

BOOK REVIEW

GENDER, CONFLICT, AND PEACEKEEPING

DYAN MAZURANA, ANGELA RAVEN-ROBERTS, AND JANE PARPART.

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By

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With regards to the causes and consequences of armed conflict, peacekeeping and post-conflict reconstruction *Gender, Conflict, and Peacekeeping* focuses on the ways that gender is a central factor in shaping international policies.

Gender relations shape the ways in which women engage in, are affected by, and seek to resolve conflict. This includes ‘the ideology and practice of gender mainstreaming in peace support and peacekeeping operations within the United Nations as well as the constraints that underpin the lack of progress in this process’ (Raven-Roberts, pp. 43-44).

The UN remains the creator and nurturer of ideas and concepts that have permeated international policy discourse seen, in its role toward an opening up of peacekeeping processes.

The contributors’ broad approach gives a detailed explanation of the forces behind the establishment of peacekeeping and intervention at the international level, and the role of gender in these processes.

In this regard, strategic responses to peace negotiations and decisions about post-conflict governance and development priorities sometimes undermine women’s rights or erode gains made in gender relations during conflict.

Furthermore, the tendency to see women primarily as *victims* of violence, particularly sexual violence is another core point highlighted in this book. This tendency often obscures the many other roles they play in provoking and pursuing conflict or building peace. As the contributors point out, women may be combatants or they may provide

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services to combatants. In all, women are more negatively affected by physical harm and loss of property that accompany war and conflict situations.

This book is divided into four sections. By covering all aspects of violence - sexual abuse and trauma, prevention, intervention, peacekeeping operations, judicial issues and more - section I links development to human security.

Section II traces a process that reflects international policy/international laws such as that aimed at ending violence against women during conflict (Valerie Oosterveld, chapter 3).

Section III focuses on the progress and challenges facing peacekeeping operations, for example, in Africa. Heidi Hudson analyzes the intervention of sub-regional African organizations in the realm of peacekeeping, and the implications of incorporating women into these missions (chapter 5).

Section IV highlights the absence of gender in post-conflict peace operations, for example, in Haiti, Bosnia and East Timor (Tracy Fitzsimmons, chapter 9).

The contributors' ability to give the historical backdrop of these developments is commendable. There is indept analysis based on a wealth of written and published reports and scholarly materials that include personal experience and observations, field work, interviews and case studies.

The observation is that this book is a major contribution to the issues related to women's well-being. For example, it is difficult to overcome the debilitating health condition that does not allow an individual to move past a traumatic event of war and conflict situation.

This includes progress in recovery and returning to a more normal life - a condition referred to as 'Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)'. The fact remains that women who face such life-threatening or traumatic situation (s) may have difficulties overcoming their effects, such as sexual violence (pp.4-8).

In an era of war and conflict, terror, violence, abuse, and trauma, the overall priority of this book is on the security of people, especially women's welfare, safety and well-being. However, the marks of a good book include the use of easy to understand language, avoiding overdetailed descriptions, making short sentences and being concise.

These qualities seem to be lacking in this book. For example, the use of many long sentences will tend to confuse a layman/woman seeking to understand the issues raised. Hence, while this book may be of help to activists and policymakers, I would hesitate to recommend it to readers, especially those in the academic profession – teachers.