Discourses in Transition:
Re-Imagining Women's Security[1]

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Abstract

This article employs data gathered in Lebanon, Northern Ireland and South Africa as part of a project entitled 'Re-Imagining Women's Security and Participation in Post-Conflict Societies'. It reflects on three different 'imaginings' of security – the state security discourse, the human security discourse and a gendered security approach – with the aim of showing that security discourses are currently undergoing a process of transition which parallels that taking place in post-conflict societies around the world. The article is particularly concerned to explore how a gendered security approach might empower women to re-imagine security in contextualised, bottom-up ways, and advocate social transformation within the broader processes of post-conflict transition. In order to consider women's demands for security policies and approaches in the twenty-first century, the article explores the direct testimony of women in three post-conflict societies, with specific reference to three key areas of security central to women's re-imaginings of the concept.

Keywords: *feminist methodology, gendered security, human security, security dialogue, United Nations*

Introduction

People aspire to 'security' as a state of being in which both their protection and their freedom will be assured. Yet 'security' is also, at least partly, an intangible notion, which different people will interpret in various ways. This article considers a range of 'imaginings' of security, and is particularly concerned to facilitate and explore women's re-imaginings of security. In conceiving of security as a malleable notion, we challenge the patriarchal perception of security as a value to be protected by statist policies and programmes, and further open the concept of security to non-traditional approaches that are better capable of addressing the needs of people, in particular

women. Explorations of non-traditional approaches to security are especially useful in the context of post-conflict societies,[2] where transition processes provide unique opportunities for social transformation.[3] Many women living the experience of post-conflict transition demand the re-imagining of security, away from institutional and patriarchal approaches towards contextualised, bottom-up approaches.

The study on which this article is based has gathered data in three post-conflict societies: Lebanon, Northern Ireland and South Africa. A key concern has been to give women and men experiencing transition the opportunity to re-imagine security with reference to their own experiences and world views, but only women's imaginings are considered here. The first section of this article will reflect on three 'imaginings' of security – the state security discourse, the human security discourse and a gendered security approach – in order to show that security discourses themselves are presently in transition. The first two of these discourses are firmly established in academic and policy literature. The third is a non-traditional approach which centralises gender and women's voices within security dialogue. The second part of this article employs women's testimonies to explore in more detail how a gendered security approach can empower women to re-imagine security. In the third section, the processes of transition in each of the research sites are considered through the lens of women's imaginings of security. As many women respondents to this study felt that transition processes had not yet adequately addressed their security concerns, the final section briefly considers three key areas of security central to women's re-imaginings of the concept.

The primary data used in this article were selected from 18 focus groups conducted with a range of women from various social backgrounds in Lebanon, Northern Ireland and South Africa.[4] The focus groups conducted by this study aimed to explore women's imaginings of security, and their perceptions of post-conflict transition. This article employs the feminist methodology of centralising women's testimonies, challenges the prioritising of written over oral sources, and contests the hierarchical nature of much security dialogue.

Three imaginings of security

Research in societies in post-conflict transition can reveal how security dialogue itself is currently in transition. As will be discussed, although there is a standard security discourse which remains dominant in international relations, other ways of imagining security have become more prominent in recent years, and represent challenges to institutionalised ways of 'doing' security.[5]

The institutionalised approach to security may be termed the state security discourse.[6] State security focuses on the protection of state borders from external threats, or the protection of state authority in the case of intra-state conflict, and it conceives of 'security' as the absence of threat from violent conflict. The right that state security discourse protects is the right of states to territorial integrity.[7] It is a militaristic discourse, which permits states to monopolise the use of force and limit

the participation of civil society in the development of security strategies.[8] This statist security approach is authoritarian, patriarchal and hierarchical. As Eric Blanchard finds:

> Statesmen, diplomats, and the military conduct the business of states, and too often war, imbuing the relations and processes of the society of nation-states with an atmosphere seemingly devoid of women and an interest in issues of concern to women.[9]

State security discourse imagines that the establishment of political stability in societies beset by conflict will act as a cure for security threats. It gives little attention to security concerns that do not flow from violent conflict, and as such is often antithetical to women's security. Yet, as Edward Newman notes:

> for most people in the world, the much greater threats to security come from disease, hunger, environmental contamination, street crime, or even domestic violence. And for others, a greater threat may come from their own state itself, rather than from an 'external' adversary . . . an overemphasis upon statist security can be to the detriment of human welfare needs.[10]

In response to such threats, a Human Security discourse has developed over the past two decades, aiming to operate alongside the statist discourse and soften its approach.[11] Critical security studies and feminist literature have been helpful in promoting this development through their recognition that the existence and nature of states can actually produce rather than lessen insecurity.[12] Although human security is intended to complement rather than replace the state security approach,[13] human security does identify the person, rather than the state, as the primary referent of security policy.[14] The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has been at the forefront of promoting this agenda, and the 1994 Human Development Report describes the concept of 'human security' in perhaps the broadest terms.[15] The UNDP imagines human security as a universal discourse whose components are interdependent. It is people-centred and focuses on preventative measures. In its broadest application human security aims to ensure both 'freedom from want' and 'freedom from fear'. Rather than focusing narrowly on the threat of violence, human security emphasises the importance of seven interrelated categories of security: economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political.

In its broad interpretation, the human security discourse imagines the empowerment of people through security policies to which they freely contribute.[16] For this reason the human security approach represents a significant step forward from the patriarchal statist approach. The human security approach frequently addresses the specific security concerns of particular groups, especially women, for example through the UN document *Women, Peace and Security*.[17] Norwegian studies have also been notable in this regard, for instance the NUPI–Fafo joint publication *Gendering Human Security*.[18] These engagements with the security needs of women draw on

the precedent set by what is arguably, from a gender perspective, the most significant document in human security: UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, adopted by the Security Council on 31 October 2000. That document affirms the important role of women in conflict resolution and peace building, and recognises 'the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, and the need to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution'.

The effect of this groundbreaking resolution is to bring the two policies of gender balance and gender mainstreaming 'into the work of all actors in the network of processes around international peace and security'.[19] Resolution 1325 is also an important contribution to the body of international literature building on the precedent set by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The resolution is significant not only in terms of what it advocates, but also in terms of its very existence. The passage of Resolution 1325 can be largely credited to pressure applied by women in the international forum, notably the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and the NGO International Alert, and as a result it stands as a symbol of what women's direct participation in security dialogue can achieve.

It is important to recognise, however, that human security has not always been interpreted in broad terms or expressed through such progressive initiatives as Resolution 1325. The potential of the human security approach is sometimes weakened by the practice of states and agencies. For example, both the Canadian government and its state-funded agency, the Human Security Centre, have narrowed the focus of the discourse to 'freedom from fear', which emphasises violence and ignores the range of interrelated areas of security highlighted by the UNDP.[20] As Mary Caprioli notes, the universal nature of human security can obscure the fact that the key macro-notions promoted by that discourse, democracy and human rights, tend to have differential impacts on men and women.[21] When human security is subsumed within statist frameworks, it loses a significant degree of its capacity to engage with people to determine their contextualised security needs. From a gender perspective, when human security deals only in those security 'threats' already within the consciousness of states, it cannot fulfil the promise of Resolution 1325 to equally involve women at all levels of peace and security activities.

However, some notable contributors have promoted the mainstreaming of gender within human security. For example, Beth Woroniuk advocates mainstreaming as a means of more adequately incorporating women's perspectives into security dialogue.[22] This proposal is strongly affirmed by the joint NUPI–Fafo publication *Gendering Human Security*.[23] As Meenakshi Gopinath and Sumona DasGupta recognise, mainstreaming is an attempt to 'bring the perceptions, experiences, knowledges and interests' of women to bear on policy-making.[24] Some commentators have argued that mainstreaming represents a potential revolutionary change in policy-making, in that gender issues are to be made core considerations for all actors across the range of issue areas. However, mainstreaming is yet to achieve such revolutionary change.[25]

Whilst mainstreaming is central to ensuring that women are guaranteed space, it is crucial to 'engender' security; that is, to make gender a leitmotif which cross-cuts the range of security concerns relevant today:

> 'Engendering' security goes significantly beyond mainstreaming and also attempts to construct an alternative discourse, and attempts to re-socialize men and women into a qualitatively nuanced and different understanding of security – a bottom up approach, where priorities shift from mere 'threat perceptions' and 'deterrence' vocabularies to a language that cognizes 'structural challenges' and 'enabling spaces'.[26]

The remainder of this article aims to contribute to this process of engendering security, specifically by adding to an ever-growing body of commentary which may be described as a gendered security approach.[27] Gendered security may be characterised as an approach capable of centralising gender in analyses of what have been termed 'traditional' security concerns – such as violent conflict – and what have been termed 'non-traditional' security concerns – such as health, economic empowerment and political participation. Gendered security empowers women and men to re-imagine security in ways which can then inform bottom-up, contextualised approaches.[28]

Gendered security will be of particular utility for women, who often demand mass-scale social transformation during post-conflict transition processes.[29] One key means of achieving such a transformation is through the empowerment of women to re-imagine security. As Hoogensen and Rottem recognise, and as the gendered security approach aims to ensure, the security needs of women are best determined by women themselves, rather than by elites.[30] When 'women's articulations of security are recognized and heard, this results in access to the appropriate resources women need to ensure their security',[31] or at the very least informs policy-makers of what women's security needs actually are. A particularised gendered security approach is required to empower women to act as transformative agents, and to promote the implementation of what Christine Chinkin regards as the as yet largely unrealised Resolution 1325 in relation to women's equal participation in post-conflict transformation.[32] By drawing on the precedents set by human security, while ensuring that all approaches to security are evaluated in gender terms, gendered security is capable of affirming women's agency and facilitating women's empowerment. It also recognises the roles men play in perpetuating the insecurity of women and considers the re-socialisation of men and boys, although this focus is beyond the present scope of this article.

Women's imaginings of security

The need to empower women to re-imagine security in their own terms is most clearly proven through the ambivalent responses which many women participating in the focus groups conducted by this study gave when asked about the term 'security' and

their relationship to it. For many women the word 'security' had at least some negative connotations, and this may suggest that 'security' ought to be used more cautiously, and perhaps in conjunction with terms like safety and freedom. In the Northern Ireland context the term security has long been associated with the 'security forces':

> Security is a very ambivalent sort of word, like security here has been used like the security forces who to me were the most violent element of that, whatever, some would say 30 or 40, some would say 80 or 90 years.
>
> (Northern Ireland, Women Political Campaigners)

For some women who associate 'security' with violence and conflict, the concept of security can appear alien and difficult to interact with. It is important to give space to such responses, as they represent a key limiting factor in some women's capacity to participate in contemporary security dialogue:

> if somebody says 'security' to me I think terrorism, policing, armies, I mean that's the concept to me, I wouldn't associate that with myself necessarily . . . I find it a very negative concept . . . not that I'm against security, it just smacks of all MI5 and what you remember from the 70s.
>
> (Northern Ireland, Women in Public Life)

Some women respondents identified security as a job done by an external, male force, and in this way criticised what may be characterised as a broader patriarchal bias inherent in security dialogue:

> In Lebanon we tend to deny women the right to be part of the security forces. Women should safeguard security along with men . . . society cannot take off with one wing. I don't understand why here in Lebanon, security is the prerogative of men only. The woman has to play a role.
>
> (Lebanon, Women in Economic Reconstruction)

Other women identified patriarchal bias in the use of the term security, and expressed concern that such bias threatened women's status as independent actors. One respondent felt there was a type of 'cosseting' implied by 'security':

> a sense that somehow we are more vulnerable, there's a kind of fragility that goes with that, that we need to be sort of cosseted or treated in a different kind of way.
>
> (Northern Ireland, Women Political Campaigners)

If women conceive of security as a concept that suggests their fragility, they may disregard security as a limiting, rather than an empowering, notion. Indeed, some women may feel compelled to abandon the language of security altogether. For example, one woman respondent to this study described 'security' as a man's word and 'safety' as a woman's word:

there is a hardness about 'secure'; we're locked away. Whereas 'safe' isn't neces-sarily being locked away, 'safe' is a concept you know, safety is a softer word. It is not any less, I mean to feel safe in some ways is better to me than feeling secure. Secure kind of implies I am not secure whereas safe kind of implies I am alright with anything.

<div align="right">(Northern Ireland, Women in Public Life)</div>

The gendered security approach affirms women's opposition to the characterisa-tion of security as a limiting concept, which could be used to imply that *only* women are vulnerable. Instead, gendered security aims to empower women to re-imagine security in terms which do not limit their agency or independence. As one woman in South Africa found, a woman's sense of self is just as important to her feelings of security as external factors:

I would also think that security is all about yourself, because even if they can say you are protected by 20 bodyguards, if you don't believe in yourself, if you don't trust in yourself you won't be secured, you would always have that fear. So I think security starts from you as a person, you need to be secured as a person to be sure about your feelings and what you want to do. Know yourself before.

<div align="right">(South Africa, Women Political Campaigners)</div>

When women respondents to this study were encouraged to discuss security, they were more likely to re-imagine security in non-traditional terms than to abandon the security discourse altogether. When women re-imagined security as an empowering concept, they often emphasised the need for security to enhance rather than restrict their freedom, as is demonstrated from the following comments:

For me, the word security in Arabic is not to be afraid. First, not to be afraid to be hungry, to move, to think, and to be misjudged.

<div align="right">(Lebanon, Women in NGOs)</div>

[Security is] . . . not being afraid, and that can be of physical violence but also feeling you have the right to do the things you want to do and say; both physical and also psychological [security] as well.

<div align="right">(Northern Ireland, Women in Economic Reconstruction)</div>

The collective project of re-imagining undertaken by the women participating in this study produced a holistic image of security, which reflected the broader human security position that security consists of a range of interrelated factors, rather than simply freedom from fear of violence or conflict. Women's re-imaginings of security, whilst broad and often aspirational, were nevertheless phrased in practical and achievable terms. Women respondents did not imagine a utopian concept of security, but rather gave several examples of how security approaches could better ensure 'freedom from want' and 'freedom from fear' in a range of areas of daily life.

The following exchange between three South African women gives an example of how women re-imagine security as a holistic concept:

> R1: I think when I think of security the first thing that comes to mind is safety. I think of safety and especially as far as women are concerned . . . you look at the figures in our country of the high rate of rape . . .
>
> R2: [I]n addition I think it's the issue of education and jobs. That women need to have skills, need to be educated in order to secure jobs, in order to have safe living areas and all those types of things.
>
> R3: I think as well, I suppose in a South African context especially, when you refer to economic security it is commonly referred to as independence, especially in relation to women. Being financially independent that comes with a lot of security, and just the freedom and will to do as you wish and when you want to, because you have that economic security.
>
> <div align="right">(South Africa, Women in Economic Reconstruction)</div>

The need for security to be assured in all aspects of life, and for women's security concerns to run throughout security dialogue, was confirmed by one Lebanese woman's holistic conception of security:

> Security is when the person is able to live a comfortable life, a life in peace in his or her house, in his or her country, in the street, in his or her children's schools, in the work place . . . and security is not only the usual meaning of security, from arms . . . there is also social security which is crucial, social and economic security and psychological security and, all of this, we have missed all of this for a long time.
>
> <div align="right">(Lebanon, Women in NGOs)</div>

A gendered security approach makes space for the negative and ambivalent comments some women wish to make in relation to traditional approaches to security, whilst also empowering women to re-imagine security in holistic terms. The conceptions of the majority of women responding to this study did not fit within institutionalised, patriarchal approaches to security, but instead gave support to non-traditional approaches that are both empowering and contextualised.

Re-imagining security in transition

In keeping with the spirit of the gendered security approach, the focus groups conducted as part of this study used women's re-imaginings of security as a lens through which processes of post-conflict transition could be evaluated. As noted earlier, women in post-conflict societies tend to reject the mere reconstruction of the pre-conflict society, and instead demand social transformation.[33] The gendered

security approach supports this demand for social transformation, and affirms the importance of women's roles as transformative agents in all societies, particularly those undergoing post-conflict transition. Although women have shown great eagerness to take on roles as transformative agents, and in many cases have achieved significant gains, many respondents to this study found that processes of post-conflict transition had not yet adequately addressed women's security concerns. Listening to women's re-imaginings of security in post-conflict societies can reveal two things: the opportunities which transition processes create for women to contribute to non-traditional security approaches, and the inadequacies of institutionalised security approaches to meet women's holistic security needs during transition and beyond.

The gendered security approach recognises that peace processes are bound to bring about some improvement in women's security situations. For example, women in the focus groups welcomed the end to violent social conflict as a key achievement of the transition process (Lebanon, Women in Political Parties). Women also noted with appreciation the reduced presence of the security services in public. Women expressed relief that the peace process had meant at least a partial revival of the political process, less destruction of people's lives and property, and an increased feeling of safety on the streets in relation to political violence. Some women also noted positive flow-on effects from peace, for example the influx of European Union PEACE funding to women's and voluntary sector groups in Northern Ireland (Northern Ireland, Women in Economic Reconstruction). Perhaps most notably among the three research sites, South African women identified a range of positive developments stemming from the transition process. For example, the new Employment Equity Act (1998) was applauded as the first effort to bring about equality in employment between men and women in South Africa (South Africa, Women in Economic Reconstruction). Opportunities in industries traditionally monopolised by men have opened up for women (South Africa, Women Political Campaigners), including in the farming industry (South Africa, Women Victims). Single mothers have greater access to resources provided by the state and greater access to funded housing (South Africa, Women Victims).

Through the lens of their holistic re-imaginings of security, women in the focus groups often provided nuanced analyses of transition processes, applauding the progressive developments emerging from transition, whilst identifying how the potential of those developments has sometimes been limited in practice. For example, many South African women respondents noted the major positive change in terms of women's political participation. Although women are still quite a long way from equality in politics, their representation at various levels of governance has increased markedly since transition, and they now constitute between a quarter and a third of members in the National Assembly, the Council of Provinces and provincial legislatures.[34] Some South African women have also found that they have increased access to a wider range of employment opportunities, as stated above. However, women's enjoyment of this enhanced participation is sometimes limited by male prejudice. Women respondents often found that men tend to be uncomfortable with women in positions of influence, or suggest that such women must have gained their positions through sexual favours. Such prejudice encourages a competitive climate in which

women may feel forced to undermine rather than support each other (South Africa, Women Ex-Combatants). Furthermore, although the security situation in South Africa has improved in terms of political violence, for example through the significant reduction in arbitrary beatings and arrests, some women respondents expressed concern that male resentment towards the equality agenda often manifests itself in violence against women (South Africa, Women Victims).

In Northern Ireland one noticeable peace dividend has been the increased investment in women's economic participation, notably through the Women's Strategy of Invest Northern Ireland. The gender pay gap has contracted since transition, so that women's earnings in 1998 were 75 per cent of men's earnings, but 81 per cent of men's earnings by 2004.[35] However, transitional approaches to women's economic participation have been criticised as weighted in favour of middle-class women, and limited in their capacity to address areas of real social need (Northern Ireland, Women in Economic Reconstruction). The transitional process has made little real change to women's position in the labour market. They remain 10 per cent more likely to be unemployed than men, and five times as likely to be in part-time employment.[36]

In Lebanon, women were granted political rights under the constitution in 1953, but (other than the right to vote) these rights were generally not exercised in practice prior to the Taif Accord, and the only women to take parliamentary positions prior to the onset of transition did so as the inheritors of seats to which a male relative had previously been elected.[37] No woman gained a parliamentary position through election rather than inheritance until after the onset of the post-conflict transition process. In 1974, four women stood for elected office, the highest number ever to stand prior to the peace process. In 2000, 18 women stood for elected office, and their initiation and maintenance of electoral campaigns was very significant in terms of empowering women in politics.[38] Yet the transition process has not resulted in a large-scale movement of women into the political arena. One continuing limitation on women's political participation is the highly sectarian nature of Lebanese politics, and the fact that most (if not all) sects prefer to put forward men to represent them (Lebanon, Women in Public Life). Indeed, one Lebanese woman found that the end to armed conflict have exacerbated conflict in other areas, particularly between sects:

> During the 10 to 15 years that followed Taif, sectarianism has become more prevalent. Various regions in Lebanon have become more polarized on a sectarian or religious basis. This has had a negative impact on women.
>
> (Lebanon, Women in Political Parties)

This comment demonstrates one of the key insights of a gendered security approach: namely, that an end to armed conflict represents only the first step in the process of social transformation. Women are bound to critique transitional processes within which the end to armed conflict appears to highlight, rather than lessen, the continued prevalence of other forms of violence. For example, some women in Northern Ireland were concerned because they felt that 'normal' (as opposed to political) crime and violence in their communities and within their homes had increased during the transition

process (Northern Ireland, Women in Economic Reconstruction). Rising levels of crime, particularly violence against women, were also of great concern to women in South Africa (South Africa, Women in NGOs), where it has been found that one in four women will experience violence at the hands of an intimate partner during their life.[39] In 2004/5, 55,114 rapes were reported to the South African police, which represents 118.3 rapes per 100,000 of the population, and a 1.5 per cent increase on the previous year.[40] There was a consensus within the Women Victims focus group (victims of past political violence) that rising levels of violence against women in the home are due in part to male resentment of advances women have recently made, especially in the field of employment (South Africa, Women Victims). Sometimes this resentment drives a man to kill his partner (South Africa, Women Political Campaigners). While such security concerns persist, obstacles remain in the path of women who seek to re-imagine security and take roles as transformative agents.

Transition processes also appear to have brought about insufficient change in women's economic situations. For example, some women in Northern Ireland noted that they had been forced to shift from public to private sector employment during transition, and as a result had lost out on hours and tax credits. One woman noted that the privatisation of employment had particularly affected women in low-paid, part-time positions (Northern Ireland, Women Political Campaigners). Another found that, despite promises, there had not been a major shift towards alternative work practices, including job sharing and flexi-hours (Northern Ireland, Women in NGOs). The labour market continues to be highly segregated according to gender and community background.[41] In South Africa, some women also expressed concern about privatisation, particularly in relation to resources. One woman found that the increasing cost of water and fuel through privatisation is more likely to directly affect women, as they are more likely to be responsible for ensuring the provision of those resources and caring for children (South Africa, Women in Economic Reconstruction). A respondent in Lebanon further emphasised the need for gender to cut across all areas of security policy, through her comment that macro-economic problems can have real impacts on individual women and their families. That woman noted that Lebanon's national economic situation had worsened during the transition period, with the country now struggling under extremely high levels of foreign debt. She believes this translates into further economic hardships for women, for example diminished funding for education and childcare (Lebanon, Women in Political Parties).

Women in the focus groups identified their marginalisation from the institutions of peace-making and peace-building as a key reason for the failure of transition processes to adequately incorporate their holistic re-imaginings of security, particularly in the key areas of violence against women and economic security. In Northern Ireland, women have taken on a range of important roles during the peace-making process, notably through civil society groups and the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition (NIWC), a women's political party which took a significant role in the drafting of the Good Friday Agreement, particularly with regards to the pledge that women had the right to full and equal political participation.[42] While numerically small and politically untested, the NIWC's impact on the negotiation process and its outcomes was

substantive.[43] However, the Coalition and civil society groups continue to work within an 'aggressively male political culture'.[44] The institutions of the transition process remain dominated by men, further demonstrating that gender has yet to take on the status of an issue that cross-cuts all fields of security dialogue.

The Lebanese context provides further examples of the marginalisation of women from the institutions of transition and the peace-building process. For example, some women respondents regarded the movement of women into parliamentary positions, following the Taif Accord, with ambivalence, because those women now in parliament were mostly there due to hereditary entitlement rather than electoral endorsement (Lebanon, Women Ex-Combatants). Some women were concerned to distinguish between the significant gains that women have made through participation in civil society and NGOs and a peace agreement which they described as giving no attention to the needs of women (Lebanon, Women in Public Life):

> Now it is mere coincidence that women's achievements, as far as their status and rights are concerned, happened following Taif; but they are not in any way an outcome of the Accord.
>
> (Lebanon, Women Ex-Combatants)

In the context of women's holistic re-imaginings of security, this section has aimed to show that post-conflict transition processes are not adequately imbued with a gendered approach to security. Transitional processes have undoubtedly increased the scope for women to act as transformative agents, but women's efforts are often confined to civil society, and they remain marginalised from the institutions of peace-building.

Key aspects of women's security in transition

This final section aims to briefly explore three key areas of security highlighted by the gendered security approach, which as yet have failed to attract sufficient attention from the institutions of transition. Just as listening to women's re-imaginings of security can develop awareness of the importance of the interrelated areas of security, so too could women's involvement at all levels of 'doing' security help to centralise these interrelated concerns within security dialogue.

Economic security

A gendered security approach recognises that economic security is crucial to women's re-imaginings of the concept, because it is regarded as a key factor in ensuring their independence. For example, some women respondents found that women who have economic security are more likely to enjoy physical security as well:

> The woman who does not have a job, who stays at home, and feels totally depend-
> ent on her husband to protect her from hunger and poverty, endures a lot and does

not talk about the forms of violence she is subjected to, because she fears that he might throw her on the street and then she would lose her sole provider. Unlike this woman, we see that the one who has a job is not afraid to confront the man when she feels she is being abused. She reminds him that she is not at his mercy and that she is with him at par when it comes to earning an income and providing for the family.

(Lebanon, Women in Economic Reconstruction)

This comment is one example demonstrating the link some women draw between economic security and empowerment, imagining 'freedom from want' as a key means of ensuring 'freedom from fear'.

Violence and security

It is estimated that each year 1.5 to 3 million girls and women are killed through gender-related violence.[45] Women's re-imaginings of security often emphasise the need to combat this violence. Some women regard the transformation of laws as a key means of proving the commitment of post-conflict societies to deal adequately with the threat to women's security which violence against women represents. However, women also recognise what Gopinath and DasGupta describe as the need to re-socialise men and women into new ways of thinking about security.[46] A gendered security approach recognises violence against women as abhorrent, and as an indication of how a society regards women more generally:

There is also this feeling that is general in society, that crimes against women are OK. An awful lot of it is sidelined as this domestic thing . . . it doesn't get a very high profile . . . It's like those domestic attacks in the home, why should that be treated differently from a woman being attacked in the street?

(Northern Ireland, Republican Women Ex-Combatants)

A gendered security approach, which takes women's holistic re-imaginings of the concept into account, is better able to name, confront and respond to the key security threat of gender-based violence, a threat which has been inadequately addressed by institutionalised, state-focused and patriarchal security approaches.

Women, governance and security

Women's holistic re-imaginings of security emphasise the need for women's equal participation at all levels of political engagement. This is especially important in light of the above observation that women have proved the value of their unique contributions through civil society, but remain marginalised from the institutions of post-conflict transition.[47] As one woman in Northern Ireland recognised:

There is more women trying to stand up and make their voices heard but in a male-dominated thing their voices are drowned out.

(Northern Ireland, Concerned Loyalist Women)

Miranda Alison has found that women's participation in transition processes destabilises gender roles, and as such is often seen as a threat to the existing political culture.[48] A gendered security approach promotes the view that women's capacity to destabilise gender roles is a prime justification for combating their marginalisation from peace-building institutions, and empowering women to participate at all levels in processes of social transformation. The equal participation of women and the de-stabilisation of gender roles can also be critical to the re-socialisation of men.

Conclusion

Women in Lebanon, Northern Ireland and South Africa have demonstrated their desire for social transformation during post-conflict transition, and their understanding of how women's re-imaginings of security can contribute to that process. In Lebanon, where women lack strong internal support from the male-dominated political elite, they use the international standard of CEDAW to support their demand for gender parity. In South Africa, women in civil society worked together early in transition to ensure a critical mass of women within political institutions,[49] and continue to battle against ongoing political marginalisation and violence. In Northern Ireland, despite few political champions for women's equality, change is occurring and institutions such as the Parades Commission and Policing Board have recently been reconstituted in a more gender-balanced manner. The gendered security approach recognises what women have already achieved through their participation in security dialogue, and uses women's re-imaginings of security to promote a fundamental transformation of that concept. Transformation is required not only in terms of ensuring women's equal participation at all levels of security dialogue, but in order to make gender a central consideration of all domestic and international actors, in all fields relating to the discussion, promotion and provision of security.

Notes

2   'The term "post-conflict" generally refers to a period when predominately male combatants have ceased to engage in "official" war.' See Lori Handrahan, 'Conflict, Gender, Ethnicity and Post-Conflict Reconstruction', *Security Dialogue*, 35, 2004, pp. 429–45.
3   'Transition processes' are concerned with the move from violent conflict to 'peace', and are frequently discussed in the context of 'transitional justice', a discipline that explores the legacy of conflict and the role of law and legal institutions in assisting the transition to 'peace'. See Christine Bell, *Peace Agreements and Human Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Ruti G. Teitel, *Transitional Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Christine Bell, Colm Campbell and Fionnula Ní Aoláin, 'Justice Discourses in Transition', *Social and Legal Studies*, 13, 2004, pp. 305–28.
4   A range of focus groups were also carried out with men, in which the same issues concerning security were explored. The findings of these are beyond the focus of this article.
5   This article employs the term 'imagining' to denote various ways of thinking about and promoting the problem of security by a range of actors. See also Jennifer Wood and Clifford Shearing, *Imagining Security* (Cullompton, Devon: Willan Publishing, forthcoming 2006).

6   Canadian Consortium on Human Security, *Human Security Bulletin*, 2002, available at: http://www. humansecuritybulletin.info/page212.htm (accessed 10 November 2005).

7   Svere Lodgaard, 'Human Security: Concept and Operationalization', Expert Seminar on Human Rights and Peace, Palais Wilson, Geneva, United Nations University for Peace, 2000.

8   Claire Turenne Sjolander and Miguel Larrinaga, '(Re)presenting Landmines from Protector to Enemy: Discursive Framing of a New Multilateralism', in M. A. Cameron, R. T. Lawson and B. Tomlin (eds), *To Walk Without Fear: The Global Movement to Ban Landmines* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 364–91.

9   Eric M. Blanchard, 'Gender, International Relations, and the Development of Feminist Security Theory', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 28, 2003, pp. 1289–1312.

10 Edward Newman, 'Human Security and Constructivism', *International Studies Perspectives*, 2, 2001, pp. 239–51.

11 It is clear from the World Bank's *World Development Report* (New York: World Bank, 2001) that human security is regarded as an approach complementary to state security: 'Today, security comprises two interrelated concepts: the state's role in protecting its borders from external threats and its role in ensuring "human security" for its citizens under the broader umbrella of human rights.'

12 Heidi Hudson, '"Doing" Security as though Humans Matter: A Feminist Perspective on Gender and the Politics of Human Security', *Security Dialogue*, 36, 2005, pp. 155–74; Sheila Meintjes, Anu Pillay and Meredith Turshen, 'There is No Aftermath for Women', in S. Meintjes, A. Pillay and M. Turshen (eds), *The Aftermath: Women in Post-Conflict Transformation* (London: Zed Books, 2001), pp. 3–18.

13 Commission on Human Security, *Human Security Now* (New York: Commission on Human Security, 2003).

14 Newman, 'Human Security and Constructivism'.

15 United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report* (New York: United Nations, 1994).

16 Commission on Human Security, *Human Security Now*.

17 United Nations, *Women, Peace and Security* (New York, United Nations, 2002).

18 Kari Karamé and Gudrun Bertinussen, *Gendering Human Security: From Marginalisation to the Integration of Women in Peace-Building* (Oslo: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs and Fafo Institute for Applied Social Science, 2001).

19 Christine Chinkin, 'Peace Processes, Post-Conflict Security and Women's Human Rights: The International Context Considered', 9th Torkel Opsahl Memorial Lecture, Democratic Dialogue, Belfast, 2004.

20 Sabina Alkire, *A Conceptual Framework for Human Security* (Oxford: Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity, 2002); Gunhild Hoogensen and Svein Vigeland Rottem, 'Gender Identity and the Subject of Security', *Security Dialogue*, 35, 2004, pp. 155–71; Human Security Centre, *Human Security Report* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 2005).

21 Mary Caprioli, 'Democracy and Human Rights versus Women's Security: A Contradiction?', *Security Dialogue*, 35, 2004, pp. 411–28.

22 Beth Woroniuk, *Women's Empowerment in the Context of Human Security* (Bangkok: UN/OECD, 1999).

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26 Gopinath and DasGupta, 'Structural Challenges'.

27 For contributions to this field of commentary, see Mary Jane Fox, 'Girl Soldiers: Human Security and Gendered Insecurity', *Security Dialogue*, 35, 2004, pp. 465–79; Hudson, '"Doing" Security', pp. 155–74; Paul Higate and Marsha Henry, 'Engendering (In)security in Peace Support Operations', *Security Dialogue*, 35, 2004, pp. 481–98; and Gopinath and DasGupta, 'Structural Challenges'.

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