G

Gender and Violence

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Synonyms

Colonialism; Internationalism; Middle East; Patri-
archy; Race; Revolutionary feminism; Social rela-
tions; Solidarity; State violence; War

Definition

In understanding the relationship between gender,
violence and imperialism the key question is:
What social relations (re)produce, sustain, or at
times adjust, violence against women? We may
also ask: How should we make sense of the
incomprehensible acts of killing, raping,
harassing, or defacing girls and women in public
or private spaces; or comprehend the burden of
discrimination, inequality, displacement, dispos-
session, war, occupation, or militarisation on
women? In addressing these questions, imperial-
ism appears as the core co-ordinating force of a
wide range of social, political, and economic rela-
tions. This analytical framework calls for a leap in
our understanding of imperialism and its co-con-
stituent relations with patriarchal and racialised
capitalist structures of power. This analysis treats
imperialism not as an abstract category, but rather
as capitalist social relations which is profoundly
classed, gendered racialised, and globalised, and
understands it as a set of complex and contradic-
tory social relations with *very* tangible impacts on
women's lives locally and globally.

In this essay, the concept of imperialism is
historicised as a feature of capitalism formed in
the course of transition from its commercial,
laissez-faire to the current monopoly stage based
on finance capital, leading to enormous concen-
trations and expansions of power in economy,
politics, culture, and ideology. Imperialism is
thus not understood as a spatial/geographical
thing, but as a set of complex social relations
where local and global structures of power con-
tinuously influence and (re)shape each other. Vio-
lence, in this essay, includes both individual and
structural forms, and is a *universal* form of gender
power relations with the propensity to develop
particular characteristics in different spaces and
places based on norms, values, traditions, cul-
tures, modes of social relations, and historical
epoch. In this sense, imperialism subsumes ele-
ments of capitalist patriarchies *universally* but
transforms them relatively, considering the *par-
ticularity* of each situation.

Another core argument in this essay is that
capitalism has enormous power to organise and
institutionalise violence against women through
mechanisms of consent and force. This dual char-
acteristic of capitalism forces it to enter into a
symbiotic relationship with other social forces

(nationalist, religious, and racialised patriarchies) to create, sustain, and perpetuate violence against women. The specific imperialist forms of violence against women are largely entrenched in this collusion and are exercised at the levels of the state and civil society. Therefore, more than other social formations, violence against women in imperialism is structural and ideological with global reach. The scale and intensity of violence under imperialist capitalism has connected the struggle of women for justice and freedom globally. It has also reawakened feminist-anti-imperialist consciousness and the need for international solidarity to a level unprecedented in the history of capitalism. The two main sections of this essay will highlight women's global experience with violence in state and civil society, and will conclude with women's contemporary challenges in building a platform for global resistance against patriarchal imperialism.

Gender-based violence has exploded globally. Reports covering wide-ranging acts of violence against women have populated social media and policy debates. These reports, mostly prepared by women's groups, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), United Nations agencies, and supranational agencies such as the World Bank or human rights organisations, speak to the persistence and/or (re)emergence of interpersonal and structural forms of violence against women on a global scale. The public outrage and the efforts of courageous women globally to stop violence have had limited impact on its eradication. Paradoxically, the perseverance of gender-based violence is taking place in the context of the explosion of feminist knowledge and activism on this topic (see Lentin 1999; Steger and Lind 1999; Weldon 2002). It appears that the more we know about violence against women and the more inventive we are in our strategies to stop it, the more it (re)appears in all aspects of women's lives. Thus, the key question remains: What social relations (re)produce, sustain, or at times adjust, violence against women? We may also ask: How should we make sense of the incomprehensible acts of killing, raping, harassing, or defacing girls and women in public or private spaces; or comprehend the burden of discrimination, inequality,

displacement, dispossession, war, occupation, or militarisation on women? In addressing these questions, imperialism appears as the core co-ordinating force of a wide range of social, political, and economic relations. This analytical framework calls for a leap in our understanding of imperialism and its co-constituent relations with patriarchal and racialised capitalist structures of power. This analysis treats imperialism not as an abstract category, but rather as capitalist social relations which is profoundly classed, gendered racialised, and globalised, and understands it as a set of complex and contradictory social relations with *very* tangible impacts on women's lives locally and globally.

In this essay, the concept of imperialism is historicised as a feature of capitalism formed in the course of transition from its commercial, laissez-faire to the current monopoly stage based on finance capital, leading to enormous concentrations and expansions of power in economy, politics, culture, and ideology. Imperialism is thus not understood as a spatial/geographical *thing,* but as a set of complex social relations where local and global structures of power continuously influence and (re)shape each other. To put it differently, imperialism is an intricate system of capitalist accumulation, one that is neither the simple sum of its parts nor a purely geographic phenomenon, but rather constitutes a complex network of relations with its own systemic dynamics. However, imperialism should not be reduced to 'capitalism on a world scale' or 'globalisation'; nor is imperialism is the same thing as colonialism. Violence, in this essay, includes both individual and structural forms, and is a *universal* form of gender power relations with the propensity to develop *particular* characteristics in different spaces and places based on norms, values, traditions, cultures, modes of social relations, and historical epoch. In this sense, imperialism subsumes elements of capitalist patriarchies *universally* but transforms them relatively, considering the *particularity* of each situation.

Building on Zillah Eisenstein's groundbreaking anthology *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism* (1979) and Maria Mies's influential work on *Patriarchy and Capital*

Accumulation on a World Scale (1986), there are two core arguments in this essay. First, there is global violence against women, to the extent that we can claim there is a 'war-on-women' (to evoke the imagery of 'war-on-terror' or 'war-on-drugs'). This is not a 'cultural' war, though cultural differences enact violence on women differentially. In other words, and to stress, culture per se is not the root cause of violence. Eisenstein proposed that to grasp the origin and the function of modern capitalist patriarchy, we should approach 'the mutual dependence of capitalism and patriarchy' dialectically. She wrote, 'Capitalist patriarchy, by definition, breaks through the dichotomies of class and sex, private and public spheres, domestic and wage labour, family and economy, personal and political, and ideology and material conditions' (Eisenstein 1979, p. 23). Mies, following Eisenstein almost a decade later, argued that the origin of contemporary violence against women is in capitalism; however, it manifests specific enough characteristics to set it apart from the violence women experienced under slavery or feudalism. She wrote (Mies 1986, p. 169):

> In the centers of the capitalist market economies, the expropriated *men* were turned into the new class of 'free' wage-earners, who own nothing but their labour power. But as *owners* of their labour power, they formally belong to the category of bourgeois 'free' citizens, who are defined as those who *own property,* and who can thus enter into contractual relationship with each other on the basis of the principle of exchange of values equivalent. Therefore, the proletarian *men* could be seen as historical subjects, as free persons...
>
> The women, however, have never been defined as free historical subjects in a bourgeois sense. They themselves, their whole person, their labour, their emotionality, their children, their body, their sexuality, were not their own but belonged to their husband. They *were* property; therefore, following the formal logic of capitalism, they could not be owners of property. (emphasis all in original)

The notion of 'property' in Mies's articulation is crucial for our understanding of the (re)production of violence against women in imperialist capitalism. In this sense 'property' means the *logic* of capital to own women's labour power and women's bodies as the reproducer of one's own labour power and the human species (for an

intensive theoretical discussion of capitalism, women, labour power, work and reproduction, see Barrett 1980; Dalla Costa and James 1973; Ebert 1996; Federici 2012; Fortunati 1989; James 2012; Weeks 2011). At the core of current imperialist forms of violence against women is the intensification of the scale of propertied women's bodies and sexuality that require further explication.

My second core argument is that capitalism has enormous power to organise and institutionalise violence against women through mechanisms of consent and force. This dual characteristic of capitalism forces it to enter into a symbiotic relationship with other social forces (nationalist, religious, and racialised patriarchies) to create, sustain, and perpetuate violence against women. The specific imperialist forms of violence against women are largely entrenched in this collusion and are exercised at the levels of the state and civil society. Therefore, more than other social formations, violence against women in imperialism is structural and ideological with global reach. In other words, imperialist forms of violence are *violence of scale* and *violence of intensification*.

The scale and intensity of violence under imperialist capitalism has connected the struggle of women for justice and freedom globally. It has also reawakened feminist-anti-imperialist consciousness and the need for international solidarity to a level unprecedented in the history of capitalism. The two main sections of this essay will highlight women's global experience with violence in state and civil society, and will conclude with women's contemporary challenges in building a platform for global resistance against patriarchal imperialism.

Imperialism and the 'War-on-Women'

I use 'war-on-women' as a metaphor to capture the extent of imperialist forms of violence against women. The imperialist 'war-on-women' is masculinised, militarised, and culturalised. It is happening in the state, the market, and civil society; in short, it is structural and ideological. The discussion in this section is organised under two

broad categories of 'state' and 'civil society' with the full understanding of interconnectedness of these two spheres of social relations where they reinforce and (re)produce racial, sexual, and class power relations. Therefore some level of repetition and overlapping of ideas is to be expected under these categories.

State Violence

The emergence of capitalism created major transformations in the division of labour worldwide. During the 'primitive accumulation' of the early stages of capitalism in Western Europe and its colonies, agrarian labour, usually under conditions of serfdom, was separated from the means of production and transformed into wage labour. This process replaced the rural subsistence economy based on production-for-use with the capitalist economy of production-for-value. This new mode of production appropriated and transformed the sexual division of labour, and thus thrived on the accumulation of value through slavery and women's labour and reproductive power. At the same time, the population of indigenous hunting-and-gathering societies found in Africa, the Americas, Oceania, and other territories was transformed into slave labour and appropriated directly, especially in the British and Spanish colonies of the Americas (Bhavnani 2001; Federici 2004; Linebaugh and Rediker 2000; Midgley 1998; Mies 1986; Smith 2005).

The international system in the imperialist era is full of contradictions between imperialist powers and colonised countries/peoples, between major imperialist powers and minor ones, even between continents, Europe and Africa, rich and poor countries. The organising of this international system is rooted in violence, including the two World Wars, which started in Europe. Women participated in these wars, but they were also raped and turned into 'comfort women,' for instance in Japan, to satisfy the demands of patriarchal nationalism and the sexual desire of patriarchal militarism (Enloe 2000; Soh 2009; Tanaka 2009).

Feminist theorists have argued that the capitalist state or nation states are patriarchal systems where the exercise of state power is also the exercise of masculine structural violence and coercion through which women are oppressed and exploited (Bannerji 1999; Jayawardena 1986; Jayawardena and De Alwis 1996; Joseph 2000; Moghadam 1994; Narayan and Harding 2000; Pettman 1999; Smith 2005; Walby 1992; Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989; Yuval-Davis and Werbner 1999). The patriarchal capitalist state consists of institutions such as the military, police, prison, and law, which enable the state to institutionalise and organise forms of violence against women. Through the functioning of these institutions, the capitalist state gains the monopoly of violence (INCITE n.d.). Let us consider, as an example, the imprisonment of women in the US. Browne and Lichter show that in the early history of the US imperialism, women were imprisoned for failing to conform '. . . to cultural norms of the feminine ideal' (Browne and Lichter 2001, p. 613). They argue that most of these women were under the age of 25 and their crimes included '"moral offenses" such as stubbornness, idleness, disorderly conduct, serial premarital pregnancies, keeping bad company, adultery, and venereal disease. Women and girls also were punished for being sexually molested or raped' (ibid.). Reporting the result of a study that Browne and Miller conducted in the 1990s at New York State's Maximum Security Prison for women, they observe that (ibid., p. 618):

> . . .the majority of incarcerated women in this setting had suffered severe violence, sexual attack, or sexual molestation prior to their incarceration. Women in the study were an average age of 32; about half were African American, one-quarter were Hispanic, and 13% were White non-Hispanic. Over two-thirds (70%) had been severely assaulted by at least one caretaker during childhood, over half (59%) had been sexually molested before reaching adulthood, and nearly three-quarters (37%) had been physically assaulted by an intimate partner. Three-quarters had been the victim of physical or sexual attacks by non-intimates as well. When all forms of violence were combined, only 6% of these women had not experienced physical or sexual assault over their lifetime. (emphasis in original)

Other studies have similar findings. The same pattern of a masculine patriarchal law-enforcing

mechanism is being experienced by Aboriginal women in Canada. They comprise 4% of the total population, but they comprise 34% of the prison population (Canadian Human Rights Commission 2003). This number increased by about 90% in one decade between 2002 and 2012. Women's incarceration is an instance of state structural violence, which is an integral part of capitalist sex, class, and race relations (Sudbury 2005).

Women's bodies are the source of instantaneous profit making on a global scale (Chin 2013; Jeffreys 2009; Kempadoo 2005; Kempadoo and Doezema 1998). Joni Seager shows topographically and statistically that the global sex trade is a multi-billion dollar industry (Seager 2003, p. 56). She argues '[T]he global sex trade is sustained by astounding levels of coercion, torture, rape and systematic violence' (ibid.). She also presents us with the astonishing statistics: 'An estimated 50,000 women are trafficked into the USA each year', 'Up to half a million women and children are thought to be trafficked into western Europe each year', and 'Prostitution and sex trafficking represents 2% of GPD in Indonesia and 14% in Thailand' (ibid., p. 57). Commoditisation of women's bodies is a privilege of power. It is exercised by males individually, such as by committing rape at home or on streets. It is also institutionalised, such as rape of women prisoners by prison guards and police or rape of women in refugee camps (Global Migration Group 2008). Massive displacement, forced migration, and sex trafficking of women as a result of military and economic aggression have created a catastrophic level of poverty where women are becoming new slaves (Elshtain 1987; Giles and Hyndman, 2004; Hynes 2004; Meintjes et al. 2001; Nikolic-Ristanovic 2000; Skjelsbæk 2001; Aafjes et al. 1998). Seager states that 'The poorest of the poor are women' and they 'not only bear the brunt of poverty, they bear the brunt of "managing" poverty: as providers or caretakers of their families, it is women's labour and women's personal austerity that typically compensate for diminished resources of the family or household' (Seager 2003, p. 86).

Poverty is also racialised: women of colour, migrant and refugee women, native women, black and Latino women, in particular in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, will constitute the majority of the estimated 1 billion people living in extreme poverty in 2015 (World Bank). To comprehend the racialisation and commoditisation of women's bodies, it is important to remind ourselves of the *inner* contradictory logic of patriarchal imperialism. It has the enormous power to absorb en masse women's labour power to onset global accumulation of wealth, but simultaneously disempower women, cheapen their labour power, enslave their bodies, and create a global condition of precariousness for them where their bodies are dispensable and disposable (Bales 1999; Butler 2004; Feldman et al. 2011).

Imperialist wars serve the purpose of reinforcing and realigning patriarchal, racialised, and colonised capitalist forces. A distinctive feature of imperialism is its dependence on war and militarisation as a mechanism to (re) produce itself and sustain its global hegemony. Imperialist wars in recent decades have penetrated all spheres of life from economy to schools, to borders, refugee camps, culture, and entertainment (Cole 2006; Eisenstein 2007; Moser and Clark 2001; Riley et al. 2008). Women and girl children have suffered greatly in the most complex and contradictory ways by wars. In the decade of the 1990s, the world also witnessed the genocide in Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo, where rape, forced pregnancy of women, sex trafficking, and forced prostitution became part of the machinery of war. Feminist ethnographical studies show that women in war zones are regularly harassed and assaulted on their way to fetch water, get food from the market, or reach the headquarters of international humanitarian aid services where they are often forced to give their bodies to receive food (Moser and Clark 2001; Aafjes et al. 1998). The horrific atrocities committed against women under the conditions of war lead us to conclude that imperialist wars are symbolically and literally fought on and over women's bodies. Women signify land, nation, culture, ethnicity, religion, and community to be captured, controlled, covered, or securitised. They are the

'honour' of the nation and culture; they are the property. They either save or betray the community through the conduct of their body and sexuality as ascribed by the patriarchal and racialised rule.

The Western imperialist powers involved in the former Yugoslavia's war in the 1990s, after intense legal wrangling, finally recognised the systemic use of rape as a 'weapon of war' against women in Bosnia Herzegovina (Giles and Hyndman 2004). As women in Bosnia Herzegovina, Africa, Palestine, and other war-ravaged regions were struggling with the aftermath of the war in refugee camps and more and more became the head of household or widowed, or were pulled into informal war economy, the imperialist powers were preparing for other wars. This time, though, women were used to justify war. To 'liberate' women in Afghanistan and Iraq and to install 'democracy' in the Middle East became the imperialist raison d'être to further plunder the region (Abu-Lughod 2002; Chishti 2010; Hirschkind and Mahmood 2005; Russo 2006; Stabile and Kumar 2005). The 1991 and 2003 US wars on Iraq and the 2001 attack on Afghanistan were, much like those of the colonial past, in pursuit of economic, military, and political interests of European and US imperialist powers (Klein 2007). Not surprisingly, imperialist wars helped the re-traditionalisation, re-tribalisation, and re-primordialisation of these societies (Mojab 2010). In other words, the imperialist wars and occupation created conditions in which the tamed feudal and religious patriarchal forces, which had been suppressed by the emerging capitalist, nationalist, secularist, and modernist states since the early twentieth century, were resurrected and (re)emerged with a vengeance. However, the presence of foreign occupying troops, lack of security, violation of human dignity, the rise in poverty, government corruption, in short the disappearance of the social in its totality, unleashed the force of patriarchy and legitimised the fierce controlling, disciplining, and punishing of women and girls by internal/native and external/foreign patriarchal forces (Al-Ali and Pratt 2009; Zangana 2007).

The purpose of citing prison, poverty, and war as forms of state violence is to make visible the scale and intensification with which capitalist patriarchy has gendered, racialised, and sexualised its imperialist domination. The hegemonic relations are established through the dual mechanism of consent and coercion. The capitalist patriarchal order utilises ideology, culture, and law to hold up the weight of its structural violence. For example, patriarchal capitalism has the capacity to execute legal reform to ameliorate gender, race, and class differences. In 'essence', though, the legal reform 'formalises' state violence through legitimising the dominance of the patriarchal, sexualised and racialised class in power. In other words, the ruling class has monopolised the state, in particular its instruments of political suppression and the legal system. This reality raises a serious consideration for the feminist anti-imperialist and anti-violence strategy: Is this colossal power reformable? If it is, would not legal reform inevitably lead us back into the very framework of the system which is fundamentally the cause of women's oppression and exploitation? To confront white-male hetero-normative dominance in the institutions of the state or in the military, some feminist activists and scholars have proposed 'feminisation' of these institutions. These debates undoubtedly have slightly improved gender, sexual, and racial discrimination, but one may argue that they have failed to eliminate violence but have added women, people of colour, and Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) persons to the hierarchy of these institutions. Cynthia Enloe's study of the militarisation of women's lives raises an important quandary: Do we make the military more equitable or do we militarise equality by legislating the rights of racial and sexual minorities to the military (Enloe 2000). To better grasp this dynamic (that is, the elasticity and proclivity of capitalist patriarchy to reform), let us think through its function within civil society.

Civil Society and Violence

Feminist theories have clearly shown that much gender violence is also committed outside the sphere of the state; that is, in civil society. Yet the state mediates and regulates patriarchal violence against women (Fraser 1997; MacKinnon 1989). Civil society encompasses a wide array of social and ideological structures such as family, Church, media, and education. Contrary to the liberal notion of civil society as a 'third space' mediating between state and market, I understand it as an embodiment of racial, class, and gender power relations with strong ties to both the state and market. Therefore, civil society is not an autonomous space, free from the exercise of patriarchal capitalist forces. In the private sphere of home, Seager argues, 'Women suffer cruelties,' and 'For millions of women, the home is the most dangerous place they could be' (Seager 2003, p. 26). The Canadian Women's Foundation reports (Canadian Women's Foundation 2013, p. 2):

> On any given day in Canada, more than 3,300 women (along with their 3,000 children) are forced to sleep in an emergency shelter to escape domestic violence. Every night, about 200 women are turned away because the shelters are full.... As of 2010, there were 582 known cases of missing or murdered Aboriginal women in Canada. Both Amnesty International and the United Nations have called upon the Canadian government to take action on this issue, without success.... In a 2009 Canadian national survey, women reported 460,000 incidents of sexual assault in just one year.

A similar pattern emerges in other regions of the world to the extent that the United Nations' 2010 *The World's Women* reports on violence against women as a universal phenomenon which appears in the particular forms of physical violence committed by intimate partners, sexual molestation and assault, femicide, and female genital mutilation (United Nations 2010). The report, addressing the role of media, argues 'Images in the media of violence against women – especially those that depict rape, sexual slavery or the use of women and girls as sex objects, including pornography – are factors contributing to the continued prevalence of such violence, adversely influencing the community at large, in particular children

and young people' (United Nations 2010, p. 127). Other studies also indicate a strong link between pornography and sexual abuse and marital rapes (Bergen 1998). Hearn suggests that '...virtual violences in intimacy through ICTs, such as forced use of pornography, use of pornography with children, digi-bullying, cyberstalking, internet harassment, "happy slapping", threatening blogging ... use of sex dolls, sex robots and teledildonics creates further possibilities for violence and abuse' (Hearn 2013). The point of reiterating, albeit briefly, the result of some of the statistical or analytical studies on forms of violence committed against women in the sphere of home, or on internet and media, is to show the boundless patriarchal capitalist attempt to enslave women's bodies and sexuality. The issue to consider is not only the matter of spatiality of violence (that is, private/public or state/market/civil society spheres), it is rather the scope and intensity of the imperialist 'war-on-women' globally.

Let us consider a different setting for the exercise of 'ideological' or 'cultural' violence against women. The imperialist wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were conducted primarily through high-tech military assault. However, the imperialist powers, led by the US, also undertook a cultural and ideological invasion through expansive 'post-war reconstruction' projects with 'democracy promotion' as its ideological core (Mojab 2009, 2011; Mojab and Carpenter 2011). The training of women to 'manage' and reassemble the society in ruins, and funding their activism in a variety of NGOs, replicated the historical process of co-opting social movements through funding mechanisms and reinventing racist, colonialist, orientalist, and imperialist feminist praxis (Amos and Parmar 2005; INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence 2007). Imperialist feminisms entered the scene of 'post-war reconstruction' with goals to 'liberate' and promote 'democracy' through 'women empowerment'. Their function is to legitimise militarised imperialist foreign policy based on the accumulation of wealth by dispossession. More significantly, they realign the foreign and domestic policy on controversial matters such as morality, family, sexuality, or women's reproductive rights. The renewed imperialist feminist

tendencies in the last few decades have achieved three main goals. First, they have trans-nationalised religious-fundamentalist patriarchy. Second, they has relativised, localised, pragmatised women's struggle against patriarchal capitalism. Finally, they have discredited feminism globally and thus made the building of a revolutionary and internationalist feminist anti-imperialist project an insurmountable task. Financial, political, and ideological dependency on imperialist feminism have contributed to a culture of spontaneity, corruption, class animosity and rivalry of masculine-capitalism among women's organisations and activists. More significantly, they has depoliticised, institutionalised, bureaucratised, and fragmented the women's movement to the extent that the struggle against feudal-religious-capitalist patriarchy, or women's resistance against militarisation and securitisation, has been limited to vacuous human rights discourse and reform of legal structure. This point will be further expanded below.

In this context, military experts in collaboration with some political scientists and anthropologists produced new literature arguing for a closer link between 'postwar reconstruction' projects, civil society, and humanitarian-aid efforts with the armed forces (Natsios 2005). The *U.S. Army/ Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual* (with a foreword by David H. Petraeus, James F. Amos, and John A. Nagl and with an introduction by Sarah Sewall) attracted huge interest when it was published in 2007. In 2008, it was downloaded 2 million times (see Biddle 2008, pp. 347–350). In the history of the academic publishing industry, it was the first time that a university-based publisher had published an army manual. The seeds of the idea of the collaboration of military and civil society were cultivated in the Bush Administration National Security Strategy (released in 2002), in which 'development' was one of the 'three strategic areas of emphasis (along with diplomacy and defense). . .' (Natsios 2005, p. 4). The release of this document drew attention to the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the major player in the 'post-war reconstruction' projects in Afghanistan and Iraq. Based on the strategy of 'defence, diplomacy, and

development', in the same year (2002) the Bush Administration announced an umbrella programme of reform called the Middle East Partnership Initiatives (MEPI), covering the area from Morocco to Pakistan. Zaki Salime argues that: 'MEPI followed a political rationality of "soft" reforms through enhancement of citizen-entrepreneurship, women's empowerment, and capacity building of "civil society," as a means to uproot "terrorism" and spread "democracy"'. She contends that MEPI, 'has also mobilized funds to support NGOs and provide training for women, youth, entrepreneurs, and political players' (Salime 2010; 2011, pp. 215, 218). Thus, ideas of civil society, and NGOs, in particular women's NGOs, were promoted as venues for establishing capitalist democracy, in which the absolute rule of the patriarchal state would be realigned with the absolute rule of the patriarchal market/ privatisation and capitalist 'democracy' to strengthen the condition of oppression and exploitation for women (for a comprehensive critique of the NGO-isation of women's movement in Palestine post-Oslo peace process, see Abdo 2010; Hanafi and Tabar 2003).

The position of women is varied within and between different societies, and while there is certainly more that we need to learn about the extent of atrocities committed against women in each society, there are two arguments to be made. First, the state response to demands of women for a safe, equal, free, and just life are protracted over decades. Weldon, in her cross-national comparison study of democratic governments' response to violence against women writes, 'Although some national governments reformed rape laws or began funding shelters in the mid-1970s, many countries did not begin to address the problem of violence against women until the latter half of the 90s, and many more only in the first half of the 1990s' (Weldon 2002, p. 19). She emphasises that without a strong women's movement, this level of policy and legal reform would not have been achieved (2002, p. 61). In the 'Introduction' of the influential anthology *The Color of Violence* (Women of Color Against Violence 2006, p. 1), we read:

> However, as the antiviolence movement has gained greater prominence, domestic violence and rape crisis centers have also become increasingly professionalized, and as a result are often reluctant to address sexual and domestic violence within the larger context of institutionalized violence. In addition, rape crisis centres and shelters increasingly rely on state and federal sources for their funding. Consequently, their approaches toward eradicating violence focus on working *with* the state rather than working *against* the state. (emphasis in original)

The allusion to 'professionalization' and 'working *with* the state' above are significant for this discussion. Critical feminist studies show that the co-opting of women's movements within the state and international institutions such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and UN-based gender agencies, or other philanthropic foundations since the 1970s have depoliticised, institutionalised, bureaucratised, and fragmented women's movements worldwide. The imperialist agenda of import/export of patriarchal networks, networks that include corporations, NGOs and humanitarian agencies, religious institutions, military and security forces, and cultural organisations have transnationalised capitalist patriarchy in such a way that there is little escape for women.

Second, since the 11 September 2001 terrorist attack against the US, and the subsequent wars in the Middle East and North Africa, in some significant respects imperialist wars have interconnected and interrelated the oppression and exploitation of women in ways unparalleled in history. They have revived and realigned pre- and post-colonial tribal, religious, national, and sectarian grievances, disputes, and conflicts throughout most of Asia and Africa. Religions have taken a central stage in public lives, and thus secular space is shrinking globally (Amireh 2012; Moghissi 2013). Religious doctrines, from Islam to Christianity, Judaism, or Hinduism, are governing women's bodies, sexuality, and gender relations. Regimes of 'gender apartheid' are established in Saudi Arabia (since its inception in 1932), in Iran (1979), Afghanistan and Iraq (2003). Women's rights are continuously violated which include their right to property, inheritance, child custody, or free choice in marriage, reproductive rights, education, employment, travel, and

a life free from sexual harassment at home, schools, workplaces or on the streets. The widespread rape, sexual harassment, domestic violence, 'honour killing', or humiliation and degradation are embedded in the social relations and the prevailing religious and cultural practices that women experience daily (Bennoune 2013; Reed 2002). Religious groups have joined forces to stop, protract, and reverse the outcome of more than a century of women's resistance against patriarchal and colonial capitalist domination. The alliance of religious forces at the UN-sponsored global conferences on women since the 1970s (Mexico, 1974; Copenhagen, 1980; Nairobi, 1985; Beijing, 1995) has dragged down the demands of women to safe and free access to abortion, contraception, and the right to same-sex marriage. The notions of 'culture' and 'diversity' have been evoked in these settings by the state representatives to legitimise the rule of 'local', 'particular' patriarchy. The logic of 'cultural authenticity' and at times anti-Western or anti-imperialist rhetoric is being used by the state and civil-society sector to preserve the right of the particular nation state to misogynistic religious practices.

A characteristic of today's imperialism is the convergence of its domestic and international relations. For instance, 'War-on-Terror' is an instantiation of the overlap of domestic and international forms of co-dependency in surveillance, racialisation, incarceration, or policing. The cyclical crisis of capitalist economy since the 1980s has incorporated surveillance, security, and incarceration into public policy (Feldman et al. 2011). There is an emphasis on disciplining and punishing the public, in particular women, youth, aboriginal peoples, poor, and people of colour, through such mechanisms as 'War-on-Terror' or 'War-on-Drugs'. Angela Davis argues that the 'Prison Industrial Complex' is a new addition to the 'Military Industrial Complex' (1998). The disciplining apparatus of the state is extensively privatised, militarised, and has turned the securitisation and incarceration of people into profit. The migrant and refugee women, the sex trafficking of women, raising wired borders between the US and Mexico or building

'separation walls' in Israel and 'normalising' the right of the state to securitise citizens in border crossing or in schools are forms of racialised and genderised violence (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2009). 'War-on-Terror' policy absorbs public resources and (re)forms the crisis of patriarchal capitalist economy through the process of privatisation. 'War-on-Terror' is a violent model to inscribe law and order in 'lawless' capitalist-imperialist social order where, as Colin Dayan suggests, 'law is a white dog' (Dayan 2011). She traces the legacy of slavery in the contemporary US supermax prison facilities and shows the way the legal system on matters such as torture and punishment prepared the way for abuses committed by the US in Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo Bay prisons (ibid.). The policy has shifted attention from the state responsibility for human security to 'terrorism' and thus has targeted women, racialised, sexualised migrants and refugees mostly fleeing conflict zones.

Women are fiercely opposing and struggling against this complex network of patriarchies. Their resistance, courage, and resiliency are extraordinary. They have joined armed forces, and engaged in armed struggles, are combatants, suicide bombers, refugee camp social workers, community organisers, peace activists, refuseniks, humanitarian aid workers, leading protests and marches, and much more. The point is that they are not 'victims'; they participate, protest, dissent and resist in order to put an end to imperialism and its violence.

Anti-imperialism: A Revolutionary Feminist Rupture

Women and girls, day and night, go through the world frequently guarded against physical, sexual, emotional, cultural, religious, or economic assaults. They carry these burdens throughout their lives. Capitalism has produced a complex network of patriarchies to facilitate the accumulation of capital and to maintain social control. Capitalist patriarchy has conflictual and contradictory relations with women. Women are a social force to be managed and engaged with, but they

are also to be controlled, punished, and disciplined. When analysed deeply, one can see remarkable homogeneity in the 'gender project' of patriarchal imperialist order, despite its apparent diversity. Imperialist patriarchy has fragmented women's movements globally and has forced them to become donor-driven; the two forces of fundamentalism and imperialism are driving the global 'gender project', though opposing each other to divert attention away from the struggle around the oppression and exploitation of women. The two belligerent forces of imperialism and fundamentalisms are forcing women into a framework of patriarchal family roles, motherhood, morality and decency, nationalism, and cultural practices to reinforce gender violence. They have transnationalised the apparatuses of punishment and control of women's bodies and sexuality through instruments such as 'War-on-Terror', 'War-on- Drugs', torture, and surveillance.

Under these conditions, some theorists claim that imperialism is in the process of transforming into a new regime called 'Empire', characterised by eroding national borders and a dissolving nation-state system, which will leave the imperial(ist) order without leaders or centre (Hardt and Negri 2000). This is an optimistic, 'post-imperialist' scenario in which sovereignty is deterritorialised, leaving room for increasing mobility of labour, fluidity of capital, on-going migration, and organising on an international level. In this context of the 'withering away' of the nation state, human beings are said to be able to realise the dream of building a world that will turn its back on pillage and piracy and move towards equality and justice. However, developments in the first decade of this century point in a different direction. Although the world order is in a situation of flux, capitalist states today, as in the past, combine the need to cross national borders (for purposes of accumulation) with the urge to maintain spheres of influence (through war and occupation).

The global scene is messy and chaotic. We can conclude that the global explosion of violence against women coincides with the heightened finance capitalism in the past three decades, and

remarkably resembles the globalised violence against the whole of humanity. At the core of current imperialist forms of violence is the intensification of the socialisation of production and the private appropriation of (re)production. At stake is building a global women's movement that can relinquish itself from the restraining forces of reformism, relativism, essentialism, and pragmatism, and set a stage for a renewed revolutionary social transformation.

Cross-References

► Gender Inequality, Imperialism and
► Genocide and Imperialism
► Immigration and Imperialism
► Imperialism and Iraq
► Indigenous People and Imperialism
► Labour, Imperialism and Globalization
► Racism and Imperialism
► Violence and Structural Imperialism
► Women's Rights and Western Imperialism in the Middle East (Focus on Iraq)

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