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"There is a War Going on You Know": Addressing the Complexity of Violence Against Women in Conflicted and Post Conflict Societies

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**“There is a War Going on You Know”:
Addressing the Complexity of Violence Against Women
in Conflicted and Post Conflict Societies***

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Despite a growing awareness of the universality of intimate partner violence and its recognition as a human rights violation, much less is known about the dynamics, as well as the specific forms and regulation of this violence in conflict and post conflict settings. While substantial legal consideration has been given to sexual violence occurring during armed conflict,¹ specifically to rape, arguably a concentration on high-profile extraordinary violence has diverted attention from the regular violence that women routinely experience in conflict and post-conflict societies. Our knowledge gap limits what we understand generally about the multidimensional complexities of

* The quote in our title is drawn from numerous interviews with support providers in Northern Ireland reporting what women were told on reporting domestic violence incidents to the police during the course of the conflict in Northern Ireland. Professor Ní Aoláin acknowledges the support of a British Academy Small Research Grant in enabling the completion of this work.

¹ See e.g. Kelly Dawn Askin, *War Crimes Against Women: Prosecution in International War Crimes Tribunals* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff Publishers, 1997); Kathleen M. Pratt and Laurel E. Fletcher, “Time for Justice: The Case for International Prosecutions of Rape and Gender-Based Violence in the Former Yugoslavia,” *Berkeley Women’s Law Journal* 9 (1994); Denise Aydelott, “Mass Rape During War: Prosecuting Bosnian Rapists Under International Law,” *Emory International Law Review* 7 (1993).

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intimate violence in conflict settings.² It also obscures the relationship between various categories of gender-based violence and the ways in which certain forms and practices of violence reinforce and sustain others. The importance of deeper investigation and theorization is underscored by the pervasiveness of armed conflict in multiple jurisdictions, with attendant loss of life and physical injuries, institutional and environmental destruction, massive refugee flows, and the tendency of conflict to be persistent, cyclical and intergenerational. Deeper understanding of intimate partner and domestic violence, and its connection to conflict-related sexual violence, is also central to advancing sustained legal accountability for gender-based violence in a manner that might transform continual impunity for a wide range of gender-based harms.

What is known about intimate partner violence in conflict settings is fragmented.³ At its core, this article contends that there are unexplored connections between the general phenomenon of intimate violence and the forms of gendered violence that emerge in time of armed conflict.⁴ We assert that conflict related forms of

² On multidimensional theory generally see Darren Lenard Hutchinson, “‘Gay Rights’ for ‘Gay Whites’? Race, Sexual Identity and Equal Protection Discourse,” *Cornell Law Review* 85 (2000): 1358.; Peter Kwan, “Jeffrey Dahmer and the Cosynthesis of Categories,” *Hastings Law Journal* 48 (1997): 1257.; Francisco Valdes, “Beyond Sexual Orientation in Queer Legal Theory: Majoritarianism, Multidimensionality, and Responsibility in Social Justice Scholarship or Legal Scholars as Cultural Warriors,” *Denver University Law Review* 75.4 (1998): 1409.

³ The small amount of available research is dispersed across multiple disciplines and includes Shireen Assaf & Stephanie Chaban, “Violence Against Single Never Married Women in the Occupied Palestinian Territories,” *Violence Against Women* 19.3 (2013): 422-441; Janie Leatherman, “Sexual Violence and Armed Conflict: complex dynamics of re-victimization,” *International Journal of Peace Studies* 12.1 (2007): 25; Jinan Usta, Jo Ann M. Farver and Lama Zein, “Women, War, and Violence: Surviving the Experience,” *Journal of Women’s Health* 17.5 (2008): 793-804; Greta Friedmann-Sánchez, “Intimate Partner Violence in Colombia: Who is at Risk?” *Social Forces* (2012): 1-26.

⁴ For the purposes of this analysis we include both Common Article 2 conflicts (conflicts between states) as covered by the four Geneva Conventions and internal armed conflicts as regulated by 1977 Protocol II Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions. The four

violation are frequently seen as a distinct concern from 'regular' intimate violence and subsequently, theoretical and practical links with human security and human rights are ignored. This article provides a more holistic analysis of the phenomena, showing the connections between different types of intimate partner violence and how these are conceptualised and problematized. We make greater theoretical and practical linkages between conflict and non-conflict intimate violence, teasing out connections between both. We argue that it is fundamentally contradictory to address one form of violence without the other. From such connections follow a number of practical consequences, not least in terms of the modalities of legal accountability, whether domestic, hybrid or international criminal law processes. We particularly identify the challenges to enabling legal interventions and protection for women from intimate violence in situations of on-going hostilities. The impact of cultural and political factors on the lives of those experiencing abusive relationships is also contextualized with primary data gathered in conflict and post-conflict Northern Ireland, encompassing violence emanating from both state and non-state actors.⁵

Conventions are: *Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field*, 6 U.S.T. 3114, 75 U.N.T.S. 31; *Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of Wounded, Sick and Shipwrecked Members of Armed Forces at Sea*, 6 U.S.T. 3217, 75 U.N.T.S. 85; *Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War*, 6 U.S.T. 3316, 75 U.N.T.S. 135; *Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War*, 6 U.S.T. 3516, 75 U.N.T.S. 287 (1950); Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Protection of Victims in International Armed Conflicts, Annex I, U.N. Doc. A/32/144 (June 8, 1977), in 16 I.L.M. 1391 (1977).

⁵ Our primary reliance is on the study by Monica McWilliams and Lynda Spence, *Taking Domestic Violence Seriously: Issues For the Criminal and Civil Justice System* (Belfast: HSMO, 1996).; more recent data is drawn from Anne McMurray, *Women's Experience of Violence: Mapping Experiences and Responses A Pilot Study* (2009). This study was commissioned by the Women's Centres Regional Partnership (WCRP) to expand qualitative research into women's experience of violence in Northern Ireland in 2009. The research project involved a sample of 15 frontline organizations across Northern Ireland. The narrative phase of the research generated 38 stories of women's experiences of violence.

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The article claims that women, having experienced the compounded vulnerabilities of public and private violence, in conflicted and peaceful societies, seek a different understanding of security; one that includes the social and relational aspects of security framed in the context of their holistic human rights. Transitions from conflict (and the peace processes that accompany them) provide unique opportunities for social transformation, facilitating a move away from institutional and patriarchal responses to more contextualised approaches reflecting the lived experiences of women. While much of the accountability action lies in the sphere of narrowly defined conflict-related sexual violence, our analysis makes the strong claim that only by addressing a wider domain of gender-based violence will peace building and transitional justice processes deliver transformative change to women's lives in rifted societies. Moreover our analysis underscores the limitations of criminal law models as the primary means to cohesively address the causes conducive to the production of gender-based violence in conflicted societies. Part I of this article addresses the range and forms of violence experienced by women in conflicted societies and charts the connections between what falls within the public 'armed conflict' sphere and what is deemed to be captured by the private sphere. Part II, explores the conceptual and practical connections between conflict-related vulnerabilities and those experienced by women as a routine part of their ordinary lives. A broad framing of gendered security is undertaken in order to broaden hegemonic conversations about the intersection of women's human rights protections and post-conflict accountability that focus only on sexual harms to the female body, particularly in the aftermath of conflict. Part III, moves to concrete analysis drawing on a wide-ranging empirical study undertaken in Northern Ireland. Here, we illustrate the cleavages in post-conflict conversations that prioritize accountability for certain kinds of 'public' harms whilst minimizing the visibility of others. We underscore that a symbiotic relationship exists between the actors and modalities of armed conflict and the experiences and challenges women face in reporting intimate violence in the context of war.

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Identifying a spectrum of violence against women in conflict settings

Social conflict is common in societies of all kinds but in some sites, the threshold of that violence reaches the legal and political requirement to categorize the experience as one of armed conflict.⁶ Equally common across all societies is enduring violence against women.⁷ The connections between conflict-related violence in general, conflict related violence directed specifically at women and intimate violence before and during conflict remains largely unexplored empirically and theoretically.⁸ The phenomenon of intimate violence poses deep challenges in societies that are referred to as 'divided' and 'conflicted', which may (or may not) have an overlap with societies that reach the armed conflict thresholds.⁹ Social scientists have explored many aspects of violent behaviour in conflicted and divided societies but intimate partner violence is consistently less likely to be in their analytical sights.¹⁰ This selectivity in emphasis on the phenomena of violence has its own gendered

⁶ See Geneva Conventions 1949 and Additional Protocols. Other conflict status measurements include the PRIO/Uppsala Armed Conflict Dataset which measures international and civil conflicts: <http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/datasets/>.

⁷ See e.g. World Health Organization, *World Report on Violence and Health*, http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/world_report/en/summary_en.pdf; for U.S. statistics on violence against women see National Organization for Women, <http://www.now.org/issues/violence/>; for Canadian statistics see Tina Hotton Mahony, "Women and the Criminal Justice System in Canada," *Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report* (Statistics Canada, 2010), <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-503-x/2010001/article/11416-eng.pdf>.

⁸ Catherine O'Rourke has described the complexity of public and private harms as constituting a "web of harms." See Catherine O'Rourke, *Gender Politics and Transitional Justice* (Routledge, 2013): 38.

⁹ Divided societies are those where there is deep social conflict adhering around rigid cleavages such as religion, ethnicity, race or national origin.

¹⁰ See, inter alia, Patrick Ball, Herbert F. Spier and Louise Spier, *Making the Case: Investigating Large Scale Human Rights Violations Using Information Systems and Data Analysis* (Washington D.C.: American Association for the Advancement of Science, 2000); Louis Bickford et al., *Documenting Truth* (International Center for Transitional Justice, 2009), <http://ictj.org/sites/default/files/ICTJ-DAG-Global-Documenting-Truth-2009-English.pdf>.

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fault-lines,¹¹ underscoring the on-going challenges that women face in making the harms they experience visible.

The categorization of certain kinds of acts as ‘private’ and not ‘public’ is a fundamentally gendered process that has been exposed by feminist scholars as illustrating the challenges to enabling female centred harms to be legally ‘counted’.¹² The arbitrary nature of such distinctions in conflict settings ignores the linkages between the violence generated by (generally male) combatants in the public sphere,¹³ and the violence perpetrated by combatants (and other men) in the private sphere. Moreover, the distinction ignores the continuities of violence for women,¹⁴ and under-appreciates the

¹¹ See for example a selection of literature on method in social science research methodology, whose tilt to gender neutrality not infrequently *de facto* excludes the experiences of women. Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR), *Guide to Social Science Data Preparation and Archiving: Best Practice Throughout the Data Life Cycle*, 5th ed. (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 2012) <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/files/ICPSR/access/dataprep.pdf>; Norman Blaikie, *Designing Social Science Research: The Logic of Anticipation*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009). In the context of data based forms to assess violence, an invariable exclusion of violence against women permeates multiple disciplines.

¹² Hilary Charlesworth, Christine Chinkin and Shelly Wright Charlesworth, “Feminist Approaches to International Law,” *American Journal of International Law* 85 (1991): 613.

¹³ Note the work of Laura Sjoberg on civilian targeting which argues that the civilian/combatant distinction, fundamental to the operational premise of the law of armed conflict, contains a fundamental skew that exposes civilians (who are *de facto* primarily women and children in most conflicted societies) to greater harm. Laura Sjoberg and Jessica Peet, “A(nother) Dark Side of the Protection Racket,” *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 13.2 (2011): 163-182.

¹⁴ Aisling Swaine, “Transition or Transformation: An Analysis of Pre, During and Post-Conflict Violence Against Women in Northern Ireland, Liberia and Timor-Leste,” (Ph.D. diss., University of Ulster, 2011), on file with authors. The pervasive co-existence of private and public violence is illustrated by the study undertaken by Usta et al., “Women, War, and Violence: Surviving the Experience,” 797-799, measuring how Lebanese women were affected by the July 2006 conflict that erupted between Hezbollah and the State of Israel. In the participant group of 310 women, with variable exposure to the conflict 89% had to leave their homes during the violence as a result of safety concerns, 39% reported at least one encounter with violence perpetrated by soldiers, and 27% reported at least one incidence of

extent to which women are the on-going targets of multidimensional violence before, during and after violent political conflicts.¹⁵ Harkening to a public/private divide in conflict settings serves to obscure the persistence and depth of conflict and non-conflict violence for women.¹⁶ As we explore at greater length below, the upshot of the conceptual divide invariably leads to an incoherent splintering of the totality of violent experiences for women, a lack of synthesis in accounting for subjective traumatic experiences and ultimately a lack of cohesive accountability for women victims of intimate violence. In parallel, a tightly circumscribed notion of conflict-related sexual violence has triumphed in conflict discourses about women's bodies, and rape has emerged as the symbolic gatekeeper for atrocious conflict related harm.

Exploring the effects intrinsically related to politically motivated conflicts on intimate partner violence, researchers need to be especially vigilant as primary source data can be distorted by the conflict itself. This is in part a product of what data can be collected during the course of armed hostilities, making access to certain sites and geographies challenging, as well as accessing certain communities that may be more or less visible to those likely to be in the information collection business. High levels of displacement and destruction, combined with low levels of safety, make information gathering a risky proposition. It is also clear that multifaceted conflicts can mute certain kinds of complex narratives describing harm experienced during war. As Wilson notes in his analysis of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission;

What was lost in the data processing and the urge to generate acts that could be counted were the existential truths

domestic violence during the conflict, with 33% reporting at least one incident of domestic violence perpetrated after the conflict by a spouse or family member.

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ Undertaking a close analysis of DDR processes in Colombia, O'Rourke documents how local organizations have identified an alarming increase in levels of domestic violence as relationships were "forged or reignited between former combatants and members of the civilian population." O'Rourke, *Gender Politics and Transitional Justice*, 95.

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contained within complex narratives. The processors destroyed the integrity of the narrative by chopping it into segments and ‘capturing’ discrete acts and types of person. What was lost was the arc of personal history, the sense of trajectory of the story, where... killing by shooting might have been the culmination of a long process of detention, harassment and torture.¹⁷

Where a controlled vocabulary can “selectively classify social reality and in turn shape how that reality is analysed,”¹⁸ violence against women must shape itself to a universe of conflict related experience where legal and political language is attuned to certain kinds of action as constituting harm, and others not. Moreover, the fact of undulating political violence tends to obscure the breadth and depth of certain harms, not least because the state’s capacity to respond to, prevent and punish such harms will be obstructed by persistent communal violence.¹⁹ Non-responsiveness is also associated with the absence of formal recognition that certain harms, specifically violence against women, have a relationship to the conflict, are enabled by the conflict, and may ultimately escape notice and censure as a result of the omnipresence of armed violence.

Situating the centrality of cultural norms to the violence experienced by women makes visible the arrogation of the female body to political purpose in conflict settings. Such appropriation in conflict sites (whether in the guise of protective paternalism, cultural integrity claims or domination of the ‘other’ by all means including sex) mirrors the patterns we see in intimate relationships where the

¹⁷ Richard A. Wilson, *The Politics of Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa: Legitimizing the Post-Apartheid State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 47-48.

¹⁸ Wilson, *The Politics of Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa*, 47.

¹⁹ “Practices deployed and administered in the name of justice do not readily lend themselves to simple empirical evaluation. Justice is not easily observed or measured, its attached meanings and symbols cannot escape cultural particularity and it will always be the controversial subject of ideological and political contestation, rather than causal certitudes.” See Geoff Dancy, “Impact Assessment, Not Evaluation: Defining a Limited Role for Positivism in the Study of Transitional Justice,” *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 4.3 (2010): 355.

requisitioning of women's bodies by their partners fundamentally impairs their full social, political and economic capacities.²⁰ For practitioners who seek to respond to intimate violence, addressing the culture-conflict nexus is imperative to developing nuanced responses to intimate violence in conflict settings. As we know, cultures differ in how the experience of intimate violence produces variable repercussions for victims. Cultural beliefs on the role of women can accelerate or moderate its impact as, for example, in Latin America where Bunster-Burrotto notes that when a woman is sexually or physically assaulted or imprisoned in her home; "The protection and refuge of the home that she represents is shattered and the control and coherence she maintained in the intimate sphere of the household is shattered as well."²¹ Less fully explored is the influence of cultural factors in the reintegration of and remediation to women victims of sexual violence in conflict settings. The field research analysed below (*infra* III) suggests that the interplay of conflict and culture functions to further stigmatize and marginalize women, particularly in the context of ethno-national conflicts.

Cultural norms and political factors play a part in the categorization and determination process, deciding what is named as violence and influencing what gets counted as 'conflict-related' violence, 'ordinary' criminal violence, and intimate/family violence.²² The counting is not incidental and not merely about adding a particular label but is central to what issues gain elevated status as

²⁰ On the importance of the female body to discourses of honor and protection in armed conflict see, generally, Elizabeth D. Heinemann, ed., *Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones: From the Ancient World to the Era of Human Rights* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

²¹ Ximena Bunster-Burrotto, "Surviving Beyond Fear: Women and Torture in Latin America," in *Women and Violence*, ed. M. Davies (London: Zed, 1994), 156-175.

²² The challenge of 'counting' and 'categorization' is obviously not unique to sites of conflict but self-evidently have profound effects in sites of extremity in determining the legitimacy of force, and breaches of the law of armed conflict, international criminal law and domestic legal norms as applicable. See, generally, Jamie F. Metal, "Information Technology and Human Rights," *Human Rights Quarterly* 18.4 (1996): 705; Todd Landman, *Issues and Methods in Comparative Politics: An Introduction*, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 2008).

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serious human rights violations, what kinds of harms count for the purposes of intervention or military action, and what kinds of violations will be remedied by criminal accountability and by symbolic or monetary reparations. Since cultural norms, based on women's social and economic dependency, limit the victim's decision to leave an abusive relationship, or the ability to negotiate safer sex with her partner, we contend that these limitations will be exacerbated by political conflict.²³ Where civil disturbances cause death and destruction, further intended (or unintended) consequences could include the elimination of the victim's potential to leave a violent relationship. Displacement, destruction of residential homes and infrastructure and constrained choices of refuge close off exit options for women and children in armed conflict settings. Where communal violence results in the disappearance of paid labour, or where other support networks for women evaporate, the conflict itself can exaggerate the perpetrator's sense of entitlement and proprietary behaviour. This can intensify the brutality, repetitiveness and likelihood of physical and sexual violence particularly where the victim becomes increasingly isolated or where the domestic accountability mechanisms for this behaviour are no longer in place. Moreover, the increased militarization of everyday life in perpetually and publicly violent societies may "erode any notion of a private sphere for women free from the state's negative infringement of her bodily integrity."²⁴

Even where there is increased post-conflict accountability for conflict-related sexual violence through ad hoc international criminal tribunals, the International Criminal Court, and local courts, this does not translate to capturing the 'routine', entrenched and normalized

²³ See also Caroline Moser and Fiona C. Clark, eds. *Victims, Perpetrators or Actors? Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence*, (London: Zed, 2001). An emerging body of health-based literature is making important linkages between trauma, conflict, stress and intimate violence. See Kenneth E. Miller and Andrew Rasmussen, "War Exposure, daily stressors, and mental health in conflict and post conflict settings: Bridging the Divide between trauma focused and psychosocial frameworks," *Social Science and Medicine* 70.1 (2009): 7-16.

²⁴ O'Rourke, *Gender Politics and Transitional Justice*, 38.

violence which women regularly experience in conflicted societies. Moreover, practice to date suggests that increased international criminal justice for women has not made the essential link between ordinary and 'extra-ordinary' violence, and may serve to heighten the invisibility of the former by elevating the political visibility of the latter. Norm diffusion from international criminal law to domestic legal systems is gathering pace²⁵ but it remains very unclear if the translation is a broad one bringing holistic and textured definitions of gendered harm to the fore. The evidence suggests precisely the opposite with deep cleavages being sustained between routine, ordinary, everyday sex-based violence against women and sexual violence that is captured under the titles of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

In the context of intimate partner violence, conflict may bring added vulnerability to rape and sexual abuse with the appropriation of women's bodies symbolising accentuated power. In particular, in some ethno-national conflicts, women's bodies are targeted as a method and means of warfare, to enable men to communicate with other men about the loss or gain of power and control within the state.²⁶ In a context where women's bodies come to symbolize the nation itself, then the female body takes on a heightened political significance — the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda illustrating how the ethnicity of the child a woman bears becomes barter in the violent tactics between some male combatants. Female bodies matter in conflict, and have symbolic, utilitarian and political purpose. However, it bears reminding that even in 'normal' societies, rape in the context of an intimate partnership, the most private of all

²⁵ Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, "Gendered Harms and their Interface with International Criminal Law: Norms, Challenges and Domestication," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* (forthcoming 2014). The definition of norm diffusion relied upon here draws on Beth Simmons, Frank Dobbin and Geoff Garrett, "The International Diffusion of Liberalism," *International Organizations* 60.4 (2006): 787, describing diffusion as a process whereby actions and choices in one country are "systematically conditioned by prior policy choices made elsewhere in the world".

²⁶ See Helke Sander in the Prologue to *Mass Rape: The War Against Women in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, ed. Alexandra Stiglmyer (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 2-18.

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rape, can share some of these characteristics. It may be repetitive and brutal, and be used to assert authority, and can force a woman to flee her home and community. It can also have potent political power to ensure the on-going hegemony of certain kinds of masculinity in highly gender-stratified societies. It is not solely the act of rape but the threat of the act, and its omnipresent reality for many women in societies where exit is sealed off, that enables and sustains male patriarchy.²⁷ Violation by a state (soldier) or non-state actor (paramilitary) is not necessarily more devastating than violation by an intimate. In both contexts, it is used as a weapon for demoralisation and humiliation. So, our analysis encourages scholars and policy makers to think less in terms of a clear binary between ‘ordinary’ intimate violence and ‘exceptional’ intimate violence in times of armed conflict,²⁸ but to encourage reflection on the continuities and similarities that both forms possess.

Compounding Vulnerabilities In Zones of Conflict

As Martha Fineman has cogently argued, “vulnerability is—and should be understood to be—universal and constant, inherent in the human condition.”²⁹ Vulnerability is also deeply gendered. Part of that gendered association has linked vulnerability with victimhood, dependency and pathology.³⁰ Fineman argues that we should accept the inevitability of vulnerability, thereby reclaiming the term for its

²⁷ Catharine MacKinnon, *Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987).

²⁸ This distinction is further exacerbated by linking sexual violence in war to a right to access abortion by some states, but it is the selective emphasis on the right to abortion that should be underscored here. The analysis is premised on the worst harm, rape in war, and not as a general right of the autonomous female subject. See “United Kingdom Pledges to Ensure Abortion Access for Women Raped in War,” Association for Women’s Rights in Development, <http://www.awid.org/News-Analysis/Women-s-Rights-in-the-News2/United-Kingdom-Pledges-to-ensure-Abortion-Access-for-Women-raped-in-War>.

²⁹ Martha Albertson Fineman, “The Vulnerable Subject: Anchoring Equality in the Human Condition,” *Yale Journal of Law and Feminism* 20 (2008-2009): 1.

³⁰ Vulnerability has been linked to victimhood, dependency, and pathology—all of which can be used to define particular gendered groups.

“potential in describing a universal, inevitable, enduring aspect of the human condition that must be at the heart of our concept of social and state responsibility.”³¹ Accepting the inevitability of vulnerability is a useful lens to think about and respond to the nexus of gender and armed conflict. Armed conflict creates a compound effect on pre-existing gendered vulnerabilities. Recognizing this compound effect is a means to further problematize the relationship between ‘ordinary’ intimate violence and the presumed ‘extra-ordinariness’ of intimate violence in conflict settings. The symbiotic relationship between both these phenomena is not well mapped and the relationship between both is critical to understanding outcomes and the lived experience of women victims of intimate violence in conflict and post-conflict settings. Macklin, among others, explores these compounded vulnerabilities and the multidimensionality of harms by showing the links between the abusive power of multinational companies in conflict zones and the manipulation of power within intimate relationships.³² The Sudanese example upon which she draws underscores the variety of source points that produce, enable and support violence against women, and the complementary patriarchies in play in such settings.³³ Exploring the

³¹ Fineman, “The Vulnerable Subject,” 8.

³² Audrey Macklin, “Like Oil and Water, with a Match: Militarized Commerce, Armed Conflict, and Human Security in Sudan” in *Sites of Violence: Gender and Conflict Zones*, ed. Winona Giles and Jennifer Hyndman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004). Using the example of a Canadian oil company in Southern Sudan, Macklin shows the impact of global capital investment on human displacement and explains how security has been redefined, not as the protection of human rights, but as the protection of oil company stock prices. The different stages of the women’s vulnerability are linked up; first their displacement from their land by the oil company, in collusion with the Sudanese military, then their move northwards to avoid being kidnapped as sexual slaves, and finally their arrest for selling illegal alcohol on the streets of Khartoum. The members of the Canadian task force, of which Macklin was one, were sent to investigate the potential abuse of human rights by the oil company. When the taskforce’s report met with little success, it raised serious questions about the complicity of the Canadian state in the war in Sudan.

³³ Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, “Women, Security and the Patriarchy of Internationalized Transitional Justice,” *Human Rights Quarterly* 31.4 (2009); Brandon Hamber et al.,

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conflation of vulnerability from multinational companies, conflict actors and unwitting international institutions also underscores the need to interrogate concepts such as 'human security' and to broaden the analysis of what constitutes security in a conflict zone, from a feminist perspective.

Security or its absence in conflict and post-conflict societies deeply and unrelentingly affects women's daily lives.³⁴ Women are consistently excluded from decision-making related to the security of their environment, their bodies and their lives in conflict and transitional settings. Gender based exclusions from security discourses and practices are not unusual. But if one starts by challenging the assumption that women's security and men's security are identical in conflict/post-conflict settings a variety of standard

"Discourses in Transition: Re-Imagining Women's Security," *International Studies* 20.4 (2006).

³⁴ Madeline Rees, "International Intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina: The Cost of Ignoring Gender" in *The Post-War Moment: Militaries, Masculinities and International Peacekeeping*, eds. Dubravka Zarkov and Cynthia Cockburn (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 2002), 51-57; Lori Handrahan, "Conflict, Gender Ethnicity and Post-Conflict Reconstruction," *Security Dialogue* 35.4 (2004): 433. In the Irish context the Women's Aid organization which provides refuge and support to victims of domestic violence, highlighted the plight of Bosnian women forced to seek asylum in the Republic of Ireland as a result of the Balkans war who were then re-victimised by their husbands venting their frustration at the 'powerlessness' of their new situation. Staff member of Women's Aid, interviewed by author (McWilliams), 2006. Lack of access to public funds in many states mean that conflict-related refugee or asylum seekers who are also victims of domestic violence have to be declared 'destitute' and, in the process of claiming social security, frequently face institutional barriers layered with racism and sexism. See Monica McWilliams and Priyam Yarnell, *The Protection and Rights of Black Minority Ethnic Women Experiencing Domestic Violence in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities, 2013). We stress that a substantive contemporary challenge for women, seeking asylum and refuge, or for wives depending on their husband's visa for residence who then leave the marital home, is that they have no recourse to public funds in many states willing to provide refugee or asylum status, see Róisín Devlin and Sórcha McKenna, *No Home from Home: Homelessness for People with No or Limited Access to Public Funds* (Belfast: Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, 2009), <http://www.statewatch.org/news/2009/aug/n-ireland-nihrc-no-home-from-home.pdf>.

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conflict/post-conflict approaches become more complex.³⁵ As research on women's security highlights, there are numerous obstacles in the post-conflict and transitional political environment to meaningful security for women.³⁶ Such obstacles include the lack of a secure physical environment, making it dangerous for women to function in any meaningful sense in the public sphere for fear of harm. It invariably involves a particular vulnerability to sex-based violence that is unchecked by the formal end of hostilities or the regime change. When these realities are allied with a lack of political acknowledgement for gender specific harms, it gives credence to the need for a wider and more embracing notion of security beyond a narrow militaristic and state-oriented approach.

Strong theoretical challenges have been mounted to the dominance of state-based approaches to security studies by asserting that individual and societal approaches to security can give greater insight into the structural causes of violence and conflict, thereby realigning how the approach to conflict resolution and transition is constructed.³⁷ From these studies, some central insights are highly relevant to the ideas explored here. The work of Johan Galtung and Kenneth Boulding was amongst the first to assert the need to acknowledge both individual and social elements of security.³⁸ Galtung in particular emphasized that peace did not simply mean the absence of war—it was also related to the establishment of the conditions for social justice. His views on violence are particularly valuable, noting that violence is all those “unavoidable insults to basic human needs, and more generally to *life*, lowering the real level of

³⁵ See Mary Caprioli, “Democracy and Human Rights versus Women's Security: A Contradiction,” *Security Dialogue* 35.4 (2004): 411.

³⁶ Pinar Bilgin, “International Politics of Women's (In)security: Rejoinder to Mary Caprioli,” *Security Dialogue* 35.4 (2004): 499; Vanessa Farr, “Gendering Demilitarization as a Peacebuilding Tool” (Bonn: Bonn International Center for Conversion, 2002).

³⁷ See Pinar Bilgin, “Individual and Societal Dimensions of Security,” *International Studies Review* 5 (2002): 203.

³⁸ See Johan Galtung, “Violence, Peace and Peace Research,” *Journal of Peace Research* 6 (1969): 167.; Kenneth E. Boulding, *Stable Peace* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978).

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needs satisfaction below what is potentially possible.”³⁹ From this he constructs a key distinction between negative and positive peace. He argues that the absence of armed conflict can be defined as negative peace and positive peace means the absence of both direct physical violence and indirect structural and cultural violence.⁴⁰

This position has a strong resonance with the argument advanced here, namely that projecting a narrow focus on particular forms of physical violence to the person, and to a particular specific context of such violence (namely its occurrence by armed actors during active conflict) ignores a much wider range of institutional and structural elements that may cause greater harms to society as a whole and to women in particular. A key element infusing a critique of the dominant language of security is that the emphasis on direct physical violence (generally specific to defined periods of conflict) tends to exclude the broader relevance of the language of security for women.⁴¹ For many women, the relationship between the public ‘conflict-related’ physical violence experienced during conflict and the experience of intimate violence are not discontinuous realities but, rather, part of one singular experience that is not compartmentalized. Furthermore, recent work suggests that violence against women not only persists but “even increases beyond pre-war levels and sometimes even beyond wartime levels.”^{42,43} Thus, accountability for

³⁹ See Johan Galtung, *Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization* (SAGE Publications Ltd, 1996): 197, (emphasis in the original).

⁴⁰ Galtung, *Peace by Peaceful Means*, 32. See further, Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, “Political Violence and Gender in Times of Transition,” *Columbia Journal of Gender and Law* 15.3 (2006): 829.

⁴¹ See further, Fionnuala NíAoláin, “Political Violence and Gender in Times of Transition,” *Columbia Journal of Gender and Law* 15 (2006): 829.

⁴² Donna Pankhurst, “Post-War Backlash Violence against Women: What Can Masculinity Explain?” in *Gendered Peace: Women’s Struggles for Post-War Justice and Reconciliation*, ed. Donna Pankhurst (New York: Routledge, 2008); Friedemann-Sanchez study of intimate violence in Colombia based on the 2005 Demographic Health Survey shows interesting and relevant findings. First a diminished probability of inter-personal violence when the respondent migrated due to the armed conflict, but also reporting and integrating further studies evidencing that 44.3% of conflict-displaced women have been physically abused by their intimate partners; see Heinemann, ed., *Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones*. Evidence is also that

violence may not have the same end point for women in the post-conflict/transitional environment as it may have for male combatants or male political actors. This means that the formal ending of hostilities between combatants which is generally the end-point for traditional conversations about breaches of the law of armed conflict, sufficient to merit an accountability nexus, entirely exclude violence against women continuing past the point of ceasefire and armistice agreements. This central insight ought to profoundly redefine how we come to determine what constitutes security in the post-conflict environment and whose securities are being advanced by a narrow, as opposed to a broad, definition. A more nuanced analysis of human security helps us to think about the ways in which power is negotiated, forcing women into different kinds of economic dependency and increasing their vulnerability to violence from men known and unknown to them. Framing it in this way, the relationship between broader strategies of empowerment for women including strong anti-discrimination enforcement underpins and is organically connected to both conflict related and intimate violence.

We further assert a relationship between gender-compounded vulnerability and the conflict and post-conflict dynamics in which control over fertility, reproduction and reproductive health is asserted by both state and non-state actors.⁴⁴ Forced impregnation of women during conflict (or its threat) can help ensure that women remain in a subordinate role, dependent on their (male) partners throughout a conflict period, thereby re-inscribing gender roles and stereotypes. In post conflict settings, dependency roles are frequently elevated to the level of national policy. The impact of this has been documented in countries where, following independence, families with many children are favoured in subsequent taxation and social policies, reinforcing the power of fathers and husbands within the family. In Croatia, for example, women's roles were defined in terms of demographic renewal, where women became the 'birthers' of children

interpersonal violence worsens among women whose partners are combatants or ex-combatants. Usta et al., "Women, War, and Violence: Surviving the Experience."

⁴³ O'Rourke, *Gender Politics and Transitional Justice*.

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to create the new 'nation' and in terms of spiritual renewal, where women returned to the home as full-time mothers to raise these children into nationhood.⁴⁵ This analysis confirms that the transition can be a backwards move for women,⁴⁶ namely that after war and conflict there is a great urge to bring back a 'normality'. Such normality is deeply gender coded. In societies with strong cultural pathways that are socially conservative, this points to a scenario that brings women backwards (literally). Thus there is a continuing circularity to the centrality of women's bodies as targets and trophies in war and the post-conflict control exerted over the reproductive function of the woman's body in the post-war social order.

For example, where pro-natalism is enforced as a state policy, to increase the birth rate during a transition from conflict, it limits the opportunities for women to escape from violent relationships.⁴⁷ Thus, as the social and political space that values women comes to centre on child production and certain forms of mothering, the choice to leave marital relationships becomes curtailed and produces greater social risk of ostracism and exclusion for women. Conservative religious beliefs can also assist in this process, in opposition to the availability of choices over contraception, particularly in the recovery from political disruption. In Iraq, for example, contraceptive devices were declared illegal during the eight year long Iran-Iraq war and the declaration was reinforced after the Gulf War. Where women attempted to assert control over their fertility, assaults by partners were frequently reported, alongside accounts of re-victimization by state institutions sanctioning the

⁴⁴ Mirjam Rederlechner and Beate Ratz, "Giving Birth to a New Nation: A Critique of the Programme for the Demographic Renewal of Croatia," *Rights Of Women Bulletin* 13 (1993).

⁴⁵ Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, Dina Haynes and Naomi Cahn, *On the Frontlines: Gender, War and the Post-Conflict Process* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁴⁶ An example here is Chile where the strongly pro-natalist positions taken by the Pinochet government following the military coup prioritized women's domestic role in the reproduction of the labor force. See also Georgina Waylen 'Democratization, feminism and the state: the establishment of SERNAM in Chile', in S. Rai and G. Lievesley, eds., *Women and the State: International Perspectives* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1996).

behaviour and refusing to provide assistance.⁴⁸ These examples cogently illustrate the greater exposure and vulnerability that conflict produces for women and for women's control over their bodies. Notably, despite the presence of international interveners (white, liberal and generally male elites), patriarchal control is ceded to local cultural norms and an entirely 'hands off' approach when the rights and freedoms of women are at issue. The contemporary patterns track historical colonial practices where the loss of land and political control by local male elites was in part 'compensated' by giving such men full and unfettered control over women and their bodies.⁴⁹

In many conflict and post-conflict situations, there is also immense pressure on women to give birth to sons. This pressure is added by both the hegemonic masculinities that arise in societies involved in intense and protracted violence, but also on the demographic pressure to produce the 'soldier-citizen' to continue the fighting stance. Given women's exclusion from combat roles in many societies, and/or the downplay of their contributions even when women take active roles as combatants, the need to 'produce' the male child plays a strong role in the reproductive dynamics of the conflicted state. An example of a husband's attempt to control the reproductive process is provided in our Northern Ireland study where the man threatened his wife to 'Have a son or else' as she went off to hospital to have their second child.⁵⁰ This language is reminiscent of the Irish custom in the 1930s, which instructed the husband married to an infertile woman: "To bounce a boot off her now and then."⁵¹ Forms of intimate partner abuse, directly through assaults on childless women or indirectly by demographic policy

⁴⁸ Beta Bhatia, Mary Kavar & Mariam Shahin, *Unheard Voices: Women on War and Sanctions* (London: Change, 1992).

⁴⁸ Helen Kinsella, *The Image Before the Weapon: A Critical History of the Distinction Between Combatant and Civilian* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 2011).

⁴⁹ Monica McWilliams and Joan McKiernan, "The Impact of Political Violence on Domestic Violence in Northern Ireland," in *Gender Relations in Public and Private*, ed. L. Morris and S. Lyons (London: Macmillan, 1996), 254.

⁵⁰ Conrad M. Arensberg and Solon T. Kimball, *Family and Community in Ireland*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1968).

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makers, may be accentuated by the impact of war and political turmoil while other abuses may continue as before.⁵²

The pressure is also fashioned by an odd intersectionality as women themselves take on board a role in reproducing dominant social and cultural norms that may be antithetical to their autonomy and liberty interests. This is illustrated by the complexity of hero validation in conflicted societies, the rhetorical virtue given to the mother figure of the boy/man soldier and the social status and recognition that being the mother of a combatant gives many women in contexts where status is unavailable otherwise. The complexity of a multidimensional vulnerability analysis is that it exposes the evident tensions of women's lives in societies where they have lower social, legal and economic status than men, and where there are feminine dynamics in play in reproducing those values.

The Action and Dynamic of Intimate Violence in Conflict Settings: The Northern Ireland Case

The Northern Ireland sub-state came into existence in 1921.⁵³ The division of Ireland resulted from an initial attempt to give some form of limited autonomy to Ireland as a whole. This political move was, at the time, ideologically and militarily opposed by the Protestant majority in the jurisdiction. This majority, a by-product of colonial settlements in Ulster by Britain in the late seventeenth century viewed itself as British, culturally and politically.⁵⁴ The political

⁵² For a rare and thoughtful insight into this phenomenon see Assaf and Chaban, "Violence Against Single Never Married Women in the Occupied Palestinian Territories." This study reports on the factors that contribute to domestic violence against single never married Palestinian women in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Perpetrators include brothers, fathers, mothers and other relatives; violence identified was both physical and psychological. Data was based on the PCBS Domestic Violence Survey conducted between December 2005-January 2006.

⁵³ The Government of Ireland Act of 1920 came into effect in Northern Ireland in 1921 and a new parliament was opened by Sir George V in Belfast on 22 June, 1921 confirming the political partition of the island of Ireland.

⁵⁴ "Ulster" is the name given to the nine Northern counties which are geographically located in the Northern part of the island of Ireland. However, the

independence of the Irish and Catholic state was perceived as undermining the identity by which this Protestant group defined itself.⁵⁵ There was also a substantial Catholic minority within Northern Ireland, whose identity was linked to an emerging Irish state. This minority defined itself politically and culturally as Irish. Thus, the polarization of the two communities was built from the inception of the state along religious and political lines. Religious affiliation thus came to define political identity. Ultimately, it was also the means by which the state characterized citizenship and loyalty.

Both parts of the island of Ireland are characterized by a history of political violence, historically derived from the co-existence of four conflicting cultures in Ireland - Gaelic, English, Anglo-Irish, and Ulster Protestant. This violence pre-dates the revolutionary decades of 1912 to 1922, finding its roots in the native responses to the war of conquest waged in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁵⁶ The cultural antagonisms had a variety of components; including colonial conquest (English and Protestant) where elimination of the native (Catholic and Gaelic) culture was a political imperative; and more recently, as communal definitions of cultural identity became rooted in the negation of other identities. For decades the strife in Northern Ireland, as well as that in Cyprus, Israel and South Africa were all viewed as ingrained conflicts, beyond reason and rationality and ultimately insoluble within their internal

description is frequently used to refer to the political entity of the six county Northern Ireland sub-state.

⁵⁵ A number of different terms are used to describe Protestants and Catholics respectively in Northern Ireland. The terms Unionist and Loyalist are both used to broadly describe Protestant political affiliation, Unionist being synonymous with the political regime in Northern Ireland from 1922 onwards, Loyalist with militaristic responses to maintain the constitutional link with the United Kingdom. The terms Nationalist and Republican broadly describe political affiliation for Catholics. Both are associated with a belief in the legitimacy of a 32 county all-Ireland state. The term Republican was largely used to refer to those who believed that only military responses could facilitate the creation of a 32 county state.

⁵⁶ See F.S.L. Lyons, *Culture and Anarchy in Ireland 1890-1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

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terms of reference. Northern Ireland was long assumed to contain two peoples with mutually exclusive, non-bargainable political objectives. These incompatible objectives were broadly, on the one hand, the desire of the Catholic community for the political integration of Northern Ireland with the Irish Republic and, on the other, the wish of their Protestant counterparts for the territory and governance of the jurisdiction to remain the responsibility of the United Kingdom. Their respective mandates for Irish-ness and British-ness as political and cultural identities were, until the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, exclusive and entirely unsupportive of political accommodation.

It is ultimately naive to seek to explain the Northern Ireland conflict in one-dimensional terms. Several theoretical explanations for the persistent recourse to armed opposition as a means to resolve the disputed status of the territory have been advanced. On one reading, the conflict found its roots in a post-colonial disengagement; on another it held strong elements of ethnic and religious dispute whilst contradicting claims to the extension of sovereignty by two independent states also provides a further explanation; finally, one state (the United Kingdom) has strongly denied that the legal threshold of armed conflict was met and claimed that internal strife amounted only to a problem of heightened criminal dis-order. As a result the Geneva Conventions were never formally recognized as applicable to the conflict. The lack of formal conflict status has persistent effects for women, not least that the United Kingdom has consistently refused to acknowledge in the post-peace agreement phase that the 2000 United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and its progeny is formally applicable to the protection of women's peace and security interests in the jurisdiction.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ See S.C. Res. 1325, U.N. Doc. S/RES/1325 (Oct. 31, 2000); *See* S.C. Res 1820, U.N. Doc. S/RES/1820 (June 19, 2008). Christine Bell & Catherine O'Rourke, "The Impact of UNSC Resolution 1325 on Peace Processes and Their Agreements" 59 *International and Comparative Law Quarterly*. (2011) 9-19. For analysis of the failure of the UK government in this regard, see CEDAW

We now turn to directly explore the experiences of women and children living in a society which has, for thirty years, been defined by high levels of social and political disruption. Our focus lies on parsing out the forms of violence experienced by women, showing how the definitions of conflict related violence seeped into contextualizing the importance (or not) of intimate violence. We also directly address the coping strategies of the victims and tease out how state and non-state actors responded to women seeking protection in the context of the pernicious communal violence. While the challenges encountered identify some issues that are Northern Ireland specific, many of the experiences are synonymous to those encountered by women living in conflict worldwide.⁵⁸

*Northern Ireland: "Don't you know there is a war going on here" - The Public Violence and the Private Harm in Armed Conflict*⁵⁹

Approximately 3,500 people were killed and 37,800 seriously injured in the conflict in Northern Ireland.⁶⁰ It has been argued that the scale of the conflict in Northern Ireland was relatively low when compared

Committee Concluding Observations on the United Kingdom's Treaty Reporting Obligations CEDAW/C/GBR/CO/7 26th July, (2013).

⁵⁷ See, for a parallel example, the first survey on domestic violence carried out in Chile in 1992 demonstrating the depth of judicial complicity in impunity for domestic violence. The study found no sustained funding of punishment for assailants in the lower courts for domestic violence charges, and a persistent excusing and justification of the acts involved. It was also demonstrated that nine years after the study, "*Violence indoors; the situation of women in Chile*" was undertaken, there has been a reduction in the time women take in seeking help under such conditions. In this study, women took, on average, 13 years before seeking institutional help, while in the later prevalence study, that period fell to 7 years. Carolina Díaz, *Studies done by the National Women Service between 1992 and 2003* (Santiago: Department of the National Women Service, Work document No. 87, 2004) See Sue Armstrong, "Rape in South Africa: An Invisible Part of Apartheid's Legacy," *Focus on Gender 2* (1994): 35-36.

⁵⁸ The response given to women who reported incidents of violence to the police was often that cited here. McWilliams and McKiernan, "The Impact of Political Violence on Domestic Violence in Northern Ireland."

⁵⁹ Mike Morrissey, Marie Smyth and Marie Therese Fay, *The Cost of the Troubles Study* (Derry/Londonderry: INCORE, 1999).

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to other long running conflicts in the Middle East or Central Africa. However, there are at least two significant features making the conflict distinctive. First is the relatively small size of the jurisdiction leading to a concentration of the spatial effects of the violence. The second notable feature is the protracted nature of the conflict, continuing unabated for thirty years in a state with a democratic infrastructure including functional administrative and legal institutions operating throughout the hostilities.⁶¹

Against this background, there were particular factors determining the response to intimate partner violence in Northern Ireland - police resources, for example, were almost entirely taken up with combating paramilitary activity and the national and international media was predominantly focused on the political situation.⁶² Numerous consequences followed including a militarized police force at the front line of a counter-terrorism strategy that paid little attention to a 'soft' issue such as intimate violence; an unwillingness to engage in collaborative relationships with women's organizations mobilizing around such violence; the performative aspect of militarized policing with its protective modes of patrolling with the British army, in armoured tanks; and heavily armed individuals moving around in armoured vehicles operating as the public face of policing. Moreover women who lived in 'suspect' communities, whose partners, families and neighbours were perceived of as operating in defiance or opposition to the state were marginalised or perceived as threatening.⁶³ For many this led to an inevitable dearth of confidence in policing and a crisis in public safety

⁶⁰ Northern Ireland has a population of 1.6 million people. If the numbers killed and injured proportionate to the population were to be applied to Great Britain (population approximately 54 million), the figures of 108,000 deaths and 1,188,000 injured would give us some idea of the scale of the problem.

⁶¹ Pamela Montgomery and Valerie Bell, *Police Response to Wife Assault* (Belfast: Northern Ireland Women's Aid Federation, 1986).

⁶³ The phrase 'suspect community' is found in Paddy Hillyard: *Suspect Community: People's Experience of the Prevention of Terrorism Acts in Britain* (London: Pluto Press, 1993).

with precise and identifiable effects on the state encounters with women experiencing intimate violence.⁶⁴

Understanding the complexity of violence in conflict settings requires not only paying close attention to the experience of victims but mandates situating the response of state and non-state actors to perpetrators in this highly volatile context. When law enforcement agencies refuse or take passive positions in response to intimate partner violence, they often rely on generally accepted culture and custom to ground their actions. In parallel, long and protracted conflicts engage certain forms of military and policing that adopt cultural practices (as framing and legitimizing edifices) thereby enabling the entrenchment of a non-interference principle in intimate relationships. This kind of ethical gymnastics also applies to the response of non-state paramilitary actors performing de facto state functions.⁶⁵ In commenting generally on cultural deference, Razack argues that state 'sensitivities' provide more 'offender-centred' than 'victim-centred' solutions adding that: "The eagerness with which theories of cultural differences are taken up in the justice system is treacherous ground to travel."⁶⁶ These myths are equally and distinctly fostered in conflict and post-conflict settings, by the formal accountability mechanisms of the state and in parallel by the less obvious enforcement methods of non-state actors exercising quasi-governance functions.

⁶⁴ The consistency of this challenge is revealed by McMurray whose data shows that of the women surveyed in 2009, 47% identified that 'breach' of a non-molestation order was not taken seriously. 38% of the group surveyed articulated that the legal system was unable to compel the perpetrator to cooperate and comply with the legal intervention or process. McMurray, *Women's Experience of Violence*.

⁶⁵ On non-state actors and gender violence generally see Fionnuala Ní Aoláin and Catherine O'Rourke, "Gendered Justice and the Non-State Actor" in *Contested Transitions: Dilemmas of Transitional Justice in Colombia and Comparative Experience*, eds. Michael Reed and Amanda Lyons (Bogota: International Center for Transitional Justice, 2013).

⁶⁶ Sherene Razack, "What Is to be Gained by Looking White People in the Eye? Culture, Race, and Gender in Cases of Sexual Violence," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 19 (1994): 24, 28.

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The 'public' and 'private' juxtaposition of violence often led to contradictory messages about what constituted 'acceptable and 'unacceptable' forms of violence. For example, when a woman was the target of a sectarian, conflict related murder in her home in Northern Ireland, the outrage that followed exposed the gendered nature of conventional public morality.⁶⁷ Here the woman was viewed as an innocent victim of the political conflict, a view grounded in archetypal and highly conservative notions of appropriate females roles. A woman murdered in a 'domestic' assault in the 'sanctuary' of her own home received minimal media attention without any public consensus that a violation had taken place. With the exception of solitary feminist scholars, little policy or conceptual attention was paid to the prevalence of intimate partner violence or to the barriers in reporting such violence and their conflict related dimensions. Despite extensive research on both military and paramilitary actors in the jurisdiction, the production of certain kinds of masculinities that fashioned violence against women received little attention from scholars and policy makers, nor were the linkages between private and public violence viewed as relevant to understanding the forms and modalities of the conflict.

The conflict also created a 'violence continuum' that ranged at the lower end from what police officers termed 'ordinary decent murders', and 'ordinary decent crimes'. This internalized categorisation of violence framed how police officers were trained to respond to these offences in contrast to the parallel 'terrorism' offences that the police were dealing with on a daily basis.⁶⁸ This

⁶⁶ As Ní Aoláin has articulated elsewhere reflecting on the gender dimension of terrorism discourses, the targeting of women functions to underscore the 'otherness' of the terrorist as the quintessential outsider. Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, "Situating Women in Counterterrorism Discourses: Undulating Masculinities and Liminal Femininities," *Boston University Law Review* 93.3 (2013): 1082-1120.

⁶⁷ In the four years prior to the paramilitary ceasefires, at least 25% of these 'ordinary' murders were related to violence between intimate partners with 20 women recorded as having been killed by their husbands or common-law partners. The term 'femicide' is used to distinguish the deaths of women, killed by their partners in intimate relationships, from 'homicide', the term used to categorize non-natural deaths of both men and women.

categorisation continued irrespective of the fact that more than half the women killed during the time period under review in our conflict data set had been killed by their partners.⁶⁹ The competition for institutional resources and the media's focus on public (community/street) violence meant that reporting of political 'homicides' won out over the domestic 'femicides', ensuring that the deaths of women within the home became even further 'normalised'.

Forms of control on women are also sanctioned by a set of cultural beliefs that are difficult to challenge, especially when they are widely supported within micro and macro communities. Paradoxically, as our empirical data cogently illustrates, the pressure to maintain cultural 'sacred cows' may be tighter in conflict settings than in peacetime. The capacity of conflict to seal-off a society from social and equality progress should not be underestimated nor should the political will to maintain a conservative social status quo at the end of hostilities. For example, the belief that the family should stay together at all costs, irrespective of what harms may follow, and a constrained view of liberal reforms to family law, has been a motif of transitional processes across multiple post-conflict settings. In the context of violence against women, this may simply reflect a reactive unwillingness to prioritize legislative proposals rendering intimate partner violence a criminal offence in the new post-conflict dispensation. In societies making the transition from conflict to peace where the perceived necessity to bolster marital relationships, or to 'save' the family and re-inscribe traditional structures, advancing substantive change to punish abusive marital relationships can be extremely difficult. The political costs of naming prominent men as wife-beaters or rapists when such individuals are lauded as local heroes can compound the vulnerability of their attached women. In

⁶⁸ Monica McWilliams and Lynda Spence, *Taking Domestic Violence Seriously: Issues For the Criminal and Civil Justice System* (Belfast: HSMO, 1996); Royal Ulster Constabulary Statistics Unit, Belfast, Northern Ireland Office (1995). This is also further confirmed by McMurray's 2009 study where the study reported that in 21% of all situations in which violence was used against women, weapons were involved. McMurray, *Women's Experience of Violence*, 28.

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such situations, workers on the frontline who provide places of sanctuary for abused women can in turn be sanctioned for doing so.

Our data shows that where the cost of remaining with the abuser is too high, some victims make the decision to leave their communities behind and seek refuge elsewhere. But this can also be the point at which intimate partner violence becomes its most fatal. The data on intimate partner homicide shows an increasing trend of women murdered on leaving the relationship or where the triggering event is the women's threat of 'leaving'.⁷⁰ This kind of obsessive proprietary behaviour is summed up by the Northern Ireland husband who informed his wife "If I can't have you, no one else can."⁷¹ The rub in such a conflict setting is that the choices for exit may be constrained by the geographies of conflict and the immovable ethno-national divisions. This means that beyond the usual limitations on exit for women in abusive relationships, the realities of conflict intrude on the safety and security of places where a woman of specific religious or ethnic identity can 'go to'.

Conflicts also increase the availability of weapons, but does their availability increase the prevalence of intimate partner violence? Evidence from the underpinning twelve-month study on domestic violence, undertaken before the military ceasefires in Northern Ireland, shows a much higher rate of domestic violence related murders due to the availability of legally held weapons.⁷² We underscore that although this is one jurisdiction specific study, its findings may be significant for multiple conflict sites, given the dearth of research in settings experiencing armed conflict concerning the experience of intimate violence for women. An important aspect of any future research in this area should be an assessment of the availability of weapons to the 'private' sphere, disaggregation of

⁶⁹ Margo Wilson, Holly Johnson, and Martin Daly, "Lethal and Non-lethal Violence Against Wives," *Canadian Journal of Criminology* 37 (1995): 331.

⁷⁰ Monica McWilliams and Joan McKiernan, "The Impact of Political Violence on Domestic Violence in Northern Ireland," in *Gender Relations in Public and Private*, eds. L. Morris and S. Lyons (London: Macmillan, 1996), 251.

⁷¹ Monica McWilliams, "Violence Against Women and Political Conflict: The Northern Ireland Experience," *Critical Criminology*, 8 (1997): 82.

weapon usage, and assessment of controls following breach to give micro level data on the severity of the violence experienced by women in armed conflict settings.⁷³

Another significant feature of the Northern Ireland domestic homicides was that the majority of victims had been married to members of the security forces, showing that it was legal, and not just illegal, weapons that had to be accounted for.⁷⁴ As a direct result of the political conflict, members of the security forces (police, prison service and army) were able to apply for personal protection weapons, as were a number of politicians, business people and others working with the security sector. This led to a much larger number of households holding firearms compared to any other part of the UK or the Republic of Ireland. The result being that the women in these households (homes containing men 'protecting' the state) were at significantly higher risk of personal harm.

The extent to which these guns were instrumental to the types of intimate abuse experienced confirmed that the increased availability of guns in the Northern Ireland conflict ensured that violence within the home had greater lethality for victims. Our data evidences women speaking of their experiences of a gun being pointed directly at them but never knowing if there was a bullet in it. One woman reported how her partner would recall episodes from the film, the 'Deer Hunter', where the scene becomes evocative of a man living on 'the edge': "It was both mental and physical. You know, I am thinking of times when he would put a gun to my head and play Russian Roulette with it."⁷⁵ Refugee workers also recall seeing women who had circular bruising on their necks caused by the

⁷² Susan McKay noted in her work as a journalist that 'guns ostensibly used for the protection of communities are used in the rape of women from those communities'. Susan McKay, "Rape and Incest in a Violent Male Society", *Fortnight Magazine*, Belfast, May – June 1985, p.9-10. More than two decades later, in 2006, the Belfast Rape Crisis and Sexual Abuse Centre (RCSAC) reported a significantly higher proportion of rapes committed at gunpoint in Northern Ireland, compared to the rest of the UK and Ireland.

⁷³ McWilliams and McKiernan, "Violence Against Women and Political Conflict."

⁷⁴ McWilliams and McKiernan, "Violence Against Women and Political Conflict," 36.

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pressure point of the gun's barrel.⁷⁶ These women reported being subjected to this kind of abuse over sustained periods of time. For women threatened in this way, there is the additional problem that the physical marks, if any, were hard to detect. This meant that they had greater difficulty in subsequently corroborating their personal narratives and forcing state and other actors to intervene based on 'hard' evidence. Our interview data confirms that men who did not keep guns in their own houses (primarily members of paramilitary organisations) continued to threaten their partners by suggesting repeatedly that they knew where such weapons could be accessed and utilized.⁷⁷ The production of the weapon was often irrelevant as it was the threat that was pivotal to the production of high levels of anxiety.

Some of these women, faced with the difficulty of reporting this abuse to their partner's police colleagues, found that their concerns were not taken seriously. Following incidents in which police officers had their guns removed, they were able to retrieve them from their workplace the next day.⁷⁸ The women who had been repeatedly threatened by these 'personal protection' weapons argued that rather than protecting the family's safety, the guns constituted a potential risk to their lives. State security policy meant that police officers had a choice about whether to take guns home and some officers chose not to whilst others were, for too long a period, permitted to do so.

As part of the on-going discussions on the jurisdiction's peace process there was and remains heated debate over the decommissioning of illegal weapons. However the retention of legally held 'personal protection weapons' was not so contentious,⁷⁹ with the consequence that the circulation of legal weapons in everyday society did not form part of the package of security sector reforms

⁷⁵ McWilliams and McKiernan, "Violence Against Women and Political Conflict."

⁷⁶ McWilliams and McKiernan, "Violence Against Women and Political Conflict."

⁷⁸ This was frequently reported in the study undertaken by McWilliams and Spence, *Taking Domestic Violence Seriously*.

⁷⁹ There are 134,000 legally held small arms with one person in 17.6 holding a gun license.

accompanying the 'peace' deal. Attention was drawn to this issue by female negotiators at the peace talks noting the number of firearm certificates being withdrawn annually as the guns had been used in domestic violence situations.⁸⁰ One positive outcome, in signalling attention to this issue, was the requirement for police officers to keep these weapons at work, a direct example of how peace process negotiations involving women can break down the presumed barriers between 'ordinary' and 'extraordinary' violence.

Reflecting on the discourse on legal and illegally held weapons in post conflict situations, Shelley Anderson calls for an examination of the links between this 'private' violence and the 'public' violence of armed conflict:

"The attitudes and values that give rise to the former lay the groundwork for the latter. Both are rooted in mind-sets where domination, control and beliefs in certain group's superiority and others' inferiority are central. A mind set that permits and justifies the use of physical or psychological force by a 'superior' against an 'inferior' cannot be safely relegated to one corner of life, such as the home, or certain personal relationships. It will become a part of public life."⁸¹

As Marie Smyth also notes, what is needed is "demilitarisation at a cultural and ideological level."⁸² Although women have, on rare occasions, emerged empowered from the experience of war, it is more usual to find women losing what has been a hard-won autonomy once war ends. Cynthia Cockburn phrases this in stark terms:

"The civil society rebuilt after war or tyranny seldom reflects women's visions or rewards their energies. The space that

⁷⁹ The Northern Ireland Women's Coalition political party used this evidence drawn from a submission to the Westminster Parliament by Women's Aid in Northern Ireland in 1998.

⁸⁰ Quoted in Margaret Ward, "Gender, Citizenship and the Future of Northern Ireland Peace Process" *Irish Studies* 41 (2006): 280.

⁸¹ Marie Smyth, "The Process of Demilitarization and the Reversibility of the Peace Process in Northern Ireland," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 16 (2004): 548.

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momentarily opens up for change is not often used to secure genuine and lasting gender transformations. Effort may be put into healing enmity by reshaping ethnic and national relations, but gender and class relations are usually allowed to revert to the *status quo ante*. ... Instead of the skills and confidence forged by some women by the furnace of war being turned to advantage, the old sexual division of labour is reconstituted, in the family and in the labour force.”⁸³

Who Polices the Ordinary and the Extraordinary in Conflict Zones?

Despite the fact that there was a struggle for legitimacy and territory between the security forces and the paramilitary groups in certain geographical locales in Northern Ireland, there was much similarity in the way in which both the state actors (police officers and prosecution service) and the non-state actors (paramilitary groups) responded to ‘crimes’ of intimate violence. This corresponds to the broader pattern we have identified about the collusion that occurs between patriarchal entities concerning the regulation of women’s lives even when such groups have theoretically different political interests and are in public friction with one another. Complimentary patriarchy operates in highly distinctive ways, no less so in highly fraught conflict settings.

In Northern Ireland, judgements were made on what constituted ‘real’ crime with a great deal of ambiguity in creating a ‘just’ response to intimate partner violence. The response of some local communities to the police and to non-state paramilitary organizations respectively influenced women’s decisions on whom to call for help in situations of physical threat to themselves or their children. When women in nationalist (Catholic) communities were asked, in the Northern Ireland study, if they would contact the police for help, some felt reluctant to do so since the question of who policed their community was such a strongly contested political issue.

⁸² Cynthia Cockburn, “Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence” in *Victims, Perpetrators or Actors?* *Victims, Perpetrators or Actors? Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence*, eds. Caroline Moser and Fiona C. Clark (London: Zed, 2001), 13.

Policing as a state function, in a context where the legitimacy of the state was contested meant that the resort to traditional state-operated policing was not an option for many women in such communities. Victims would also become vulnerable to retaliation if their help seeking was interpreted as 'informing' or collusion with the contested state. One respondent noted: "in this area the police are not people that you normally go to... we look after ourselves... when we look for help, the police are never included."⁸⁴

Aside from the substantive unwillingness of victims from one political community to involve state actors, the challenge of police refusals to answer calls from victims, seeing the incident as 'just a domestic,' was persistent through the conflict. This is a feature familiar to 'peace-time policing' but is accentuated by political conflict from real and perceived risk to police officers' physical security. When police did not respond to calls in certain geographical locales, they made judicial restraining orders ineffective as such legal devices are entirely dependent on police action for meaningful enforcement. Offenders new about the lack of state supported policing within their communities, thus the conflict functioned as a *de facto* means to remove legal restraints and regular police presence. The under-enforcement of statute based protection and non-molestation orders meant there were fewer accountability mechanisms available to women during the on-going hostilities. Limited or delayed response from the police, even where victims sought direct intervention from immediate physical harm, meant that a victim's resistance to intimate partner violence was/is curtailed and other strategies of resistance had to be pursued.

The persistent destabilising effects of political conflict resulted in the breakdown of structures of law and order, exemplified

⁸³ McWilliams and McKiernan, "Violence Against Women and Political Conflict," 56. Parallel responses were seen in South Africa where victims of intimate violence have articulated the view that "no black woman would go to the police station... just to be seen near a police station might mean you were perceived to be an informer, your home would be burnt down and you would be killed." See Sue Armstrong, "Rape in South Africa: An Invisible Part of Apartheid's Legacy," *Focus on Gender* 2 (1994): 35-36.

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by police officers requiring a military escort provided by the British Army when responding to incidents of partner violence, at the height of the conflict in Northern Ireland. This arrangement involved a convoy of six to eight heavily armoured vehicles with soldiers wearing flak jackets and carrying submachine guns accompanying the police into local communities. Not only did this draw further attention to the victim but it also added to the anxiety of having to seek police help in extremity. On occasions, in order to respond to domestic violence calls in rural nationalist areas, the police used helicopters for protection against sniper fire or remote control bombs in the more open countryside. At particularly tense periods of conflict, they sought out intermediaries, such as members of the local clergy, to respond on their behalf. The attitude of religious leaders to family integrity and sexuality was an additional factor in addressing the intricacy of crisis management for intimate partner violence, adding further complex dimensions to the cultural/ religious overlay to intimate violence in the jurisdiction.

Ultimately in Northern Ireland, supported by the neutral space of women's advocacy groups, community based women's organizations and neutrally supported shelters, women began to break the silence around perpetrators by naming men who had systematically abused them and their children. In a fragile and politically fraught conflict, this was a challenging "work in progress."⁸⁵ For example, protection in some contexts meant approaching paramilitary organizations to issue alleged offenders with unofficial 'exclusion' orders with time limits attached on when to

⁸⁵ Helen Collinson and Lucinda Broadbent, *Women and Revolution in Nicaragua* (London: Zed Books, 1990) offer a parallel example of women in Nicaragua, who recommended that men who battered their wives should be publicly named and denied active participation in political projects. In a study visit to the Centre for Domestic Violence Prevention in Kampala, in June 2013, it was reported to one of the authors (McWilliams) that women lobbied for a motorcycle taxi (boda-boda) license to be denied to an abusive partner following complaints of domestic violence to the authorizing company. In remote rural areas, other methods of community control were highlighted such as women collectively banging stones against corrugated zinc roofs to shame men known to abuse their partners inside the home.

leave the area and when to return to the jurisdiction. If the demands to leave the community went unheeded, more 'heavy handed' tactics, such as punishment beatings and knee-capping could be ordered by paramilitary commanders. But the paramilitaries, like some police officers, also adopted a method for deciding what constituted acceptable and unacceptable forms of behaviour. Within the continuum of more serious forms of crime, powerful and armed men set priorities and acted accordingly. For violence within the family, child abuse received a more immediate response than intimate partner violence. Our data reveals that women knew they could seek intervention from paramilitaries organizations but at least one woman interviewed for the study concluded that "certain members of the IRA ... didn't like getting involved (in domestic violence)."⁸⁶

Not wishing to invade the privacy of intimate partner relationships has often been the pretext for the lack of gender justice so it is worth noting that non-state actors have similar dynamics of reaction and mediation (or not) to that of the state. There is consistency in the finding that, in addressing intimate partner violence, male leaders in positions of official and unofficial authority, at the state and community level, understood and internalized the power to decide what was or was not a violation and what consequences followed. Women also understood that to address intimate violence through paramilitary justice was 'rough' justice, with few of the controls and regulations that defined the formal system of British family law and criminal courts. The lack of meaningful access to the latter meant that women faced a difficult dilemma, trading off the risks of immediate and lethal physical harm to self over the unknown meting out of punitive sanction without due process or recourse.

When victims experiencing the controlling influence of their partner's abuse, while invoking external interveners who de facto mirror their partner's dominating behaviour, their help seeking becomes riddled with contradictions. In the context of a political

⁸⁶ McWilliams and McKiernan, "The Impact of Political Violence on Domestic Violence in Northern Ireland," 56.

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conflict the outcome might involve the women being asked to hide weapons or personnel in their homes, or to respond with sexual favours at some later stage. Women, in effect, exchange one set of controls (intimate/familial) for another (community/societal).

Interviewees disclosed that action (generally severe physical punishment to the offender) would most likely be taken if the woman's partner had displeased the paramilitaries in some other way (i.e. other than the intimate violence itself). Here a strategy, sometimes utilized in peace-time, by police forces is mirrored in conflict situations. There is an evident internalized twist given the layering of non-state actor and community relationships in divided societies, where policing in the normal sense may be entirely absent on the ground. In this situation, the domestic or intimate violence becomes the pretext for non-state engagement with an individual who has fallen out of favour for other non-gender specific violence related reasons. In these cases, victims were concerned that their partners would be seriously harmed or permanently disabled as a result of any action taken to address intimate violence.⁸⁷ For victims, action in this sphere requires an assessment of harm trade-offs, generally the results of which were not exercised in their favour and rarely prevented further violence to them.

In highly fraught politics with entrenched political violence, victimized women belonging to particular ethnic or religious communities may endure a process of triple victimisation — first by the perpetrator of the assaults within the family; second by the state, and non-state, actors who ignore or provide differential support within the community and finally by the institutional responses that minimise and rationalise the abuse. Gendered, stereotyped policies and actions can be created at each level with the result that the abuse itself is maintained for longer by the perpetrators and endured for longer by the victims.

In conflict situations the masculinities and militarism of both the paramilitaries and the police is exhibited in their various

⁸⁶ McWilliams, "The Impact of Political Violence on Domestic Violence in Northern Ireland."

responses to intimate partner violence. Punishment with weapons by paramilitary actors became the appropriate remedial response but it was the harm inflicted by such extreme punishment that made female victims reluctant to seek intervention. Similarly, the accompaniment of the police in any intervention with the symbolism and consequence of their highly militarized presence made many victims reluctant to come forward and openly identify the harms they were experiencing. Choice for women in these communities may thus be partial and compromised as they find themselves between 'a rock and a hard place', where choice is inevitably constrained and all decisions are fraught with risk to the victim.

Conclusion

Forms of intimate partner violence thread through the life course of women and girls but armed conflict provides heightened opportunities for inflicting such harms and the reality of likely impunity after such acts for perpetrators. Conflict constitutes a compounding and exacerbating context within which to understand and frame the causality for and responses to violence against women. Our case study illustrates that there are additional challenges in seeking assistance and finding meaningful and sustainable solutions to intimate partner violence whilst the wider society is experiencing increased levels of communal violence. An added risk in such settings is heightened violence towards women, with the interaction of militarism and masculinities leading to a greater tendency to use, or threats to use, guns to assert power and control over partners in intimate relationships.⁸⁸

In societies experiencing armed conflict where controls, either cultural or political, are not levied on men's use of violence, then intimate violence may struggle to be mediated or tempered. When permission is granted, metaphorically speaking, for men to assert, or reassert, their power and dominance, women often find themselves on the frontlines of both the societal and interpersonal

⁸⁷ Fionnuala Ní Aoláin and Naomi Cahn, "Hirsch Lecture: Gender, Masculinities, and Transition in Conflicted Societies," *New England Law Review* 44.1 (2010).

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violence. Women who live with men either as soldiers, conscripts or civilians may experience a heightened level of violence from these men during periods of intensive conflict.⁸⁹ In all of these settings, legal accountability for intimate violence is muted as the proposition, whereby human rights norms cede to the *lex specialis* of armed conflict norms, operates in practice to limit or screen out the (albeit inadequate) application.

Examples from Northern Ireland highlight the variations that an on-going conflict can make to the dynamics, forms and regulation of intimate partner violence. The experience of women in this jurisdiction illustrates the broader lack of controls placed on an offender's behaviour, the lack of opportunity for the victim to escape and the intensity and prevalence of the violence in situations of internal armed conflict. The widespread availability of guns and weapons (particularly small weapons) can lead to a greater likelihood of death and serious injury. The dysfunction of the rule of law limits the functionality of domestic accountability mechanisms during armed conflict. The state/non-state response to intimate partner violence is heavily influenced by the intensity of the conflict and the preoccupation of the states' physical and financial resources being directed to conflict-related responses.

Where victims' ability to resist the violence is curtailed, they become more vulnerable in their relationships with fewer options for exit. What the Northern Ireland study shows is that the political conflict imposes considerable constraints to victims' decision-making in the context of intimate partner violence. The abuse can become accentuated by keeping victims constrained in their homes, by

⁸⁸ A rare general household study from another conflict zone vividly illustrates these risk factors. See Greta Friedemann-Sánchez and Rodrigo Lovatón, "Intimate Partner Violence in Colombia: Who Is at Risk?" *Social Forces*, 91.2 (2012). Employing an intra-household bargaining framework and a bivariate probit model, the article assesses the prevalence of, and risk factors for, physical and emotional intimate partner violence, including such variables as income, education, gender-based intra-household decision making, employment and migration related to armed conflict and child maltreatment. This is one of the only robust studies identifying a link between armed conflict and domestic violence based on comprehensive country-level data.

limiting their opportunities to live, learn, work and care as full human beings and to hamper their abilities to organise and claim their substantive and procedural rights. The combination of violence from within an intimate relationship, alongside civil and political disturbances in the external environment, is a major obstacle to empowerment and rights realization. In such situations, the victim has few opportunities to participate in shaping the social and political decisions that impact on her security. Where the 'security' services have a heightened perception of their 'military' role, and where the police culture subscribes to traditional views about the subordinate role of women in intimate relationships, the more *laissez-faire* attitudes towards intimate partner violence adds yet another set of barriers to the help-seeking process.

Transitions from conflict may provide opportunities to decide which traditions, laws and policies are outmoded, which should be transformed and which should be preserved. Activists have begun to challenge the gendered responses to intimate partner violence and are finding ways of holding accountable those who permit men's use of violence to dominate and control women in intimate relationships. Such a challenge is finding voice in domestic criminal accountability, truth recovery processes and rule of law reform, so that all of these sites pay attention to intimate violence as a significant human rights violation in its own right. The growing presence of international criminal law in conflict sites and a greater willingness to prosecute gender crimes means that certain forms of conflict related sexual violence are receiving greater scrutiny and attention. The attention to genocidal rape, sexual slavery, rape as torture, and rape as a crime against humanity means that sexual violence against women in conflict is more firmly on national and international policy agendas than ever before and in ways that ought to work to the benefit of victims of intimate violence broadly defined.

A transition from conflict also requires a reorientation of institutional culture where the organisational practices previously

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reflected the impact of living in an “armed patriarchy”.⁹⁰ The previous variable nature of police response, such as delays in serving judicial restraining orders and the inconsistencies in police practice towards perpetrators of intimate partner violence has begun to change. Violence between partners is more accurately recorded with intelligence gathering devices and surveillance tools turning on high-risk offenders in these relationships. Changing their profile from a police *force* and centring their practice on a human rights based framework, help-providers view their *service* as an essential part of their protection and prevention work on abusive relationships. The successful resistance serving non-molestation orders, from the public to the private sector, reflects the progress in the partnerships established between communities and policing in Northern Ireland.

Although women have shown great eagerness to take on roles as transformative agents, and in many cases have achieved significant gains, processes of conflict mediation, conflict management and post-conflict transition have still much to do to adequately address women’s human rights and their security concerns. In engaging with the cultural and political dimensions of the problem, women both locally and globally are making the connections between the ‘ordinary’ pervasive and undulating violence they experience as a routine part of their daily lives and the ‘extra-ordinary’ violence that excites the interest of states, decision-makers, media outlets and their audiences, driven by the sensational and the extreme. The time is ripe for the connections women see at the ground level in conflict sites to be seen and articulated to policy makers and for the issues on human security to be raised by the broader feminist communities. This article constitutes a small step in the direction of connectivity; in bringing together the experiences of women in ways that view the totality of

⁸⁹ Cathy Harkin, a shelter worker for Derry Women’s Aid, referred to women experiencing domestic violence as living in an ‘armed patriarchy’ encompassing men in the security forces as well as paramilitary groups. Cathy Harkin and Avila Kilmurray, “Working with Women in Derry,” in *Women and Community Work in Northern Ireland*, eds. Marie Abbott and Hugh Frazer (Belfast: Farset Co-operative Press, 1985), 38.

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the harm experienced and then re-imagines a response that advances genuine transformation in women's lives.

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