


# How the Military Impacts Our Lives

by Rosalie Bertell

*Dans cette réunion plénière tenue lors du Forum des ONG, l'auteure examine l'impact militaire de la violence contre*

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*The myth of war being a part of human nature needs to be exposed as a lie. Along with this myth there are myths that men go to war for women; hence women must satisfy their sexual desires as "payment."*



*les femmes résultant des guerres, l'impact socio-économique des guerres et des préparatifs pour les guerres et l'impact caché des nouvelles technologies d'armement et production de mégamorts sur l'habitat humain et les systèmes qui soutiennent la vie.*

We can consider military impacts on women by referring to three levels of military visibility: first and most obvious, the violence of war itself; second, the socio-economic impact of war and preparations for war; and third, the more hidden impact on the human habitat and life-support system of modern technological warfare and megadeath production. No one of us escapes injury on at least one of these levels.

## The violence of war

Boot camp is a concentrated effort to erase all of the gentle upbringing of a young man or woman. "Any woman's son will do" is an old saying. However, few of us realize the depth of the brutalization process designed to make the combatant "comfortable" with killing. The sex or age of the "enemy" makes no difference. Any child or elderly woman can be carrying a hand gre-

nade. Using anti-personnel weapons "shortens the war." Rape of women is their "just desert"; it both humiliates the "enemy" and prevents the comfort he obtains from "his woman"!

We are all, unfortunately, familiar with the brutality of war, with its pillaging and slaughter. However, we seldom stop to think that it is really unnatural for humans to kill; otherwise it would not require so many external forces to keep the

killing activity in place: special uniforms (to keep them from running away), better food than civilians and various other bribes, camaraderie, close living quarters where one can be watched. In an extreme, for example in the Falklands/Malvinas war, men were shot in the foot so that they could not run away. Deserters are severely punished, even killed. There are elaborate social pressures, especially on young men, to fight for the glory of Country, Motherhood, and the Flag. If war were natural, these measures would not be necessary.

The myth of war being a part of human nature needs to be exposed as a lie. Along with this myth there are myths that men go to war for women; hence women must satisfy their sexual desires as "payment." Even UN peacekeepers believe that they are entitled to rape women in return for their "sacrifice." Indeed, it must be women's concern to erase these destructive myths and behaviours from civil society. Violence never ends a dispute or conflict; it only biases the dialogue which must take place at the end. Biased dialogue forced by the more powerful opponent is never just, and the loser always waits for the next opportunity to renew the conflict in the hopes of "winning" and dictating

the "peace." War begets nothing but more war. It is uncivilized, brutish, and unjust. It is behaviour which needs to be renounced, just as civilized people renounce slavery and cannibalism.

## The socio-economic impact of war and preparation for war

War and the preparation for war depletes society of needed money and resources. The strategy of the West in the cold war was to so push the nuclear and space race that they broke the economy of the Soviet Union. It was a reckless gamble that economic strain would not break the western economies first or cause the Soviet Union to launch a nuclear war rather than admit defeat. Even as the Soviet Union collapsed, so did the West sink into depressed economies from which it has not yet emerged. The German and Japanese economies, those of the two countries forbidden to build up their militaries after World War II, were of course the exception. They had not participated in the "race," and therefore they could put their human and natural resources to civilian tasks.

In order to maintain the cold war, both the West and the Soviet Union resorted to surrogate wars in which they could try out their weapons systems and through which they could sell some of the surplus military production. Stockpiling all the military production would quickly lead to bankruptcy. The wars in the economically developing world were fed through this rivalry, bringing unspeakable physical, emotional, and economic harm to most of the world's people. The so-called low-intensity wars left countries devastated and impoverished, caused millions of refugees, and led to slaughter, maiming, and dislocation of countless numbers of innocent people.

Another aspect of war preparation

in the high-technology world is the brain drain. Young, intelligent students are picked up by the military as they complete their education, and they are captured for the secret military projects into which money and resources are poured. The nations undertaking such practices want to "harness technology" in the cause of world domination. This brain drain has the effect of harming all civilian

military scientists separated chlorine gas for the first time in large enough quantities to become one of the poison gases used in warfare. Chlorine does not exist as a gas naturally in this biosphere we call home.

After the war scientists tried to find uses for this gas, as if it were a new and wonderful toy. Some scientists became chlorine chemists, who systematically built up chlorinated molecules

and then tried to find uses for the new products. One of the early ones was carbon tetrachloride, the cleaning fluid which we now know is carcinogenic. Another was chloroform, once used as an anaesthetic but

now not used because of dangerous side-effects. Eventually chlorine chemistry produced the herbicides, pesticides, and defoliants which were used to kill the jungle in the Vietnam War. These chemicals were devastating to plants, animals, and humans, causing skin eruptions, reproductive abnormalities, malformed children, and cancer. They were watered down for civilian use, causing many farm-related illnesses and fatalities, loss of prime farmland, and general dependence on chemical farming.

Although chlorine was used to kill bacteria in drinking water, thus reducing many water-borne diseases, it also was transformed in the environment into organochlorines, which we now recognize as copycat hormones. These man-made chemicals are able to replace normal estrogen in the body and are likely implicated in a number of reproductive organ anomalies, such as reduced sperm counts, undescended testes in newborn males, and cancers. In the Great Lakes region of North America organochlorines have been implicated in sex reversals (de-masculinization and de-feminization) of birds, fish, and animals in the wild. Studies of the implications for human sexuality and reproduction have just begun. How-

ever, we cannot claim to be immune to these ubiquitous chemicals.

Today there are over 11,000 different chlorine chemicals in large quantities in our land, water, and air. None of these occurred in any significant way in our environment prior to World War I. I call it the "peaceful chlorine" program because of the similarity in development to the "peaceful atom" program after World War II. Like chlorine, nuclear radiation products are becoming embedded in our civilian economy, being used for farming, mining, medical tracers, smoke alarms, research, food irradiation, sterilization of medical instruments, generation of electricity, etc. Again, there was no question about using this death technology broadly and exposing men, women, and children of all ages and states of health while we learned the consequences of exposure. Our warriors like to learn through large-scale human experimentation. Their death-dealing discoveries are presumed "innocent" until proven "guilty" beyond any reasonable doubt through tragic human experiences.


### Looking to the future

We are here in Beijing, women acutely aware of the physical, social, and economic violence of our masculine-dominated society, aware that physical or technological power assures the nation and the individual of the right of dominance. We realize that our human relationships—marriage, family life, community, and nations—are threatened by this cancerlike poison. Even more frightening is the realization that the slow poisoning of our land, water, air, and food by the spin-offs of a military death culture are gradually attacking the integrity of the gene pool—source of all future life on the planet—and making the earth habitat unlivable. This is a death process for the human species. We are producing offspring less able to cope and giving them a world more hazardous to cope with.

While we are here looking back on the mistakes of the past, the warriors

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enterprises, including medical and educational services. It is difficult to obtain funding unless projects are related to some area in which there is military interest. It biases the economy and the intellectual efforts of society toward military priorities. I remember being outraged when I visited a United States university in the 1970s and found that freshman university students were torturing large animals under a research project testing nerve gas for the army. Video games are designed to prepare young people for technological warfare. Nuclear power reactors were a highly dangerous method of boiling water to produce electricity, but they were needed by the military to gain civilian support for their industrial needs.

### The impact of war on the human habitat and life-support system

There is a more dangerous and subtle level of military impact on women and children and on the survival of the human race. This impact is like a cancer in society. It begins quietly, becomes part of the living organism, and gradually saps away all of the life force. A good example of this is what I like to call the "peaceful chlorine program." In World War I,

among us are out creating even more spectacular and lethal technologies. I will just mention one which may be new to you. The United States government, through its Defense Advanced Research Project Agency, is building and testing in Alaska a High Frequency Active Auroral Research Project (HAARP). This appears to be a model of the "full global shield" designed by Bernard J. Eastland—capable of destroying satellites and missiles and of totally disrupting all radio communications around the globe. The HAARP design calls for powerful blasts of electromagnetic energy, causing a heating of the earth's protective ionosphere and creating artificial magnetic lines around the globe. These magnetic lines can eventually direct massive energy (more than an atomic bomb can deliver) to pinpointed locations on the planet.

The HAARP experiment is predicted to be able to cause the earth to wobble on its axis, which may cause a see-saw motion. Some see this motion as capable of causing the planet to move further away from the sun. Others speculate that the energy experiments will cause an implosion reaction, causing the earth to move toward the sun. The HAARP technology could be used to change climate and weather patterns, and is likely to change the chemistry of the ionosphere in ways which are difficult to predict. Life on earth depends on the delicate balance of oxygen, nitrogen, and water in the atmosphere. The prototype HAARP facility is now operating, and construction on the second and larger antenna array was begun early in 1995. It is expected to be operative in late 1997. An ARCO company, ARCO Power Technologies Inc., has the bid for construction. There was no competition for the contract, and the total cost of the project far exceeds the yearly budget of the small company. It is thought that ARCO patents for this experimental technology are being used, although the military denies this. The site of this military facility is Gakona, Alaska, on the north slope.

According to the United States

Office of Naval Research, November 4, 1993:

Similar [to HAARP], though less capable, research facilities exist today at many locations throughout the world and are operated routinely for the purpose of scientific investigation of ionosphere. In the US such systems are located in Arecibo, Puerto Rico, and Fairbanks, Alaska. Other installations are at Tromsø, Norway; Moscow, Nizhny Novgorod, and Apatity, Russia; Karkov, Ukraine; and Dushanbe, Tadzikistan. None of these existing systems, however, has the combination of frequency capability and beam-steering agility required to perform the experiments planned for HAARP.

The power to deliver immense pulses of destructive energy anywhere in the world; the power to change weather, modify climate, and disrupt all radio communication on the globe; the power to cause the earth to wobble on its axis and change its position relative to the sun; the ability to destroy satellites, missiles, and planes!—this hardly constitutes providing for the national security.

This small and fragile earth-home is a place for us to live, breathe the air, enjoy the sunshine, and bask in the brilliant diversity of life. No nation has a right to destroy this in the name of military power. This addiction with violence, this military cancer on civil society, has reached the point where either we destroy it and renounce war forever, or it will destroy us. There is no human security in the face of military excesses. National defense produces nothing but insecurity. It is time that we took our stand for life, for justice, for sharing, and for conflict resolution. War and militarism must go the way of the dinosaurs, or we are the last generation to enjoy a still-intact planet.

Women must take the leadership in restoring true security based on justice, sharing, and cooperation. We

must demand that international recognition go not to bully nations but to those who demonstrate honesty, compassion, and right living. We need to recognize and honour nations for their intelligence and diligence in solving human problems and improving the quality of human life. Violence and threats of violence will never hold together the global village. It will fail just as it fails to hold together a marriage or a family or a community.

Like other aberrant behaviour, violence is similar to a communal addiction. It must be confronted. It must be destroyed by our noncooperation with it. This is our home planet, to be cared for and lived in and passed on to our children. It is not a place to be experimented with or a place for achieving new and better ways to use efficient killing technologies. This dark part of our societies needs to receive women's light, scrutiny, and healing.

*This article was a plenary speech given at the NGO Forum in Huairou.*

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