and/or physical and/or psychological well being perpetrated by any forces under arms, military, paramilitary, police, private armies, and body guards, no matter whether the forces be of the state, challengers of the state, or parties engaged in ethnic, religious, ideological or political conflict using violent means.[18]

This definition telescopes a range of some of the most vicious violations of human rights that have occurred in a century of unprecedented violence. There is no more powerful evidence of the misogynous nature of war than these crimes now epidemic throughout the many conflicts which plague the world. As the definition illustrates, all men under arms are potential and many, actual rapists. Equally important to understanding this category of violence against women and its relationship to militarized security is the fact that these assaults take place in "peace time" as well as during armed conflict (which is addressed in the Beijing Plan of Action). They take place wherever there are

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18. "Stop Military Violence Against Women: Demilitarize Security," an appeal to the Commission on the Status of Women, March 2-13, 1998, from the Ad Hoc Group on Military Violence Against Women.

military or paramilitary installations. The larger the number of military personnel, the more numerous are the assaults. The history of such attacks in Okinawa has been documented by Okinawan Women Act Against Military Violence, a group which has engaged in or created some particular form all of the modes of resistance described here.[19] It is the belief of this group that the assaults on women are related to the military training that engenders a level of aggression that is assumed necessary for combat.[20] The aggregation of evidence about these crimes has led a segment of the feminist movement to argue that the elimination of violence against women requires the abolition of war, and has helped to initiate the recently undertaken campaign to persuade nations to demilitarize security.

Conclusion

The challenge that feminists now pose to the United Nations and to the field of peace research is not only to attend more to the currently proposed nonmilitary means for addressing conflict and threats to the peace, but to systematically search out, plan and develop an international arrangement which will be more capable of assuring fundamental, quotidian security for the world community. Simultaneously, a sequenced and integrated strategy for demilitarization should be undertaken. This strategy should begin with "dimilitarizing" the military, assuring their "readiness" not only for combat, but for legitimate peacekeeping, carried out in full respect for universal human rights. It should also, through training, sanctions, and suitably severe punishment, reverse the tide of military violence against women. Such an arrangement will require theoretical and analytic cooperation between the United Nations and peace researchers, strategic cooperation between the United

19. "Postwar U.S. Military Crimes Against Women in Okinawa," a chronological, statistcal report prepared by Okinawan Women Act Against Military Violence.
20. Suzuyo Takazato, Presentation at International Forum on Military Violence Against Women, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, February 26, 1998.

Nations and international civil society, and political cooperation among all these parties and member states. In all these cooperative endeavors, the primary requisite for success will be the equal participation of women and men, the inclusion of a gender perspective and a comprehensive view of what comprises human security. Only through the fulfillment of such requisites can women's expectation of well-being be met. Women's security is essential to the security of all vulnerable populations. As women's rights are human rights, so too, women's security is human security.