Globalisation
and governance

gendering the discourse

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It is important to look at ways through which globalisation, governance and women's lives intersect to better understand how issues of gender justice are being accommodated, incorporated or co-opted. As far back as the 1980s, research showed that, while women are at the centre of production and reproduction processes, their needs and concerns are neglected. Evidence highlights that it is women's labour, waged and unwaged, that transnational corporations and others expropriate as cheap labour for production purposes. Together with the social care provided by women in households and communities the unfair burden placed on women reduces them to the instruments of development rather than participants in their own development (Sen and Grown, 1987).

In this paper I focus on three main points. First, I contend that we cannot examine globalisation processes without looking at governance. Second, I argue that economic globalisation processes determine the terms for both inclusion into the arena of governance and the acceptance of differences, and that these terms are being established in the global context of the dominance of the North. Third, I focus on issues related to increasing militarisation, state-sponsored violence and the impacts on women and identity.

GLOBALISATION AND GOVERNANCE

There is little doubt that terms such as "governance" and "democracy" are contested. In the post cold-war period of the late 1980s and early 1990s, the concept of governance gained increasing prominence in national and international discourses. As Rai (2004) states, there was a notable shift in emphasis from "government" to "governance". This, she

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argues, is in part a response to the needs of a gendered global capitalist economy that is shaped by discursive and material struggles against the consequences of economic globalisation.

While the underlying objectives and outcomes of different forms and processes of globalisation and governance are contested, the dominant discourse tends to homogenise, simplify and minimise the diverse and complex patterns of power that influence decisions at national and trans-national levels. This blurring of the complex forces and interests at work arises from many factors. Among these is the manner in which state and economic power is captured by elites and retained in both democratic and undemocratic systems of governance (Taylor, 2006).

Yet terms such as "globalisation" and "governance" contain assumptions about how power is distributed and used, and under what conditions. Even when we look beyond national state systems and examine issues related to global governance, there are assumptions about whose interests are being secured. Indeed, we may well ask whether it is possible to reach consensus within global governance institutions on development in a "global community" that does not exist and a form of "global management" that is not really about governing in the interests of the public good (Streeten, 2001).

Governance in the 21st century is increasingly concerned with managing a global market economy to secure the interests of global capital. This becomes clear when we examine decisions made within the multilateral institutions of the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organisation. These global institutions become the sites for contestation over whose needs matter and under what conditions. They are also the sites that concentrate power and influence and determine what rules and procedures are used to regulate economic decisions. It is in these spaces that the terms for inclusion and exclusion are determined and opportunities for the development of women and people living in poverty are constrained.

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At the same time, the policy environments at national, regional and global levels are dynamic and diffused. Governmental and inter-governmental structures, functions and responsibilities are changing to accommodate new information technologies and to respond to the risks and vulnerabilities generated through economic globalisation. There are new realignments at the global level, with states not only organising themselves around territorial geo-political issues but also building geo-strategic alliances with pivotal states around such concerns as access to and control of natural and other resources (e.g. minerals and oil). Partnerships among governments in "the global war against terrorism" also lead to opportunistic diplomacy that overlooks domestic oppression and human rights abuses in exchange for co-operation in the pursuit of "terrorists."

That globalisation has both negative and positive outcomes can no longer be ignored. The issue is whether states have the capacity to manage globalisation processes in the interests of previously excluded people. Just as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights declared a new era of global ethics in 1948, can this phase of world development transform our understanding of ethics to ensure gender justice, poverty eradication and sustainable development? Contemporary debates about the meaning of rights and their enforcement in the context of globalisation reinforce issues of governance and the ethical obligations of states (Lane, 2001).

The erosion of civil liberties and the unabated violence experienced in the conflict-ridden zones of Africa and elsewhere bring to the fore issues of human rights and ethical globalisation. Ironically, the pursuit of human rights and the rights of women is being used by some countries to justify military attacks against those that are said to host "terrorists". Demands for transparent, accountable procedures and protocols that will provide oversight of governance processes for both state organs and markets are now central to democratic practice and ethical globalisation.

GENDER DISPARITIES

Gender disparities under globalisation remain among the most pervasive of inequalities.

They are revealed most brutally in parts of South Asia, Southeast Asia, Latin America and Africa (UNDP, 2005). There is no doubt that women's labour is being used with impunity to make markets competitive and increase the comparative advantage of countries. Economic globalisation processes and human insecurity do not happen through osmosis or by accident. These conditions and other global crises cannot be understood or addressed without acknowledging the structural inequalities of the current world system and the significant role played by institutions of global governance (IMF, World Bank, WTO) in maintaining this system.

While gender is at the heart of these processes, other inequalities (racial, ethnic, spatial) are also at play. These inequalities are often mediated through existing and reconfigured systems of power within governments and inter-governmental organisations. Values, traditions and norms that are embedded in such systems privilege some over others. Using gender as a lens permits us to see how structural inequality works in the world, how it is institutionalised, legitimated and reproduced. It is in the disciplining and controlling processes of national and global governance that the spaces for promoting ethical globalisation and women's human rights become compromised. When it comes to issues such as militarisation and security, it is important to reframe and interrogate both the dominant discourse of governance and globalisation and how women experience these processes.

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Women's mobilisation against gender inequalities has resulted in some gains, especially through various UN conferences. But we are still trying to make sense of the ways through which economic globalisation intersects with new forms of colonialism, patriarchy, ethnicity and narrow nationalism. While these factors are mediated through both government and trans-national corporations in culturally determined ways, the mainstream debate on governance has been reduced to what kind of government is needed for the global market. The emphasis is on efficiency and how to engage with market forces in a competitive environment. The social dimensions of globalisation are ignored. Despite efforts to ensure that social and economic policy objectives work together, the global economic environment remains hostile to issues of social justice. "Good governance requires normative judgements to be made about what constitutes the legitimate acquisition and efficient use of power" (UNRISD, 2005: 181).

MILITARISATION AND CONFLICT

The increase in internal conflicts since the end of the cold war continues to jeopardise the survival, livelihood and dignity of a growing number of civilians. In 2000, of the 25 major armed conflicts, all but two were internal, with the large majority occurring in the poorest countries and more than half of these were in Africa. In addition to human suffering, civilian casualties and population displacement, internal conflicts destroy homes, economic assets, crops, roads, banks and utility systems. Amidst the accumulation of wealth in globalisation processes, there are ongoing struggles within regions for natural resources and economic and political power. While the issues that fuel militarisation and conflict are many and complex, in this section I focus on how threats are used to build political power and to promote national identity and citizenship, and how women portray their struggles for inclusion.

Issues of economic globalisation, governance and conflict result from a confluence of forces representing both internal and external power relations. Take, for example, countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Somalia. Factors such as the availability of weapons and other instruments of war spur the political economy of conflicts in these countries and regions. Moreover, there is growing concern with the increasing role of military industries in peacekeeping and governance processes. Para-military and private security forces also play a role in destabilising democratic processes in conflict-torn countries. Violence against civilians, especially women and children, becomes acceptable in war and conflict situations, and terms such as "collateral damage" become euphemisms for what happens to them. Estimates that 53 major armed internal conflicts in the 1990s resulted in 3.6 million deaths (most of them civilian) highlight the human cost.

Statistics merely describe the situation. They do not tell the full story of the roots of the problem. Narratives of women and war illustrate how issues of nationhood, sovereignty and citizenship intersect. Moreover, it can be argued that increasing militarisation of states and the propensity for conflict go together. As Jeanne Prinsloo reflects, being a citizen of a nation-state and possessing a sense of identity as a national with certain loyalties to a country is not simply an accident of birth or naturalisation. She asserts that it is the product of continuous cultural and ideological work. When it comes to war and conflict, this becomes clear. Nationalism becomes inscribed as a masculine position within which citizenship takes on dominant and varied masculine identities (Prinsloo, 1999).

Jean Bethke Elshtain relates how her views on war, nationhood and identity crystallised after listening to hundreds of women share their war stories. A recurrent theme emerged from these stories – one of sacrifice. "The young man goes to war, not so much to kill as to die, to forfeit his particular body for that of the larger body, the body politic, a body most often presented and represented as feminine: a mother country bound by citizens speaking the mother tongue" (Elshtain, 1992: 141–142). This theme of sacrifice as a measure of citizenship can be traced to Rousseau and to Spartan conceptions of women's roles

in war and citizenship. Elshtain's views compel us to look beyond the obvious and to examine other explanations for war and militarisation in contemporary society.

"War-constituted solidarity" is a powerful way for states and non-state entities to proclaim their sovereignty and identity and to gain recognition. "The state is free that can defend itself, gain the recognition of others and when citizens view the state as the source of all rights" (Elshtain, 1992:143). But in this view of freedom, the freedom of individual citizens from fear and want dominates, and the freedom to be is absent. The latter, *the freedom to be,* is vital when it comes to women's concerns for control over their bodies and lives and the assertion of their human rights.

Politicians externalise threats to communities and states as a way of legitimating unaccountable state systems, reviving surveillance and increasing militarisation. For these and other reasons, women increasingly challenge a state-centred view of rights and citizenship that emerges in the context of war and conflict. Women's everyday experiences in times of peace and conflict expose the brutality of the silent erosion of their rights. Where such erosion of women's and people's human rights occurs, there is increasing contestation around notions of patriotism and nationhood. In part, this is because the threats and violations emerge within national boundaries. In some instances, governments are both arbiters of security and violators of people's rights.

SOME CONCLUSIONS

The intellectual and political currents that propelled human development and security onto the international agenda have much to do with human rights, globalisation and governance. Alongside these is the growing recognition that contemporary processes of economic globalisation, underpinned by neo-liberalism, generate greater risks and insecurities especially for the poorest people. Existing institutions are inadequate to deal with such global problems.

Dominant discourses on governance and globalisation are framed in ways that disallow questions on how power is distributed and how control is maintained in economic and political systems. They also obscure how the violence that is inherent in the global economy is refracted through women's experiences within households and communities.

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Recognising that rights denied and multiple deprivations are the consequences of state and non-state actions, concerted effort is required to develop norms, processes and institutions that systematically address these problems. For example, there are critical gaps in the promotion and protection of human rights when it comes to the needs of thousands of women, children, internally displaced people and migrants. There are no clear agreed principles and protocols to secure their human rights. Nor is any international provision made for the effective monitoring of violations committed by non-state actors such as paramilitary forces and private security firms against women and civilians in conflict zones. These gaps need to be closed and attention given to ending the impunity of perpetrators of human rights violations. Equally urgent is meeting the survival needs of people living in poverty and deprivation.

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Increasingly, the complexities of modern states and inter-state systems create rifts between individuals, households and communities. Often such rifts serve to subordinate or exclude the concerns and interests of the poorest, and women in particular, in public policy choices. Women's experiences in conflict situations and in post-conflict reconstruction and development processes are a major concern. Precisely because states and inter-state systems are gendered and women are not adequately represented in decision-making processes, their experiences and analyses are not often captured in the dominant discourse. It is therefore important to change this so that women and issues of gender justice become part of an agenda of inclusive development.

Amartya Sen (2002) emphasises the need to see the challenges of global equity and human development in a somewhat different way from the standard practice. He states that while the debates on global distribution often centre on the question as to whether "the poor are getting poorer while the rich get richer", attention must also focus on the fairness of the distribution of benefits. For even when the poor gain a little (rather than losing), the distribution of opportunities and benefits could be very iniquitous. The real issue, he claims, is whether there is equity in the sharing of the enormous benefits that can potentially be generated by globalisation.

Governments have a role in configuring and reconfiguring individual and collective identities, in shaping people's histories and promoting forms of nationalism that in turn influence public policy decisions on war and peace, gender
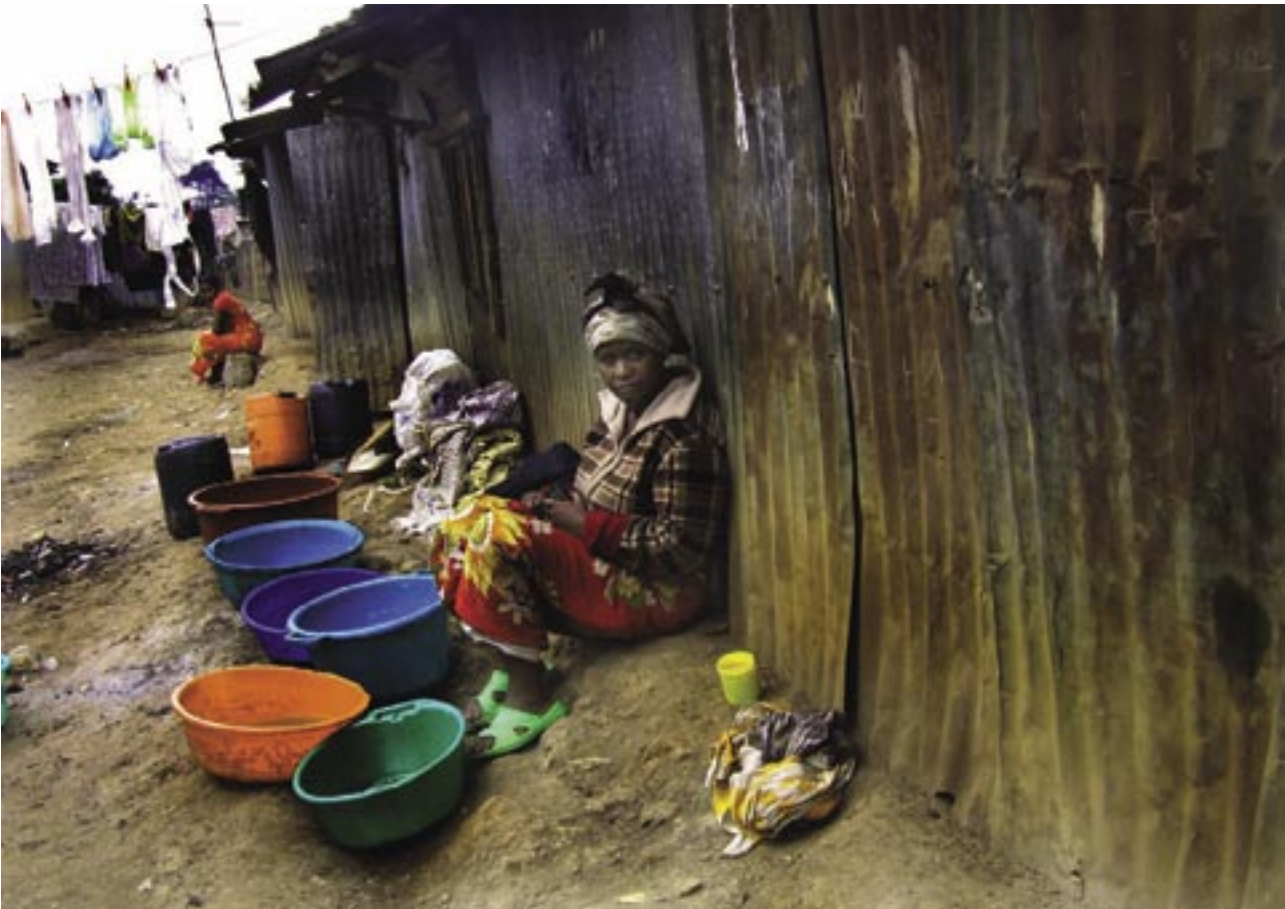
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justice and governance. An approach to development that is centred on human development and freedom is vital in these processes. Both civil society formations as well as state organs are beginning to focus on the importance of human development and freedom. A society's protection comes not just from safeguarding the state as a political unit, but also from access to individual welfare and quality of life. A countervailing force, based on informed debate, can play an important role in making authoritarian state systems and retrogressive forces accountable.

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