Re-Imagining Women's Security post 9/11

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Structure of talk

- CEDAW and 1325
- Discourses of security
  - State security discourse
  - Human security discourse
  - Gender security discourse
- A case study of women's security in three post conflict societies
- A few remarks on prospects post 9/11

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The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

The Convention defines discrimination against women as "...any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field."

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CEDAW

- Adopted by UN General Assembly in 1979
- Commits signature states to undertake a series of measures to end discrimination against women in all forms, including:
- to incorporate the principle of equality of men and women in their legal system,
- abolish all discriminatory laws and adopt appropriate ones prohibiting discrimination against women;
- to establish tribunals and other public institutions to ensure the effective protection of women against discrimination; and
- to ensure elimination of all acts of discrimination against women by persons, organizations or enterprises.

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CEDAW

- Affirms the reproductive rights of women (Only human rights treaty to do so)
- Targets culture and tradition as influential forces shaping gender roles and family relations
- Affirms women's rights to acquire, change or retain their nationality and the nationality of their children
- Obligates states to take appropriate measures against all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of women.

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UN Security Council Resolution 1325

- Adopted by Security Council 31 October 2000

- Affirms the important role of women in conflict resolutions and peace building

- Brings together gender balance and gender mainstreaming into all aspects of international peace and security

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Resolution 1325

Recognises:

…the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, and the need to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution

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State Security Discourse

- Focuses on the protection of state borders from external threats or the protection of state authority in the case of inter-state conflict
- Security = absence of threat of violent conflict
- Militaristic – monopoly over the use of force
- Limits the participation of civil society in the development of security strategies
- Authoritarian, patriarchal and hierarchical
- Considers political stability will act as a cure for security threats

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State Security Discourse

Statesmen, diplomats and the military conduct the business of states, and too often war, imbuing the relations and processes of the society of nations-states with an atmosphere seemingly devoid of women and an interest in issues of concern to women.

Eric Blanchard (2003)

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Human Security Discourse

Seven interrelated categories of security

- Economic
- Food
- Health
- Environment
- Personal
- Community
- Political

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Human Security Discourse

- Attempts to ensure freedom from want and freedom from fear

- Imagines the employment of people through security policies to which they freely contribute

- Often addresses the specific security concerns of particular groups – women

- Eg UN Document 'Women, Peace and Security (2002)

- Significant Norwegian work

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Human Security Discourse

- Critical security studies and feminist analysis helped promote the approach through the recognition that states can actually produce rather than lessen security
- UNDP at the forefront of promoting this agenda
- Focuses on preventive measures
- Freedom from want and freedom from fear

Human Security Discourse in practise

- Often interpreted by states narrowly

- Canadian Human Security Centre narrowed the focus of discourse to 'freedom from fear'. Emphasises violence plays down other threats.

- Dilemma recognised. Some therefore argue for gender mainstreaming within security dialogue (Beth Woroniuk, 1999)

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Gender Security Discourse

- Advocates mainstreaming as a means of more adequately incorporating women's perspectives into security dialogue

- Attempt to bring perceptions, experiences, knowledges and interests of women to bear on policy making

- But it is more than tagging on mainstreaming it is about 'engendering'

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Gender Security Discourse

'Engendering' security goes significantly beyond mainstreaming and also attempts to construct an alternative discourse, and attempts to re-socialize men and women into a qualitatively nuanced and different understanding of security – a bottom up approach, where priorities shift from mere 'threat perceptions' and 'deterrence' vocabularies to a language that cognizes 'structural challenges' and 'enabling spaces'.

(Gopinath and DasGupta, 2006)

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Gendered security discourse

- Centralises gender in the analysis of 'traditional' security concerns –violence conflict – and 'non-traditional' security concerns – such as health, economic empowerment and political participation
- It is a bottom-up approach
- Demands mass-scale social transformation
- Assumes that security needs of women are best determined by women themselves rather than elites
- Affirms women's agency

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The Research Project

- Aim: To examine the gendered meanings of security in 3 post-conflict societies - Northern Ireland, South Africa, Lebanon

- Unique comparative project

- Team made up of people from each of the 3 countries

- Funded by the ESRC

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Research methods

- ## 30 Focus Groups
  - Men and women party Activists
  - Men and women in Public Life
  - Men and women Ex-combatants
  - Men and women victims of the conflict
  - Men and women political campaigners
  - Women in economic reconstructions
- ## 30 Interviews with key informants
- ## 3 Gender Audits

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Aims of the interviews

- Explore and elaborate upon issues raised in the focus groups with people in:

Government

Public Life

Civil Society

People in whom international conventions relating to women would have a direct or indirect impact

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Aims of the gender audit

- Produce systematic and comparative analysis of the new forms of governance
- Explore the extent to which new arrangements recognised the position of women
- Examine the extent of women's participation in political and economic life and their own economic position
- Considered existing and proposed government gender equality strategies
- Looked at the status of national women's institutions (Gender Equality Commissions)

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Findings: notions of security

- Holistic notion – much more than freedom from physical violence
- Encompasses a wide range of other elements – social, economic and political
- Men also had a broader conception but placed different emphasise on the social, economic and political
- Eg. In SA men spoke about the economic aspects of security but focused on employment. Women emphasised 'everyday' economic issues: attaining water, food for children, caring fro sick relatives.

- Security is a very ambivalent sort of word, like security here has been used like the security forces who to me were the most violent element of that, whatever, some would say 30 or 40, some would say 80 or 90 years. (Northern Ireland, Women Political Campaigners)

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- I would also think that security is all about yourself, because even if they can say you are protected by 20 bodyguards, if you don't believe in yourself, if you don't trust in yourself you won't be secured, you would always have that fear. So I think security starts from you as a person, you need to be secured as a person to be sure about your feelings and what you want to do. Know yourself before. (South Africa, Women Political Campaigners)

- For me, the word security in Arabic is not to be afraid. First, not to be afraid to be hungry, to move, to think, and to be misjudged. (Lebanon, Women in NGOs)

- [Security is] . . . not being afraid, and that can be of physical violence but also feeling you have the right to do the things you want to do and say; both physical and also psychological [security] as well. (Northern Ireland, Women in Economic Reconstruction)

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Findings: Security in practice

- In all 3 countries women disappointed by the peace process

- Did not feel that they or other women had gained significantly from the 'peace dividend' – apart from the cessation of formal violence

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NI Gender Audit

- Assembly - between 14 and 18 out of 108 seats

- Public appointments of women declined from 35% in 1996/7 to 32% in 2005

- Reported cases of domestic violence up by 60% in last 4 years

- In period 2004 and 2006 more people died of DV than in what police define as 'security situations'

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Position of women post 9/11

- Symbolic level
  - 'War on terror' wars conducted by men
  - Strengthens position of state security discourse

- Practical level
  - Focus on physical security
  - Billions made available not subject to gender mainstreaming
  - Cuts in other programmes

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9/11 and Muslim communities

- Encourages support for more extreme versions of Islam
- Position and status of women weakened
- Cultural differences become focus
- EG: Head-dress became an issue in Britain
- Use of emergency powers and women
  - House searches
  - Arrests and detention
  - Loss of earner

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