A Feminist Reading of Security in Africa

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"*Stories afterwards, however, said that Nnu Ego was a wicked woman even in death because, however many people appealed to her to make women fertile, she never did. Poor Nnu Ego, even in death she had no peace! Still many agreed that she had given all to her children. The joy of being a mother was the joy of giving all to your children, they said.*

And her reward? Did she not have the greatest funeral Ibuza had ever seen? It took Oshia three years to pay off the money he had borrowed to show the world what a good son he was. ... for what else could a woman want but to have sons who would give her a decent burial?

Nnu Ego had it all ..."

The Joys of Motherhood, Buchi Emecheta 1

INTRODUCTION

She had it all, but was she secure? The irony of this poignant tale about the life of one African woman epitomises the deadlock with which many women in the contemporary developing world are confronted. But so what? The answer to this question lies embedded in the changing nature of how we view human security.

The demise of the Cold War has forced analysts to redraw the boundaries of the security discourse by allowing variables, other than the military, to enter the intellectual fray. In addition to the struggle to translate these theoretical insights into practice, a thorough understanding of the challenges of a new world order is hampered by the legacy of male-dominated security thinking, which seldom, if ever, reflects on the implications of a gendered perspective.

The purpose of this article is not only to offer an alternative vision of security through the lens of gender, but also to present a view of global security as being representative of a whole range of experiences, including those of women who constitute more than half of the world's population. The inclusion of gender in the analysis further aims to highlight the saliency of security issues in the South. Nowhere more than in Africa is the security of all people linked to the security of the women of the continent.

It will be argued, firstly, that the current security framework with its acceptance of multi-level and multi-dimensional principles of security errs in

the sense that it holds up a false holism. An increased sensitivity to the so-called `marginalised' without openly acknowledging women's specific gendered security needs defeats all claims to total inclusivity. Women's security must first be examined in terms of their gender roles before comprehensive human security demands can be met. Ideally, an holistic approach to security should reflect a synthesis or reconstruction of the different levels and dimensions of human security, and it is precisely here that a feminist conceptualisation of security in the 1990s can make a contribution. The feminist perspective is highly critical of the masculinist underpinnings of a state-centric approach and offers theoretical insights as well as practical mechanisms on how a fusion of masculine and feminine values may serve the goals of human security over and above those of the state.

Decentralised, more interdependent ways of solving conflict coupled with a gender sensitivity could go a long way towards creating a security community based on a common understanding of peace and security. In order to facilitate such a process, feminist notions of security must be integrated into the mainstream discourse and not merely tacked on. Secondly, it is argued that an holistic feminist definition of security is particularly appropriate to the security concerns of the developing world. In Africa, for instance, where the linkages between physical security and political, socio-economic, cultural and environmental threats are part of everyday life, a feminist perspective can elicit serious debate on how meeting women's security needs may work towards `curing' many of the ailing continent's `aches and pains'. The parallels in terms of the inequality between the position of women and the position of the developing world in the global system, plus the dire need for some kind of transformation are too obvious to ignore any longer.

From a methodological point of view, a feminist epistemology has the potential to raise consciousness, and through the use of `gender' as a social organising principle,[2] women's disadvantages are placed in context. A connection is made between the all-pervasiveness of gender and the ubiquitous nature of human insecurity. The reader is reminded that an holistic or broadly integrative approach to security, though ideal, also runs the risk of presenting a closure. Holism as an intellectual framework may be counterproductive if unity or harmony is elevated at the expense of difference. The presentation of security in this article along the lines of four `types of security' or diagnostic categories, must therefore be seen as part of a "*fractious holism*"[3] wherein interdependence does not necessarily imply equality and stability. On the contrary, the tolerance of identity in difference should be that which shapes the identity of a truly secure community.

The case for a feminist reading of contemporary security starts with brief surveys of the changes to the security concept and an outline of feminism as a multidisciplinary project. The contribution of feminism as an intellectual enterprise is analysed and evaluated in terms of four conventional dimensions of security, namely political, socio-economic, military, and environmental. This is followed by a feminist examination of the state of women's security in Africa. The same analytical categories are employed. In doing so, the prospects for a secure continent are also highlighted.

NEW SECURITY CONCEPT

International relations theorists, Strategic Studies scholars and peace researchers alike have had to come to terms with a global paradigm shift in how security, peace, conflict, war and politics are viewed in the post-Cold War era. Realists and neo-realists have been criticised for their fragmented and narrow preoccupation with the sovereign state, state power and national security as the primary referents of security; and idealists, though claiming to have taken a far more holistic view of the subject, have yet to come up with a widely acceptable alternative to the state-centric international system.

From the seventies onwards, the effects of the so-called `security dilemma' have been increasingly questioned. Unilateral military action was no longer adequate to protect a state and its people. Global interdependencies in the technological age and common problems which transcend national borders made the notion of `common security' imperative. The principle of common security also proved to be the catalyst for the convergence of idealist and realist agendas, the synergy between Strategic and Peace Studies and the subsequent broadening of their scope in the 1980s.[4]

The conceptualisation of security in military terms thus proved to be inadequate for the following reasons. Firstly, it not only exacerbated military insecurity through the security dilemma, but also completely ignored non-military sources of insecurity. Secondly, a military definition of security confined the debate to the realms of the developed (Western) world and negated the consequences for the majority of the world's population: those living in the developing world.[5] A rejuvenated, reconceptualised understanding of security therefore necessitated a more holistic and comprehensive approach, by means of which the security needs of all human beings could be met.

Leading International Relations scholars such as Barry Buzan[6] and Ken Booth,[7] provide useful theoretical frameworks for the analysis of a multidimensional and multilevel security agenda. Ken Booth recommends a redefinition of security in terms of a broadening of the concept both horizontally and vertically. On the horizontal axis, security is seen as dependent on:

- political democracy and a culture of human rights;
- social and economic development;
- environmental sustainability, as well as
- military stability.[8]

In this regard, Buzan identifies five `sectors' or typologies of security, namely political, social, economic, environmental and military, which serve as analytical tools or "*ordering priorities ... woven together in a strong web of linkages.*"[9] Buzan's vertical hierarchy of analytical levels, namely the individual, the state, the regional subsystem and the international system[10] enables us to see how the objects of security have evolved to include non-state actors, from the individual to the global level, where people should be the primary referent of security. In this context, state or national security is then redefined to encompass human security.

Notwithstanding the dramatic global changes, in practice the state still remains the dominant referent in international politics, as is also evident from the emphasis in Buzan's neorealist definition of security where individual security is considered to be an important level of analysis, but subordinate to state and international security.11 Sørensen argues that the principal problem in International Relations is not an exaggerated focus on the state, but rather a lack of analysis of the state and its development. General analyses of the international system and global civil society cannot do justice to the state as a complex and problematic entity. The state should therefore be recognised for what it is: "*the primary nexus when it comes to security for individuals and groups.*"12 Such recognition, however, is marred by the fact that, particularly in the developing world, the state has often been (and still is) the root cause of insecurity among its people. Consequently, there is a real danger that the security of a regime or a social *élite*13 could remain the focal point of the dominant discourse. It is therefore imperative that the broadening of the security concept should challenge the *status quo*.14

In this context, the nature of threats has undergone dramatic changes. External military threats to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the state have been replaced by largely non-military threats such as:

- poverty;
- global inequality in the distribution of wealth between North and South;
- social injustice, human rights abuses;
- oppression; and
- ecological degradation.

In Africa, in particular, such threats manifest themselves as a myriad of interconnected relationships between political liberalisation and democratisation and a rise in crime, corruption, drugs and small arms trafficking; between failed attempts at democratisation and instilling a culture of human rights protection and the unwillingness of military élites to accept the primacy of civilian rule; between economic decline, debt and structural adjustment on the one hand, and poverty, scarcity of resources, population growth and migration on the other hand; as well as between migration, displacement of people, the rise of ethno-nationalism, disease and violence, to name but a few.

The transnational character of these threats not only has implications for the continued existence of the state as an actor in the global system, but also necessitates a fundamental re-examination of intrastate relations, i.e. society-state relationships. Questions arise as to whether the state should remain the sole provider of security to its people in a region where common threats necessitate common solutions. With this in mind, the objectives of security policy should be to pursue peace, democracy, development, social justice and environmental protection. The key to the achievement of such noble ideals is a people-centred approach which addresses the root causes of human insecurity rather than its consequences.15 Alternatives to state-centric solutions and security policies should therefore focus on sustainable human development with the emphasis on providing rather than maintaining security.

Human security defined as the absence of harm or threat to human life

becomes a prerequisite for a condition of `positive' peace, which is not only the absence of war (the so-called `negative' peace), but also the existence of social justice. Such definitions, however, are far from unproblematic. Roberts[16] cautions against simplistic distinctions. He reminds us that no situation of positive peace can be absolutely just and he also reminds us that reality does not fit neatly into normative frameworks. Classifying violence as, for instance, structural violence (violence built into the system) may also provide an easy justification for the use of counter-violence in pursuing the goals of national liberation. Even Michael Howard's more traditional definition of peace as "*creating or maintaining a just order in society ... which is accepted as just by, if possible, all its members, and certainly by an overwhelming majority; a society in which conflicts can be resolved without violence or intimidation, by processes of law or reconciliation within a framework which is generally accepted by everybody...*",[17] grapples with the implicit dilemma of reconciling order and justice. In the absence of majority acceptance, the rule of law and a strategy of non-violence cannot guarantee social order. At the same time, the maintenance of order, which is legitimised by majority consent, is not necessarily built upon democratic principles of justice.

Though recognising the difficulties inherent in the notion of `positive' peace, women in the peace movement, as well as feminists have linked this concept with their understanding of peace and have insisted that security can no longer be measured in terms of the absence of war. In this respect, the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women (1985) stated that "*[p]eace includes not only the absence of war, violence and hostilities at the national and international levels but also the enjoyment of economic and social justice, equality and the entire range of human rights and fundamental freedoms within society.*"[18] This definition highlights key areas, such as structural violence and the linkage of violence at the personal and international level; economic and gender inequality; the denial of basic rights and freedoms; and the deliberate exploitation of large sectors of the population.[19] Despite the growing acceptance of a more ambitious security agenda, the formal and consistent inclusion of gender relations on the agenda remains as elusive as ever. More often than not gender is mentioned only as a by-product of the inclusion of economic and development issues, e.g. when referring to the plight of African women in agriculture. In the light of such *ad hoc* references to women's `place' in the global order, the need for a truly inclusive re-examination of security becomes imperative. Klein suggests in this regard that "[*i*]*t may well be that the most revitalizing intellectual force at work upon IR is coming from the many schools of thought that generally fall under the heading of `Feminist Studies'. Particularly influential here are debates about the phallocentric quality of strategic discourse, the engendered nature of the development of the paradigm, and the patriarchal basis of the modern state.*"[20]

In conclusion then, it can be argued that the security concept has undergone substantial changes, but that these developments have not incorporated a feminist epistemology.

FEMINISM REVISITED

In order to contextualise feminist theory and praxis on security issues, a brief survey of feminist scholarship in general is necessary.

In an ideological and disciplinary sense, feminist scholarship is far from

monolithic, so much so that Maynard[21] suggests that we should rather speak of the existence of many feminisms. Their trans- or multidisciplinary character represents both the strength and the weakness of the feminist contribution a strength because feminist critiques draw on the diverse inputs of sociology, anthropology, psychology, political studies and language to name but a few; and a weakness because such diversity complicates the analysis of the feminist contribution to the security discourse. Yet, despite this state of affairs, it is still possible to identify certain common commitments. In the first instance, feminism puts women and the experiences of women at the centre of its theoretical and practical investigations.[22] Secondly, feminism is a critical project analysing or deconstructing the gender-biased *status quo*, concerning knowledge, claims and practices and then challenging these by means of a process of reconstruction: incorporating women's experiences and insights into a newly synthesised gender-sensitive theory of knowledge and power.[23] Peterson further adds that feminism is also critical in the sense that it engages in self-reflection on the meaning of feminism, woman and "*the dangers of universalizing assumptions*."[24] Thus, because of its rather explicit agenda for change, a feminist epistemology is normative, value laden, politicised, and essentially post-positivist.

George Ritzer's typology[25] of contemporary feminist theory assists us in making sense of the diverse feminist perspectives. He categorises the theories in terms of difference, inequality and oppression.

Theories of gender difference revolve, among others, around the fact that women's psychic life, values and interests, modes of value judgement, sense of identity, their relation to their biological offspring[26] and styles of play differ from those of men. These differences are explained on the basis of biological factors (e.g. hormones and women's naturally caring and nurturing instincts); institutional factors where a woman's distinct role as mother, wife and homemaker paves the way for the division in other spheres; and socio-psychological factors such as the effect of socialisation on accepting and internalising gender roles.[27]

Theories of gender inequality emphasise the fact that men and women are not only different, but also unequal in terms of the allocation of resources such as power, and the way in which society is organised. Consequently, women have fewer opportunities than men to satisfy their needs. This body of theory, however, does not ascribe any of these inequalities and/or differences to biology. Liberal feminism (a minority position among intellectuals, but vastly popular within mainstream American political beliefs because of its emphasis on careers for women and the elimination of discriminatory laws as the solution to the changing of sexist attitudes[28]) and Marxist feminism (which sees gender inequality as firmly rooted in the economic inequality of the capitalist class system[29]) form the two most prominent strands of the theory on gender inequality.

Power is the lens through which theories of gender oppression view society. According to this perspective, lack of access to power is not merely an accidental consequence of difference and inequality but rather premeditated and deliberate. Such a power relationship between men and women is maintained through `patriarchy' which represents an ideology or basic structure of male supremacy in society.[30] Psychoanalytic feminism uses reworked Freudian theories to explain patriarchy and examines the question of why men deliberately sustain dominance and why women

collaborate (either directly or indirectly) in their own subordination, i.e. why women are universally oppressed.31 For feminist psychoanalysts, the answer to this question is buried in the subconscious psyche and emotional world where oppression originates.32 Patriarchy is also the focal point of wrath for radical feminists, but they extend the analysis by linking patriarchy to the social practice of violence, i.e. violence against women.33 Another theme which flows from the radical viewpoint is the politicisation of all social practices and relationships, even the private hence the slogan, "*the personal is political*."34 Radical feminists seek fundamental social transformation rather than equity. Socialist feminism attempts to blend Marxist and radical critiques of women's inequality and oppression in order to produce a comprehensive explanation of female oppression as, emanating, for instance, from the patriarchal capitalist system.35 This is also where the notion of standpoint feminism comes in. These feminists argue that the oppressed (women) are better equipped to understand the origins of their oppression than their oppressors (men).36 The so-called `Third Wave' feminists challenge the universalistic and monolithic concept of `woman' and the myth of a common sisterhood. Black feminists, Third World feminists and lesbian feminists would argue that Western feminist developments have marginalised the black or `other' experiences and elevated the white, middle-class heterosexual woman as the universal object of male oppression. Race, therefore, forms the basis of most of their analyses.37 Barrett and Phillips38 are of the opinion that this critique of Western feminism by black feminists has had a major impact on revitalising feminist discourse in the 1990s. In a similar vein, post-modern feminists contend that to ignore the multiplicity of women's experiences across race, class and cultural lines, feminism runs the risk of essentialising the meaning of woman, thus reproducing similar modernist, hierarchical and totalising discourses such as patriarchy.39 After all, as Stanley and Wise remark, "*the experience of `women' is ontologically fractured and complex because we do not all share one single and unseamed material reality.*"40

The analysis of security presented in this article is influenced by the views of the radical non-western feminist school of thought. This perspective provides a useful analytical framework for understanding the causes of militarism in society and its link with violence against women, as it offers a fairly comprehensive explanation of women's oppression. A concomitant of this is the fact that radical feminists have done significant research to support the connection between patriarchy and violence against women.41 However, radical feminism errs in the first place by focusing exclusively on patriarchy. Such grand narratives become problematic in the post-modernist era where universalised a-historical constructs have made room for a multiplicity of truths and plurality of oppressions, threats and/or insecurities. Women, like men, fulfil multiple roles in society, resulting in their social identities not being fixed, but context-bound. Secondly, some radical feminists display a tendency to follow a separatist approach to change by withdrawing into women's-only organisations and activities42 in an attempt to challenge the patriarchal system. This, it could be argued, defeats the object of comprehensive security for all.

In its analysis of the security situation, feminist epistemology turned its attention to the discipline which traditionally claimed the inter- and intrastate security discourse of war, war prevention and dispute resolution as part of its intellectual make-up, namely International Relations (IR).

THE FEMINIST CRITIQUE OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, STRATEGIC

STUDIES AND PEACE STUDIES

In the early 1990s, in the wake of the global political changes and the fragmentation of the familiar bipolar world order, a new generation of scholars has focused on feminist perspectives on war, peace and global security. A growing recognition that, in the words of Cynthia Enloe, "*an entire dimension of international politics*"43 had been missing, prompted scholars such as Tickner, Peterson, Grant, Newland, Enloe, Runyan and Sylvester, among others, to question the masculinist underpinnings of the academic discipline of International Relations. This also meant that the subdisciplines of Strategic and Peace Studies came under fire Strategic Studies for being blatantly militaristic and androcentric, and Peace Studies for creating a mere semblance of gender neutrality.

The discourse on IR, according to the feminist perspective, is a product of Western modernist and positivist thinking and is consequently subsumed under the binary logic of asymmetrical dichotomies. This socially constructed dualism manifests itself in `paired opposites' such as public/private; rationality/irrationality; objectivity/subjectivity; fact/value; empirical/normative; culture/nature; autonomy/relatedness; self/other; mind/body; order/anarchy; theory/practice; and abstract/concrete, where one term is at once differentiated from another, preferred to the other; arranged hierarchically and where the subordinate term is displaced "*beyond the boundary of what is significant and desirable.*"44 Feminists argue that such binary constructions are derived from the masculine/feminine dichotomy and, in fact, are based on false premises. Traits such as reason, intellect, objectivity and order are equated with `maleness' and are taken as the human norm, whereas traits like emotion, subjectivity and disorder are ascribed to females. The implications of this for women are that they, as well as `others', are "*stigmatized as feminine*"45 and considered to be not `fully human', thus justifying all other forms of gender inequality and domination.

The exclusive focus on the public sphere as the only domain where politics and power are acknowledged, renders women and women's experiences in politics, science, and history invisible.46 And, as mentioned earlier, until the beginning of the 1990s, there were few feminist contributions to the literature on security studies, particularly in the field of strategy47 where the phallocentric quality of its discourse became one of its trademarks. Women do not have a say in how the international political and global security system operates, because at the first level i.e. the identification of actors and how they behave women are excluded, and at the second level, any theory which is used to explain conflictual or co-operative behaviour is gender-biased.48 A United Nations report noted that from 1985 to 1988 less than eight per cent of members of the Committee of the General Assembly dealing with disarmament and international security were women.49

Martin Gruberg of the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh has been monitoring the participation of women in the annual American Political Science Association Meetings for more than twenty years and has noted the ascent of women in the field of Political Studies. In his comparison of papers read at the 1993 annual meeting, he observed that women were least represented in the subdisciplines of (International) Political Economy, Politics of Developing Areas, International Security and Arms Control, Foreign Policy Analysis and Conflict Processes.50 Noteworthy is the fact

that these disciplines currently form part of the core of what constitutes the study of human security. In the South African context, studies conducted by Taylor (1990), Gouws (1993),51 Du Pisani (1987) and Van der Westhuizen and Sattlegger (1994)52 have all attempted to provide a view of the composition of political scientists in South Africa. Until 1994, the female component has not exceeded 25 per cent and should be a cause for concern. Women are also chronically underrepresented in positions of power, such as in the departments of Defence and Foreign Affairs. If the statistics of the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD)53 are anything to go by, then the future looks bleak for the Southern African region. At the five peacekeeping training projects hosted by ACCORD in Zambia, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Tanzania and Mauritius in 1996, the ratio of male participants (85 per cent) clearly outweighed that of female participants (fifteen per cent). All the participants from the Ministry of Defence or the Police were male, while only four representatives from the Department of Foreign Affairs were female, the rest being from non-government organisations.

This shows that the subject of peacekeeping and security is still largely male-dominated.

Feminist IR theorists have not only attempted to expose dualist thinking and androcentric discourse as essentially gendered but have also "*raised new questions about how power, knowledge, politics and gender are related.*"54 In IR and in the security debate, theorists and practitioners are urged to shed mutually exclusive or opposing conceptualisations in favour of relational and inclusive thinking patterns and strategies. The answer does not lie in putting women on the (male) agenda, i.e. adding or assimilating women's issues into existing masculinist paradigms, but rather to fundamentally rethink the paradigm55 and integrate these perspectives. Grant and Newland56 describe the challenge of feminism to IR as the development of a feminist epistemology which uses `gender' as the logical starting point. The gender bias in IR theory and security discourse delegitimises its epistemological basis. But, at the same time, gender can be used as a tool for transforming the foundations of what constitutes knowledge in the realm of security.

Gender Silences in the Realist/Strategic Discourse: A Feminist Critique of the Mono-gendered State

Feminists have joined the idealist and globalist schools of thought in their critique of the inadequacy of the strategic/realist preoccupation with the maintenance of military power as a means of promoting national security and peace. Feminists have furthermore joined the ranks of post-modernists, post-structuralists and economic globalists who argue against a one-sided focus on the sovereign and autonomous state as the primary unit of analysis in IR, security studies and international political economics. While all these theorists share the general concern that the realist perspective produces a biased view of the world confined to states and power relations between states, feminists in particular, concentrate on the gender bias inherent in the state as a masculinist construction.

Ann Tickner57 illustrates the presence of `masculinist hegemony' by means of a three-tiered level of analysis, based on the individual, the state and the international system. Individuals in the realist state are all male: the male warrior being the embodiment of the `first-class citizen'. The modern state was born through war and consolidated its power through the coercive

conquest of resources and territory. It is therefore no wonder that the Western state and its colonies that subsequently gained independence developed a deeply entrenched national identity.58 The international system is characterised by male state *versus* male state. The security needs of groups and communities other than the above-mentioned are completely negated. In gendered terms, the state acts as protector of the nation which is represented as a woman.59 Yet ironically, more often than not women end up being victims of the state or national security as is witnessed in the detrimental effects of increased military spending on the welfare of poor and powerless women. This apparent contradiction is the consequence of the fact that citizenship is equated with being male, thus rendering women invisible.

There exists a peculiar relationship between feminism and nationalism. The relationship, as Tessler and Warriner60 point out, is highly contextual, because, on the one hand, feminist and nationalist goals can be mutually reinforcing i.e. men and women accept that improving women's position in society forms part of the nationalist drive towards reform. On the other hand, the nationalist project is authoritarian and seeks to maintain the patriarchal *status quo*, thus relegating women to the margins of citizenship61 through effectively obscuring the class, race, gender, regional, ethnic and other differences within a state. Deniz Kandiyoti describes women's complex paradoxical role in post-colonial societies as follows: "*On the one hand, nationalist movements invite women to participate more fully in collective life by interpellating them as ënationalí actors: mothers, educators, workers and even fighters. On the other hand, they reaffirm the boundaries of culturally acceptable feminine conduct and exert pressure on women to articulate their gender interests within the terms of reference set by nationalist discourse.*"62 This rings true for women in South Africa and other African countries such as Zimbabwe and Mozambique, where the national liberation struggle has not brought an automatic liberation from gender oppression.63 Democracy for women has to be a struggle in its own right. In the Middle East, Palestinian women also have to grapple with the contradictions between unity and democracy. On the one hand, unity is important to achieve national self-determination, while on the other hand, democracy opens up space "*for all marginal social and political forces to express themselves in the ongoing struggle over hegemony within Palestinian society* ..."64 The case of Palestine also serves to illustrate the extent to which feminist issues are masked by a nationalistic sentiment strongly influenced by religious fundamentalism.

The feminist Critique of Peace Studies

Even the theories that are more critical of the *status quo*, such as critical theory with its Marxist underpinnings and the idealist approach to IR which is paradigmatically closer to the domain of Peace Studies, have been criticised by feminists for their apparent gender-neutral analysis of the state. Gender neutrality refers to the perception that gender issues are irrelevant to the theoretical assumptions of the discipline. Even scholars of structural violence have paid scant attention to women's security.65

The multidisciplinary character of Peace Studies is no guarantee that feminist viewpoints will be considered. After all, how can a discipline which cuts across several male-dominated disciplines be anything but gender-biased? Betty Reardon asserts that "*the peace research establishment has been as heavily populated by men as has the discipline of national security*

studies."66 Moreover, gender neutrality in Peace Studies has taken the form of a relative silence about women's leadership roles and achievements in peace movements.67 Women are therefore not only underrepresented as peace researchers, but also in terms of accounts of women's experiences of war and peace. Several reasons for the male ownership of mainstream peace research can be cited. Firstly, according to Robin Burns,68 the transnational nature of peace research (i.e. where international and regional conferences are a regular occurrence) is an important, practical reason for the low visibility of female peace researchers. This state of affairs may be partly ascribed to the fact that many women have commitments as mothers and care-takers, hence limiting their professional networking skills. Secondly, the nature of feminist peace research goes against the standard research practice and paradigm. Their attempt to find new research priorities is met by the all too familiar criticisms regarding the lack of systematic analysis, an inadequate provision of supporting empirical evidence, excessive holism and reductionist thinking due to an overemphasis on patriarchy. Such attacks on the `scientific quality' of peace research is likely to discourage peace researchers from departing from so-called notions of `academic respectability'. Finally, feminists in general are also wary of promoting a simplistic dichotomy of men as innately aggressive and women as peaceful. Such dualisms run the risk of perpetuating gender stereotypes and may nullify the feminist contribution to the peace and security debate.69

A FEMINIST CONCEPTUALISATION OF SECURITY

In this section, the main tenets of the feminist vision for global peace will be considered. During the course of the analysis the similarities between a feminist understanding of security and the redefined security concept (as discussed earlier) will be highlighted, but more importantly, an attempt will be made to show how the feminist concept of security can work towards the creation of a truly comprehensive security.

Feminist thinking on security is in line with current security perspectives. Feminists agree whole-heartedly with the shift from a simplistic and reductionist dichotomy between war and peace towards a global conceptualisation of collective security by means of international peacekeeping, forms of world government, regional alternatives and the transformation of existing institutions such as the United Nations. Therefore, there seems to be a high degree of consensus on the inclusion of economic, social, ecological and political conditions of a just peace. Holism and interconnectedness within multiple dimensions of security, women's multiple roles and experiences of security, feminism as a multi-disciplinary project, and Peace Studies as a multi-disciplinary enterprise, all testify to the fact that a shared commitment to an interdisciplinary methodology, to co-operative solutions to security concerns, as well as to similar normative orientations towards conflict resolution and socio-economic justice, is beginning to emerge. The feminist position also concurs with the redefined security perspective with respect to the limitations of the state as the primary referent of security. The question `whose security?' can rightly be posed if the dismal track record of African states, in particular, is considered. Dalby points out that the feminist critique "*reveals security as a condition of order that renders some secure, but many (and not just women) unsafe in terms of vulnerability to violence and injustice.*"70

On the other hand, the feminist contribution is different from the conventional security concept, due to the fact that it focuses intensely on the sources of insecurity. It extends the general arguments about the nature of society to the realm of security and reminds us that comprehensive security can only be achieved if the relations of domination and submission in all walks of life are eliminated. Social justice in the form of economic development, human rights protection, military peace and ecological sustainability all depend upon the achievement of gender justice. Posing the question "*what security can mean in the context of interlocking systems of hierarchy and domination and how gendered identities and ideologies (re)produce these structural insecurities*"71 leads one to an alternative understanding, namely that the so-called `security dilemma' has its origin in the dualistic nature of political society. Ann Tickner explains it as follows: "*[G]endered depictions of political man, the state, and the international system generate a national security discourse that privileges conflict and war and silences other ways of thinking about security* ..."72 A comprehensive definition of security must therefore include an analysis of patriarchy, as well as the linkage of war and military culture to violence against women.

A second difference between the feminist notion of security and the mainstream thinking relates to their giving new meaning to the term `collective security'. A feminist redefinition of this concept starts with a re-evaluation of the notion of power. Drawing on women's experiences while simultaneously extending them to the male experience as well, feminists argue that power in the words of Hannah Arendt should rather be defined as "*the ability to act in concert*"73 instead of the ability to make someone do something s/he would not otherwise do. Interdependence, mutual enablement, and empathy are given preference over autonomy, self-help, individualism and competition. A redefinition of power would change the nature of politics globally and regionally to reflect the nature of local politics and this, from the point of view of security, would manifest itself in a relational, collaborative, non-oppositional approach to the topic where the survival of one depends on the well-being of the other. It is argued that this kind of approach would not only enhance women's security, but also that of men, who are similarly threatened by the conventional gendered approach to security. But infusing the term `collective security' with so-called feminine characteristics is contentious as these are socially rather than biologically constructed. Women, it is argued, think more subtly about matters like peace they are less hampered by rigid Manichæan dichotomies or `ready-made ideas' and more tuned in to process and change, thus being able to think more freely and holistically.74 In this way, the feminist understanding of security provides a framework for enriching or deepening the principle of collective security in practice: from collaboration motivated by national interest to a deep-rooted recognition of interdependency.

A third reason why the feminist contribution to security thinking is worth exploring, is that this contribution is the result of a dialectical relationship between theory and practice. According to Adrienne Harris and Ynestra King, the feminist perspective on security "*emerged from the intersection of women's practice in peace movements and the analysis of gender in recent feminist studies.*"75 The contribution of women in the peace movement to the debate has a long history. As far back as the First World War, Jane Addams addressed the International Congress of Women at The Hague arguing in favour of a "*new internationalism to replace the self-destructive*

nationalism."76 Women have organised many demonstrations and have held numerous peace camps to protest the arms race and have also promoted peace research. In 1985, at the Women's International Peace Conference in Halifax, Canada, as well as in the final document of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the UN Decade for Women in Nairobi (1985), a multidimensional definition of security was proposed.77

A fourth difference relates to the complex interconnectedness of the condition of peace, (perceived) security and threats and expectations. Though not exclusively used by feminist peace researchers, the distinction between positive and negative peace, and positive and negative security does seem to be in harmony with their conceptualisation. However, the conventional view of security as the prerequisite for peace is turned on its head. Peace is no longer viewed as the end, but rather as the means. This notion may be summarised in the words of Gandhi: "*There is no way to peace. Peace is the way.*"78 What flows from this, is the fundamental feminist conviction that, just as the personal cannot be separated from the political, so can means and ends not be separated. In fact, more often than not, processes and methods take precedence over goals. Posing the question of `how' rather than `why' opens up room for a multitude of explanations.

In the conventional discourse, `negative security' as the inhibition of destruction, i.e. countering a threat with an equally or more severe threat, paves the way for `negative peace', a condition in which severe structural violence, repression and gross inequality are not addressed. The feminist discourse, however, conceptualises `positive peace' as the condition of social justice, economic equity and economic balance. In other words, a situation wherein basic human and ecological needs are met, should create room for fulfilling the reasonable expectation of well-being related to the political, social, economic, ecological and military dimensions of life. `Positive security' is therefore the end result of a constructive process whereby a threat is eliminated by addressing its cause. This does not mean, however, that peace is made and security shaped in an orderly and stable situation where conflict is absent. Instead, it refers to a situation in which violence (direct or indirect) is less likely to take place and where the system is actively, but non-violently challenged.79

In an attempt to clarify the broad principles of feminist thinking on security, the discussion will follow Buzan's typology of the five sectors of security, namely political, social, economic, ecological and military. The social and economic dimensions will be combined, as most socio-cultural aspects of life, such as health, education and population growth, have a profound impact upon the economic well-being of the individual and/or group and *vice versa*. The use of these mainstream labels is deliberate they serve the analytical purpose of simultaneously establishing the continuity between feminist and mainstream perspectives, as well as highlighting the specific feminist contribution.

Political Security: Women's Rights as Human Rights

Barry Buzan defines political security as "*the organizational stability of states, systems of government and the ideologies that give them legitimacy.*"80 It is against the backdrop of the norms and values of the dominant ideology that the struggle for human rights as a prerequisite of

social justice and human security gains importance. The recognition of women's rights as human rights is central to the feminist understanding of security. Philip Windsor maintains that "*one can hardly discuss human rights without discussing what it is to be human. And if humanity (presumably) includes women, the nature of human rights has to be much more broadly addressed. Specific violations of human rights in a political context are ... recognisably evil. But if moral categories exist at all ... then the relegation of more than half the human race to a condition of pure contingency ... becomes monstrous.*"[81]

In part, women's rights have been limited (particularly in the socio-economic field), because they have not been fully considered in the general discourse on human rights. But some scholars would even go so far as to argue that putting women on the official international human rights agenda has done little to challenge the patriarchal underpinnings of the state. In this regard, Dorothy McBride Stetson[82] argues that investing energy in adopting policies against gender discrimination (e.g. the ratification and monitoring of the **Convention for Elimination of Discrimination Against Women** (CEDAW)) becomes meaningless in the face of unchanged conventional policies regarding human rights. A separatist charter for women defeats the goal of inculcating feminist values into main or should one say `male' stream thinking. Fostering a more inclusive concept of human rights is further hampered by a too ambitious international focus which is difficult to achieve comprehensively. A more localised strategy, on the other hand, may make the evolution of human rights to include those of women more feasible. This is illustrated by the case of El Salvador's mothers of the disappeared (CO-MADRES) (founded in 1977). The movement's initial focus on human rights abuses was not directly linked to the oppression of women: i.e. the aim was not to transform from a `motherist' into a feminist organisation. It was rather a nuanced process in which women's detention, rape, torture, domestic conflict and their contact with other human rights organisations and with feminists have combined into a much wider definition of human rights one that incorporates women's rights.[83]

Feminist human rights advocates insist that human rights must be seen in holistic terms. Human rights for women extend beyond the granting of the right to vote and to govern, to the private domain where marital rape, domestic violence, and even unfair employment practices are often the cause of grave insecurity. `Needs fulfilment' must therefore be seen as an intrinsic human right that is essential to the achievement of security. But while the granting of political rights does not necessarily lead to the recognition of socio-economic rights the obverse is also true: women's economic and social rights are impeded because their political rights are denied. Failure of attempts at development can partly be attributed to the omission of women's participation in policy-making and the lack of a perspective on human needs.

Socio-economic Security: Securing Development by Meeting Basic Needs

One of the revised objectives of the expanded security agenda is to promote sustainable economic development and strive towards the achievement of social and economic justice. Economic security that includes "*access to the resources, finance and markets necessary to sustain acceptable levels of welfare and state power*"[84] underpins the other dimensions of security and paves the way for realising goals set in terms of

the evolution of sustainable patterns of language, culture, religion, national identity and custom (social security); the maintenance of environmental balance (ecological security); the capacity of the state to govern (political security); and the capacity of the state to protect itself (military security).

Development is not a new phenomenon. As early as 1948, the UN confirmed the right to develop in Article 28 of the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**. In spite of two *Decades of Development* (the 1960s and 1970s), the 1980s were marked by high interest rates and heavy debt burdens, and by 1990 most developing countries were in fact worse off than at the end of the 1980s.85 In real terms, it means abject poverty and deprivation for millions of people. Basic services such as clean water, a decent education and food security, are rare in many parts of the world. The failure of development strategies to meet basic needs led to a closer examination by peace and development researchers and feminists of the role played by the global capitalist economy and the state in the economic (in)security of its citizens.

Ann Tickner, in her analysis of the liberal, nationalist and Marxist approaches to international political economy, criticises them for being seemingly gender neutral, for creating the impression that "*the interaction between states and markets ... can be understood without reference to gender distinctions.*"86 The "*rational economic man*"87 of the liberal economic model is a western invention, totally unrepresentative of the experiences of women and non-western societies. The nationalist economic model is premised on the overtly gendered state as the primary unit of analysis. This emphasis on the state's economic welfare privileges men at the expense of women. On the surface, the Marxist economic model shares the fact that it speaks for the marginalised with feminism, but in this model women's interests are completely subsumed under class as the basic unit of analysis. Furthermore, traditional Marxists do not question the gendered division of labour women's role as mothers and caretakers is taken as natural.88

The concept `structural violence' serves as a useful yardstick to determine the extent of socio-economic justice and well-being. The term does not refer to a situation where security is measured by the absence or presence of direct or physical violence: "*Structural violence exists when economic and social conditions are such that people die or suffer as a consequence of the unequal distribution of resources ...*"89 Johan Galtung defines it as "*harm resulting from the structure of the world's economic, political and social systems and those of its individual units.*"90 Structural violence links underdevelopment, social and economic security and women's inequality particularly in the developing world. It helps us to see how historically and culturally imposed divisions in terms of, for example, labour and production have contributed to women's insecurity and what feminists currently term the `feminisation of poverty'. According to the **Human Development Report** (1995) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) women constitute seventy per cent of the world's poor and two-thirds of its illiterate. Evidence cited by Tickner, Brock-Utne and Ekins further illustrates this point: women constitute one-third of the world's paid labour force, yet women do two-thirds of the work in the world (most work is being performed outside the wage sector); women earn one-tenth of the world's income, but own less than one per cent of world property.91

Industrialisation has had a profound effect on women both in the developed

and in developing countries. In some developed countries, industrial change has encouraged the employment of women in some areas while reducing it in others. In the newly industrialised countries, women have been recruited on a large scale into high technology industries. In other developing countries, mechanisation of agriculture for increased food production and export crops, accompanied by male migration, has increased women's workload. They have become the sole food producers for the family. eiop92

In the developed world, two job markets exist simultaneously one full-time and well paid, the other part-time with no benefits. This serves as one example of how women's work has been consistently undervalued. Women's work is often characterised as `servicing' work if not for the family, then caring for the ill and elderly or supplying food, water and wood. In order for women's work to be taken into reckoning, the public/private divide must first be demolished. Domestic work, reproduction, and volunteer work must gain recognition as legitimate economic practice and be included in the calculation of the gross national product (GNP). After all, out of US $16 trillion which goes unrecorded in the global economy each year, US $11 trillion constitute the contribution of women.93 The field of development studies is currently the only discipline that pays sufficient attention to the economic security of those on the periphery of the world economy.

Poverty and food insecurity go hand in hand. The African food crisis bears testimony to this. Women are particularly hard hit by famine, considering the fact that in the developing world they are responsible for forty to sixty per cent of all agricultural production. Food shortages are also linked to the quality of health and life many women suffer from malnutrition and nutritional anaemia94 which, in turn, also have implications for women's reproductive health and that of their families. The state of women's health is also intimately linked to the level of political freedom that they enjoy. Since the capture of Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, by the Islamic Taliban movement in September 1996, local women's health conditions are much more precarious. Women have been banned from the 32 public bath-houses in Kabul, the only places where many of them could wash in hot water. It is feared that gynaecological infections, scabies, uterine infections after childbirth and respiratory diseases in children who would normally have accompanied their mothers to the bath-houses, could increase as a result of the banning.95

Health, education and employment form part of socio-economic well-being in the sense that the former represent the conditions for the latter. According to the **Expert Group Meeting on Women and AIDS** in Vienna in 1990, women's vulnerability to HIV infection is heightened by their social and economic dependency on men. In a situation of inferiority, it becomes increasingly difficult to control `health risks', i.e. to insist upon the practice of safe sex.96 Sixty per cent of the billion adult illiterates in the world are women.97 Lack of education as evident in the statistics which show a literacy gap between men and women (in the mid-1980s) of 28 per cent, and an education enrolment gap of 33 per cent in the developing world bears a direct link to employment security and health security. Education of the mother in simple matters such as hygiene, nutrition and safety has an immediate bearing on the health of her children.98 The Women's Health Project explains the complex interaction between economic, political, socio-cultural, physical and psychological factors as determinants of health as follows: "*Women have gender roles and responsibilities which directly affect*

their levels of access to and control of resources necessary to protect their health, including external resources such as the economy, politics, information and education, a safe environment free of violence, and time, as well as internal resources such as self-esteem and initiative. Women are diverse in their age, class, race or ethnicity, religion, functional capacity, sexual orientation and social circumstances. These factors may lead to inequities that adversely affect their health ..."[99]

Famine is exacerbated in part by environmental abuse in a struggle to survive, as well as by war. The cases of the Sudan and Somalia show how food can be used as a weapon of politics. War and strife do not only lead to ecological degradation, but can also be the inevitable consequence of a struggle over scarce resources. Consider the example of India and Bangladesh and their dispute over the water of the Ganges river. Since 1975, India has been diverting most of the dry-season flow of the river to one of its internal rivers. This has had devastating effects on down-stream Bangladeshi communities, who have had no alternative but to migrate to India. This, in turn, has led to highly politicised (ethnic) clashes between the local population and foreigners.[100]

Feminists also highlight the connection between women's poverty and military security. While the connection between direct military violence (e.g. war) and women's economic and physical insecurity may be conceptually obvious, the correlation between female economic insecurity and military spending as a form of structural violence is less well-known. Ann Tickner[101] explains that capital-intensive military ventures divert funds from labour-intensive activities, thus leading to a general rise in unemployment, but particularly for women who are employed in light manufacturing services and local government where cuts are made first. Women and children suffer the most when social programmes are cut in favour of military spending. Ruth Sivard identifies military expenditure as one of the main contributing factors to structural violence in the developing world between 1975 and 1985, for instance, their arms imports amounting to forty per cent of the increase in foreign debt. The World Bank has estimated that one-third of the debt paid each year by developing countries is the direct result of the purchase of military equipment.[102]

It is thus clear that a complex cyclical relationship of interdependence exists between political, socio-economic, ecological and military security.

Military Security: Undermining a Culture of Militarism by Creating an Awareness of Personal Security

The analysis of the feminist discourse on military security is dealt with on two interrelated levels. In a stricter sense, the nature and the extent of women's integration into the military is examined in the light of the increased female recruitment for peacetime armies in recent years spurred by the Gulf War where more than 27 000 women served in the US armed forces.[103] On a broader level, the world's dependence on the military for its security is in itself seen as a major threat to human security and the security of women in particular. The effects of war on women are particularly devastating. Armed conflicts in Africa, for instance, result in a large number of civilian casualties, an increasing proportion of whom are women. The majority of the world's displaced people (eighty per cent) are widowed or abandoned women and their dependent children. They are doomed to a life within overcrowded refugee camps. Feminists contend that

all forms of gender violence are fundamentally a manifestation of the connection between war, militarism and the discrimination against women. Consequently, military security is redefined to include all forms of physical security and protection against bodily harm.

Feminist viewpoints on the place of the military institution in society epitomise the dilemma with which the feminist movement has grappled since its inception. In the words of Elshtain in her seminal contribution, *Women and War, "feminism has not quite known whether to fight men or to join them; whether to lament sex differences and deny their importance or to acknowledge and even valorize such differences; whether to condemn all wars outright or to extol women's contributions to war efforts."*104 On the one hand, liberal feminists could plead for gender equity in the military, while some anti-militarist feminists would support women's inclusion in the military, because they believe women's feminine characteristics might contribute both towards altering the nature of defence forces and war, and to give women a stake in the formulation of security policy. On the other hand, radical, socialist and other pacifist feminists would vehemently oppose such `collaboration' with the minions of patriarchy; while others would argue that women's peacemaking and nurturing `nature' makes them unsuited for warfare.105 So in effect, an analysis of the feminist contribution to the creation of military security in its narrow, conventional meaning is impeded by feminists themselves due to their scant regard for consistency, as well as the fact that they "*are not only at war with war but with one another, as well as being locked in combat with women not self-identified as feminist.*"106

Combat is for `Real Men' Only

In the United States, women's inclusion in the military has made some inroads into traditional gender roles, while in Mali, Guinea and Israel women are conscripted. But nowhere are women routinely utilised in combat roles, even though countries like Canada, Denmark, Norway, Luxembourg, Portugal and South Africa (the latter since 1994) have no combat exclusion policies.107 The former Soviet Union, Germany, and Israel permitted women to participate in combat during times of grave national insecurity, but afterwards excluded them from the armed forces. In similar vein, women are usually given their rightful place in guerrilla movements, only to be dropped once the revolutionary organisation comes to power.108

The term `combat' also evades precise definition.109 Modern warfare is much more impersonal due to its use of sophisticated technology. This may affect the roles of women in combat, thus weakening the arguments against women's inclusion. Furthermore, combat is an essential component of the patriarchal military system and serves as the ultimate test of masculinity. To overemphasise women's inclusion in the military, and to argue that women's first-class citizenship depends on equality in the military is dangerous. In an era where armed forces across the globe are beginning to refocus their mission away from the purely military, such emphasis runs the risk of elevating the military to its former Cold War glory. (This argument, however, does not preclude a more positive outcome emanating from interaction between women who enjoy equality within the military and an institution with a redefined mission.)

(Military) men have argued against women's inclusion on the basis of

factors such as combat readiness hampered by biological limitations in terms of upper body and leg strength and endurance, and cohesion of the combat unit. While some of the biological evidence may be hard to dispute, psychological comparisons are less waterproof. Accounts of women who participated in combat roles indicate that they experience similar emotions and reactions to those of men.110 Women in the Israeli armed forces are drafted for a shorter time than men with the assumption that they have to take care of the children; and they are ineligible for combat duty which is a prerequisite for promotion to high-ranking military positions. Women are therefore effectively excluded from leadership positions. Feminist issues are also viewed as secondary to the `national cause'111 of protecting society and state against (external) aggression.

Feminists, despite their multiple and often conflicting voices, play an important role in unmasking the true nature of the military. Consistent with their critique of the gendered state, the masculinist and sexist underpinnings of the military as an institution of the state are exposed. It enables us to see why the traditional view of national security and the dominance of the `security forces' as the main (even sole) agent for the protection of `national interest' has prevailed. Comprehensive security remains elusive as long as male warriors/citizens continue to protect visible male interests.

Male security is built on one of the most basic dualisms, namely that of `us' *versus* `them', the enemy. The language of war abounds with `macho' terms. Enloe112 coined the term `rambo-ization' to describe this possibly universalist phenomenon. The enemy is furthermore depicted in feminine terms as is shown by General Norman Schwartzkopf's description of the plan to destroy the Iraqi military during the Gulf War in terms of a `Hail Mary' strategy.113 The current controversy over the admission of gays and lesbians to the military is a further example of how the armed forces maintain the us/them dichotomy a concerted effort to maintain the masculine character of the institution! The male imagery of `war talk' is further strengthened by the use of metaphors from the world of sport, another domain where men can compete to prove their self-worth. Competition in sports is often depicted as a form of combat. Pictures of women armed with guns when a country is at war are aimed at recruiting men.114 Hicks Stiehm also "*avers that military trainers resort to manipulation of men's anxiety about their sexual identity in order to increase soldiers' willingness to fight.*"115 To be called a `girl' in training is the worst possible insult. Yet, in a bizarre and paradoxical kind of way, soldiers are also required to be almost bisexual, i.e. to be disciplined and to obey orders which require a heavy dose of so-called feminine submissiveness together with a combat ability that represents the ultimate expression of masculinity.116

These dichotomies feed on controversial assertions that men, in general, are more aggressive and violent than women. Galtung and Ikeda117 mention that at least 95 per cent of all direct violence is committed by men. Statistical evidence is often used to develop such claims, but is normally qualified by the proviso that some women can be as violent and militant as men and that men are not biologically destined to rape and kill. Proponents of the `special qualities' thesis argue that women's unique life-giving capabilities, motherhood and their nurturing/caring role link women to peace and pacifism, since they naturally value the preservation of life. According to this thesis, women's caregiver role in society is of particular

relevance to global security as their tolerant nature not only makes them ideal peace makers, but can also help men to shed their aggressive approach to the solving of conflict.118 Men, on the other hand, are more prone to violence due to being physically stronger and having higher testosterone levels which make them more assertive. Johan Galtung119 hypothesises the "*Woman: Man = Peace: Violence*" correlation by arguing that direct violence is an essentially male phenomenon. He extends the argument by further making a conceptual connection between male violence/aggression and male sexuality, thus linking fear and lust. These two emotions share the same physiological/orgasmic trajectory and are intimately linked to the so-called neurological triggers and specific hormonal curves. Carol Gilligan120 also argues that the different moral development of women makes them more prone to peace than men. Her study of playground activity sharply contrasted boys' competitive (winner-loser) behaviour with girls' win-win approach where a so-called communicative (kinship) web of relationships overshadows a more individualistic and hierarchical mode of thinking. Her research provides an interesting glimpse into human behaviour which may be transferred to the field of intrastate, regional or global interactions regarding security. Recent scientific proof that the differences between men and women in terms of intuition and social behavioural patterns are genetically determined,121 goes a long way towards strengthening this argument.

However, this intermingling of biological and gender differences justifies the criticism levelled at such arguments. These theories perpetuate dangerous stereotypes and can rightly be typified as essentialist, reductionist, counterproductive and self-defeating for the feminist project. Women are reduced to one-dimensional universalistic characters. Historical evidence on how German women, through their silence, made a vital contribution to the Nazi cause122 indicates that being female does not insulate one from being a protagonist of horror. Women have also benefited from the war effort, as demonstrated by those who stepped temporarily into men's jobs during the Second World War. What is important, though, is to recognise that all these arguments bear an element of the truth, and that our biological make-up, together with our socially and culturally constructed roles, determine our insecurities. Johan Galtung123 also supports the notion that an analysis of peace and security issues requires a multifaceted perspective. Gender, if used in isolation, is an insufficient analytical tool. Patriarchy as the root cause of all evil therefore presents an oversimplistic view of the problem. The dilemma for feminists rests, therefore, in finding creative ways of balancing an aggressive stance against militarism, while retaining the values of care and responsibility.

The above-mentioned theses have also been criticised for the lack of empirical evidence of significant sex-linked differences regarding attitudes towards conflict (e.g. to support the hypothesis that women as a rule are more liberal and less supportive of military force). Two recent studies have been undertaken to fill this gap, the first being a cross-national survey by Wilcox, Hewitt and Allsop124 of eleven large cities in developed, as well as developing countries on attitudes towards the Gulf War. The second is a survey by Tessler and Warriner125 on the attitudes of four politically, economically and culturally diverse Middle Eastern states, namely Israel, Egypt, Palestine and Kuwait regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict. The study of the Gulf War found "*only modest gender differences*"126 in the interpretation of events, in effect toward the major actors and in support for the goals of the UN actions. The research is disappointingly inconclusive

and raises more questions than answers. The value of the study on the Arab-Israeli conflict lies in the fact that it provides a non-western perspective which may be more applicable to the conditions of Africa and the rest of the developing world. The research also shows no significant gender differences in the views of men and women and therefore concludes that there is no evidence that women are more inclined toward the use of peaceful methods of conflict resolution. Further, an important connection is drawn between attitudes toward the status of women and attitudes vis-à-vis war and peace. Those who were in favour of gender equality were more favourably inclined towards compromise as a means of conflict resolution. What becomes clear from both studies is the fact that much research is needed to determine the validity of the connection between gender and anti-militaristic attitudes in an African context.

Gender Violence

Feminists reconceptualise military security to include all forms of violence, particularly those perpetrated against women. They contend, firstly, that all forms of violence are fundamentally interrelated, albeit inter- or intrastate, or domestic. Family violence, for instance, must be seen in the wider context of unequal power relations. Secondly, it is argued that violence is a major consequence of the imbalances created by a male-dominated/gendered society. Patriarchy127 is therefore also seen as a form of violence, i.e. structural violence. It is on this level, namely bringing about an awareness of the correlation between private and public violence, that feminism makes a sound contribution to the notion of comprehensive security.

Jamil Salmi's typology128 can be adapted to show the pervasiveness of violence against women. His first category, direct violence, includes brutal acts such as murder, torture and rape (sexual violence). Although it is difficult to determine the full extent of domestic violence against women, the following examples paint a rather grim picture. Femicide has increased enormously over the last few decades, especially since women are considered `soft' targets. In 1995, Amnesty International reported that "*[t]he growth of nationalist, secessionist and ethnic conflicts has seen groups increasingly adopt methods of violence, repression and terror against women. Women have been killed, raped, ill-treated or taken hostage by armed opposition groups in all regions of the world.*"129 In India, `bride burning' (the murder of young wives by `accidental' kitchen fires if families are unable to pay the required dowry) has claimed many lives, and one can be relatively certain that the official figure of 2 449 deaths in 1991 is in reality much higher.130 Physical attack is often accompanied by sexual violence, such as marital rape, sexual harassment in the workplace, and mental torture, the sum total of which has a devastating effect on the well-being of the family; and is perpetrated at great economic cost to society. The problem is exacerbated by legal systems which for years have failed to offer women protection or recourse. To this day, under the guise of not invading the sanctity of the family, so-called crimes of honour by men are absolved or treated with the utmost leniency. Physical violence is inextricably linked to the political, social and economic inequality of women as exemplified in the second category. Indirect violence threatens the right to survival. This broad categorisation relates to the facets of needs fulfilment, economic and social well-being and manifests itself as hunger, disease, poverty, and environmental abuse (mediated violence). In the case of women in the developing world, these insecurities multiply during

times of conflict. Rural women not only lose their loved ones, but also their property and their means of livelihood. Consequently, many of them become economic refugees in the city where prostitution (as another form of social violence) presents itself as the only alternative. Thirdly, Salmi identifies repressive violence, which refers to the deprivation of fundamental rights. Social, economic, and civil-political inequality is part and parcel of a woman's existence: i.e. low social status, inferior employment, unequal access to property for lack of capital, insufficient protection from the state and lack of opportunity to participate in political life due to powerlessness can all be cited as examples of repressive violence. The last category, alienating violence (which, by the way, is where Salmi places women) attempts to depict what it means to be a woman in a gendered society where sexism, just like homophobia, xenophobia, genophobia, and racism is an all-embracing state of mind.

Amidst our focus on women's issues and their bearing on the security of the `whole', we need to remember that men are also often the victims of direct and indirect violence. But feminists point out that, in most cases, `gender' serves to establish a connection between institutional (structural or indirect) and physical (direct) violence: "*As institutional violence is a means to maintain privilege and hierarchy, so physical violence is used to demonstrate [that] power.*"131 Feminists would therefore assert that, until the private/public dualism is broken down and the personal is recognised as political, a truly inclusive human security cannot be built. The UN **Declaration on Violence against Women** recognises this connection between the private and the public spheres. Gender violence is defined as "*any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life ... Violence against women shall be understood to encompass, but not be limited to, physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family and in the community, including battery, sexual abuse of female children, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence, violence related to exploitation, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women, forced prostitution, and violence against women perpetrated and condoned by the state.*"132

True to their holistic and inclusive approach to security matters, feminists remind us also not to overlook that type of abuse which threatens the survival of the entire planet.

Ecological Security: Male Gardeners in a Female Garden?

The beginning of the 1990s has witnessed a dramatic shift in consciousness regarding ecological issues. The redefining of security in terms of ecological concerns, such as sustainability, balance and protection, was in the first instance born out of the growing awareness of the fragility of the natural environment, the potential of modern weapons to destroy the natural environment, and the devastating effects of ecological degradation and depletion of resources on the well-being of the world's inhabitants. Secondly, this recognition was driven home by the fact that threats such as air and water pollution, environmental disasters, depletion of the ozone layer, and deforestation affect rich and poor alike.133 Thirdly, there is an increasing awareness of the fact that, in an age where

resources are rapidly diminishing and the competition for resources has never been greater, environmental conflict is becoming ever more salient. Whereas the complementary nature of ecological threats obviously warrants collective action, the state-centric composition of the international system mitigates against global or regional co-operative arrangements.

Throughout the centuries, nature has been depicted as female. Some would even be bold enough to argue that this is fitting, as women are closer to nature than men. References to `Mother Earth', the `rape of nature' and other gendered metaphors were fundamental in shaping attitudes towards nature, women and non-Western peoples. Even the term `ecology', which is based on the Greek root for `house' or `domestic space', connects environmental security to women's rather than men's experiences.134

As a result of this gendered perspective on nature, ecofeminists assert that there is therefore a clear conceptual link between the inattention to environmental problems (the rights of nature), the silence about women's rights in general ,and more specifically, the gender-differentiated effects of ecological insecurity on women as subsistence providers, and also in terms of their health and reproductive systems. Women's health often serves as an `ecological marker'135 to measure the health of the planet. As a consequence of the Enlightenment, man has sought to tame and impose order upon nature since the seventeenth century, very much in the same way as man or the state has maintained gender inequality and domination through patriarchy. According to ecofeminists, such mechanistic or instrumental attitudes towards nature make the state unfit to address environmental problems. The colonial legacy of supplying the developed world with raw materials is one of the crudest examples of resource depletion. Ann Tickner points out that, in the post-independence era, "*[p]aradoxically the [state's] quest for national security, which involves the appropriation of natural resources through the domination of global space, is a historical process that has actually contributed to a decline in the security of the natural environment.*"136 Furthermore, both domestic and international institutions are ill-equipped to address complex interrelated environmental problems, because of their adherence to a bureaucratic and functional task-orientation. Comprehensive security is therefore premised on a more holistic interdisciplinary and interagency approach to both women's and nature's problems.

The danger inherent in the call of many ecofeminists to pursue holism by including gender in their analysis, and to follow a `natural holism' or `whole earth' approach and environmental management strategy, is that it presumes an orderly world, thus falling prey to the Enlightenment's desire to control and to universalise. If we accept that nature has just as many irregularities as regularities, then perhaps the term `fractious holism' (multilevel) is more appropriate. In this regard, Anne Runyan remarks that "*[a]n ecofeminist politics informed by fractious holism would entail resisting the ideal of harmony and stability even as feminists struggle to create more ... just homes within our overlapping ... environments.*"137 In addition, the inability to establish absolute holism has a bearing on ecofeminism as an intellectual discourse that encompasses a multitude of perspectives. Ecofeminists who draw on the biological link between women and nature have been criticised as being `essentialist' and as having perpetuated dualisms which most feminists believe need to be challenged.138 Gwyn Kirk139 also adds that American ecofeminist writing is far too abstract to be of any use to grassroots ecological activists.

The feminist discourse on ecological security, though far from being completely sound, does offer an enriching perspective on the relationship between man, woman and nature. By exploring the ecological consequences of, for instance, military security policy, it drives home the fact that nature also has rights and that any attempt at holistic thinking can only work if plans are based on constructive and equal partnerships and on practical experience.

Evaluation of the Feminist Contribution to the Security Debate

The strength of the feminist contribution lies in the fact that it not only enhances our understanding of global developments by analysing and confronting the partiality of masculinist accounts, but also offers alternative constructions that could lead to new and creative solutions to our global security problems.

Firstly, alternative feminist thinking on security offers a critique of mono-gendered theories and practices of world politics, and exposes the way in which one's ability to think comprehensively about national security policy and global security issues is inhibited by such theorising and praxis. It therefore examines the gender-specific consequences of international and national processes. Since feminists speak from the experience of those on the periphery of the world system, it can, as Tickner postulates, "*offer us ... new insights on the behaviour of states and the needs of individuals, particularly those on the peripheries of the international system.*"140 This, in turn, allows us to rethink the interrelationship of political, socio-economic, military, and ecological insecurities from the vantage point of the powerless, and also to gain an understanding of how deeply entrenched the Western value system is in the behaviour of states. There are definite parallels between women's experience and the experiences of the developing world with regard to the global economy. Both cases are at a fundamental disadvantage within an essentially paternalistic framework.

Secondly, a feminist reconceptualisation of security comes closer to the textbook definition of comprehensive all-inclusive security. Although absolute holism, which takes all relevant and interrelated factors affecting world security into consideration, is impossible to achieve, a multifactor, multidimensional, and multilevel way of thinking comes easily to feminist scholarship due to its inter- or transdisciplinary character.

Thirdly, the feminist analysis enables the scholar to establish a link between the individual and international levels of security, thus giving new meaning to the concept of security as `the security of all'. Christine Sylvester also defends the feminist approach of shifting back and forth between individual, national and international levels of security by arguing that "*to separate phenomena into discrete and independent categories of analysis leads to artificial islands of sociality.*"141 Fred Halliday argues in this respect that the slogan of `the personal is political' can be extended to the international milieu, "*in the sense that inter-personal, micro-political relations are greatly influenced by transnational processes.*"142 This kind of conceptualisation thus enables one to recognise the divisions between the private and the public sphere as artificial and `man'- made.

Finally, an emphasis on a `female approach' of care and responsibility to security issues gives feminism an edge in terms of practical applicability. It

is argued that women's socialisation and historical roles have led to the development of uniquely female values and capacities which can be `learned' by all human beings and which need to be incorporated into security policy and mechanisms for conflict resolution. Most women's analysis of a particular problem, as well as the solutions they offer, are holistic or global rather than atomistic. Women have the capacity to recognise positive, co-operative and constructive relationships of a non-hierarchical nature and they normally display the ability to synergise resources, which refers to the art of making the whole greater than the sum of its parts. The latter `virtue' is particularly important in the developing world context where resources are severely limited. It is therefore maintained that these qualities have concrete implications for the way peacemaking and security-building should be implemented.

The fundamental question that now has to be addressed is whether a feminist strategy or approach to peace and security is necessarily superior to the conventional way. Is a secure world by implication and of necessity female? This raises questions about the way in which the feminist way should best be accommodated within a broader intellectual security framework to ensure the achievement of its goals.

Feminist responses to this question range from an emphatic and radical `yes' to a more moderate `yes but' to a cautious `no, but let's add the feminist perspective and hope it will have some effect'. Many of the feminists who believe that the female approach is superior also insist that women should organise separately for two reasons. Firstly, the use of non-violent methods are more characteristic (though not exclusive) of women and secondly, the connection between the national and international levels of security on the one hand, and the personal level, on the other, can only be established in an environment where women share their experiences with other women.143 Women's insight into their own insecurity is therefore more valid than the views of outsiders and should accordingly form the starting point in the analysis of international relations and global security. In this way, rather than being an added body of knowledge, it becomes perspective transforming as it modifies current approaches from within.144 This extremist view is often criticised, because it keeps false dualisms alive, defeats the object of achieving equality and glosses over the differences in terms of race, class and culture among women, giving the impression that there is a universal female experience. Post-modernists, in contrast, are at pains to point out that women do not have a monopoly on peace "*but through the links with their own experience, [they have] an edge to lead all people towards a more just, more viable and more humane future.*"145 The feminist perspective on security is therefore, according to this view, highly valid, but certainly only one of many approaches to a complex world. Rebecca Grant suggests a more integrated approach to international security with "*a framework where states and systems and women are combined as starting points for a feminist epistemology ... What a feminist perspective can and should do is to identify gender bias, and provide criteria for a research agenda that leads toward a better understanding of aspects of human behavior that have been marginalized in theories of security.*"146 But she does concede that a feminist epistemology can never "*stray completely from the prime task of working from women's experience.*"147 Both schools share the goal of transforming from within, but differ essentially as to the weight that is placed on women's experience. There is also a real danger that if women's experiences are not integrated properly they could end up being assimilated and subverted by the

mainstream discourse and subsequently marginalised again.

With regard to possible weaknesses it could be argued that the so-called `separatist' feminist approach weakens the feminist contribution to an understanding of contemporary security issues. Excluding men from the debate or the bifurcation of female and male approaches undermines the concept of holism, as well as the notion that militaristic and sexist men and women can `unlearn' conflictual and discriminatory behaviour. A second limitation relates to the overemphasis by radical feminists on patriarchy as the root cause of women's insecurity. While this perspective certainly offers a valuable framework for analysis, it errs in the sense that it overlooks the fact that women's exclusion from global security in practical and academic terms has had negative consequences both for the disciplines of International Relations, Peace Studies and Strategic Studies, and for men and women as a whole.148 In the third instance, the criticism against the current mainstream security debate as being too inclusive or broad and therefore too cumbersome, can also be levelled at the feminist contribution. Feminism even claims to strive for greater inclusivity than the current conventional thinking. However, in its defence it can be argued that prioritising threats to security is a normal part of the political process, regardless of the extent of the agenda. The broad anti-militarist stance of feminism, as well as the different angle taken regarding military security (i.e. linking public and private violence) help to raise the political profile of non-military (and often neglected) security threats. Judging from the disappointing and non-committal outcome of the UN Earth Summit in June 1997, agreement about common problems does not imply agreement about solutions. In this regard, the feminist approach to issues of comprehensive and collective security is still sorely lacking.

Feminists have made a variety of proposals, including the following mechanisms to ensure the development of `a new security culture'. Initially, a less ambitious set of objectives concentrating on small-scale localised and contextual projects needs to be adopted. Women have been politically more effective on the local level through their involvement in development, peace and environmental projects and social movements. This involvement leads to an important sense of empowerment and works towards a more secure future. Both through grassroots and non-government organisations and the informal sector women come to improve their lives. On the issue of women's involvement in state or community politics, local government is often viewed as the most important level of government for women as it is responsible for the provision of services such as health, childcare, water and sanitation, electricity and public transport, all of which impact directly on the lives of women. But, in order for local government to really have a positive impact on women's lives, according to Cathi Albertyn,149women must be elected to and employed by local government. In addition, local government must become accessible to women in civil society, and an understanding of women's gender roles, inequality and oppression must permeate all local government thinking. In this way, the danger of women's local projects remaining `women's projects' can be overcome. Local government thus serves as a bridge between women in civil society and their access to the centres of power and decision-making.

A second mechanism or tactic has to do with women's unique way of taking decisions, which is directly related to their decentralised, non-hierarchical, grassroots way of organising and networking. Women at various peace camps practised alternative cyclical ways of decision-making using group

discussions and intensive dialogue. This not only broke the conventional Western style, but also eventually led to a far deeper understanding of the problem.150 While such an approach may appear anarchic, disorganised, and time-consuming, it provides more insight than a top-down approach and is far more interactive, with the result that consensus may finally be easier to achieve.

The monitoring of security policy by means of national machinery, such as a women's caucus, is another mechanism advanced by the feminist contribution to security thinking. A change of approach about security and structures must be reflected in security policy. Women need to assure themselves that the implementation of strategies is monitored in terms of compliance with articulated policy principles and the goals set. Betty Reardon151 suggests four criteria by means of which the four dominant types of security can be monitored:

- o equity as a means of safe-guarding political security, the protection of human rights, and freedom from discrimination;

- o vulnerability as a way of keeping the socio-economic needs of the poor and the powerless on the agenda and highlighting its link to other forms of insecurity;

- o Protection (from harm) as it relates to the narrow concept of military security (war and public conflict), and the broader concept of all forms of physical security (violence in the private realm); and

- o sustainability which raises the importance of ecological issues and consequences of policy decisions by asking whether a particular policy will harm or enhance ecological security.

The effects of policy decisions on women are to be used as a barometer of the value of each decision regarding security policy.

Women can also make a valuable contribution to the employment of non-violent mechanisms applied to conflict resolution. Women's experience of local organising and peacemaking within the family creates opportunities for more contextualised approaches to conflict resolution and the application of non-violent techniques. Reardon describes this approach as "*[a] familial or kinship model of conflict resolution, in which maintaining constructive human relationship is a primary concern, seeks fairness and reconciliation rather than victory and retribution.*"152 Unlike conventional institutionalised conflict resolution methods which involve power *élites*, promises of rewards by the mediator, and at times a superficial analysis of the roots of the conflict, the kinship model offers a degree of flexibility where non-government organisations, mothers, professional and/or interest groups and business153 have the freedom to address the insecurities of communities with a specific cultural context in a more humanising and personalised way.

Finally, women have had a long involvement in peace education as a mechanism for change. As parents and as primary and secondary school teachers, women can play a significant role in shaping attitudes about peace. Even at tertiary level, women are beginning to make their mark, as is borne out by, for instance, the dominance of women in the Peace Studies

department at the University of Bradford, in the United Kingdom. The fundamental aim of peace education is social transformation. It is a life-long process and takes place in every situation and structure of human society. In this regard, Nancy Shelley, an Australian peace activist and feminist, defines peace education as being concerned with "*respect for persons, personal relationships ... social justice, sharing the world's resources, cooperation, and community. Peace education deals with oppression, sexism, racism, injustice and a recognition that violence has to do with power. Peace education involves a radical approach to curriculum, the structure of schools, and the personal relationships within schools. Peace education is concern for the planet, the environment and the connectedness of humans to other life...*"154

Against the background of this theoretical synopsis, the issue of the relevance of the feminist perspective on security for Africa will be addressed below. The state of women's security in Africa needs to be examined before the theoretical and practical implications of the feminist perspective on security for Africa can be evaluated.

SECURITY OF WOMEN IN AFRICA AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ACHIEVEMENT OF CONTINENTAL PEACE

Many people in Africa are considered to be without rights despite the existence of various treaties and declarations. In practice, a combination of poverty and violence places people in situations where their lack of rights is taken as a given. For African women, this situation is compounded by the effects of patriarchy. The absence of rights thus embodies African women's comprehensive insecurity.

The purpose of this section is to analyse, within the framework of the holistic feminist viewpoint, the challenges facing women in the developing world, but particularly on the African continent. The women's movement is often criticised for not being able to translate political gains in terms of equality before the law into material security gains for women, and it is therefore in this context that the question `How secure are women in Africa?' is posed. Another issue which will be put under the spotlight, is the way in which gender is used as an organising principle in African society and how it impacts upon women's political, socio-economic, military/bodily and environmental security. Finally, the prospects for achieving human security on the continent will be examined.

In the first place, it is contended that a feminist rethinking of the nature of threats relates directly to the threats facing the developing world. Whereas white Western middle-class women of the 1970s and 1980s were concerned with the threat of nuclear war, women in the developing world were and still are faced with a broad range of insecurities associated with imperialism, militarism, racism, sexism and poverty. The second premise relates to the contention that holistic feminist thinking on security, since it takes the recently broadened concept of security beyond its gendered underpinnings, has definite intellectual as well as practical value for men and women in Africa. The feminist perspective has much in common with what Sandra Harding calls an African worldview, where "*the individual is seen as part of the social order and as acting within that order rather than upon it. ... such a view of human behaviour could help us to think from a more global perspective that appreciates cultural diversity but at the same time recognizes a growing interdependence ...*"155

There is, however, a danger of presenting African culture as stereotypically collectivist and Western culture as stereotypically individualistic. Not all Africans are communalistic, and Westerners are not uniquely individualistic. Other factors such as acculturation the difference between urban individualism and the more group-oriented rural mode of life need to be born in mind. But this kind of generalised comparison or typology does provide a framework for analysis and shows how compatible the feminist and African mindsets can be.

African thought processes, according to Van der Walt,[156] emphasise human interaction as opposed to Western thinking which has a tendency to objectify all behaviour; holistic integral knowledge as opposed to reductionist fragmentary knowledge; closeness to concrete reality as opposed to aloof abstraction; warm, personalised individual knowledge as opposed to a coldly clinical universal knowledge; synthesis as opposed to analysis; intuition, emotion, and experience as opposed to reflection, intellect, and technology; cyclical flexible and lateral thinking as opposed to linear and methodical, structured thinking; consensus and complementarity of differences as opposed to competition and binary dualisms. These differences can be reduced to the differences between the dictum `I am because we are' and the saying `We are because I am'. The African notion of *ubuntu* (compassion), if used in such a way that it includes women, can definitely play a role in building a greater communal spirit.

Afropessimists would contend that, while there certainly appears to be broad intellectual similarities, as well as consensus about the objects of security (human security), it remains questionable whether the merging of feminist and African mindsets can achieve for African women what the women's movement so far has failed to do. Given Africa's specific historical, political, and social context, any achievement of a comprehensive and collective security is severely hampered by a number of factors, such as:

- governments operating under severe economic constraints and political instability;

- the fact that mere lip-service is being paid to the principle of an egalitarian society;

- the pervasiveness of patriarchy and sexism in African society; and

- the weakness of civil society which may necessitate retaining the weakened state as the primary referent of security.

Efforts at generalisation and prediction are made extremely difficult by political instability and the continuous change from civilian to military rule and *vice versa*; by the fact that African society and gender roles are culturally diverse; that class is an important variable which influences the status and opportunities of women; and lastly by the fact that gender inequality in Africa reflects a combination of indigenous, precolonial and European influences.[157]

The State of Women's Rights in Africa

The prognosis for the achievement of political security on the African continent is poor. The euphoria in the aftermath of the peaceful settlements on the continent, such as in Namibia, Mozambique, Benin, Zambia and South Africa soon made room for more cautious assessments. In this regard, Michael Bratton points out that, in comparison with the experience of Poland and Brazil where democracy evolved over a period of time, "*African regime transitions seemed frantically hurried. Insofar as democratization involves the institutionalization of procedures for popular government, precious little time was available for such procedures to take root, implying that the consolidation of democratic institutions in Africa will be problematic in years to come.*"158

In gendered terms, Africa's history of modern state formation is no different from that of most of the world it was also a fundamentally gendered process. It is different, though, in the sense that this process has been exacerbated by the superimposition of Western patriarchal values and practices. In precolonial times, African women enjoyed a great deal of (informal) political influence. For instance, the female chiefs of the Mende and Serbro of Sierra Leone and the `headmen' of the Tonga in Zambia enjoyed positions of informal authority. On a formal level, the queen mother in many West African societies had the power to select the king, and female warriors for example, Queen Amina of Hausaland during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and Nzinga of Angola who led the earliest resistance to the Portuguese were revered for their leadership in battle. Women's organisations existed parallel to men's groups and enjoyed recognition as such. Within such organisations, women had the power to make decisions concerning their own interests. Economically and socially, too, women had a fair amount of informal and indirect power. Division of labour and the fact that women played a vital economic role as producers and preparers of food for the family, tending animals, and selling surplus products in local markets, were translated into high status and autonomy for women. April Gordon argues that, while the practice of polygamy is frowned upon by Westerners and feminists, it was much more indicative of the central role women played in the economic well-being of the family. In precolonial times, bridewealth (the transfer of goods or services from the male's family to the bride's family) also signified the high value attached to women in African society, since families had to be compensated for the loss of their daughters. They did not entertain the modern notion of women as a commodity.159

Parpart and Staudt sketch how a custom such as bridewealth was manipulated by colonial authorities and so-called `traditional' men: "*Men provided increasingly large amounts of wealth in exchange for wives, thereby securing greater marital control over wives' labor. Colonial officials had an interest in stabilizing domestic relations and strengthening accumulation processes.*"160 Europeans thus imposed their own gender biases by promoting all-male tribal authorities while an emphasis on `African tradition' enhanced men's position politically, economically, as well as culturally at the expense of women. Men's advantageous social position was inextricably linked to the interchange between political and economic factors. Their access to positions of political power facilitated the unequal distribution of resources, thereby increasing gender inequality. But their economic power was derived from an easy access to education, jobs and property which, in turn, enabled them to occupy the leadership positions in post-colonial Africa. Men in the newly independent states of Africa modelled their style of leadership on those of their former colonial masters

male control of public political power was therefore viewed as the logical extension of the private division of authority where the man is the head of the family.

The male-controlled state thus became a major source of insecurity for women. With the emergence of the modern Western-style state, traditional avenues of decision-making through families and local community organisations were replaced with a highly bureaucratic and centralised system.161 What little control women had over the allocation of resources by means of decentralised structures was now taken from them. Add to that the dismal track-record of African states in respect of women's political representation, and one has a recipe for the complete marginalisation and neglect of women and their interests. For instance, there have been no female heads of state in Africa. Women constitute about half of the franchised population in Africa, yet during the mid-1980s, women held a mere six per cent of the legislative positions and two per cent of cabinet or equivalent positions where they are relegated to the so-called traditional female portfolios of health, education, social welfare and women's affairs! Half of all African states had no women in cabinet at all in the mid-1980s. On the local level, however, the position regarding female representation was slightly more encouraging, namely ten per cent.162

Since that time, there have been some gains for women in terms of representation. At the end of 1995, 25 per cent of parliamentarians in Mozambique and fifteen per cent in Zimbabwe were women.163 The Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly in South Africa and the Deputy Speaker in Zimbabwe are also women, although Maxi van Aardt164 points out that, of eleven countries only 24 women hold positions as ministers and/or deputy ministers in the Southern African Development Community (SADC). In South Africa, for instance, since 1994/95 women have occupied about 25 per cent of the seats in the National Assembly. South Africa also has a higher average in terms of gender representation than its counterparts in North America, Western and Southern Europe, Australia, New Zealand and Japan as members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. On a provincial level, the figure is even higher, with women members constituting 33 per cent of provincial legislatures. Yet, it was found that women were still grossly underrepresented in South African local government structures (18,75 per cent) by November 1995. Patriarchal values are also still dominant in the overwhelmingly male traditional authorities.165

The general public often assumes that increased women's representation will be enough to address women's inequality. It is estimated that a thirty per cent level of participation is the minimum requirement for women to exert a meaningful influence on the national decision-making process. Most African countries still have a long way to go in this regard. Furthermore, quotas do little to change deeply entrenched mindsets. In military and/or one-party states, women also have even less opportunity to express their views.

The ambivalence of African (male) society towards women's rights is one of the most fundamental causes of women's current politico-legal insecurity. Lip-service is paid to the principles espoused in the Western-style constitutions and declarations of many African countries. By 1995, only 33 out of 53 African states had signed the 1979 **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women** (CEDAW),

which "*affirms the right of women to enter freely into marriage; to equality during marriage and its dissolution; to equal rights to guardianship of children; and to equal rights to property.*"166 By 1995, six SADC member states (Namibia, Zimbabwe, Angola, Mozambique, South Africa, and Zambia) had signed and ratified the Convention. Public treaties become meaningless when signed by countries such as Zambia which has built an escape clause into its constitution which exempts marriage and personal and customary law. The Ivory Coast, Kenya and Ethiopia all allow women to inherit and own property. In the Ivory Coast, polygamy and bridewealth are forbidden. In Senegal, women have the right to choose a husband, but must consent to the husband taking additional wives. Men no longer have the right to grant themselves a divorce. Yet sadly, many of these reforms are weakly enforced and, in practice, the man remains the head of the family. Under the guise of preserving tradition, a dual legal system which perpetuates women's subservience to men is unofficially condoned and maintained. In contrast to the West where economically dependent women at least enjoy legal protection in compensation for their economic dependence on their husbands, African women in a similar situation have no automatic right to their husbands' assets or their children in case of death or divorce.167

Since gender is not central to the African analysis of politics and security, it comes as no surprise that most African governments have failed to integrate women into policy formulation, partly as a result of a lack of understanding of gender issues and how to translate these into policy and also because of a reluctance on the part of male power-holders to lose or share deeply entrenched privileges.

So far in this discussion, the state has been depicted as one of the main sources of women's insecurity. But the analysis is, in fact, more complex. While it is true that men benefit more from the African state than women, it is also correct to point out that, in the context of a continent in crisis, where corruption, undemocratic government procedures, and lack of political accountability exist, and where *élites* control civil and economic power, both men and women are left insecure. On the one hand, a weakened state can be equated with an insecure state. But in theory on the other hand, weak states offer the chance for robust social movements to shape their own security. In this regard, Parpart and Staudt cite Thomas Callaghy who warns that African states' ability to mould society should not be reified. The coexistence of traditional and Western values however hypocritical that may be shows that African states are "*neither monolithic nor unchanging.*"168 This suggests that there should be enough room for the development of a vibrant civil society, both to give substance to the concept of human security and to foster a regional consciousness based upon common interests. However, civil society in Africa, in general, is hampered by the legacy of colonialism and neo-colonialism, an unfamiliarity with a base-line approach, and poor communication between countries. Other impeding factors include a lack of consistency and cohesion, the absence of a clear sense of identity and the ephemeral, transitory or crisis-ridden nature of many such movements.169 A severe shortage of resources, coupled with the unwillingness of states to sacrifice sovereignty, further hinders the sustainability of civil society.

Women can and should play a pivotal role in building a security community based on common values. Since the mid-1980s, there has been a significant growth in the number of women's organisations. Formal and

informal women's associations, such as grassroots self-help groups formed by poor rural women, serve as vehicles of economic security and assistance. Women's groups that are modelled on their Western colonial counterparts focus on social welfare activities and are dominated by *élite* and middle-class African women. Since the 1970s, international organisations also began to promote small-scale `women's projects' such as commercial crafts production. Although these organisations have played a valuable role in raising consciousness and self-confidence, as well as in building capacity and leadership skills, they are hampered by a number of problems. Isolated international efforts to foster women's development have failed to place them on the mainstream development agenda. Women's lack of education, management skills and finance minimise the success of women's groups; networking and co-ordination between women's organisations are insufficient; and women's work in the community severely limits the amount of time available to pursue the larger goal of promoting common values and comprehensive human security. But the greatest problem, according to April Gordon,[170] is that most women's organisations are essentially middle-class and consequently fairly conservative, antifeminist and content with the *status quo*. These organisations not only fail to challenge gender-role assumptions, but have also been insensitive to the needs of poor women. Due to their lack of a civic political agenda, such organisations should technically not be regarded as truly part of civil society. More politicised and militant women's movements also have their share of problems. Now that the South African post-election euphoria has subsided, the cracks in the ANC Women's League are all the more apparent. Instead of giving primacy to women's issues, the movement is paralysed by party-political in-fighting. This has alienated many women and led to the proliferation of national institutions committed to the empowerment of women, such as the Office on the Status of Women, the *ad hoc* Committee on Improving the Quality of Life and Status of Women, the parliamentary Women's Group and the Commission on Gender Equity.[171] The proliferation of women's organisations or structures should not be seen as a drawback, or as a symptom of a lack of cohesion, but rather as one way of building a security community.[172] The notion of civil society as the sum total of these organisations also fits in with the recognition that women's experiences are diverse and multiple. Women are able to co-operate despite differences, as seen in the networking initiatives encouraged by the third **World Conference on Women** in Nairobi (1985), the African Platform for Action at the fifth **African Regional Conference on Women** in Dakar, Senegal and the fourth **World Conference on Women** in Beijing (1995).

From Securing Basic Needs to Sustainable Development

If structural violence is used as a yardstick of women's security on the African continent, then the prospects for their well-being seem bleak, both in spite and because of international and local efforts at development. African women suffer (and even die) as a result of an unequal distribution of resources within global and national economic, political, and social systems. In a recent survey of local entrepreneurs in 69 countries on the issue of the link between credibility and investment, sub-Saharan Africa was singled out "*for the most severe deterioration in the state's effectiveness*"[173] in meeting basic needs and providing a safe environment for development. Most sub-Saharan countries are situated at the bottom of both the gender empowerment measure (GEM) rankings (devised by the UN **Human Development Report**) and the gender-related development

index (GDI) which focuses on gender inequalities. Sierra Leone, Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso are among the five lowest on the scale.174

In this context, David Lamb rather cynically describes the life of the African woman as follows: "*Her comforts are few, her burdens many. But if liberation means freedom to work, rather than from work, she is the world's most liberated woman.*"175 In preparation for the Beijing Conference, the African Platform for Action spelt out African women's economic insecurity. It noted that 35 per cent of all households have a woman at the head and are in dire need of support in the form of policy; special economic programmes for poor women especially in the informal and the agricultural sectors are required; and gender-biased laws which constrain the economic potential of women need to be changed.176

In precapitalist Africa, men and women (although men played a dominant role) worked together as a single productive unit. Where women had rights to land, animals, and the products of their own labour, their status was higher. But with colonialism came the forcible integration of African states into the global capitalist economy. The capitalist system reinforced women's inequality. To ensure a cheap labour supply and to extract the mineral wealth of Africa, agriculture was commercialised and mechanised with the purpose of producing cash crops for export. Men took control of cash crop production and women were left behind in the traditional sector responsible for local subsistence food production. Thus, the introduction of a wage-labour market reduced the economic interdependence between men and women and enabled men to increase their economic power, whereas women's exclusion from certain areas of production made them economically more dependent upon men.177

In Africa, women's economic contribution is higher than in other regions of the developing world. African women spend 44 per cent of their time in economic activities whereas Latin American and Asian women work 28 per cent and 36 per cent178 respectively of all their time in the market or in the subsistence sector. Nevertheless, African women's contribution is often omitted from national income accounts. Women in Africa play a dual role in the economy, inside the home as subsistence farmers and care-takers, and outside the home in the agricultural sector and in the informal urban sector. Women farmers in sub-Saharan Africa are responsible for between sixty and eighty per cent of all agricultural production,179 thus forming the economic backbone of the rural community. While men earn cash on nearby plantations or in the cities, women in the rural areas work long hours in the fields with primitive equipment. An average of 1 000 hours per annum (in rural Kenya 56 hours per week) 180 is spent in the field, planting and harvesting crops, collecting firewood and fetching water. An extra three to four hours per day are spent on unpaid domestic work such as food preparation and childcare. Where women are employed in seasonal part-time agricultural work, they are also generally paid less than seventy per cent of men's wage rates.181 Men spend money on themselves, while women spend their money on the household and their children. Not only is women's subsistence work accorded lower social and economic value, as being unscientific, traditional and unproductive, but the state has also contributed towards the deterioration of women's traditional situation by keeping the price of traditional food crops low in order to benefit urban consumers.182

For women farmers in Africa, their struggle for survival is deeply intertwined

with the competition for land, and access to the resources (capital and technology) for its development. Women have little legal control over the land they farm. Often the best land is granted to men for the production of cash crops while women are deprived of their ancestral claims to land. Colonial policies, such as the **Swynnerton Act** in Kenya in the 1950s which introduced private land ownership for the male heads of households,[183] continue to this day and threaten the economic security of women. The only way women can gain access to land is often through marriage. Yet, in Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and Swaziland, married women are under the permanent guardianship of their husbands and have no right to manage property. In Zimbabwe, husbands allow their wives a piece of land where they can grow `women's crops' such as sweet potatoes, nuts, and millet, but the decision on cultivating the remainder of the land rests ultimately with the husband, even though caring for the crop is the woman's responsibility. According to the UNDP's **Human Development Report** (1995), only 69 per cent of female farmers receive extension visits, compared with 97 per cent of male farmers, and only seven per cent of extension agents/advisors are women. Rural women in Africa receive less than ten per cent of the credit available to small farmers and only one per cent of the total credit to agriculture. Technological changes often aggravate the disadvantaged situation of women. In Sierra Leone, the mechanisation of rice cultivation cut men's workload, but increased that of women because more planting and transplanting (traditionally female tasks) were required. Due to cost and tradition, women rarely use draught animals. However, the practice of weeding can be done six times faster with animal traction. If these women were to receive the same kind of assistance and incentives as men, their productivity would increase dramatically.[184]

The validity of the well-known gender dualism in African agriculture, namely that men are responsible for cash crops and women for subsistence food production, is questioned by Whitehead in the present context as it "*understates the involvement of women in the modern sector of the economy [women's involvement in cash crop production] and ignores the fact that food crops are also grown as cash crops.*"[185] Women entered the wage labour market towards the end of the colonial period only to have their unequal status confirmed by multi- and transnational corporations that, in an attempt to escape minimum wage requirements, working-hour regulations, and environmental legislation at home, exploited the newly appointed female labour force in the developing world.[186]

Women's economic hardship in the rural areas and their disadvantaged position in the formal employment sector have forced them into the informal unremunerated sector. Women's involvement in the informal sector is often overlooked by governments and international agencies. Sixty per cent of Africa's labour force works in this sector, the major part of which are women. In Nigeria, for example, 94 per cent of street food-vendors are women. Women's resources are most of the time directed *via* informal, unregulated or non-state channels. Selling foodstuffs and crafts, as well as `black market' enterprises, such as prostitution, smuggling and illegal beer brewing, are examples of their involvement in the informal sector.[187] This sector grew dramatically during the 1980s, because of the decline in security of employment in the formal sector. The informal sector is increasingly being viewed as a safety net and a source of alternative income. Another reason for its popularity among women may be attributed to the fact that women are considered risky clients by commercial banks.

Informal financial institutions such as `people's banks', saving and loan co-operatives and revolving credit systems have stepped in to fill the void. Other factors which encourage women to enter the informal sector are their inadequate skills and knowledge of simple business management techniques such as book-keeping and marketing, their lack of access to and the high cost of business premises and basic infrastructure such as water and electricity, and cumbersome laws and regulations relating to taxation and licensing.188

In a negative sense, the growth of the informal sector (which is also quite precarious in terms of minimum wages and working conditions) may be regarded as a reflection of the failure of efforts at development and as a desperate attempt at short-term poverty alleviation. Michael Todaro189 estimates that of the world's total households, seventeen to 28 per cent (in South Africa more than forty per cent) are headed by women and that such households are among the poorest in society, partly as a result of women's inequality. Caroline Moser190 maintains that, in parts of Africa, the figure may even be higher than fifty per cent, while in refugee camps it could be between eighty and ninety per cent. This is not a new phenomenon, but its significance lies in the fact that it is on the increase and is currently also more openly acknowledged. The `feminisation of poverty' is therefore inextricably linked to the notion of food insecurity. Moreover, female impoverishment and food insecurity are manifestations of structures and policies which foster deeply entrenched gender differentiation.

African food security declined steadily during the 1980s, and food dependency is currently closely linked to factors such as environmental degradation, rising mortality and unemployment rates, and the negative effects of global profit-driven policies. The gendered effects of such factors and policies are particularly salient in Africa. The main food producers of the continent and their children are often worst hit due to their unequal access to resources. Tradition also plays its part when women allow the family to eat first, when men and male children are given the biggest and most nutritious share of the food, and when boys are breastfed longer, and taken more readily to health services.

Women's plight is aggravated by the fact that policies to alleviate poverty usually benefit African men in allowing them greater employment opportunities in the urban sector via a ready access to education and skills training. Gender disparities in education (as the key to women's empowerment) are, however, slowly but surely being addressed. The UN **Human Development Report** (1995) has noted that "*[g]ender gaps in adult literacy and school enrolment halved between 1970 and 1990 in the developing world, and women's literacy rose from 54 per cent of the male rate in 1970 to 74 per cent in 1990. In Africa, female enrolment rates at secondary level increased from 8 per cent in 1960 to 32 per cent in 1991. Zimbabwe raised the adult women's literacy rate to 70 per cent or more.*"191 However, by 1990, sub-Saharan Africa still had a female illiteracy rate of 62 per cent. The highest female illiteracy rates are in West Africa with Burkina Faso (91 per cent), Sierra Leone (89 per cent) and Nigeria (61 per cent) topping the list.192

The extreme poverty and underdevelopment of Africa places a severe burden on existing formal and informal systems of social security. Social security as the sum total of all assistance to individuals and social groups, is designed not only to ensure their physical survival, but also to afford

protection from any deterioration in their standard of living. Countries such as Zimbabwe, Zambia, Tanzania, Malawi and Mozambique do not have comprehensive social security schemes. Formal social security systems in Southern Africa are also not sufficiently gender conscious. In Tanzania, for instance, family relief allowance is given to male and unmarried female employees, but not to married women whose husbands are employed. Differentials in legal retirement ages for men and women discriminate against women as their old-age benefits are automatically smaller. Free medical care should, but is not always available to the lowest paid employees who are mostly women.193

Women's health is directly affected by economic, socio-cultural and psychological factors. There is a definite link between women's unenviable position of being `poor, powerless and pregnant', together with the increase in the feminisation of poverty and the lack of government attention to primary health care for girl-children and reproductive healthcare for women. African women are 200 times more likely to die from pregnancy-related causes than women in industrialised countries. According to the **Human Development Report**, "*[m]aternal mortality rates in sub-Saharan Africa are the highest in the world, with 150 000 dying from birth-related causes each year.*"194 Avoidance of pregnancy through birth control is an important factor both in prolonging women's life expectancy and improving the socio-economic life of the family. However, by the early 1990s, up to ninety per cent of women in ten African countries were not aware of modern methods of contraception. Apart from increasing awareness and improving facilities, cultural barriers need to be overcome in order to halt the reproductive treadmill. In many African societies, a woman's status is determined by the size of her family, and very often children serve as an important source of labour and income for poor families.195 In South Africa, as in many other African countries, female farmworkers are the most disadvantaged of all, also in terms of health care. They often suffer from respiratory problems such as bronchitis, tuberculosis and asthma. Their poverty and general deprivation of civil rights are compounded by the fact that, in remote rural areas, access to primary health care facilities is limited and irregular.196

In recent times, acquired immunity deficiency syndrome (AIDS) has also become a `feminised' disease and a global security threat. By 1990, an estimated one in forty adult men and women in Africa was infected with the human immuno-deficiency virus (HIV). For women aged fifteen to 49, the rate of infection at that stage was 2 500 per 100 000. There is a high rate of AIDS/HIV infection among urban women, especially prostitutes. The World Health Organisation has estimated that, around the beginning of the nineties, about two million women in sub-Saharan Africa carried the AIDS virus. Between 1,5 and three million women in Central and Eastern Africa's AIDS belt are expected to die from AIDS in the 1990s. Most of the infected women are at the reproductive age who have a fifteen to 45 per cent chance of passing the virus to their infants.197 This is particularly disturbing, given the fact that fertility rates have increased in eleven sub-Saharan countries.198 In South Africa in 1995, 10,4 per cent of women throughout the country were infected with HIV, and with an infection rate which doubles every five to twelve months,199 there is certainly cause for concern. With the rise of Muslim fundamentalism in Africa, women's health is under threat from religion. Archaic religious laws and customs are manipulated to justify barbaric practices, such as circumcision and genital mutilation.

On the issue of the impact of development strategies on the socio-economic security of women in Africa or the developing world, two broad feminist schools of thought have emerged. The first view is represented by Ester Boserup who, as far back as 1970, challenged the assumption that the problems of women in the developing world was the result of insufficient participation in the process of modernisation. She and other scholars, such as Janet Momsen in her study of *Women and Development in the Third World* (1991), have concluded that economic development has had a divergent impact on men and women, development aid having actually negatively affected the status of women. This view argues from the perspective of Northern feminists and is premised on a critique of gender-biased or sexist approaches to development. The second perspective, a combination of radical and Marxist feminist thought emerging from the developing world, argues that women's declining position is directly related to their assimilation into the global market economy that is built upon a patriarchal exchange between North and South.200

The modernisation approach to development did not see women as a distinct and particularly disadvantaged group. Seemingly gender-neutral initiatives simply assumed that men were the beneficiaries of aid and training and that women would benefit *via* their husbands. Male privilege was justified in the name of African tradition. Many development projects failed because they were imposed upon communities and did not take the specific context and dynamics of the situation into consideration. The effects of such an approach on women's economic security are well documented. Bernal's (1988) study in Northern Sudan and Carney's (1988) study in The Gambia of irrigation schemes where cash crops were given preference, resettlement schemes in Cameroon, and women's increased workload as a result of cash crop production and their lack of access to the money they raised in the production of cash crops, indicate how men were given preferential treatment by development agencies and African governments.201 The welfare approach to development also failed as it led to the creation of two parallel approaches on the one hand, as financial aid for economic growth and, on the other, as relief or survival aid for so-called socially vulnerable groups. Women were treated as passive recipients of development, rather than as participants in the development process. The primary aim of another approach, the equity approach, was to give women their fair share of the benefits of development in the public and the private spheres of life by means of top-down legislation and policies. Many development agencies, as well as developing world governments, found this to be politically unacceptable. Both groups perceived the attempt at addressing broad gender issues in society by fundamentally redistributing power as a form of intervention in the affairs of a sovereign state.202

(Northern) feminists, who focus entirely on gender bias and sexism as the root cause of the unequal impact of development on women, are criticised for overlooking "*the deep-rooted mechanisms established by Northern countries, with the participation of Southern states, mechanisms which result in a negation of basic needs ... the financing of white-elephant projects while basic infrastructure ... fail miserably; the unfair economic exchange wherein the technology of Northern countries is bought at high prices, while natural resources are purchased at low prices...*"203 The more radical view therefore emphasises that the impoverishment of women is derived mainly from (structural) domination of the South by the North. Women, according to this view, are a separate issue on the development agenda, since they argue, from a functionalist perspective, that the

involvement of women is vital for the efficiency of any development scheme. Morally, they argue that the empowerment of women is the motor force for meaningful development.204

It is in this context that International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank policies of structural adjustment have been the target of severe criticism. Loans are extended only if the debtor countries adjust the so-called `distortions' (such as support given to the poor in the form of food subsidies) in their domestic economies. External debt must be reduced by cutting domestic spending and switching to export-led strategies of growth in order to compete in the global market. Women in Africa, as in the rest of the developing world, have been harshly affected by the reduction in public spending because, as social welfare programmes in areas of health, food subsidies, education and housing are cut, women, who are traditionally the providers of the basic needs of the family, have had to carry this burden with little or no government assistance. Switching from subsistence to cash crop economies has led to the displacement of farming families and turned them into a cheap and exploited labour force. Loss of income, combined with a sharp rise in food costs, has forced women to find extra income.205 According to the UN **Human Development Report**,206 the number of women dying in childbirth in Harare, Zimbabwe, doubled in two years after an adjustment programme was implemented in 1991 and health spending was cut by a third. In The Gambia, child malnutrition increased and in Nigeria in the 1980s, many women who moved into public sector jobs after the petroleum boom of the 1960s and the 1970s lost their jobs as a result of structural adjustment.207 The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimates that a few million pounds of debt reduction in sub-Saharan Africa would save the lives of hundreds of thousands of children and thousands of women in childbirth. Over the next four years, Ethiopia will pay more than US $1 billion in debt servicing, spending four times as much on debt servicing as on health.208 A growing awareness of the impact of these policies on the poor and on women, in particular, led the World Bank (1989) to admit that "`[m]odernization' has shifted the balance of advantage against women. The legal framework and the modern social sector and producer services developed by the independent African nations (and also most externally sponsored development projects) have not served women well."209 However, instead of changing the basic structure of structural adjustment programmes, compensatory measures were merely added, as was reflected in the document entitled *Protecting the Poor during Periods of Adjustment* (1987).

Only if development is recognised as a right for all, will threats to African women's well-being and economic security be taken seriously. However, meeting basic needs as a second and a third generation right is difficult to guarantee and implement, especially if the resources available to the state are limited. The states in Africa face a major challenge if they want to pull this off, because only economic development itself can ultimately bring about a change in gender roles.

Addressing the marginalisation of women in the development process would not only help women, but would enable them to make a meaningful contribution to the overall development effort. Caroline Moser210 argues that a distinction between strategic and practical gender needs may provide useful methodological tools for the planning of an economic security framework. These two categories are also causally related. Strategic gender needs are essentially feminist as they challenge women's

subordinate position in society. In contrast, practical gender (or rather women's) needs are more tactical and usually non-feminist in nature, because they are formulated from women's concrete experience, that is, the effects of women's engendered status. In this regard, a World Bank policy report (1995) identified education, health, wage labour, agriculture, the management of natural resources and financial services as key areas where strategic demands for equal opportunity and access, together with basic needs such as food, water and shelter, must be met.211

Within the framework of an empowerment approach to development and socio-economic security, power is viewed less in terms of domination over others (i.e. a gain for women implying a loss for men), and more in terms of a base-line process through which "*the capacity of women to increase their own self-reliance and internal strength ... the right to make choices in life and to influence the direction of change through the ability to gain control over crucial material and non-material resources*"212 are being realised.

Political activism, the awakening of consciousness and popular education, together with receptive public policy and the legal acknowledgement of women's right to economic security, can play a role in preventing conservative interests from erecting barriers to female participation in policy formulation and strategic planning initiatives in the agricultural and monetised sectors of the economy. Strengthening women's organisations albeit at a grassroots level as small-scale self-help projects, peasant co-operatives, credit associations or national networks has the potential to exert political pressure on both internal and external donors to enter into partnerships with women's groups. A fair amount of government intervention213 may also be required to specifically target poor women in terms of access to land, credit, and skills. April Gordon notes that sufficient government attention to the informal sector could spur it on to become "*the fertile ground for the expansion of indigenous African entrepreneurial activity and economic growth*" by creating "*a large, female, small- to medium-business class.*"214

Given African women's precarious situation, especially in the rural areas, a jointly-run, self-reliant model of development may be the best answer in the short term. Participatory social relations, grassroots development and a decentralised approach to decision-making may best serve women's interests in the short run.

Women in Combat at Home and on the Battlefront

Whereas women's socio-economic security and physical survival in a material sense are often linked to more indirect external and structural factors such as the global economic system, their physical well-being is also directly threatened by other human beings through civil strife and the prevailing legacy of a militaristic culture.

By drawing the United States and the former Soviet Union into intervening militarily, economically and politically in Africa, the ideological dimension of the Cold War fostered a synergy between global, regional and local dynamics of security. As a result, the plight of women and their own struggle to gain equality and freedom from oppression were obscured. One ought not to forget, however, that the wars of liberation in Africa had many victims of both sexes. The end of the Cold War has not brought significant gains for African women. To some extent one may even argue that the end

of the old world order has impacted negatively on the security position of African women. The surge towards democratisation has raised great hopes for lasting peace on the continent. But this can only be achieved over an extended period of time. How can `instant' democracies in the midst of regional economic difficulty, saddled as they are with an inability to carry out the critical functions of government such as overseeing national resources, rendering basic services and maintaining law and order faced with an inhospitable global market, and lacking a deep-rooted commitment to tolerance and the protection of human rights, be expected to care about women? In many African states, such as Kenya and Cameroon, multipartyism exists only in name. Already weak states, further `emasculated' by ethnic and tribal strife, have neither the resources nor the moral and political will to secure one of the most marginalised groupings in society. Strong ethnic sentiments within deeply polarised societies justify, in part, the maintenance of military and paramilitary forces whose loyalties lie with the ruling *élite*. Amidst mutual retaliation and counter-attacks, ethnic conflict has taken on genocidal proportions in countries like Liberia, Ethiopia, Somalia, Burundi, and Rwanda. Bringing peace and stability to such areas is often hampered by the presence of criminal paramilitary activity, protection rackets, and warlordism. Even in Southern Africa, one of the few areas where superpower withdrawal has facilitated relative stability and reconciliation, cracks are beginning to emerge. Hutu militias and refugees are spilling over into Angola. Members of Zaire's former President Mobutu Sese Seko's presidential guard are crossing into Angola to join UNITA, which is currently regrouping with the aim of crossing swords with the Angolan government over the control of the Cabinda diamond fields.215

Not only are women and children among the many who die in these bloody conflicts, but civil war has the ability to displace entire communities, mostly women, children and the elderly. By 1994, it was estimated that women and children constitute eighty per cent of the 22 million internally and externally displaced Africans.216 These women are physically threatened by war, starvation, malnutrition, poor sanitary conditions, as well as rape and other forms of sexual violence. It is further important to remember that non-refugee women whose lives are at the best of times in dire straits, have to compete for scarce resources with refugees flowing into their areas. In Southern Africa, the legacy of the Cold War lives on in the form of landmines and the proliferation of light weapons such as AK-47 assault rifles. While landmines kill indiscriminately, it is also true that in the rural areas women and girls who collect water and carry wood over long distances are particularly vulnerable. The proliferation of weapons poses a real danger in areas where crime syndicates operate, thus placing women, among others, in the crossfire again.

In 1984, while receiving US $534 million for famine and development aid, Ethiopia spent $447 million on military forces in order to fight the civil war. In 1988, Angola spent sixty per cent of its government revenues on military forces.217 In the post-Cold War period, there have been sharp downward trends in conventional arms-production in developing countries such as Iran, South Africa, Iraq, Egypt, Israel, Argentina and Brazil. Generally, arms imports from less industrialised countries have also declined substantially. However, the root of the problem, namely both a deeply entrenched culture of militarism and vested interests cannot be expected to disappear overnight. Paul Dunne explains: "*The end of the Cold War has removed the justification for huge expenditure on arms by the superpowers and their*

allies. But there remain many who argue the contrary ... the vested interests within the `military industrial complex' are continually defining new threats which require the maintenance of the present force and procurement levels ... This is not to say there are no real threats ... But ... the new potential threats will not require the same level of resources as were devoted to the military during the Cold War."218 In Europe, the cuts in military spending did not lead to a noticeable peace dividend. In fact, the savings in military expenditure were reallocated to reduce budget deficits during a time of recession. In the light of the European experience and the African economic crisis, it remains dubious whether military savings can be translated into benefits for education, health, welfare, and housing. Even in South Africa, where there is a relatively high degree of political commitment towards human development, the government's Reconstruction and Development Programme is hampered by hawkish elements in the defence industry and government who wish to maintain current levels of defence spending. In June 1997, the Defence Review proposed and accepted a compromise between hawks and doves by opting for a smaller and cheaper, but better equipped defence force219 to be achieved mainly through cutting personnel rather than equipment.

The main argument of the South African National Defence Force, namely to maintain its capacity to deal with a threat should it arise, serves as a reminder on the one hand, of the real concern about diminished security if military readiness and protection from external (state and non-state) aggression are neglected. On the other hand, this statement is not only indicative of the prevalence of the militarised culture in Africa, but also has very definite implications for women in Africa. A number of internal and external factors combine to explain the tenacity of militarism. In the post-independence period, most African states adopted the Western masculinised military model as a symbol of their newly found independence. Heightened by the effects of the Cold War where the West and the former Soviet Union exported war into Africa, the military in Africa began to act as protectors of *élitist* interests in the face of popular discontent. Military spending in African countries is further encouraged by the profit-driven goals of the North, which sells surplus arms to the developing world. Such practices are also often not sufficiently highlighted and challenged. Northern feminists, in particular, take flack for their frequent silence on the effects of arms sales to the developing world. Internally, African women's organisations are faced with such a vast array of feminist issues, like the feminisation of poverty and violence against women, that selective prioritisation is inevitable. Consequently, the linkage between women's poverty and the increased military spending is often either overlooked or given less prominence. One of the ways of ensuring that funds are directed towards the civilian sector is to develop a `women's budget'. Limited efforts have been made in this regard in South Africa but it remains problematic, since the women's budget has an alternative status which defeats the object of transformation from within.

As long as African governments continue to pay lip-service to basic democratic principles, the military will remain largely a sectarian and undemocratic institution founded on the principles of the protection of dominant racial, class, ethnic, and gender groupings.

With the exception of post-apartheid South Africa, African countries have displayed an ambivalence towards the position of women in the military. It is hoped that policy guidelines with regard to equal selection and training

procedures and those pertaining to the increase of the number of women in senior positions and at all levels of decision-making, will eradicate discrimination in the South African military institution.220 But these efforts, though hailed as progressive and courageous, have been problematic. Political expediency has paid scant attention to various logistical and practical considerations such as day-care for children and family disruption when both parents are serving members and have to attend courses or be deployed away from home. Very little research, if any, has been done in the South African context regarding training men and women together, the impact upon the combat unit and the experiences of women in the liberation armies. A concomitant of this is the fact that careful research of the US experience (Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces submitted to the US President on 15 November 1992 after the Gulf War) revealed a strong case against engaging women in ground combat221 This is a complex and sensitive issue, and policy-makers and gender caucuses need to take cognisance of public opinion. Two surveys conducted by the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) and the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) in 1995 and 1996, concluded that sixty per cent of respondents (in the 1995 survey) and 48 per cent in the 1996 survey were against women in combat positions. So, while there is a small shift towards acceptance of women doing active duty in the frontlines, it is counter-balanced by respondents' overall rejection of women taking part in police patrols in dangerous areas. In spite of all this, more than three-quarters of the respondents are in favour of recruiting more women into the armed services. Only five per cent of ANC supporters were in favour of allowing women to volunteer for combat duty. This is surprising, given women's high profile in Umkhonto we Sizwe, as well as the role women leaders are currently playing at the national level.222 The black community's opposition to the deployment of women in combat positions may suggest that cultural gender stereotypes are still very strong and that, while the leadership may be enlightened, a change of attitude has not yet worked through to the grassroots level. The `discrepancy' may also suggest that the strategy of incorporating women into the armed forces to promote equal rights and/or to break the link between militarism and masculinity is well intended, but grossly oversimplistic. The matter is particularly complex in Africa society is still deeply patriarchal, the politics of the day is largely undemocratic, and militarised violence has become a way of life.

Feminist theorists have made a significant contribution towards freeing the concept of military security from its narrow association with physical and `organised' violence during war. A broader conceptualisation of violence, to include violence against women, is particularly apt in the African context. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has expressed its concern over the world-wide increase in the incidence of intentional injuries inflicted on people in general, but especially on women and children. It has therefore urged the WHO director-general to "*[i]dentify the types, magnitude and causes of violence, as well as the public health consequences by using a gender perspective in the analysis.*"223

The sharp rise in violence against women in Africa manifests itself, among others, in rape, pervasive sexism and victimisation in secondary and tertiary institutions. Rapes of Kenyan women students by high-school men are commonplace as is indicated by the case of 360 male students who raped 71 students of the dormitory of St Kizito boarding school in Meru in July 1991. Nineteen women were suffocated or trampled to death in the process. Ironically, it was the killings that incidentally exposed the

prevalence of such rapes.224 Cases from tertiary institutions in Kenya, South Africa, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Somalia and Senegal have also demonstrated a sharp rise in sexual violence against students by male students and lecturers in recent years.225 Between 1974 and 1995, the incidence of rape in South Africa increased by 149 per cent.226 During the years of political transition in South Africa (1990-1994), the incidence of rape cases increased by 42 per cent.227 While official statistics often do not accurately reflect the situation due to underestimation and/or under-reporting, in South Africa "*rapes reported between 1990 and 1995 show a gradual increase each year from 20 321 to 36 888.*"228 Between 65 and 75 million women world-wide are victims of some form of genital mutilation, such as circumcision, excision and infibulation. In Somalia, for instance, some girls' vaginas are stitched together to ensure purity until marriage.229 Since the late seventies, awareness of such barbaric practices has increased and has led to many African governments discouraging or outlawing these practices. It also led to the establishment of the Inter-African Committee to combat such practices.230 However, legislation has done little so far to change deeply entrenched mindsets.

The high incidence of violence against women in Africa can be attributed to an interconnected range of cultural/religious, economic, political, military and criminal factors. Culture or customary law is the first factor that influences the physical security of women. The subservient status of women, particularly rural women, in many African countries is deeply rooted in tradition. Through various marriage rituals, most of these women are objectified. Rituals such as *lobola* (bridewealth), (female) child pledging, and the tradition of inheriting women (being regarded as the property of fathers, uncles, husbands and older brothers) depersonalise women. These practices set the stage for inflicting harm on women such as beatings by husbands, marital rape, femicide, sexual harassment, and genital mutilation. In the name of tradition, different moral standards often apply to men and women. Wives are expected to remain sexually faithful, while their spouses are permitted to have as many girl friends and wives as they can support. McFadden remarks that "*[i]n some societies, sons are the ones who are tasked with the murder of their mothers as the only way to cleanse the family from her alleged or real sexual promiscuity. Matricide becomes the ultimate purifier polluted by uncontrolled ... female sexuality.*"231 Young girls' bodies are mutilated since premarital sex is traditionally taboo in rural Africa. Removal of the clitoris or death are some of the ways in which women are controlled or punished. Mutilation can also take place after death: "*There are still societies where a woman cannot be buried if she dies a virgin, and must be occupied by some male, so that `her spirit can rest'; [or] where her corpse has to be sexually occupied by the village fool in order that her husband, who is still living, can take another wife without being haunted by her spirit, ... None of these practices are extended to men.*"232 Educated African males are often the most hypocritical in their views about women's physical integrity. They often argue that this concept is the product of bourgeois and liberal thinking and therefore `unafrican'.233 Such a schizophrenic political position is clearly illustrated by the case in 1979 of the Kenyan parliament (168 men and four women) which considered a bill to legalise polygamy and to codify marriage standards with the aim of `safeguarding the interests' of wives and children in the case of the death of the husband. On the basis of objections to the corporal punishment section of the bill which would have denied a man his `traditional right' to beat his spouse, the bill was finally scrapped.234

A second factor related to the cultural origin of violence against women is the stranglehold that some religions, particularly Muslim radicalism, have on traditional society. According to a recent study, almost 97 per cent of Egyptian girls undergo circumcision. The many deaths resulting from botched operations by untrained barbers and midwives led to the Ministry of Health banning such practices in hospitals and clinics in 1996. But in 1997, an Egyptian court ruled that the ban was contrary to Islam.235 Furthermore, in Egypt, acid attacks are the favourite method of punishment of Islamic terrorists against young women seen as offending religious sensibilities by wearing make-up and miniskirts.236 This form of misogyny (hatred of women) has recently taken a `nasty' turn as this punishment is now being meted out by economically and sexually frustrated lovers, husbands and fathers.

The previous example ties up with a third reason for the increase in violence against women, i.e. economic factors. Maria Mies237 contends that traditional violence against women has increased as a result of the process of modernisation in the developing world which led to a breakdown of traditional social values in the home. One could speculate as to the possible connections between class and gender violence. It may be argued that gender violence flowing from economic frustration is mostly a middle-class phenomenon where changes in traditional gender roles women entering the corporate world and gaining economic power are at the root of some men's hatred. However, it is also a fact that poor women in urban areas are more vulnerable to sexual and other forms of violence due to their marginalised position in the workplace, e.g. as domestic workers.

A feminist reading of the evidence points towards political factors (structural violence) as underlying all forms of physical violence against women. In Africa, patriarchy of the state, blatant or masked by cultural and religious rituals, is the common denominator. Lenient sentences and severely limited recourse to the law render states the perpetrators of violence against women. States also act indirectly as condoners or passive bystanders through their failure to challenge the private/pubic divide in all spheres of life.

A further contributing factor to the *malaise* is the omnipotent culture of military and criminal violence in African societies. Research has also shown that countries undergoing transition to democracy are prone to a sharp increase in crime,238 because change is usually accompanied by a reshaping or transformation of the instruments of social control, such as the police and the military. Such a situation presents opportunities for organised crime to gain a foothold. In the Southern African region, countries such as South Africa, Namibia, and Mozambique are at present in the process of consolidating democracy amidst rising popular expectations and shrinking resources. The rise in the rates of sexual crime against women must be seen against this background.

It may not be easy to curtail the wave of gender violence in the short term. Legislation aimed at preventing sexual violence represents a first step in the fight for women's personal security. But the promulgation of laws and the adoption of politically correct constitutions and gender sensitive policies cannot be expected to effect social change. A complex range of variables, such as police attitudes, clarity of procedures, the involvement of non-government organisations in training, more attention to victim

empowerment and harsher sentences, among others, need to be inculcated. The law can only provide the backdrop against which a meaningful transformation of attitudes can be achieved through an evolutionary process of education and socialisation. It is furthermore important for women to critically look at rituals and what they mean. What may on the surface appear to be benign, traditional and even acceptable, could very likely be masking a disregard for women's right to security.

The Role of African Women in the Ecological Security of the Continent

The actions of human beings in their capacity as users, consumers, producers, and managers of the natural environment, impact directly upon the security of the planet. In the developing world context, the relationship between human beings and nature and between women and nature are much more intimate, in the same way as the effects of environmental degradation on women in the developing world are more immediately and materially felt than in the developed world. Overgrazing, commercial logging and the gathering of wood, land clearance, deforestation, the burning of crop residues and dung, soil erosion, sedimentation, flooding, and salinisation are some of the most critical environmental problems facing Africa.239

Women's insecure position in the development process impacts upon the ecological security of the family and the community and also consolidates their multiple roles as agents of ecological destruction, victims of ecological degradation, and managers of limited natural resources. Western-style development approaches often turn sources into resources that have value only if they are profitable. In the process, rural communities are impoverished and rural women are burdened with the responsibility of taking care of the environment when men migrate to the cities. In contrast, sustainable agriculture respects the integrity of all living entities: the earth, water, animals, seeds, people's knowledge, skills and labour.240

Poverty forces African women in their traditional role as collectors of firewood, water and food to exploit natural resources. Farming steep hillsides and thereby aggravating soil erosion and flooding during heavy rains become, in this context, a matter of economic necessity. Energy in rural Africa is mainly biomass (wood for fuel, crop residues and manure), which accounts for ninety per cent of fuel consumed in sub-Saharan Africa. The gathering of wood, for instance, is often named as a cause of deforestation. This assumption is, however, not always correct as women collect mostly dead wood. It is ironic that a woman's social value is measured in terms of how she exploits nature, how `productive' she is in discovering arable land and firewood. In Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, about 73 000 women and children make a living by collecting firewood from protected forests and selling it in the city. These people belong to the poorest section of society, are unorganised and do not (usually) participate in the planning of development policy programmes. On a more commercial level, due to rural constraints, women enter the labour market as plantation or forest industry workers, thereby contributing towards deforestation. Collecting, processing and selling forest products are often the only ways in which rural women can obtain a cash income. In Egypt's Fayoum province, 48 per cent of women work in the forest industries. In Northeast Tanzania, in at least fifty per cent of the households surveyed, one member of each household was active in the forest industry.241

There is therefore an almost symbiotic relationship between being an agent and a victim of ecological insecurity. Women are often the worst victims of ecological devastation. Collecting firewood and carrying water are strenuous and time-consuming tasks. In some parts of Africa, women spend eight hours a day collecting water. Not only are the water collection points situated far away, but the pumps are often inaccessible and difficult to operate and repair. Moreover, the quality of the water is frequently very poor, posing a general health risk, particularly among young children. According to Gwyn Kirk,[242] it is estimated that 40 000 children die each day mainly in Africa and Asia from malnutrition and the lack of clean water. Girls start at a very young age to carry water. This unremitting burden can distort their pelvis, making the recurrent cycles of pregnancy and childbirth more dangerous.[243]

Since women in Africa are often seen as part of the environmental problem, their role as conservationists and managers of natural resources is often overlooked. As the primary producers of agricultural products, as those who control the storage and the use of water in large parts of Africa, women are ideally placed to play a leading role in the process of sustainable development. Most African women in rural communities experience and interact with the natural environment on a daily basis. These women have an expert knowledge of local water conditions and indigenous plants for medicinal use and of seasonal conditions for growing crops. Such skills are passed on from generation to generation. Their holistic understanding of the intimate relationship between environmental, socio-cultural and economic issues such as population growth is demonstrated in the West African Sahel where women, through their involvement in the control of desertification, played a pivotal role in the change of male attitudes toward large families.[244] In Africa in particular, behaviour towards the environment is quite overtly culture-driven. In Mali, for instance, only women have access to the Karite tree and its resources. Many ecologically sound development projects have been organised by women, of which a prominent initiative is the establishment of the aforestation movement called the National Council of Women of Kenya's Green Belt Movement in 1977.[245] Especially at community level, women's networks can rally around natural resource management and conservation.

Women's contribution to sustainable ecological practices must be recognised and rewarded through, among others, policy decisions on local, national and regional level. Addressing women farmers' economic insecurity by providing appropriate technological assistance and credit facilities are some of the ways in which the prospects of environmentally sound agricultural practices may be enhanced. In order to ensure that women's needs are met on all the above-mentioned levels, sufficiently stable communication/interaction between women's groups and structures is a prerequisite.

With this in mind, the focus shifts to the issue of the institutionalisation of security as a means of securing women's position both horizontally and vertically. A brief analysis of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) is undertaken with the aim of exploring its potential as a regional pillar of human security.

Institutionalisation of Security: A Case Study of SADC

With regard to the institutionalisation of security in feminist terms, women

essentially have three mutually inclusive choices. The first option is to rely on the African state's dubious capacity to maintain and provide security. For this alternative to become viable, states will have to shed their ambivalent position regarding the prominence of women's rights in relation to cultural rights and traditional practices (customary law). (Many influential, but conservative women would also argue that the best avenue towards security for women lies in strict adherence to cultural norms.) The state can make a contribution by committing itself to the increased political representation of women in areas of traditional security such as foreign policy and defence, but also to raise women's profile in the areas of advanced economics, trade and finance. The intervention of women in such positions would then be determined by how well they themselves understand the holistic nature of human security and how gender impacts upon it.

A second option would be to adopt a less ambitious agenda for change by working through localised grassroots associations and non-government organisations as agents of civil society. While references to the breakdown of formal government and the impotence of civil society may sound like clichés, they certainly reflect the current realities. In South Africa in the post-apartheid era limited resources have paralysed many non-government organisations. In addition, their leadership has been swallowed up by the government which now acts as the main conduit of international aid.246 Thus, civil society is forced to become a reluctant bedfellow of government, and more often than not, this has led to women's interests being under- or misrepresented.

A third alternative, namely the establishment of regional security, was born out of the desire to strike a balance between the national sovereignty of states and a commitment to regional co-operation built upon a supranational sense of responsibility and accountability. For this purpose, an institutional framework for security co-operation needs to be developed.

The current emphasis on multidimensional human security is reflected in the objectives of SADC. The organisation has committed itself to the principles of political security such as the "*sovereign equality of all Member States; solidarity, peace and security; human rights, democracy, and the rule of law; equity, balance and mutual benefit; peaceful settlement of disputes.*"247 The regional economic development arm of the organisation aims to address economic and development security by concentrating on economic growth, the alleviation of poverty, support of the socially disadvantaged and the enhancement of the standard and quality of life within the context of sustainable utilisation of resources (ecological security).248 The security arm of SADC, the Organ for Politics, Defence and Security expresses similar sentiments. References to collective security, mutual defence and non-violent methods of conflict resolution (mediation, preventive diplomacy) against the backdrop of the promotion of "*the political, economic, social and environmental dimensions of security*"249 all reflect the change of priorities.

Commendable as these holistic objectives may be in the long term, a feminist reading reveals that the organisation still has a long way to go in both theory and practice with regard to the `insemination' of feminist values into a regional security framework. To SADC's credit, however, one must point out that it was wise enough not to set up a separate women's unit, since that would have given women even less power in terms of strategic

bargaining and decision-making.

While the decision to split the organisation into two wings, namely development and security, was clearly motivated by historic, bureaucratic and pragmatic reasons, and while the interrelatedness of development and human security250 is recognised throughout, the decision, from a feminist perspective, still does not seem plausible. From the above, it appears as if human security is the means to economic development. Such a dichotomy is artificial and will inevitably lead to divergent interests on the level of planning and implementation. Signs of this are already evident in the fact that formal horizontal interaction between the two arms mentioned earlier only exists on the summit level where the chair is located. Vertical overlap between sectors within one entity, coupled with crosswise or lateral mechanisms may be one way to facilitate the integration of the dimensions of security.251 However, as it stands, a sectoral or fragmented approach to security within the organisation could prevent meaningful engagement with women's security needs. A reason for this is the fact that, without structural communication or fusion, concrete mechanisms on how to integrate women's issues into the two arms will remain beyond reach. The gender blindness in the terminology does not bode well for women's security. Categorising women by implication as part of the so-called "*socially disadvantaged*"252 smacks of gender neutrality.

Another concerning factor is the lack of consensus on the political values espoused in the organisation's manifesto. The lack of a sense of shared responsibility towards the protection of human rights and the promotion of democracy among member states not only impacts upon the kinds of methods used to deal with such issues, but also jeopardises women's rights. Malan and Cilliers253 propose the establishment of an Institute for Democracy and Human Rights to foster a common democratic system and ethic. The feminist cause stands to benefit from such a think tank in two ways. Firstly, it may assist in transforming the institution from within, thus inculcating feminist values and more evenly balanced approaches to peace through a process of an open exchange of ideas, informed debate and a relationship of mutual trust between SADC members and the institute. In addition it could also counter another rather serious flaw in the organisation. Despite SADC's commitment in Article 23 of its treaty "*to involve fully, the peoples of the Region and non-government organisations*",254 no room is allowed for any formal liaison with non-state actors in the areas of human rights research and early warning. Civil society at large, as well as women's voices, are therefore effectively silenced. Regularised communication between the organs of SADC, researchers, academics, security specialists and feminists can therefore help to strengthen democracy.

The flaws in SADC indicate that national interest is still the main driving force behind regional co-operation. A sectoral approach to security is adopted which makes the organisation more of a security regime than a security community.14 The stated objectives of SADC and the security organ, however, indicate that there is a willingness (though still rather disparate) to work towards establishing a security community where the security of one depends on the security of all. In such a scenario, the region, rather than the individual states, is the primary referent of security. A regional identity or common value system is fostered where collective security really means a commitment to mutual defence, and civil society is accorded its rightful place as an equal partner. Evidence shows that, at

least on paper, the seeds for co-operation have been sown.

CONCLUSION

The new world order has opened up room for gender in reflections on the security issue. But sadly, this is still largely a contested area. This article has focused on the dual aspects of this dissension, proceeding from the general to the specific case of Africa. Although substantial progress has been made to shed the military ballast encumbering the security concept, many of the changes have not come about as a result of a fundamental commitment to feminist principles. In this light, it was therefore argued that a feminist perspective on security may not only enhance our understanding of international developments, but could also offer alternative solutions to the issue on a global scale.

The feminist epistemology, though extremely diverse, makes a valuable contribution to the security debate because it looks at security through the lens of gender, follows an agenda for change and provides a reconstructed vision of human security. Its critical agenda forces disciplines such as International Relations, Strategic Studies and Peace Studies to rethink their respective paradigms fundamentally. The statist discourse with its masculinist underpinnings, the phallocentric quality of strategic debate and the trappings of gender neutrality in the deliberations on peace all come under fire. The feminist conceptualisation of security redefines the notion of `comprehensive security' by expanding the emphasis to include an analysis of patriarchy as one of the roots of insecurity. Feminists further give new meaning to the concept `collective security' by drawing on the interdependent, collaborative approaches which are characteristic of women. Within the triad of `research-action-education' the following elements are united: positive peace *versus* structural violence; participatory methods; and non-hierarchical learning structures.

Feminist theory on security has a particular relevance for the developing world, since both women and the developing world act from a position of inequality in relation to men and the developed world, respectively. The case of Africa shows that gender permeates and informs all dimensions of current areas of insecurity. Political security in Africa and elsewhere in the developing world can only be achieved if women's rights (both in the public and the private domain) are acknowledged without cultural bias and hypocrisy. Increased political representation will have no impact as long as female leaders themselves are unclear about how gender impacts upon women's security. The women's movement in Africa is also doomed to failure if it is not coupled with an explicit agenda for change. Socio-economic security underpins all other forms of security. Feminists apply the concept of structural violence as an analytical tool to link underdevelopment, social and economic security and women's inequality in Africa. It helps them to see how historically and culturally imposed divisions have contributed to women's economic insecurity. True to the holistic nature of the feminist analysis, it also highlights the complex cyclical relationship between factors such as poverty and food security; health, education and employment, famine, environmental quality and war, and poverty and military spending as they impact on women. The socio-economic quality of life for most women in Africa is very poor. Only in the area of education have marginal gains been made. In addition, their situation is aggravated by short-sighted, gender-insensitive efforts at development. Research suggests that one of the ways in which women's

insecurity may be alleviated in this regard is to distinguish between long term strategic gender needs and the short term tactical needs of women. Only if development is fully engendered, does it have any hope of not being endangered. Political activism and receptive policies should also be considered.

In a purely military sense, the feminist contribution grapples with the question of whether women should be included in the military, whether they should be excluded from combat, to what extent women's inclusion might have an effect on security policy and how human security in general is perceived. Controversial arguments emphasising biological theses at the expense of sociological ones and *vice versa*, run the risk of essentialising women's experience. It is therefore maintained that this debate would be better served by a multifaceted perspective wherein patriarchy is seen as one of many explanations. The inconclusivity of many research findings invites further investigation. In Africa in particular, research on the connection between attitudes to peace and conflict and gender bias is presently lacking. One of the most valuable contributions of the feminist perspective is that it redefines military security to include all forms of physical violence against women. Gender serves as the analytical tool by means of which a connection between institutional or indirect violence and physical or direct violence is established. The increase in gender violence in Africa may be attributed in part to the prevalence of traditional cultural values, fundamentalist religious practices, the economic consequences of the process of modernisation, structural or institutional violence, and an omnipotent culture of military and criminal violence. Legislation can only provide a backdrop to the long process of popular socialisation in this regard. It is, therefore, ultimately up to women themselves to be critical about rituals which may appear to be benign.

A feminist reconceptualisation of security provides an enriching insight into the relationship between man, woman and nature, and drives the fact home that any attempt at holistic thinking has to include an environmentally sensitive approach. The article concludes that women's multiple and symbiotic roles (as agents, victims, and managers) in the ecological security of Africa are often overlooked. African women have an expert ecological knowledge which needs to be shared *via* community networks.

Finally, a case study of SADC is used to examine the prospect of building a truly holistic and comprehensive understanding of human security in a regional context. While there is a definite willingness to foster a common culture, it still lacks an integrated gender perspective which can be translated into practice. Without that, it is argued, change from within remains a pipe-dream which will not only impact negatively on women's security, but on that of men too.

The prospect for a truly non-gendered perspective on the African continent (and elsewhere) is still fairly remote. But as the countdown towards the 21st century begins, there is real hope that women's visions of global security are increasingly being recognised. Through analysis of gender and its impact on the security of men and women, we can move toward the creation of a truly secure world.

Footnotes:

1. B Emecheta, **The Joys of Motherhood**, Heinemann, Oxford, 1979, p. 224.

2. Sandra Harding defines gender as "*the analytical tool through which the division of social experience along gender lines tends to give men and women different conceptions of themselves, their activities and beliefs, and the world around them.*" See S Dalby, *Gender and Critical Geopolitics: Reading Security Discourse in the New World Disorder*, **Environment and Planning D: Society and Space**, 12, 1994, pp. 595-612.

3. A S Runyan, *The `State' of Nature: A Garden Unfit for Women and Other Living Things*, in V S Peterson (ed.), **Gendered States: Feminist (Re)Visions of International Relations Theory**, Lynne Rienner, Boulder, 1992a, pp. 135-136.

4. D J Dunn, *Peace Research versus Strategic Studies*, in K Booth (ed.), **New Thinking About Strategy and International Security**, Harper Collins Academic, London, 1991, pp. 56-71.

5. H Solomon & J Cilliers, *People, Poverty and Peace*, in H Solomon & J Cilliers (eds.), **People, Poverty and Peace: Human Security in Southern Africa**, ISS Monograph Series, 4, Institute for Security Studies, Halfway House, May 1996, pp. 5-6.

6. See B Buzan, **People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era**, Harvester Wheatsheaf, New York, 1991.

7. Solomon & Cilliers, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

8. *Ibid.*; B S Klein, **Strategic Studies and World Order: The Global Politics of Deterrence**, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994, p. 34.

9. Buzan, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 187.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 54.

12. G Sørensen, *Individual Security and National Security: The State Remains the Principal Problem*, **Security Dialogue**, 27(4), December 1996, pp. 371 & 384.

13. K Booth & P Vale, *Security in Southern Africa: After Apartheid, beyond Realism*, **International Affairs**, 71(2), April 1995, p. 293.

14. H Hudson, *Resource-based Conflict: Water (In)security and its Strategic Implications*, in H Solomon (ed.), **Sink or Swim?: Water, Resource Security and State Co-operation**, ISS Monograph Series, 6, Institute for Security Studies, Halfway House, October 1996, p. 5.

15. **Africa Recovery**, 8(1/2), April-September 1994, p. 17.

16. A Roberts, *New Peace Studies and Old International Relations*, in E Kaye (ed.), **Peace Studies: The Hard Questions**, Rex Collings, London, 1987, pp. 24 & 27.

17. M Howard, *Peace Studies: The Hard Questions*, in Kaye, *ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

18. United Nations, **Women: Challenges to the Year 2 000**, United Nations, New York, 1991, p. 66.

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67.

20. Klein, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

21. V McKay, *Feminism and Sociological Theory*, in V McKay (ed.), **Social Theory**, Lexicon, Johannesburg, 1994, p. 342; Dalby, *op. cit.*, p. 597.

22. McKay, *ibid.*, p. 342; R Grant & K Newland (eds.), **Gender and International Relations**, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1991, p. 4.

23. B A Reardon, **Women and Peace: Feminist Visions of Global Security**, State University of New York Press, New York, 1993, p. 17; McKay, *ibid.*, p. 343; Peterson, 1992a, *op. cit.*, p. 6; V S Peterson, *Transgressing Boundaries: Theories of Knowledge, Gender and International Relations*, **Millennium: Journal of International Studies**, 21(2), 1992b, p. 191.

24. *Ibid.*

25. G Ritzer, **Sociological Theory**, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1992, pp. 456-481.

26. See C Adcock, *Fear of `Other': The Common Root of Sexism and Militarism*, in P McAllister (ed.), **Reweaving The Web of Life: Feminism and Nonviolence**, New Society Publishers, Philadelphia, 1982, pp. 209-219. This contribution offers a controversial, but thought-provoking psychoanalytic explanation of how both sexism and militarism grow from the fear and hatred of the `other'. The biological mother subconsciously communicates to her son that he is different from her, thus explaining why the boy cannot identify with the mother.

27. Ritzer, *op. cit.*, pp. 459-461.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 462; McKay, *op. cit.,* p. 343; F P Williams III & M D McShane, **Criminological Theory**, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1994, p. 237.

29. Williams & McShane, *ibid.*, p. 238; Ritzer, *op. cit.*, p. 468; McKay, *ibid.*, pp. 351-353.

30. McKay, *ibid.*, p. 346; Ritzer, *op. cit.*, p. 470; Williams & McShane, *op. cit.*, pp. 237-238.

31. Ritzer, *op. cit.,* p. 471.

32. McKay, *op. cit.*, pp. 348-349.

33. Ritzer, *op. cit.*, p. 474.

34. McKay, *op. cit.*, pp. 346-347.

35. J A Tickner, **Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspectives on Achieving Global Security**, Columbia University Press, New York, 1992, p. 15; Williams & McShane, op. cit., p. 239; McKay, *op. cit.*, pp. 353-355.

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37. McKay, *op. cit.*, p. 355; Ritzer, *op. cit.*, pp. 480-481.

38. As discussed in McKay, *op. cit.*, p. 360.

39. Tickner, 1992, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

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43. Dalby, *op. cit.*, p. 595.

44. Peterson, *op. cit.*, pp. 185, 186 & 190; Peterson, 1992a, *op. cit.*, p. 7; Tickner, 1992, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

45. Peterson, 1992b, *op. cit.,* p. 193.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 192.

47. Dalby, *op. cit.*, p. 604.

48. R Grant, *The Sources of Gender Bias in International Relations Theory*, in Grant & Newland, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

49. United Nations, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

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51. A Gouws, *Women in Political Science: (An)other Look at the Discipline,* **Politikon**, 20(2), December 1993, pp. 5-24.

52. J van der Westhuizen & R Sattlegger, **Political Science in South Africa: A Biographical Directory**, Centre for International and Comparative Politics, University of Stellenbosch, Stellenbosch, 1994.

53. ACCORD, **Annual Report**, African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes, Durban, 1996, p. 13.

54. Peterson, 1992a, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

55. Peterson, 1992b, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

56. Grant & Newland, *op. cit.*, pp. 2 & 5.

57. Tickner, 1992, *op. cit.,* pp. 29 & 43.

58. *Ibid.*, pp. 48-49. The adoption of a westernised masculinist mindset of state formation by the former colonies is particularly ironic as the colonised peoples were often described as being effeminate, their leadership unpredictable `like women'. Masculinity was the prerogative of the white man.

59. See references to `motherland'.

60. M Tessler & I Warriner, *Gender, Feminism and Attitudes toward International Conflict: Exploring Relationships with Survey Data from the Middle East*, **World Politics**, 49(2), January 1997, p. 255.

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66. *Ibid.*; Reardon, 1993, *op. cit.*, p.128.

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