

Security Sector Reform in Africa: A Lost Opportunity to Deconstruct Militarised Masculinities?

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Under the guise of peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction, countries that have been through years of civil war (Liberia, Sierra Leone, DRC, Southern Sudan, Mozambique, Angola, etc), have committed to reforming the security sector. There are a number of gender researchers and activists (Koen, 2006; Meintjes *et.al.*, 2001; Pillay, 2000) who regard post-conflict reconstruction as an opportunity for African women to advance their status in the public arena. I will explore whether this perceived opportunity is being taken up within security sector reform, particularly in relation to the need to deconstruct, understand, and transform the militarised varieties of masculinity pervasive in post-conflict situations. Does security sector reform present an opportunity for engagement with these militarised masculinities in a way which would allow for the emergence of an alternative society?

Countries described as post conflict have invariably undergone a formal peace process in which conflicting parties have made a commitment to work together to redress fundamental inequalities that are perceived to be the root cause of the conflict. Whereas unequal access to resources (such as oil) and political power are often posited as the main 'cause' of the conflict, there is hardly any (if at all) interrogation of prevailing constructions of masculinity and femininity, and how these are always a key dynamic within oppressive institutions. There is equally minimal insight into how these dynamics might lie at the heart of the tendency for given polities to revert to war, the ultimate expression of masculine violence and aggression. Although security sector reform entails a reconstitution of a wide range of institutions - including the army, militia groups, intelligence services/networks, private security firms, the police, the judiciary, and prisons - the most contested institution is the military (both formal armies and informal militia groups). However, not only have all key institutions been historically male-dominated, serving as essential vehicles

for the production of masculinity in modern nation-states, but the military has operated as the most intensively coercive of these in its relation to the authority and force of masculinity.

Security sector reform (SSR) often arises out of peace processes and forms part of post-conflict reconstruction efforts. Other imperatives driving the push for SSR include fiscal reform, deficit reduction, improved control of crime, desire to enhance civil control, human rights, or legitimacy of security institutions. This article will focus on the more specific instances of SSR that have occurred as a result of peace agreements. This is because the most comprehensive SSR processes in Africa have been attempted in the aftermath of conflict, and these scenarios dominate the discourse of SSR in Africa (Hutchful and Fayemi, 2005).

The prevalence of aggressive masculinities institutionalised in armies and security structures has featured prominently in contexts where political institutions have been displaced by militias and armies engaged in violent conflict. In such militarised societies, violence has become a political tool to retain power amongst the elite, and in a growing number of instances (notably Rwanda, DRC, Liberia and Sierra Leone), mass rape and gender based violence have been widely deployed as a military strategy to terrorise the 'enemy'. Yet it would seem that there has so far been limited attention to this aspect of conflict in security sector reform. For example, UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security commits member states to involve women in all aspects of peace-building processes at national, regional and international levels and makes specific mention of measures required to end violence against women. The Resolution also requires commitment to the inclusion of women in peace keeping operations and military structures (including civilian police). While there is no specific mention of security sector reform, there is explicit mention of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) and the need to take into account the different needs of female and male ex-combatants and the needs of their dependants (see article 13).

It is worth questioning the extent to which these international commitments – which result in part from women's mobilisation in peace-building – have endeavoured to go beyond merely considering women's involvement in African militaries. Is there any critique of the militarised masculinities that are key to militarism, or indeed any exploration of the possibility that these may in fact be a root source of violence and conflict, obstructing any hope for the attainment of security?

Defining Security

Conventional notions of security – including its use in security sector reform – are defined in relation to the nation-state. National security is perceived as the primary concern of the state, and the use of force and militarism are generally accepted as legitimate ways to protect state sovereignty. Despite feminist critique of both the state as a unit of analysis, and of its reliance on the use of force – seen as being embedded in militarised masculinities – security institutions and governments across the world (as well as proponents of mainstream international relations) remain deeply gendered, and privilege masculinity in all their operations. Women’s experiences generate definitions of security that are multilevel and multidimensional. Feminists have taken these up to re-define security to mean the complete absence of violence whether it be military, economic, or sexual. Not until the hierarchical social relations, including gender relations, which have been hidden by the depersonalised and universalising political discourses of Western political thought (including the discourse of the modern state) are brought to light, can we begin to construct a language of national security that addresses the socially differentiated experiences of insecurity, and women’s particular vulnerability to violence (Stearns, 1998).

Feminist efforts to redefine security (Okazawa-Rey and Kirk, 2000) resonate with the conceptualisations of human security that have recently made inroads in African security thinking. This has partly been the result of pressure from international actors such as the UN. Furthermore, the most recent poverty reduction programmes of the IMF and World Bank have begun to push for African security structures to take socio-economic security on board. This discursive shift is evident in the changed policy approach of traditional defence structures such as the Southern African Development Community’s recent Strategic Indicative Plan for the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security (SIPO) insofar as this makes specific reference to human security threats such as poverty, HIV/AIDS, gender-based violence and governance issues (CCR, 2005). The same shift in the definition of security can be seen in the recent publications of defence organs such as *The Ugandan Defence Review*. This identified 134 “security threats” of which only three were military in character (Hutchful and Fayemi, 2005: 77).

Despite these recent rhetorical shifts, traditional concepts of security which posit military and police forces as being central to maintaining national security still dominate African security discourse. Thus, security sector reform

has been largely interpreted in conventional ways that focus on reforming conventional security institutions – police, armed forces, intelligence services and the like.

I argue that post-conflict situations provide us with a unique opportunity to make fundamental shifts in the ideology of the military and its role in perpetuating militarised masculinities. I have two reasons for doing so. The first is that communities and states which have endured decades of violent conflicts have experienced intense dissatisfaction with existing security forces, and therefore may be more willing to explore non-conventional forms of military and security structures. The second is the fact that security sector reform is being placed as conditional for the international funding required for the economic reconstruction of devastated economies.

However, making use of this opportunity requires a careful consideration of the links between militarism and masculinity in African contexts, and the manner in which this has sustained such militaristic security paradigms.

Historical connections: Masculinity and Militarism in Africa

Being a soldier is purposefully linked to being a 'real man'. The military attempts to mould all men in a uniform guise of masculinity. This is done through an organisational culture that encourages ideal assets of soldiery such as physical ability, endurance, self control, professionalism, sociability, heterosexuality - these traits tap on masculine performance by contrasting them with images of 'otherness' such as femininity, homosexuality, etc. Soldiers are drilled to conform to virile heterosexuality where women are viewed as either sex objects that need to be abused or loved ones that need to be protected. Femininity is equated with weakness, vulnerability and feebleness.

In her analysis of the South African Defence Force (SADF), Cock (1991) explains how notions of masculinity are a powerful tool in the process of making men into soldiers. Rigid aggressive masculinities that idealise aggression, competitiveness, censure of emotional expression and the creation and dehumanisation of the 'enemy' continue to dominate armies, police forces, and other security structures.

With the advent of international and continental commitments to address gender inequality, African military structures have purported to be interested in the needs of women. This has been done either through the efforts of wives of commanders (in the case of military regimes) and/or through the establishment of national structures for the advancement of gender equality.

In her analysis of the military regimes of Generals Babangida and Abacha, Mama (1998: 13) explains how Nigeria's military regimes involved the wife of the Head of State as a "Commander of Women". Wives of commanders directed the establishment of national women's structures such as the Mrs Babangida's Better Life for Rural Women Programme (BPL), Centre for Women and Development and the National Women's Commission. During Abacha's regime, Mrs Abacha dominated the running of the Family Trust Fund Programme that was coordinated by the Ministry of Women's Affairs. Gender machineries (with interference from African first ladies)¹ have contributed to an entrenchment of patriarchal notions of women as appendages of male authority whose primary role is to care for the family under the protection from the state.

The increase of women in military structures has not shifted dominant notions of masculinity and femininity, except to the extent of the recognition that women can take on militarised masculine roles - further entrenching oppressive gender constructions. Cock's (1989) study on the white women's involvement in the SADF demonstrated that even a substantive increase of women in the military did not challenge traditional sexist ideologies, but in fact reinforced them.

One of the results of such sexist ideologies has been seen in the fact that most national militaries and militia groups around the world have had to address the problem of sexual exploitation and abuse. According to a study by Refugee International on sexual exploitation in militaries: "even the best trained militaries must still work to eliminate this problem among its forces. According to the US Department of Defence Inspector General's 2004 survey of three military academies, one in every seven female cadets reported they had been a victim of sexual abuse in the previous five years and 50% of the women at the three academies reported being sexually harassed."² Turshen's (2001) article on the political economy of rape during armed conflict in Africa reveals that systematic rape and sexual abuse of women are among the strategies used to strip women of their reproductive and productive labour power as well as their possessions and access to land and livestock. The abduction of women and girls to serve as porters, farmers, cooks, cleaners, launderers, tailors, and sex workers is perhaps the crudest way of using women's productive labour to sustain armies and militia groups (Turshen, 2001: 61). Militia groups in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Burundi, and DRC are known to spend much time looting villages - many of which are sustained by women's labour in the absence of men who have either fled or joined the armed struggle. According

to Turshen (2001: 63), “militia disguised rape as sanctioned intercourse between husband and wife by performing bogus weddings; they then used the ‘marriage’ to legitimate the seizure of land”.

UN peace keeping missions have also been implicated in extreme forms of sexual and gender-based violence against women. Sexual misconduct has long characterized UN peacekeeping missions. During the UN mission in Cambodia (UNTAC) from 1992 to 1993, the number of sex houses and “Thai-style” massage parlours multiplied and the number of prostitutes rose from 6,000 to 25,000, including an increased number of child prostitutes.³ In 2004, the media erupted with allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse levied against UN uniformed and civilian peacekeepers based in Bunia, in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. Following this, the then Secretary-General Kofi Annan asked the Permanent Representative of Jordan, His Royal Highness Prince Zeid Ra’ad Zeid al-Hussein, a former civilian peacekeeper and the UN ambassador of one of the major peacekeeping troop contributors, to prepare a comprehensive report on strategies to eliminate future sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations.

The report revealed how sexual abuse by UN peacekeepers in Africa mostly involved the exchange of money (an average of US \$1-3 per an encounter), food for immediate consumption (to barter later) or job opportunities for sex.⁴ Recommendations included the need for the UN to put in place institutional procedures (in the form of codes of conduct, investigatory processes and disciplinary procedures) to deter soldiers from getting too close to local communities and inevitably engaging in abusive sexual relationships with women in local communities. The United Nations has continued to push for sexual and gender-based violence to be put on the international agenda of peace building efforts. The most recent UN Security Council resolution 1820 passed on 19 June, once again called on “..all sides to armed conflicts around the world to stop using violence against women as a tactic of war and take much tougher steps to protect women and girls from such attacks.”⁵

Cynthia Enloe (1993: 38) points out that “ironically, the more a government is pre-occupied with what it calls national security, the less likely its women are to have physical safety necessary for sharing their theorizing about the nation and their security within it”. It is well known that traditional security systems are ill equipped to prevent and or respond to sexual and gender-based violence – particularly domestic violence, violence by security officials, and human trafficking. How did these security institutions come about? How did

these forms of aggressive masculinity come to take on such central importance in conventional security structures in African states?

The origin of the African militaries (as we know them today) is largely located in the colonial project. With the advent of colonial regiments, standing armies were formed and these bore allegiance to the colonial administrative and political structures. Regiments and armies were ideologically attached to the visions of the colonisers and became the ‘protectors’ of colonial ‘territories’ - set by the Berlin conference of 1884 where Africa was demarcated into imaginary pieces (we now call countries) that were shared amongst 14 western states with Great Britain, France, Germany, and Portugal taking the largest share (Tandon, 1989). The Northern Rhodesia Regiment, for example, is the historical forerunner to the Zambian Army and grew out of the Northern Rhodesia Police that in turn administered Northern Rhodesia on behalf of the British Crown in 1891.⁶ Colonial regiments and armies were thus closely tied to the western concept of the nation state and were used for the domestic task of protecting the (British/French/Portuguese) colony and policing colonial subjects.

However, we must recognise that the concept of defence and protection was evident and very much present in pre-colonial colonial Africa. The Nguni (of southern Africa), for example, comprised of centralised societies with controlled use of force. Chiefs maintained some form of direct control over men of fighting age who were, from time to time, called upon to raid other communities and defend their territory from outside attacks. The Nguni of eastern Zambia, for instance, fought many wars before the arrival of the ‘white man’ and drew lessons from Shaka Zulu’s approach to warfare. A distinguishing factor between these regiments and those of colonial regimes was that warriors in pre-colonial African communities tended not to constitute a standing army central to the control of the broader society.

Whereas the history of armies and warriors reveals the evolution of particular types of aggressive masculinity and thus militarization of society, there are other institutions that highlight the extent to which African societies became militarised.

Years ago Claude Ake astutely observed that “it was not the military that caused military rule in Africa by intervening in politics; rather, it was the character of politics that engendered (*sic*) military rule by degenerating into warfare, inevitably propelling the specialists of warfare to the lead role.”⁷ It is unfortunate that during Africa’s ‘liberation’ from the west, the role of the military in the state (in situations where there was a distinction) was

not questioned. Post-colonial states took on institutions left by the colonial powers (Tandon, 1989). While this argument can be made for all institutional remnants of imperialism, I have always found it quite intriguing that there was no critical analysis of the military, army, police (including the secret police networks), judiciary, prisons, nor of the role that they ought to play in the 'new' Africa once colonial oppression and domination had ended. The only interrogation of the military and its relevance was in terms of how the soldiers' allegiance to the new government could be kept. In Zambia, for instance, two years after independence, Zambia's first President Dr. Kenneth Kaunda reminded the third battalion of the Zambia Regiment in Kawbe that:

"Under our constitution the right is given to the people of Zambia to elect their own government. This is legally exercised at the general elections and, in the same manner, the people can reject a government during properly constituted elections. Constitutionally, therefore, your role is to be loyal and to protect and defend the constitution of the land as well as other institutions emanating from the provisions of the constitution."⁸

The defence force was expected to respect the young independent state. Kaunda's speech was prompted by events elsewhere in Africa where the defence forces had already begun taking over constitutionally elected governments through military coups. In an early incident, an uprising of the army occurred in what was then Zaire in July 1960, when Belgian officers were resisting the 'Africanisation' of the army.⁹ African soldiers' main concern was that they were still being given orders by Belgian generals, but the new government also feared that British/Belgian/etc. soldiers would act sympathetically to white regimes in African countries still under colonial rule, holding back the ongoing liberation wars in the region. Thus, although the ethnic and racial composition of armies of newly independent countries changed significantly in the first decade following independence, their culture, traditions, and gendered practices remained strongly influenced by discourse and ideological themes of Western armed forces.

Even the South African Government maintained the status quo, and did not pursue legislation disbanding the Scorpions until after it was revealed that the Police Commissioner Jackie Selebi was linked to criminal networks. This illustrates how governments only seem motivated to reconsider the role of certain security institutions when they show signs of undermining powerful elites and state power.¹⁰

What Kwame Nkrumah, Kenneth Kaunda, Nelson Mandela, Julius Nyerere

and other leaders of the new African states did not interrogate, was the purpose of the military and security systems in liberated Africa. How could an institution that was responsible for keeping Africans suppressed under colonial rule be transformed into an institution that would facilitate nation-building and the rehabilitation of African communities? Just as there was no interrogation of the gendered nature of the liberation movements, there was also no interrogation of how the entrenched masculine culture of the military and entire 'security' system could provide real security for both men and women, after carrying out extreme violence, and being premised on dichotomised gender relations.

Perhaps as a result of heavy reliance on a warfare-oriented politics and the entrenchment of extreme inequalities (across gender, class, race, and ethnicity), several African states have degenerated into militarised, organised, collective, violent conflict – and this time it is called war rather than liberation because there is no 'legitimate' common enemy (the colonisers). Many African states face new, and often closely inter-related, forms of violent politics and crime, the proliferation of small arms, and competition from a variety of community and private security organisations. The African state has metamorphosed (perhaps not surprisingly given the fact that Africans inherited oppressive systems) into an autocratic enemy of the people – either entrenching inequality along ethnic lines (Rwanda and Burundi are clear examples) or along class and race lines (South Africa), or through their sheer inability to redistribute wealth to the poor masses that took on the brunt of the liberation struggle (Zimbabwe).

It is interesting that even the current wave of multi-party politics and democracy discourses has not led to an interrogation of the anti-democratic culture of the military itself – or to a questioning of the relevance of the military (aside from the police's role of protecting and upholding rights of citizens) to democracy. Critique of the military has often stopped at questions of military expenditure, the issue of civil-military relations and civilian control over the military.

Hutchful and Fayemi's (2005) survey of 43 of Africa's 53 countries across five sub-regions shows that all African governments have considered some degree of reform in their security institutions. Several of the reforms have taken place under the ambit of regional and sub-regional collective security mechanisms such as ECOWAS, SADC, and IGAD. The survey also refers to various states and security systems. There is however, absolutely no gender analysis of security and its concomitant reliance on militarised masculinities.

William's (2005) overview of African armed forces and the challenges of security sector reform, similarly debate options for reform with absolutely no gender analysis. A point worth noting in both articles is the recognition that the most comprehensive security reforms have been attempted in the aftermath of armed conflict, as part of a peace agreement. Given that a gender analysis of contemporary armed conflicts points to men's dominant role as soldiers and women's multiple roles as both perpetrators (bush wives, porters, looters) and victims (refugees, sexual slaves, and civilian targets), it is imperative that gender be taken seriously in SSR.

Security Sector Reform: what about gender?

To date, there are several ways in which we can see that gender is taken into account in security sector reform processes. A recent training toolkit on Gender and Security Sector Reform (2008) developed by the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, and the United Nations Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) encapsulates some of the main arguments that have been put forward by gender activists and security technocrats (or "securocrats") calling for gender mainstreaming in SSR.

A main theme of gender mainstreaming SSR is the inclusion of women in security reform processes. In post-conflict situations, this entails increasing the number of women employed in mainstream military structures such as the police and army, and ensuring that women are taken into account in demilitarisation, demobilisation and reintegration processes (DDR). Other efforts have involved the inclusion of women in bureaucratic structures by bringing on board gender experts, or ensuring that women (preferably from the women's peace networks and women's rights NGO's) are represented in various reform committees and processes. Another approach has been to ensure civilian oversight of military expenditure, with gendered budget analyses of SSR processes.

A fourth, and perhaps the most widely used strategy, is that of providing gender training for military personnel. The curricula of such training packages vary from an introduction to gender and its conceptual and practical links to military structures, to a narrower focus on sexual and gender-based violence and the role of the military structures in preventing and combating this.

An intrinsic weakness of these approaches has been the emphasis on the inclusion of women in security systems and process in an instrumentalist way

that treats them either as overlooked beneficiaries (in the case of DDR), or as a resource of knowledge and skill which will enhance the work of security structures. This falls far short of a feminist approach that would consider deeper transformation of the gender relations that characterise security institutions and systems, and addresses questions of hierarchy and masculinity.

Just as the early women-in-development approach to development resulted in a proliferation of women's projects and national women's bureaus and ministries that did not address unequal gender relations, so has gender mainstreaming in security sector reform generated bureaucratic interventions that seek to 'add' women, without questioning the gendered premises of the security sector and its role in government.

This 'add women in' approach is evident in the introductory section of the Gender and Security Sector Reform Toolkit (Bastick and Valasek, 2008). The first 'tool' (or section) of the manual begins with a quote from Margret Verwijk, Senior Police Officer of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs who laments the absence of policewomen as a possible threat to efficiency of the Afghanistan police:

"... interviews with new male recruits for the Afghan National Police in the province illustrated the need for an increase in the number of police women at both police stations and checkpoints... Performing a body search was simply out of the question, due to lack of female colleagues" (Bastick and Valasek, 2008: 1).

Apart from the suggestion that a central rationale for mainstreaming gender in SSR is to ensure that there are enough women in the police and army to conduct regular cordon searches of women, the manual goes on to various other examples in which women's involvement in SSR opens up options for a more efficient and effective security system. A central theme of the tool kit is the various ways in which women's networks can widen the net for gathering intelligence information; ensure local ownership of SSR by bridging the gap between local communities and security policymakers; provide support to victims of sexual and gender based violence; and design 'community-level security-related programming' to prevent, for example, gang violence or human trafficking (Bastick and Valasek, 2008: 6). With reference to the recent 103-strong, all-female Indian peacekeeping unit in Monrovia¹¹, the manual makes mention of the positive impact women are likely to have on the morale and behaviour within peace-keeping units, suggesting that this will automatically result in an increased recruitment of women, which will in turn

limit the prevalence sexual exploitation and abuse by peace keepers (Bastick and Valasek, 2008: 8).

Similar gendered assumptions were evident during a recent meeting of police and gendarmerie women in peace operations in West Africa which considered options for mainstreaming gender in national and international peace operations under the ambit of the West African Police Project (WAPP). High-level military officials debated reasons for integrating women in peace operations. It was agreed that women's presence provides operational advantages by virtue of their links with conflict-affected communities and sensitivity to the experiences of women during armed conflict – particularly sexual and gender based violence. The report also suggests that an increase in women peace-keepers is likely to result in a reduction of sexual abuse and exploitation of vulnerable communities. The same report insinuates that women will provide 'calming effects in tense situations' and are more likely to be 'attentive and safety conscious' (Marks and Dehham, 2006: 17).

These approaches seem more likely to reproduce rather than to question existing gender identities and relations within security reform processes. At no point is masculinity questioned, nor the manner in which the notion of combat remains central to military masculinities. The emphasis on women as being useful for searching women is particularly worrying, as is the stereotypical assumption that female military officials will be calm and safety conscious, and less likely to engage in sexual abuse and exploitation. This assumption is not upheld in the studies of women's integration in military structures, which have shown that women rather tend to take on masculine roles resulting in an entrenchment, rather than transformation of traditional sexist ideologies (see Cock, 1989; 1994). Women's involvement in liberation movements such as Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) did not ensure an absence of sexual harassment either within MK or in MK's military interactions with the broader community (Cock, 1989: 1994).

It is however worth noting that SSR does provide (at least on paper) spaces for women's rights activists and gender experts to intervene, and to place the transformation of militarised masculinities on the agenda. For example, if women's links with local communities are taken seriously, this could broaden the scope and reveal insights on different kinds of insecurities experienced by different communities, and across ethnic and class structures. If women's perspectives – as well as their kinship, trading and distribution networks – were taken seriously, perhaps security itself would be reconsidered, and

incorporated into the reform of security structures.

El-Bushra's (2008) article *Feminism, Gender and Women's Peace Activism* explores the 'different feminisms' that have manifested in the field of peacebuilding. She suggests the need "to adopt a definition of 'peace' which encompasses the totality of women's needs and interests and which emphasizes structural change towards justice and towards representivity in political decision-making" (El-Bushra, 2008: 140).

She further argues that an essentialist approach to women's peace activism – that draws on women's roles as wives, mothers, care givers, and inherently peaceful and gentle people – can undermine efforts to deal with the structural causes of patriarchy. In relation to SSR, I argue that it is questionable whether women's peace activists and gender securocrats are likely to go beyond a liberal feminist approach to SSR.

Liberia provides an interesting case study for two reasons. Firstly, it has a history of a relatively prominent women's peace movement that has, to date, influenced Liberia's peace processes both prior to and after the August 2003 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). Secondly, SSR is one of the four major objectives pursued by the Liberian government as it rebuilds after a fifteen year civil war. For fourteen years, women in Liberia bore the brunt of the two brutal wars characterised by the use of child soldiers, mass displacement, sexual violence, and extreme poverty. Their Mass Action for Peace involved drawing on women from the market place, churches, mosques, civil society, refugee camps and the government. (Douglas and Hill, 2004: 10). Even the then President, Charles Taylor, granted them an audience to hear their plea for peace talks between his government, Liberians United for Reconciliation and Development (LURD), the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), and political party leaders. The mass action followed the delegates to Accra where the peace talks took place. With the support of Accra-based women's groups and Liberian women refugees, the women barricaded the entrance of the hall, blocking the delegates from leaving, until they had reached an agreement. Even though the women were not directly involved in the content of the peace agreement, they made substantive impact on the process of the peace talks and challenged the patriarchal power of political leaders who were using the peace process as a platform to advance personal political interests (as documented in the film *Pray the Devil Back to Hell* reviewed in this issue by Yaba Badoe).

Neither the peace agreement nor the CPA makes any mention of gender, or of efforts to address gender-based violence that was such a widespread feature

of the Liberian conflict. The CPA addresses SSR in Part four (articles 7 and 8) which requires the disbanding of irregular forces, reforming and restructuring of the Liberian Armed forces, and restructuring the Liberian National Police (LNP) as well as other security forces. Human Rights Watch (2004) describes how all three parties to the conflict gang-pressed and abducted girls and women to become cooks, domestics, wives, sexual slaves and fighters. Sex on demand was used to “boost the boys’ morale” and many girls were sexually assaulted to the point of death. DDR was one of the first elements of SSR that took place.

Fortunately, in his report to the Security Council on the Situation in Liberia (11th September 2003), the then Secretary General, Kofi Annan, directed special measures and programmes to address specific needs of female ex-combatants, as well as wives and widows of former combatants. UNIFEM’s article on gender and DDR (Douglas and Hill, 2004: 10-19) provides a detailed account of the various stages of the DDR process undertaken by UNMIL, other UN agencies, government agencies and international funders. This included special provisions for female combatants such as separate interim care centres in cantonment sites, reproductive health, counselling and training on women’s rights and sexual trauma support. However, due to the flood of combatants eager to trade their weapons for US \$300, UNMIL was unable to contain over 12,000 combatants at a cantonment site equipped to cater for only 1000 combatants. After much unrest, the DDR programme was suspended. At this point, under the banner of the “Concerned women of Liberia”, the Liberian Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET), the Christian Community, the Government of Liberia and local NGO’s held a press conference to identify key flaws in the DDR process.

Apart from logistical limitations of transporting and containing the influx of combatants at cantonment sites, it became apparent that women combatants were not showing up at these sites. It took the assistance of women’s networks to investigate the issue, because even with the elaborate facilities available to support female ex-combatants in cantonment sites, DDR experts could not explain why women stayed away. For these women, the risk of exposing their links with rebel groups presented a security risk for which no sum of money could compensate: devastating social ostracism and stigma. Liberia’s DDR process did not make adequate conceptual and policy shifts to respond to women’s human security needs, in part because there were obscured by existing gender relations. Only the longstanding women’s peace

networks were in a position to unearth the possibilities of a demilitarisation that could begin to acknowledge the meaning and cost of the war for those Liberian women who survived it.

We are yet to see if women's peace activism will come to influence mainstream reform of the reconstituted Liberian Armed Forces.¹² SSR processes are at risk of being led by external governments and private companies. In the case of Liberia, the Government of the USA is playing the leading role in restructuring the Liberian Armed Forces, as this was requested in the 2003 CPA. There are grounds for concern over the fact that the US Department of State has contracted two US based private companies to 'deliver' US support to the Government of Liberia (Malan, 2008). DynCorp International has been contracted to provide basic facilities and basic training to the Liberian Armed Forces, and Pacific Architects and Engineers (PAE) has been contracted to build a base and provide 'specialised and advanced' training, including mentoring, to Liberian army officials.¹³ Given the track record of the role of US militaries in the rest of the world, Liberia seems less likely to demilitarise than to face a remilitarisation of its armed forces, complete with the entrenchment of the aggressive masculinities currently characterising the US 'War on Terror' approach to state security.

However, given that the DDR process was to some extent successfully influenced by international and local pressure to adhere to principles of gender equality, it can be hoped that women peace activists will continue to engage with Liberia's SSR process.

Conclusion

The evidence presented in this article suggests that even in post-conflict situations, security sector reform processes do not necessarily lead to any questioning of militarism, or of the cultures of masculinity sustained within military institutions.

Existing efforts to mainstream gender in security reform will need to go beyond the technocratic liberal feminist approach of merely adding women into conventional security systems.

The key role played by women's peace activism suggests that it would be worthwhile engaging in further research which analyses the gender implications of women's peace activism and their resistance to militarisation in Africa, and considers redefinitions of security that are suggested by feminist analysis.

Given the prevalence of violent conflict in Africa, and the fact that it is now

clear that national liberation struggles did not liberate women, it becomes imperative to interrogate the dominant masculinities that are profoundly implicated in militarism, and which have sustained the oppression and marginalisation of women in Africa.

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Endnotes

- 1 A recent example is the August 2007 SADC Heads of State Summit where SADC First Ladies presented the draft Gender and Development Protocol to the Heads of State. This was despite the existence of 13 national gender machineries and hundreds of vibrant women’s rights NGO’s that are in fact legitimate institutions tasked to represent and champion women’s rights issues in the region. (See http://www.gov.bw/cgi-bin/news.cgi?d=20070821&ti=Gender_protocol_freezes, accessed on 7 July 2008).

- 2 Refugee International, *Men Must be Boys?* 2004 (available at http://www.refugeesinternational.org/section/publications/pk_missions/, accessed on 16 May 2008).
- 3 Refugee International, *Men Must be Boys?* 2004 (available at http://www.refugeesinternational.org/section/publications/pk_missions/, accessed on 16 May 2008).
- 4 United Nations Report by Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al Hussein, *A Comprehensive Strategy to Eliminate Future Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in United Nations Peace Keeping Operations*, 24 March 2005, A/59/710 (2005), p8 (available at <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/reports.htm>, accessed on 16 May 2008)
- 5 UN News Centre, 'Security Council demands action to end sexual violence as a tactic in war', available at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=27093&tCr=sexual+violence&tCr1=women>, accessed, 8 July 2008.
- 6 B J Phiri, 'Civil Control of the Zambian Military since independence and its implications for democracy' in Rocky Williams, et.al (eds.), *Ourselves to Know: Civil-military Relations and Defence Force Transformation in Southern Africa*. Institute for Security Studies, 2002, (available at http://www.issafrica.org/static/templates/tmpl_html.php?node_id=158&mlink_id=211&mlink_type=12&tlink_id=3, accessed on 16 May 2008)
- 7 Quoted in Charmaine Pereira's article in Feminist Africa, 2002
- 8 J J Mphaisah (1988) 'Politics and Governance', *The State of the Nation Volume 1*. Kenneth Kaunda Foundation, Lusaka, p 172.
- 9 Ludo De Witte, *The Assassination of Lumumba*. Jacana, 2001, p213-214.
- 10 MailandGuardian:http://www.mg.co.za/articlePage.aspx?articleid=339268&area=/breaking_news/breaking_news__national/
- 11 See article by the Christian Science Monitor, "All-Female Unit Keeps Peace in Liberia", available at <http://www.csmonitor.com/2007/0321/p06s01-woaf.html>, accessed on 1 April 2008.
- 12 For information on the link between DDR and SSR in Africa see an Issue paper by titled "Linking DDR and SSR" presented at the Second International Conference on DDR and Stability in Africa, 12-14 June 2007, Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), available at <http://www.un.org/africa/osaa/speeches/ddr-ssr.pdf>, accessed on 8 July 2008.
- 13 See Refugees International, available at <http://www.refugeesinternational.org/content/article/detail/10188/>, accessed on 6 July 2008.