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Wenona Giles, Jennifer Hyndman, eds. *Sites of Violence: Gender and Conflict Zones.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004. x + 361 pp. ISBN 978-0-520-23072-9; ISBN 978-0-520-23791-9.

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Gender Inequalities Fuel Violence

This collection of essays emerged out of an international collaborative research network based at York University, Toronto, called "Women in Conflict Zones Network" (WICZNET). WICZNET was founded in 1996 "to explore the gendered complexities of militarized violence" (p. 6). Attempting to bridge the activist-research divide, the participants discussed concepts and definitions with relation to conflict zones around the world, including Sudan, Iraqi Kurdistan, post-Yugoslav states, Ghana and Sri Lanka. These debates focused on "four interrelated analytical domains: (1) ethnic nationalism and gender relations; (2) violence in the context of women's rights; (3) gender and citizenship; and (4) women's empowerment in war" (p. 7). The collection of essays here presents original research that engages with those debates and, in so doing, challenges traditional notions of violence, war, and peace.

According to the editors, the book was motivated by three factors. First, "gender relations [and identities] have been deployed in sites of militarized conflict to incite, exacerbate, and fuel violence" (p. 4). As other feminist scholarship has argued, gender is central to the construction of national, ethnic and/or religious identities and women's behavior is perceived as a "cultural marker" of "their" communities. Various essays demonstrate how the intensification in nationalism or other communal identities before and during conflict lead to women being particular targets of violence, in an attempt to coerce women into complying with certain "authentic" gender norms. In the case of Iraqi Kurdistan, Shahrzad Mojab writes that the two competing Kurdish nationalist parties both condoned patriarchal practices as a marker of national culture (p. 122). Consequently, an environment was created that was conducive to a sharp increase in honor killings and other forms of violence against those women who were perceived to have violated gender norms about female propriety.

The second factor is that, increasingly in recent years, civilians are becoming part of war. The boundaries between the battlefront and the "homefront" are breaking down. Civil conflicts, economic crises, and the exploitation of natural resources by multinational corporations have contributed to transforming people's homes and communities into sites of conflict. In particular, Audrey Macklin, investigating the links between human rights violations and oil development by Canadian companies in Sudan, demonstrates how concerns about oil field security have led to forcible displacement of local people; oil activity has intensified conflict between North and South Sudan for control over the resource-rich territory; and oil development has generated the construction of infrastructure (such as new roads) that facilitate government access to the region in order to prosecute its war against the South (p. 100).

The third factor, which relates to the incorporation of civilians into conflict, is that wars have created a massive displacement of people (both within their own countries and to other countries). The experiences of migration and displacement create new inequalities and vulnerabilities that are gendered. In the case of Valerie Preston and Madeleine Wong's essay on Ghana, women's dependency upon male relatives may increase with migration, causing them to become more vulnerable to violence and/or threats of violence. Meanwhile, in Maja Korac's essay about the post-Yugoslav states, women refugees, leaving behind male relatives, find themselves faced with the problem of being the sole providers for their children, while their refugee status makes it difficult for them to find work to fulfill this role.

Teachers of politics and international relations, migration, conflict, peace-building, and gender studies will find this book an invaluable tool in providing students with case studies that demonstrate the ways in which women's experiences of violence and conflict differ from those of men, and how the study of gender relations and gender identities allows us to see the ways in which gen-

der inequalities are inextricably linked to the occurrence of violence. Researchers and practitioners will also benefit from the ways in which the book promotes and develops feminist conceptual tools for analyzing the processes and experiences of conflict, peace-building and migration. In particular, throughout the book, authors emphasize that sites of violence span the private and public spheres, and regional and national boundaries, creating "a gendered continuum" that connects inequalities between the different social spaces. As Cynthia Cockburn observes, "The power imbalance of gender relations in most (if not all) societies generates cultures of masculinity prone to violence. These gender relations are like a linking thread, a kind of fuse, along which violence runs" (p. 44).

The concept of a "gendered continuum of violence" points to how gender inequalities fuel violence that, in many instances, is undiscriminating in its effects. As Maja Korac notes, it is not only women that suffer as a result of conflict, but that men are also victims, "affected by various forms of violence, from killing, torture, and body mutilation to psychological pressures resulting from experiences at the front" (p. 270). Nevertheless, throughout the book, there is a tendency to marginalize men's experiences of war, almost suggesting that men are complicit in the construction of masculinized/violence-prone identities and, consequently, do not deserve the same attention as women. While we should welcome the way in which this book redresses the balance of mainstream studies of war and conflict by enabling women's experiences to be heard, we should also recognize that both men and women are victims of violence (although, often in different ways) and that both men and women can contribute to the reproduction of gender relations and identities that cause violence. In light of this, it is essential that future feminist research also draws attention to the fact that unequal gender relations can be bad for men as well as women and that feminist politics are not concerned only with women, but with the whole of humanity.

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