Gender Relations as Causal in Militarization and War

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A FEMINIST STANDPOINT[1]

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Abstract

Based on empirical research among women's antiwar organizations worldwide, the article derives a feminist oppositional standpoint on militarization and war. From this standpoint, patriarchal gender relations are seen to be intersectional with economic and ethno-national power relations in perpetuating a tendency to armed conflict in human societies. The feminism generated in antiwar activism tends to be holistic, and understands gender in patriarchy as a relation of power underpinned by coercion and violence. The cultural features of militarization and war readily perceived by women positioned in or close to armed conflict, and their sense of war as systemic and as a continuum, make its gendered nature visible. There are implications in this perspective for antiwar movements. If gender relations are one of the root causes of war, a feminist programme of gender transformation is a necessary component of the pursuit of peace.

Keywords

gender, militarization, patriarchy, standpoint, war

In many countries and regions around the world, women are organizing in women-only groups and networks to oppose militarism and militarization, to prevent wars or bring wars to an end, to achieve justice and sustainable peace. From early in 2005 I carried out two years' fulltime empirical research investigating the constitution and objectives, the analyses and strategies of such organizations.[2] The research involved 80,000 miles of travel to twelve countries on four continents, and resulted in case studies of ten country-based groups, fourteen branches of Women in Black in five countries and

three other transnational networks – the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Code Pink and the Women's Network against Militarism. Yet this was only a slender sample of the movement of movements that is women's engaged opposition to militarization and war in the contemporary world.

In this article I summarize or encapsulate the unique feminist analysis of war that women seemed to me to be evolving from their location close to armed conflict combined with their positionality as women, and the activism to which they had been provoked. I draw out here only the boldest of its themes, the 'strong case' on gender and war. It is that patriarchal gender relations predispose our societies to war. They are a driving force perpetuating war. They are among the *causes* of war. This is not, of course, to say that gender is the only dimension of power implicated in war. It is not to diminish the commonly understood importance of economic factors (particularly an ever-expansive capitalism) and antagonisms between ethnic communities, states and blocs (particularly the institution of the nation-state) as causes of war. Women antiwar activists bring gender relations into the picture not as an alternative but as an intrinsic, interwoven, inescapable part of the very same story.

A FEMINIST STANDPOINT ON WAR?

Approaching this field of study, I read back into feminist standpoint theory by which many of us had been guided some decades ago, a Marxian way of thinking that had been eclipsed in the conservative era of the 1990s. In the late 1970s, Nancy Hartsock, inspired by Marx, Lukaćs and Gramsci, began rethinking their concept of working class consciousness and the emergence of a 'proletarian standpoint'. Material life, they had suggested, structures but sets limits to the way we understand society and its relations. The ruling class and the working class, situated at either end of a power relation, may be expected to have radically different understandings of the world. The vision of the rulers is liable to be both partial and perverse, while that available to the oppressed group, born of struggle, may be able to 'expose the real relations among human beings as inhuman' and so have a potentially liberatory role (Hartsock 1983: 232; see also Hartsock 1998). To summarize its features, then, a standpoint is an account of the world constituted by (and constitutive of) a collective subject, a group. It is derived from life activities and achieved in struggle. It is subversive of the hegemonic account. It is potentially the foundation of oppositional and revolutionary movement. Locating and accounting for the emergence of a feminist movement, Hartsock applied a Marxian historical materialist approach to *women's* life activity and the phallocratic institutions that structure it, supposing that here too was the ground for a distinctive consciousness, another and different oppositional standpoint. Analysing the sexual division of labour she showed how women's distinctive activity, their

experience of domestic, servicing, reproductive and caring work, characteristically unpaid or underpaid, can indeed generate a feminist standpoint that contradicts the hegemonic understanding of political economy.

A number of feminist theorists in those productive years were questioning the basis of knowledge claims (Jaggar 1983; Rose 1983; Harding 1986; Smith 1987). Donna Haraway, addressing the multiplicity and diversity of feminist subjects and life experiences, developed the plural concept of 'situated knowledges'. One cannot expect, she affirmed, to generate an understanding useful to subjugated groups from the universalizing standpoint of the master. After all, he is 'the Man, the One God, whose Eye produces, appropriates, and orders all difference' (Haraway 1988: 593). Diverse views from below, clearly rooted in life experiences, were a better bet for more reliable accounts of the world.

But 'reliable' seemed to claim 'objectivity'. On what basis could such partial knowledge be considered objective? Haraway, and a little later Sandra Harding, reclaimed objectivity for situated knowledges. Reframing feminist standpoint theory for the postmodern and poststructuralist context of that moment, Harding clarified that giving up 'the goal of telling one true story about reality' need not mean that 'one must also give up trying to tell less false stories' (Harding 1991: 187). On the contrary. Science had never been value-free, as scientists liked to claim. A stronger version of objectivity could be achieved by combining the view from below with enquiry that was *reflexive*, by researchers who named and clearly situated themselves, coming clean about power, interests and values, as informative about the subject and source of knowledge as about the studied objects. I aimed in my empirical research therefore, as indeed I have always done, to be maximally reflexive. I named myself as a long-time feminist antiwar activist in a war-sourcing country, and as a researcher in a white, western academic world. I set out a research strategy that gave the greatest possible influence over resulting texts to the women whose activity I would research, using a website and weblog as a tool for discussion, negotiation and review of interim and final writings (see 'Introduction' in Cockburn 2007).

However – could I legitimately understand women's face to face involvement with *militarization and war* as a situation capable of giving rise to a feminist standpoint? As other socialist-feminists have tended to do (e.g. Hartmann 1979; Weeks 1998), Hartsock had stayed close to Marx in focusing on *labour* as the quintessential human activity. She had brought to view and built a feminist standpoint on the hidden, marginalized (though necessary) activity allocated to women in the sexual division of labour. But a disadvantaged place in the labour force was not the only characteristic of women's life experience. Could not a situation at the receiving end of gendered physical violence in militarization and war (and indeed in so-called peace), subjected to the will of those who possess the means of coercion, likewise be expected to generate a certain feminist consciousness, a feminist oppositional standpoint? My belief that it could was strengthened by finding that other theorists had dealt with

a variety of aspects of women's experience and activity as the source of a knowledge claim. Chapters of a reader edited by Sandra Harding (2004a) showed Sara Ruddick arguing for the experience of mothering (Ruddick 2004), Dorothy Smith (2004) for women's bodily engagement in the 'everyday world', and Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva (2004) for women's survival and subsistence in the third world, as all generative of feminist standpoints. I feel a certain confidence, then, in describing as a standpoint the outcome of my engagement with the understandings of feminist antiwar/antimilitarist activists and the feminist researchers and writers (many of them also activists) who have documented and analysed their experiences. In fact I titled the book that reported the research *From Where We Stand*, signalling 'standpoint' while problematizing the 'we' and the 'where' to leave open the possibility of different positionalities in relation to power and differing locations in relation to violence generating subtly varied perspectives.

Framing war, however, calls for a generously holistic conception of power. It must account for women's experience not only of labour, subsistence, mothering and so on, but also of physical violence. War-makers and their apologists are capitalists, but not only capitalists. They are phallocratic, but not only patriarchs. They are white supremacists, but also located advantageously in other power systems (cultural, religious). In 1998 Kathi Weeks (1998: 5) (striving to heal the antagonism between modernism and postmodernism) had reformulated feminist standpoint theory, invoking what she calls 'totality', that is to say dimensions of power seen not as one, nor even as several, isolated forces, but rather as 'systems that traverse the entire social horizon and intersect at multiple points'. Weeks, like Hartsock, had located her standpoint in women's labour. Nonetheless her notion of the 'social totality', 'the whole of society seen as a process', seemed to me helpfully to promise a perspective inclusive of more than mode of production and labour processes. It approximated rather well, I thought, to the view from a refugee camp, a military brothel or the picket at the gates of a military airfield.

THINKING FEMINIST, PERCEIVING PATRIARCHY

I found women antiwar activists, with few exceptions, unhesitating in naming themselves feminist. Take, for example, *La Ruta Pacifica de las Mujeres* (Women's Peaceful Road), a state-wide network in Colombia organizing for an end to half a century of internal war. They identify feminism and pacifism as their two 'political bastions' (baluartes politicas). They write of their organization, 'These theoretical foundations have led to its recognition as a novel movement, because there have been prejudices against both of these concepts in the traditional social movements' (*La Ruta Pacifica* 2003: 63).[3]

This identification with feminism may seem surprising in view of a widely reported hesitation among contemporary women in western and 'developed' contexts to adopt the perspective, due among other things to the

counter-offensive that has defamed the movement (Faludi 1991; Scharff 2008). There is however plentiful evidence in a global context of a feminist response to circumstances, such as third world indebtedness, neo-liberal economic 'reforms', environmental exploitation or threatened incursions by corporate capital into poor communities, that heighten the contradictions women experience (e.g. Basu 1995).

We should perhaps not be surprised, then, to find that a feminist consciousness is readily generated by close encounters with militarization and war. In the context of war-resistance, I found some women, reaching for an understanding of gender power relations, had had access to transnational feminist theoretical work. The Women in Black group in Belgrade, for instance, travelled widely to other countries during the years of the Yugoslav wars. They exchanged ideas with the feminist antimilitarist women in Spain and Italy who hosted their speaking tours. Their written analyses of their situation cite a transnational body of feminist work including that of Cynthia Enloe, Judith Butler, Adrienne Rich and Nira Yuval-Davis (Women in Black Belgrade 2005). At the same time, they were themselves influential thinkers and writers. Many of them had been active in the feminist movement that blossomed in Yugoslav cities in the 1980s. When rival nationalisms started to tear the State apart they found that, along with all else, they were losing the gains they had made as women. They recognized this as a resurgence not just of militarism and nationalism but also of patriarchy. Their boldly stated disloyalty to nation, state and church inspired women antiwar activists in other countries (Cockburn 2007: ch. 3).

Members of other women's antiwar organizations I met had been stimulated to work out their own ideas by reference to newspapers and TV, while yet others had learned from each other and gathered ideas circulating through the Internet within the transnational movement. In some cases networking and funding organizations such as the Swedish *Kvinna till Kvinna* had been instrumental in transmitting feminist ideas between war zones. It was regional women's networks, including *Femmes Africa Solidarité*, that helped bring into existence the Mano River Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET), that intervened to stop war in Sierra Leone (Cockburn 2007: 24–33).

So what kind of feminism is this? Extraordinarily holistic it seems to me. By definition it is *transnational*. Second, it is necessarily *social constructionist*. An essentialist view of sex differences as 'given' cannot coexist with a goal of transformative change in gender relations. Knowing male pacifists and women who celebrate violence rules out any view of men and women being deterministically shaped by biology. For instance, the women of the Indian groups Forum against the Oppression of Women and Awaaz-e-Niswan, who organized the International Initiative for Justice in Gujarat (see Cockburn 2007: 13–22), could hardly hold an essentialist view of women as 'naturally peace-prone'. In the profoundly patriarchal culture of India's Hindu extremist organizations, women may be cast as the selfless wife and mother. Yet during the massacre of Muslims in Gujerat in 2002 the women's wings of the Sangh Parivar and other institutions of the Hindutva movement were out on the

streets chiding the men for 'wearing bangles' – urging them to be prove their manhood by killing and raping Muslim women.

Third, looking through the prism of war has made us acutely conscious of the way women are oppressed and exploited through our *bodies*, our sexuality and reproductive capacities. War deepens already deep sexual divisions, emphasizing the male as perpetrator of violence, women as victim. In particular, it legitimates male sexual violence, enabling mass rape of women. It magnifies the distance between femininity and masculinity and enhances men's authority in a quantum leap. So this feminism sees women's subordination as more than the by-product of political inequality or an exploitative economic system. However, antiwar feminism inevitably has a wider range of concerns than this. It cannot fail to have a *critique of capitalism*, and new forms of imperialism and colonization, class exploitation and the global thrust for markets, since these are visibly implicated among the causes of militarization and war. Further, many wars involve intra-state and inter-state nationalisms, so this feminism is necessarily conscious of and *opposed to exclusions* on grounds of race, religion or other aspects of ethnicity. Abuses in war give rise to energetic movements for human rights, including *women's rights*, and the struggle to obtain UN Security Council resolution 1325 (Cockburn 2007: ch. 5) involved a demand for *representation*, suggesting that antiwar feminism also has these so-called liberal demands on its complex agenda. Many organizations and networks are concerned to create horizontal structures and prefigurative forms of activism (Cockburn 2007: 178–80), presupposing a feminism that has a critique of the meanings and operation of *power*.

There is thus no way the thinking of women antiwar activists can be reduced to those limited categories we so often, unhelpfully, brand as 'radical', 'socialist' and 'liberal' feminism. It is better encompassed by what Chela Sandoval (2004) terms a 'differential' mode of oppositional consciousness. It has not been unique to feminism, she says, but common to all the great liberation movements of the late twentieth century, to have several tendencies. She names them: equal rights (we're similar and want equality); revolutionary (we're different and want radical change); supremacist (we're different and better); and separatist (we'll build a better world alone). They are not mutually exclusive. Sandoval's (2004) 'differential' is a metaphor suggestive of a gear box and thus of a feminism that intelligently and tactically slips from one to another analysis of women's condition as circumstances demand.

As I found women antiwar activists on the whole comfortable with the word 'feminism' I also found them, both in the global south and global north, routinely and without hesitation using the term 'patriarchy' in everyday speech. They know patriarchy well – they live in it. The Women's Network against Militarism has member groups in a scatter of countries from the Caribbean to the Pacific rim, all of them plagued with US military bases and personnel, weapons technology and related environmental destruction. These well-informed women activists are clear about the part played by patriarchy and masculinism in the region. 'The basis of militarism is the strengthening of

the patriarchal system', Aida Santos, of the Philippines told me, referring to the effect the US presence was having on her own country's gender relations. They recognize the significance of masculinism in sustaining patriarchal structures. In one of their pamphlets the Network write: 'We need a redefinition of masculinity, strength, power and adventure; an end to war toys and the glorification of war and warriors' (Cockburn 2007: 63–7).

An easy reference to patriarchy in some ways marks a difference between feminist activists and feminist academics, who today often hesitate before invoking patriarchy. Thirty or forty years ago it was possible to feel confident of using the term. We had evolved the notion of a *sex/gender system* (Rubin 1975) or *gender order* (Connell 1987) as one of the significant dimensions of power in human societies. While in theory, almost any set of sex/gender arrangements could be found in our world, all societies we knew of and those of which we had reliable knowledge from the past, had been, with institutional variations, patriarchies, characterized by male domination, female subordination.

But feminist thinking in the 1980s noted that we needed to take account of historic phases of male dominance, which varies in form with changing modes of production and the rise and fall of empires. With the passage of time, as we became alert to the ways in which rule by the 'fathers' in the sex/gender system of European society was giving way to rule by men in general (Pateman 1988), and familial authority was giving way to more public expressions of male power (Walby 1990), the word 'patriarchy' began to sound a little archaic. On the other hand nobody came up with a satisfactory alternative. 'Fratriarchy' and 'andrarchy' might be more accurate designations of the gender order in Western Europe today, but they have failed to find favour. We are left with a very powerful reality that academics are uncertain how to name.

Popularly, however, the term lives on. This does not mean feminist antiwar activists are blind to its complexities and contradictions, in fact these are widely discussed. For instance, women are certain that there *is* in fact a sexual division of war, just as there's a sexual division of labour, a strong gender skew that makes for gender-specific experiences. Yet they can hardly fail to be alert to anomalies. Most rape victims are women, but some are men. While most soldiers are men, a growing percentage are women. At the same time, we see that the exceptions to the norm, like those that fulfil the norm, experience their anomalous fate in profoundly gendered ways. The implications of rape are very different for women and men. Women, unlike men, can become pregnant as a result of rape. Males experience rape as 'feminizing', a trauma specific to masculine identity (Zarkov 2007). As to soldiering, one need look no further than US female soldier Kayla Williams' startling account of her service in Iraq. Aspiring to equality through military service alongside men, she emerged from the experience reduced in her own eyes to 'a slut' – which is how her male comrades had perceived and treated her. It is not the same thing to be a woman soldier as a man soldier, nor is it seen as one (Williams 2005).

So, observing the sexual division of war and especially observing its vagaries, it becomes clear that the case for gender as a power relation implicated in the perpetuation of war cannot rest on what individual men and women do. It is not written in stone that the cultures we live in will capture and 'normalize' the gender performance of each and every one of us. Some of us escape, some of us do not match up, some of us fail to live our gender 'properly', some individuals resist gender norms. There are no certainties, only probabilities. The case rests more firmly on the patriarchal gender relation itself, which is a phallocratic relation between a supreme masculine principle and a secondary feminine one, where masculinity is associated with transcendence (rising above the mundane) and femininity with immanence (immersion in the daily round), where the masculine is a source of authority (de Beauvoir 1953). It is the *gender order itself*, predicated on coercion and violence, that comes to view as bearing on militarization and war in interesting and significant ways.

A WAY OF SEEING WAR: AS CULTURAL; AS SYSTEM; AS CONTINUUM

What I have learned in listening to feminist antiwar activists is that a particular perception of war comes from a combination of a certain location and a certain positionality. Being located close to war, in the flesh or in the imagination, combines with the experience of being a woman in patriarchy to foster an understanding of the significance of gender. Women's reflections on war are closer to those of the culturally attuned sociologist or anthropologist than those of the international relations discipline which, despite the recent inter-vention of feminists (Grant and Newland 1991; Peterson 1992; Tickner 1992), tends to speak for and from the abstract masculinity of statesmen, diplomats and military. The conventional view of war in this maintream discourse stresses its political, institutional, calculated and organized nature. It tends to downplay the messy *cultural* detail of armed conflict. For example, Colin Creighton and Martin Shaw (1987: 3) in the introduction to their classic collection of articles *The Sociology of War and Peace* sum up this understanding in the words: 'Aggression isn't force, force isn't violence, violence isn't killing, killing isn't war.'

They are right, of course. War is not fisticuffs. Yet – looking at war as a woman inside the war zone, or paying attention as a feminist to women's experience of war, it is not quite so easy to set aside 'ordinary' aggression, force or violence as 'not war'. Women are saying clearly that they experience coercion by men in disturbingly similar forms in war and so-called peace. Thus the women of the women's organization *Vimochana*, in Bangalore, whose antiwar activism is pitted both against the militarism of the Indian state and the bloody inter-communal conflict that besets India, told me, 'We didn't start as women against war, but as women against violence against women. Through that we came to take a stand against violence in the wider society.' While the frequent sexualization of violence in war is not the whole story, it

is indicative. Feminists tend to delve beneath the cool 'international relations' representation of war, to break the academic taboo on looking at 'aggressiveness', and then, down at the level of cultures, when we see the violence clearly, to ask questions about social relations: what kinds of violence? Who does them to whom? And what may they have to do with gender identities, gender antagonisms and gender power? War as institution, seen from a woman's location inside it, reveals itself as made up of, refreshed by and adaptively reproduced by violence as banal practice.

Second, war-fighting between two armies is only the tip of the iceberg, as it were, of an underlying, less immediate, set of institutions and relationships that can be understood as *systemic*. The author most often credited for the term 'war system' is Betty Reardon. In her text *Sexism and the War System* she employs the term to refer to society in its entirety, 'our competitive social order, which is based on authoritarian principles, assumes unequal value among and between human beings, and is held in place by coercive force' (Reardon 1996: 10) While this accurately describes many modern societies, the women's organizations I have studied, in so far as I have come to understand their analysis, do not in the main share Betty Reardon's reduction of this social order to nothing other than a gender order. Few, I believe, would follow her in a belief that 'patriarchy . . . invented and maintains war to hold in place the social order it spawned' (Reardon 1996: 12). Looking at war from close quarters these women activists see all too clearly that other forces are at work in addition to gender.

All the same, it is helpful to visualize 'war' using the idea of system as a conceptual model, imagining it as a set of interacting or interdependent entities, functionally related, with inputs and outputs, and information flows within and across its open borders. (For sociological applications of systems theory see for instance Bailey 1994; Checkland 1997.) Seen this way it comprises linked organizations (Ministries of Defence, the arms manufacturing firms, training academies and military suppliers, the Chiefs of Staff and their commands), materiel (bombs, battleships, bullets) and governing ideologies (expressed in values, attitudes and cultures). War seen systemically reflects the perception of women transnational antiwar activists, located at varying sites they recognize as interconnected, engaged in distinct but related oppositional practices (opposing the international arms trade from London, demonstrating outside the Ministry of Defence in Serbia or contesting military influence in children's education in the USA or Turkey). Such a systemic view of war readily opens up to a gender analysis. Its institutions, let us say the 'military industrial complex', can be seen as loci of several dimensions of power, economic, national – and patriarchal. We can see overlaps and information flows between the war system and other social systems in which a gender dimension is particularly significant, such as the educational system, recreation and media.

So, war as relational, war as systemic – and a third qualifier is important: the idea that wars are only phases in a sequence of conditions linked together

as a continuum. It is from women I have met during my research that I have learned to see the continuum effect more clearly (Cockburn 2004). *La Ruta Pacifica* (2003: 75) for instance write, 'we Colombian women are tired of so many kinds of violence: sexual violence, intrafamilial, social, economic, political violence – and armed violence as its maximal expression'.[4] As with 'war system', 'war as continuum' is a perception that arises from being linked in an international movement, yet variously located in relation to war-fighting as it waxes and wanes. For example, some, like the Women's Network against Militarism whose focus is the US military bases in the Pacific and Caribbean, are particularly well informed on militarization, the state of preparedness for war. *La Ruta* is in mid-war. *Actoras de Cambio* in Guatemala are in a post-war moment, dealing with the terrible residues of massive armed sexual violence. In Sierra Leone, the women of MARWOPNET are organizing women along borders to monitor movements of men, guns and drugs to prevent a renewal of war (Cockburn 2007: chs 1 and 2). So, organizations and networks like this, spanning the globe and linked by electronic communications, tend to see 'war' not just as spasms of war-fighting, but as part of a continuum leading from militarism (as a persisting mindset, expressed in philosophy, newspaper editorials, political think tanks), through militarization (processes in economy and society that signify preparation for war), to episodes of 'hot' war, and thence to cease fire and stand-off, followed perhaps by an unsteady peace with sustained military investment, beset by sporadic violence that prefigures a further round in the spiral.

In fact, authors in mainstream war studies too are increasingly noting a continuum effect. Steve Schofield (1994) has shown how the UK's war-readiness was not relaxed at the end of the Cold War – rather militarization measured by military expenditure was maintained into the 1990s. Rupert Smith (2006) suggests that with the end of industrial warfare and the advent of the new paradigm of 'war among the people' the continuum effect has increased. War 'is no longer a single massive event of military decision that delivers a conclusive political result' – rather 'our conflicts tend to be timeless, since we are seeking a condition, which then must be maintained until an agreement on a definitive outcome, which may take years or decades' (Smith 2006: 17). Berdal and Malone (2000) have collected a volume of essays that suggest that in contemporary civil wars, defeating the enemy in battle is no longer necessarily the aim. Rather, some participants have a 'vested interest in continued conflict' and in the long-term institutionalization of violence (Berdal and Malone 2000: 2).

CAUSES OF WAR AND WHERE TO LOOK FOR THEM

Many women antiwar activists, then, see gender relations as causal in war. The mainstream analysis is blind to such causality. How can this incompatibility be resolved? Are they perhaps looking at different phenomena? The verb 'to

cause', after all, has more than one inflection. Brian Fogarty (2000) writes that the reason for multiple theories of war is that even a particular war may have multiple causes. 'At the very least, every war probably has immediate causes, antecedent causes, and something like "root causes" or "favorable conditions" underlying them' (Fogarty 2000: 77). The economic motivators of war are often, in Fogarty's sense, immediate. Usually they are rather clear to see, written into the news headlines. What are the aggressors demanding? What are the defenders defending? In early wars, 5,000 years ago, we might see theft of grain surpluses; a little later maybe a demand for levies, taxes, tributes; water sources; control of trade routes. In internal revolutionary wars – let's say that of Russia in 1917 – the aim may be to seize control of the means of production. In African wars today it is possible to see valuable minerals as a factor. The extraction of coltan and tantalite for computers and mobile phones features in the current profoundly destructive war in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Business interests can often be seen at work beneath the 'security' discourse of states (Blum 2003).

Ethno-nationalist issues, foreign-ness, the expression of the perceived security interests of an ethnic or national self in relation to its others, is a second major cause of war (Horowitz 1985; Gurr and Harff 1994; Hutchinson 2005). It is often an antecedent cause, in Fogarty's terms, if not an immediate one. Raids against the ones outside the walls of the first city states, the barbarians on the borders of the early empires. Later, the Infidel. Some contemporary wars are fought by an insurgent ethnic group trying to get recognition inside a larger polity, looking for more autonomy or its own state: as Chechen separatists seek to escape from the Russian Federation while the Russian military mobilize to stop them. How can this kind of racializing cause in war be detected? By listening to what the ideologues are saying, the religious leaders. What is the propaganda, who is putting it out? What names are claimed, what names are being imposed on others?

By contrast, patriarchal gender relations as a cause of war, I would suggest, most often fall in the 'root cause' or 'favourable conditions' category, and here we have to pay attention to culture. With the exception of the abduction of the mythical Helen of Troy (and the spurious attempt of George W. and Laura Bush to portray the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 as a war to save Afghan women from repression by the Taliban) wars are not fought 'for' gender issues in the way they are sometimes fought 'for' oil resources, or 'for' national autonomy. Instead, they foster militarism and militarization. They make war thinkable. They make peace difficult to sustain. As noted above, women close to militarization and war are observant of cultures, cultures as they manifest themselves in societies before, in and after armed conflicts. If we think of the war system as having a cyclical or spiralling life, as a continuum over time, proceeding from the discourse of militarist ideology, through material investment in militarization, aggressive policy-making, outbreaks of war, short firefights, prolonged stalemates, ceasefires, demobilization, periods of provisional peace, anxieties about security, rearmament and so on, and if we look closely at the social

relations in which individuals and groups enact these various steps, that is where it is possible to see gender relations at work, pushing the wheel around.

The above account of a feminist standpoint, generating an understanding of war that contradicts the hegemonic view, is derived first and foremost from my empirical research among women's antiwar organizations and networks. But, closely involved with that movement, there is a world of feminist scholars (men as well as women) who have striven over the past three decades to articulate in a growing library of written work the understandings arising among women war survivors and activists. Many collected editions bring together research and reporting from a range of different countries and periods (for instance, Cooke and Woollacott 1993; Lorentzen and Turpin 1998; Moser and Clark 2001; Giles and Hyndman 2004). Research-based monographs show the influence of gender relations at points along the continuum of militarization and war. Robert Dean (2001), for instance, in his study of the Kennedy administration taking the USA to war in Vietnam, shows masculinism at work in preparation for war. Susan Jeffords (1989) in *The Remasculinization of America*, shows, through an analysis of films and novels, national efforts to salvage masculine pride after such a defeat. Many firsthand accounts show in painful detail how, in military training, patriarchal masculinity lends itself to exploitation for war-fighting, and how violence is eroticized in masculine fantasy (Theweleit 1987). Together such studies articulate the feminist perception that patriarchal gender relations are among the 'root causes' of militarism and war.

THE VIOLENCE INHERENT IN LINKED SYSTEMS OF POWER

There are many dimensions along which power is distributed in the 'totality' of society (Weeks 1998). One is age. Others are skin colour; physical strength and ability; or, say, the urban–rural dimension of advantage. As far as militarization and war are concerned however it is safe to say that three dimensions of power are the most significant and influential. The first is economic power. The second is ethnic or national power embodied in community, religious and state structures. This is often, but not uniquely, white supremacy. The third is gender power. Feminist studies have developed a way of addressing this multiplicity of sources of power from the perspective of the individual, using the concepts of 'positionality' and 'intersectionality'. They are ugly and tedious words, sometimes deployed to the point of fetishization, but they are genuinely useful because they enable us to take account of the way a person's sense-of-self and ascribed identity are partly defined by her or his positioning in relation to not one but several dimensions of power (Anthias 1998). What has too often been overlooked, I believe, in a 'post-structuralist' climate, is that intersectionality *also and always works at the macro level*. The power structures of economic class based on ownership of the means of production, the racializing power of ethno-nationalism expressed in community

authorities and states and the sex/gender hierarchy *together* shape human social structures, institutions and relational processes. Together they establish positions of relative power, thereby laying down the possibilities and probabilities for individuals and groups that variously inhabit them. No single one of them produces its effects in the absence of the other two.

Intersectionality means that it makes little sense to seek to isolate the institutions, the structures, of patriarchal gender power. The family may appear to be the 'real' one, the only one. It is not. Few if any institutions do a specialized gender job – or for that matter a specialized economic or other 'power mobilizing' job. A corporation or a bank may appear to be 'just' an economic institution, a church or a mosque may look as if it is simply an ethnic institution, a family may seem to be merely a sex/gender institution. But look inside them and you find each and all sets of relations functioning at one and the same time: they are all economic, ethnic and gender institutions, though differently weighted. In corporations, almost all senior people are men; churches often mobilize considerable wealth and all the monotheistic clerical institutions are bastions of male power; blood-and-earth nationalists have keen interests in the fecundity of the patriarchal family and so on. It is not possible logically to disconnect them, neither the dimensions of power themselves nor the processes that are their vectors. They are distinct, they can be studied and named, but they are intersectional.

What, then, has the view of power as intersected sets of institutions and relations got to do with war? Here I think we need to depart from empirical material and undertake an exegesis, something like this. A class system built on economic surpluses, a racializing hierarchy of cities, then states and empires, and institutionalized patriarchy, emerged together within a definable historical period (at a different moment in different parts of the world). They were predicated on violence. They all involved constituting a self in relation to an inferiorized, exploited other – the rich man's landless labourer; the citizen's hated foreigner; the woman as men's property, commodified in bride price, sale or exchange price, in prostitution and the value of her children. All three processes were necessarily violent. Labourers will not build canal systems unless driven by hunger. Foreigners will not bow to another's hegemony if it is not backed by coercion. Women will not be subdued without force. It is not surprising therefore that institutionalized warfare, the augmentation and mobilization of what Charles Tilly (1992) terms the means of coercion, was born along with increasing accumulation of wealth, the early state and the establishment of patriarchies – innovations that signified the condition known as 'civilization'. Gerda Lerner's (1986) intensively researched book *The Creation of Patriarchy* shows this happening towards the end of the Neolithic in the emerging societies of the eastern Mediterranean. It has also been noted, several millennia later, in the American hemisphere. William Eckhardt (1992: 4), in a comprehensive study that reviews many other historians on war, evolves a 'dialectical evolutionary theory', as he calls it, suggesting that the more 'civilized' people became the more warlike

they became. Civilization and war: it is a correlation he finds persisting in all regions and phases of history.

The suggestion here then is that militarization and war are caused, shaped, achieved and reproduced across millennia through all three dimensions of power. If one is at work, the others will be too. The gender drama is never absent: the male as subject, the female as alien, the alien as effeminate (both the one a man perceives out there, and the one he fears inside himself). This is why a theory of war and its causation is flawed if it lacks a gender dimension. Most theories of war, however, in sociology and in international relations, do indeed lack this necessary element. To those who evolve and deploy them, they seem perfectly complete and satisfying without it. When women, feminists, come along and introduce our insights into discussions of war, when we talk about women and gender, we are often told we are being trivial, we are forgetting 'the big picture'. Cynthia Enloe (2005: 280) speaks from a feminist standpoint when she boldy interjects 'but suppose this IS the big picture?'.

CONCLUSION: GENDER TRANSFORMATION AS PART OF THE STRUGGLE FOR PEACE

To summarize the argument made above – looking closely at war with a sociologist's or anthropologist's eye reveals cultures, the detail of what is done and said. You see job advertisements for the military, you see training, you see discipline and indiscipline, killing, rape and torture. If, as well, you have a feminist's engaged standpoint, derived from women's lives and deaths in this maelstrom, you see the gender in it. And you turn again to evaluate so-called peacetime. You see that the disposition in societies such as those we live in, characterized by a patriarchal gender regime, is towards an association of masculinity with authority, coercion and violence. It is a masculinity (and a complementary femininity) that not only serves militarism very well indeed, but *seeks and needs militarization and war for its fulfilment.* Of course, the violence of war is in turn productive. It produces re-burnished ethnic identities, sharpened by memories of wrong and a desire for revenge. It produces particular gender identities – armed masculinities, demoralized and angry men, victimized femininities, types of momentarily empowered women. But these war-honed gender relations, 'after war' (which may always equally be 'before war'), again tend to feed back perennially into the spiralling continuum of armed conflict, for ever predisposing a society to violence, forever disturbing the peace.

Why is it important to pay attention to the perceptions of a feminist standpoint on war, to address the possibility that gender-as-we-know-it plays a part in perpetuating armed conflict? Because there are practical implications in this for our worldwide, mixed-sex movements for demilitarization, disarmament and peace. After all, we are ready to recognize that a sustainably peaceful

society must differ from today's war-torn societies. At the very least, its economic relations must be more just and equal. Additionally, its national and ethnic relations must become more respectful and inclusive. Women committed to organizing as women against war add a dimension to this transformative change. They ask the antiwar movement to recognize that, to be sustainably peaceful, a society will also have to be one in which we live gender very differently from the way it is lived today.

R. W. Connell has persistently analysed what cultural studies tell us about masculinity. In 2002 he wrote 'men predominate across the spectrum of violence. A strategy for demilitarization and peace must concern itself with this fact, with the reasons for it, and with its implications for work to reduce violence' (Connell 2002: 34). And he went on to say,

> Gender dynamics are by no means the whole story. Yet given the concentration of weapons and the practices of violence among men, gender patterns appear to be strategic. Masculinities are the forms in which many dynamics of violence take shape ... *Evidently, then, a strategy for demilitarization and peace must include a strategy of change in masculinities.*
>
> (2002: 38, emphasis added)

Connell has also been important for showing us the multiplicity and variation in masculinity, pointing to its subversive as well as hegemonic forms (Connell 1995). In countries such as Serbia and Turkey where military service for men is still obligatory, some homosexual men have been among the most politicized and challenging 'conscientious objectors', because of the way they have simultaneously refused militarism and conformity to patriarchal norms of manhood (Cinar and Usterci 2009).

So the message coming from feminist antiwar, antimilitarist and peace organizations of the kind I studied is that our many internationally linked coalitions against militarism and war as a whole need to challenge patriarchy as well as capitalism and nationalism. 'We can't do this alone', women say. Sandra Harding (2004b: 135) has pointed out that:

> everything that feminist thought must know must also inform the thought of every other liberatory movement, and vice versa. It is not just the women in those other movements who must know the world from the perspective of women's lives. Everyone must do so if the movements are to succeed at their own goals.

But the message emanating from a feminist standpoint on war has not so far been welcomed onto the mainstream agenda. The major antiwar coalitions, mainly led by left tendencies, contain many women activists. An unknown number, individually, may share in a feminist analysis of war, but their presence has not yet been allowed to shape the movements' activism. If antimilitarist and antiwar organizing is to be strong, effective and to the point, women

must oppose war not only as people but *as women*. And men too must oppose it in their own gender identity – *as men* – explicitly resisting the exploitation of masculinity for war.

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Notes

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2 The project was action-research in which I engaged both from my academic base in the Department of Sociology at City University London and my involvement as an activist in the international network Women in Black. It resulted in a book, *From Where We Stand: War, Women's Activism and Feminist Analysis*, Zed Books, 2007, and the supporting materials are available on my website www. cynthiacockburn.org. The research was generously supported by grants from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, the foundation Un Monde par Tous, the Network for Social Change, the Ian Mactaggart Trust, the Lipman-Miliband Trust and the Maypole Fund.

3 My translation. 'Ambas bases teóricas han hecho que se le reconozca como un movimiento novedoso pues con uno y otro concepto han existido pre-juicios en los movimientos sociales tradicionales' (*La Ruta Pacifica de las Mujeres* 2003: 63).

4 My translation. '[L]as mujeres colombianas estamos cansadas de tantas violencias: la sexual, la intrafamiliar, la social, la económica, la política y la armada como su maxima expresión' (*La Ruta Pacifica de las Mujeres* 2003: 75).

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