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Comparative Perspectives Symposium: Feminists Reconceptualize Peace

Beyond War and Men: Reconceptualizing Peace in Relation to the Everyday and Women

Chan Shun-hing

In the Western intellectual tradition, peace studies has been considered the purview of international relations scholars, and war between political entities, especially nation-states, has been the main referent when conceptualizing peace. According to Harald Müller, for example, peace must be construed narrowly in relation to direct violence that occurs between collectives: "Peace is a state between specific social and political collectives characterized by the absence of direct violence and in which the possible use of violence by one against another in the discourse between the collectives has no place" (Müller 2005, 62). Müller distinguishes peace from concepts such as justice, insisting that peacemaking has nothing to do with structural or cultural violence. As Oliver P. Richmond notes, "Making peace in the international system has mainly been conceptualized as Western activity derived from war, from grand peace conferences, and more recently, the sophisticated contemporary institutionalization of key norms associated with liberal peace. Where theorists do attempt to engage with peace as a concept, they often focus upon units such as states and empire as its main building blocks, thus broadly discounting the role and agency of individuals and societies in its construction and sustainability" (Richmond 2005, 2).

The 1000 Women for the Nobel Peace Prize campaign, or PeaceWomen Project, directly challenges such narrow understandings of peace.[1] By ex-

[1] The PeaceWomen project is an international women's project making women's peace work more visible. It began as an effort to nominate one thousand women, collectively, for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2005 under the campaign "1000 Women for the Nobel Peace Prize 2005." The one thousand women nominated came from more than 150 countries,

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amining peacemaking in everyday life, this project links structural and cultural violence with violence that occurs at the individual level. In so doing, the project demonstrates that the discipline of international relations neglects complex interconnections between peace and gender, the environment, development, and poverty. Such persistent oversights preclude comprehension of crucial causes of conflict. Indirect violence grounded in everyday life contributes to large-scale disasters and destruction, as well as to direct violence, such as military war and conflicts—all of which result in losses of life, loved ones, and homes, and in starvation, insecurity, sexual harassment, and mental trauma.

The PeaceWomen Project adopts a holistic concept of peace that integrates human security, human rights, conflict resolution, and gender equality and draws on civil society mobilizations for economic livelihood, health, education, environment, and cultural values. This approach overlaps with but transcends conceptions of "liberal peace" that incorporate "mantras of human rights, democratization, and human security" (Richmond 2005, 10). International organizations like the United Nations have played a key role in liberal efforts to connect the concept of peace with security. The 2004 report of the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change concluded, as one of its members puts it, that the threats confronting the contemporary world include "a whole range of issues that have not traditionally been considered as part of the peace and security nexus at all—poverty, environmental degradation, pandemic diseases and the spread of organized crime, to mention the most prominent" (Hannay 2005, 9).

Like the UN panel, the PeaceWomen Project strives to expand understandings of peace. Taking an innovative approach to peace studies, the project seeks to identify the complex origins of threats and different forms of violence in order to change the circumstances that give rise to conflict. In this sense, the project builds on Johan Galtung's ([1969] 2005; 1996) distinction between personal (physical, direct) violence and structural (systematic, indirect) violence, as well as his concepts of negative peace (ways of intervening in conflict situations) and positive peace (ways of preventing violence). As Galtung points out, "The absence of personal

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and many of them were from the grass roots. Although the prize was not awarded to these PeaceWomen, their work and stories were made visible through various means and publications all over the world. This effort is now continued by PeaceWomen across the Globe, the organization born out of 1000 Women for the Nobel Peace Prize. It aims to facilitate connections and strengthen women's peace efforts around the world so that a strong, cross-sectoral, and global women's peace movement will emerge. For details, please see http://www.1000peacewomen.org.

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violence does not lead to a positively defined condition, whereas the absence of structural violence is what we have referred to as social justice, which is a positively defined condition (egalitarian distribution of power and resources). . . . This means that peace theory is intimately connected not only with conflict theory, but equally with development theory" (Galtung [1969] 2005, 42).

Although it is a global project connected to high-level institutions, the PeaceWomen Project goes beyond the critique of liberal peace by emphasizing the impact of individual women and the diversity of their everyday peacemaking work rather than focusing on international organizations, representation, and governance. As Ruth-Gaby Vermot-Mangold, President of the Association of 1000 Women for the Nobel Peace Prize, puts it: "In Africa, [these women] fight against genital mutilation of little girls; in South America, they search for loved ones who have disappeared; in Asia, they denounce poverty and child labor; in Europe, they stand up against sexual exploitation and domestic violence. . . . The 1000 women . . . stand up everyday against violence and destruction and for peace" (Vermot-Mangold 2005).

Some feminist scholars and activists have analyzed the many national, racial, and ethnic conflicts arising from national independence wars or movements in formerly colonial states, as well as other wars between races or ethnic groups within nation-states.[2] Others theorize a politics of peace with reference to actions taken by women in response to war situations, and some theorize the ethics of peace and war in relation to feminism more generally.[3] Two approaches to peace have grown from these efforts. The first conceives of peace as an alternative to war and conflict, which are construed in terms of nationalism and patriotism and as linked to powerful male-dominated institutions such as the state or religious organizations. Linking nationalism and nation-states to complicated political and historical questions (such as colonial histories and religious affiliation), some feminists have debated whether women should participate in so-called just war, while others have argued that women should resist war itself as a masculinist endeavor.

A second approach suggests that peace can be brought about by the proliferation of feminine values, such as care. Genuine peace, on this view,

[2] See Parker et al. (1992), Chatterjee (1993), Grewal and Kaplan (1994), Lentin (1997), West (1997), Yuval-Davis (1997), Butalia (1998), Chan (1999), Kaplan, Alarcón, and Moallem (1999), and Lau (1999).

[3] See Ruddick (1995), Elshtain (1996), Tobias (1996), Warren and Cady (1996), and Kelley and Eblen (2002).

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is a kind of positive peace that involves cooperation, agreement, and humane interaction rather than merely preventing war. Peace educator and activist Betty Reardon envisioned feminist peace and security in terms of life affirmation, social justice, equality, and inclusivity and holism. Indeed, she argued that peace must "include all peoples and all nations based on a notion of extended kinship including the entire human family" and must "assure that all interrelated and relevant factors affecting world security are taken into consideration," including the maintenance of ecological balance (Reardon 1990, 139–40). Arguing that militarism and war are linked to sexism and the enforcement of patriarchy, she defined feminism as the force to affirm life and to transform the system to a peaceful one (Reardon 2000), and her ideas lie at the core of ecofeminism (Warren 1994, 1996, 2000; Sturgeon 1997; Eaton and Lorentzen 2003).

As a feminist activist in Hong Kong, my involvement in the PeaceWomen Project has inspired me to reconceptualize peace beyond war from a feminist cultural studies perspective that integrates the category "women" with "the everyday." Cultural studies has established the everyday as an important analytical category for culture (Williams 1989). If peace can be conceived as a kind of culture (rearticulation of relationships, redistribution of power, reestablishment of values and order, etc.), we can also say that peace can no longer be conceived outside the everyday.

Contemporary everyday life is a site of conflict not only because of its exploitative, oppressive, and relentlessly controlled capitalist nature (Lefebvre 1984) but also because of its cultural and ideological complexity (Langbauer 1992; Chan 2002). The dimensions of conflict are multiple, including visible or physical violence (ranging from domestic violence to war violence), structural violence (such as damage done to the environment, to people's livelihoods, or to health and safety), and cultural violence (such as discrimination, prejudice, segregation, and binaries that foster systems of advantage and disadvantage).

Women are vulnerable to all these types of violence, but they also are uniquely positioned to envision ways to engage in resistance and to resolve conflicts, contributing to their own survival and the survival of those with whom they share their lives. This framework harnesses "the everyday" alongside "women" as crucial analytic categories for reconceptualizing peace. It invites us to explore how women resist violence in their daily work and how they negotiate gender-specific forms of violence. Some women may deploy maternal thinking or use feminine values like care and sharing. Others may be guided by alternate logics such as community bonds or ordinariness, countering masculinist ways of dealing with conflicts (Marshall 2000).

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I will discuss three cases of Chinese women's peace work—Gao Chin Shu Mei, the Women Workers Cooperative in Hong Kong, and Yang Hailan—to demonstrate how peace work is deeply rooted in everyday life. Environmental protection and sustainable livelihood are common themes in these three cases, as they were in many PeaceWomen nominations from China. By contextualizing their work in their respective political, social, and economic systems in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and mainland China, we will see that peace work at the individual level does help to eliminate structural and cultural violence embedded in government policies, profit-driven economic development, and discrimination.

Gao Chin Shu Mei

Gao Chin Shu Mei comes from one of the major Taiwanese indigenous groups, the Taiya. Well known in Taiwan first as an actress and singer, Gao worked with the victims of the September 21, 2001, earthquake in the mountainous areas where most indigenous people live. Discovering that the rights of indigenous people are violated by various development projects proposed by the government in the name of the indigenous people's interest, she decided to participate in the parliamentary election in order to speak for the rights of the Taiya and other indigenous people. She used her position within Parliament to mobilize Taiyas to defeat a proposal that would have promoted tourism development projects while jeopardizing endangered species and Taiya cultural traditions. She continues to study problems related to water supply, roads and transportation, education, medicine, employment, and livelihood that affect the everyday lives of people from various mountain tribes.

Gao's peace work in Taiwan is a kind of positive peace that uses the language of sustaining the environment and indigenous cultures to transform the two kinds of war against the Taiwanese people, namely, the possible military antagonism between mainland and Taiwanese authorities due to political tension and the developmentalism that marginalizes the rights of indigenous people and the environment in which they live. The goal of this kind of peace politics is to build a secure society that guarantees the livelihood of all Taiwanese people (not only the urban and Han people) politically, socially, economically, and culturally. Gao knows how to use her indigenous identity, her cultural capital as a successful entertainment star, and her political capacity to work on the policy level. This is often no easy task. As William C. Gay argues, there are obstacles to infusing public policy discourse with the language of positive peace (Gay 2004, 5). In the context of Taiwan, the myth that war is natural has been his-

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torically sustained by the political division between the Chinese Communist Party and the Nationalist Party since the mid-twentieth century, a division now intensified by the Democratic Progressive Party's uncompromising and even intentionally provocative attitude toward the Communist Party regarding Taiwan's independence. As a result of such highly oppositional party politics and the ideology of militarism, the discourse of security has been used by national politics. Along with Taiwan's quest to regain its once-leading economic position in East Asia, policies prioritizing buying arms to secure Taiwan and developing the rural mountainous areas into national parks to attract tourist consumption are far more comprehensible to parliamentarians than ones aiming to guarantee the human security of all citizens in terms of their rights to sustainable livelihood, social inclusion, education opportunities, and cultural traditions in their everyday lives.

Hong Kong Women Workers Cooperative

Members of the Hong Kong Women Workers' Cooperative are mostly middle-aged women who worked in the industrial sector in the 1970s and early 1980s, when the manufacturing industry boomed in Hong Kong. When the factories moved northward to mainland China for cheaper labor and land in the mid-1980s, these women gradually became un- or underemployed. Under the Hong Kong government's laissez-faire economic policy, workers were expected to adjust by shifting to other economic sectors to sustain their livelihoods. For women workers from poor families with limited formal education, the positions available were as cleaners, waitresses, office attendants, and saleswomen—jobs with very low pay.

The profit-oriented and urban-centered economic and social development model in Hong Kong offered no assistance to displaced workers. The development project sustained by the ideology of cosmopolitanism is dominated by the concerns of the middle class, showing little interest in the livelihoods of socially disadvantaged groups, such as women, the aged, and immigrants. It was in this context that the Women Workers' Cooperative came into existence in 1993, offering skills-building job opportunities in areas such as Chinese typing, typesetting, and interviewing to help generate income for its members while also demonstrating how to run a business in a cooperative and nonhierarchal way. In 2002, the Women Workers' Cooperative set up the first secondhand shop and community economy project in Shamshuipo, one of the poorest districts in Hong Kong. Based on their observation of overconsumption by the af-

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fluent and the dire needs of the low-income families living in the district, they began collecting unwanted household objects from different community groups, families, and individuals, as well as nonmarketable goods donated by manufacturers. They displayed the objects in the shop and sold them at low prices.

To encourage donations, the cooperative created an alternative currency that donors can use to obtain other goods and services. Individual donors could become members of a community network. When their donated goods were sold, they would be awarded a certain amount of "flowers," a community currency that could be exchanged for services provided by members or used to buy necessities from a shop also run by the community. The cooperative started a second shop in the same district in 2006. For the labor of running the two shops, members of the cooperative are rewarded by a subsistence-level salary generated by the business and approved by consensus of all the members.

Such an alternative economy is not easy to maintain in capitalist Hong Kong. The cooperative must deal with the high cost of rent, monopolization of the market by big entrepreneurs, and competition in the labor market. In addition to the challenge of their own survival, members confront the challenges of building alternative work relationships (around production) and community relationships (around consumption). Their dedication demonstrates a deeper meaning of peacemaking. As a collective, the women workers have been trying to fight against the logic of capitalism that generates forms of invisible violence in everyday life. Like war, capitalist practices of deindustrialization destroy people's livelihoods, egalitarian social relationships, sustainable living environments, fair modes of operation, and community cultures. Transforming unwanted objects into usable and exchangeable commodities generates a production-consumption exchange cycle built on principles of fairness and mutuality and a culture of cooperation, connectedness, trust, and nonwastefulness. The impact of such positive peace politics is significant for demonstrating an alternative way to reach human security from the bottom up, informed by a vision of life that is sustainable at the community level.

Yang Hailan

Yang Hailan began to engage in environmental protection work as a result of her ambition to convert desert into oasis through tree planting and agriculture. Environmental degradation has been a growing problem in

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mainland China since the 1980s. In 1992, the United Nations identified land degradation and sandy desertification in Northern China, in particular in the province of Ningxia, as serious environmental crises (Yi 2001).

The impact of sandy desertification on China's ecosystem and economy is enormous (National Environmental Protection Bureau 1999, 17) and includes "damage to the ecosystem, environmental degradation, lower land productivity, loss of people's livelihoods, aggravated poverty, and ecological refugees; [the] loss of usable land resources and loss of habitable land; [and an] increase in [the] strength and frequency of sand and dust storms" (Wang and Wu 2005, 239–40). In 1996, for example, desertified land represented 27.3 percent of the total area of China (Yi 2001, 39–40). With other forms of degradation and pollution also getting worse over recent decades, the Chinese authorities and the international community can no longer deny that environmental degradation is one of the most prominent threats to human security. Like wars, violence done to the environment because of rapid economic development, uncontrolled exploitation of resources, and other social and political factors has seriously affected the standard of living and everyday life, threatening the survival of humanity and civilization in the long run. Facing such threats, the Chinese government has begun to pay much more attention to environmental protection work, including setting domestic desertification control plans and signing international treaties on desertification control in the 1990s.[4] Contracting desert land out to entrepreneurs was one of the rehabilitation strategies to involve local people in controlling desertification.

Although raised in the city and trained as an accountant, Yang contracted 520 acres of desert land near Yinchuan, the provincial capital of Ningxia (one of the poorest and most desertified provinces in northwest China), where she lived. Her initial interest in cultivating desert land was more part of a business plan than a result of environmental consciousness. Building farmland by leveling sand dunes with water is one of the technologies used in northern China for controlling sandy desertification. Although it requires water, it is inexpensive, effective, and easy to maintain once it is fully functional (see Wang and Wu 2005, 241–43). Before the severe winter came, she managed to level the sand dunes with water from the Yellow River channeled through a dike. She prepared to plant trees and construct a windbreak forest on the revived land when spring came. But

[4] For example, China issued the National Desertification Control Plan 1991–2000 and signed the 1994 UN Convention on Desertification Control (National Environmental Protection Bureau 1999, 5, 14).

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when she returned in spring, she saw sand dunes covering the whole area again, leaving no trace of her previous efforts. With sand and tears in her eyes, she did not give up but continued to work to make way for building the farm.

As she became more conscious of environmental issues and learned more skills in ecoagriculture, she set up, with the help of her family members, an ecologically balanced agricultural system on her farm. She practiced organic farming, poultry and cattle rearing, and wine manufacturing. By 2002, from among the thirteen entrepreneurs who had contracted desert land from the government in 1996 (twelve run by men), only Yang was continuing her business in the desert. Thus she proved the sustainability of her efforts to revive the resourcefulness of the land and maintain a livelihood. She gained recognition from governmental and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) for her success in alleviating environmental degradation in the desert and creating a model for ecological agriculture.

She then established an NGO in Yinchuan to help peasant women learn skills to improve their production, to protect soil, and to acquire gender consciousness. She also opened her farm to tourists so they could enjoy organic food and learn about ecoagriculture. When she was interviewed as a PeaceWoman in 2005, Yang said that after ten years of struggle with the desert, her greatest achievement was not the business (in fact she did not get rich) but the realization of her dream of becoming the "mother" of her "daughter," the desert farm that bears fruits and hope (Chan 2007, 254).

Conclusion

As these three examples demonstrate, the everyday is a site influenced by complex forces that range in scale from global to local, including the global market and divisions of labor, profit-driven economic models, national policy priorities, cosmopolitanism, urban-centered development with wasteful consumption of commodity goods, and exploitation of human and natural resources. Whether or not these women have experienced direct physical violence—loss of homes and jobs, or deprivation of food, water, or land—they realize that they are living in an unjust, stratified, and insecure world. They engage the everyday as a site of conflict, filled with gender trouble, structured by patriarchy. Whether as elected officials, members of worker cooperatives, or environmental entrepreneurs, women use their different positioning and tactics to exercise power and sustain their work, which indirectly subverts unequal power relationships while

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building a balanced cultural ecology. Securing the rights of indigenous people, defending the livelihoods of low-income workers, and cultivating alternative cultural values and sustainable environments are new kinds of peacemaking that require persistence, creativity, and intensive negotiation.

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Protected by Friendship and Caring: Women and Peace in the Former Yugoslav Countries

Jasmina Lukić

For many younger readers of this article, the name Yugoslavia may mean nothing since the country with this name ceased to exist in a series of brutal wars. Stanislava Staša Zajović calls them simply "post-Yugoslav wars" (Zajović 2001, 382). Sabrina P. Ramet uses the explanatory phrase "the war of Yugoslav succession" (2006, 7) and Dejan Jović "the Yugoslav wars of succession" (2009, 19). The wars officially began in June 1991 with the Yugoslav Army's intervention in Slovenia, at that time one of six Yugoslav federated republics, which declared independence from the common country. It was the first and shortest of all the wars for succession, lasting for only ten days and ending with the withdrawal of the Yugoslav Army.[1] This was followed by wars in Croatia and subsequently in Bosnia, each more devastating than the previous, ending with the Dayton Peace Accords in December 1995. The Serbian military, led by Slobodan Milošević, intervened into Kosovo, a move halted by the NATO

[1] The war in Slovenia also provoked the first, unfortunately unsuccessful, mass movement of women across the whole of Yugoslavia, who organized themselves in an effort to stop the war. The movement on a larger scale was soon to be compromised by nationalist forces (see Ramet 2006).

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