



NEXTGEN 5.0

The Use of Gender Equality as an Insurgent Tool

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ABOUT US

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INTRODUCTION

As a basis for social organization,¹ gender informs most societal processes, even—perhaps especially—those considered to be “gender-free”.² Though its study has often been neglected,³ gender plays a crucial role in insurgencies, which often promote gender equality (GE) as a secondary goal. However, many insurgencies which promote this aim do not appear to actively work toward it during their campaigns. This essay argues that the gendered construction of insurgencies leads GE to be exploited as a tool to further insurgent aims rather pursued as a singular goal. An examination of six case studies which promote GE reveal three trends by which this occurs: the masculinization of female insurgents, positioning of GE as dependent on success of the primary goal, and exploitation of gender roles for strategic purposes. This essay is divided into five parts. The first examines the limitations of this research; the second outlines the framework used; third, each case study’s connection to GE is detailed; fourth, the three major trends are discussed; and finally, the trends are analysed through the lens of the framework.

LIMITATIONS

A note on restrictions is necessary. Current feminist theory lacks frameworks through which to examine gender dynamics in war;⁴ as such, this essay thus adapts existing feminist theories to create the appropriate model. Further, research on gender and insurgency tends to conflate gender (a relational process)⁵ with women (one aspect of

¹ Lorraine Bayard de Volo, “A Revolution in the Binary? Gender and the Oxymoron of Revolutionary War in Cuba and Nicaragua”, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 37, no.2 (2012): 415.

² Bayard de Volo, “A Revolution”: 415; Rachel Einwohner, Jocelyn Hollander & Toska Olson, “Engendering Social Movements: Cultural Images and Movement Dynamics”, *Gender and Society* 14, no.5 (2000): 681.

³ Einwohner et al., “Engendering”: 679.

⁴ Joshua Goldstein, *War and Gender* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001): 38.

⁵ Shelley Budgeon, “The Dynamics of Gender Hegemony: Femininities, Masculinities and Social Change”, *Sociology* 48, no.2 (2013): 318.

gender).⁶ This problematic trend forces this essay to take a relative focus on the positioning and introduction of women and femininity within insurgency groups. It is acknowledged that there is a need for more comprehensive research on all genders within conflict environments. Finally, women in conflict are often studied through a binary of “oppressed” or “emancipated”, a viewpoint which reduces their political motivations to their gender identities. This binary is rarely applied to male insurgents, indicating an acknowledgement of political agency which is not afforded to women. This essay takes the position that examining insurgent genders through this lens is unnecessary and unsophisticated;⁷ however, many of the sources used take this binary as a main assumption, a weakness in the current literature.

FRAMEWORK

The framework used combines Judith Butler’s theory of performativity, Rachel Einwohner et al.’s concept of gendered conflict, and Aaronette White’s assertion that “revolutionary warfare” is oxymoronic.

Butler’s theory of performativity states that gender is not a stable, objective locus from which acts proceed, but rather an identity which is constructed through “a stylized repetition of acts”.⁸ What is considered the “correct” form of gender is determined by its repetitive performance, which is both informed by and reproduced through the continued belief in its legitimacy. While considering gender to be “real” only provided it is performed as such,⁹ Butler also suggests that gender, through structuring social and sexual relationships, also acts to

⁶ Mike Kesby, “Arenas for Control, Terrains of Gender Contestation: Guerrilla Struggle and Counter-Insurgency Warfare in Zimbabwe 1972-1980”, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 22, no.4 (1996): 566.

⁷ Miranda Alison, “In the War Front We Never Think That We Are Women”, in *Women, Gender and Terrorism*, ed. Laura Sjoberg & Caron Gentry (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011): 146.

⁸ Judith Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory”, *Theatre Journal* 40, no.4 (1988): 519. Emphasis in original.

⁹ Butler, “Performative Acts”: 527.

ensure the biological and cultural reproduction of societies.¹⁰ As such, gender constitutes a fundamental system of societal organization.

White contends that the term “revolutionary warfare” is oxymoronic on the basis that traditional warfare promotes unquestioning obedience to a leader or goal, while revolutions stand diametrically opposed to such compliance.¹¹ This concept, while debateable, is useful when examined through a gendered lens. The introduction of GE (and visible femininity) to traditional masculinized warfare exposes a fundamental contradiction. White suggests that in an insurgency’s masculinized environment, the pursuit of GE does not connote equal appreciation of all genders, but rather “women’s equal right with men to take up arms against repression”; essentially, to masculinize themselves.¹² The attempt to introduce gendered reform into a system which operates primarily on masculinized behaviour and logic is fundamentally contradictory.

Finally, Einwohner et al. theorize that gender is a cultural resource which can be manipulated or exploited within a basic set of available meanings¹³ to further the aims of a movement.¹⁴ As a result, not only is the basic structure of an insurgency gendered, but its tactics may be as well.¹⁵ The authors also connect gender with legitimacy. As a largely masculinized activity,¹⁶ warfare relies on femininity as its opposite to represent weakness. This weakness is typically attributed to the home front which requires protecting, as well as the enemy for the purposes of emasculation and delegitimation.¹⁷ This association poses several

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Aaronette White, “All the Men Are Fighting for Freedom, All the Women Are Mourning Their Men, but Some of Us Carried Guns: A Raced–Gendered Analysis of Fanon’s Psychological Perspectives on War”, *Signs* 32, no.4 (2007): 875.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Einwohner et al., “Engendering”: 683.

¹⁴ Ibid. 687

¹⁵ Ibid. 686

¹⁶ Laleh Khalili, “Gendered Practices of Counterinsurgency”, *Review of International Studies* 37 (2011): 1473; Goldstein, *War and Gender*: 10.

¹⁷ Bayard de Volo, “A Revolution”: 416.

barriers for GE in conflict environments, while also importantly informing who is afforded legitimacy in such environments.¹⁸

These concepts create a framework for the following analysis. Gender performativity is crucial to understanding how gender relations are maintained and renegotiated during conflict—in particular, how women become integrated into traditionally male spaces. As a cultural resource, gender is recognized as something which exists by virtue of its performance, but may be exploited to the benefit of the insurgent or COIN. Finally, considering GE within insurgency as an oxymoron allows a lens through which to understand its apparent subversion as an insurgent goal.

CASE STUDIES

Six case studies were chosen for their availability in the literature and their rhetorical claims of GE. These are the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the Maoist insurgencies in Nepal and India, the Cuban revolution, and the Sandinista National Liberation Front in Nicaragua (FSLN). Each has pointed to GE as a necessary (but never *primary*) revolutionary goal. This section provides an overview of the positioning of GE in each case.

1. PKK

Initially a nationalist-separatist group and later seeking equal rights and democratic reform in Turkey,¹⁹ the PKK demonstrates a structural approach to GE. Claiming equal labor division,²⁰ the PKK reserves 40% of roles for women, 40% for men, and 20% as gender non-specific.²¹ GE in the PKK was introduced by founder Abdullah Öcalan, who advocated that a revolution required the liberation of women and could

¹⁸ Einwohner et al., “Engendering”: 691.

¹⁹ Eric Schoon, “The Paradox of Legitimacy: Resilience, Successes, and the Multiple Identities of the Kurdistan Workers' Party in Turkey”, *Social Problems* 62 (2015): 267.

²⁰ Olivier Grojean, “Théorie et Construction des Rapports de Genre dans la Guérilla Kurde de Turquie”, *Critique Internationale* 3, no.60 (2013): 28.

²¹ *Ibid*: 22.

not be generated by men.²² This is grounded in an historical narrative which claims that the matriarchal system enjoyed by Kurdish society was replaced with patriarchies upon colonization by Turkish forces. In stripping Kurdish women of their power, Kurdish society found itself oppressed as well.²³ Central to Öcalan's ideology is the "new man" theory, which criticises masculinity, insisting that "men must liberate themselves from this false sense of superiority...renounce their royal attitudes and develop revolutionary relationships based in equality".²⁴ This ideology later developed into a theory named "jineology", which maintains that the liberation of women is fundamental to the liberation of society.²⁵ The prospect of GE, important though it may be, constitutes a foundation of the PKK's ideologies rather than its primary goal.

2. LTTE

Until its defeat in 2009,²⁶ the nationalist-separatist LTTE championed GE to demonstrate that the movement was for all members of minority Tamil people.²⁷ Women's involvement in the LTTE is grounded also in an historical narrative of a lost matriarchal society,²⁸ but was fully developed through the need for more bodies in the ranks, as well as pressure from Tamil women wanting to fight.²⁹ Through the work done by female combatants to "prove themselves",³⁰ the LTTE gradually developed GE as a fundamental ideological practice.

²² Marcel Cartier, "Jineoloji: The Science of Women's Liberation in the Kurdish Movement", last modified 2 June, 2017. <http://kurdishquestion.com/article/3923-jineoloji-the-science-of-women-039-s-liberation-in-the-kurdish-movement>

²³ Grojean, "Théorie": 25.

²⁴ Ibid: 32. Translation by author.

²⁵ Meral Düzgün, "Jineology: The Kurdish Women's Movement", *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 12, no.2 (2016): 285.

²⁶ Alison, "In the War Front": 134.

²⁷ Ibid: 133.

²⁸ Tamara Herath, "Women Combatants and Gender Identity in Contemporary Conflicts: The Case of the LTTE" (Doctoral Dissertation, London School of Economics and Political Science, 2014): 35.

²⁹ Alison, "In the War Front": 134.

³⁰ Herath, "Women Combatants": 204.

3. NEPALESE MAOISM

Based in the disadvantaged communities most affected by a monarchical system,³¹ Nepalese Maoism takes a markedly shallower form than the PKK or the LTTE. An unexpected influx of women wanting to join the insurgency³² has led to adaptations in the movement's structure, leading to requirements that two women are placed in every combat unit.³³ The Maoist leadership have claimed that at least 30% of insurgents are female,³⁴ and its recruitment now targets women under the reasoning that they "make up the biggest segment of the population in the downtrodden communities...Since [they] have suffered class and sexual oppression they have double the capacity to revolt".³⁵ Yet while GE is a point in the Maoists' memorandum of social issues,³⁶ it is neither a primary goal of the movement nor reflected in the leadership.³⁷ Furthermore, recruitment tactics tend to be geared³⁸ towards teenage girls rather than adult women, leading some to question the extent of their agency.³⁹

4. INDIAN MAOISM

The Indian Maoist movement also promotes a rhetorical commitment to GE but questionable pursuit of this value.⁴⁰ A booklet published by the insurgency addresses the "women question", claiming that the revolution cannot be achieved without women's emancipation

³¹ Lauren Leve, "Women's Empowerment and Rural Revolution: Rethinking 'Failed Development'", *Dialect Anthropol* 33 (2009): 347.

³² Rita Machanda, "Maoist Insurgency in Nepal: Radicalising Gendered Narratives", *Cultural Dynamics* 16, no.2/3 (2004): 239.

³³ Ibid: 241.

³⁴ Leve, "Women's Empowerment": 347.

³⁵ Machanda, "Maoist Insurgency": 241.

³⁶ Ibid: 247.

³⁷ Ibid: 251.

³⁸ Ibid: 251.

³⁹ Swati Parashar & Janet Andrew Shah, "(En)Gendering the Maoist Insurgency in India: Between Rhetoric and Reality", *Postcolonial Studies* 19, no.4 (2016): 452.

⁴⁰ Ibid

as well.⁴¹ A popular narrative in the movement also states that mainstream feminism has failed women outside of the elite classes, an oversight which the movement aims to rectify. While women do not tend to join the group with intentions of gender emancipation, its possibility has acted as a strong pull factor for their recruitment,⁴² which then contributes to the growing discourse of GE.⁴³ Despite this rhetoric, Indian Maoist women often experience violence within the movement, implying a failure to truly pursue the movement's official ideology.⁴⁴

5. CUBAN REVOLUTION

The Cuban Revolution has a complex relationship with gendered narratives.⁴⁵ Virtues of femininity were first introduced with Che Guevara's suggestion of a "tough but tender" revolutionary, guided above all by feelings of love.⁴⁶ The feminine virtue of tenderness expressed itself differently between genders, and largely became associated for women with a maternal fierceness⁴⁷ with which she would protect her children—and, by extension, her country.⁴⁸ Shortly afterwards, Fidel Castro proclaimed women's material equality as the "revolution within the revolution",⁴⁹ encouraging women to work as motherhood was suddenly considered an obstacle to full participation in the revolution.⁵⁰ By the 1980s, Cuban women were expected to take up arms on the war front as well.⁵¹ The image of insurgent women shifted bluntly from requiring maternal tenderness to truly loving

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴² Ibid: 450.

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ Ibid: 457.

⁴⁵ Bayard de Volo, "A Revolution": 417.

⁴⁶ Ibid: 419.

⁴⁷ Ibid: 421.

⁴⁸ Ana Serra, "The 'New Woman' in Cuban Revolutionary Discourse: Manuel Cofiño's The Last Woman and the Next Combat (1971)", *Journal of Gender Studies* 14, no.1: 49.

⁴⁹ Barbara Riess, "Counting Women, Women Who Count: Measures of the Revolution Within the Revolution", *Cuban Studies* 42 (2011): 116.

⁵⁰ Ibid: 35.

⁵¹ Bayard de Volo, "A Revolution": 424.

nothing but the revolution. One popular story which exemplifies this shift is that of a mother who, devoted to the revolution above all else, sentences her only son to a firing squad for treason.⁵² The integration of feminine values only exists to a point within the Cuban insurgency, wherein true love may be directed towards the country and revolution alone.

6. FSLN

The FSLN took an explicit approach to GE, claiming outwardly to “abolish the odious discrimination that women have been subjected to compared to men”.⁵³ In the ten-year revolution, women were thought to have comprised 25-30% of the combatant force.⁵⁴ The tough but tender revolutionary mother travelled from Cuba to the Nicaraguan struggle as well, becoming a widely circulated ideal among the insurgent forces.⁵⁵ Influenced by Guevara, Sandinista Omar Cabezas wrote also of “a tender man who sacrifices himself for others, a man who gives everything for others, who suffers when others suffer”.⁵⁶ This rejection of traditional hypermasculinity and embrace of feminine qualities, though not explicitly aimed at giving space to women, is reminiscent of Öcalan’s own “new man” theory in which the traditional gendered male is rejected.

GENDER AS A TOOL

The case studies examined demonstrate three trends which reveal a masculine logic from which GE is exploited as a tool, preventing meaningful advancement towards its rhetorical goal. First, many groups unconsciously reproduce traditional gender binaries by devaluing the feminine and masculinizing female insurgents. GE is then framed as a secondary issue which is contingent on achieving the primary goal, a logical fallacy which failed to address the necessary structural changes.

⁵² Ibid: 422.

⁵³ Ibid: 418.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid: 421.

⁵⁶ Ibid: 420.

Finally, many insurgencies exploit gender norms opportunistically for tactical purposes, facilitating their reproduction and preventing reform.

I. MASCULINIZATION OF THE FEMALE

Masculinization of female insurgents and devaluation of the feminine occur in two primary ways. First, women tend to be afforded respect only when proving themselves to a masculine standard. This is a strong recurring theme of the LTTE, which expects its female combatants to emulate the same qualities of fierceness as their male counterparts.⁵⁷ In pointing to an important relational trend, Alison notes that “equality here is arguably about women emulating constructed/expected masculine qualities.”, rather than an equal exchange of male and female qualities.⁵⁸ A similar theme is found in the PKK, which prior to creating female cadres kept women separate from the men, disallowing them from using the same campfires, wearing their hair down, or exposing indications of their femininity (menstrual pads, for example).⁵⁹ Even as the PKK affords increasing respect towards its female combatants, some women masculinize their bodies through chest binding to present themselves as more authoritative.⁶⁰ The gender divide still appears clearest during wartime, when male guerillas, distrustful of their female comrades’ abilities, may prevent women from fighting on the frontline under the pretext of protection.⁶¹ Male insurgents also criticise females for their perceived emotions or physical strength, and women are often suspected of being spies of the Turkish state.⁶² In Nepal, women who fill non-combatant political roles tend to enjoy less mobility and respect than combatant women,⁶³ suggesting that the rejection of femininity through combat earns them comparatively more opportunity. This is exemplified through the fact that negotiation parties in the political

⁵⁷ Alison, “In the War Front”: 149.

⁵⁸ Ibid: 141.

⁵⁹ Grojean, “Théorie”: 29.

⁶⁰ Ibid: 30.

⁶¹ Ibid: 31.

⁶² Ibid: 30.

⁶³ Machanda, “Maoist Insurgency”: 253.

(non-combatant) realm repeatedly appoint men as representatives of women in the movement.⁶⁴

The Cuban and Nicaraguan “tough but tender” revolutionary may be read as a challenge to feminine devaluation, but in fact represents a very controlled acceptance of the feminine. The Nicaraguan “new man” was only afforded feminine traits to a point. The “wrong” balance of tenderness versus toughness was often portrayed in caricatures of gay men,⁶⁵ who represented a “failed, effeminate masculinity.”⁶⁶ It is noted that the call in the 1980s for all Cubans to take up arms,

“...can be read as a masculinist refusal of the feminine position of surrender and dependence. Here, all Cubans—men, women, and children—were expected to defend Cuba’s independence and, in a sense, Cuba’s manhood. Arguably, then, death before dependency, stated differently, is death before feminization.”⁶⁷

Feminine devaluation is secondly expressed through narratives of the “violent woman”, which depict women as vicious and hyper-violent actors, often explained as the result of sexual deviance or emotional disturbance.⁶⁸ In committing violence, women transgress doubly, first through the violent act, and secondly by defying the stereotypes which would seemingly reject such an act.⁶⁹ Violent woman narratives are noted in both the Indian Maoists and the LTTE. Indian historical narratives of ruthless female warriors do exist, but the honour afforded to these fictional women was not also given to violent Maoist women,

⁶⁴ Ibid: 251.

⁶⁵ Bayard de Volo, “A Revolution?”: 421.

⁶⁶ Ibid: 421.

⁶⁷ Ibid: 426.

⁶⁸ Laura Sjoberg, “Reduced to Bad Sex: Narratives of Violent Women from the Bible to the War on Terror”, *International Relations* 22, no.1 (2008): 10.

⁶⁹ Sjoberg, “Reduced”: 7.

who are often shunned by society.⁷⁰ This was also the case in the LTTE, one explanation being that in order to be taken seriously as combatants, women must be doubly ruthless as men.⁷¹ Though it may afford female combatants legitimacy in combat, this narrative does not effectively advance GE. The explanations for such actions undermine the political agency of these women,⁷² thus removing both their political contributions as well as obscuring their regular femininities.

Both trends imply a masculinized foundation of these insurgencies, which demands that women make the effort to meet a masculine ideal, rather than accepting the female gender in previously masculine spaces. Acceptance of the female only on the condition that they reject their femininity is, indeed, not gender equality at all, but the continuation of patriarchal structures.

II. GENDER EQUALITY AS A PROXY GOAL

In most cases, GE appears to have been positioned as dependent on the primary goal's accomplishment, a tactic which Alison considers to be a "classic trap"⁷³ in insurgencies. This trap appears to be present in Sri Lanka,⁷⁴ India,⁷⁵ Nepal,⁷⁶ and Cuba,⁷⁷ which all appeared to take the stance that gender inequalities would melt away once national reform was achieved. The PKK may be considered one exception to this. Female emancipation was initially overshadowed by revolutionary needs,⁷⁸ but the subsequent adoption of Jineology has reversed the proxy relationship: national liberation is now tied to women's emancipation, rather than the opposite.⁷⁹

⁷⁰ Parashar & Shah, "(En)Gendering": 451.

⁷¹ Alison, "In the War Front": 141.

⁷² Sjoberg, "Reduced": 6.

⁷³ Alison, "In the War Front": 143.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Parashar & Shah, "(En)Gendering": 449.

⁷⁶ Machanda, "Maoist Insurgency": 246.

⁷⁷ Serra, "The 'New Woman'": 34.

⁷⁸ Grojean, "Théorie": 24.

⁷⁹ Düzgün, "Jineology": 285.

Treating GE as a proxy goal serves the strategic purpose of devaluing its urgency. Insurgents who are invested in the achievement of GE will not find themselves distracted from the primary goal if it is believed that the two goals are achieved simultaneously. Further, this strategy absolves the insurgency of addressing gender inequality directly, spinning the narrative instead that changes in regime will also reconstruct fundamental structural relations. This is a logical fallacy, however, as the highly gendered (and highly structured) environments of insurgencies resist the introduction of non-masculine genders or the reconfiguration of social relationships. Rather than an insidious trap for the recruitment of women, this narrative indicates a misunderstanding of the fundamental role that gender plays, and the structural reform needed to alter its composition.

III. GENDER AS A WEAPON OF WAR

Too fundamental a social structure to be “muted” during conflict,⁸⁰ gender experiences both restructuring and exploitation in the cases examined.⁸¹ A common form of restructuring is the strict control of romantic or sexual relationships. The PKK scorns sexual relationships, advocating instead for (platonic) love, directed only towards the Kurdish people, the revolution, and Öcalan himself.⁸² This control is targeted primarily towards women, who are thought to carry familial honour which is easily susceptible to betrayal.⁸³ A similar system is found among the ranks of the LTTE, which encouraged “sibling” relationships and imposed severe restrictions on romance.⁸⁴ In a different approach, the Nepalese Maoists have used forced marriage as a tactic to retain women within the party.⁸⁵ Traditional gender roles may also be exploited for propaganda or attack purposes. The PKK has been cited as intentionally using women and children as victims of the

⁸⁰ Luisa Maria Dietrich Ortega, “Looking Beyond Violent Militarized Masculinities”, *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 14, no.4 (2012): 490.

⁸¹ Einwohner et al., “Engendering”: 680.

⁸² Grojean, “Théorie”: 33.

⁸³ Ibid: 25.

⁸⁴ Alison, “In the War Front”: 138.

⁸⁵ Machanda, “Maoist Insurgency”: 250.

Turkish state's repression to frame the state as ruthless despots,⁸⁶ while the LTTE is credited with perfecting bomb belts that create the illusion of pregnancy on its wearer.⁸⁷ Both tactics exploit gendered ideas that women are non-violent, and elicit greater sympathy from targeted audiences or promote ease of access to a target.

Beyond attack purposes, insurgencies may also control gender in response to COIN tactics. COIN operations may use sexual abuse as a war tactic,⁸⁸ and may also advance gendered narratives for delegitimization purposes. Popular narratives in Indian COIN often reduce female insurgents to the “girlfriends” of the men, stripping them of agency and political voice.⁸⁹ A similar tactic is used by the Turkish state, which paints the PKK as an army of hyper-masculine, primitive men accompanied by their sexually deviant female sex slaves.⁹⁰ This depiction reduces the PKK to an uncivilized group rather than a legitimate insurgency. The tight control of sexual and gendered relationships within insurgency groups may in part be a response to gender-based COIN tactics. By controlling gender relationships, the insurgency both exhibits a unique social structure which distances itself from the “old” society it seeks to overcome, while also protecting itself against harmful delegitimizing gender-based narratives.

DISCUSSION

The trends found between the examined insurgencies may be rationalised through the framework developed at the beginning of this essay. Gender performativity provides an explanation for how female insurgents present themselves as legitimate actors in a masculine environment, as their ability to perform masculinity often appears to be

⁸⁶ Tevfik Zehni, “Turkey and PKK Terrorism” (Masters Dissertation, Naval Postgraduate School, 2008): 38.

⁸⁷ S.V. Raghavan & V. Balasubramaniyan, “Evolving Role of Women in Terror Groups: Progression or Regression?”, *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 15, no.2 (2014): 202.

⁸⁸ Parashar & Shah, “(En)Gendering: 450.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Grojean, “Théorie”: 31.

the only avenue through which they are afforded respect. Even the increased presence of women in insurgent ranks does not subvert traditional gender roles: as seen with the “violent woman” narrative, female insurgents are often required to perform masculinity to an even greater extent than their male counterparts.⁹¹ The PKK provides a unique exception to this. Their consideration of women as crucial to successful warfare implies that female performance has shifted to incorporate, or even be representative of, political violence.

The repetitive performance of conflict as masculine creates an environment in which the existence of GE is oxymoronic. Both the FSLN⁹² and Indian Maoism⁹³ have been criticized for reproducing the same patriarchies that they rhetorically challenge. This oxymoron is also exemplified by the continued failure to place women in leadership positions. Nepalese leadership has long resisted the inclusion of educated women, fearing that they may be “more sensitive to gender issues than to class issues . . . [which] may lead to reformism”.⁹⁴ The fear that female insurgents would prioritize their gender identities before insurgent politics indicates a failure to recognize their political agency and a continued resistance to femininity in insurgent spaces. Alison points to the absurdity of this fear, noting that “while some people see feminism as “true” only when it puts women’s rights before nationalist goals...[women] all over the world have shown that in their position, this strategy is not only questionable but undesirable”.⁹⁵

The construction of masculinity in insurgencies largely leads GE to be used tactically rather than genuinely pursued. Indeed, the use of gender as a tool may also reinforce the rhetoric of GE. Indian Maoists,

⁹¹ Ibid; Bayard de Volo, “A Revolution”: 434; Ibid; Parashar & Shah, “(En)Gendering”: 457; Alison, “In the War Front”: 145

⁹² Bayard de Volo, “A Revolution”: 434.

⁹³ Parashar & Shah, “(En)Gendering”: 459.

⁹⁴ Machanda, “Maoist Insurgency”: 243.

⁹⁵ Alison, “In the War Front”: 146.

for instance, have used “token women”⁹⁶ to promote the impression of GE amid little progress, championing all-female cadres and feminist groups while silencing whistleblowers of gender-based violence within the ranks.⁹⁷

These combined processes outline the system through which GE is used as a tool rather than an aim in the insurgencies examined. The reproduction of a masculine environment which resists other genders, combined with the availability of gender as an exploitable resource ensures that GE will more likely be manipulated for insurgent purposes than taken as an independent goal. While the increased involvement of other genders may promote the image of GE, this system appears to ensure resistance to its achievement.

CONCLUSION

While insurgencies may potentially bring about social change beyond their stated goals,⁹⁸ they equally risk exacerbating pre-existing power inequalities.⁹⁹ Masculine logics of warfare and the pervasiveness of gender as an exploitable resource often leads insurgencies to use GE as an short-term tool, rather than fundamentally restructuring social relations for its realization. This strategy constitutes significant tactical benefits: as a system of societal organization, control over gender represents an aspect of societal control as well. The manipulation of gender and gender roles also allows the insurgency to structurally distance itself from the society it challenges. Yet the failure to address GE beyond rhetorical promises may cause increased complications. This was the case in Nicaragua when, having felt muzzled by the FSLN, feminist groups withdrew support from the main insurgency in favor of

⁹⁶ Tami Amanda Jacoby, “Fighting in the Feminine: The Dilemmas of Combat Women in Israel”, in *Gender, War and Militarism: Feminist Perspectives*, ed. Sandra Via & Laura Sjoberg (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2011): 82.

⁹⁷ Parashar & Shah, “(En)Gendering”: 455.

⁹⁸ White, “All the Men”: 860

⁹⁹ Lana Khattan & Henri Myrtinnen, “Most of the Men Want to Leave: Armed Groups, Displacement, and the Gendered Webs of Vulnerability in Syria” (report for International Alert, July 2017): 15.

pursuing the gender reform they had been promised.¹⁰⁰ Failure to address the gendered structures of insurgency groups therefore risks backlash if GE promises are not fulfilled. While gender is clearly an effective tool of war, its continued exploitation may result in severe consequences.

¹⁰⁰ Karen Kampwirth, "Resisting the Feminist Threat: Antifeminist Politics in Post-Sandinista Nicaragua", *NWSA Journal* 18, no.2 (2006): 79.

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