

# Post-Conflict Reconstruction

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# Post-Conflict Reconstruction

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**P U B L I S H I N G**

Post-Conflict Reconstruction, edited by Neil Ferguson

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## FOREWORD

Explicitly or implicitly, issues of ethics underpin every aspect of life, as public institutions and private individuals make decisions that will inform their own welfare and the lives of others. The ethical impulse and its determination has recently gained considerable intellectual attention, as many in the academy seek to understand the moral challenges and opportunities their own subject area presents. This series, which flows naturally from Liverpool Hope University's unique mission, is distinctive in its multi-disciplinary range and encompasses arts and humanities, social sciences, business and education. Each volume is informed by the latest research and poses important questions for academics, students and all those who wish to reflect more deeply on the values inherent within different disciplines. Bringing together international subject specialists, the series explores the complexities of ethics, its theoretical analysis and its practical applications and through the breadth of contributing subjects, demonstrates that understanding ethics is central to contemporary scholarship.





## INTRODUCTION

The challenge posed by violence and conflict at all levels of abstraction from intra-individual violence, such as self-harming, to collective inter-group violence aimed at achieving political, social or economic power has been cited by the World Health Organization as the greatest challenge the world will face in this millennium (Krug et al., 2002). The size of the problem created by collective violence in particular is clear in just a few statistics. Approximately 191 million people lost their lives to political violence and warfare in the twentieth century and since the turn of the century it is estimated that approximately four million more have died in armed conflict. Since the end of the Second World War there have been over 190 armed conflicts and every region of the world currently endures armed conflict with 28 conflicts taking place in 24 different countries in 2008 which result in at least 1,000 combat deaths per year. However, the distribution across the regions of the globe is not even, with Africa and Asia being the most affected by war with 11 armed conflicts apiece, or almost 80% of the world's total armed conflicts (*Armed Conflicts Report 2009*).

In addition to these current conflicts raging across the globe many more societies face the challenge of rebuilding post-conflict societies; some 30 conflicts ended in the period from 1999 to 2008 while many more communities endure the violence created by low intensity conflict and terrorism (*Armed Conflicts Report 2009*). This post-conflict recovery does not happen in the immediate aftermath of the hot conflict, indeed it is rare that the signing of the peace accord or the ending of formal hostilities automatically brings a return to normality in these fractured societies. It is more likely that the scarred societies face a period in the twilight between war and peace, a time when the world turns its attention to new problems and seemingly more pressing matters, leaving the country to struggle towards peace and a new social order.

This book is the result of conversations between staff and associates of the Desmond Tutu Centre for War and Peace Studies against the backdrop of the war in Iraq and the unfolding violent aftermath caused by the invasion

in 2003. These conversations began by discussing just war theory and how the events in Iraq illustrated the need to reformulate the theory to include *jus post bellum* responsibility alongside establishing the right to go to war and the correct conduct within war. These conversations widened and developed into a discussion about how to right the wrongs of war and begin to repair the damage inflicted by conflict. This damage was not viewed purely in the terms of the cold statistics proffered earlier, or the cost in billions of US dollars it would take to rebuild splintered infrastructure; instead it included the *philosophical*, e.g. reasoning about the nature of war and peace; the *physical*, e.g. the economic, material and physical features of conflict and conflict resolution; the *political*, e.g. the role of local, regional and international actors in reconstructing civil society; the *psychological*, e.g. dealing with the psychological trauma of conflict; and the *sociological*, e.g. restructuring society and building rebuilding social relationships. This volume of the Hope Ethics Series, with its multidisciplinary range of approaches to post-conflict reconstruction, both reflects and further develops these conversations by bringing together members and associates of the Desmond Tutu Centre for War and Peace Studies with other researchers in this area to assemble a cross-disciplinary exploration of current, historical and hypothetical approaches to post-conflict reconstruction and provide some answers to the questions being posed within the Desmond Tutu Centre at Liverpool Hope University.

The main aim of this book is to inquire into the creation of the conditions necessary for the development first of 'negative' peace (dealing with the hot conflict and preventing a return to conflict) and then paving the way to allow the development of 'positive' peace and the removal of structural violence (see Galtung, 1981). The book's contributors deal with the challenges to creating the foundations for positive peace from a variety of perspectives, some of which, such as politics, development studies and even psychology, are normally found in books on peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction, but some of the perspectives offered here, such as those from neuroscience, sports studies, the visual arts and psychoanalysis, are atypical. This breadth of perspectives offers innovative insights into the grey space between war and peace, which is home to millions of people across the globe. Many of the contributors take a case study approach and explore this transition from war to peace by examining conflicts and peace building interventions taking place in various countries across the world. To some extent, the range of countries focused on reflects the uneven distribution of the world's conflict and post-conflict zones with the chapters considering post-conflict recovery in Afghanistan, Bosnia, the Congo, Israel, Liberia,

Northern Ireland, Rwanda and Sierra Leone.

In the first chapter **Beverly Metcalfe** examines the role of women in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction. Her chapter draws on a number of case studies with a particular focus on the work of women's NGOs in Afghanistan and Rwanda. Her evaluation of these initiatives demonstrates the considerable and varied role women play in post-conflict reconstruction. Chapter 1 also offers a critique of the dominant views of the role of men and women in conflict which view men as active, territorial and aggressive, while women are perceived as inherently passive, nurturing and peaceable. Metcalfe also explores the impact these views have on women's roles in conflict and peace building.

Chapter 2 demonstrates how sport can be utilized to promote peace and post-conflict recovery through building human relationships. In this chapter **Joel Rookwood** and **Stefan Wassong** evaluate the benefits and limitations of the use of sporting activities to build bridges between fractured communities by comparing and contrasting three different sports programmes (based in the Congo, Israel and Liberia) aimed at building better community relations. Their discussions of these programmes should provide practitioners with some important lessons on how to develop and employ sporting activities as effective tools in post-conflict reconstruction.

**Neil Ferguson** (Chapter 3) explores the role and impact of Northern Irish integrated school sector and school based cross-community contact initiatives which bring Protestant and Catholic children and adolescents together with the aim of fostering better relationships between these divided communities. The chapter reviews the research examining the impact integrated education has had on attitudes towards members of the other community, increasing cross-community contact, developing friendship ties with children and adolescents across community divides and how these longstanding peace-building interventions can alter the seemingly intractable conflicting ethno-political identities which fuel segregation and sectarianism in post-agreement Northern Ireland.

**Ruth Leitch** stays with the post-conflict environment of Northern Ireland in Chapter 4 where she summarizes and evaluates an arts based initiative, the Enabling Young Voices Project (EYV), which aims to assess the level and nature of victimhood among young people in post-agreement Northern Ireland. Her chapter examines the impact of the Northern Irish 'Troubles' on children and adolescents, before moving on to discuss both the pedagogical and research facets of the EYV project in depth. Leitch's chapter also employs the first-hand accounts of children and teachers who were involved with the project to illustrate how the conflict and associated

community divisions impact on children and the wider community. Leitch's evaluation demonstrates the challenges faced in breaking the silence around issues of trauma and fear which need to be dealt with in order to allow Northern Irish society to move forward towards recovery and reconciliation.

Issues around trauma and post-conflict trauma recovery are further analysed by **Eve Binks** in Chapter 5. Binks provides a detailed exploration of the psychological impact of exposure to political violence. Her chapter illustrates how violence not only harms the intended target, but can have a devastating impact on those who witness it or know the victim, and on the wider community and even future generations. Binks explores psychological trauma, focusing on the psychological consequences of coping with political conflict while evaluating which coping strategies work and those which pose additional harm. Binks then moves on to discuss how to psychologically recover in the post-conflict space and begin to heal the unseen wounds conflict causes.

**Frank Wood's** (Chapter 6) novel application of observations from neuroscience and brain complexity dynamics to the understanding of how and why post-conflict environments have the propensity to spiral destructively back into conflict are both thought-provoking and original. This chapter examines how the interconnections between parts of the human brain mirror communication processes and relationships between individuals and groups in wider society. Wood develops these neuroscience insights to generate a research agenda and a set of hypotheses which should offer guidance to policy makers, researchers and practitioners in future post-conflict reconstruction activities.

**Paddy Greer** in Chapter 7 follows on from Frank Wood in offering a further fresh and novel perspective of reconstruction in post-conflict societies. Greer critically examines the role of post-conflict reconstruction in attempting to re-create an anodyne imitation of the pre-conflict environment devoid of meaning and cleansed of the physical signs of conflict and the trauma of war. Greer builds his critique of international post-conflict reconstruction efforts around Lacanian psychoanalytical principles, focusing on the rebuilding of the Stari Most bridge in Mostar, Bosnia. Greer argues that the rebuilt bridge has become a symbol of the absence of peace and potential for future violence in Bosnia instead of the symbol of reconciliation it was envisioned to be by the international community. Chapter 7 concludes by warning that peace building needs empowered citizens, not international efforts which homogenize and disenfranchise.

The final three chapters (8, 9 and 10) all explore the use of Disarmament,

Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) processes to assist in building peace in post-conflict societies. In Chapter 8, **John Kabia** explores the transitional period after conflict has officially ended and the society is beginning the process of reconstruction by focusing on post-conflict recovery in both Liberia and Sierra Leone. Kabia does this by evaluating the effectiveness of domestic, regional and international peace building efforts taking place in these countries to promote effective DDR and Security Sector Reform (SSR). This chapter concludes that while remarkable progress has been made in building peace and security in both countries, each still faces considerable problems which threaten further recovery and reconstruction.

**Neil Ferguson** (Chapter 9) further examines the DDR processes which have become a critical aspect of contemporary post-conflict reconstruction activity. Firstly in Chapter 9, Ferguson discusses and defines what DDR entails before exploring the unique case of DDR in Northern Ireland after the signing of the Good Friday (or Belfast) Agreement in 1998. To achieve this Chapter 9 focuses on the decommissioning of paramilitary weapons against the backdrop of security normalization and the release of politically motivated prisoners. Ferguson also discusses the reality of the reintegration of these former combatants into the post-conflict society and their role in both the maintenance and transformation of the conflict in Northern Ireland.

In the final chapter (10) **Ross McGarry** stays with the issues around DDR and focuses on the relatively unexamined area around the homecoming of combat troops who were deployed to fight in conflicts overseas and their reintegration into a non-militarised environment free from political conflict on their return. McGarry does this by focusing on homecoming British soldiers returning from recent military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Chapter 10 explores the consequences of being exposed to these conflicts for the returning soldiers and the challenges they face on their initial return to the UK and after their demobilization from the British Army. To add depth to this analysis, McGarry utilizes the first-hand accounts of four ex-soldiers who served in either Iraq or Afghanistan to highlight the problems faced by both the veterans of these conflicts, but also the agencies tasked with their care and support.

As a collection, these chapters offer a glimpse of the multifaceted nature of post-conflict reconstruction and should inspire readers from multidisciplinary backgrounds to widen their conceptions of what is required to rebuild societies after violent conflict, or build bridges in divided communities still under the shadow of political violence. Hopefully in addition to provoking thought and awareness, this book will cause readers to consider developing new approaches or reflect on how to improve current peace-

building interventions which in turn will be put into practice in post-conflict environments across the globe.

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## CHAPTER ONE

# FEMINISM, GENDER AND THE ROLE OF WOMEN'S NGOs IN PEACEBUILDING AND RECONSTRUCTION

BEVERLY DAWN METCALFE

The UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on *Women Peace and Security*, signed on 31 October 2000, reflected a commitment to women's peace activism. It brought together member states to provide for women and girls in war to ensure full participation of women in humanitarian, conflict resolution, peacebuilding and post-conflict initiatives. This marked a change for global policy interventions regarding women's roles in conflict and reconstruction efforts for civil society, and challenged dominant stereotypes of both men's and women's roles in war and reconstruction. Women's resistance to violence is widely believed to be a resistive force in both local and national movements. This raises concerns about women's and men's essentialism: are men inherently territorial and aggressive and women naturally nurturing and peaceable? Or do the interactions of men and women constitute the social relations of power? This chapter considers some of these issues in relation to women's movements and women's peace organizations in mobilizing to support post-conflict rehabilitation as well as negotiating and participating in peacebuilding alliances, strategies, and networks. The chapter draws on a number of cases, specifically Rwanda and Afghanistan, to illustrate women's activism in fighting for peace, negotiating for peace and reconstructing civil society. As part of the debate the chapter critiques dominant views about women's role in war and conflict. We suggest that essentializing accounts of women as wives, mothers and caretakers discourages their inclusion in political tactical areas, as well as undermining support for other marginalized groups. While we do not want to underplay the significance of women's movements and peace organizations, we stress that all of humanity should recognize that men and women are violated emotionally, economically and politically by war.

While much of the work on conflict resolution focusses on the government or public level, the resolution of contemporary conflict is very much a holistic process that is simultaneously conducted at the private, grassroots level (Metcalf & Rees, 2010; Metcalfe, 2010). Many of the efforts under

way to sustain peace in countries and regions beset by, or emerging from, violent conflict are undertaken by grassroots organizations formed by those whose lives are most directly and significantly affected by the conflict. A substantial proportion of these organizations are formed and staffed by women. These non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are playing an increasingly active role in dispute resolution and post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding (Al-Ali, 2003).

In the following chapter we expand gender theorizing in post-conflict scenarios and women's involvement in war. We consider alternative understandings of peace processes and outline gender perspectives of conflict at the interpersonal, meso and macro levels. We argue that women's NGOs' efforts have evolved gradually, but these organizations are now considered key stakeholders by international organizations in post-reconstruction victim support, political campaigning and, significantly, seen as vital by UN agencies in assisting war efforts. We also maintain, however, that in some geographic territories women's access to political advocacy and engagement in post-conflict reconstruction is curtailed by commitment to patriarchal regimes, and reform will not move forward until additional international support is given.

## **Theorizing Gender in War, Conflict and Reconstruction of Civil Society**

The concept of "gender" relates to all the qualities of what it is to be a man or a woman, socially and culturally rather than biologically determined (Davis, Evans & Lorber, 2006). This relates to the way society defines appropriate behaviour and access to power resources for men and women, and in practice has referred to the way women are generally discriminated against and have less access to positions of power than men. In development studies of women in third world states, gender analysis of social systems, state formation and international relations study the broader interconnecting relationships through which women are subordinate in society, in the division of labour in the household and economy, in access to resources (including shelter and education) and responsibilities, attributes and capabilities and, finally, in power and privilege in the economic and political realm (Kabeer, 1994).

Research into gender relations has been particularly influential on the field of development studies (Moser, 1989, 1993; Kabeer, 1994), based on the underlying conceptual rationale that because men and women



play different roles in society, they often have different needs. Therefore, when identifying and implementing gender planning needs it is important to disaggregate households and families within communities on the basis of gender (Moser, 1989). Consequently, current debates on war, and the emerging discussion on men, women and violence and war, can be traced to feminist theorizing of patriarchal relations in society (Ridd & Callaway, 1987; Davis, 2006). This rests on essentialist accounts presenting men and women as having different but complementary roles in the home and economic sphere. This holds that men are inherently territorial and aggressive, and that women are inherently nurturing and peaceable. Alternatively, cultural theorists point to the importance of cultural conditioning in shaping a myriad of different gender roles and identities (Ashfar, 2007). We will expand on these perspectives in our discussion of Rwanda and Afghanistan.

In contrast to the development field of gender planning and analysis, there is limited literature on the gendered processes of conflict management and peacebuilding, although it is now growing (Moser, 1989, 1983; Pankhurst, 2008). The limited scholarship has been criticized for failing to recognize that international and national structures of power and patterns of

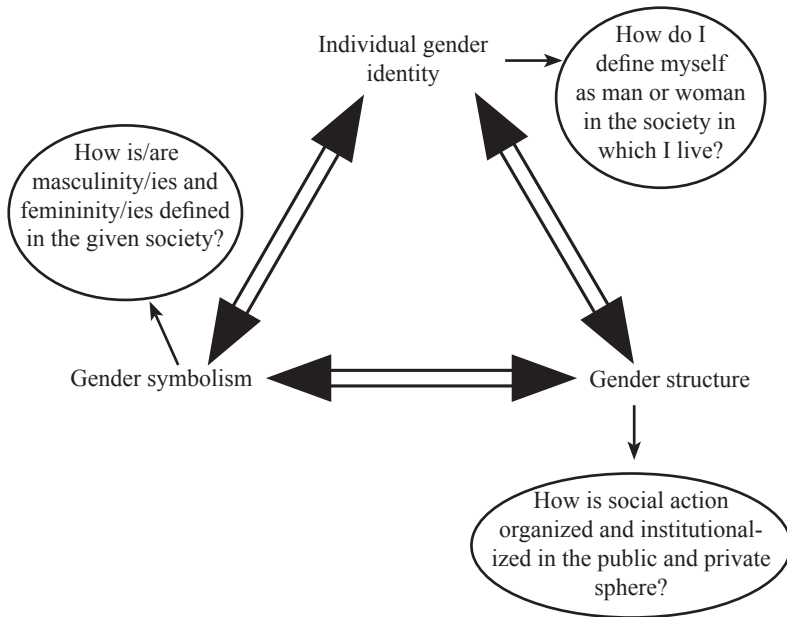


Fig. 1-1. Reimann's Gender Triangle (2002: 5)

resource allocation, which may contribute to conflict, are based on a range of inequalities or differences. Inequality can emanate from a number of different dimensions including regional, social, ethnic, religious and gender identities. Cordula Reimann (2002) illustrates the dynamics of gender relations in the form of a “Gender Triangle” which describes gender in three ways: the individual gender identity (how one defines oneself as a man or woman in society); the symbolism signifier (how masculinity and femininity are defined in a given society); and the structure of gender (how social action is organized and institutionalized in the public and private sphere).

Reimann, in line with many critical theory scholars (Metcalf, 2010), views gender identity as a transformative concept that can be defined by social norms and notions of fluid masculinities and femininities, which in turn can be based on the distribution of labour in the public and private spheres. Gendered power relations are reconfigured by a myriad of processes – for example an occupation may become feminized if the majority of its practitioners are female, and thus devalued; similarly the dominance of men in political leadership and as heads of international organizations or clans/tribes conveys symbolism and imagery of masculinism with power and authority. Men thus embody and signify authority and power (Metcalf, 2008b). Reimann, like many gender scholars, highlights the power relations and distribution inherent in everyday working and cultural practices. While the framework is useful in unravelling marginalization and difference, it is important to recognize the intersecting dynamics of other signifiers such as race, ethnicity and class. The role of women in NGOs and peacebuilding activities is thus marked by the variety of ways in which women’s competencies, identities and relations are subordinate. In war and conflict these gender relations frame the dynamic of interactions in multiple ways.

The social, political and institutional relations are similarly complex in respect of perspectives on peace. The nature of peace was defined by Johan Galtung (1981) as either “negative” (simply an end to hostilities) or “positive” (a sustainable peace). Galtung’s approach to conflict resolution states that for truly positive peace, structures must be found that remove the causes of wars and offer alternatives to war. In a positive peace all major conflicts of interest, as well as violence, should be resolved, and society be based on an active and egalitarian civil society, inclusive democratic political structures and equity between ethnic groups and races. Gender and peacebuilding researchers, notably Pankhurst, insist that gender equality must be included in this list (Pankhurst, 2002, 2003, 2008). If women are not included in this list then this ignores the serious impacts on women of post-conflict situations, and other forms of abuse and mass violence.

In order to achieve the ultimate goal of a 'positive peace', a true understanding of the nature of gendered dynamics of conflict is necessary. Conflicts are multilayered and multidimensional and can exist from the local to international level, and they may move in and out and across these arenas. This has been categorized by Lewer in four broad but interlinked levels (Lewer, 1999: 5):

- 1 the intrapersonal – individual understanding of the root causes of conflict
- 2 the micro level or interpersonal – conflict between communities or groups
- 3 the meso level – conflict involving militant groups, local government, UN agencies, international nongovernmental organizations (INGO) and local NGOs
- 4 the macro level – conflict at the national and international level.

There is a growing awareness among peace and conflict theorists that top-down diplomatic processes of conflict resolution alone are not effective in leading to diplomatic interaction across and between these levels. Experiences and needs in conflict and peace may vary at each level and therefore require different management interventions. As Metcalfe and Rees (2010) comment, power, politics and conflicts represent a complex network of multidimensional interests. Reimann (2002) believes conflict analysis benefits from a gender perspective which illuminates how men and women are caught up in different ways in struggles over power and resources through the fluidity of dynamic forms of gendered power relations. This incorporates different gender identities, differential access to and control over resources, political decision making and changes in gender ideologies in specific social-cultural and geopolitical contexts.

## **Re-Evaluating Gender Ideologies in Conflict and Peace**

Gendered qualities associated with masculinity and femininity can be possessed by both men and women at different times and are historically and socially constituted. However, they are often treated as oppositional. Masculinity has been associated with objectivity, reason, autonomy, and power and production, while femininity has been equated with subjectivity, emotion, passivity, dependency and reproduction (Metcalfe, 2008b; Reimann 2002; Davis, 2006). The conventional definition of war and peace refers to these by associating aggression, violence and heroism with masculinity, and nurture, pacifism and compassion with femininity (Connell, 2002;

Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; El-Bushra 2007; Molyneux, 1985).

Research by El-Bushra (2007) and Jones (2008) on gendered understandings of conflict reveals how gender ideologies can be manipulated in conflict which can help to construct a sense of a dominant gender identity or ethno-nationalism. This is apparent through dominant cultural discourses and everyday social practices and interaction. In some societies and cultures, being a “proper man” has become inseparable from the capacity to use force and control weapons. (This applies particularly to African nations, and also Islamic regions such as Iraq and Afghanistan. See Connell, 2002; Jacobs et al, 2000; Pankhurst, 2003.)

Warring parties often appeal to men’s masculinity to encourage them to take up arms in defence of a country, ethnic group or political cause. While these dynamics are to some extent globally configured, they also vary across regions, depending on how feminine/masculine characteristics are represented and interpreted. It is fair to argue, nevertheless, that men and masculinity are seen as embodying power and authority “skills” necessary to engage in warring activities (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). However, as feminist commentators note, men are the primary losers in war (they dominate casualty rates), and cannot always live up to the masculine ideal (Connell, 2002). Those who refuse to fight have faced ridicule, imprisonment or even death for their lack of “courage”. This highlights the importance of addressing men’s needs and experiences as well as women’s.

A view of femininity that concentrates on its link with motherhood, nurture and non-violence has been referred to as the “maternalist position” (Davis, 2006). “Mothering work” “naturally” rejects war, which increases with women’s abilities to resolve conflicts non-violently. These perceptions feature in international development discourse, especially by those agencies that play a role in managing efforts to build peace after conflict. Unesco’s Director-General Federico Mayor declared: “Women and life are synonymous terms. A woman gives life – she is the most apt at preserving it” (Reimann, 2002: 22 and UNDP, 2003). This position “ghettoizes” women by placing them in a category of their own, removing them from the diversity of identities and experiences available to men. Research from Ridd and Callaway (1987) show how an ideology of femininity can also represent the heightened sentiments of societies in conflict. Women’s bodies and women as a group have become bearers of a group’s culture and identity. For example, Greek Cypriot women were said to embody a symbolic power by maintaining the ideals of chastity and motherhood. This led to the violent targeting of Greek Cypriot women by the invading Turk army as a political

attack against the Greek Cypriot identity (Ridd & Callaway, 1987: 22). Bizarrely, more recent political commentary on the Iraq and Afghanistan invasions has used women's fragility and their position in an Islamic state as one of the justifications for US and allied intervention (Al-Ali, 2001; Ashfar, 2007). Appropriating the feminine then is used as an international relations tactic to justify violence (Metcalf, 2008a, 2010). The realization that women are inextricably linked in war and conflict, irrespective of dominant mother and caring discourses, underplays the harsh realities of war-torn territories. This suggests that a number of dynamics need to be considered. These include the agency of women, the explicit recognition of the geographies of femininities/masculinities, emphasizing the interplay among local, regional and global politics and, finally, gendered notions of embodiment which undo traditional stereotypes of gender performativity.

## **Women, Men and War**

A wealth of literature has assessed the impact of conflicts since the Cold War, as well as other forms of sexual violence. With the growth of informal wars, generally taking place within territory contested by various protagonists, the recognition grew that there were direct and terrible implications for ordinary citizens – men, women and children, amongst whose homes and livelihoods these conflicts were being fought – and that the different impacts on these groups needed to be better understood by humanitarian and aid agencies (Jacobs et al., 2000; Jones, 2008). Scholars acknowledged that disinterested bystanders do in fact contribute directly and indirectly to peace/war through their everyday social practices. Accounts of the impact of conflicts and other forms of mass violence since the Cold War show that the direct physical impacts on women are often extreme. Redin and Sirleaf (2002: 9), for example, describe with sincere compassion the serious physical impacts on women:

Wombs punctured with guns. Women raped and tortured in front of their children. Rifles forced into vaginas. Pregnant women beaten to induce miscarriages. Foetuses ripped from wombs. Women kidnapped, blindfolded and beaten on the way to school or work. We saw the scars, the pain, the humiliation. We heard accounts of gang rapes, rape camps, and mutilation. Of murder and sexual slavery.

The acts of violence are not just physical, they victimize women and impose psychological, sexual and emotional traumas. War increases women's burden of work while failing to provide additional resources. When

managing postwar livelihoods, there is a breakdown in all services including health, financial and market services and education all of which impact particularly heavily on women's condition.

However, the view that war threatens women's security, through essentializing sexual identity by fundamentally positioning them as victims of war during and after wartime, needs reassessment. First, there is evidence to suggest that women support war; they may even participate in armed combat (Jabri, 2006). The "maternalist position" is immediately put in doubt by women's continued involvement in violent conflict – Ugandan women's role as army combatants, for example, and a number of women's suicide campaigns on behalf of Al-Qaeda. Women do not speak as one voice on issues on war and peace. They are divided by political identities and allegiances. Significantly, where women do take on peace initiatives they are often based on a pragmatic response to desperate situations rather than on an inherently pacifist orientation. These observations suggest that always seeing women as victims of war is to deny the complex realities of women's embodied experience, denying them agency as Connell and Messerschmitt (2005) argue. El-Bushra (2007) speaks passionately about their "trauma" and "resilience", especially in Africa. These are not the only reasons, of course. Many women become committed to peace organizations because of a sense of empowerment – resisting, challenging, negotiating, rediscovering and planning lives after war, after experiencing the failed politics of violence (El-Bushra, 2007). This phrase was the common cry of Rwandan women who formed the Pro Femmes Tweshamwe who gained government support.

Men's experiences of war, however, are also ambiguous. As Connell asserts, men in the history of social, economic and political organizing "have predominated in the 'spectrum of violence'" (2002: 33). However, this ambiguity rests on the fact that gender relations and femininities and masculinities are multiple and fluid (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). It is important to note that war is indiscriminate in its capacity to kill, demolish and destroy livelihoods. It touches existing differences of power and access to resources, weakening those with already limited powers, whether men, women or children. Women suffer through the violence and deprivation imposed on their men, just as men are affronted and emasculated through the abuse and belittlement of their wives, mothers and daughters. Within the household, both men and women struggle to provide, assist and emotionally respond to war experiences. Men, too, experience sexual violence, and it is important not to ignore aspects of war policy that acknowledge gendered constraints on men who take part in, or resist war.

The foregoing discussion has highlighted that the gendered international

relations of women's organizations terrain is difficult to navigate due to the ingrained belief and value systems concerning women's capacity to engage in peacebuilding and reconstruction efforts, as well as the symbolism and imagery associated with war, violence and masculinity. In order to understand women's roles and experiences of war and reconstruction we need to evaluate the agency of women, the geographies of femininities/masculinities, and global-local linkages in international power relations that determine and shape conflict, and thus help constitute gendered notions of embodiment. We argued at the beginning of the chapter that the UN 2000 1325 resolution gave impetus to women's organizations. The subsequent advance of women's organizations and their influence on war and peace processes has nevertheless been slow, especially in acknowledging gendered perspectives, and we develop these ideas in the next section.

### **Moving Forward: the Role of Women and NGOs and Peacebuilding**

There has been growing interest in documenting women's NGOs' efforts in responding to war and post-conflict resolutions. Studies of Cambodia, El Salvador and Rwanda are amongst the many studied (see El-Bushra, 2007). Recent research has attempted to document women's peace activism. There are now a considerable number of women's peace activist organizations operating in every continent (El-Bushra, 2007; Pankhurst, 2008). While many operate at grass roots level, others have a national, regional or international profile. Activism is directed towards global issues of war and peace. Unequivocally, involving women and gender expertise in peacebuilding activities is essential for reconstituting political, legal, cultural and socio-economic and social structures so that they can deliver on gender equality goals. Gender equality brings to peacebuilding new degrees of democratic inclusiveness, faster and more durable economic growth and human and social capital recovery. Indeed, peacebuilding may well offer the single greatest opportunity to redress gender inequities and injustices of the past while setting new precedents for the future (Pankhurst, 2008). But these opportunities can be enhanced significantly, or constrained, by how the international community sets its priorities for recovery and uses its resources for peace building.

As the UN Secretary-General's 1998 report stated, "In terms of net transfers, NGOs collectively constitute the second largest source of development assistance" (El-Bushra, 2007: 133). An article in the *New York Times* just

before the UN Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 cited development successes by NGOs such as the *Trickle-Up Program*, and stressed their low costs and high impact (UNDP, 2003). Women's NGOs also began to play a role in humanitarian assistance in conjunction with peacekeeping missions. They began to be referred to increasingly in UN resolutions, and some even began to meet informally with members of the UN Security Council to coordinate actions in emergency situations.

Both the number of NGOs and their involvement in national and international policy-making have increased tremendously over the last half century and especially the last several decades. At the time of the foundation of the United Nations in 1945 there were 2865 INGOs; by 1990 that number had increased to 13,591. This compared to 3443 international intergovernmental organizations and roughly 200 nation-states. More significantly, in the 1990s the importance of the NGO role began to be recognized. In human rights, development, environment and even disarmament, NGOs had begun to be recognized for their role in influencing public policy at the UN and on the ground in nation-states (UNIFEM, 2003; Pankhurst, 2002, 2008).

NGOs also matter in intractable conflicts. NGOs play a variety of both positive and negative roles, from conflict resolvers doing Track II diplomacy, to development aid and humanitarian assistance, which can exacerbate or reduce conflict, to human rights advocacy, to election monitoring, to disarmament and to environmental work. Mary Robinson, the UN Commissioner for Human Rights 1997–2002, has stressed the importance of both development aid and conflict resolution organizations being sure, first of all, that they do no harm.

At the 2005 UN World Summit, world leaders reaffirmed the important role of women in conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding (UNDP, 2006). They called for the full and effective implementation of the 2000 Security Council Resolution 1325 (referred to in the introduction of this chapter) on Women and Peace and Security. This new resolve for integrated approaches to peacebuilding became a core rationale for the creation of the Peace Building Commission (PBC). In making gender equality the PBC's only thematic mandate, a new doctrinal imperative was created for ensuring systematic attention and resources to the advancement of gender equality within transitional recovery, reintegration and reconstruction efforts.

Indeed, the reality for women in post-conflict situations has grown increasingly difficult as the impact of HIV/AIDS interacts with the effects of poverty, natural disasters and environmental degradation. As the case discussion of Afghanistan shows, the dissolution of strong governance regimes and the criminalization of society endanger NGO efforts. Consequently, to-



day, women in the aftermath of crisis have perilously little protection or access to services, justice, economic security or citizenship. Delivery to meet basic needs and safeguard fundamental rights is unrepentantly lacking. We shall turn to the challenges for the capacity building of women's peace organizations, but now continue with case studies.

## **Women's Activism, Peace and Reconstruction Efforts**

Feminist social science research indicates that women generally are more collaborative than men and thus more inclined toward consensus and compromise (Davis et al, 2006). Women often use their role as mothers to cut across international borders and internal divides. Every effort to bridge divides, even if initially unsuccessful, teaches lessons and establishes connections to help nurture collaboration.

In several instances during the peace talks that led to the Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland, male negotiators walked out of sessions, leaving a small number of women like Monica McWilliams and other members of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition at the table. These women focussed on mutual concerns and shared vision, enabling the dialogue to continue and trust to be rekindled.

During the violence of the first Intifada in the Middle East, Israeli and Palestinian women like Naomi Chazan and Sumaya Farhat-Naser created Jerusalem Link, an umbrella group of women's centres on both sides of the conflict, to convey to the public a joint vision for a just peace. In a time when both communities forbade cross-community meetings, Jerusalem Link activities were permitted because "it's just a group of women talking" (Al-Ali & Pratt, 2009).

Women, then, have played key roles in reconstruction, peacebuilding and managed civil society developments. To demonstrate that feminist critiques of war and conflict should be an ongoing concern for development and security specialists we discuss in detail the cases of Rwanda and Afghanistan, two cases that had very different outcomes for women's status, citizenship and basic human rights.

## **The Politics of Gender and Reconstruction in Afghanistan**

The plight of women in Afghanistan was presented as a humanitarian crisis in the aftermath of 9/11 and the efforts to restore women's rights were

explicit in American foreign policy at the time. However, women's oppression and subordination and the poverty and strife of the Afghan population were long established. As Ameena<sup>1</sup> explained, the "tragedy of Afghanistan started with the former Soviet Union which along with its brutalities, paved the way for Islamic regimes" (Ahmed-ghosh, 2006:115). The Russian occupation from 1979 to 1989 was characterized by a growing reliance on humanitarian aid and the destruction of the rural economy through counterinsurgency. Rural populations were forced to Afghan cities and refugee camps in Pakistan and Iran. Between 1979 and 1989 an estimated 6 million people fled their homes and became refugees (Emadi, 2008). During this period women's NGOs assisted with a range of welfare and health interventions but faced resistance and an ongoing legitimacy battle with the governing regime. The Islamic state of Afghanistan led by President Rabbani and established in 1992 failed to establish control of the country's territory and the country fell into sectarian warfare. These sectarian struggles were ingrained in everyday culture. Emadi (2008) argues that historically there seemed to be an absence of moral discourse of statehood and governance. In the power struggles that followed, regional warlords acted with impunity and perpetrated forms of extortion that disrupted trade and markets. This period of lawlessness witnessed some of the worst human rights abuses in Afghanistan's history (Emadi, 2008; Kandiyoti, 2007). The Taliban gradually took control of the country and in 1996, after taking Kabul, controlled approximately 90% of the constituencies, backed by foreign oil companies who wanted to secure Afghanistan as a pipeline route. The Taliban led by Mullah Omar promised to restore the rule of law, based on conservative interpretations of Islam influenced primarily by Wahhabi and Pashtun tribal traditions.<sup>2</sup> The Taliban regime recruited by force young Afghan men to enforce laws, and introduced measures to socially control women and gender relations. These included strict dress codes, restricted mobility for women, denying women access to education, reducing the marrying age and enforcing marriages, and removing women from the majority of public roles. Coupled with this there was the further erosion of local livelihoods, criminalization of the economy and an increase in human trafficking which created many advantages for men.

After the fall of the Taliban in 2001 through international intervention, coalition parties formed the Bonn agreement which mapped a framework for state building and reconstruction (Kandiyoti, 2007). Since the fall of the Taliban, many would agree that the political and cultural position of Afghan women has improved substantially. The Afghan constitution states that "the citizens of Afghanistan – whether man or woman – have equal rights and

duties before the law". Women have been allowed to return to work, primarily in education and women's health roles. The government no longer forces them to wear the all covering burqa (though many do) and, through quota systems, they have even been appointed to prominent positions in the government. Despite all these changes many challenges still remain. Following Bonn a new constitution was established with a new structure, a lower house (*wolsei jirga*) and an upper house (*meshrano jirga*), where women's political representation was enshrined in law. On the other hand, Article 3 on "Islam and Constitutionality" states that no law can be contrary to the sacred religion of Islam. This declaration of Afghanistan as an Islamic state has been a means of defusing political power struggles in Afghanistan, with its ethnically diverse populations, and in institutionalizing male authority. The political tensions between ethnic and political constituencies create a climate for women's struggles which is divisive. Furthermore, women may adopt diverse strategies rather than converge around a common agenda. That said, although women are in parliamentary seats, women are still excluded from the bodies of local governance dispute resolution in tribal *jirgas* and *shuras* which are all-male assemblies.

In her empirical assessment of Afghanistan's parliamentary system Emadi (2008) stresses that the majority of male parliamentarians are against female quotas and see it as a violation of men's rights. Women's capacity to engage in meaningful state building and reconstruction activities and policy planning is continually undermined, as allegiance is first to diverse conservative political parties in respect of ethnic, religious and factional identities (see also Kandiyoti, 2007). And, where decisions have been made by female parliamentarians, culturally the subsequent decisions taken by male members have proved to be final and binding, rendering prior collective decisions by female parliamentarians insignificant and invalid. This means that women's political voice has simply been made quite powerless as they can in effect be overruled by male decisions.

Repression is further evident if one examines cultural and social practices. In rural areas many families still restrict their own mothers', daughters', wives' and sisters' participation in public life. They are still forced into marriages and denied a basic education. Schools for girls have been burned down and little girls have even been poisoned to death for daring to go to school. UNDP indicators for human well-being (latest figures 2007) show that female illiteracy is 89%, that only 30% of the female population has access to education and the life expectancy for women is only 44 (Al-Ali & Pratt, 2009; Metcalfe, 2010), figures that are significantly lower than those of men in Afghanistan. Although national governmental machinery has

formulated a development plan and sought to develop women's rights, little progress has been made (Emadi, 2008). Women's agency is intertwined with the National Development Framework which outlines market led and privatization processes for institution and state building. Historically some women's NGOs such as the Revolutionary Association of Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) were treated as enemies of the state and of the ruling parties because they advocated secular economic and political reform, and continuously fought for legitimacy. Much of their work was, therefore, of necessity done through informal means. Other women's organizations currently working in Afghanistan, such as 'Asraf', are very firmly committed to an Islamic state and want to play a role in raising women's health and education standards, and take a non-political stance (Emadi, 2008). This would mean raising education standards but within prescribed limits. The cultural, social and political environment thus make it difficult for women collectively to organize and develop resistance strategies. Kandiyoti (2007) argues that women's NGO efforts need to form broad cross-gender, multi-ethnic and tribal political alliances, and wonders whether this can be achieved under a regime that is pursuing economic liberalization and democratic governance, firmly underpinned by an Islamic conservative philosophy. Emadi (2008) similarly argues that more radical reform is required, urging women to unite. Ahmed-gosh (2006) further argues that a rights-based discourse as currently conceptualized is not appropriate since it is based on the 1948 Declaration of Human Rights which was written for western, secular individualistic societies and does not represent the constitutional framework of Islamic states. She states education is the way forward and that women can be empowered through institutional building efforts that tackle literacy specifically, and that are devised in accordance with Afghan women's social and cultural needs.

Consequently, the legal rights of women continue to represent an area of uncertainty, heighten political instability internally, as well as continue to face severe criticism from the international community. As commentators note, women's oppression and social status in Islamic regimes are often used to legitimize political and international relations defence efforts and tactics. The question arises as to whether this is merely expedient or a genuine concern of focussing on rights and justice. Many women continue to be imprisoned because of family law violations (i.e. refusing to marry husbands chosen by parents). Women's civic participation is largely curtailed and women are not in authority positions in legal and governmental institutions. Differences of view among women parliamentarians have hindered collective unity, and served to subjugate women's interests and concerns.

Further, growing instability and the harassment of female parliamentarians (including threatening phone calls and death threats) by conservatives and fundamentalists make it difficult for women to visit constituencies, and so hinder their public role (Kandiyoti, 2007).

One can thus argue that gender conflict is embedded in all levels of society in Afghanistan, supported by essentialist interpretations of men/women and masculine/ feminine. At the interpersonal levels women's disempowerment permits abuse, forced marriages and limited economic and political freedoms. The micro- and meso-level conflicts are intimately related as they represent multi-layered conflict between tribal communities, and disagreements amongst women's NGOs and their donors. Gender conflict is evident in the different tactics and strategies employed in the international community for reconciliation. Ahmed-gosh powerfully argues that:

patriarchal institutions in the West will continue to wrestle their differences by using women, their bodies and their lives to play out masculinized power struggles. Women's voices are not heard: women are relegated to the status of symbols for international political battles (2006: 126).

Before rights-based activism can empower women and engender civil society institutions, it is first essential to ensure security and social and economic rights for women.

## **Rwanda: Empowering Women**

The case of Rwanda is dramatically different from that of Afghanistan. After the genocide of 1994, the Minister of Gender and Social affairs in Rwanda, Aloisea Inyumba, represented a powerful leadership figure devising the tactics and strategy of post-conflict reform and peacebuilding. She created programmes to bury the dead, find homes for more than 300,000 orphaned children, and resettle refugees. She also served as Executive Secretary of the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission, which organized national public debates promoting reconciliation between Hutus and Tutsis, and she had been governor of Kigali-Ngali Province (UNIFEM, 2003). However, the history of Rwanda's women's status, their struggles and strife deserves sketching briefly at this point

The first Ministry for Women was established in Rwanda in 1965, but neither this nor the launch of the decade of women in 1975 had a significant impact on addressing women's legal, cultural, social and educational margin-

alization. The third Global Conference of Women, held in Nairobi in 1985, encouraged Rwandese women to establish the first non-governmental women's organization, *Réseau des Femmes* (RDF). Identifying rural women as a priority, its 29 founders mobilized 330 women across the country. Over the course of time, the RDF gave rise to other groups seeking to address gender imbalances, including voluntary groups that specialized in legal, business, or health issues, and co-operatives. As a result, the political party then in power, the National Revolutionary Movement for Development (MRND), set up the Union of Rwandese Women for Development (URAMA) in 1988. Pressure from URAMA gained women the right to participate in co-operatives and profit-making businesses (Powley, 2003).

Through the early 1990s, Rwandan women had been trying to combat structural problems within society such as food shortages and economic and environmental constraints. Though husbands still controlled resources and owned all the property of the family, women were becoming freer in their everyday movements. Improvements were taking place and women were very active in forming associations and in the informal sector, seeking out income-generating activities. In spite of women's minimal occupancy of political posts and lack of formal education, these groups and associations were beginning to acquire a certain political weight (Jacobs et al, 2000). Even so, social tensions in Rwanda rose during the late 1980s and early 1990s. The harassment of women in pre-genocide Rwanda mirrors the experience of women in other pre-conflict settings. Repression and rape, a gendered expression of the rising extremism, became more commonplace (Powley, 2003). As the threat of civil war loomed in the early 1990s, Hutu extremists sought to circumscribe women's roles radically. Such violence and discrimination were only exacerbated by the outbreak of genocide.

The 1994 genocide perpetrated by Hutu extremists against the Tutsi minority killed an estimated 800,000 people, traumatized survivors and destroyed the country's infrastructure, including the Parliament building. Lasting approximately 100 days, the slaughter led to civil war, with ruling powers eventually being obtained by a former guerrilla army, the RPF, which is still in power today. Between 250,000 and 500,000 women were raped during the 100 days of genocide. Up to 20,000 children were born to women as a result of rape. More than 67% of women who were raped in 1994 during the genocide were infected with HIV and AIDS. In many cases, this resulted from a systematic and planned use of rape by HIV+ men as a weapon of genocide.

During the nine-year period of post-genocide government, from 1994 to 2003, women's representation in parliament reached 25.7%. However,