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Let me make just a short introductory comment that can focus you while you listen to my shortened thoughts. Fall 2008—new suicide bombers, a god-fearing vice presidential candidate in the U.S. who says “that the U.S. sent troops to fight in the Iraq war on a `task that is from God””. And she is the mommy of us all—five children and counting. There could not be a more important moment to discuss the newest new gendering and sexing of militarism for the globe and its newest wars.

I have one very big idea here—that this just might be the historical moment in which all the historical changes of genders and races has met a crucial point—where existing meanings are so fluid that their static and power-filled meanings are in true crisis. It is a moment when the excessive and endless greed of global capitalism actually trumps the importance of traditional patriarchy and racism for a more modern misogyny and racializing of color. Think female suicide bombers, female presidents across the globe, females in top ranking military positions, girl-soldiers, millions of dagonmei in China, and billions of biological mothers—in all colors. Let me now give some background for this curious comment.

Since September 11, 2001 there is a female face to the wars on/of terror but the meaning of this is not self-evident. Females assist in the orchestration of the U.S. wars of/on terror and therefore women have more complicity in these wars. Yet, there is nothing more undemocratic than war so it is highly unlikely that women’s presence can mean anything good. No one’s rights—especially not women’s—can be met in war; or by waging war.

Females, although still a minority, are more present in militaries, as government officials, as suicide bombers, as soldiers in third-world countries than in earlier times. There are more women being militarized for and against imperial power. Today there are both more women at these sites of power, or what were sites of power, fighting on behalf of the powerful, *and* they are more visible. This visibility is unusual because females are more often than not out of view—made absent—silenced—rather than seen. So the fact that women appear more present needs attention.

Condoleezza Rice wields power, but not as a woman—whatever this might really mean today—and not for women and their rights—but for an imperial democracy that destroys women’s equality and racial justice. Imperial democracy uses racial diversity

and gender fluidity to disguise itself—and females and people of color become its decoys. Condi's black skin and female body operate to cloud and obfuscate. Imperial democracy mainstreams women's rights discourse into foreign policy and militarizes women for imperial goals. Imperial democracy creates women combatants both inside and outside the military and Laura Bush authorizes this process as civilian in chief. My point is not that nothing has changed, or that these changes do not matter, but rather that these changes do not mean what they seem to mean

War bespeaks exceptional circumstances and is also naturalized as part of the human condition: there will always be war(s). War is then awful and normal; universal and yet unique. Each war is both similar and different to a previous one; it is both changed and static. The Vietnam War is different than the Afghan and Iraq wars, and not. Each war is defined by and defines anew its racialized gender power relations. And these power relations are defined by early global capitalism and anti-communism in Vietnam, and U.S. unipolar capitalism and anti-terrorist rhetoric in Afghanistan and Iraq.

More than a quarter-century of feminist activism partly initiated by the Vietnam War defines new trajectories today. Sexual politics and the sexual/racial/gender systems of violence have new exposure and visibility because militarism and militarization redefine both masculinity and femininity, alongside a hyper-sexuality, and neo-racism that construct new-old racialized gender formations. Although women's bodies that birth have also always been maimed in war, today's wars make this more complex with more females as actors in war. The newest technologies of war, alongside feminist activism and the demands of global capital de-essentialize and de-naturalize the earth mother.

I am therefore focused on the re-sexing of gender in the past quarter century to better understand this stage of highly militarized global capital. Post-'89, with the fall of the Soviet Union and the revolutions in Eastern Europe, ushered in this stage of U.S. unipolar power. The start of the Gulf Wars in '91 solidified the militarist phase of U.S. global power: more surveillance, more privatization, more concentration of power, more military expenditure. Sept 11, 2001 authorized this militarism in its heightened form and began the slide from neo-liberal to fascistic democracy. With the re-justification of this militarized frame—be it the growth of prison facilities or the activation of the national guard and reserve units or declaring code orange and red alerts for the civilian population-- racialized gendered configurations are being re-articulated in established but revisionist form.

re-militarizing daily life

A culture of pre-emptive strikes and unilateral power plays out on both the battlefield and everyday life in the U.S. An aggressive self-absorption justifies a heightened individualism on the part of most successful people. And our leaders think they do not need to heed international law that defends against torture, or need to sign treaties to help protect the environment. The U.S. controlled 32 percent of the world trade in weapons in 1987; and in 1997 controlled 43 percent. And, of the 140 nations it gave or sold arms to in 1995, ninety percent did not have democratic elections or were known for human rights abuses.¹

The U.S. has the most advanced arsenal on the face of the earth and is becoming more and more conditioned by a military style of discipline because of this. The presence of our military—at home and abroad—is too significant to not affect the very culture that surrounds, and is surrounded by it. The U.S. spent more on its military—\$329 billion in 2002-- than China, Russia, Japan, Iraq, North Korea, and all other N.A.T.O. countries combined.²

The U.S. also spends greater amounts on its prisons—much more than it does on its schools. There has been an eighty-one percent increase in the number of prisons from 1990 to 2000. C.W. Mills' military-industrial complex is now termed a prison-industrial complex by Angela Davis. She states that there are at present more women in prison in California than there were women in prison in the whole country in the 1970's. In 2003 there were approximately 2 million prisoners in the U.S. and about 1 and a half million people in the military.³ Our militarized culture spends 52 percent of the federal budget on the military and 6 percent on health.⁴

War is our cultural metaphor. We war on drugs, on AIDS, on cancer, on poverty, on terrorism. But `war' as metaphor obfuscates. Its language is as deceptive as its end goals. War is a danger to democracy because it justifies and therefore normalizes secrecy, deception, surveillance, and killing. This mentality of war spills out into everyday day life. The games our children play naturalize war at home while U.S. troops in Iraq use these games for training and relaxation. The popular "Play Station" is a recruiting tool—one thinks one can play with war, be in war and have fun, be warlike and win.⁵ Meanwhile in `real' life Governor Jeb Bush supports the use of a computer cyber-matrix program that has marked thousands of citizens as potential terrorists.⁶

Cynthia Enloe writes of militarization as a process that impacts and pervades everyday life, from the site of the military. The actual military is only a small, even if central aspect of this disciplining and regulating of social relations. Hierarchy, surveillance, authoritarianism, and deference, become a part of the way people live both inside and outside military barracks.⁷ Homeland Security defines civilian psyches in militarist fashion. Code orange and red demand a kind of unconscious consciousness of fear. They authorize the need of a security state; a war of a different sort—the kind you might not see, or feel first-hand, but is there. The 2004 presidential election was embedded in these militarist frames: calling forth particular memories of the Vietnam War to construct the new heroes and patriots of today.

Enloe worries that militarized culture mystifies its own significance by focusing on the military *as* the location for militarized ways of thinking/living. She argues that by focusing on the military as the site of war-like life we normalize "the militarized civilian sites". She insightfully argues that the newest way that militarization is "camouflaged" is by presenting women's service in the military as though it were connected to women's liberation.⁸ Instead of liberation, women's entry into the military is better understood as the newest stage of militarizing global capitalism. In this post-`89 era the constructions of racialized patriarchy are being re-formed once again. New-old constructions of the dutiful wife, the black mammy, the welfare mother, the soccer mom, the professional woman, are being refashioned for and with militarization. More women are forced to join the military out of economic necessity; and more non-military women have been disciplined by the demands of a privatized public sphere that restructures gender with its intensified demands.

Women in the military may make the military look more democratic as though women now have the same choices as men, but the choices are not truly the same. So this may be a more modern military, if modern means changed, but it is not more democratic or egalitarian. Actually, it is because there is less democracy, if democracy means choice and opportunity, that more women have joined the military. At present, this stage of patriarchy often requires women to join the army in order to find a paying job or a way to get an education. The military—given this militarist stage of global capital—is a main arena where working and middle class women can find paid work; like domestic labor was for black women in the 1950's. Given the structural changes of labor in the global economy marriage no longer affords most women—no matter their race or class—life without paid labor. These women are looking for ways to get medical and housing benefits, educational resources, career training. These are significant shifts in women's needs and lives, and in the institutions of marriage and family, that cut across racial and class divides.

According to Enloe whereas women made up only 1 percent of the Soviet army, in post-communist Russia they made up 12 percent of the armed forces. In the U.S. during the Vietnam War women made up 2 percent of military personnel and by 1997 constituted 13 percent. As of September 2003, 213,059 women made up 15 percent of the women serving in active duty. Eighteen percent of new army enlistees were women, 17 percent of the navy, 7 percent of the marines, and 23 percent of the air force. Almost all say they joined for the education and job training. Over 50 percent of enlisted women are from ethnic minorities: 33.2 percent African American, 1.8 percent Native American, 4.1 percent Asian American, and 10.2 percent Hispanic.⁹ The presence of women is also growing in the militaries of Croatia, Mexico, Jordan, Argentina, Chile, Japan, and South Korea.¹⁰ In Iraq, one in seven service members and one in three in the army's military intelligence personnel is female.¹¹

Young women make up a near critical mass in the Maoist movement in Nepal. This highly militarist movement is defined by male leadership and female combatants. Nearly 30 percent of the Maoist movement is women and many of them find their military involvement both a problematic and liberating opportunity. These women are surrounded by domestic and state violence so that the 'People's War' gives them new and different options. These militarized struggles reproduce and unsettle stereotypic gender relations. Their involvements are thought to be in some sense emancipatory and yet constraining as the patriarchal relations of their country are both in play and subverted by their mobilization.¹²

It is important to note that the militarization of women's lives is complex and disorderly. The military has offered women entry before as a place of survival. Japanese American women signed up for the military during World War II to prove their loyalty and to further their education. Brenda Moore writes about the Japanese American women who served during World War II. Many of these women saw military service as an "avenue of upward mobility", especially given their minority racial status. Citizenship was offered to immigrant groups in exchange for military service. Six thousand Nisei—children of Japanese immigrants, born in the U.S.—trained to serve with the military in the Pacific. "An estimated 5000 Nisei men were on active duty before the U.S. declared war on Japan." After declaring war, most of these individuals were "denied the very rights they were willing to fight and die for" given the injustices of American racism. In

the end, over 100,000 people of Japanese descent were `relocated'; approximately 80,000 of these persons were born in the U.S. Some Nisei women in the end entered the military straight from internment camps. And this was then used as a `show' of democracy: the U.S. army will open itself to even those of "enemy extraction". Nisei women broke the norms of both U.S. culture in general and their more private lives. Their desires were various: to use their particular skills for the war effort, to prove their loyalty as U.S. citizens, to see the world.¹³

African-American women suffered extreme stigma and discrimination in the military during WWII. There was a racial quota of 10 percent and a policy of racial segregation was practiced. African-American women were segregated into an all black platoon and were isolated from their white counterparts. Many of these women were trained professionally but were assigned menial tasks simply because of their race. Given this segregation there were African American Women Army Corps officers to lead their segregated units but there were no officers among the Nisei women. All Japanese American women remained in the enlisted ranks.¹⁴ These women served their country—both coffee and war, and traces of patriarchy continue as gender is reformed and modernized for the new needs of combat. Racial segregation is now illegal and gender hierarchies are nuanced so patriarchal privilege is camouflaged but not less present. And the nuances are embedded in inadequate knowledge about the varied actual lives of women in the military across the globe.

Hundreds of thousands of women fought for Germany, the Soviet Union and Britain during WWII; and many of them engaged in combat. According to D'Ann Campbell approximately 800,000 women served in the Red Army and over half of them were in front line duty units. The Soviets could not afford the luxury of the non-combat/combat classification that preoccupied the Americans, British and the Germans.¹⁵ A lack of sufficient `man'-power drew women into combat, not democratic priorities. Women soldiers died in hand-to-hand combat in Okinawa—while necessity drew women to combat roles rather than a feminist quest for `equality'. Slightly more than 200,000 women serve in the enlisted ranks in the U.S. military at present. Necessity should not be misunderstood here for progress, or democracy, or feminisms.

Women in worn torn countries live this new militarized life sometimes as combatants but more often as refugees and displaced people. Countries like Palestine, Israel, Sudan, Iraq, and Afghanistan do not have neat divides between civilian and military realms. Private life and familial relations take on militarized form as the usual divides of home and battle are smashed. Sexed and gender relations are remixed in war alongside the remix of militarized zones like the U.S.

militarizing gender

First-world countries get to make the distinction between militarized life and war more readily than countries elsewhere. War-torn countries live without the luxury of this divide. Gender violence in India and the Sudan is publicized and put in view; as both horrific and ordinary. Gender violence and the gendering of violence appear as one process. Gender violence can be practiced against males and females which both loosens the grip of traditional meanings of gender, while also reinforcing them. Public rape and publicized gender humiliation are the newest forms of very old practices.

People in the U.S. were horrified by September 11, 2001 because they felt a bit of what war feels like up closer than usual. People in the U.S. with loved ones in Iraq and Afghanistan also feel a bit of war up close. But most of us do not consciously feel the wars in the sense that we do not walk around with a constant aching and fear. Yet, more women in the U.S. are away at war. As such, women have joined the once male landscape in greater numbers. These changes alter gendered relations both inside and outside the military. Women are mobilized for and by combat. It remains to be seen exactly what of established gender remains in these newest wars and how war will change with these newly gendered constructions.¹⁶

Peace is often identified with females; and war with males. Because war unsettles previously gendered life, space itself is reconstructed. The language of war—home front, battle zone, combatant, civilian—challenges established notions of home, safety, and privacy. Death creates new necessity. So many men lost their lives in the Rwandan massacres that women now lead most of their local counsels. In Iraq, so many men have been taken into custody by U.S. forces—more than 10,000 men and boys--women now do men's work. They till their fields and guard their homes.¹⁷

Much of war is covert. Yet, war itself is an overt and violent form of politics. War is seeable, and in view; even if not knowable. Because the obscene inequities and injustices of global capitalism are more visible today, more crushing systems of power are needed to protect it. The U.S. protects itself with its fists while democracy is still trotted out as a defense and its women in khaki¹⁸ are used as decoy. Meanwhile the protection of women along with children—as civilians--is simultaneously used as a justification for war despite the fact that ninety-five percent of the casualties of war are civilians and the majority of these are women. These civilians are also militarized as refugees, as wage-laborers, as haulers of wood and water, as mothers.

Women who enter the military enter a masculinist bastion. Military culture seeks to stabilize and punish the dangerous female. At the U.S. Naval Academy a nightly ritual is practiced in which the new plebe says, goodnight Jane Fonda; and the entire company responds, “good night bitch”.¹⁹ Domestic violence is found to be three to five times higher in military couples than civilian ones. Men who have been in combat are four times more likely to be physically abusive. In 2002 five military wives were brutally killed by their husbands upon returning from Iraq to Fort Bragg.²⁰ Before the September 11, 2001 attacks, the Miles Foundation—a non-profit agency in Connecticut that deals with abuse in the military—received about 75 calls a month from military families reporting domestic violence and sexual abuse. After 9/11 it starting receiving 150 calls a week. Eight soldiers after returning from Iraq committed suicide; another drowned his wife in the bathtub.²¹

War supposedly exposes the evilness that lurks beneath the surface, that gives purpose and trivializes everything else. War is both desired and despised. It is an “orgy of death”, destruction and violence. As such war seduces. Christopher Hedges describes and authorizes this Hobbesian version of life, and death as one of male conquest. Men are driven by eros, their flirtation with life, and thanatos, death.²² Thomas Hobbes' world was a world of men—women were missing. War does not give me meaning. Nor do I think war gives most people—male or female--meaning. Hobbes was not right about most men or women. Yet, the naturalization and normalization of war is maintained by this notion of a mythic human nature, which is also constructed as male.

It is dangerous to think that war is inevitable, and intrinsic to human nature. I do not think genes are simply nature nor do I think human nature is natural at all. The concept of nature is truly political at the start. It is a construct that reifies the needs of those who need us to fight their wars. In this techno-masculinist world that we inhabit we are shown war as the drama of manhood. Sometimes it is named the “oedipal compulsion”, and the “psychic quest for the father”. Yet over 120,000 dutiful sons who fought the Vietnam War came home to commit suicide; two times more than were killed in the war.²³

Gender naturalizes war; and war is gendered. Masculinity and femininity are set as normal oppositions. And the sexual body itself is left silenced. The very process of birthing is most often not in view, or is trivialized, or is fantasized.²⁴ None of these options help real live women. This process silences and obfuscates the female body and leaves it unreadable. War, in Hobbesian fashion starts from this mythic place. Women are absent giving birth; men kill. Or as Klaus Theweleit says “War ranks high among the male ways of giving birth”.²⁵ Women then are supposedly peaceful; and men make war. The essentialist argument assigns these categories in nature while masking the artificial gendering of wars.

Women are sexed in particular ways and birth in a world that demands that they nurture as well. If one gives up the fixedness of both sex and gender then we are left to examine the changeability of sexing gender and gendering sex. This does not erase sex or gender but rather demands an accounting of their politicized contextual meanings. So some women may look to preserve life rather than smash it but many females will enter the military. This means that the practices of gender will change even though the authorized essentialized views of femininity and manliness can remain static.

War institutionalizes sexual differentiation while also undermining it. War demands opposition, differentiation, and the othering of peoples. The privileging of masculinity underscores all other processes of differentiation. War is a process by which masculinity is both produced and reproduced. The heroic warrior is the standard.²⁶ Everyone else is a pussy, a wimp, a fag. It is why the defeat of the U.S. in Vietnam was viewed as emasculating. The defeat required a re-articulation of gender as much as refocusing of foreign policy. As recently as 2003 the newspaper The Blade had an expose of the Tiger Forces—the elite unit that “savaged civilians in Vietnam”. This highly trained unit of paratroopers, in 1967, cut off ears and scalps of their prisoners and donned them as necklaces of triumph.²⁷ It is now well documented that U.S. troops maimed and raped innocents in a series of Vietnamese villages. Yet, the Tiger Forces are still fighting U.S. wars leading some to say that the only difference between the Afghan and Vietnam wars is that Afghanistan is brown, and Vietnam was green.²⁸ One is left to ponder how the ghoulish war atrocities in Vietnam are a part of the Tiger Forces strategy in Iraq.

Vietnam continues to be a reminder of the unsettling de-masculinization of the U.S. in defeat. It is why Jane Fonda is still hated for her anti-war activity and remains nothing but pussy to defenders of this war. She sadly continues to apologize for her anti-war activism, but to no avail. Gertrude Stein has it right when she said that patriarchal is supposed to be the same as patriotic and the patriotic woman is supposed to be silent and supportive, not subversive.²⁹

Post-Vietnam politics turned to re-masculinizing the U.S. military for global capitalism. The U.S. defeat in Vietnam was used to justify the down-sizing and

privatizing of the `feminized' inept government. A leaner and meaner state is what global capitalists wished for along with Donald Rumsfeld's desire to restructure and privatize the military as well. My own trajectory back to thinking about the Vietnam War was when I read about the Tiger and Delta force, but this time in Iraq. And then the 2004 presidential election brought Vietnam up once again. Kerry was a Viet vet and was tainted with it, rather than embraced because of it.

Too much hateful happened there. Millions of tons of bombs were dropped on civilians and soldiers alike. Three and half million Vietnamese died; 58,000 U.S. soldiers were killed. Those who returned home came home with terrible memories that they could not live with. They tell their stories in the documentary "Winter Soldier".³⁰ They speak against the war and tell the horror: women and children indiscriminately murdered, mutilated, burned and killed, cut open while still living, prisoners thrown alive from helicopters. They speak of how they were trained to think of the Vietnamese as "gooks" and "commies" and not human beings. They say they were totally scared for their own lives and did what they had to survive.

I watched "Winter Soldier" again, while writing this book. I sat listening and watching and not quite able to do so. The footage of young Vietnamese women screaming and begging for their lives was beyond bearable. I kept thinking that if this is the truth, we should not be allowed to forget. These acts cannot be forgiven because they must not be forgotten. They must be remembered. I am not speaking of the need to punish when I renounce forgiveness. But I am speaking of the need to not forgive the making of war.

The feminizing loss of the Vietnam War was a significant historical moment that re-fashioned the historical process of gender renegotiation. The war became a "vehicle for expansion and specification of altered gender relations".³¹ The oppositional gender relations became more transitory and fluid. Gender would become more supple; but not more equal. The gender divide would still exist but not in simply old formations. War would be shaped less by biological sex—by one's male body—by maleness—and more by masculine discourses that can be adopted by males or females. Discourses shape what gender looks like. There is a move "away from gendered individuals and toward gendered discourses."³² This process of gender renegotiation took on particular significance in Gulf War `91. This was the first U.S. post-Vietnam War and it was the first U.S. war that acknowledged the troops as both male and female.

The Iraq wars from 1991-2006 have been an expression of rehabilitating the post-Vietnam U.S. military through a re-sexing of it. In part femininity has been militarized while the military has not been demasculinized. The story of Jessica Lynch's capture by the Fedayeen in Nasiriyah was used to mobilize U.S. male soldiers to action. They would find her and protect her.³³ Jessica Lynch along with her comrades Lori Piestewa and Shoshanna Johnson represent the shifting sexual and racial make-up of the military. Only one of the three was white, while all three were working class and female. They remained gendered as women while being militarized like men. These young females were in harms way. Both Lynch and Johnson came home with serious injuries. Piestewa—a single mom, died.

Yet, the Iraq War of 2002 was initiated by a cowboy, but with no military record to speak of. And, women at home also face a re-feminization—be it liposuction or a

remake of the Stepford Wives—in their everyday lives. The gender confusion is real. In 2005, the film “Brokeback Mountain” is a hit. Now, even cowboys can be gay.

Global capitalism requires a re-articulation and re-gendering of patriarchy. This involves a use of class differentiation among women to affirm masculinist privilege across class lines. And working class women, especially women of color, are most often the new masculinist warriors. As class differences exacerbate inequality and injustice globally these class realities are written into the militarization of gendering everyday life.

rape as gendered war

Rape articulates the violence encoded in gender; in wartime it re-inscribes the continuity of gender inscription of woman as victim rather than actor. Yet, enemies, male or female are also feminized in this process. Rape in Bosnia or Darfur sexually violates girls and women while attacking the gendered system of masculinity. Men are de-masculinized by the rape of their daughters or wives. Everyone is shamed in this process.

Rape is war in brutal torturous form; not simply war’s effect, or its crime. As such, the female body is the battlefield. Women’s bodies are appropriated, conquered and destroyed. War rape smashes all distinction between private and public life. It destroys the ownership and privacy of one’s body as individual lives are destroyed as barter in gendered wars. There are no civilians left. It disallows the mapping of a civilian status in war or the confinement of torture to a context that is disconnected from home and family.³⁴

The enemy nation is de-masculinized while the victor is re-masculinized. Systematic rape policy—as a “murderous misogyny” often exists as integral to military policy.³⁵ There have been different forms of this process: the sexual slavery of Jewish women for Nazi soldiers, the enforced institutionalized rape of ‘comfort women’ by the Japanese army in WWII, the genocidal Serb rape camps of the Bosnian War, the rape and mutilation of Tutsi women in the Rwandan massacres, sometimes initiated by Hutu females themselves.

Over 500,000 girls and women were raped in the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Tens of thousands of girls and women have been raped in Bosnia, Sierra Leone and East Timor. In many of these countries, as in Serbia and Pakistan, a raped woman will be shunned by her community, and suicide is often thought to be her only avenue of escape. Despite this stigma and shaming, in Sierra Leone war rape was so massive that rape survivors were allowed back into their communities despite all else.³⁶

If I build on Clausewitz and Foucault here, rape can be said to be a form of war in yet another inhumane form; an integral form of war rather than an effect.³⁷ War and rape are both normalized as though they are inevitable, almost biologically driven as in the mythic warrior’s state of nature. Yet, bodily violation destroys established gendered stereotypes. A violated female is no longer a woman that a man wishes to lay claim to. In war rape females are reduced to their patriarchal definition as a body vessel and also denied the status of a privileged womanhood. In war rape the woman is totally occupied which is the “ultimate invasion”.³⁸

Although less acknowledged and less systemic, homosexual rape—man on man—occurs, but is less publicized for the way it collides with established notions of hetero-masculinity. Rape in war—whether hetero or homosexual in form, structures a re-gendering of gender. When raped, males become womanlike or like a fag ; they become feminized as helpless. In this instance, gender floats from the biological body in horrific form.

According to Yvette Abrams, one in two females have been raped in South Africa due to the institutionalization of violence, starting with slavery and following with colonial wars. This violent sense of trauma underpins any possibility of viable politics today.³⁹ And the more war ravaged the globe becomes, the more necessary it is to recognize rape as politics in yet another form. Nevertheless, General Musharaf of Pakistan speaks dismissively of the claims of Pakistani women, in fall 2005, saying that many of them make false or exaggerated claims of rape in order to get financial support and visas from foreigners. He likened rape to a “money-making thing” if you want to go abroad. He does so despite the publicity surrounding Mukhtar Mai who was raped—as an act of honor revenge—at the orders of a village jurga in 2002; and the threats against Shazia Khalid’s life after she went public about her rape.⁴⁰ Pakistani feminists were outraged and demonstrated in the streets to make their counter statement.

Rape as war in another form, also exists much closer to home. Dozens of service women in the Persian Gulf area have charged sexual assaults and rape by their fellow troops. During 2002-04 there were over one hundred reports of sexual misconduct in the Central Command Area—Iraq, Kuwait and Afghanistan.⁴¹ These sexual assaults simultaneously construct these females as both the womanly warrior and the womanly victim.

The military needs female recruits. This means that the military is becoming more female with approximately 14 percent of the Army, 17 percent of the Air Force and 13 percent of the Navy now female. But military life still nurtures masculinist sexual predators.⁴² Thirty-seven service women sought sexual trauma counseling from civilian rape crisis organizations after returning from war duty in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Kuwait. Eighty-eight cases of sexual misconduct were reported by the 60,000 women stationed in these areas.⁴³

Although the now infamous Jessica Lynch has no memory of sexual assault Rick Bragg writes that she was probably tortured and raped—her medical report sites ‘anal sexual assault’.⁴⁴ The intra and transnational presence of sexual humiliation and rape defines and constructs enemies, nations and their wars. Women’s bodies become the universalized representation of conquest while male bodies are both masculinized in victory, and feminized in defeat.

The sexed body—whether whole or maimed—male or female—is usually forgotten in war. Sometimes we are forced to remember. Tammy Duckworth returned home as an amputee after losing both her legs to a rocket propelled grenade. She was an Army aviator in Iraq scouting the Tigris river, and then came home to run for public office in Illinois. Legs and arms are shattered and blown off, vaginas are violated, people are blinded, psyches are tortured by unforgetting nightmares and little is said of this. This silencing of the racial, sexual and gendered body is vital to the persistence of war.

patriarchy, suicide bombers and war

Patriarchal gender continues to morph according to context. Many U.S. women looking for job-training and steady-paying work continue to join the military in new numbers. Over 50 percent of enlisted women are from ethnic minorities.⁴⁵ Similarly positioned women in countries elsewhere also look to the militarized zones of their lives. Palestinian women—living some of the most militarized lives of any women across the globe—find themselves smack up against the daily life of war. As such they are some of the most activist women in the world today—struggling to survive and build their nation. Their lives have little space for what is usually considered private and familial and few of them could claim civilian status in their war-torn circumstances. They suffer and struggle and die in equal numbers to their men.

Women suicide bombers reflect similar gender bending as in other militarized arenas. Female suicide bombers do not bespeak the demise of patriarchal relations in these countries—Lebanon, Palestine, Chechnya—but rather the new fluidity of gendered roles carried out by male and female alike. According to Barbara Victor in Army of Roses as early as 1985 Syrian intelligence officers encouraged young Lebanese women to blow themselves up in attacks on Israeli troops. Palestinian authorities distribute a lifetime stipend of \$400 a month to families of male suicide bombers; and to families of shahidas—female suicide bombers-- like Wafa Idris, \$200 per month. Once again the economic needs of these young women play a part. And patriarchy in obvious ways devalues their lives in relation to men's. According to Victor these women who give their lives do so in a mix of economic necessity and their own personal despair. "Suicide attacks become the ultimate 'smart bombs' of the poor".⁴⁶

Several of the women suicide bombers are bright, intelligent, divorced, and mothers. Yet they are also described as irrational and distraught and remain within the masculinist discourses as emotional and unstable vulnerable women. They are feminized as such, while occupying the masculinist position of bomber. When the reality of women suicide bombers is discussed the query is always, why? It is assumed that politics cannot sufficiently describe the actions of women so there must be something else to the story; some other reason for their actions. So their acts are described as ones of "personal despair" and their reasons are coined in terms of their personal stories of "moral transgressions" needing redemption through a "martyr's death". Whereas male suicide bombers are explained in terms of a "psychosis of martyrdom" given the "humiliation of occupation" and the "hopelessness of deeply stagnant societies", female bombers are explained in terms of jilted love, and failed marriages.⁴⁷

Jacqueline Rose wonders why suicide bombers are seen as more irrational than other soldiers. Or why dying is a greater sin than living when you kill. She thinks that suicide bombing—that kills far fewer people than conventional warfare—is no less sane than killing in general. Rose also thinks that Victor is wrong about the women suicide bombers. Victor envelopes them in their gender—they are simply scorned and rejected women; not Palestinians or politically passionate people or martyrs.⁴⁸

Palestinian women are crucial to the armed resistance/intifada. Arafat calls these women his "army of roses". He needs women to crush the Israeli army similarly to the way that the Bush administration has needed women to help fill the ranks for the Iraq wars. At the same time patriarchal privilege is protected in these scenarios, especially as suicide bombers are depicted as irrational and pathological. In part this pathology is

defined by the fear and aversion to death; but in part the gendered viewings of female irrationality play significantly in these instances.

The Black Widows are suicide bombers in Chechnya. Some report that in order to make these girls choose death that Chechnyans rape them and videotape the rapes. Then they have nothing left to live for and have a reason to die. This explanation begins and ends with patriarchal gender: women are not viewed as political agents so they must be raped to force them to take such action *and* rape is used as the narrative for domination. One is left to wonder why else a woman would choose to be a bomber. Rape once again denies women as actors in their own right, as an agent of her own self. But not all Black Widows are described as such. Another female bomber is described as cultured, and 'modern'.⁴⁹

In Russia these women are also known as shakhidki, the feminine Russian variant for the Arabic word that means holy warriors who give their lives. They are seen as nihilistic and have taken part in at least 15 different attacks since 1999. Although many were not Black Widows 19 of the 41 captors who took part in the hostage siege of the Moscow theater in October 2002 were women. A decade of war has created the new woman suicide bomber. And this is as much a part of a deep commitment to Islamic culture as it is to feminist democratic theory.⁵⁰

A female suicide bomber is killed in Iraq for the first time, September 2005. She initially dressed as a woman, in traditional robes and veil and was not searched at the check point. After clearing this hurdle she switches to men's clothes and travels to where she detonates the bomb, killing eight and injuring fifty-seven. The veils of gender—both as woman and man—are used to enable the making of war. Bodies are clearly not what they seem.

Terry Eagleton writes that "blowing yourself up for political reasons is a complex symbolic act, one that mixes despair and defiance". It expresses the tension between living a life under occupation that has no self-determination and determining one's death. By becoming invulnerable they taste a kind of freedom. Their only power is to die a devastating death that makes life appear "monstrously unrecognizable."⁵¹

Once you are preoccupied with death and dying, martyrdom feels like a real choice. But people are not expected to think this way; especially not women. The female suicide bomber denies traditional gender essentialism; she denies hetero-normative gender in its usual construction.

women's rights and the military police

The U.S. claims to free Iraqi and Afghan women in war while women at home join the military. Many of these young women choose to join the Military Police Corps because its jobs in the field are open to women. Thirty-four of the one hundred seventy one soldiers in the Corps are women. These units often perform the same duties as all-male combat units. Many of the MP gunners are women. The jobs are dangerous. Pvt. Tracie Sanchez, 30 years old, mother of four had her face hit with 15 pieces of shrapnel from a rocket-propelled grenade. She is a combat machine gunner in a kill zone. Her children are 12, 10, 7, and 4 years old. She had a boring job after high school so she turned to the army. She has bad dreams, not because she froze in combat, but because

she did not. She killed people and wishes that she didn't.⁵² This is the new-old gender geography.

Specialist Danielle Green, a former college basketball star for Notre Dame, also a member of the military police returned home after losing her left hand. She says she is disappointed in her tour of duty because she didn't do what she thought she would. She said that they did not rebuild neighborhoods or schools, but spent time doing too much of nothing. Given the way things have turned out she now thinks the U.S. should not have gone to war. "I thought we were going for humanitarian reasons".⁵³ She too is another expression of new-old gender.

On the other hand Iraqi teenage girls find themselves with new restrictions and less freedom. They are not allowed out of their homes by themselves for fear of kidnapping and/or rape. Their lives too have been militarized: they live with little security and if they are lucky enough to still have a semblance of family life, it is under strict surveillance from parents. One mother says, "you have to keep your daughters in the house".⁵⁴ There is no easy call to make here. The limited changes in a post-Saddam Iraq have not been sufficient to justify the turmoil and sadness.

Women and girls may lose a great deal depending on how the intra-Islamic conflict and imperial democratic forces play out. Imperial democracy does not look too good for women because women will be bartered once again. The U.S. has never truly stood with women's liberation abroad or at home. A militarized notion of women's rights is a far cry from women and girl's liberation. It is significant that Spain's Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero was elected on the promise that he would withdraw Spanish forces from Iraq. Shortly after his election he appointed half of his ministers as women and has spoken out on behalf of women's rights, especially the right to abortion. Whether these females will be gender decoys in another form, or instigators of democracy, is yet to be seen.

continuing onward

It is impossible to know in advance how sex and gender and their racialized formations will continue to shift and change. Present day war politics necessitates opening the racialized and gendered configurations of this period to careful scrutiny. Domestic violence and sexual rape are gendered constellations of a politics of war and terror. So are the new diverse gender expressions of women's lives in all colors. Without naming and seeing these new configurations of racial and sexual inequities the re-sexing and gendering of war cannot be uncovered in its newest forms. And then the bartering of democracy in the name of women's rights and freedom will continue to mask the destruction of democratic possibilities.

This *may* be a critical historical juncture where gender will be truly destabilized with the help of feminisms across the globe; *or* masculinist formulations of gender in defense of imperial democracy may hold sway but in more variegated forms. In just the past year there have been a series of firsts: women have been elected president in Chile, Germany, and Liberia, Cecelia Fire Thunder has been elected leader of the Oglala Sioux tribe, Tzipi Livni serves as the first Israeli foreign minister since Golda Meir, and six women were elected to the newly chosen Hamas parliament. The meanings of each of these happenings are not clearly obvious. Some of these victories reflect enormous political struggle and achievement. Gender remains incredibly complex and confused amidst these changes. On the one hand so much is changing...and on the other it is not clear what exactly is changed.

So sex and gender and race can be used as decoys because their meanings can always be multiple and varied at the same time that they are ossified. Sex and gender though distinct and multiple are more often than not collapsed as one. The variations of femaleness and femininity, and maleness and masculinity stand counter to the homogeneity of heteronormative gender. This creates confusing, illegible, and unknowable readings and meanings.⁵⁵ The illegibility and unreadable aspects of sex, gender and race allow for their deceptive role today as sometime decoys for imperial and fascistic democracy. But gender cannot always or completely be deceiving or it would not work as decoy. This furthers the difficulty of reading the meanings of sex and gender and race. This complex decoy process—of allure, deception, and entrapment-- defines history and also takes on 'new-old' historical meanings.

At this juncture, as more and more females become heads of state, and Hillary Clinton attempts to win the presidency of the United States, very much is at stake. Unless the complexities of sex, gender and racial formations are understood for their urgency, females can present a kinder and softer face to militaristic global capitalism. It is more urgent than ever that women's rights, along with their female bodies, are not used to obfuscate the moves towards fascistic democracy. Not in our name.

For a fuller accounting of the ideas of this article please see Zillah Eisenstein's Sexual Decoys, gender, race and war (London: Zed Press, 2007).

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