



## WHAT SECURITY IS AND WHAT IS NOT?

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*“Women’s bodies, minds and souls are raped. Eventually the wounds will stop bleeding, tears will dry and the women will only be left with physical and psychological scars and a deplorable story to tell”.*

Charlotte Proudman

### ABSTRACT:

*The term security is full of ambiguity and has become a much contested notion of late. Within the discipline of international relations, the traditional study and discussion of security revolves around issues of war and peace in an international system among and between self-interested nation states with overwhelming focus on military security. Feminists and other critical scholars have raised the question: security for whom? Feminists define security broadly in multidimensional or multilevel terms – as the diminution of all forms of violence, including physical, structural, and ecological. According to most IR feminists, security threats include domestic violence, rape, poverty, gender subordination, and ecological destruction as well as traditional wars. Rape in war is in direct correlation to the study of women, their health and development. This paper will attempt to analyse security from a feminist perspective by illustrating how sex slavery/sexual exploitation and rape are threats to women’s security and why this is not seen as a security threat though it threatens half the population. Sex slavery and rape has been used as instruments of war since time immemorial and even institutionalised by states; (the Japanese and the ‘Comfort Women’ during the World War II, the American in the Vietnam War, the Bosnian Civil War, etc).*

**KEYWORDS :** *security, war, rape, gender crimes.*

### INTRODUCTION

The Paper is divided into three sections. The first section will deal with a feminist perspective of security and a critique of traditional concept of security. The second section will deal with the problem of rape: how it is used as a weapon of war and the institutionalisation of rape or sex slavery. This section will focus mainly on how rape itself is a method or instrument in war by challenging the traditional understanding that rape is a consequence of war and therefore inevitable. The third section will attempt to incorporate the concept of rape as a weapon of war into the Indian context by focussing on the Northeast and how the AFSPA have given impunity and facilitated it. This impunity has become as a kind of booty to the armed forces. The situation of helplessness faced by the people has led to the development of, what Lene Hansen has called, security as silence, as the insecurity cannot be voiced because the threatened group has no or limited possibility of speaking for its security.

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## WHAT IS SECURITY?

The term security is full of ambiguity and has become a much contested notion of late. Within the discipline of international relations, the traditional study and discussion of security revolves around issues of war and peace in an international system among and between self-interested nation states with overwhelming focus on military security. So, the state is seen as the protector of its citizens and guarantor of security from external threats (Blanchard 2003). Feminists and other critical scholars have raised the question: security for whom? Annie T.R. Wibben in a Globalised World Post Q&As with Marianna Karakroulaki on Feminist Security Studies and Today's Challenges argues that Feminist Security Studies is "at the intersection of security studies, feminist international relations and feminist theory more generally", and that Feminist Security Studies, like all feminist projects, is inherently political.

Feminist, in order to overcome the limitations of the traditional concepts of security which has failed to provide security or secure people define security broadly in multidimensional or multilevel terms – as the diminution of all kinds of violence: physical, structural, and ecological.

According to Lene Hansen "Security as silence occurs when insecurity cannot be voiced, when raising something as a security problem is impossible or might even aggravate the threat being faced" and maintains that in not recognizing women as a potentially threatened group, the "potential subject of security has no, or a limited, possibility of speaking its security problem" (Sylvester 2010). This is because the traditional concept or notion of security has limited itself to state security and does not give agency to individuals and more so to women because the discourse of security is seen in purely masculine notion. Jonathan D. Wadley argued that nowhere is the gender more silent than it is in the field of international security. He further went on to argue that war reconstitute society in gender terms by masculinisation and power is valorised and identified with a heroic kind of masculinity (Wadley 2010).

Annie T.R. Wibben argues "that there must be neither certainty nor fixity in what constitutes security studies, even feminist security studies, only the indeterminable question of how security functions and the subjection of security to continual, radical and deliberate critique" (Wibben 2011). The challenge for 'third world' theorists and feminist scholars of International Relations (IR) and Security Studies therefore, according to Swati Parasher, lies in deconstructing this "state-centric" discourse. "The hyper masculine nature of war and security" Parasher argues, "pushes women out of the theatre of International Relations" (Parasher 2010). Following the end of Cold War, the traditional notion of security which was clouded with military state centric security began to be challenged and people open their eyes to other areas of security such as economics, the environment, and health leading to broadening and deepening of the concept of security. This Jennifer Lobasz argues is an indication that there might be more than one way to understand international security (Lobasz 2009).

Feminists have added to traditional security studies gender-based perspectives encouraging analysis accounting for the roles women and gender play both during and after the conflict, this is usually absent in security politics. Feminist security scholars force us to reconsider what it is that our current security politics are truly serving to secure and argues for a concept of security which would serve the citizens rather than governments, corporations, or politicians. Shifting the field of security politics away from the more traditional emphasis on securing borders to instead securing the rights and well being of individuals is perhaps the most important task for feminist security studies (Hagen 2012)

Laura Sjoberg argues that a feminist research agenda is necessary for a better understanding and positive change of international security because "Feminist work in security not only looks for that gender subordination but also reformulates mainstream approaches to traditional security issues (Sjoberg 2012). According to Cynthia Enloe, "women's gendered identities and bodies become marked territories on which both states and non-state militant groups wage their wars and construct national narratives" (Parasher 2010).

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### The Problem of Rape in war and conflict

Sexual aggressions against women exist and could be traced back to the earliest formation of expansionist or agricultural societies. Rape was available to a lowly soldier as a form of booty as they were hardly paid. Kevin Gerard Neill argues, "In a wartime environment full of danger, fear and the thrill of adrenaline, the possession of women becomes the act of a conqueror" (Neill 2000).

Women are one of the most vulnerable sections of the society in times of war on conflict. Radhika Coomeraswamy argued that they can be affected by war in five different ways: victims of direct violence recruited for battlefield, as refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), victim of trafficking and exploitation, orphans. Women are often raped or violated in conflict situations. Rape is often used as a military strategy aimed at terrorizing the population and humiliating the community (Coomeraswamy 2009). The threat that women and faced is different from what men faced. It is not to say that men do not faced problems but that the threats are gendered and perpetrated differently. Wartime rape is in direct correlation with the study of women, their health and development. In places where war has raged or is raging still, sexual violence meted out against women is both an individual as well as a collective wound like no other. According to Kevin Gerard Neill, "rape is not limited to a male's assault against a female; it does represent a virtually universal symbol of terror for the entire female gender" (Neill 2000).

Rape and other forms of sexual abuse against women are always present in all forms of war. Hundreds and thousands of women are raped and this creates sense of insecurity among the whole gender. Vasundhara Sirnate's term 'gender terrorism' could be applied here. Women in war and conflict torn areas faced multiple war at the same time. While the society or community as a whole faced the threats of being attacked by enemy groups, women also faced the threat of being raped and sexually abused.

It is argued that 100,000 to 200,000 Asian women, mostly Korean, were pressed into sex slavery by the Imperial Japanese Army during WWII known as comfort women. In the 1971 Bangladeshi Liberation war, around 200,000 and 400,000 women were raped. The majority of these raped women, about eighty percent were Bengali Muslims, and the rest were Hindus and Christians. The Pakistani soldiers who were Muslims themselves perpetrated this act against the Bangladeshi Muslim women. The Vietnam War was no exception. Rape and sexual exploitation of women ranges 'from the individual rape of bar room girls in Saigon to the mass rape and murder of dozens of civilian women in the village of My Lai' rape was everywhere. The ugliness of the situation was made complete with the American military's role and involvement in the commercial sex business. The Pentagon knowingly allowed the formation of brothels on base camps throughout Vietnam (Neill 2000). In the Bosnian civil war, the Serbian forces raped between 20,000 and 50,000 women. The estimations of rape during the Rwandan genocide range between 250,000 and 500,000 women were raped (Crider 2012).

The biggest obstacle in gaining the accurate data of wartime rape is that such acts are under/not reported. The fear of bringing "dishonour" and "stigma" that reporting could bring them and their families is the biggest challenge. It is not only about the dishonour and stigma on the family form the society but also the fear of being rejected by family have prevented victims from reporting rape and other wartime sexual crimes.

### Rape as a weapon of war and the institutionalisation of rape

'Rape as a weapon of war' refers to sexual violence as having a systematic, pervasive, or officially orchestrated aspect, emphasising that rapes "are not random acts, but appear to be carried out as deliberate policy" (Buss 2009). Charlotte Proudman pointed out that rape is used conquer territory, expel the enemy, break their network links and spread disease. "The methods of persecution", according to Charlotte Proudman, "are beyond bloody and gory – they are abhorrent. Rapists have been known to insert rats and mice into women's vaginas" (Proudman 2013).

Lindsay Crider argues that the conception of 'rape as a weapon of war' and not a consequence of war has laid the groundwork for the legal recognition of rape as a crime by the Rwanda and Yugoslav

Tribunals. “The use of rape in Bosnia and Rwanda was a clearly defined method of war” (Crider 2009). Helke Sander argued that, “all the mass rapes mentioned [Bangladesh, Uganda, Iran] were simply too far from Europe to frighten us” (Crider 2012) because Europe was considered as the model of civilisation and modernisation while the rapes in other places are considered inevitable as these people are not developed or civilised enough.

### According to a 1996 UNICEF Report

“Rape and other forms of violence against women have added its own brand of shame. Systematic rape is carried out as a method of war during ethnic cleansing. Apart from rape, women are also victim to forced prostitution and trafficking many times with the complicity of the government. During WW II, the Japanese forces abducted and imprisoned to be used as sex providers” (UNICEF 1996).

The rape of Bosnian Muslim women during the Bosnian Civil War was systematically orchestrated and widespread. Although no official orders (i.e. memos, documents, speeches) have been found, and which are not necessary either, commanding the soldiers to rape women. It is evident from the testimonies of individual soldiers to the women conveys orders from top. The language used by the soldiers clearly indicates whether mass rapes were coordinated and systematic. Similar phrases were being uttered during rapes across the country. Jody Williams<sup>1</sup> is of the opinion that we already have enough proof of rape being used as a weapon or method of war and we don't need further. She argued, “We don't need more research or more proof, we need a plan” (Wolfe 2013).

The following testimonies clearly show how rape was orchestrated and had the support and order from above. A rapist said that they were ordered to rape the girls; some women were made to tell other people that they were raped though they were not, one rapist told a woman that she was been raped because she was a Muslim and they were too many of them, while other rapist confessed that they have to rape in order to avoid being killed (Crider 2012)

Men in Syria are more than just witnesses to the sexualized violence against women; they too are experiencing it directly. Rape as a method of war, appears to being utilized during in horrifyingly soul-crushing and abhorrent ways. They don't stop with simply raping the detainees, *shabiha*<sup>2</sup> members or Syrian army soldiers have carried out massive rapes of family members or other women front of prisoners (Wolfe 2013). All these inhuman and gory acts are done to break the morale of the opposing camps. The body of a woman is seen as the territory and honour of man and the violation of a woman's body is considered as a humiliation to the family or the community.

Rape and sexual violence in war and conflict is institutionalised and has always been institutionalised. The institutionalisation of rape and other sex crimes is not devoid of evidence. The best to start with (though there have been before) because of the large scale and the degree of severity would be the 1937 "The Rape of Nanking". The atrocities that the Japanese forces committed especially the large scale rape of young women and girls, and the barbaric treatment of the general population-created an outcry in the international press. The press reports of the Rape of Nanking reached Emperor Hirohito, who was appalled by the negative image of the Imperial Army that the incident had created. As a result **comfort**

<sup>1</sup> Jody Williams is an American political activist known around the world for her work in banning anti-personnel landmines, her defence of human rights – especially those of women – and her efforts to promote new understandings of security in today's world. She was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1997 for her work toward the banning and clearing of anti-personnel mines.

<sup>2</sup> *Shabiha* are groups of armed men in civilian clothing who act in support of the Ba'ath Party government of Syria, led by the Al-Assad family. The *shabiha* have allegedly attacked Syrian opposition protesters and rebels during the Syrian civil war. The Syrian opposition, several foreign governments, and human rights groups all state that the *shabiha* are a tool of the government for cracking down on dissent. Syria's National Organization for Human Rights has stated that some of the *shabiha* are mercenaries

stations were set up. The Japanese army also forcibly abducted women and girls both in the colonies and the occupied territories and murder family members who tried to defend the women from being taken.

### War on women's body in India's Northeast

The Armed Forces Special Power Act (AFSPA), which has been in operation has given impunity to the security forces and have goaded them from whatever deeds and violence they perpetrates on the people of northeast. It has been rightly described '*an abomination*' to India by Sanjoy Hazarika (Hazarika 2013). Access to women's body and free rape that is available seems to be the reward or bounty in kind for the security personnel to work and stay in the cursed land of northeast. By free rape, I mean the rape and other forms of sexual violence committed against women by the security personnels (the Indian Army) that have become an everyday activity in the so called '*disturbed areas*' and has been taken for granted because of the impunity that covered the military from any judicial proceedings against them. The real problem lies not in the disturbed nature of these areas but how the means taken to solve these issues is causing more disturbances. Gerard Niell pointed out in his '*Duty, Honor, Rape: Sexual Assault Against Women During War*' that there were rape everywhere during the Vietnam War: from the individual rape of bar room girls in Saigon to the mass rape and murder of dozens of civilian women in the village of My Lai. What is even more is the fact that the American military was involved in commercial sex business. The Pentagon knowingly allowed the formation of brothels and also organised *sex tours* for military officials. This is particularly interesting because this was considered necessary and allowed to keep the soldiers going in fighting the unpopular war (Neill 2000). Is this what we are seeing toady in India in northeast and Kashmir? Is the Indian government giving a free hand to the military to commit sexual crimes and other forms of crimes without being penalised a form of incentive in kind? From the mass rape in Oinam<sup>3</sup> to the rape and murder of Manorama Devi and the naked rally<sup>4</sup>, what has the Indian government done to protect the women of these disturbed areas? Nothing. It is more than nothing; the Indian state is facilitating the rape and exploitation of more women by giving free hand to the military with the AFSPA drenched with abomination and impunity. William Hague in his '*Ending Wartime Rape*' pointed out that "rape tends to be treated as a secondary issue by the international community when responding to conflict. As a result, survivors are neglected, funding is insufficient or simply withheld, and perpetrators roam free". He further argues that as the perpetrators often or always continue living with impunity, we need to have strong measures to deal with this atrocious wartime crime.

What strikes us even more is the fact that the people of this place have come to live with the situation. The people in this place do not realise that their rights and security have been violated, not because they are stupid but because they have being living a life of fear and agony and darkness and have internalised it. For them this is the reality and they assume that that this is how life is.

There are many movements and organizations working in the area to improve the situation and get justice to the people. But like everywhere else, the issue of rape and other sexual violence has come to be seeing as a social issue. Organizations like Meira Paibi<sup>5</sup>, Naga Mothers Association<sup>6</sup> among others are

<sup>3</sup> In 1987 the NSCN-IM, a Naga underground group attacked the camp of the 21<sup>st</sup> Assam Rifles and managed to run off with some ammunitions. As a counter to that, 'Operation Bluebird' was launched where massive and outrages human rights violations took place. Many women were raped and several others were made to deliver babies in full view of the jawans and men were tortured and beaten up beyond limit

<sup>4</sup> A group of women, bared all in front of the Western Gate of Kangla, where the 9 Sector Assam Rifles and 17 AR were housed, to lodge their protest against the killing of Thangjam Manorama by the army on the claim that she was a part of some insurgent groups. She was allegedly raped and they were wounds on her genitals.

<sup>5</sup> Meira paibi literally means "women with flaming torches". It is the largest grassroots, civilian movement fighting state atrocities and human rights violations in Manipur, comprising virtually the entire adult Meitei female population in every Meitei town and village. It is the watchdog of civil rights violations at the community level, initiating and engaging in campaigns against rights violations, such as arbitrary detention, cordon and search operations, and torture, committed by the security personnel of the federal government of India.

outstanding ones and they shared the Times of India 2012 Social Impact Award for 'A Lifetime of Inspiring Work'. The major concerns voiced by these organizations have more to do with social justice and not from security perspective. The reason behind these organizations and others taking a social justice perspective and not as a security issue could be explained by the fact that security have been defined in very narrow and parochial terms and has not encompassed the insecurity that women faced in their everyday lives.

## CONCLUSIONS

As evident from the above, the traditional concept of security (as is usually understood) has come under attack from several quarters. Security in the traditional sense, has failed to explained the why the insecurity faced by women and other marginalised sections of the society have not been addressed. The concept of security itself is greatly under peril and needs to be expanded and reformulated to make it more comprehensive and inclusive. This is where the feminist concept of security comes in. The feminist concept of security as opposed to the traditional notion of security includes multidimensional or multilevel terms – as the diminution of all forms of violence, including physical, structural, and ecological. One aspect of insecurity which has never been addressed by the traditional notion of security is the issue of sexual violence against women manifested in the forms of rape, sex slavery or forced prostitution. It is assumed that there are more important and serious things to take care of and also these issues are considered as the inevitable outcome or consequence of war.

Time and again few concerned and informed people have shown that rape is a method or a weapon of war. as Jody Williams pointed out that we don't need evidence but a plan, we have uncountable evidence from the comfort women of the Japanese of the WW II to the mass rape of Bosnian Muslim women to that of Rwandan women to the rape of Bangladeshi to the rape of women in India's northeast and Kashmir with all impunity where rape is not a rape, the list is endless. There is no reason as to why rape should not be considered a security issue. But this has not gone down well with our leaders and strategist and rape, as it seems, is not a threat big enough to merit their attention as they have more important things to do. The concept of security has become a non concept with this kind of attitude which allows the perpetrators of gory inhumane acts to do so.

The impunity that the draconian law called AFSPA carries around have shattered the lives of the people of northeast India. In this place called the northeast, rape is not a rape, any armed forces personnel can kill anyone of their choice, the only word they need to utter is 'insurgents' or even better said 'militants'. Everything will come to place with the utterance of either of these two words. This is security in the Indian terms and context. The whole community lives in utter darkness and uncertainty. You can be picked up or shot anytime any day, so it seems we always have to be ready. Women folk have to be even more patriotic and be ready to sacrifice for the great country even to the extent of losing their chastity and modesty because here rape is not a rape (Freny 2013). The Indian army have overriding rights, they are above the law and the Indian judicial system cannot call them for explanation as they are above the law itself. This is the security the people get from the state. So it is time we think or consider redefine security.

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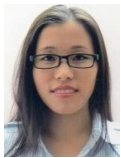
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<sup>6</sup> The Naga Mothers Association (NMA) was formed in 1984 in response to the drug and alcohol addiction ravaging Nagaland at the time. Through the 1980s and 1990s, NMA addressed the violence that tore Nagaland apart: atrocities by the Indian army against Naga groups and civilians, and then years of fratricidal killings between various Naga factions. The motto of NMA is "shed no more blood".



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