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International conflict, and the military culture and machine that drives it, emanates from the patriarchal power structure of our society. While many consider this to be an unchallengeable or inevitable component of human culture, recent application of feminist discourse to international conflicts reveals not only the inevitable links between military response to conflict and hegemonic masculinity, but also suggests alternative constructs for both dealing with conflict and preventing military intervention and war.

Tickner (1999) and others present the dangers of the traditional stereotypical view of men as warriors and aggressive and women as peacemakers and passive. Masculinity is often defined as what is not feminine, and femininity as what is not masculine, although understanding the dynamics of one requires considering both the workings of the other and the relationship and overlap between the two (Cohn and Enloe 2003). " Militarism gets defined as masculine, based on domination and violence, and peacemaking gets defined as feminine, based on compassion and passitivity" (Rabrenovic and Roskos 2001, 47). This causes forms of addressing conflict in any way other than a military or " masculine" response to be seen as feminine or a threat to manhood (Moylan 2003).

For example, Cohn and Enloe (2003) consider why military response seemed by so many to be the only possible response to the September 11 attacks in the United States. " The seemingly 'self-evident' (to a lot of people) need to strike back is partly based on the assumption that it will 'work'" (Cohn and Enloe 2003, 1203). There exists an old but dangerous assumption by many

in power that violence will simply be more effective than " a negotiated political solution or a response based on the enforcement of national or international law or on economic actions (Cohn and Enloe 2003, 1204). Cohn (2003) comments that she believes responding to violence with violence is an outflow of the interwoven ideas of national security and appropriate masculinity that dominate our political and cultural thought. Riddick agrees that the effectiveness of violent response is consistently overrated, with the costs of military response consistently underestimated (Cohn and Riddick 2002). The hegemonic man, favouring action over relationship, responds to the threat of violence or conflict with a response that reinforces the idea of the male role as protector and emphasises physical strength.

This masculinisation of military action, though strongly dominant both historically and cross-culturally, not only prevents the consideration of alternate and possibly more effective responses to conflict, but also damages the psyche of those it indoctrinates. The idea that the military will " make you a man" reinforces the concept that only one version of manhood is socially acceptable. The concept of hegemonic masculinity was originally introduced by R. W. Connell. " He argues that at any given historical moment, there are many different masculinities, not only one - but the hegemonic one (or ones) is the most valued one, the ideal" (Cohn and Weber 1999, 461). This construct juxtaposes the ideal man not only against anything perceived as feminine, but also against other masculinities (Cohn and Weber 1999). It gives men who are able to conform to the single or few definitions of appropriate manhood the power to dominate both women and men outside this definition in their society. Over time, it is the men who

succeed within such systems that consolidate their power, at the expense of other members of society; unfortunately the men do so at the expense of limiting their future response options to those that fit the hegemonic male construct to which they have succumbed. Men in positions of world leadership, typically products of this conformist environment, are then unable to consider national responses to international conflict outside their conditioned, action-focused response.

Cohn and Enloe (1999), critiquing the film Saving Private Ryan, examine this military and cultural on the soldier, and all acceptable men in society, as " real" men. The underlying messages of the movie, they feel, are the perceived need for men to separate themselves from everything feminine. Masculine and feminine are two distinct constructs, without shared components (Tickner 1999). When feminine sentiments or responses are allowed in a conflict situation, the result is death. This squelching or compartmentalisation of " feminine" responses, emotions, and reactions from a position other than aggressive action threaten the very lives of not only the man who has " failed" at being a real man, but also the lives of all those around him. For example, in the movie a young, rather effeminate American compassionately allows a German soldier to go free rather than killing him in cold blood. The German later returns to kill soldiers in the American's company. The message is that " men have to make sacrifices for the good of the nation, and women and feminine sentiment are the polluting elements that prevent that from happening" (Cohn and Weber 1999, 466).

This skews the view of war and conflict to being a wholly male construct, with little consideration to the wants, needs, and viewpoints of women in

conflictual situations. Service to the country, honour in battle, loyalty to one's fellow soldiers, and the ability to face terrifying and potentially deadly situations with courage and fearlessness are the signs of both a successful soldier and a successful man (Cohn and Weber 1999). The view of war as destructive, both to the countries that wage it, the soldiers who fight in it, and the civilians who suffer through it, becomes a secondary image of military action. The desire to find a way of resolving the issues at hand through negotiation, dialogue, and understanding is devalued and rejected (Ruddick 1989). Women remain those less likely to cause war and violence, most likely to suffer from it in their own homes and communities, and the least valued in terms of the development of effective systems for conflict resolution.

Rabrenovic and Roskos (2001) also point out that while war offers some men both new career opportunities and increased power, women typically are not afforded such benefits, but rather face " the disruption of services, the shortage of necessary resources, the loss of men's contribution to the household, as well as the every-present worry for safety of their children" (Rabrenovic and Roskos 2001, 48). Therefore resolution of the conflict may jeopardise economic and political standing for some men, particularly those in charge of military operations. Women, on the other hand, are more likely to benefit from and therefore pursue peaceful resolutions of conflict involving cooperation and compromise (Rabrenovic and Roskos 2001). Male leaders in a military conflict typically strive to end it through " winning," or achieving a cease-fire agreement which results in increase in their own power and the power of their nation (Rabrenovic and Roskos 2001). They are

less likely to focus on a means of resolution that most easily accommodates rebuilding the countries impacted by the war, or on establishing systems and practices that enable the use of non-violent alternatives to preventing future conflict (Rabrenovic and Roskos 2001).

Feminist discourse contends that international conflict does not require an automatic move to military, violent, or force-based response (Rabrenovic and Roskos 2001). Reardon (1993) envisions true peace as deriving from " relationships amongst people and nations based on trust, cooperation, and recognition of the interdependence and importance of the common good and mutual interests of all peoples" (4-5). It is not sufficient to simply include women in political and power systems designed by and for men, which therefore use a highly masculinised response mechanism for addressing world issues (Scott 1988, Moylan 2003). Rather, women must be both brought into the decision-making and system developing processes and empowered to include alternative perspectives and means of addressing, conflict, war, and peace.

Many women's organisations have attempted to suggest alternate resolution and conflict prevention strategies from their traditional positions as mothers (Ruddick 1989). This shifts motherhood from a private to a public activity, allowing women and women's organisations to engage in political and peace strategy discourse and challenge typical and assumed conflict resolution activities. The recent UN resolution 1325 " makes gender a routinely considered component in the full range of work undertaken by the Security Council" (Cohn, Kinsella and Gibbings 2004, 131). However, there is a significant difference between the simple inclusion of women and gender

considerations in international policy and process, and the significant shift in systems called for by the full inclusion of feminist theory in the realm of international conflict. Rabrenovic and Roskos (2001) contend that women " must persist in gaining greater visibility for women's peace-work and feminist insights on peacemaking and noting that in the context of unravelling the dynamics of war-making, women have not made sufficient progress" (42). Strong and widespread resistance remains the common response in most countries to any questioning of the use of force as a legitimate response to conflict or manifestation of power (Rabrenovic and Roskos 2001).

An additional consideration is the different manifestations of feminism and feminist thought in different cultures. There are a number of worthy feminist thinkers outside the privileged Western realm that is published or given voice in media outlets (Sylvester 1999). Elshtain (2001) examines the different practises and goals of women's groups in a number of countries, many of which are not in line with the brand of feminism promoted in the West. In Prague, for example, feminists contended " we want to emphasise concrete problems, not ideologies" (Elshtain 2001, 546). After years of forced involvement in the workforce and requirements to place their children in poorly run state-sponsored day cares, women in Czechoslovakia valued the choice they now have to work or stay home, and considered this at odds to discourse they had encountered from Europe and the United States (Elshtain 2001). Feminists in Palestine were perplexed by the West's emphasis on freedom, but perceived unwillingness to promote the freedom of the Palestinian people. Women there also were confused by comments of

several American feminist theorists who viewed head scarves as a form of oppression, which the Palestinian women who wear them do not (Elshtain 2001).

It is important, therefore, to concentrate on vital and universal feminist values, viewpoints and aims rather than be distracted by issues not considered important to women in the cultures where the issues exist. Women worldwide should be aware of their options, but encouraged to live from the cultural construct they personally value, and impact their society from this construct. At the same time, Moylan (2003) noted that when men become uncomfortable in viewing power structures and response mechanisms, often feeling a threat to their manhood, " many women will work to end the men's discomfort by agreeing with them rather than by expecting them to explore the reasons why they are uncomfortable (571). This leads to a perpetualisation of the very power structures and response mechanisms that need to be challenged.

Cohn and Enloe (2003) ask what it takes to " genuinely demilitarise a society" (1189). First, cultures must allow for separation of hegemonic masculinity, manhood, and the use of force. This is beginning to happen in some areas of the world, where alternate life choices are increasingly tolerated and even valued. " Gender analysis and gender disaggregated data must be used to bring women's experiences to the forefront of the conversation and eventually to recast the very meanings of the topics under negotiation, in this case to challenge the very meaning of war and peace" (Scott 1988, 3). This will cause distress to many in the patriarchal power structure that dominates our world organisations. However, with

perseverance, the reward of a world where military action and war are not the typical response to international conflict, where men are empowered to express various versions of masculinity, rather than being forced into a hegemonic construct, and where women are both participants in the actions and the creation of international policy and practises is well worth the effort.

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