

Rape, Women and War

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Angela Robinson, a London-based freelance journalist specializing in human rights issues once stated, "If human rights are to be universally respected and protected, they must apply to the lives of over half the human race-women."¹ The rape of women has been utilized as a tactic of terror in wars since the beginning of armed conflicts. It appears to go through three main stages: First, rape is a routine and expected reward to the victors. Secondly, rape occurs due to a lack of military discipline. Finally, rape occurs as a military technique to demoralize the opposition.²³ Through these horrific actions, women experience the loss of home and the loss of land, which is synonymous with the loss of identity. This is known as ethnic cleansing. Rape forces out certain ethnic groups from geographic areas, by instigating a form of ethnic pollution. This paper will examine a broader socio cultural phenomenon that is taking place in the Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatian areas of Eastern Europe. Rape is used to humiliate husbands, brothers, fathers, and sons to demonstrate their inability to protect the women. In the Balkans, this is especially heinous because the honor/shame complex, characterized by the chastity of females, is fundamental not only to the family, but also the honor of the community. The rape of women during armed conflicts is a tactic of war and a threat to international security because its psychological and physical abuse of women destroys the entire community.

History

Throughout history, rape has been an unwanted camp follower. Unlike nurses, laundresses, wives, and cooks who followed army units to lend their support, rape is a vile companion. The ancient Greeks and Romans wholly accepted rape as a common practice in warfare and captive women came to expect this as a consequence of defeat. Documentation from the Wars of Religion in France outlines the rape and torture of Huguenot women. Records also detail rapes in the Scottish Highlands in 1746 and during the First World War where the German military raped Belgian and French women. It is believed that this was not a tactic of war, but it was widespread and systematic.⁴

The image of German soldiers callously raping women was used by the Allies as a propaganda tool to rally support for the cause. Propaganda used by the Allied Powers was wildly exaggerated and later served to cast doubt on the veracity of the stories related by the damaged women. Rape allegations proved to be a useful tool for inciting rage against an enemy and enlisting new recruits.⁵ However, it was largely ignored in the overall historical accounts.

In the Second World War, sexual humiliation and rape were commonly utilized against Jewish peoples. Rape took place in concentration and prison camps, as well as in brothels established by the Germans. Documented evidence suggests that it is highly likely rape was utilized as a systematic weapon of terror and retaliation against enemies.⁶ These memories live on today.

Rape as a Tactic of War

¹ Angela Robinson, *Weapon of War*, New Internationalist magazine (1993): 27, <http://www.org/features/1993/06/05/rape/> (accessed October 29, 2010).

² B.A. Robinson, *Religious Tolerance: Rape of women during wartime* (Ontario: Consultants on Religious Tolerance, 2002), 32.

⁴ Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975) , 74.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

Rape is torture and should be prosecuted as such. Rape should be considered a war crime and a resolution condemning this practice is before the United Nations Security Council. Most purveyors of sexual violence in war walk free with little fear of retribution. Prosecuting acts of wartime rape tells the perpetrators that women's lives matter. Justice delayed is justice denied, it is terror continued. Even long sought after peace brings little peace of mind. For centuries the rape of women has been used to advance one group's political, economic, social, or religious position over others. Systematic mass rapes devastate individuals and destroy the fabric of families and communities.⁷ Rape, identified by psychologists as the most intrusive of traumatic events, has been documented in many conflicts from Bangladesh to Croatia. It is used to create psychological fear within an entire ethnic, religious, or social group who only wants to live in peace in their homeland with all the rights and privileges enjoyed by the majority community.⁸ However, real and imagined wrongs throughout history are avenged as rivals have long memories. The following sections describe the three main stages of rape as outlined in the literature.

Rape as a routine and expected reward to the victors

From ancient times, women were unquestionably part of the spoils of war. Susan Brownmiller asserts, "The body of the raped female becomes a ceremonial battlefield, a parade ground for the victors trooping of the colors."⁹ A women's humanity disappears and her body is utilized as a vessel of conquest. At this point she is devoid of identity, personality, or personhood. Women become property.¹⁰

Since women were viewed as property or chattel, the rape was not a criminal offense against her. It was considered a crime against her owner, be it husband, father, or other male relatives. This back door approach allowed rape to become a crime of property perpetrated between two men. The raping of women was seen as "earned compensation" by the victors and a boastful reminder to the conquered men that they had been defeated.¹¹ This act defined a soldier's social identity as a man and as a member of a specific military organization.

Biblical references from the Old Testament describe the rape of women from conquered tribes as a normal occurrence. Foreign women were often raped, kidnapped, and forced to marry their rapist captor. The early rules of warfare did not prohibit rape; rather it was encouraged and remained a hallmark of success in battle.¹² On close examination, one can find rape condemned and tacitly sanctioned in the Bible. When David's son, Amnon, raped his half-sister Tamar and then rejected her, Absalom, her brother revenged her rape by killing Amnon. That death balanced the scales in Israelite justice, but the pain experienced by the woman was not considered worthy of further notice.

Conquered men view the rape of their women as the ultimate humiliation, a sexual coup de grace.¹³ This stands as undeniable evidence of their impotence. The defense of women has

⁷ Diana Milillo, "Rape as a Tactic of War: Social and Psychological Perspectives." *Journal of Women and Social Work* (2006): <http://online.sagepub.com>.

⁸ Raga Ragavan, "Rape: Weapon of War," Online Tamil Sydney (2009), <http://www.tamilsydney.com/content/view/2458/37/> (accessed October 22, 2010).

⁹ Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will* (New York: Simon and Schuster 1975), 177.

¹⁰ Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975), 208.

¹¹ Kelly Askin, *War Crimes Against Women: Prosecution in International War Crimes Tribunals* (Cambridge: Martinus Nijhoff, 1977).

¹² Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975), 211.

¹³ Vesna Nikolic Ristanovic, *Women, Violence and War* (Belgrade: Reference Publications, 1995), 83.

stood as a hallmark of masculinity and pride and demonstrated their masculine success. The rape of their women erases their masculinity and destroys their sense of self. Defeat is complete.

The males of the conquered nation see the rape of their women and it decimates any lasting illusion that they possess any power. “The act that is played out upon the woman’s body is a message passed between men—vivid proof of victory for one and loss and defeat for the other.”¹⁴ Francisco de Vitoria, a Spanish Renaissance Roman Catholic philosopher, jurist, and theologian, opposed rape during siege. However, he conceded that the sacking of cities might serve as a “spur to the courage of the troops.”¹⁵ This type of violence however, makes it impossible for the ethnically distinct communities to coexist in peaceful times.

The military ethos continues to be male and fervidly heterosexual. War is viewed as an initiation into manhood, a license to destroy that has no civilian equivalent. As the military tends to cultivate patriarchal ideals of male protectors, it also engenders an exaggerated male sexuality. There exists a definite connection between waging war and aggressive sexual behavior. Propaganda also further objectifies women. The enemy is painted as the foe that will rape and murder our women; so the war effort becomes the campaign to save our mothers, daughters, and wives. So, as dehumanization of the enemy allows soldiers to kill, the objectification of women, in concert with the military’s developed hyper-masculinity, can lead to rape.

Militaristic nationalism in some countries has led to aggression against women. In Croatia, for example, domestic violence against women has increased thirty percent since the outbreak of war; the violence is especially great after nationalistic television propagandizing.¹⁶ The content of this propaganda represents selected facts to primarily influence a specific segment of its audience. It is a form of political warfare.

Rape as a consequence of lack of military discipline

In any society when an imbalance of power exists, the possibility of sexual violence increases.¹⁷ Women’s lack of power leaves them vulnerable to sexual exploitation and coercion. The trauma that war and the breakdown of civil society produces, forces women to unwittingly stand on the front lines of the battle. The military ethos includes attitudes of hyper masculinity, adversarial sexual beliefs, sexual promiscuity, violence and hostility toward women, and sex-role stereotyping. The theme in military culture is to cast women as prey and the men as voracious consumers of sex.¹⁸ Rapes occur for three reasons: power, anger, and sadism. Without leadership from command structures, the military culture makes it easy for men so inclined, to rape women in war zones. In his memoirs, General George Patton, who ably led American troops during the Second World War writes, “I told him that although I would do my best to keep such incidents to a minimum there would unquestionably be some raping. I told him that he should forward the details of all such incidents to me so that I could have the offenders

¹⁴ Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975), 147.

¹⁵ Catherine Niarchos, “Women, War, and Rape: Challenges Facing the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. *Human Rights Quarterly* 17 (1995), 4, http://muse.jhu.edu/login?uri=/journals/human_rights_quarterly/v017/17.4_niarchos.html (accessed October 12, 2010).

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ B.A. Robinson, *Religious Tolerance: Rape of women during wartime* (Ontario: Consultants on Religious Tolerance 2002), 33.

¹⁸ Madeline Morris, *By Force of Arms: Rape, and Military Culture*. (Raleigh: Duke Law Journal 1996), 19.

properly hanged.”¹⁹ Patton was known for his flamboyant manner, his decisive leadership, and his impolitic statements and actions.

Systematic rape as a military technique to demoralize the opposition

A careful review of history suggests that rape has always occurred in war. It has ranked along with plunder as one of the war’s “unfortunate byproducts.”²⁰ The inevitability of wartime rape appears to be accepted by political and military leaders. Serb military leader, Ratko Mladic, told his troops as he looked over thousands of refugees in a camp, “Beautiful. Keep the good ones over there. Enjoy them.”²¹ In the former Yugoslavia, rape was used as torture, mutilation, femicide, and genocide. Niarchos expresses the nature of the Yugoslavian Conflict in this matter: “It is war fought on and through women’s bodies. It is rape as a military strategy.”²² The rape turns animosity into hatred.

Catherine MacKinnon, noted feminist and lawyer, in her book “Are Women Human?” observed, “Xenophobia and misogyny merge here; ethnic hatred is sexualized, bigotry becomes orgasm.”²³ Women became tactical objectives, the prime targets of the conquerors because of their cultural position and importance in the family structure. Victory can be accomplished by the deconstruction of a culture and the symbolic rape of the body of the community, the culture, or the nation. Sexual violence towards the women is a way to destroy the national pride, manhood, and honor. Now, not only do the women want to leave the country, but the men do not want to return. The vicious rapes not only violated the women, but they humiliated husbands, fathers, sons, brothers and demonstrated their inability to protect their homes, their lands and their women. The honor/shame complex is very strong and the female’s chastity is central to family and community honor.²⁴ This gender based violence is torture and a war crime.

This paper seeks to demonstrate that the threat to the international community is evidenced by the affect on the raped community. The systematic rapes instill terror in the civilian population. They humiliate and degrade the individual, their families, and their communities. They further an agenda of cultural and ethnic destruction, exploiting the stigma that falls upon rape victims and their children to weaken marital and communal relations. Huge populations are displaced and hamper the ability of other populations to reconstitute and organize a sustained return. The rapes also destroy group bonds, causing pervasive and even deadly affects for women in particular.²⁵ The stigmatization of the rape renders women incapable of fulfilling their roles in the community.

Case study: Rape in the Former Yugoslavia

¹⁹ George Patton, *War As I Knew It*. (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co. 1947), 288.

²⁰ Tom Shanker, “Crimes of War, and Sexual Violence,” *New York Times*, 20 June 1994, World section.

²¹ Adam LeBor, *Complicity with Evil: the United Nations in the age of modern genocide* (Harrisburg: R.R. Donnelley, 2001), 44.

²² Catherine Niarchos, “Women, War, and Rape: Challenges Facing The International Tribunal for the Former

Yugoslavia.” *Human Rights Quarterly* 17 (1995), 4-6.

²³ Catherine MacKinnon, *Are Women Human?: And Other International Dialogues* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006) 218-227.

²⁴ Encyclopedia for the Record from Physicians for Human Rights. US Senate Committee on the Judiciary, Human Rights and the Law Subcommittee. 2008 (accessed October 9, 2010).

<http://physiciansforhumanrights.org/about/founding.html>.

²⁵ Encyclopedia for the Record from Physicians for Human Rights. U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary, Human Rights & the Law Subcommittee. 2008. (accessed October 9,2010).

<http://phycisiansforhumanrights.org/about/founding.html>.

To date, more than 200,000 people, mostly in Bosnia, have been killed in the civil wars in the former Yugoslavia. Because rape is used as a tactic of war, there are over two million refugees living in camps or with relatives in Croatia. Large numbers of displaced persons have fled to Slovenia, Hungary, Austria, and Germany. The vast majority of casualties have been experienced by civilians.²⁶ History demonstrates that Christians and Muslims have feuded since the Muslim Turks arrived in Europe in the fourteenth century. These historic animosities and cultural divisions have fueled the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia. As a result, the refugees from these conflicts cause an economic drain on their host nations, and they contribute to political instability in the affected areas. Many refugees still do not know the fate of their loved ones and family members. Even fifteen years after the war has ended, the International Red Cross has no information on 14,444 persons.²⁷

Torture is expedient; it is used to extract information from criminals, subversives, traitors, and terrorists. It has been utilized extensively in Bosnia-Herzegovina during the wars of the 1990s. This is particularly heinous in the Balkan societies where women are assigned the greatest responsibility for sexual transgressions. These rapes are also used by men of one faction to humiliate the men of another, creating and punishing “otherness”. The conflation of the penis as an object of the victim’s pain and the torturer’s pleasure suggests the often sadomasochistic nature of the relationship.²⁸ However, researchers remind us that the goal of state violence is not to inflict pain; it is to punish categories of people, build consensus and enforce behavior, and de-legitimize specific groups.²⁹ Having been tortured by the state may be the ultimate form of distinction.³⁰

In the former Yugoslavia, tens of thousands of women have been raped, some more than a hundred times, while their sons and husbands were beaten and tortured in concentration camps like Omarska and Manjaca. Documents examined by the War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague suggest that Ratko Mladic issued orders to shell particular villages depending on the ethnic make-up of the inhabitants. The militaries’ use of ethnic cleansing created more than two million refugees and displaced persons. This number increased next with the expulsion of Serbs from Croatia and with the atrocities committed by the Serbs against the Albanian majority in Kosovo.³¹ This displacement forces many women and children to live lives of constantly shifting temporary existence.

A historical view now suggests that the Serbs were the most successful of all the “cleansers,” but in the course of the conflicts, all sides utilized this heinous tactic of war. The violence is aimed at driving the “other” community from land claimed by the victimizers. Sexual

²⁶ John K. Cox, K. *Teaching about Conflict and Crisis in the Former Yugoslavia* (Bloomington: ERIC Clearinghouse for Social Studies/Social Science Education), 1985.

²⁷ Mark Danner, “Faces of sorrow: Agony in the Former Yugoslavia,” *BalkansNet*, March 19, 1992, Balkansnet.org/ethnici.html/ (accessed November 11, 2010).

²⁸ Carole Nagengast, “Violence, Terror, and the Crisis of the State,” *Online Journal of Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol.23: 109-136 (October, 1994), <http://www.annualreviews.org/doi/abs/10.1146/annurev.an.23.100194.000545> (accessed November 1, 2010).

²⁹ *Ibid*, 19.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 19 & 20.

³¹ Carole Nagengast, “Violence, Terror, and the Crisis of the State,” *Online Journal of Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 23: 109-136 (October, 1994), <http://www.annualreviews.org/doi/abs/10.1146/annurev.an.23.1009194.000545>. (Accessed November 1, 2010).

violence then turns animosity into hatred. The goal of the rapists is to make the victims hate them, to not want to return.³² Their lives often become humanitarian crises.

A Sarajevo Muslim woman victim of sexual violence stated, “I’m a Muslim woman, thirty-five years old. My second, my newborn son, I named him Jihad, so that he wouldn’t forget his mothers’ oath—revenge. When I first nursed him I said, ‘If you forget, let the milk be cursed. So help me God.’ ...the Serbs taught me hatred.”³³ Rape is an exceptionally effective tool for assigning the message of “other.” Because of the honor/shame complex in Balkan society, the message is carried between the male enemies. The honor of the group is determined by the honor of its women. Their violation links the territory of the violated bodies with that of the violated nation. When the nation state is under attack, the bodies of its women are unprotected and worse, appropriated by the enemy. This newly polluted body is no longer welcome in the geographical territory.³⁴ They are driven from their homes, never able to return.

Activist, Mubera Zdrlovic is developing programs to assist women in Zagreb left pregnant by rape. The anguish of carrying a child conceived by rape is often more than a woman can bear. As the fetus grows inside of her, it becomes a living and constant reminder of the horrific act that created it. It’s as if the wound inside keeps on growing. Zdrlovic’s organization provides women with counseling and medical services including abortion and adoptions. “The Pope warned the women not to seek abortions, but to ‘accept the enemy into them.’ In his 1995 Christmas message, the Patriarch of the Serb Orthodox Church called on women to stop killing unborn children. These children were conceived out of violent revenge, how can any woman forgive a rapist of that?”³⁵ Catherine MacKinnon, Professor of Law at the University of Michigan states, “Human-rights principles are based on experience, but the experiences have not been those of women. What most often happens to women escapes the human-rights net. Whether in war or in peacetime, at home or abroad, in private or in public, by our side or by the other side, man’s inhumanity to women is ignored.”³⁶ The unequal balance of power makes women vulnerable to material hardships, but also exploitation.

Rapes of Muslim, Croatian, and Serbian women have been reported, but the majority of cases involve rapes of Muslim women by Serbian men. The perpetrators of these rapes involve soldiers, paramilitary groups, local police, and civilians. The numbers of incidents range from 20,000 to 50,000. The exact number of victims may never be known.³⁷ There have been recurring characteristics of these rapes in all areas of the Balkan conflicts. Most are gang rapes; they involve the element of spectacle, occurring in the presence of the victim’s family and they include torture and sadism. Sufferers have been assaulted with guns, broken bottles, or truncheons and family members have been forced to assault each other. Many times after the rapes, women’s breasts are cut off and their bellies sliced open. Some of these horrific acts have been shown on Serbian television and portrayed as a specific ethnic group to ignite nationalist fervor. Empirical data indicates an increase in violence as a result of the propaganda.

³² Robert M. Hayden, “Rape & Rape Avoidance in Ethno-National Conflicts: Sexual Violence in Liminalized States.” *American Anthropologist*, New Series, Vol. 102, No. 1 (March., 2000), pp.27-41.

³³ *Ibid*, 31, 32.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 32.

³⁵ Angela Robinson, *Weapon of War*, New Internationalist magazine (1993): 27, <http://newint.org/features/1993/06/05/rape/> (accessed October 29, 2010).

³⁶ *Ibid*, 28.

³⁷ Catherine Niarchos, *Women, War, and Rape: Challenges Facing the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia*. *Human Rights Quarterly* Volume 17, No. 4 (1995). http://muse.jhu.edu/login?uri=/journals/human_rights-quarterly/v017/17.4niarchos.html.

The rapes appear to be carried out as a deliberate policy. Many of the attackers claim they were ordered to rape, or to guarantee that the victims and their families would never return to the disputed area. The frequent consequence of rape is that the victim is rejected by her spouse or family. This reaction grows out of the view that the woman is a coconspirator in her own victimization. Rape victims are stigmatized in a way that no other crime victim is, and she is considered defiled, dishonored, and ruined.³⁸ They are the principal target intended for the destruction of a culture.

Catherine Niarchos, attorney and career foreign service officer states, “Mass rape has been a weapon of war since the beginning of conflict and it has occurred in the last ten years in El Salvador, Guatemala, Liberia, Kuwait, and the former Yugoslavia. Yet, for the most part it has been ignored; history has been just that—His Story. In the former Yugoslavia, rape speaks to the universality of women’s experience in war. Almost every motive for wartime rape is present—rape as misogyny, rape to destroy culture and community, rape to instill terror, rape to boost morale, rape as reward, and rape as the messenger of defeat.”³⁹ This is the deconstruction of culture.

Since the Balkan society embraces the honor/shame complex, the wartime rapes appear to be especially effective in destroying the fabric of its communities. Honor defines prestige or reputation, and so the honor/shame complex extends to the political system. It defines men’s trustworthiness and therefore their status as good and reliable patrons, clients, or citizens. Their honor is not just related to social standing, but extends to the standing of social and political groups. The honor of the household is inextricably linked to the reputation of the women who live there. Their reputation in turn is sealed by the public display of shame. Shame is an index for female reputation, just as honor is the measurement of a man. This helps to insure that men marry virgins and females display the proper reticence in public places. Women’s reputations are held in check by and sanctioned through local gossip. A man whose wife is adulterous or who fails to demonstrate virginity on the wedding night is dishonored.⁴⁰ This situation in the Balkans provides a broader socio-cultural context of conflict between different groups of men. This social and cultural context for rape has produced a lasting effect on the position, the identity and the sense of self of women.

United Nations peacekeeping forces were also implicated in the sexual abuse and prostitution of women in the Balkans. They utilized forced impregnation postulating the idea that the child’s ethnicity is that of the father. Serb soldiers and paramilitaries told women they raped them so that they would give birth to little Serbian soldiers who would grow up to kill them. Many women were held in rape camps in Bosnia until it was too late to have an abortion. Women of all nationalities from age six to age seventy have been raped, but Muslim women have experienced a disproportionate number of casualties among the victims of Serbian paramilitaries. In these countries, the rape of women of a community, or culture, is regarded as a symbolic rape of the nation.⁴¹ Even after being violently raped, women were still judged on their ability to maintain their chastity. They were seen as unchaste because they did not fight off

³⁸ Catherine Niarchos, *Women, War, and Rape: Challenges Facing the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia*. *Human Rights Quarterly* Volume 17, No. 4 (1995).

http://muse.jhu.edu/login?uri=/journals/human_rights-quarterly/v017/17.4niarchos.html.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Jon P. Mitchell, “Honour And Shame,” *Online Encyclopedia of Social & Cultural Anthropology* (August 2190), <http://www.bookrags.com/tandf/honour-and-shame-1-tf/> (accessed September 2, 2010).

⁴¹ Penny Welch, “Gender, Nationalism and War in the Balkans.” *Online Women’s Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 27 (1999), 34. <http://pers-www.wlv.ac.uk/~le1810/research.htm>. (Accessed September 29, 2010).

their attackers. This stigmatization caused many women victims of rape and forced prostitution to keep quiet about their ordeals. These sexually violated women not only feared their captors, they feared the reactions of husbands, families, and their communities because of her new status as a “raped woman.” As women endured their horror in silence, the crimes of their aggressors went unreported.⁴² This silence can be understood by women all over the world as they have been imbued with the task of transmitting the culture in many communities.

The health consequences of rape in war are called physical sequelae, or the diseases resulting from the rape. These conditions present as traumatic injuries, sexually transmitted diseases (including HIV infection), chronic medical conditions, infertility and pregnancy. Emergency contraception, antibiotics, and abortion access are extremely limited. Short-term psychological consequences include fear and a profound sense of helplessness and desperation. Over time these women suffer from depression, anxiety disorders, flashbacks, shame, and an inability to reestablish relationships. The rapes leave these women with evidence of the violence for the rest of their lives.

Stories of rape have surfaced predominantly from women who were forced to remain in isolation. If the woman was lucky and did not get pregnant, she buried her story inside to spare her family the dishonor. Now the woman is forced to fulfill her stereotypical role with the ever-present series of loss and trauma. The ripple effect on an entire community is incalculable.

Asija, a refugee Bosnian Muslim woman told her story of horror at her village while living in a Croatian refugee camp. Serbian soldiers ransacked their village, murdered husbands, raped the women and even killed the rabbits of the children. After the massacre the women had to bury the bodies of the men. Asija buried her husband, her two brothers-in-law, her father-in-law, and three nephews. While burying the bodies the armed Serbian soldiers circled them and taunted them saying, “We will kill you as well.” The physical torture to her body is a daily reminder of her hatred for the Serbs. Thirteen women buried their families over a period of six hours. Today, their main concern is to have a place they can call home. One woman told an aide worker she had to “touch the threshold of her home once again to be sane.”⁴³ Women need help to move beyond the trauma, but moving on does not deny its impact.

In the Balkans, loss of land is synonymous with the loss of identity. When the land is lost, the identity and self-esteem are lost. The psychological relationship to the land is imprinted in the DNA of the Balkan peasant. To them, the land is a sacred thing. When the city of Vukovar fell, a song was written and is now played at all public gatherings. It says, “do not touch my fields because I will return.”⁴⁴ History however, indicates that many of the displaced civilians will not be able to return.

“Rape shapes not only the future of an individual victim, but families, communities, generations, and nations and has the potential to reach a global scale. When rape is employed instead of a bullet, the weapon continues to wield power beyond the primary victim, while the

⁴² Penny Welch, “Gender, Nationalism and War in the Balkans.” *Online Women’s Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 27 (1999), 34. <http://pers-www.wlv.ac.uk/~le1810/research.htm>. (Accessed November 12, 2010).

⁴³ Maria B. Olujic, “Women Rape and War: The Continued Trauma of Refugees,” *Online Journal of Anthropology of East Europe Review*. (accessed November 1, 2010).

⁴⁴ Ibid.

battlefield may be the body, but the target is civil society.”⁴⁵ Wartime rapes not only destroy the lives of the victims, the affects cascade across generational divides. This leaves permanent inscriptions on the country’s civil society, which then affects the globalized world. Children born of rape are rarely adopted and thus, orphanages in conflict areas are flooded with “rape babies.” These children emerge from the orphanages and foster homes with little education, only to face poverty, abuse, homelessness and psychological problems. Communities then become burdened with children and adults, suffering from traumas from which they are unable to cope.⁴⁶ This phenomenon increases the instability of the populace which leads to the instability of the international community.

The Balkan societies operate with rigid customs and taboos regarding chastity. In this context, rape victims are viewed as unfaithful, unclean, traitors, and damaged. Many unskilled women are left to support themselves and their children and the long-term effects lead to destabilization of the family, the community, and ultimately the nation.⁴⁷

Discussion: How Rape is a Threat to International Security

Many victims of rape are forced to leave their country of origin and carry the effects of the traumas into the country in which they seek asylum. With a culture of silence from shame, this leads to decreased levels of productivity, poverty, and the spread of untreated diseases. As Nelson Mandela stated at the World Health Organization conference in 2002, “Safety and security don’t just happen: they are the results of collective consensus and public investment. Children-the most vulnerable citizens in our society- deserve a life free from violence and fear. In order to ensure this, there must be tireless efforts not only to attain peace, justice, and prosperity for countries, but also for communities and members of the same family. The roots of violence must be addressed. Only then will the past century’s legacy be transformed from a crushing burden into a cautionary lesson.”⁴⁸ Evil cannot have the last word.

This calls for a focus on gender equality in the world. In order to facilitate this premise, a global effort must focus on three things: (1) gender equality and bias must be removed from all countries, (2) there must be a unified international response to ban rape as a weapon of war, with strategies of prevention and awareness put into place, and(3) impunity of victims must cease.⁴⁹ The world will not survive if we cling to the verities of the past. Human beings are all part of the human family.

The wars in the Balkans ended in various stages, mostly resulting in massive economic and social disruption. War weariness is evident and the horrors of the conflicts are drawing people to think of alternatives to settling disputes. It has even been reported that up to 60,000 young men of military call-up age have fled from Bosnia to Montenegro to avoid military service. Many people are homeless, jobless, and have been separated from their families and communities. Some areas have become ethnically pure states. “Throughout the whole territory of Bosnia, ethnic cleansing is now nearly complete,” said Steve Curliss of the United Nations

⁴⁵ Cassandra Clifford, “Facing the Balkan Challenge,” *Online Journal of The Foreign Policy Association* (January 2005), http://www.fpa.org/topics_info2414/topics_info_show.htm?doc_id=483334 (accessed November 1, 2010).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Cassandra Clifford, “Facing the Balkan Challenge,” *Online Journal of the Foreign Policy Association* (January 2005), http://www.fpa.org/topics_info2414/topics_info_show.htm?doc_id=483334 (accessed November 2, 2010).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

High Commission for Refugees. This organization estimates that 417,000 people have fled their homes. A huge numbers of refugees is moving to find safety. This displacement of people represents the largest movement of refugees since the Second World War.⁵⁰ This contributes to international instability.

In the 20th century there were 250 wars and this trend is rising. In the 19th century, most casualties were among soldiers. Today eighty-five percent of casualties are among civilians. As the world's population increases exponentially, societies struggle to find adequate resources for its people. These stressors increase the possibility of hostilities. This increases the threat of the rape of women and the threat to international stability.⁵¹

Conclusion

There is no doubt that war is an invention of mankind, but tragically, women are the victims of these male wars. The war in the former Yugoslavia is a recent episode in its long history. As stated in the beginning, rapes happen as a result of a routine and expected reward to the victors, random rapes occur due to a lack of military discipline, and the one that was examined in this paper, rape as a tactic of war. The widespread use of rape as a tactic of war reflects the unique terror it holds for women, the unique power it gives to the rapist and the unique contempt it displays for the victims. The use of rape also reflects the inequalities women face every day of their lives. Until this discrimination is ended, rape will continue to be a favored weapon of the aggressor. ⁵²

As campaigns of ethnic cleansings are launched, mass movements of refugees place great burdens on the international community. Host nations are forced to provide basic services and can lead to social tensions within that country. Accepting refugees from other states is a tacit acknowledgement that the sending state is a human rights violator. Thus, alliances, trade, and diplomatic relations might be compromised. ⁵³ The safety of the women of the world is paramount to international security.

⁵⁰ Lindsey German, "The Balkan War: can there be peace?" *Online Journal of International Socialism*, Issue 69 (Winter 1995), <http://pubs.socialistreviewindex.org.uk/ssj69/german.htm>

⁵¹ Martin Donohoe, "War, Rape, & Genocide: Never Again?" *Online Journal, Medscape OBGYN & Women's Health*. (May 2004). <http://www.medscape.com/view/article/491147>

⁵² Amnesty International, "Stop violence Against Women." Rape As a Tool of War: Fact Sheet. <http://www.amestyusa.org/women/rapein wartime.html> (accessed November 13, 2010).

⁵³ Idean Salehyan, "Safe Haven: International Norms, Strategic Interests, & US Refugee Policy," *Online Journal of The Center for Comparative Immigration Studies* (June 2001), http://www.ccis-ucsd.org.PUBLICATIONS/working_40.PDF