CHAPTER 3 : MILITARISM, GENDER VIOLENCE, AND RESISTANCE.

Introduction

This chapter examines the processes of gender violence, the means by which they are legitimated in situations of war and insurgency, and the forms of resistance to it engaged in by women. By looking at the gender dimensions of counter-insurgency and repression-resistance situations, it is clear that the relationship between women and nationalist movements need to be understood in greater depth. The strategies deployed against communities, particularly women, such as intimidation and rape, and the ways these are institutionalised in military training, are explored. The chapter then focuses on the various forms of resistance engaged in by women, including speaking out, refusing to be intimidated, negotiating with military officials, and organising meetings. Women's attitudes toward male-dominated resistance movements, suggest that the leadership of such movements need to be challenged if real change is to be achieved.

Following on from an initial examination of these issues in Chapter 1, this chapter attempts to ground some of the points made in that literature. By focusing on the theoretical insights of Cynthia Enloe, Anne-Marie Hilsdon, whose work is on the Philippines, and Jacqueline Siapno who carried out research in Aceh, this chapter will explore in greater detail, how these insights inform the West Papua situation.

Rape as an Element of Military Strategy

Conquering a people through its women has been an ongoing part of warfare, and has in part to do with the notion held in many societies, of women both being the property of men, and representing the collective honour of the community. According to Nira Yuval-Davis (1997), the 1949 Geneva Convention has defined rape as a 'crime against honour' rather than a form of torture, and she suggests that 'the "honour" is that of the men and the community, rather than necessarily that of the women themselves' (p.110).

It is only very recently that rape as a war crime has been given proper recognition within international courts The most recent international pronouncements were in 1996 (Enloe, 2000), when for the first time, rape in itself was treated as a war crime. The International War Crimes Tribunal indicted eight Bosnian Serb military and police officers on charges of raping Bosnian Muslim women (p.135). Then in 1998, the Arusha Tribunal in Tanzania, found a

Rwandan civilian major guilty of 'overseeing the systematic rapes of Tutsi women'. Significantly, this was 'the very first guilty verdict by an international court that included rape as a genocidal crime' (p.137).

In situations of war and insurgency, in which military personnel are unchecked in their behaviour, violence against women is a common way of humiliating and terrorising the civilian population perceived as being the enemy. As Susan Brownmiller suggests, the effect of rape in warfare is 'indubitably one of intimidation and demoralization for the victims' side' (1976:37). Anne-Marie Hilsdon (1995) in her study of militarism and violence in the Philippines, discusses perceptions of women as men's property, and says that women are 'the victims of sexual violence as the 'property' of men whom the military want to punish' (p.120). Galuh Wandita (1998), who works with an NGO concerned with women's health and human rights in Eastern Indonesia, suggests that in times of conflict, existing assumptions about masculine power to conquer and destroy are exacerbated. As she says 'Women are seen as property of the enemy, justifying acts of plunder, forced possession, and destruction' (p.1).

However, rather than being a side effect of warfare, part of what she terms 'lootpillageandrape', Cynthia Enloe (2000) argues convincingly that rape has been militarised and used strategically in various ways which require deeper understanding by feminists (p.134). Rape is often part of military strategy, particularly if military strategists and their civilian allies view women as sustaining the enemy's culture, and as the breeders of more potential enemies. Rape is also likely to be used as a strategy when women are seen as being both the property of men and symbols of men's honour, or as being crucial in performing work upon which their communities depend (p.134).

In her discussion of how militarised rape is used in the name of 'national security', Enloe (2000) suggests this is most likely to occur under a regime for which national security is paramount, and understood by the civilian population to be a military problem. It is also more likely when national security policy is determined by a masculinised elite, and when men perceived as security threats are considered most vulnerable in their roles as fathers and husbands. Finally and most critically, this scenario is more probable when some women are publicly organised in their opposition to the regime (p.124).

Enloe states that this scenario was very much in force in the Philippines by the late 1970s (p.124). Given that both the Philippines and Indonesia have been engaged in anti-insurgency operations, and both are beneficiaries of US military education and training, Enloe's analysis is also very relevant to Indonesian military strategies. The anti-insurgency doctrine taught in US military academies and labelled 'Low Intensity Conflict' (LIC), has a number of characteristics including an official denial of open warfare, yet civilians are deemed to be possibly as dangerous as armed guerillas. Government critics are labelled 'communist', and psychological pressure is used against the civilian population. LIC also implies 'selective removal of population', the use of 'sophisticated methods of surveillance and interrogation', and the 'organisation of local militias' (p.125). The adoption of this doctrine by Philippine officials was intended to build on pre-existing patriarchal cultural ideas and practices, such as what it is to be a respectable woman. Thus when women activists were labelled 'communists' or 'subversives', those officials were 'wrapping a local form of patriarchy in the flag of national security' (p.127).

Gender Violence in Indonesia

In Indonesia, gender violence became part of public discourse as a result of the 1998 May riots, which culminated in the resignation of Suharto, and the beginnings of political reform. The gang rapes of Chinese Indonesian girls and women during the riots, led to the formation of Volunteers for Humanity, which documented incidents, gave support to survivors of rape, and initiated public education on gender violence and racism (Wandita, 1998:2-3). In July 1998, the Society for the Elimination of Violence against Women (*Masyarakat Anti-Kekerasan terhadap Perempuan*) presented its findings to President Habibie, who agreed that the National Commission on Human Rights in conjunction with various NGOs would investigate the May rapes, and that a National Commission on Violence against Women would be established (Wandita, 1998:2-3).

Enloe (2000) argues that it is only through women's activism, that the political use of rape by soldiers during this period was uncovered (p.109). A month after the riots, women activists had gathered sufficient evidence to substantiate the rapes of ethnic Chinese girls and women. According to Ita F.Nadia from the Kayam Women's Aid Centre in Jakarta, 'not only were rapes systematically committed by men in groups, but they were perpetrated by men in the Indonesian army wearing civilian clothes' (cited in Enloe, 2000:330).

Since then, stories of human rights violations by the Indonesian military, including gender violence, continue to surface, and are being documented by NGOs, particularly in Aceh, East Timor and West Papua. It is in these areas, the so called *Daerah Operasi Militer* (Military Operations Areas) that the military has had unrestricted power, and where indigenous women have been tortured, raped and used as mistresses by military personnel. For example, in August 1998, one East Timorese woman told a group of women how she was forced to work as a domestic in a military complex, where she was often hit. If she refused to have sex, she would be tied and raped. She gave birth to five children.

> So these are children of war. Before the war I had no children, since the war, I am carrying these children - children of war, children of Indonesia' (cited in Wandita, 1998:4).

Gender Dimensions of Military Discourse

Hilsdon's (1995) analysis of military discourses in which civilians are perceived as being weak and feminine, in contrast to soldiers who are strong and masculine, is useful in understanding militarised gender violence. Whilst her study focuses on the Philippines, strong parallels can be drawn with the Indonesian military, particularly as they are both benefactors of U.S military training and aid. In the case of the Philippines, the 'enemy' of the AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines) that Hilsdon identifies is the NPA (New People's Army). In Indonesia, the 'enemy' in West Papua is the OPM (Free Papua Movement), in Aceh it is *Aceh Merdeka* or Free Aceh Movement, and in East Timor, it was Fretilin.

The way soldiers are taught to view themselves in relation to the 'enemy' and to civilians, is instructive in appreciating military violence. In many armies, soldiers are taught that 'weakness' is 'feminine', and must be overcome, while 'strength' is required to conquer a 'weak' enemy.

> Hence the enemy/victim is feminised and the conqueror masculinised. The strong-weak dichotomy may be linked with male control over women; with military force directed against weaker cultures or nations....(Hilsdon, 1995:91-92).

Thus Hilsdon (1995:93) argues that military and sexual notions of conquest come together, and the military-instilled abhorrence of the 'feminine' weakness in the self, supports the sexual exploitation of women in war.

Whilst military training builds on social constructions of masculinity, there are situations where men have rejected this linking of militarism with masculinity. Cynthia Enloe (1993)

discusses one such case in South Africa, where, by the late 1980s, white men were not only questioning conscription, but organising against it. Some young men were so traumatised by their duties in the black townships that they were committing suicide.

> Men who had gone through service began to question out loud whether their killing and beating of African women and children was indeed 'manly'. Some men began to reconstruct their own ideas of masculinity, often drawing on their Christian beliefs (Enloe, 1993:54-55).

Militarism, Terror and Civilians

As well as being inculcated with notions of conquest through military masculinity, soldier recruits learn the importance of military hierarchy. Hilsdon (1995:108) suggests that civilians are deemed 'irrelevant and peripheral to military life', and are constructed as ' "weak, poor and ignorant" people who "look up to us" '. Robin Morgan (1989:170) argues that both men of 'the State-that-is', meaning soldiers, and men of 'the State-that-would-be', meaning members of armed nationalist movements, practice terrorism of a similar kind. She says: 'Such men suffer from a lack of ambivalence'. This lack of ambivalence, in which neither complexity nor compassion is tolerated, allows them to torture and rape civilians who are depicted either as suspected communists or terrorists, or of harbouring them (Hilsdon, 1995:92). In Aceh, because of the behaviour of the military toward the general population, young people who have witnessed incidents of intimidation and violence 'have formed strong opinions that the role of the Indonesian military is not to protect civilians but to abuse them' (Siapno, 1997:289).

In the case of Indonesia, as Jacqueline Siapno (1997:28) observes, the so called 'dual function' of the military which makes it responsible for both national security and social and political affairs, means that in areas like Aceh, West Papua and East Timor, 'almost all aspects of civil society are controlled and occupied by the Indonesian military'. In the Philippines, Hilsdon (1995:183) observed situations where military apparatuses operate independently of their government. They create terror through surveillance and torture 'with or without hierarchical orders'. Siapno (1997:288-289) similarly found that members of the Indonesian military in Aceh contemptuously disregarded legal restrictions on their behaviour.

> One military commander in Aceh publicly told human rights lawyer who referred to the minimal guarantees provided in the Code of

> Criminal Procedure: "You can eat your KUHAP[1]. It doesn't apply here."

Strategies of Resistance to Militarism and Gender Violence

In militarised societies like Indonesia and the Philippines, where there is long term war or insurgency between the military and an internal 'enemy', terror and violence is something people learn to live with. It is therefore not surprising that the National Commission on Women in the Philippines has suggested that 'women have been socialised into accepting the inevitability of male aggression and violence' (Hilsdon,1995:114-115). But not all are just silent victims. Many act politically, both to protect themselves and their communities, and to resist and subvert military oppression.

The ways in which women resisted the Indonesian occupation in East Timor, is discussed in interviews with refugees in Australia conducted by Patsy Thatcher (1988). After the Indonesian invasion, women, particularly widows, combined together for economic purposes, and also 'for protection from sexual harassment from Indonesian soldiers and officials' (Tokodede woman, cited in Thatcher, p.92). Some East Timorese women fought as guerillas, and in Indonesian controlled areas, women were active in underground resistance groups. Widows and prisoner's wives declined joining Indonesian women's organisations.

> Many women refuse to learn Bahasa Indonesia and insist on Timorese languages at home. Many have become Catholics as a symbolic act of defiance (Tokodede woman, cited in Thatcher, p.125).

In 'post-modern wars'[2], where the warring parties exist within rather than between states, the burden carried by women of being widowed and supporting the family is the norm. Men do most of the fighting, while women 'continue their fight for survival for themselves and their children' (Yuval-Davis, 1997:114). Both in refugee camps, and in Aceh, in widow villages, women are vulnerable to rape. Yuval-Davis (1997:110) writes that because of notions of 'honour and shame', when pregnancies result from rape, women may 'lose the respect and support of their surviving families and communities…'. She says that this explains why most reports of systematic rapes are of widowed or single women, - married women prefer to stay silent. On the issue of reporting and documenting rape, Shana Swiss and Joan Giller who

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[1] Kitab Undang-Undang Hukum Acara Pidana, Code of Criminal Procedure.

[2] A term used by Miriam Cooke, (cited in Yuval-Davis, 1997:94)

have interviewed women in war zones, warn activists not to let their own concern 'turn into the objectification of women as victims'. As they told Cynthia Enloe:

> The very process of human rights documentation may conflict with the needs of the individual survivor. Recounting the details of a traumatic experience may trigger an intense reliving of the event and, along with it, feelings of extreme vulnerability, humiliation, and despair (cited in Enloe, 2000:133).

Jacqueline Siapno (1997) takes to task what she calls the 'narrative of victimization', which she claims characterises both human rights reports and the discourse of Jakarta women's organisations (p.321). Whilst acknowledging the concern motivating these groups, she rejects the all encompassing portrayal of women of the South as victims 'without any regard for the complex and distinct ways in which gender, ethnicity, class and religion intersect with each other'. In matrifocal Aceh, for example, she says many women are not easily intimidated by the military (p.323).

Siapno herself witnessed an example of this at a road checkpoint where bus passengers were asked to produce their identity cards. The usual pattern is that only the men are required to get out of the bus and be inspected. However on this occasion, a KOPASSUS (Special Forces Command) officer came on to the bus and said

> Sorry ladies, we're going to have to check you too. We have to open your bags. You never know, all Acehnese are GPK.

One of the older women in the bus replied,

> Look, don't be so obnoxious calling all Acehnese troublemakers. You are the ones who have been making trouble here all this time (p.332).

Siapno (p.333) suggests this was not an isolated incident, that older women are much more likely than men in these situations to question military authority. This is also the case when relatives have been killed, been imprisoned or disappeared. Female relatives were usually the ones who with great perseverance, approached human rights lawyers, and confronted the police and military to try to negotiate the release of their son, husband, brother or father (p.324).

In the Philippines, Hilsdon (1995) found that widows were more likely to be politically outspoken than other women, apparently empowered by their widowhood. In the words of one of them, 'We have nothing more to fear….nothing more to lose'. However they were

more vulnerable to surveillance, and when threatened with military violence, many ‘either curtailed their activities or went into hiding’ (p.73).

One of the tactics which the Acehnese women found to be successful in dealing with the military, was to use their ‘feminine’ charms to their advantage. One woman gave the following advice to Siapno:

> If you need to go through any government bureaucracy which you find intimidating, make sure to put on a lot of make-up and look very attractive. These military men are so stupid, they forget their duties when they see an attractive woman. For example, when my brother was detained, several members of my family begged the guards see him. None of them were given permission. When I went in, with all my make-up and so on, they let me in to give him food and new clothes (pp.329-330).

Siapno herself found this tactic worked, and concluded that men in positions of authority were more responsive to women who dressed up and wore make-up, because they perceived them as fulfilling the proper roles of ‘good daughters, good wives, good mothers’ (p.330).

Women and Militarised Resistance Movements

Whilst creating an atmosphere of terror amongst the civilian population may be effective in maintaining control, and is often resorted to in situations where the aim of winning hearts and minds has been abandoned as hopeless, it also usually leads some of the terrorised to look more actively for ways in which they can resist and help the other side (Hilsdon, 1995:16-17). However, when organised resistance to military repression itself becomes militarised, whilst needing women’s support and at times participation, this process tends to privilege masculinity (Enloe, 1993:247-8).

Acehnese women not only show contempt towards the Indonesian military whom they view as their enemy, but also according to Siapno (1997) they are ‘profoundly cynical if not contemptuous’ towards the male leaders of Aceh Merdeka, who claim to represent them (p.331). After speaking with Acehnese women, Siapno gained the distinct impression that while the male leaders did all the talking, the women remained quiet and resentful that they were the ones who carried the burden. Women whose husbands had been killed were the ones who had to support the family, often in very difficult circumstances. Siapno suggests that Acehnese women appear to have been ‘silenced’ not only by the military and political

institutions, but also ‘by their own male elite leaders who tend to monopolize representation in the name of the struggle for “independence”’ (p.335).

The first Acehnese Women’s Congress was held in Banda Aceh in February 2000. Attended by 358 participants and observers from all over Aceh, the congress aimed to ascertain Acehnese women’s aspirations in finding solutions so that peace can be realised (‘Acehnese Women’s Congress’ 2000:1). One of the stated aims of the congress was: ‘To create a situation in which women have political, economic and social power, which until now has been disregarded’ (‘Recommendations Resulting from the Acehnese Women’s Congress’, 2000:3). Towards this end, the Congress recommended that as a first step, women be given 30% representation in all policy and decision making (‘Recommendations Resulting from the Acehnese Women’s Congress’, 2000:4).

Significantly, a majority of women rejected the inclusion in the Congress resolutions of support for a referendum, the aim of Aceh Merdeka and other organisations. Those opposed to its inclusion felt that priority should be given to the issue of human rights, and that women should play a more active role in the search for a peaceful solution (‘Acehnese Women’s Congress’, 2000:3-4). Politically, they clearly saw a neutral position on the issue of independence more effective, and had doubts about the *Aceh Merdeka* leadership.

Conclusion

The strategies of rule in counter-insurgency situations, exploit dominant notions of gender power relations, which are embedded in military discourse and military training. The strategies of resistance to military repression engaged in by women, are varied. Some women join armed nationalist movements, and some benefit from the militarisation process in the sense that they ‘gain new space in which to develop political skills’ (Enloe, 1993:247-8).

However, the outcome of the Acehnese Women’s Congress suggests that most Acehnese women, see no benefit in continuing violence. The Congress urged Acehnese women to ‘remove feelings of revenge from all sides, in order to break the chains of violence and hatred’ (‘Recommendations Resulting from the Acehnese Women’s Congress’, 2000:6).

The challenge for women in these militarised situations is to devise forms of opposition which are non-violent, and allow for their voices to be heard. In November 1998, East

Timorese women held a conference in Dili, at which for the first time they felt courageous enough to speak out about their experiences during 23 years of Indonesian repression.[3] In West Papua, Beatrix Koibur, a member of the Presidium of the Papuan Peoples Council, and an experienced church leader, is involved in organising the first Papuan Women's Congress, to be held in Jayapura in November 2000. Clearly West Papuan women leaders view their involvement in the nationalist movement as crucial in charting its future direction.

[3] This conference was attended by Rebecca Winters, who subsequently interviewed East Timorese women, and compiled : *BUIBERE Voice of East Timorese Women volume 1,* (1999), East Timor International Support Center, Darwin.