



SUMMARY OF  
THE  
**REMAKING  
OF SOCIAL  
CONTRACTS**  
FEMINISTS IN A FIERCE NEW WORLD

Edited by **GITA SEN** and  
**MARINA DURANO**

for DAWN

# Summary<sup>1</sup> of

## The Remaking of Social Contracts: Feminists in a Fierce New World

(eds for DAWN) Gita Sen and Marina Durano

(London: Zed Books, 2014)

Dedicated to the memory of Josefa (Gigi) Francisco whose commitment to social justice and gender equality, and whose belief in the power of social movements fuelled and made this work possible.

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### Part I Introductory Overview

#### Social Contracts Revisited: the promise of human rights

GITA SEN AND MARINA DURANO

This book is the product of a collective attempt by DAWN and our allies to understand the complexities of our times, to challenge the webs of power and the many intersecting forms that social injustice takes; to spell out what it will take to resist and transcend the might of the juggernauts of globalization and reaction. Written by an international group of authors with diverse expertise in political economy, ecology, human rights and social change, the book attempts to weave these threads together to articulate a vision both multifaceted and interlinked. What drives that vision is our collective understanding of the world we live in, and our belief that changing that world is both essential and possible. The book explores, from a Southern feminist perspective, the potential of an interlinked approach to human rights for confronting and transforming the fierce world in which we live. The book provides no blueprints. It is an attempt to open debates in the search for understanding of complex and difficult dilemmas in politically fraught terrains.

The early twenty-first century has been marked globally by the war on terror and the financial and economic crisis. Beneath these headlines, however, lie other phenomena of no less importance – climate change, species die-offs, and a host of related ecological crises, as well as a backlash against advances towards social justice and human rights for all. Even deeper beneath the surface lies the drastic transformation of the world of work towards flexibility and precariousness that shapes what is possible and probable by way of social policies. A ‘fierce new world’ has been born – full of shaken premises, complicated contradictions, serious fractures, severe backlash, broken promises and uncertain outcomes for the world’s peoples.

Our usage of the term ‘social contract’ is embedded in the political economy of power and inequality at multiple levels and in varied forms. For us, a social contract is a collective agreement that is built on and imbued with power. It may be imposed from above, fought over from below, and always holds the potential for change. But its fluidity is also interspersed with stability. Periods of stability in social contracts, local or global, are periods when our collective understanding of what is and what ought to be are stable and roughly in synchrony with each other; and when power structures and associated institutions are relatively steady. But social contracts are always in a state of flux. The fracturing of existing social contracts can come from many sources: social movements, technological changes, institutional and cultural transformations, and of course economic and ecological pressures. Our reading of recent history uses this open and flexible meaning of social contracts to analyse what is and what ought to be from the perspective of social justice and human rights.

From such a perspective, two sub periods after World War II offer a study in contrasts. The period from 1945 to 1980 saw post-war economic growth, the unravelling of colonial empires, optimism about the developmental state and its potential to fight poverty and deprivation, belief in the possibility of a New International Economic Order, challenges to the idea of limitless growth, the rise of global social movements including women’s movements, international norm-setting and governance and greater monitoring of the activities of transnational corporations. Progressive change was in the air, fed by beliefs in social justice, economic and political equality, and human rights, and substantiated by the expansive policies of the welfare and developmental states, which were supported in the 1970s by The World Bank under the rubric of basic needs and ‘redistribution with growth’.

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<sup>1</sup> This is a summary of the book *The Remaking of Social Contracts: Feminists in a Fierce New World* (eds for DAWN) Gita Sen and Marina Durano (London, Zed Books, 2014). This summary is intended for the purposes of advocacy and training by social movements and other organizations. The summary was put together by Claire Slatter, Seona Smiles and Gita Sen for DAWN in 2015. DAWN holds the copyright for this Summary.

The period from 1980 – 2008 saw the breaking of these beliefs and related institutions, and the emergence of more conservative social contracts, with the coming to power of, and deep collaboration between, the financial elites of the USA and UK and the start of an era of financial globalisation driven by the pressure to remove all barriers to free flows of money and capital, with harsh conditionalities imposed on government borrowing, the dismantling of state capacity, decimation of the developmental state and its substitution by the private sector and public-private partnerships, and weakening of labour laws and unions. The untethering of finance from the world of industry and the removal of regulatory barriers to finance capital opened the door to instability in the global economy, as shown by the financial and economic crisis of 2008. The rise of the WTO to set norms for a new era of global trade enshrined flexible labour and cheap exports, while developments in emerging markets spurred economic growth in Africa and saw the new BRICS multinationals' search for cheap sources of minerals, energy and raw materials replicating what their older Northern counterparts have done for over a century. This period when many existing social contracts were fractured, is replete with ironies. Not the least of these is the fear and chagrin amongst leaders in the North at being beaten in the game of capitalist competition by a country that still calls itself socialist: China. Importantly, the period also saw the rise of religious conservatism as the frontline of opposition to gender equality and women's human rights, strongly imbricating the growing economic struggles of South versus North governments.

This regressive combination of neoliberal and religious fundamentalism did not go without challenge. The deep economic and financial crisis of 2008 onwards fractured the neoliberal social contract, creating further space for social movements of women, indigenous people, young people, migrants, people with disabilities, and on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity that had gained momentum and vigour through the UN conferences of the 1990s. DAWN's approach to feminism has always been based not on identity alone but on the recognition that women's human rights are lost or gained in the interplay between the personal and the structural environment. For women as women, the politics of personal relations, of the body, of sex and reproduction matter greatly. The household and family relations are a critical site of gender power expressed in multiple dimensions. At the same time, women are workers, juggling double and triple burdens under increasingly harsh conditions; are members of communities struggling for land and livelihoods; are agents in societies undergoing cultural transformations; are actors in economies shaped by globalisation and militarism; and are parts of production systems unmindful of ecological limits. Understanding the dynamics of gender relations requires an analysis of how they are shaped by political economy, ecology, militarization and conflict, as well as other systems and processes. The reverse is also true: advocacy on macroeconomics, militarization or climate change including by progressive advocates and analysts, must also seriously address gender power, which is central to who is affected, how, and how they cope, resist and organise for change. The more open, if harsh, spaces for mobilisation provided by the fracturing of the neoliberal social contract can be used to create stronger alliances across social movements and organizations working for different elements of progressive social change.

This collection of essays is a mix of in-depth analyses and proposals for the remaking of the broken social contracts of today. Additional to the essays is a series of short pieces in boxes, many written by younger feminists, which contribute to understanding specific instances of confusion, contradiction and crisis in today's fierce world.

## **Part II      Governing globalization: critiquing the reproduction of inequality**

### **Chapter 1      Financialization, distribution and inequality**

STEPHANIE SEGUINO

In the past three decades there has been a widening of income and wealth inequality within and between countries, a slowdown in economic growth rates except for some Asian countries, greater limitations on the state's ability to promote rising living standards and social protection, and greater economic instability, with more than a hundred financial crises occurring since 1980. The Great Recession, which began in 2008, is only the most recent disruption in an increasingly unstable global economy. This essay explores the role of inequality in contributing to the most recent global economic crisis, and the related tendency to 'financialization' – the increase in size and importance of an unregulated financial sector. It discusses what an equity-led macroeconomic policy framework would look like, and makes some proposals for producing greater equality, reducing economic instability and raising living standards.

The current crisis is not just a financial crisis. Facilitated by a period of financial sector deregulation that began in the 1980s, banks and investment firms seemed to run amok, with the development of exotic financial instruments and 'teaser' loans that bordered on predatory lending, which combined to produce toxic assets.

Deregulation did not happen without a push from the financial sector. The accumulation of power and wealth by financial elites over the last two decades has been used to fund an anti-regulation lobby targeted towards policy-makers and regulatory agencies. The result has been tantamount to regulatory capture: public agencies charged with regulating in the public interest acted instead to favour the financial sector, or turned a blind eye to the very practices they were charged with regulating.

The economic fissures that led up to the 2008 crisis were related to growing inequality within and between countries over the previous three decades. The focus on the malfunctioning of financial markets has obscured inquiry into the deeper systemic roots of the crisis. Several factors contributed to the intensification of global inequality over this period. A key factor is the slowdown in wage gains and, in some instances, the decline in real wages. Several forces - economic and political - have reduced worker

bargaining power and, as a result, held back improvements in wages. Policy shifts towards trade and investment liberalization have made it easier for firms to move production from high to low wage countries to reduce costs of production and increase profits, and then export their goods back to high wage countries. Firms have become more mobile, and that mobility has increased bargaining power to hold down or lower the wages of workers in both rich and developing countries.

Another factor contributing to growing inequality is the pressure on governments to reduce public sector spending, especially on much-needed physical and social infrastructure. The impact of these trends is evident in the decline in global public investment as a share of GDP. The downward pressure on budgets in developing countries also results from loss of tariff revenue through trade liberalization. Governments are also pressured to reduce budget deficits as a way to attract foreign investment, because government budget deficits are seen by wealth holders as contributing to inflation. Another source of growing inequality is the shift in the policy framework among central banks from a focus on price stability and full employment to an almost singular concern with controlling inflation by raising interest rates, thereby making borrowing more expensive and depressing spending.

The past decade and a half has also been witness to a variety of mechanisms by which firms' profits have been funnelled out of the productive sector of the economy to the financial sector. Mergers and acquisitions have absorbed a large chunk of firms' profits. Share buy-backs, where firms repurchase shares from existing shareholders to concentrate ownership, have been one use of excess cash that firms decline to employ in expanding output. Shareholders have also funnelled their increased earnings per share to financial markets, resulting in a flood of funds to the financial sector, creating a situation similar to that experienced by big banks during the 1970s, the decade of the OPEC oil crisis when they found themselves awash with 'petro dollars' which they then lent to developing countries.

In the current period, the financialization of industrialised economies has led to a surfeit of loanable funds in the hands of financial institutions, enticing them to develop exotic loans at 'teaser' rates and other financial instruments to expand lending in the housing sector. Analysts have noted that many of the so-called sub-prime loans in the US were predatory - made under unfair, deceptive or fraudulent conditions, and targeted to people of colour and single, female heads of households, who were already struggling to cope with declining economic conditions, low or falling real wages, higher health care and education costs, and reductions in employer contributions to pension plans.

The growth of the financial sector and redistribution of national income to the rentier class, the wealth holders, translated into increased political power for that group. Financial elites have had influence at the International Monetary Fund, which has long championed the elimination of capital controls (the movement of finance across borders) thus leading to increased global instability, as well as very large profits on speculation for wealth holders. At the same time, the IMF has pressured developing country governments to adopt 'independent' Central Banks - freed from the constraints of government strategies for development.

Feminist economists and activists, and other progressives in industrialised and developing countries have an opportunity to contribute to defining a transformational macroeconomic policy agenda. The principles that guide such a framework should be sustainable and equitable growth that promotes the expansion of 'green' jobs and earth-compatible sources of energy. Such an agenda would not only emphasise reductions in inequality and poverty, but also pay particular attention to race and gender inequality. Sustainable equitable growth requires a set of macroeconomic policies that create the conditions for wage-led growth, in which redistribution to workers and, in agricultural economies, to small farmers stimulates demand and, as a result, economic growth.

Although there is no one-size-fits-all set of policies to achieve inter-group equality, exiting the low wage, low productivity trap requires policies and methods to discipline the financial sector. A number of progressive economists have advanced proposals for financial sector reform. Such reform policies, appropriately applied, can lead financial and non-financial firms to align their profit goals with broader development goals. Macro-level policies must shift the economy to growth led by domestic demand, promote import substitution, and include an industrial policy centred on helping domestic producers develop productive capacity. Equity-led growth also requires a reformed central bank geared towards employment creation, not inflation targeting. Racial and gender equality must be addressed explicitly. Attention must also be paid to mechanisms that will finance development. Currency transactions taxes can slow financial capital mobility and stabilize economies as well as discourage systemically risky economic behaviour, and generate a pool of resources to finance development. Activist groups and academics must elaborate participatory methods to promote equitable use of such funds.

### **Box II.1**      ***Barbara Adams: Multilateralism – from advancement to self defence***

We have been witnessing a major shift in the approach to multilateralism away from one of advancing common concerns by establishing and upholding universal standards to one of self-defense from global agreements. Calls for policy coherence as an attempt to maintain a value-based approach are giving way to calls for policy space. In this shifting and uncertain terrain, the place and role of civil society more generally, including women's organizations, is uncertain and evolving. Opportunities for women's organizations to engage effectively in shaping the creation of new institutions and the reform of others need to focus much more on neglected issues of economic and global governance as well as continued efforts on women's human rights, including sexual and reproductive health and rights.

## **Box II.2**      *Lice Cokanasiga: Women's status and Free Trade in the Pacific*

There has been too much emphasis on promoting commercial agriculture, resulting in the marginalization of women not only from economic benefits but from their traditional roots, status and authority. Women in the matrilineal societies of the Solomon Islands, for example, were relegated to the role of mere advisers to men, who now control decision-making over customary land management systems in ways they never could before. Making matters worse are foreign investors who prefer to deal with male chiefs when negotiating for corporate rights over land and forests.

## **Chapter 2**      **New poles of accumulation and realignment of power in the 21st century**

YAO GRAHAM AND HIBIST WENDEMU KASSA

This paper focuses on selected countries in the economic South, namely Brazil, China, India and South Africa, to illustrate the global and regional realignment of power. The analysis charts the shifts towards new poles of accumulation away from the North Atlantic through an exploration of trade and investment flows, regional power, aid politics, reform of the multilateral system, as well as issues of cooperation and contradiction within the South, particularly among these new poles.

New powers in the global system represent new poles of accumulation. The accumulation model centres on the opportunities offered in the markets of the economic North, with the rest of the globe as a secondary target. The model has driven the shift of production and migration of technology and jobs to these countries. The economic strength of these new poles of accumulation is that they are suppliers to the markets of the economic North.

According to the IMF, the gross domestic product at purchasing power parity in 2005 of countries in the economic South exceeded that of the economic North. China is predicted to become the largest economy in the world, even if the USA, which is the highest consumer of Chinese exports, stagnates. India's per capita income is also expected to continue to grow rapidly. This provides a snapshot of the shifts in power. Regionally, the shift in economic power is most starkly exemplified by changes in East Asia. Japan has been displaced by China as the main regional economic power, although it remains the technological leader, with China being the main workshop. China's leading role has involved a reconfiguration of economic relations into a hub, with spoke linkages centred on China and countries in the region acting as suppliers of various types of inputs to Chinese industry. As a result, China has become the workshop of the world. It is also the main financier of the deficits of the USA, and its biggest creditor.

The reconstitution of the G8 into the G20 in the midst of the current economic crisis is an illustration of some of these shifts. The G20 is the first institutional recognition of these new powers by the old ones but there are still questions about what the G20 represents in terms of democratic character, the power that it is arrogating to itself, and the kind of decisions it is taking. Alongside these concerns, there are outstanding issues like UN reform and the aspiration for UN Security Council membership by India, Brazil and South Africa.

As these shifts are taking place it is possible to identify areas of formal and informal cooperation as well as some contradictions. The India, Brazil and South Africa Forum (IBSA) is a formal expression of the new cooperation, and represents an axis of countries of the South. G77 has however been faced with growing divergence in power and interests among its members and its workings exemplify some of the contradictions within the South. The new G20 is described as an attempt to accommodate the weight of the emerging powers within the existing architecture of global power without effecting fundamental reform. As such, the G20 represents a compromise and symbolises acceptance of the evolving shifts in power.

Countries of the South all want reform of the Bretton Woods Institutions but are not uniform in their areas of focus and emphasis, with more powerful countries of the South interested in voting reform, and smaller countries prioritizing the removal of conditionalities. The growing power of India and China is reflected in their emerging cooperation with the BWIs – India is discussing with the World Bank how its experience in running the biggest railway network and passenger traffic could be applied in other developing countries, through the Indian Railways taking the lead in the privatisation of railways in developing countries, particularly Africa; China and the WB are exploring how to relocate some Chinese light industry to other developing countries, namely Africa.

New powers of the South are aggressively signing free trade agreements and bilateral investment agreements in the search for advantage against each other in the area of investments in addition to markets. Critically they are competing for raw materials. The African region – the new scramble for Africa - illustrates what is happening within the coalition of the South. This is a region with 1 billion people which, even with 32 countries categorised as LDCs, represents significant purchasing power and could become an even more important market as incomes and purchasing power increase. The region also has significant raw materials to be exploited and a workforce which could be a useful source of cheap labour to companies which relocate. Currently Africa as a continent has at least 8 trade, investment and aid frameworks, with other countries and regions, all seeking to have a framework that gives them some preferential access.

The positive aspect of the entry of these new powers is that there are now options available, as opposed to the monolithic culture represented by Western transnational companies, and African governments are in a better position to negotiate. It does not guarantee

that new deals will be more beneficial than the old. It is a crack in the edifice into which feminists could insert efforts to remake social contracts. A common criticism of these new powers emanating from the West - governments, CSOs and media alike - is that they have low standards of respect for human rights and the environment. There is evidence of Brazilian mining giant, Vale, being hostile to unionisation in a number of countries. Western criticisms of violations of human rights and environmental standards by Chinese firms are hypocritical, given the low standards set by long dominant Western firms in the continent's extractive sectors.

A convergence of factors that should be addressed at this juncture of the liberalisation regime relate to labour, environment, human rights and complicity of companies and foreign governments with incumbent repressive regimes. Since unions are weak in many African countries, the danger of a regime of lower labour standards becoming the norm with the entry of new powers is quite real. Brazilian firms have attracted negative attention for dispossessing large numbers of rural people from substantial tracts of land they are acquiring across Africa for agricultural, especially bio-fuel, projects.

One potentially negative impact of Indian and Chinese manufacturing exports on African firms that produce for home markets and export is the undermining of indigenous manufacturing development. Interest in minerals also raises the spectre of the perpetuation of a dependence on raw material exports, with minimal returns to African countries even with commodity price hikes. Breaking the pattern of export of raw minerals and agricultural produce will challenge all countries that see Africa as a source of raw materials, and have planned on that continuing to be the basis of the profitability of their processing and fabricating industries.

The current trends of inequality in almost all of these economies means the agenda of working for a new economic model, with an emphasis on public spending, social investment and work security remains important. This is because all the new powers have made their transition within the period of the dominance of neoliberal global economics which has taken advantage of the domestic consequences of neoliberal policies. Moreover, the definition of corporate power that activists target will increasingly have to include corporate power from the South.

### **Chapter 3      The modern business of war**

OSCAR UGARTECHE

It has sometimes been argued that war is a solution to economic problems. It reactivates failing economies while consolidating the political power of warring states. Bastiat's (1850) 'broken window' fallacy argues, however, that money spent on wars is not spent on something else, so there is no greater economic good from war, only economic profit for those directly related to the business of war. This argues that what is good for the military-industrial complex may not be so for the overall economy given that the greater the military expenditure, the greater both fiscal and external deficits become, while GDP growth does not necessarily increase.

The end of the cold war was expected to bring a reduced military presence with the consolidation of the USA and Pax Americana in a unipolar world. Instead, there was a doubling of US military expenditure between 1999 and 2009, and more aggressive military presence which appear to have been triggered by the Rumsfeld Commission Report of 1998. That report argued that there was a real and growing missile threat to the US, and that there was a threat to the US from Iraq, Iran, Libya and North Korea. This brought an increase in defence business, including privatisation of military force and investment in new unmanned technologies.

The process of militarisation of the US economy had begun after World War II but developed further following the rise of a new military-industrial complex in 2001, supported by think tanks such as the Project for the New American Century. The proposition that American leadership was good for the world and required military strength, diplomatic energy and moral principle called for an increase in defence spending. The open-ended Bush Doctrine implied that a US attack is justified if a nation or organisation might pose a threat at some unknown future date. This pre-emptive strike doctrine - strike first against a nation that is poised to attack - suggests that military threat was not the only consideration for intervention. What is clear is that, the economic crisis notwithstanding, the US military-industrial complex has made substantial profits during the decade; more public spending has gone towards defence while less has been allocated to non-defence sectors.

In this context, conflicts are not meant to win wars per se but primarily to make money for the defence industries and guarantee that power remains in US hands; in this new signification of war, what matters is not winning but preventing others from winning. So a losing war, or one of attrition is positive as long as the enemy does not gain control over any aspect of the US economy, or in any way diminish its power. The most evident conflict over control is the energy industry. Those who control oil could potentially control the United States and thus try to subjugate it to their own power; hence the wars in oil-producing regions.

This logic protected defence-related industries from the effects of the recessions of the 21st century, as indicated by the Dow Jones Industrial Average rebound in 2003 that was explained as an increase in Chinese demand (which had been growing since 1990), but was actually due to the occupation of Iraq. Although stock prices and stock exchanges recovered, the real economy did not. The stock prices of the largest defence industries enjoyed a boost after the 9/11 attack.

An aspect of the new business of war is the change in the world power structure. Using IMF data, projections show that by 2017, the USA will be the second largest economy; Germany will be the only remaining European country on the list of the seven largest economies; and four of the seven will be Asian countries. The political significance of this is the loss of global market power of the richest economies, in spite of their having the highest incomes per capita and the highest standards of living.

Following on neoliberal economic reforms, criminalisation of protests are worldwide trends that correspond to the deregulation and flexibilization of labour. There is insufficient employment for the growing labour force, particularly in slow-growing emergent countries and in the old G7 countries. The rapid rise in inequality and the added problem of wage competition from illegal migrants has seen not only restrictions but criminalization of the international movement of people, and sharply increasing expenditure on territorial control of borders in old G7 countries.

The possibility of outsourcing conflicts has led to a very profitable and growing industry involving the privatisation of war by security firms; guns for hire that have no position, only a contract and which can continue doing what the army was doing previously without a nation's soldiers being put at risk, and avoiding the embarrassment of a prolonged war without a clear win. The modern business of wars is to wage them, not to win them, and to maintain power and control over strategically important resources. Those bearing the greatest weight of this distorted social contract are women, black people and children.

**Box II.3**      *Adebayo Olukoshi: Militarization, illicit economies and governance*

The radical shift in the structure of rewards and penalties that undermine the real economy, and absence of effective mechanisms for governing contemporary globalization allow for untamed expansion of illicit activities and fuel illicit economies. Illicit activities provide alternatives to the erosion of the developmental state and consequent retrenchment of social policies, which particularly penalize youth, women and the working poor. Diversion of national productive capacities in support of increased arms production and related war efforts also fuel illicit economies that encompass mercenaries, armed guerrillas, transnational smugglers, drug lords and others. The human costs of these male dominated illicit economies and their power struggles seriously challenge governance, democratization, citizenship and rights and undermine gender equality, as can be seen in increased commoditization of women's bodies and erosion of women's livelihoods.

**Box II.4**      *Nicole Bidegain Ponte: Commodity exports and persistent inequality under Latin American progressive governments*

The emerging progressive region within Latin America and the Caribbean still has structural weaknesses and continues to rely on the export of primary commodities as a source of growth. Its share of greenhouse gas emissions is produced by agricultural and livestock activity and reinforced by deforestation, and there is significant political resistance from the producers to discussing possible changes. Although there have been reductions in poverty and inequality, sustained by increases in social expenditure, this has slowed due to the global economic crisis. The region remains the most unequal in the world, reproducing inequality in a context of low socio-economic mobility. An important element to consider is access to education's role in reduction of inequality and intergenerational poverty. It is especially important that young feminists and ecological and economic justice movements work together to build more transformative economic and social agendas.

## **Chapter 4**      **The convergences and divergences of human rights and political economy**

ALDO CALIARI

The current economic crisis, occurring alongside crises of food, energy, climate and care, poses the biggest opening since the 1970s for challenging neoliberal economic thinking through an assessment of human rights and political economy approaches. Both frameworks, as tools for developing a progressive agenda for development and for gender justice, are incomplete. The assumed consensus reached by the late 1980s on a close relationship between human rights and development, based on the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Right to Development in 1986, may be less generally shared than it appears.

Regardless of the debates on the relationship between development and human rights, the activism of advocates working within the human rights framework has achieved outcomes that support development, including a body of norms and interpretations that are useful tools for activists, organisations, researchers and national and international authorities in charge of adjudicating matters where the development value of economic rules and policies are at stake. The human rights approach also offers an avenue of engagement with donor countries as it acknowledges their concern to ensure that funding for development reaches intended objectives and beneficiaries. Even though this risks playing into donors' geopolitical interests, it can serve as a common platform that cannot be ignored.

There are limitations, however, to human rights approaches. They are based on human rights instruments designed for a very different time, when nation states exercised effective sovereign control which is no longer the case today. State action can be pre-empted by trade, investment rules, financial agreements or other international agreements. Human rights advocates often come from the legal tradition and may focus on ends with little practical consideration of the means needed to get there.

It is a well-established idea today that human rights are indivisible, as opposed to earlier approaches of separating civil and political from economic social and cultural rights. But this discourse still hides meaningful dissent about the relative importance of each set of rights, on the basis of which human rights advocates diverge in their approaches. When the advocacy focus is too emphatically on the side of civil and political rights, there is a potential for broad alliances with mainstream promoters of free trade and investment. The human rights approach may alienate developing countries even when used as a framework to promote their own development agenda because rights tend to become a geopolitical instrument or a bargaining chip to extract political concessions. Emphasis on human rights tends to put developing country governments on the spot for failures, although some degree of co-responsibility on the part of donors, trade partners or investors should be acknowledged.

Part of the human rights approach is directly concerned with women's rights. The global women's movement can boast of important achievements that have brought greater recognition of women's rights. However, a focus on the empowerment of women, and on civil and political rights, can obscure the more intricate cultural, social and economic dynamics that prevent women effectively being empowered by what may be otherwise formally available legal human rights mechanisms. One blind spot of the human rights framework is its state-centred nature – the state becomes the duty-bearer in opposition to rights-holders, leaving out of the picture mediating social, cultural or economic constructions in what is considered the 'private' sphere.

In contrast to the human rights approach, what is termed cautiously as the political economy approach to development has helped to elucidate the processes behind elite capture of the state and the state's subjection to external, if not imperialist, forces. We owe to models of political economy valuable ideas with respect to a concept of development that addresses the dynamics of attempting to develop in the context of the larger global economy where it belongs. Whereas the human rights approach has to be stretched to bring into its fold the actual power relationships within the state – the primary subject of its obligations – the political economy approach offers ready tools to make an assessment. The political economy approach is also more oriented to the dynamic of how development happens. This is quite different from the lack of concern that a human rights approach shows towards the detail of the economic policies by which development is to be achieved.

Political economists are more tuned into the practical challenges that policy makers face: limited resources, for unlimited ends. Therefore, they are more likely to think about trade-offs and practical policy solutions that cannot so easily be dismissed. They can build a critique that engages with economic policy while offering a progressive alternative to the sort of trade-offs that would be agreeable in a neoliberal model.

Drawbacks in the political economy approach include the focus by some schools of thought on processes of national development and the expectation that improvements in living standards and access to public services will reach everybody in the country by some trickle-down mechanism. Exaggerated faith in the developmental state may ignore the scope for unaccountable decisions by the state in its use of resources.

In placing the sort of checks and balances that allow citizens to have an informed debate over the distributional consequences of possible strategic state interventions, and their conscious and open negotiation as part of a social contract, the principles of participation and accountability that a human rights approach brings can be most useful. The political economy framework is useful to untangle and chart the way to tackle power dynamics that may be acting as obstacles to development.

Unlike the human rights framework, however, it does not carry with it an institutional and legal structure that can empower individuals and social groups to make the claims that could overturn or change such power dynamics. Nor does it have the same potential to capture the imagination of individuals and groups as the moral imperative that emanates from human rights norms.

The complementarities of the two approaches suggest powerful outcomes from combining the institutional approach of the human rights framework with its sense of entitlements, and the political economy approach looking at the role of global economic policy and human rights, to tackle the neoliberal framework that refuses to allow economic policies to relate to non-economic considerations and the construction of a state that is both developmental and accountable.

### **Part III Political ecology and climate justice: Tackling sustainability and climate change**

#### **Chapter 5 Climate non-negotiables**

ANITA NAYAR

We are witnessing a historic convergence of multiple global crises – financial, food, energy and climate – and vocal aspirations of citizens around the world who are no longer willing to accept these outcomes. These are compounded by wars, increasingly militarized and repressive states, and a continuing lack of political will to fundamentally redress global problems at a global level. Industry and governments have failed to recognise the interlinkages between the multiple global crises and the unsustainability of the capitalist mode of production and consumption that lies at their core, exacerbated by the past 30 years of neoliberalism which have progressively weakened the ability of states to meet their social obligations. The resulting grossly skewed distribution of wealth and destruction of nature have never been more evident to the peoples of both developed and developing countries.

Whether the present situation is characterised as a fundamental crisis of over-accumulation of capital with multiple manifestations, or a converging series of structural, economic, ecological and social crises, the present state of affairs cannot continue. There is mounting scientific evidence that the earth does have limits. The accumulation of greenhouse gases related to human activity have led to extreme weather and climate events, causing frequent and more intense flooding, blizzards, heatwaves, droughts and wildfires. Eminent scientists predict that global warming, along with de-forestation, agriculture and urbanisation could drive half of all species to extinction by 2100. Some 90% of all large fish species have been driven toward extermination. Depleted water tables have become a global problem and since 1950 the world has lost about one third of its arable land and soil fertility, mostly in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Clearly the earth is tipping off balance and the crisis is escalating rapidly at a rate we cannot even begin to predict. While some are in denial of catastrophic climate change and others are taking advantage of the crisis or playing on people's fears, more need to question the very model of development, based on accumulation of capital and material goods with its social and political inequities and envision sustainable alternatives. We need a shift in consciousness to realise the linkage between ecology and economy as little if any progress can be achieved without addressing their interconnectedness.

This chapter critically analyses the main policy responses to global environmental crises, explores arguments for ecological justice and calls for a recovery of feminist engagement, principles and alternatives.

Historically industrialized countries continue to deny their historical and current responsibilities, passing the burden of mitigation and adaptation to developing countries, while pushing for technological and market based 'solutions' which transnational corporations are positioning themselves to take advantage of and profit from. Economists, traders and policymakers are recasting the climate problem into something markets can handle.

While many now recognise that the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) adopted with the 1997 Kyoto Protocol is not working, the policy response seems to reinforce the same 'carbon market' to which it is linked. Mechanisms such as carbon trading are being widely proposed but there is no evidence that markets will actually protect ecosystems. Such schemes are about redistributing carbon emissions through trading, allowing companies or countries to offset their emissions by paying developing countries to store carbon. This model essentially privatises the atmosphere and promotes the right to pollute. To make matters worse, the financial services sector is now taking advantage of price volatility and uncertainty in the expanding carbon markets, incentivizing the management of risk through hedging services. As a result, the bulk of carbon trading is now taking place in the world of forwards, futures, options and swaps, without any regulation of speculation in such future markets.

REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries) which is portrayed as a quick fix, is resulting in land grabbing for agrifuel plantations and genetically engineered trees that may grow fast but destroy biodiversity, as well as reduce land for agricultural food production and other livelihood strategies. It is a cause for serious concern when money is poured into forests without attention to fundamental governance questions that take into account the rights of local communities.

Technological fixes such as nanotechnology, geoengineering and synthetic biology are not neutral in their design, implementation or effect due to pre-existing social, economic and political disparities, and violate the precautionary principle which requires a need to anticipate serious or irreversible harm without waiting for full scientific certainty of the damage. Capital intensive and centralized technologies which are corporate controlled and disrupt intricate ecological balances are no fix for today's multiple social, economic, ecological and political crises.

Corporations are positioned to profit from these crises but industrialised countries are reluctant to promise any significant finance for mitigation and adaption in developing countries. Regardless of how much money is raised, it remains unclear how these funds will be administered. The World Bank is positioning itself to become the 'environment bank', with a dual mandate on climate and development, continuing to disburse mostly loans, not grants, with conditionalities. The Bank has been given temporary control of the new Green Climate Fund established at the 2010 UNFCCC Conference in Cancun, and many bilateral donors are entrusting their monies to various World Bank Climate Funds.

All of this plays into UNEP's 'green economy' initiative based on the idea of de-coupling economic growth from increasing carbon emissions and rethinking traditional measures of wealth, prosperity and wellbeing. As presently framed, the initiative prioritizes economic growth over ecology, undermining sustainable development and the gains made over 20 years ago, including the principle of 'common but differentiated responsibilities' and sustainable production and consumption. While a number of South governments are not buying the promise of this framework – to halve the human ecological footprint by 2050, eliminate poverty through green jobs, ensure social justice and be an engine of growth - industrialised countries have embraced it.

Progressive social movements worldwide are moving the discourse beyond a scientific or environmental one towards the inequitable use of our commons and are using environmental justice as a political framework to respond to the disproportionately negative impacts of environmental hazards on marginalized communities. The more recent framework of climate justice challenges climate change analysis and policies driven by science and instead recognises that climate change in fact emerged through economic and political systems. It addresses the historical responsibility of industrialized countries which have contributed most to the problem to take the greatest responsibility now by reducing their emissions and assuming the greatest burden of mitigation and adaptation costs. One of the key demands of 'climate debt' is reparations from the North to the South via financing for adaptation, transfer of appropriate technology, and creating climate space under the principle of 'common but differentiated responsibilities'. Climate debt

also encompasses the idea that nature has rights, which people have violated and must undertake legal and other measures to allow the earth to regenerate.

Feminist engagement with these critical environmental debates has been in something of a hiatus since the early 1990s when feminists engaged in preparation for and engagement in the Earth Summit in 1992. From the late 1980s through to the 1990s several analytical approaches to gender and the environment emerged including ecofeminism, premised on the idea that patriarchy and the domination of women are closely linked to environmental destruction and the domination of nature; and feminist political ecology, framed by debates around alternatives to the dominant development paradigm that emerged in the 1991 World Women's Congress for a Healthy Planet in Miami and thereafter.

FPE focuses on gendered differences in interests, knowledge, abilities, power relations over resources and labour, and political struggles on multiple scales from individual to global, and took an intersectional and interrelational approach. While few activists engaged in gender and environment issues carry the label 'feminist political ecology', this approach can be seen in a number of struggles over rights and resources in the context of economic globalization – e.g. in mobilizing to resist the privatization of water, extractive industries, and industrial monocultures for food, energy and carbon sequestration. In this millennium, however, there appears to be less clarity in feminist interventions in global environmental policy debates, and women and gender tend to be 'added and stirred' without a wider structural analysis.

In demands for ecological justice towards alternative development policies, feminists should be wary of discourse that creates an inevitability of catastrophic climate change leading to a sense of resignation that the planet is doomed, and challenge the inevitability and fear based responses. To this end, we can: massively scale up public investment in green energy to shift the world from fossil fuels to renewable and other low emission technologies; challenge techno fix responses such as agrofuels and geoengineering, insist corporate science must be held accountable and the precautionary principle guide such activities; challenge extractivist economic policies based on the removal of large volumes of natural resources with high social and environment impacts that are oriented to global markets; recover principles of sustainable development and livelihoods putting people at the centre of development, entailing eradication of poverty and elimination of unsustainable production; defend Multilateral Environmental Agreements and ensure WTO and bilateral trade agreements do not trump them; challenge the emergence of neo-Malthusian notions linking 'over'-population with the energy, food and climate crises because they do not take into account the considerable slowing of population growth in most of the global South, or disparities in distribution of resources and rates of consumption; and challenge the discourse of women as passive subjects 'vulnerable' to 'disasters'. We must reclaim women's pivotal role in the productive economy, given their gender differentiated relationships to ecological systems as producers, workers, care-givers, consumers and conservers.

### **Box III.1**      *Gita Sen: Primitive accumulation revisited*

One of the most powerful insights that political economy provides for our understanding of the world is the concept of 'primitive accumulation' – the forceful expropriation of resources and wealth and the separation of people from their means of production, consumption, and survival. As we look at the global economy as it has evolved during the past three decades, it becomes clear that primitive accumulation recurs every time the resources of a new region of the world are eyed by the greedy, or when a new group of people is seen as a barrier preventing free access to such resources. As in previous times, the two main mechanisms through which primitive accumulation occurs today are force and debt.

Periods of primitive accumulation are always accompanied by significant increases in wealth and income inequality of the kind we are now witnessing both between and within countries. Such periods hit hardest at the most vulnerable, and in particular at women who bear primary responsibility for the daily care and survival of families. The double whammy of the gender division of labour on the one hand, and of male bias and violence on the other, becomes particularly acute in such times. As common resources get privatized and commercialized, women's ability to care for families is stretched to breaking point. And their inability to 'manage' often becomes the excuse for violence against them.

## **Chapter 6**      **Geoengineering: a gender issue?**

DIANA BRONSON

The idea of re-engineering the planet used to be the stuff of science fiction. More recently, however, a band of increasingly vocal scientists, venture capitalists, think tanks, and other advocates – overwhelmingly male – is rapidly moving these controversial ideas from the margins to the mainstream. This essay overviews the main technologies being contemplated, and summarises some problems associated with them. It discusses some of the ways that geoengineering has been marked by gender, and examines elements of how and why it seems to attract a demographically skewed group of people: overwhelmingly white male scientists from industrialized countries.

Engineering is defined in the Webster's dictionary as 'the application of science to the optimum conversion of the resources of nature to the uses of mankind'. Since 'geo' means earth, this optimum conversion implies planetary-scale interventions and risks. Not all people on the planet have a common view of how the resources of nature should be used, nor equal access to them. 'Mankind' in such a context is a loose and intellectually lazy notion, laden with the false universalism of the patriarchal mind. At best, it offers an appearance of a short-term remedy for those who caused the climate crisis and who do not want to pay for it. The majority of humankind has nothing to gain from a high stakes gamble with Gaia, no reason to trust the institutions likely to be charged with controlling the global thermostat, and potentially, a great deal to lose. The illusion of a technofix just around the corner serves as an excuse for industrialised countries to continue avoiding the urgent changes required to reverse the climate's trajectory. The geoengineering field is rapidly growing and becoming more mainstream in North climate policy circles.

There are three broad categories of geoengineering:

1. solar radiation management involving reflecting sunlight back into outer space to cool the planet without changing the composition of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, cloud whitening to reflect more of the sun's rays back to space, and space sunshades;
2. carbon dioxide removal and sequestration which involves taking CO<sub>2</sub> out of the atmosphere and attempting to store it somewhere else, in algae in the ocean or synthetic trees, or burying concentrated carbon in soil; and
3. intentional weather modification including cloud seeding to avoid drought, and hurricane suppression or redirection.

All have implications of unpredictable and potentially devastating impacts and significant environmental damage.

The geoengineering discourse is gendered in areas of assumption and context, expression and language, and political agenda. In terms of assumption and context, geoengineering is contemplated from an epistemic position of privilege in which key people enjoy a sense of invulnerability to any ill effects of their technology; there is a failure to recognise that it has emerged in a geopolitical context, in industrialised countries that are historically responsible for the climate crisis, which have taken it upon themselves to find a technological solution, and that in a context of inequality, science can be an instrument of domination; it is intended to control or dominate Earth's climate systems, reflecting a durable cultural equation between masculinity and technology; and geoengineering research characterised by scientific hubris and arrogance, with the planet reduced to a laboratory.

It is also gendered in expression and language: as a discourse of imminent catastrophe and inevitability, a tactic to make no other option seem realistic or responsible; in its explicitly masculine metaphors which are rampant i.e. 'a big ass volcano...and how much ejaculate it has'; use of sports metaphors in which teams of scientists battle it out for truth but no one questions the foundational power of science and technology or the rules by which they operate; and in its projection of geoengineering discussions as merely scientific and therefore superior and more legitimate than softer ethical, religious cultural or social considerations or objections.

It has a gendered political agenda: a pragmatism in which geoengineers project an image of scientific competence, even precaution, while opponents are characterised as romantic, ignorant, reckless and irresponsible; seizing the opportunity and disregarding or underplaying risks to achieve their end, imbued with an inflated sense of believing you are saving the world from climate catastrophe; there is no geoengineering scheme that is really ready for deployment, only for more research and development; and although there are a few prominent women in the field, all-male meetings, publications and conversations are not unusual.

The international community is only beginning to come to grips with how to govern this controversial set of technologies and heated debates are under way. In the meantime a small group of mostly male Northern based scientists have been actively promoting a voluntary standards framework through discussion that remains based on scientific feasibility, not ethics or politics or equity.

It is wise for women of the global South, who have so far been completely excluded from the debate, to begin thinking about what a real discussion on geoengineering would look like and how some demands for this might go forward.

A new paradigm proposing a completely different relationship between humanity and nature that recognises the rights of nature, is emerging that honours connectivity, diversity and interdependence and requires a new humility towards the natural world.

### **Box III.2**      *Marina Durano: Green rhetoric in the Asian fiscal stimulus*

Only small amounts of the 'green' fiscal stimulus commitments made by Asia Pacific governments in recent years are for renewable energy and these are disconnected from the trends in resource material use. The Asia Pacific region overtook the rest of the world in domestic material consumption by the turn of the 21st century. Technological improvements are unlikely to slow down resource consumption and improved standards and regulation of waste and pollution dumping are needed to deal with Northern de-industrialization and outsourcing to developing countries of less efficient production technology. As technological innovation brings down costs and lowers consumer prices, demand for items will increase. Consumption patterns need to move away from using goods as markers of social status, which can also contribute to a reduction in social inequality. Fiscal stimulus plans will not be the vehicle for changes in consumption patterns, especially when motivated by a need to push up demand to mitigate the effects of economic recession.

## Chapter 7 Land grabs, food security and climate justice – a focus on sub-Saharan Africa

ZO RANDRIAMARO

Competition for resources spurred by energy, climate and food crises has led to aggressive land grabbing operations in Africa, either speculative or for securing food in land-scarce, capital-rich economies, spurred to a large extent by the convergence of energy, climate and food crises. The key driver of the land scramble derives from flaws in the global food system whereby the vast majority of the billion people who suffer from hunger are food producers lacking decent livelihoods. Many of the land deals have been done in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) where some 239 million people – one in every three – go hungry every day. While the urban and rural poor, who have to spend up to four fifths of their income on food, are most affected by food insecurity, women in poor net-food-importing countries bear the brunt of the impacts of hunger and food insecurity because of their ascribed gender roles as food providers and managers of food security at the household and community levels.

Agriculture is the mainstay of 60 per cent of the population and provides 50 per cent of total exports and 20 per cent of continental GDP in SSA countries. The agricultural sector is dominated by small-scale farmers, with women making up at least 75 per cent of agricultural workers and accounting for some 70% of food production, especially in the subsistence sector. Despite this, food security in developing countries continues to be a challenge, aggravated by the combined effects of several factors. The global food price crisis of 2007-2008 increased the number of people living in extreme poverty from 130 to 150 million and drove 115 million people into chronic hunger, mostly in low income food deficit countries (LIFDCs). Most SSA countries are also net food importers (NFIDCs). The Declaration of the 2009 World Summit on Food Security underlines that 'climate change poses additional severe risks to food security and the agriculture sector'. Its expected impact is particularly fraught with danger for smallholder farmers in developing countries, notably the LDCs, and for already vulnerable populations.

It is important to take into account the gender dimensions of the causes and impacts of food insecurity and hunger especially the distinct gender based differences among the social groups that are the most affected. As Amartya Sen argues, 'this implies the need to view the food problem as a relation between people and food in terms of a network of entitlement relations' and how these entitlement relations are shaped by patriarchal norms and practices, social inequalities as well as inequitable global food and economic systems involving different agents with varying entitlements. Even before the recent food crisis, according to FAO, women made up 60% of the chronically hungry, in spite of their central role in food production. A feminist analysis of the causes and impacts of food insecurity and hunger should be contextualized in the political economy of LIFDCs and net food-importing countries, and examine how food security and hunger are linked with social reproduction and care in the context of climate change.

Hunger and food insecurity do not happen in a vacuum but in a global system that is an integral part of the global economic system, involving many players with different interests and unequal political and economic power, as well as rules and institutions. The global food system is characterized by (i) the growing concentration of a handful of firms in agribusiness, which enables these powerful players to affect prices, reduce competition and set standards in the food and agriculture sector; (ii) the organisation of a 'free global market' by these big players with the support of the power holders in global governance; and (iii) the expanding use of science, technology and information as well as laws, rules and regulations to control the risks faced by the different players, and to protect their interests. Underpinning this food system are the inequities in the existing global economic system and the organisation of production and value chains at the global level, whereby most SSA countries are contained in the production of non-food primary commodities and at the low value added end of global value chains, and are heavily dependent on food imports, especially cereals.

Trade reforms have made SSA countries particularly vulnerable to surges in food imports that are often subsidized by exporting developed countries. Such surges have negatively affected the balance of payments of many LIFDCs and NFIDCs in Africa, where the total cost of food imports has more than doubled between 2000 and 2009.

Land reform policies have been a determining factor in land grabs, driven by climate change, interest in biofuel production and to attract foreign investment. These reforms tend to take away land from the poor and benefit the elite, through privatization and formalization of property rights. Over the last few years, increased attention has been paid by the media, policymakers and social justice advocates to the wave of so-called 'land grabs' whereby governments and corporations in capital rich but land scarce countries in both North and South have engaged in large scale investments in land acquisitions to outsource food and energy in developing countries – including the African continent – more directly than through the global trading system. Together with climate change, this scramble for land runs a serious risk of perpetuating inequities and increasing the vulnerability of people in concerned countries.

While the land grabs show that the global food system is mainly organised for the interests of the most powerful players, the recent global food crisis has heightened the strategic dimensions of food. As noted in a 2009 Financial Times editorial 'If food was ever a soft policy issue before, it now rivals oil as the basis of power and economic security'. Madagascar, Sudan, Ethiopia and Mozambique are among the main recipients of foreign direct investment in land in Africa, with an overall total of more than 803,414 hectares of land allocated to private companies between 2004 and 2009. The land grabbing phenomenon adds another dimension to the complex setting of land claims in Africa due to the multiplicity of institutions and sources of political authority that underlie negotiations and bargaining over various claims to land use and ownership.

Climate change also represents a formidable challenge for the future food security for millions of African people, especially intertwined with the consequences of development policies, political economy issues and population pressures. Their combined effects increase

land pressure and competition, resulting in greater vulnerability of smallholders in the absence of tenure security. In addition to tenure security the challenges include the management of common property resources; land access and redistribution, including in regard to settlement demands from the increasing number of climate refugees and potential land conflicts; land use regulation and environmental protection, as well as the reform and development of effective land institutions.

There is also growing interest in purchasing forest land in developing countries as a means to offset carbon emissions. In general, carbon forestry projects present potential threats to land and territorial security of social groups with insecure land rights. In particular, the customary ownership of lands by indigenous and forest dependent peoples is not recognised by governments, hence the high risk of expropriation through carbon forestry projects. Land considered 'idle' or 'waste' land is often made available for conversion to biofuel production – these terms are not often applied to unoccupied land but to land used in ways not perceived as productive by government.

Apart from the risk of undermining sustainable soil and water management, biofuel production is likely to exacerbate ecological imbalances and undermine women's livelihoods and rights in rural areas where land traditionally used by women has been converted to energy crop plantations. Since women are mostly involved in subsistence production for households, biofuel production can negatively affect household food security. Women's work burden and time can be negatively affected by loss of agricultural land and biodiversity and many are likely to become agricultural labourers employed by foreign companies engaged in biofuel production.

The FAO, which once saw land grabbing as a form of neo-colonialism, now sees transnational land deals as a means of economic development for poor countries, if the deals take into account the interests of both parties including smallholder farmers. FAO has developed Voluntary Guidelines for Responsible Governance of Land and other Natural Resources. Other international organisations such as IFAD and IFPRI also see land acquisitions in poor countries positively. The African Union in collaboration with the UN Economic Commission for Africa and the African Development Bank have developed a Framework and Guidelines for Land Policies in Africa. The growing support for large scale land investments in policy circles legitimizes transnational land deals and diverts attention from the numerous risks and disadvantages facing small farmers.

For men and women alike, food security and sustainable livelihoods are contingent on effective implementation of equitable land reforms, but there are difficulties over unpacking the heavily intertwined customary law, colonial legacies of alienation and push towards agricultural commercialisation so that tenure security remains uncertain for many Africans. The stakes are higher for women as they are expected to benefit from reforms that give them more secure access to land. The predominant win-win rhetoric ignores the history of foreign corporate agribusiness and is based on the assumption that deals will take into consideration the needs, capabilities and constraints of smallholder farmers, despite historical evidence to the contrary.

### ***Box III.3 Hibist Wendemu Kassa: African feminist resistance and climate change politics***

Today's young African women have been identified by global capital as potential allies as well as sources of resistance to the status quo. Women play an important role in ensuring the stability of the current system through their care work, but precisely because they engage with the system to secure the survival of their communities they are also a dynamic source of resistance.

As a consequence of the global food crises, leaps in food prices, leadership betrayals and high unemployment, several African countries have been faced with protests. Women severely affected by the food crisis have been part of these struggles and young women were involved in organizing and participating. This is a time of opportunity for genuine revolutionary political projects for equality in diversity, but can only occur if women boldly own their struggles.

## **Part IV      Secularism and biopolitics: Confronting fundamentalism and deciphering biopolitics**

### **Chapter 8      Negotiating sexual and reproductive health and rights at the UN – a long and winding road**

ALEXANDRA GARITA AND FRANCOISE GIRARD

It is worth remembering how path breaking the paradigm shift from 'population control' to 'reproductive health and rights' achieved at ICPD in Cairo in 1994 and strengthened at Beijing a year later, truly was. At the ICPD brand new concepts of 'reproductive health', 'sexual health' and 'reproductive rights' were defined. It was agreed that reproductive health required an integrated package of health services from family planning to maternity care and including diagnosis of HIV, and that universal access to reproductive health should be provided no later than 2015. Governments concluded that unsafe abortion constituted a major public health problem and agreed to take (largely unspecified) measures to address it in circumstances where abortion was not against national law. They explicitly recognised the rights of adolescents to reproductive health education, information and care. Gender equality was acknowledged as a crucial determinant of sustainable development and of reproductive health in addition to being a really important end in itself. Agreement on any of those subjects would have been unimaginable just five years earlier.

But the ICPD Programme of Action (POA) did not stop at reproductive health; it recognised the interrelationships between consumption and production patterns, economic development, access to education, population growth, migration, demographic structure and environmental degradation. In the view of both Gita Sen and Sonia Correa, both gender justice and economic justice were advanced in Cairo. In that sense, the Programme of Action can legitimately be described as the blueprint for the eventual MDGs.

Five key elements made the ICPD outcomes possible:

First, progressive forces (namely women's organisations from the global South and North working and debating together over a number of years) laid out the vision and the terms of the debate in Cairo. Activists were determined to ensure that respect for the reproductive rights of women would be the central concern, in order to end the abuses and coercion associated with population policy, focused on targets and quotas for family planning. Second, although the population establishment, demographers, family planning groups and environmental groups from the North came into the negotiations opposing the new paradigm, women's health and rights activists realised they had to strike an alliance with these groups to prevail over the Holy See's opposition. Third, the US government played a leading role in shaping the Cairo agenda and ensuring its adoption through skilful negotiation, outreach and use of its influence. Fourth, the G77 negotiating bloc (all developing countries, sometimes joined by China) chose not to negotiate sexual and reproductive health issues as a bloc. This allowed for a diversity of views and something more than the lowest common denominator. And fifth, attempts by the Holy See to forge an unholy alliance with the Islamic countries were not yet successful. Adolescent sexuality, rather than abortion or contraception, was the issue of concern to conservative Muslim states. As a result, the Holy See garnered support mainly from certain Catholic countries of Latin America, although it was able to present itself as champion of the South on economic matters, such as the right to development, ODA, trade policy, structural adjustment programmes and the unsustainable consumption of the North.

Crucially the ICPD POA was confirmed in Beijing a year later, proving Cairo was not an aberration. Taking the agenda one step further, paragraph 106 of the Beijing Programme for Action called on governments to consider reviewing laws that punish women who had undergone legal abortions, and paragraph 96 asserted the right of women 'to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality'. The Holy See established an alliance with certain conservative Islamist countries by focusing on women's sexuality, adolescents and gender rather than solely on abortion and contraception. EU countries took a more prominent role and G77 again chose not to negotiate as a bloc, and South Africa and the Caribbean played a lead role in maintaining and advancing the agreements.

At ICPD+5 and Beijing+5 the dynamics of negotiations shifted significantly, with the location – the UN headquarters in New York City determining the content, players and rules in new and unexpected ways. The prominent role of North American right-wing groups shifted attention towards sexual and reproductive health issues, relegating economic and other social issues to the back. The conservative backlash against ICPD began in earnest and foreshadowed the Bush era shift at the UN to significantly more conservative views on reproductive health. The G77 began each negotiation speaking as a bloc on all issues as is its custom in New York, obscuring the progressive views of many developing countries on sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Progressive governments and activists spent the next eight years battling to prevent rollback at ICPD+10 and unable to move the reproductive agenda forward at global level, while countries that previously relied on US leadership realised they would have to take a very public stand on reproductive rights and reproductive health services, unsafe abortion and access by adolescents to information and services. Intensive lobbying by women's human rights advocates in 2005 ensured the ICPD goal was included in the final Millennium Development Goals declaration.

The first opportunity to advance agreed language on human rights, gender equality and sexual and reproductive health was at the 2009 Commission on Population and Development. In a preamble paragraph of the final CPD Resolution, governments expanded on the language of paragraph 96 of the Beijing Platform for Action, by recognising that it applied not only to women but also to men. This provided an important opening to combat the coercion, discrimination and violence that men – notably men who have sex with men, gay, bisexual and transgender men – also face in respect to their sexuality. The Resolution also contained the strongest language ever adopted on empowering young people, reiterating their right to family planning, to female and male condoms, sexual and reproductive health services, and 'comprehensive education on human sexuality' that teaches gender equality and human rights without the usual restrictive qualifiers regarding culture, parental consent or age appropriateness.

The CPD Resolution also contained unprecedented action commitments by governments on integrating sexual and reproductive health services information and services into HIV/AIDS strategies and strengthened initiatives to increase the capacities of adolescent girls and women to protect themselves from HIV, principally through sexual and reproductive health services. This was the first intergovernmental negotiation prioritising sexual and reproductive health in health systems strengthening. This first global negotiation in eight years to advance the language of Cairo and Beijing was due to factors similar to those that made ICPD possible: a US government recommitted to women's sexual and reproductive health and rights, skilled feminist activists on the delegations of several countries, and the breaking up of both G77 and EU blocs to negotiate nationally on sexual and reproductive rights issues.

The struggle on HIV/AIDS took a different path, with reproductive health and women's health activists feeling the HIV movement didn't pay sufficient attention to the increased vulnerability to HIV infection of women and young people, yet very few women's or reproductive health groups prioritised HIV/AIDS as a sexual and reproductive rights issue and few of them participated in

the UNGASS on HIV/AIDS. There was movement on universal access to life saving treatment and against severe discrimination, and some impressive national HIV programmes that associated trade related intellectual property rights. However, 30 years into the AIDS epidemic, references to women's and young people's health and rights are insufficient, when nearly half of all new HIV infections occur amongst those aged 15-24, primarily young women in sub-Saharan Africa.

ICPD comes to a crossroad in 2014-15 with further opportunities to advance, although ICPD+20 is meant as a review only. The UN is expected to adopt a new post MDG framework and there are early indications of high level support for reproductive health, which will require UNFPA, the sexual and reproductive health community, feminists and young people to ensure hard won language is retained and moved forward. Activists have signified their intention to recast women's sexual and reproductive health and rights in their proper, broader context within development, human rights and environmental agendas, which is vital for sustainable development. The past 20 years have shown that reproductive rights can easily 'disappear' without strong women's participation in political processes and that even friendly governments sometimes shy away from such issues as too controversial or messy.

## **Chapter 9      The making of a secular contract**

FATOU SOW AND MAGALY PAZELLO

Relationships between religion, culture and politics, and the struggles for gender equality and women's human rights, are extremely complex, yet common threads can be traced through analysis of forms of fundamentalism and their impact on women's lives. Considered as a dimension of private life in countries which claim to be secular, religion extends well beyond into public life, and even into politics on a global scale. There are religious groups imbued with a mission to lead society and transform social contracts, based on a very particular view of the sacred, albeit one that often diverges from basic interpretations of their own religion. In the fierce world of today, religion has an intrinsic geopolitical identity, and claims not only moral but also cultural sanctity. It is impossible to ignore the revival of such religious and cultural values in any reflection on the potential for a new social contract based on social justice and gender equality as these religious/cultural revivals often contribute to a backlash against freedoms and rights for women and gender equality.

Culture is used in parallel with religion to define identity and as a tool to reshape the social contract. For instance, some right wing Hindu groups in India base their ideology on questionable readings of history, cultural origins and nationhood that view Muslims as an arch-enemy. The resulting violence and upheavals have also led to the reordering of gender-based contracts concerning men's control over women's lives and women's observance of social codes of dress and behaviour.

In the present situation of conflict between ideologies and religions, Western societies brandish secularism (notwithstanding its different interpretations) as a principle of democracy and consider how far it can be applied to countries with other dominant religions, particularly Islam. Yet many presumed secular countries still have official relations between church and state and preserve laws inspired by religion. Furthermore, education and health services also often remain as focus areas for the church with the support of state authorities. Secularity also does not automatically transform the gendered nature of religions. In the birth of the modern nation state, religion partially left the public sphere but never left the personal/individual. It remained in the realm of family, communities and religious institutions, which provide social networks in a manner that the liberal secular state has not been able to. Secular Europe continues to subsidize religious associations, schools and missions. Some of its laws, particularly those concerning the family that have a fundamental impact on women's rights, are religion inspired. The position of the head of the family given to the man, the indissolubility of marriage as a sacrament, and the rejection of children born outside marriage, are all based on patriarchal religious rules that are largely shared by the religions of the book (Judaism, Christianity and Islam).

These ambivalences in regard to state-religion separation illuminate why conservative religious forces are now challenging the norms in this area. They perceive that the transformations that are taking place in regard to gender and sexuality - through norms and rights - may in the long run transform the gendered and sexualised nature of religion itself. This means that their aim is not just to take over the state for the sake of political power. The takeover of the state and the retreat of gender - and sexuality- related norms are a means to preserve the status quo of the religious gender systems as they have been for the last ten millennia.

No single community, social or cultural group, sect or religious movement can claim to represent conservative religious fundamentalists today. They consist of groups as heterogeneous as the fundamentalist Catholic movement of Archbishop Lefebvre (dissident member of the French clergy), US Pentecostals and Adventists, the Wahabis/Salafists of Saudi Arabia, the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt, the Taliban of Afghanistan and the Hassidic Jews. They share a similar vision of authority and power and cultivate a religious idealism essential for maintaining their personal and community identity. They understand truth as one and revealed and condemn their opponents as evil. Fundamentalist movements are religious, political and social and have a need for joint religious and political authority.

Beyond fundamentalist extremist movements there is rampant everyday fundamentalism. It is the ordinary fundamentalism/radicalism of people who are no more than ordinary but whose thinking, daily attitudes and behaviour have an impact on people's lives, and in particular on women's lives, that is even more insidious. It involves judgment on clothing and public and private conduct which encounter disapproval and condemnation. This includes the obligation on women to wear the veil or longer skirts in public, and obligations on individuals to fast or not eat in public at the time of Ramadan, and to pray in an ostentatious manner in public.

Fundamentalist religious leaders are vigorously active even in strong democracies and states defined as secular and endeavour to generate tensions between state and religion to oppose secularism. Women's organisations have experienced this interplay when negotiating women's rights as human rights at the United Nations, where the political alliance between the Vatican and some Islamic states provided a powerful backlash against gender equality and women's rights.

Control of women's bodies, rights within families, sexual and reproductive health and rights have been some of the most critical areas of contention. Islamic states, whether fundamentalist or not, have always demanded respect for Islamic values and managing of relations between men and women within the family. In the United States, disputes between fundamentalist religions and liberals and the ties between economic power, conservatives and radical religious leaders can be seen in the battle over abortion. There are numerous examples of opposition to sexual rights, including sexual orientation and gender identity.

Control of women's bodies is a step towards political control of society and control of the state is the ultimate goal of fundamentalist groups. Women's struggles for their rights are deeply enmeshed in the struggle for political power and the making and remaking of social contracts.

**Box IV.1**      *Erika Troncoso: The abortion debate in Latin America and the Caribbean – one step forward, two steps back*

In the Latin American region only Cuba, Puerto Rico and Mexico City allow women access to voluntary, legal and safe abortion services. Five countries fully criminalise abortion even when the woman's life is threatened; and other countries allow abortion only for reasons such as rape or health risks. However safe and legal access to abortion is not guaranteed because of an absence of service protocols and lack of advice to women on their reproductive rights. The legal framework in the region is contrary to women's rights enshrined in international treaties that countries have already signed. In certain countries the personal religious beliefs of some dignitaries, upper classes and Catholic Church have prevented advances. Right wing groups gain strength by issuing disinformation and in the middle are the majority of the people who lack easy access to vital, unbiased information.

**Box IV.2**      *Bhavya Reddy: MDGs, SRHR and poverty reduction policies - evidence from a DAWN project*

There has been great concern over whether the Millennium Development Goals have been a step forward or back from the more complex and integrated approaches to development agreed in the UN conferences of the 1990s. DAWN's project on the MDGs, SRHR and poverty reduction showed that in Nigeria, the MDGs agenda is strongly integrated in government structures and action; India represents a mixed picture and in Mexico the MDGs have not formally entered national policy discourse and appear to have negligible impact. Access to safe and legal abortion remains a critical concern for all three countries.

Poverty reduction strategies have generally failed to address adequately the relationship between poverty, health and sexual/reproductive health and rights. HIV/AIDS is better linked to poverty alleviation in India and Nigeria. Although all three countries gave political backing and programme focus to maternal health, unsafe abortion linked to maternal mortality and morbidity has been marginalized.

## **Chapter 10**      **Sexuality as a weapon of biopolitics - rethinking Uganda's anti-homosexuality bill**

ROSALIND P. PETCHESKY

Viewing social and development conflicts through a double lens integrating Foucauldian biopolitics with feminist intersectionality invites conceptualising every issue of political economy – markets, poverty, growth, militarisation, climate change and most problems in public health – as profoundly gendered and sexualised from the start. It also demands understanding every arena of sexual, gender and reproductive health politics as having deeply macroeconomic and development related dimensions. It recognises multiple expressions of masculinity, femininity and hybridity that intersect across diverse bodies with race and ethnicity in historically and geographically specific ways.

The Anti Homosexuality Bill in Uganda and the complex politics and debates around it demonstrate the impossibility of engaging in defence of sexual and human rights in 'neutral' terms; and the dangerously thin line between solidarity and protection on one hand and corporate profiteering and militarisation on the other. The trend towards criminalisation of nonconforming genders and sexualities is not confined to Africa but is rampant in many other countries and regions.

The politics of homophobia in Uganda sits on top of a number of geopolitical, imperialist and macroeconomic fault lines, including what can be called evangelical neo-colonialism – the machinations of a United States based network of operatives on behalf of Christian homophobic piety. Homophobia also provides a convenient diversion from the bad sexual behaviour of married men, whose wives are becoming infected with HIV at growing rates, and distracts attention from the real issues that truly threaten African families – economic crisis, lack of jobs, food insecurity, rampant domestic violence and child sexual abuse. The crisis in food and jobs can be traced back to economic reform and structural adjustment programmes with gendered consequences.

Entangled with United States economic interests in Uganda are its military and strategic interests which allow Uganda to serve as a proxy in conflicts in Somalia and elsewhere, risking its own citizens to terrorist attacks. Uganda has also been thoroughly militarized on its own initiative, fuelled by global traffic in small arms, use of military courts and accusations of terrorism to suppress political opponents. There is a race-ethnic dimension in this, seen in the horrific Rwanda conflict that originated in an internal Ugandan crisis of citizenship. Militarization, racialization and sexual and gender economies weave tightly in the production of biopolitics as a general strategy of power.

New instantaneous communications technologies help incite fantasies of proximity, connectivity and participation; and humanitarian discourses deployed by transnational advocates can have an effect of reducing Africans to the status of helpless victims being rescued by Northern NGOs. Transnational campaigns are most effective when undertaken in full partnership with and guided by local groups working on the ground.

Countering prevailing forms of biopolitics also requires broad based multi issue alliances, building strong coalitions between sexual rights advocates and economic and social justice groups that oppose distorted neoliberal development policies and continued militarisation.

Ultimately single issue politics have deadly consequences. Threats by foreign governments to cut off assistance or give special support to local gay rights organisations create a risk of serious backlash against LGBTI people.

Sexual politics must always be understood in their complex relation to deep geopolitical and economic forces and Northern based human rights activists must continue to act in solidarity with groups in the global South and take leadership from those working on the ground.

#### **Box IV.3      *Rodelyn Marte: HIV and SRHR***

Worldwide, HIV is a leading cause of death and disease among women of reproductive age, higher in Sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean. The often disadvantaged social and economic status of women causes them to experience the impact of HIV disproportionately. Only by addressing issues of gender equality, economic justice and human rights can the epidemic be dealt with effectively and this is more critical in the era of diminishing funding for health. The most effective responses are aligned to country specific epidemic transmission dynamics, an approach that facilitates demanding women-responsive HIV/AIDS programmes. Who is and who is not part of defined vulnerable populations is heavily debated and women, except for sex workers and pregnant women, often don't make the list.

#### **Box IV.4      *Sonia Correa: Sexuality and human rights in Brazil: the long and winding road***

Realising human rights in relation to sexuality is a complex and contradictory process. Over the past three decades, Brazil, for example, has experienced legal and policy reforms favourable to sexual rights that in the 2000s have seen flagrant regressions. Although gains are yet to be appraised, they have not translated easily into reality. Effects of legal and policy change vary sharply. In many other Latin American countries changes regarding same sex unions and marriage have moved faster than demands for legal abortion. Moral conservative forces have become increasingly influential. Legal and policy reform, though indispensable, is wholly insufficient. History in Brazil and elsewhere shows that realising human rights in the realm of sexuality requires unending struggles within the social fabric and depends on dialogue and solidarity among various advocating groups.

## Chapter 11 The state of states

CLAIRE SLATTER

Despite their common history of colonisation, Southern states had markedly different experiences of imperialism and colonialism that had strong bearing on their post-colonial state formation as well as on possibilities for enlarging citizenship and rights, especially for women. A common feature of all colonial states was their authoritarian nature. Variants of the liberal democratic state that had emerged in parts of Europe were hastily transplanted to replace long established authoritarian colonial state systems; the democratic foundations of the post-colonial state were thus quite shaky from the start; and it was hardly surprising that Southern political elites that inherited power at independence tended towards authoritarianism. Gaining or retaining control of the state, its bureaucratic-military apparatus and national resources (often for personal enrichment) increasingly became the primary objective of male dominated electoral competitions and the masculinist one party states and military dictators which often took over. Authoritarian regimes that have survived have largely been able to do so by repressing their citizens.

Struggles for control of natural resources intensified in the post-colonial period; conflicts were often financed by external forces with direct interests in the resources. Even today resource struggles involving foreign interests and related geopolitical machinations usually lie at the heart of political instability. Even states with less resources are not spared because the mutual distrust created by colonial divide and rule strategies in multi ethnic and multi religious states usually encourage identity politics and extremism, impeding nation building and evolution of a sense of citizenship.

Except where women's traditional political role was deliberately eroded by colonialism, the gender systems underlying traditional social, economic and political arrangements appeared to survive the transition to modern state forms virtually intact. While women benefitted from state led development, their disadvantage within existing gender systems mostly remained ignored except in revolutionary states where women's equality measures were aimed at expanding economic production and growth, as in Cuba.

Victories have been won through new negotiated rights agreements and court rulings since the 1980s although some states have recently backtracked, breaking the social contract and advancement of women's rights by returning to military rule. Recent struggles have opened opportunities for women, but they will not be won without sustained and strategic negotiations. Only feminists appear to see parallels among the various forms of fundamentalism or neo-conservatism and threats posed by mobilisation of right and extreme right political forces. The model of the developmental state, earlier disparaged under neoliberalism, is enjoying a comeback, notably in discourses on the state and poverty reduction. While the developmental state remains important as a heterodox alternative to the neoliberal state, its authoritarian character makes it a problem for enlarging women's citizenship and rights.

The World Bank's effective state assigned it a role fitted with neoliberal principles essentially elevating the market above the state and holds little promise for enlargement of women's citizenship and rights. Discourses on fragile, failing and rogue states are not motivated by concerns to strengthen democracy but rather to discredit or discipline unfriendly regimes and recalcitrant states, possibly to justify intervention.

DAWN's critique of the state remains closely tied to the project of reclaiming the state - making it more accountable to ordinary citizens and more transparent, and strengthening institutional and civil society checks on executive power - not destroy its legitimacy, institutions and capacity to check runaway capitalism. Full and equal citizenship remains an unfulfilled promise for an overwhelming majority of women in today's fierce new states in the South, requiring redoubled feminist advocacy efforts to re-make national social contracts so that full and equal citizenship is constitutionally enshrined, promote global citizenship and multilateralism, and secure more ethical modalities of global governance and global trade that do not conflict with international human rights norms.

### **Box V.1**      *Cai Yiping: ICTs – efficient exploitation or feminist tool?*

The big platforms and service providers for the new information and communication technologies are also commercial companies that finance themselves like mass media and have the power to engage in propaganda. The rapid and uneven pace at which new ICTs develop continues to divide societies, creating a digital divide that cuts across class, nation, age, race, ethnicity and gender. Despite the growing number of women internet users, the online world is not gender neutral or women friendly. Traditional communication tools such as radio, theatre, print and face to face discussion are still the most effective means to reach out to women at the grassroots. The convergence of traditional communication tools and new ICTs allows women to transcend the status of passive recipients and become active producers of information to challenge neoliberal globalisation.

## Chapter 12 Religious fundamentalism and secular governance

AMRITA CHHACHHI

The fiercest face of the world today is the growing strength and power of religious fundamentalist groups deploying terror to hold lives to ransom. Vigilantism, bans and censorship are becoming the forces of civil and political governance. Combined with the 'war on terror' technologies and racial profiling, it is leading to a sense of insecurity signalling a profound shift as a number of certainties become shaky, including that of religious fundamentalism being the problem and secular governance the solution.

The term 'fundamentalism' is under debate but what has remained critical for women's analysis and strategy is the emergence of religious fundamentalisms as political movements using religion to consolidate power and extend social control over the state and civil society. What are being asserted as fundamental, basic, religious principles are often selective interpretations linked to broader political projects.

Key features of such movements include: selectivity of such principles requiring boundary maintenance with a sense of being under siege and the breakdown of social order; fabrication of a glorious past and tradition and collapsing of differences between culture and institutionalised religion; intolerance that makes anyone who challenges the sacralised authority a traitor, building exclusion into the construction of the community/nation; control over women and redefinition of gender relations; a clear, articulated political project to capture state power or institutions, particularly cultural and educational organisations; anti-democratic, authoritarian and hierarchical male dominated organisations in which women rarely hold leadership positions. They are not irrational or medieval movements but have grown as a way of accommodating capitalism, so while the vehicle is traditional the content is contemporary. A lethal coalescence of welfare and identity offered by such political formations is crucial to their expansion.

Both political economy and culture are needed to understand contemporary religious fundamentalisms. First it is important to apprehend the moment of emergence and consolidation of transnational religious fundamentalist political formations. These organisations are de-territorialized – members come from various locations. We need to think about how these political formations dislodge traditional ideas of sovereignty, or disrupt the operations of sovereign territories – they are not restricted to the nation state. Second, a corollary to the development of global fundamentalisms is the worldwide nexus between the armaments and drug industries and the ways in which militarization and narco-terrorism have been fostered for geopolitical agendas by governments and non-government actors.

A third dimension is the link between these fundamentalist movements and neoliberalism. Neoliberalism informs fundamentalist projects, even as they draw support from people suffering from its outcomes. The failure of the state to deliver services, increased poverty, high levels of unemployment and increasing inequality have propelled large numbers of the marginalized and the disenfranchised to join these groups. The discourse on decadence is critical since it resonates with the disenfranchised and is linked to the experience of inequality. In particular, with the rise of male unemployment, the primary marker of masculine gender identity – the male breadwinner – is being eroded. There is a resultant crisis of masculinity that takes different forms. Attempts to reconstitute and reassert hegemonic masculinity can take violent forms at the individual and personal level. For instance, a rise in sexual violence has been noted. Fourth, is the identity of the fundamentalist – the leaders are highly educated, belonging to middle class or upper middle class families. In addition many fundamentalist organisations are very active in welfare and humanitarian aid and are the first to respond when there is a natural disaster.

The view of women as manipulated or deluded to be involved in fundamentalist movements needs to be revisited; participating is a form of entry into the public sphere where they can be involved in politics and talk equally with men because it is legitimised by religion; or a choice in a context of communal/racial discrimination and violence. Secularism does not guarantee women's rights and there are contradictions inherent to secularism, such as between the individual and collective rights. The women's movement tried to overcome these by putting forward the idea of universal citizenship based rights that also recognised other layers of citizenship in collectives, and argued that women had a birthright entitlement to the secular charter of rights but the option to live subject to religious family law must also exist; an alternative heavily criticised.

Moving forward would mean a discussion of the process of secularization and the development of secularity along with the process of democratization. The term 'religious fundamentalism' needs to be used as an analytical tool to interrogate the ideological content and practice of organisations, not as a static label; and there is a need to broaden frameworks beyond straightforward human rights. While the space for challenge is shrinking, a broader social justice vision is needed to incorporate issues of redistribution, recognition and representation because only through these combined concepts can the women's movement challenge that mix of welfare and identity that is offered by religious fundamentalist groups.

### *Box V.2 Case study of engagement and responses by women's groups in the face of violence in Gujarat*

After the March 2002 communal riots in Gujarat, women working with communities were faced with the break-up of their groups in areas where violence had occurred, and hostility prevented Hindu and Muslim women coming together. The context had changed radically and required the women and development groups to learn to manage diversity and stand by each other. Religious symbols and festivals of both groups were used to bond and groups worked to bring women from the communities together through sessions dealing with the schisms in their neighbourhoods. Women's groups in Gujarat positioned themselves as arbitrators in post-riot conflicts and negotiations in an attempt to rewrite the social contract around peace and security.

## Chapter 13 Reframing peace and security for women

KUMUDINI SAMUEL

In this century there has been a growth of nationalism and fundamentalisms, and the 'crisis of reproduction' has evolved into a crisis of human (in) security that is gendered in nature and includes the informalization and feminization of employment, intensification of women's labour time, increased burden on the care economy and crisis of masculinity when men cannot maintain the myth of the male breadwinner. The crisis has intensified as the nature of conflict shifted from inter-state to intra-state, with casualties being mainly women and children.

Women and girls play multiple and diverse roles in conflict and transitions, from armed combatants to single heads of household to peacemakers. In the context of changing security imperatives women achieved the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR1325) in 2000, finally recognising women's concerns in relation to international peace and security and bringing it out of the domain of soft policy. However, implementation has been slow and uneven, with no mechanism that can hold states accountable for enforcement; and its principles are for many too abstract and discussion reduced to simplistic framing around narrow understanding.

UNSCR1325 is a thematic resolution, adopted under Chapter VI (non-coercive measures) and thus uses 'persuasive' language such as 'urges' 'encourages', 'invites' and 'calls'. Resolutions adopted under Chapter VII, by contrast, use the strong language of enforcement and are binding. Another problem with the resolution is that its articulation and understanding of security is state-centric, and therefore directly linked to the creation and maintenance of militaries or 'security' forces, in contradiction of the intended framing in the context of unequal patriarchal power relations.

Northern countries developing national action plans for the resolution are also countries supporting a global arms industry and having large defence budgets. They contribute to 'mitigating' conflict by contributing troops for 'peace-keeping'. The feminist equality dilemma has been used to promote the inclusion of more women in militaries, which undercuts the objective of justice and transformative change in gender and power relations. Despite the Security Council's core responsibility being to maintain international peace and security, the women drafting the resolution were dissuaded from including language critiquing militarism, militarization and the pursuit of war by member states. So protecting women in war and participation in peace negotiations leaves war in place and the legitimacy of the systems that produce it. In not challenging the war system but merely giving women a role in its structures, Resolution 1325 does not allow for the making of sustainable peace. To secure transformative peace and ensure economic, social, political and personal security for women there has to be an understanding of the complexity of conflict and peace in the interpretation of UNSCR1325.

The recognition of a continuum of violence against women is also now central to feminist conceptualisation of peace, human rights and security. All forms of this violence whether inter-personal, in the family or the community, or perpetrated by state/non-state actors, are inter-related. And this violence continues into times of transition and post-war, posing a continuum of threat to women in space, time and location.

Women's bodies and their sexuality are markers of culture, tradition and family and are constantly subject to institutional and interpersonal contestations of power, control, regulation and surveillance. In times of conflict this contestation is overtly expressed as part of the broader struggle where women's bodies, and sometimes the bodies of men, become virtual battlefields. Sexual violence is not an aberration of wartime, however. Institutionalised male dominance is itself a form of violence. Attitudes to dealing with sexual violence in times of war and transition has led to questioning the possible collusion between masculine institutions of law enforcement and justice and patriarchal power politics that condone control of women's sexuality.

Women express agency that goes beyond the stereotype of them as victims and create new spaces for political engagement in post conflict transition and political and social transformation. As frontline human rights defenders, women can express political agency when it is dangerous or impossible for men to do so. The complexity of conflict and peace makes it apparent there is no clearly defined post-war moment, but a continuum of conflict, with supposed peace a pause between wars. The significance of structural violence, long term oppression and impoverishment, often part of 'peacetime', cannot be ignored. Reframing of security must also ensure a transformative peace that challenges existing structures of patriarchal power and dominance, an absence of social and political violence, as well as within the domestic sphere.

### **Box V.3** *Jayanthi Kuru-Utumpala: LBT rights and militarisation in post conflict context*

A key challenge faced by sexual rights advocates is the argument that violation of rights relating to sexual orientation and gender identity is never as important as human rights violations that occur during conflict or post conflict situations. Sri Lanka criminalises adult consensual same sex relationships and when issues of sexuality have been raised, it has been done within a heteronormative framework mostly dealing with violence against women, rape and reproductive health services, excluding LBT people, adolescents, single women and other women outside the heterosexual matrix. After the Sri Lanka Government defeated the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in 2009 after 30 years of conflict, the government adopted a victorious attitude underpinned by Sinhala Buddhist nationalism. Cultural values restricting women's sexual autonomy became stronger and restrictions on freedom of association and organisation increased. It is impossible for LBT rights activists to work in isolation and it is important to link with the women's movement for support and solidarity.

## Chapter 14 Feminist activisms for new global contracts amidst civil indignation

JOSEFA FRANCISCO AND PEGGY ANTROBUS

In the first years of the 21st century there have been amplified calls for governments to save humanity and the planet from the greed of industrial/finance corporations and traditional political elites that enable them. Women's movements and feminists are globalised transnational actors with distinctive issues who have used the United Nations to expose governments that have broken global social contracts around development, women's rights and gender equality. However, in this multilateral space there are regular disputes over global norms and rules.

Although the relevance of the UN has come under attack, there has been no other inter-governmental space in which an overwhelming number of states are represented and which has ways of access for feminists to use and prevent others from capturing global social contracts. DAWN has identified several fault lines that plague the UN. The challenge to reform the UN is to find ways to address the need for a more democratic, plural and accountable multilateral body also able to respond immediately to major and unexpected crises and resolve them in the long term. Other informal but powerful groupings of governments such as the G8 are non transparent and challenge demands for more accountable, democratic and human rights respecting global leadership.

Feminists have also constructed mechanisms for horizontal debates around advocacy positions and strategies. The power of women's movements and the need for them to interconnect horizontally with other social justice movements were made particularly evident in the World Social Forum. With political manifestations taking on a more plural face, the aggregation of feminists and women's rights activists increasingly takes place within larger sites of inter movement encounters or as a step in joint global actions by NGOs. Feminists are also engaged in another stream to interweave and network around specific issues, and one such space is the UN. Where a strong single issue movement can be most seen is perhaps on internet, where a powerful form of feminist cyber activism is made possible.

Today's call for solidarity has been founded on plural and diverse ideas that have been generated by an increased civic awareness of the systemic nature of issues that tear apart people's lives. Those who gained from political relationships between feminist and social justice movements have much to contribute to the realisation of solidarity across struggles. Acquiring resources to support women's rights advocacy has become a huge concern leading to more collaborative undertakings and other funding strategies that face challenges of ethics, politics and values which require clear principles and unities to guide political practices.

Having the astuteness and commitment to explore avenues for interlinkages, be it through organisational collaboration, issue based alliances and/or sustaining creative tensions through debates and global conversations, is a must. It is difficult to construct another world and more difficult to ensure that what has been built is not swept away overnight. Feminist leadership recognises the fundamental value of women's solidarity as a basis for organising around issues that affect all people at once but also differentially across class, race/ethnicity, caste, religious affiliation, country, sexual orientation and other social markings.

### **Box V.4** *Nicole Bidegain Ponte: The promise and pitfalls of UN Women*

UN Women, born in 2010, consolidated all four UN bodies working on gender equality. The aim was to have a stronger agency at a higher level in the UN, but there still appears to be a clear division between the normative and the operational function, which need to work more organically together to create synergy between the two. It requires an integrative and long term approach and keeping its agenda inclusive and transformative, especially as the women's agenda has always been at the forefront of addressing gender based exclusion, discrimination, vulnerability, deprivation and poverty. Besides working within the UN, it needs to engage with Bretton Woods and other global institutions to challenge restrictive economic policy frameworks; have strong leadership to overcome gender blindness and political resistance; as well as being properly funded.

### **Box V.5** *Jennifer Redner and Fadekemi Akinfaderin-Agarau: Young people – shattering the silence on sexual and reproductive health and rights*

Since ICPD 1994, youth activists have recognised that international political processes provide opportunities and are increasingly organising to influence regional and global intergovernmental negotiations on sexual and reproductive health and rights, population, environment and development. Young people, shattering expectations of silence as a requirement of respect for their elders, have clearly articulated their priorities in various fora. The central challenge is strengthening, through strategic investment, young people's capacity, especially young women's capacity for consistent and influential engagement with their national governments, bilateral donors and other decision makers in order to generate national policies and programmes that implement the international agreements they have helped achieve.