

**Gender and Human Security – bureaucracy and the marginalisation of women: cases
from the Solomon Islands and India¹**

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Abstract

This paper looks at human security through the lens of the private space and structural violence, making links to the broader theoretical literature, in particular Patricia Owens who draws heavily in Hannah Arendt's classic work on bureaucracies. It then uses two case one from the Solomon Islands in the Pacific and the other from India to argue that the human security based actions by government and official bodies generally leave out women in the everyday space as a result of bureaucratic action or inaction. This has the effect of exacerbating both the physical and structural violence women face in their everyday lives.

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Introduction

The question of gender and human security is often concerned with discussions about the abuse of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations, and the behaviours of the military or other belligerents in conflicts. Understandably, this focus is due to women and girls (and increasingly men and boys too) being more vulnerable to sexual and gender-based violence during conflict and post-conflict as a result of existing gender inequality, and the use of rape as a weapon of war by belligerents (Enloe, 2004; Skjelsbaek, 2001).

In this article we wish to extend the scope further as part of the feminist security theory project to expand the concept and application of human security; and in particular, explore how human security should encompass more than national or international conflict, and take on issues of structural violence such as deprivation and poverty (Iadicola and Shupe, 2013; King & Murray, 2001). The issue of personal security as the central element of human security tends to get overlooked (Hudson, 2005; Reed & Tehranian, 1999). A related view is that human security is about “authorised intervention and reconstruction based on a sliding scale, not of need, but of threats to the interests of powerful states in the West and the dominant classes in both the North and South” (Owens, 2012, p. 549). Owens goes on to argue that the discussion of human security tends to be very bureaucratic in nature, and drawing on Hannah Arendt’s (1970) work, identifies that the exercise of power lies in these bureaucratic processes.

On the other hand, Paris (2001) argues the term is not particularly helpful, being more of a motherhood statement, and open the endless definitions by those who by design wish to keep it vague:

...the most ardent backers of human security appear to have an interest in keeping the term expansive and vague. The idea of human security is the glue that holds together a jumbled coalition of “middle power” states, development agencies, and NGOs—all of which seek to shift attention and resources away from conventional security issues and toward goals that have traditionally fallen under the rubric of international development (p.88)

The problems with this vagueness are that the discussion tends to default to international relations and discussions about national or international security, conflict and post-conflict situations. This leads us back to Owens’ (2012) idea of rule by the (often ‘gender blind’) bureaucrat. It is through the lens of the bureaucratic nature of human security that development and foreign aid are endlessly debated. Paris (2001) in his discussion of the ‘successes’ in the human security space, mentions the land mines conventions, The Hague criminal court, and to that we could add the UN Security Council’s seven related resolutions on women peace and security in the 2000s, all of which bureaucratic by their very nature, but this does not diminish their importance. Rather it is the lack of space for a strong gendered analysis of power relations by the bureaucracy that is at issue, and results in structural violence.

In this context, discussions of gender in the human security discourse are either ignored or otherwise sidelined by what Aoláin refers to as “international patriarchies” inherent in international (and national) bureaucracies (2009, p. 1060). An example of this is marginalisation through sensationalism in how conflicts are reported (for example ISIS’s treatment of women in the Middle East conflict) whereby women are seen as subordinate objects (Gasper & Truong, 2008), or the justification of the invasion of Afghanistan to free women from Taliban rule (Aoláin, 2009; Kandiyoti, 2010). The abuse of women in these

examples is seen an aberrant ‘syndrome’ that can be ‘treated’ through legislative bureaucratic, and related military processes. For example, the package of seven UN Security Council Resolutions on women, peace, and security referred to above that were passed in the early 2000s² (Westendorf, 2013).

While these UN resolutions are very important, if only at a symbolic level, they miss or rather avoid a central point in the debates on gender and human security. That is, gender based violence and the abuse of women and sexual minorities in conflict is not a separate category to the everyday experiences of violence against women, usually in the home (Blanchard, 2003; Sylvester, 1994). Rather it is that armed conflict provides an avenue to foster more extreme forms of patriarchal domination, for example, what has occurred in the Great Lakes Region in the Democratic Republic of Congo over the years following the international intervention in the 1990s (Dolan, 2010). Violence against women in armed conflict lies on spectrum of male behaviour that is about power as domination (Neill, 2013; Qurashi, 2012; True, 2012). At one end of the continuum might lie sexual violence and torture in conflict, and at the other end domestic violence and bullying in the home, and structural violence by the state (Kelly, 1988). The role of the institutions of the state at one extreme perpetuate this patriarchal domination through repressive laws against women (and sexual minorities³) or they make symbolic gestures to the extreme manifestations such as sexual violence, without addressing the root causes of patriarchal domination (Boesten, 2012; Patil, 2013).

Human security and violence against women

² Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000); 1820 (2008); 1888 (2009); 1889 (2009); 1960 (2010); 2106 (2013); and 2122 (2013).

³ This refers to LGBTIQ – lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer sexual and gender identities

For decades, feminist researchers and activists have made significant contribution towards our understanding of violence against women during war and post-conflict. In particular, feminists have focused on military perpetrators of violence against women, partly to highlight women's experiences and partly due to the historical oversight of gender-based violence instigated by state and state-like actors. For example, Cynthia Enloe's ground breaking work on women's experiences of militarisation focused on how rape and other forms of sexual violence were justified by military policies (Enloe, 1983, 1989, 2000, 2001)). MacKinnon goes on to make the point of how women are violated in so many different ways to men in times of armed conflict (MacKinnon, 1993, 2006).

Since the identification of men's violence against women as a symptom of gender inequality as well as a tool to maintain women's subordinate status, feminists have been making connections between violence which takes place during peacetime, and those which are perpetrated during conflict/post-conflict situations (Parmar Agrawal, Goyal, Scott, & Greenough, 2014). Firstly, it is argued that even during peacetime, so-called 'domestic violence', which is assumed to take place in the privacy of family homes, can also take place "outside the home, in public places" (Hearn, 2015, p. 129), and that whilst there is a temptation to see men's violence against women as an individual or even a health problem, the issue goes further to the state and society, and "to reduce and stop men's violence means considering social context and changing social norms" (p. 130). Likewise, (Kelly, 1988) argues that rather than focusing on the extreme cases of abuse, the issue of men's violence against women need to be analysed as a context within which women and girls live their lives. The idea of 'continuum' as an analytical framework, encapsulates the forms of men's violence; the contexts (home, workplace, war/conflict, refugee, State, and so on); and the

range of social, political, economic, and individual impacts and consequences of violence against women.⁴ It is in with this framework in mind that guides our two case studies.

This paper will explore the issue of gender and human security and argue that human security is as much about dealing with the ‘everyday violence’ in the home and local communities, and the role of bureaucracies in perpetrating this and other forms of patriarchal domination and control. It can be argued that there are clear connections between domestic violence and violence against women in conflict settings. Any real understanding of women as victims in armed conflict has to start with an analysis of the local. Added to the mix is the insecurity that globalisation has brought and with it rising inequality, increasing ethno-nationalism and religious and other fundamentalisms. One aspect of this is migration, in which with increased globalisation and ease of transport, together with local economic transformations, has meant that (usually male) members of families are migrating for labour, and the women are left at home to care, not only for the family, but their’s and their children’s livelihood at the home village as well. Both the women and their husbands are exposed to vulnerabilities, insecurity and structural violence, often due to state action or inaction (Koser, 2005; Mawadza, 2008; Pickering, Segrave, Tazreiter, & Weber, 2013).

We propose to a look at two quite different local contexts: one in the post-conflict situation in a peri-urban context in the small Pacific nation, the Solomon Islands; and the other in the quite different rapidly globalizing context in India where the local rural livelihoods of marginalized groups such as the Adivasis⁵ of India, are under threat, and where

⁴ Kelly cautioned against viewing the continuum framework as an opportunity to place hierarchies of importance or severity, but rather, to see the continuum as a way of seeing the different experiences and forms of violence as complex and inter-related.

⁵ ‘Adivasis’ also called ‘tribals’ is a generic term used by the Indian government, and more generally, to indigenous or aboriginal people who live a largely traditional life style. They are a marginalised group specifically recognised in the Indian constitution.

the only solution is for male family members to migrate for work. In both cases there are both opportunities and threats for the women involved. The role of the patriarchal state in both cases has been key to the impact on women. These two cases are based on field research the authors have been involved in, and have been deliberately selected, in part to move out of a solely conflict or post-conflict setting for human security debates, to show a common issue of institutional neglect and thus structural violence towards of women, and the gendered institutions they find themselves being marginalised by.

Solomon Islands⁶

The Solomon Islands endured a period of civil conflict from 1999-2003 when law and order broke down on the main island of Guadalcanal and the capital Honiara. This conflict was only resolved with the RAMSI⁷ intervention made up of an international armed force supported by officials led by Australia in August 2003, and an assistance package for over ten years, as part of the intervention, which was built around improved governance, in which Australia had a direct role (Craig & Porter, 2013; Dinnen & Firth, 2008; Kabutaulaka, 2005; Westendorf, 2013). During both the ‘tensions’ as the 1999-2003 period is euphemistically referred to, and the subsequent international intervention and recovery, the role of women, their resilience, and how they were viewed in the process has come to the fore.

Conflicts occur increasingly within rather than between states. In many instances the relationships between the protagonists are intimate and complex. They share the same

⁶ Solomon Islands consists of almost one thousand islands in the southwest Pacific, with a predominantly Melanesian population. The country is ethnically and linguistically diverse and its population of just over half a million speak around eighty languages. They live across nine provinces and the capital Honiara. Approximately 85 per cent of the population reside in rural areas on customary-owned land (Vella 214, p. 94)

⁷ Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) led by Australia but made of officials and military personnel also from Fiji, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, and Tonga. Other Pacific countries that contributed to RAMSI included the Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Samoa, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

geographical territory, and are often linked through marriage and other social and economic ties. (Vella, 2014, p. 93).

This complex interpersonal aspect of conflict can place women in either a protagonist supporting the conflict for one side or the other, or in a ‘peacemaker’ role. The implication of them being in either role, but particularly the latter, is that they should also have a clear role in any formal peace process. In the Solomon Islands, before the formal processes, not only were women intimately involved in the conflict either as peace makers but also in a small number of cases supporting the belligerents (Brigg, Chadwick, Griggers, Murdock, Vienings, 2015). They were also victims of the conflict: ...suffering from torture, rape, sexual violence, murder, beatings, arson, kidnapping, looting and extrajudicial detention ... [and] the closure of medical clinics, schools and other basic services (p. 2).

Despite this history, women were excluded from the initial peace talks held in Cairns Australia in 2000, and also from follow-up peace processes in the Solomon Islands. For example, RAMSI military personnel prevented the National Council of Women from entering the parliament to participate in the negotiations on how to end violence. Charlesworth (2008), Westendorf (2013), and Brigg, Chadwick, Griggers, Murdock, Vienings (2015) are all highly critical of how the RAMSI intervention failed to adhere to the UN Conventions on women peace and security referred to above. Westendorf refers to “...a significant gap between Australia’s rhetoric of commitment to UNSCR 1325 and [Australia’s] adherence to its mandates in terms of policy and practice” (p. 457). Westendorf found that women were poorly engaged in the formal peace process, despite the role of women in the more informal peace processes prior to the intervention, where for example they negotiated access across combatant lines to health services and markets, and took a stance against child combatants (Brigg, Chadwick, Griggers, Murdock, & Vienings, 2015). Despite their role as

peace-makers before the intervention, their role in society was actually diminished by the RAMSI intervention, in that the women were actively excluded from the peace process as outlined above, and lost status in their own communities. Women were confined “...to issues related to the domestic sphere [and] were invited to discussions about sexual violence as a ‘domestic’ manifestation of the conflict [but] not included in discussions about land tenure and disputes” (Westendorf p. 465), and felt “marginalised in the peace-building process” (Charlesworth, 2008, p. 357).

The key group involved in earlier peace building was the Women for Peace movement who met and negotiated among the various parties in the early 2000 prior to the RAMSI intervention (Pollard, 2000). The Women for Peace Movement enabled women from both sides access to services ‘...drawing upon their moral authority as mothers’ (Brigg, Chadwick, Griggers, Murdock, Vienings, 2015, p. 8). There is no doubt they were active drivers of peace dialogue processes prior to the intervention. In the end the peace came with a paradox for women: “Conflict created opportunities for women, such as a relaxation of the cultural restrictions on speaking out and decision-making and becoming the *de facto* head of the household” (Charlesworth, 2008, p. 357). In peace time these opportunities were withdrawn.

The situation in 2014 during the authors’ field-work was that there has been little long term change in the role of women, and patriarchal norms were very evident. The field work involved a 300 household survey of five communities in the per-urban outskirts of Honiara, the capital, which was first undertaken in 2012 and repeated in 2014 to look at how a particular intervention using the churches and local pastors may reduce the very high levels of family violence found in the Solomon Islands (WVSI 2014).

The research found very high levels of domestic violence, and also violence more broadly in the settlements around Honiara the capital, which were key sites of the earlier conflict, and had housed people who had escaped it. For example, around two thirds of the three hundred households we surveyed had experienced violence in the home; around 90 per cent said that violence was common in their communities; two thirds of men thought it was fine to hit women; two thirds of women thought it was fine to hit their children (WVSI 2014, p.1). These figures point to an almost culture of violence in communities, where violence is normalised as a dominant expression of (usually male) power. Furthermore, the household survey findings match those of the quantitative survey conducted in 2009 by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, in which it was found that two in three (63.5 per cent) of ‘ever-partnered’ women had experienced physical or sexual violence, or both (SPC 2009, p. 62).

While it is hard to establish if these figures were any worse than before 1999, when the ‘tensions’ started due to a lack of data, there is no doubt about the trauma to women of the conflict itself. There is evidence from elsewhere in post-conflict situations (for example, see Dolan 2010,) who found that “...conflict had created a tendency within communities to make a fetish around the violation of vulnerable women” (p. 55), and also that it gave impunity to the perpetrators. While it is difficult to provide hard data on causality given the sensitivity of the issues in the Solomon Islands, the experiences from elsewhere, suggest that the conflict, the use of sexual violence in conflict, and the silencing of women voices in the formal peace processes in the Solomon Islands, has contributed to the current situation of high levels of violence in the community overall and GBV in particular. The way forward is not an easy fix through public campaigns to end violence against women (of which there are many), even though short-term, awareness-raising campaigning does have its place. Rather, it is about sustained effort of clear messages and robust law enforcement (and dare we say it

institutional change by the organs of the State) over many years to lead to a broad-based behavioural change in men and boys, and the empowerment of women and girls. In this context, human security involves not only the central role of women but also other institutions of society, which includes government law enforcement, the churches and of course the men themselves. One of the issues that women face in the Solomon Islands is that many, if not most, of these institutions reinforce existing patriarchal gender norms and are part of the structural violence women experience in their everyday lives. In the next section we will look at a case, which while culturally and socially quite different, has marked similarities particularly around the structural violence by state organisations.

West Bengal (India)

Our second case study looks at women and human security in quite a different context, and that is the changes that occur as a result of men's migration. The Adivasi community in Dinajpur district in West Bengal have always led a precarious existence that has become more acute with India's changing policy to a more open economy in rapidly globalising world. The effect has been to make small-scale agriculture more marginal and thus necessitating a family diversification strategy involving men migrating for work as their way of ensuring the security of the family. This has had important gendered effects, involving what can be described as a 'feminisation of agriculture'. These structural issues of globalization and liberalization have pushed small-scale agriculture to be increasingly undertaken by women, and by women-headed households, following the migration of erstwhile men farmers, either internationally or locally (Lastarria-Cornhiel, 2008). The economic viability of small-scale agriculture is such that it is becoming a low wage occupation, and more dependent on women's labour as part of broader household management strategies (Bryceson, 2002).

The reasons for this de-agrarianisation beyond broad statements around globalisation and liberalisation are complex, but are largely to do with the falling price of capital in comparison to labour (due to a more 'open' economy), an urban bias in developing country policies with food subsidies for staple items to consumers, and the consequent low prices farmers get for producing these key food items (Bezemer & Headey, 2008; Jacoby, 2013; Lipton, 1977; Mallick, 2014). Mallick (2014) goes on to argue that any reduction in poverty in rural areas in India is due to migration, usually of the men. The women left behind receive lower wages than men for casual agricultural work with younger women with lower bargaining power being the worst affected (Arun, 2012; Lastarria-Cornhiel, 2008; Mahendra Dev, 2012; Srivastava & Srivastava, 2010).

Up to half of rural household incomes in developing countries are dependent on off-farm labour (Arun, 1999, 2012; Lanjouw, Murgai, & Stern, 2013; Lastarria-Cornhiel, 2008). The migrants (usually men) then either remit money back to their families or bring their savings back (in cash or kind) on their return (Mu & van de Walle, 2011). This has some major implication for those left behind, which in many if not most contexts, is the women of the household. There are a number of effects of this, and the evidence is mixed due mainly to the particular context of the women left behind. These are to do with the increased workload for the women left behind, and the social isolation if a sole parent or their disempowerment if the wife is left living with the husband's family. On the positive side the women may experience a reduction in gender-based violence, more autonomy in terms of livelihood and decision making, and in some cases being able to build an independent stock of assets under their control (Chapagain, 2015).

For women this is a mixed blessing: on the one hand women have greater responsibility and are empowered as they manage their land, while on the other hand their

workload is much greater than before. Research was undertaken in early 2015 involving a series of focus group discussions with Adivasi women in four villages of Bankura district, as well as interviews with district officials⁸.

The research found that the livelihoods strategy for a typical Adivasi woman of Bankura is a mix of women cultivating their own plots of land while also doing contract work on nearby land. A typical family might have the husband away for a few months of the year working on larger farms in more fertile parts of the state, and bringing money back when they return, which is used for capital items or to cover larger costs such as school fees and the like. The woman has to cultivate her own land, which is difficult simply because of the gendered nature of labour (there are tasks she is socially not allowed to undertake, such as ploughing), and so she either has to hire a tractor with a male tractor driver to cultivate the land, or share crop with a man. Most of this rest of the cultivation and crop management work she can do, but the time critical task of ploughing can carry a large risk of delays and thus lower yields. This can lead her to being exploited by tractors' owners and sharecroppers, who can gouge higher prices for equipment hire or use. In addition, she also spends a few days a week working on other people's land as a contractor, which sees her away from the household for up to 12 hours a day, and having to leave the children under the care of neighbours or older children.

From the woman's point of view her confidence levels are increased as she has to manage her land and juggle a number of roles. The man of the household being away brings an element of peace as there is less drinking in the household, and less domestic violence. The problem, however, is that the local institutional processes to support agriculture tend to

⁸ This research undertaken by Dr Kilby and Dr Mukhopadhyay was part of broader research undertaken by IBRAD looking at women livelihoods in Bankura District, West Bengal.
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ignore women and so extension services do not target them, and so the women have poor knowledge of various critical processes in crop production. This occurs as result of their ‘economic invisibility’ (Sengupta, 2012), and manifests itself in a few ways. First, women generally do not have legal title to the land as there is a strong bias against female land registration, crucial for accessing different incentives and subsidies provided by the government to support agriculture and agro-based activities, and also to access institutional credit facilities (Brown & Chowdhury, 2002). The second area in which women are invisible is to extension officers, who are almost always men and they seldom invite women to their trainings and agricultural technology demonstration sessions. Interviews with local extension officers found they are overworked and have no time, incentives, or instructions to schedule additional sessions for women farmers, and women farmers are not encouraged to come to the existing sessions, which are aimed mainly at (wealthier) men farmers. As a consequence, the women surveyed reported poor pesticide application as a major reason for the low productivity of their plots, that is they either apply too much or too little pesticide, which has a negative impact on yields. In short, the government services are not recognising women as ‘real’ farmers in the area, who have real issues and concerns. The effect is that the increasing cohorts of women farmers are missing out and that affects local agricultural productivity. The obvious solution is to have targeted program of support to women farmers so they can access the necessary support to increase either productively; that is, timely ploughing of fields, and extension support on correct pesticide application. It is bureaucratic inertia within a patriarchal structure that prevents this happening.

In terms of human security, the dilemmas caused by local male migration are clear. While there is some increased women’s agency, male dominated bureaucratic structures that support agriculture serve women farmers very poorly. This has a direct impact on the

productivity of the land, and with that the women's' livelihoods and their human security. It is the invisibility of women in this context, which provides the means for patriarchal control not only by the menfolk of the families, but also the state itself in how it prioritises its services based on what are gendered norms. Here the structural violence we would argue is not through an act of commission by the state, but by an act of omission, by ignoring its responsibility to its women citizens.

Conclusion

The issue that emerges from these two brief case studies is that in the context of human security the role of women can be too easily ignored. In post-conflict situations women can either have an enhanced role in peace-making and building or they can be ignored in this process, and so marginalised with their lives being arguably worse off. In the case of migration, a similar phenomenon emerges whereby women are left behind and can be profoundly changed either for the better or worse but again this reality is ignored. The issue here is less about globalisation but more about the bureaucratic response to the change that it brought. The common issue in both cases is that the institutions of the state actively ignored the specific needs of women when broader social change had occurred, whether it had been a result of conflict or globalising forces. In the case of the Solomon Islands the state let the women down in their roles as peacemakers and peace-builders through a period of conflict, resulting in their further marginalisation by patriarchal power in their own state and communities. In the case of West Bengal in India, women farmers were denied access to land title and the benefits that that can give as well as government agricultural services. This brings us back to Arendt (1970), which Owens' (2012) picks up, and that is the idea of the rule by the bureaucrat and "the greater regulation of underdevelopment" (p.563). The issue is

that this greater regulation has at its heart the maintenance of the status quo and the patriarchal norms and structural violence inherent in that status quo.

The challenge for the future is to explore and document more the issue of the structural violence by bureaucracies and government and how that expands and enlightens the human security debate. By seeing gender based violence human security as sitting along a continuum from sexual violence in conflict to domestic violence in the home, and the structural violence by government action or inaction to perpetuate societal patriarchies, then a more nuanced and structural approach to dealing with human security issues can be developed.

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