



COMPREHENDING GENDER AND PEACEBUILDING: AN ANALYSIS OF ELISABETH PORTER'S WRITINGS

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Abstract

The main objective to review this book is to understand the reality of the issues of women's peacebuilding. The primary focus of the book is on vulnerable women living in war zones that are transitioning from existing violence to new democratic and peaceful frameworks. The book further discusses formal and informal peace processes during the pre-conflict, during the conflict, and post-conflict transitions and is written to be relevant to all peacebuilders. As the book author Elizabeth Porter highlights positive examples of women's peacebuilding in comparative international contexts, she, critically questions these accepted and entrenched dualisms that prevent meaningful reconciliation. It also investigates the harm caused by the 'other' and the significance of recognition, inclusion, and tolerance. This book provides a better understanding of the gravity of the issues and problems associated with peacebuilding. In this book, she has tried to articulate many of the theories underlying the concept of peacebuilding. It also provides many concrete examples of significant short-term and long-term programs, policies, and practices that help build and sustain meaningful peace, most importantly peacebuilding practices. Appreciate her efforts to highlight gender equality and her efforts to confirm it at the end of the book should be appreciated. Also, since she has written the book from secondary sources, it seems that she has a good understanding of the literature on peace and peacebuilding. As a result, it appears that this book has been largely successful as a result of Elisabeth Porter's generous efforts to build peace and explain how to maintain peace in a very sustainable way.

Keywords: *feminism, international relations and peacebuilding, peacekeeping, peacemaking*

Introduction

Peacebuilding has remained crucial from time immemorial. From the earliest of times, when efforts were made to resolve conflicts, to more modern periods where world wars ravaged large areas of the planet, peacebuilding was and continues to remain a critical factor. The focus on gender, especially in the 21st century has resulted in much debate with many voices contributing to the debate. Elisabeth Porter, in her seminal work, *Peacebuilding: Women in International Perspective*, aims to clarify key ideas and practices underlying peacebuilding, which is defined as formal and informal peace processes that take place before, during, and after a conflict. She also tries to highlight the common differences between peacebuilders.



Literature Review

This review is based on Porter's book "Peace Building: Women in International Perspective"(2007) and to strengthen the research topic, UN Security Council Resolution 1325, "Peace and Security: Implications for Women" by Porter and Mundkur (2012) and Klot (2011) review of the provided book being considered. At the same time to bring a good understanding of Gender Ann Tickner's "Gender in International Relations" book is being also reviewed together with various publications with regard to peace and gender equality. Finally, this paper tries to provide a general overview of Potter's 2007 book.

Book Review

This research analyzes Porter's contribution to the debate and how it has induced dialogue and thereby generated attention to the need to improve women's role in peacebuilding policies. This is where women have a role to play in policy formulation and in policy implementation. Porter's writings have been contested but the debate remains important for the field of study.

Porter believes that peace and security truly became concerns in the post-9/11 era. In 2005, 82 countries were at risk of instability or conflict. While men, women, and children were all affected by war, the specific experience of conflict and immense pain differed when it came to women. Therefore, her writings focus on women living in areas prone to war or transnational societies moving away from states of violence to democratic and peaceful structures. Porter has been able to provide an overview of the conflicts and triggers of those disputes and other modern war-related issues. Further, she examines concepts that are crucial to peacebuilding regardless of gender and considers rarely acknowledged examples of women's contribution to peacebuilding, especially concerning United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. In the aftermath of the post-conflict period, she pays special attention to children, women, and the repatriation, resettlement, rehabilitation, and reunification of those in need and consideration of special needs for reconciliation. Furthermore, Porter focuses on the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of "All Forms of Discrimination against Women" (CEDAW) optional protocol and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, and the progress of Security Council Resolution 1325 with illustrative examples and gaps to be filled but not just through this resolution.

Former UN Secretary-General Kofi A. Annan's foreword to 'Women, Peace and Security' (2002) gives a clearer picture of the main topic than that which Porter explains, (Porter, 2007, pp. 26-27, as cited in Annan, 2002). Another important aspect of her writing is that she dispels the myth that depicts war and conflict in gendered terms to reveal their significance. It explains the harm of polarization, which has been entrenched since 9/11, when President Bush uttered the now infamous, "if you're not with us, you're against us" ultimatum, with devastating ramifications for marginalized groups.



Additionally, Porter emphasizes what pushes men to engage in Gender Based Violence (GBV), assisting in post-conflict peacebuilding. It would be helpful to address masculinity in a manner that makes men feel included in programmers' "Programs Gender-Based Violence". However, her assessment of the implementation of the Security Council resolution might be incorrect as its success is attributed to a diverse coalition of peace and women's activists (Klot, 2011). Porter has not given due respect to men's education, rather emphasizing women affected by conflict, overlooking the main resolution because educating men can resolve many problems affecting women as only then gender equality, human rights, and peace could be established in conflict zones. In addition, men are more inclined to win in any argument, and women are marginalized owing to coercion and other ways. The specialty here, as Porter notes, is that most women are forced to participate against their choice. An example is the LTTE's conscription of women and children as troops during Sri Lanka's ethnic war (International Crisis Group, 2017, p.7), (Roberts, 2013/2019, pp. 65–67).

Porter emphasizes why dualism; idealism/realism, international order/national security, internal/external, public/private, civil society/barbarism, cosmopolitanism/particularism, global politics/nation-state, intervention/ sovereignty, hero/victim, and peace/war, as well as traditional philosophical dualisms such as maleness/femaleness, men/women, reason/passion, political/personal, public/private, objectivity/subjectivity, and logic/intuition (p.44) are harmful to feminisms and feminist ethics; first ethic, women's lives in their full myriad of variety, second ethic, feminist ethics interrogates the male privileging of what constitutes security and insecurity, what the conditions are for sustainable peace and how to overcome women's exclusion from negotiating tables, third ethic, it proposes alternatives that emphasize personal experience, relationships, context and nurtures (p.56) which are not compatible with International Relations. Besides the importance of defining dualism, her defense of the politics of compassion and general issues such as inclusion, tolerance, mutual respect, compassion, justice, quality, and forgiveness for a peaceful world, is repeated throughout her writings (Klot, 2001).

Porter pays special attention to her arguments on violence against women, agreeing with Johann Galtung's influential peace theories of equality, equal rights/dignity, symmetry, reciprocity, diversity, and coexistence. At the same time, Porter highlights, genocide observers in Rwanda have failed to report massive rapes during the genocide, which severely affected women's lives and their dignity because thousands were injured, killed, and raped and hundreds of thousands were displaced (United Nations, n.d.). Further, the spread of rape and sexual violence in Rwanda and former Yugoslavia came to the world's attention after the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia Convention (UN, 1993) identifies Rape and Sexual Violence as a Crime against Humanity since the outbreak of war in 1991. As well she highlights how Russian soldiers raped women with impunity in Chechnya in 2000, In Algeria, armed Islamist groups raped some 5,000 women, and kidnapped and killed some between



1995 and 1998, in East Timor, pro-Indonesian militias and Indonesian soldiers raped many women before 1999 East Timor independence referendum. The same is true in Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Impunity may lead to a quick ceasefire, but in the absence of accountability, violence is frequent and lasting peace is unlikely, Porter insists. At the same time, it should not be forgotten that most of the men who fought between life and death during the war are simply a group of people who followed other people's (political leaders') agendas. Therefore, if Porter talks about gender balance, it is important to mention more men's rights as well because all soldiers are not culprits.

At the same time, she also mentioned a unit called The United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) dedicated to first-gender work in a peacekeeping operation that aims to increase awareness, promote gender equality, and emphasize the distinct effects of conflict and reconstruction on men and women is notable for gender equality promotions. Simultaneously a gender sub-committee was established in June 2002 by the Government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka, fully supported by Norway, to develop gender-sensitive policies. The LTTE and the government have considered the following points for the full implementation of SCR 1325 at the request of women; the substantive issues of violence and sexual violence; refugees and internally displaced women; the protection of the rights of women during resettlement; rights in the possession of homes, land, and title; war widows; the families of detainees; the families of the disappeared; the families of soldiers; combatants; provision of food; housing; clean water; health care; education; trauma counseling and etc. but not a single woman negotiator were in the peace process in Sri Lanka. Nevertheless, the attempt to address gender-sensitive issues is important as Porter states that women are disproportionately affected by the consequences of war.

In addition, the focus has changed at the beginning of the book: "Not all women are natural peacemakers, and some women are aggressive fighters" (Porter, 2007, p. 3 as cited in Alison, 2006). There Porter makes notes of countries such as Nicaragua, Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe, etc. referring to the contribution of girls to the struggles in these countries over the past decade. As originally written, (even corrected on page 3), a misconception about the behavior of women comes first, hence this has a somewhat negative effect on women. Therefore, the author should not omit this reference in the introduction as Porter may think to bring it to balance. Instead, Porter should have stated "Since women's participation in conflict areas is based on coercion, many women seem to be impulsive, suppressing their lust, like in Namibia, Sierra Leone, etc." to, bring a balance in a positive manner

Porter notes that many personal and cultural barriers exist to women's participation in peace-building, but overlooks the nature of corruption of political institutions, the disregard for human rights, and religious barriers. There seems to be disrespect for gender equality, but due respect has been given to the theories like primordial when giving solutions to disputes. Porter contends that part of



acknowledging the reality of the past is calling evil for what it is and claiming responsibility for evil. Further, she argues that those who have been wounded can choose to resist, leap over, or set their forgiving limits, and that forgiveness can promote healing if a person is ready but all of these are general facts known to all (pp. 127-183).

Comparing this book with “Peace and Security: Implications for Women” by Porter and Mundkur (2012), the 2012 book is more coherent than Porter’s 2007 work; Porter and Mundkur ensure credibility as they refer to primary sources, which is lacking in Porter’s 2007 writings that rely more on secondary sources. This book focused on many issues based on feminist ethics but remains a very descriptive book that expresses too many things at once, hence the reader has to struggle in grasping the details on each page. However, Porter tries to prove that there is a very slow recognition of gender equality and women’s contribution to conflict resolution. There she highlights when women and girls are treated unfairly and discriminatorily based on their sex, they are not given what they deserve, which is their dignity. Porter should give attention that these problems occurred not only for women but also for men (ex: in Afghanistan involving child sexual abuse through “Dancing Boys-Bacha Bazi” (Knappenberger, 2021), (Kapur, 2014) and there are many men in the world who are also marginalized and persecuted.

Porter, through her writing, and in particular through her 2007 publication tried to increase attention, and ensure that emphasis was placed on women in peacebuilding by looking at the process in connection with the UN Security Council Resolution 1325; how efforts need to be made to overcome the harm of polarization; the role of recognition and inclusion; the significance of justice and compassion; the place of memory and truth; and the importance of reconciliation and differences. Porter's book comes to a very intriguing conclusion. She then pointed out that for reconciliation to be more than just a slogan, women and men must participate in all phases of peace-building. A politics of compassion can be built with spaces of harmony and mutual regard for equal respect by embracing the vast diversity of humanity. While Porter has tried to make a noteworthy contribution, there may be challenges to her writing as well. However, it is important that attention has been placed on the role of women in peacebuilding in general.

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