LINKING ARMS

War and women's organizing in post-Yugoslav states

Maja Korac

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The Women and Nonviolence Series

Violence against women in war has been a prominent news story as this se-ries of case studies developed. The systematic rape of women in Bosnia-Herzegovina, direct attacks upon women as part of the genocide in Rwanda, and the recently revealed stories of Korean and Filipino "comfort women" during the Second World War assaulted us with the vulnerability and dan-gers which women face in war-generated violence. However, such violence, although often in the news, is sadly only a fraction of the violent experiences of women and, as well, ignores the different and creative responses of women to resist gendered oppression.

Violence is, in the end, deeply personal. It is individual human beings who suffer, it is individuals who act in violent ways. The monographs in this series describe and analyze the international and the local, war-related vio-lence, the social-structural violence, and the visible and the more hidden experiences of violence which women and girls experience. These analyses show clearly that violence against women is part of societal-wide violence, developed and supported through the devaluation and oppression of some people and groups. Violence against women is, in the end, violence against us all.

This series grows out of a conference of women peace activists and re-searchers held in Manila, in November 1993, sponsored by the *Life & Peace Institute*, the *World Council of Churches,* and the *Lutheran World Federa-tion*.

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Foreword

Violence was central in the formation of the states that emerged from the foremr Yugoslavia, ripping apart the very fabric of community life as neighbor fought against neighbor, as families were divided and uprooted, as hatred was encouraged through torture, rape, and killing, through mass slaughter, through the destruction of trust. The sheer brutality of the armed conflict which raged across the region shocked and sickened those who watched and seemed helpless to stop the carnage. Ethnic cleansing became a tactic and a goal, driving people from their homes, destroying communities, producing thousands upon thousands of refugees. As Maja Korac notes, the multi-ethnic nature of the population provided the very rationale for the violent carrying out of the social and political project of exclusion.

Rape of "the women of the enemy", was a horrifyingly common weapon which became, in the minds of many observers, a defining characteristic of the Balkan conflicts. Women were sexual targets both as women and as symbols of the enemy. The conflict was thus intentionally and brutally gendered.

Ethnic nationalism fueled and provided a rationale for ethnic cleansing. Ethnic nationalism provided some sort of excuse for rape as a weapon of war. Although one can surely distinguish differing levels and patterns of carrying forward the war in the Balkans, searching for 'who is doing what to whom and why', ethnic nationalism is unfortunately very similar in all the post-Yugoslavia states, and continues to provide the framework for state building.

Women are both the victims of rape and the mothers of soldiers. Women are sexual targets in these patriarchial societies and women are redefined as 'mothers of the nation' in the post socialist context. When women protest war and violence, they call into question the very rationale of state building shaped by ethnic nationalism. The engagement of women in response to war and violence is therefore especially complex. What is 'disloyality' and what is 'patriotism'? What are the implications for peacebuilding within these differing ap-

proaches to citizenship within a nation-state?

The images here of women as victims are both powerful and compelling. The fact of women organizing, *as women*, against violence, against ethnic cleansing, against war is less known and often ignored in the Balkan context. When women organize to protest violence and to stop the war, they are clearly subjects not objects; they are actors not victims. For the men who are in power and who continue to wage war, it is important that women 'stay in their place' supporting ethnic nationalism, continuing to stress their situation as 'female victims' - as prime evidence for the inhumanity of the enemy. Women's organizing against war and violence within the context of ethnic nationalism becomes defined as treason. Strong efforts are made to supress such organizing, to publically humiliate the women and to devalue their efforts. In such a reality creativity and courage are fundamental to even a modicum of successful organizing.

In her analysis of *War, Violence and Women's Organizing: The Case of Some Post-Yugoslav States*, Maja Korac 'explores (the) meanings and roles of women's activism against violence, war, and ethnic-national chauvinism…' asserting that women's organizing '…represents a unique struggle to reestablish social inclusion and social integration…' within the processes of exclusion which characterize state building shaped by ethnic nationalism. In so doing she analyzes the more general patterns of ethnic nationalism in relation to gendered relations of power providing a view into the linkages between war-instigated violence, ethnic nationalism violence and patriarchy which produces and maintains systemic violence against women. Linking state building to the manipulation and oppression of women is a key insight which has implications far beyond the post-Yugoslavia situation.

Maja Korac's analysis grows out of her field data in East and Central Europe and in the post-Yugoslav states in particular. The many quotes from interviews with women from differing backgrounds and regions reveal the passion, the pathos, the courage and the complexity of women's struggles against violence and ethnic exclusion.

The analysis also explores the marginalization of women's anti-

war organizing, a marginalization shaped by political and social circumstances as well as by the attitudes of the women, themselves, towards open political activism. Importantly, for us as readers, the linkages with, the efforts and effects of international support are also subject to analysis. To learn that the *Women in Black* in Belgrade were inspired by the *Women in Black* in Israel is to understand the potential power of women's solidarity.

Unremitting, brutal violence does not easily leave spaces for bridgebuilding between enemies. Differences, perhaps even 'essential differences' become the way to explain the violence and justify the continued separation of and antagonism between peoples. From this perspective there is no way forward except ethnic exclusion. Those who want to encourage trust and cooperation in order to rebuild communities search for avenues and possibilities. The women interviewed by Maja Korac choose to focus on similarities, that is, to search for 'positive linkages'. Korac, in agreement with these women, asserts '… that is the only way to negotiate the differences in interests… Otherwise, all the parties are 'locked' within their own 'small worlds', which are not the best of all possible worlds.'

War, Violence and Women's Organizing: The Case of Some Post-Yugoslav States is part of the onngoing analysis by the Life & Peace Institute (LPI) on the issue of women and violence and the ways in which women can and do organize to shape nonviolent communities. In November 1993, a conference of women peace activists and researchers was held in Manila by the World Council of Churches (WCC), the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), and LPI. The women attending identiried a number of themes which need more analysis and urged continued study, publication, and discussion. In particular, they emphasized the inter-linked nature of the various aspects of violence in women's lives resisting a simplistic emphasis upon one issue.

In preparation for the conference, a background analysis, *Women, War and Peace*, was published by LPI as a researach report. A collection of national case studies and several analytical essays of women's organizing, *Women, Violence, and Nonviolent Change*, has been published by the WCC and is being distributed by WCC and LPI.

1. Introduction

> We, women who live in a state whose regime is responsible for this war, have all these terrible years transformed our bitterness into nonviolent resistance, our despair into public acts of disobedience, our sadness and helplessness into feminist solidarity. We have supported each other in order to transform the feelings of a quilt into a form of communication and action.[1]

This report addresses the issues of women's organizing in the situation of the recent conflict and wars in selected post-Yugoslav states. It explores meanings and roles of women's activism against violence, war, and ethnic national chauvinism in the region. Evidently, this ac-

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[1] Message from the 6th International Meeting "Network of Women's Solidarity Against War" - Novi Sad, August 7, 1997, organized by the *Women in Black*, Belgrade. Unpublished, distributed through the *Women in Black*, Belgrade, listserv.

tivism failed to stop the wars and prevent the tragedy of the peoples of what once was Yugoslavia. It also failed to maintain untouched the network of women across the region. Nationalism brought about internal tensions, crisis and separation within and among some local women's groups, because some women felt they could not engage in anti-nationalist and anti-war politics while their nation was 'endangered'. The report argues, however, that women's organizing against war, violence and the politics of ethnic nationalism represents a unique struggle to re-establish social inclusion and social integration in the region of post-Yugoslav states.

Women's anti-war and anti-nationalist political protests throughout the region represent genuinely autonomous women's initiatives. By making their resistance to war and all forms of control over women visible, the local women activists reject the assumption of the role of passive victims of militarist and nationalist politics in post-Yugoslav states. Women's efforts to build relationships among women across ethnic national divisions and to advocate new forms of solidarity within their own differences have the potential to undermine the exclusionary politics of ethnic nationalism in the region. The processes of exclusion, as will be discussed further below, represent a common central characteristic of ethnic nationalism, and thus, make this type of nationalism an undemocratic social phenomenon. Therefore, women's resistance to the processes of exclusion embedded in ethnic nationalism can contribute to the development of a more democratic and tolerant political culture in post-Yugoslav states.

Exploration of women's organizing against war, violence and ethnic nationalism is based on data collected during my research in Serbia, as well as on existing studies and documents concerning the situation of women in some other post-Yugoslav states.[2] The perspec-

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[2] The sources for my research include: observations made during fieldwork, in-depth interview data with 18 refugee women from various ethnic-nationalities and place of residence before their flight as well as with five women activists, newspaper articles, papers, newsletters and journals. The field work was conducted in the Summer 1994, 1995, 1996. The first phase of the research was funded by the Centre for Refugee Studies, York University, Canada. The support is gratefully acknowledged.

tive is, thus, partial because it arises primarily from an analysis of the recent situation in Serbia, and to lesser extent, the situations in other states in the region. The discussion of the situation of women in these particular geographical locations, therefore, acknowledges that women's responses and their organizing in situations of war and ethnic nationalism differ as a consequence of a particular political, social and cultural context. However, the analysis also recognizes similarities in the situation of women in these contexts. The similarities are associated with social and political transformations of state socialism into ethnic nationalism and their impact on gender relations. These processes of change are tied to patriarchal principles and are detrimental to women's social and civil rights. Therefore, the report does not focus solely on a critique of Serbian nationalism as the nationalism of 'my own people'[3] and women's responses to it. Rather, it explores how ethnic nationalism as the most dominant social and political force for change in the region, tends to control and subordinate women, and how women can gain their autonomy through solidarity and organized political action.

Women's anti-nationalist and anti-war initiatives in post-Yugoslav states have not been the first forms of women's autonomous organizing in the region. Feminism in post-Yugoslav states has a long history,[4] thus, feminists have been the first to initiate an organized women's resistance to nationalism, violence and war.

2. Women's autonomous organizing under state

[3] For more discussion on this particular topic see Korac, M., 'Serbian nationalism, nationalism of my own people', *Feminist Review*, no. 45 (Autumn 1993), pp. 108-113.

[4] For more on the history of feminism in Yugoslavia before the end of s see Benderly, J. 'Rape, feminism, and nationalism in the war in Yugoslav successor states', ed. L. A. West *Feminist Nationalism* (Routledge: New York, London, 1997) pp. 60-61; Bozinovic, N., 'Key points in the history of the women's movement in former Yugoslavia', eds. M. Blagojevic, D. Duhacek, J. Lukic, *What Can We Do For Ourselves* (Centre for Women's Studies, Research and Communication: Belgrade, 1995) pp. 10-13; Slapsak S., 'Silence kills, let's speak for peace', *Warreport*, no. 36, (1995), pp. 30-31.

socialism

Yugoslavia's separate path to socialist transformation was characterized by the introduction of the workers' *self-management* system which allowed a certain level of decentralization of state power and administration.[5] Therefore, the public sphere had not been unequivocally defined and controlled by the centralized state. The relative diversification of power within socialist Yugoslavia, thus, had 'softened' the one-party political system, and had permitted some public space for alternative political opinions and action. These specific circumstances had laid the social and political ground for the emergence of political awareness amongst some women in socialist Yugoslavia and their public challenge, in the late 1970s, to socialist patriarchy.

The emergence of such a public challenge was compounded by the fact that socialist Yugoslavia had 'open borders' and had permitted relatively free exchange and communication of people and ideas. These circumstances had made the Yugoslav socialist system 'a softer ideological cage',[6] and consequently, had permitted the emergence of a students' movement, new leftist politics, youth counter-culture, various sub-cultures, rock-and-roll, modern artistic phenomena, as well as feminism.[7]

Such a context had opened a social space for a new generation of urban, educated, predominantly young, middle-class women, brought up in socialist Yugoslavia, to articulate feminism publicly and to challenge the socialist patriarchy and the assumption that the women's struggle is synonymous with class struggle. Feminists argued that the

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[5] Socialism in Yugoslavia was characterized by the introduction of the system of self-management via the establishment of the workers' councils; a decentralized system of decision making; market mechanisms in the economy; freedom of movement and travel; a complex system of national rights; and a leading role in the nonaligned movement (i.e., an alliance of nations resistant to the domination of the two great powers of the Cold War era).

[6] Papic, Z., 'Women's movement in former Yugoslavia: 1970s and 1980s', eds. M. Blagojevic, D. Duhacek, J. Lukic, *What Can We Do For Ourselves* (Centre for Women's Studies, Research and Communication: Belgrade, 1995), p. 20.

[7] Papic, Z., (footnote 6), p. 20.

basic gender order which preceded the revolution was left intact in the socialist structure. They claimed that certain gender inequalities (e.g., unequal access to decision-making positions in society) were not just residual elements of the 'traditional past', but were incorporated into the matrix of the 'new' economic and political life.

Following the first International Feminist Conference held in Belgrade in 1978, a number of small feminist groups emerged in Belgrade, Ljubljana and Zagreb. Women's groups initially started as discussion or consciousness-raising groups. By the end of the 1980s, however, SOS hotlines for women victims of violence were established and lesbian groups were founded.[8] These groups were genuinely autonomous from the socialist state, and were linked since their foundation in both local and international feminist networks.

From the very beginning, feminists were ridiculed by the media as 'women who hate men', or were aggressively attacked by the socialist state as 'a danger for the leading role of the working class'.[9] The initial phase of public articulation of feminism, and consequently feminist activism, was predominantly concerned with problems that seemed distant from everyday life, problems of 'working women' and even more from the hard, yet socially invisible lives of rural women. Socialist Yugoslavia was characterized by a profound social gap between rural women and educated, employed women in urban areas. As studies of the social status of rural women have indicated, they missed out of the modernization process during the state socialist period.[10] This also meant that patriarchal gender relations of the rural

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[8] For more discussion on feminism in Yugoslavia from the end of 1970s and in 1980s see also Papic, Z. (footnote 6), pp.19-23.

[9] Drakulic, S., 'Women and the new democracy in the former Yugoslavia', eds. N. Funk and M. Mueller, *Gender Policy and Post-Communism* (Routledge: New York, London, 1993), p. 128.

[10] Korac, M., *Zatocenice pola - drustveni identitet mladih zena na selu izmedju tradicionalne kuluture i savremenih vrednosti* [Captives of Their Sex - Social Identity of Young Rural Women Between Traditional Culture and Contemporary Values] (Institute for sociological research, University of Belgrade: Belgrade 1991); Milic, A., 'Women, technology and societal failure in former Yugoslavia', eds. C. Cockburn and R. Furst-Dilic, *Bringing Technology Home: Gender and Technology in a*

family remained untouched, and thus, rural women were prevented from gaining better education and from seeking jobs outside the household. Simultaneously, women from urban areas attained higher education, had more employment opportunities, and a number of them progressed up through the social and professional hierarchy. Nonetheless, the majority of these women rarely occupied management positions, and thus, were paid less than men. In addition, their role as primary emotional providers for their families remained central.[11]

Thus, the context of the wide social distance between women of different social classes, and the above mentioned public and political attacks on feminists, contributed to their marginal social and political position in the 1980s. The distance between feminists and different socio-economic groupings of women, had also been compounded by the fact that state socialism had 'granted' women considerable legal rights and improvement in their social status. The improvements in the status of women such as equal legal status, equal access to education, and equal pay for equal work, affected women's perception of their situation under state socialism. Zorica Mrsevic,[12] a feminist activist at the *Center for Women Studies*, Belgrade, recalled her attitude toward women's issues at the time of the emergence of feminist autonomous organizing in socialist Yugoslavia:

> I considered the issue of class to be the most important, and I simply thought that women share the destiny of that wider group. This attitude was related to my own, not particularly privileged, social status. My parents are white-collar workers, and I thought that if I, with such a background, was able to get a Ph.D., and a job, then, that is the best confirmation that every woman who wants to achieve something, can, and that she'll get a social promotion... I have to say that I am ashamed of such attitudes now, but that was in the 1970s and the 1980s, at the time of the

Changing Europe (Open University Press: Buckingham and Philladelphia 1994), pp. 147-164.

[11] Milic, A., (footnote 10).

[12] The interviewed feminist activists gave me their consent to use their real names in this study. The identity of refugee women, however, is not revealed, accept in one case, in which I was given consent to use the refugee woman's real name.

beginning of feminism [in socialist Yugoslavia].

The rise of feminist consciousness in socialist Yugoslavia had not been the result of these women's experiences of the abuse of their basic rights, but rather of their awareness of the more subtle problems regarding gender equality. Consequently, the considerable legal rights and the improvements in their social status had left most women in socialist Yugoslavia disinterested or unable to grasp the economic, social and political consequences of their situation under state socialism. In such circumstances, it had been impossible for broad-based autonomous women's organizations to take shape.

The marginalization of feminists and their ideas, however, had not been solely a result of the above-mentioned political and social circumstances. It had also been the result of these feminists' attitudes toward political activism in state socialism. Their general attitude that politics is 'dirty business' had prevented them from articulating their ideas as intrinsically political. Although this lack of political articulation of their ideas had helped feminists to exist publicly as autonomous women's groups, it also had disabled them from challenging the system in a crucial way. Therefore, autonomous feminist groups in socialist Yugoslavia had remained tiny minority organizations whose activism took place outside the official political avenues and had no critical impact on lives and status of majority of women in the region.

These feminist groups, although marginalized, were the seeds of the later growth of women's lobbies, women's parliaments, and umbrella organizations that were established and active in 1990, as part of the feminist political reaction and resistance to the politics of ethnic nationalism in the region. The very core of this engagement and activism was grounded in the perceived undemocratic and reactionary form of nationalistic politics of the ruling male elites in what was formerly Yugoslavia.[13] At the end of the 1980s, as Benderly de-

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[13] With regard to parliamentary representation, after the first so-called 'free' elections in 1989, in Bosnia-Hercegovina 2.9 percent of members were women; in Croatia 4.5 percent; in Macedonia 3.3 percent; in Montenegro 4 percent; in Serbia 1.6 percent; and in Slovenia 13 percent. Kajosevic, I., 'Women of Yugoslavia in parliament and

scribes:

> feminists gave increasing attention to opposing nationalism (whether present among Communists, such as Slobodan Milosevic in Serbia,[14] or their opponents, such as the HDZ in Croatia or Demos in Slovenia).[15] Feminists asserted that the construction of any nation, be it Yugoslavia or one of the republics, manipulates women.[16]

The women's groups attacked the nationalistic concept of citizenship which promoted divisiveness rather than diversity and emphasized that the ethnic national projects based on territorial sovereignty lead to absolutism, and as such, jeopardized civil rights and women's rights in particular.

3. The political context: Exclusionary politics of ethnic nationalism

The most significant factor driving change in post-Yugoslav states has been a form of nation-state building embedded within ethnic nationalism. This type of nationalism is intrinsically related to processes of exclusion. In contrast to 'civic nationalism'[17] or 'political nationalism',[18] which is 'reasonably open and inclusive'[19] in a sense 'that anyone loyal to the state is, at least theoretically, acceptable to it',[20] ethnic nationalism aims to build a state that serves the interests of an ethnically defined nation. That is, a nation composed not of all citi-

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political life after multiparty elections in 1989', ed. S. Zajovic, *Women for Peace* (The *Women in Black*: Belgrade, 1995), p. 164.

[14] At that time the president of Serbia.

[15] HDZ, Croatian Democratic Party, the ruling party in Croatia.

[16] Benderly, J. (footnote 4), p. 61.

[17] Smith, A., *National Identity* (Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1991).

[18] Nodia, G., 'Nationalism and crisis of liberalism', eds. R.Caplan and J.Feffer *Europe's New Nationalism: States and Minorities in Conflict* (Oxford University Press: New York, Oxford, 1996), pp. 101-120.

[19] Nodia, G., (footnote 18), p. 106.

[20] Nodia, G., (footnote 18), p. 106.

zens regardless of their ancestry, religion, language and culture. Because this type of nationalism defines the nation in terms of ethnic origins and birth, the nation is perceived as 'natural', and membership in it is dichotomized: one belongs, or one does not.

Ethnic nationalism, thus, as Nodia points out, 'aims for a nation-state but conceives of its goal in terms of ethnic purity.'[21] Such a state serves the interests of the core ethnic nation and tries to exclude minorities - politically, and in extreme cases, physically, through forced expulsion, or so-called 'ethnic-cleansing'. Even those who doubted in 1991, at the beginning of the war in Croatia, that 'ethnic cleansing' was planned, now perceive - after the wars in the region - that this was the main goal of the conflict, transforming Croatia, for example, into one of the most ethnically pure post-Yugoslav states. The heaviest fighting took place in areas with the most mixed populations in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia. Territorial cleansing in war-zones was followed by cleansing in those areas unaffected directly by the war.

Moreover, the exclusionary politics of ethnic nationalism are also intolerant toward certain groups within ethnic national collectives, such as individuals who are members of or from ethnically mixed marriages, as well as those who do not wish to state their identity in terms a single ethnic nation. Therefore, the exclusionary politics of ethnic nationalism cut across seemingly unambiguous ethnic national lines, and also victimize the people of the majority ethnic nationalities, those who are branded as 'different'. The politics and practice of exclusion embedded in ethnic nationalism in the region of what was formerly Yugoslavia, meant that the existence of all those who cannot or do not want to state their 'appropriate' ethnic national background and/or 'loyalty' to the nation-state should be excluded. The discourse of 'common blood' and ethnic national purification victimizes people who crossed 'demarcation lines' through friendship, love affairs, and marriage. Since there is no longer accepted political expression for their needs, language, and experiences, they are left without any clear

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[21] Nodia, G., (footnote 18), p. 106.

sense of where they belong. To illustrate this type of crisis, I refer to the words of a Bosnian Muslim refugee woman who is married to a Bosnian Serb:

> Both I, and my husband grew up in the same atmosphere, he too declared himself as a Yugoslav all his life, we have actually been left without a homeland, a citizenship and without the possibility to declare ourselves as what we are.

Woodward documents[22] that '[i]n ethnonational terms, Yugoslavia was a land of minorities. No group had more than a regional majority, and most communities were ethnically mixed... Large parts of the country - including cities and most towns - were ethnically mixed'[23] This multi-ethnic coexistence is reflected in individual notions of regional differences among peoples of Yugoslavia, where these differences among populations were not previously associated with cultural characteristics of a single ethnic nation. A refugee woman of mixed ethnic nationality (mother Serb, father Croat) from Bosnia-Herzegovina, explained her notion of difference among ethnic nations:

> My belief now and before, is that Serbs, I mean a Serb from Serbia and one from Bosnia, have different mentalities. They are not the same... The Serbs were close to the Muslims [in Bosnia-Herzegovina], for example. The Serbs, Muslims and Croats lived together as one community, their customs were similar. Some [Muslims] celebrate Bairam [Muslim religious holiday], go to the mosque, I mean that's their respect. For the first 10 years [when she left her parents' home and started to work] I lived in Muslim houses [as a tenant]. I know their mentality, customs, just like my own. The only thing I didn't learn was to pray their way.

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[22] For more on ethnic-national composition of what was formerly Yugoslavia see Woodward, S., *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution After the Cold War* (The Brookings Institution: Washington D.C., 1995), pp. 33-35.

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This particular context of an ethnically mixed population, as well as considerable number of people who identified themselves as Yugoslavs[24] was the rationale for deploying the policies of exclusion. These policies were, in turn, critical for political elites and their claim for power over ethnically pure territories.

Multi-ethnic communities were not just the sites of peaceful multi-ethnic co-existence but also of cohesion. Ethnically mixed marriages were one of the significant demographic and cultural characteristics of Yugoslav society. Although ethnically mixed marriages were more typically found in urban settings, in areas with the most ethnically mixed population, they were also common in rural settings. A Bosnian Serb refugee woman, born in a rural area of Southeastern Bosnia-Herzegovina, said:

> It did happen [people marrying inter-ethnically], but it was clear that their families didn't like it[...]I don't know how to explain it[...]It was a small place [her village] [...]But there were such cases[...]My cousin married like that[...]Her parents were against it, but when she married a Muslim, they couldn't do anything but to accept it. After the marriage, her in-laws were regular guests at my cousin's family Patron Saint celebration [religious holiday in Christian Orthodox tradition].

Ethnically mixed marriages were both a prerequisite and a consequence of a quite considerable history of good multi-ethnic relationships in the region. Approximately 2 million people in the region are either parents or children of ethnically mixed marriages.[25] At the time of the 1981 census, they outnumbered Albanians, Montenegrins, Macedonians, Muslims, and Slovenes, and were themselves outnumbered only by Croats and Serbs.[26] Therefore, in order to realize their projects for ethnically pure states, the political elites had to deploy a pol-

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[24] Petrovic, R., *Migracije u Jugoslaviji i etnicki aspekti* [Ethnic Aspects of Migration in Yugoslavia] (Research and Publishing Centre of Serbia: Belgrade, 1987), p. 30.

[25] Petrovic, R., *Etnicki mesoviti brakovi u Jugoslaviji* [Ethnically Mixed Marriages in Yugoslavia] (Institute for Sociological Research, University of Belgrade: Belgrade, 1985).

[26] Petrovic, R., (footnote 25).

icy of biological and cultural 'cleansing', which was, in effect, a pre-cursor to war. History and language were to be purged of any notion of peaceful co-existence. The names of streets and cities were stripped of every reminder that a given ethnic nation lived with 'others'.

Woodward argues, in commenting on the results of the first multiparty elections in Yugoslavia in 1990, that '[t]he voters did not make a clear choice for nationalists and independence. They did push the nationalist momentum further, not because of the voting results themselves, but because of the use politicians made of them.'[27]

The above mentioned processes of purification were essential for politicians who have been seeking more political power over their ter-ritories. Nationalist oligarchies have also actively worked to spread hatred and fear of an 'other', creating a base for an ethnic national identity that would be suitable for their nationalist projects. This is not to imply that society was without internal national tensions and dif-ferent interests. However, the state socialist political solution to the ever-present active national element was, as Milic explains,

> to give political legitimacy to the national interest through a federal state with territorial autonomies, while trying on the social level to reduce, and overcome this legitimate national interest by shaping society along the lines of egalitarianism and the ideology of a 'workers' society.[28]

This political solution to the national enigma, in which the federal system granted near statehood to the republics as well as multiple rights of national self-determination for individuals, meant that Yugo-slav society was not successfully held together by political dictator-ship, or repression of national sentiments, but instead by a complex system of rights and overlapping sovereignties.[29] Therefore, the pri-mary social divisions and inequalities were not, as Woodward argues,

[27] Woodward, S., (footnote 22), p. 118.
[28] Milic, A., 'Women and nationalism in the former Yugoslavia', eds. N. Funk and M. Mueller, *Gender Policy and Post-Communism* (Routledge: New York, London, 1993), p. 110.
[29] For a detailed discussion on the constitutional system of rights in Yugoslavia see Woodward, S., (footnote 22), pp. 29-46.

'defined by ethnicity but by job status and growing unemployment.'[30]

Accordingly, it can be argued that the revival of ethnic nationalism in the region was in essence a 'state nationalism' rather than 'nationalism from below'.[31] A crucial element in this 'state nationalism' is a politics of ethnic national identity which demands purification and ethnic national 'sameness', thus, the politics of exclusion based on a hatred and fear of an 'other', represented by an ultimately different ethnic nation. As a result of such a policy in post-Yugoslav states, 4.5-5 million people in the region had been uprooted by August 1995.[32] The data includes refugees, internally displaced persons, as well as approximately 700.000 people who left the country since the beginning of the wars seeking political asylum in European countries.[33] When we note that the total population before the war was 22 million, these figures mean that every fourth or fifth citizen of what was once Yugoslavia has been forced to flee their homes.[34]

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[30] Woodward, S., (footnote 22) p. 44

[31] Milic, A., (footnote 28).

[32] The data refer to UNHCR report, July 1995, as well as the latest instances of 'ethnic cleansing' in Srebrenica and Zepa (Bosnia-Hercegovina) and in the region of Krajina (Croatia). *Nasa Borba* (August 10, 1995), p. 5.

[33] It is important to note that the distinction between refugees and internally displaced persons is critical for the situation and wellbeing of those who are forcefully displaced in these wars. Refugees are persons who cross internationally recognized borders (e.g., persons from Bosnia-Hercegovina who fled to Croatia, FR Yugoslavia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Slovenia, or any other country of the world). As such they are protected by the international convention. Internally displaced persons are those who flee their homes but are still within the borders of their country of origin (e.g., persons who fled their place of residence in Bosnia-Hercegovina but have remained on its territory). The UNHCR's mandate does not officially extend its protection to internally displaced people.

[34] The data presented aims to emphasize the overall consequence of the exclusionary politics of ethnic nationalism in post-Yugoslav states, in order to stress its importance for the realization of ethnically pure nation-states in the region. However, this does not mean that I do not acknowledge important differences in the extent to which some ethnic-nations, Bosnian Muslim in particular, have been victimized by this politics. Moreover, the emphasis on a more general patterns embedded in ethnic nationalism in the region, does not imply a lack of awareness of unequal relations of power among ethnic-national collectives in the recent wars, and thus, their differen-

Kaldor argues that ethnic nationalism in East and Central Europe, as with the politics of exclusion, leads to 'political nihilism',[35] because its claims to power are based on primary identity, or ethnic national belonging, rather than on different ideologies and policies. In such a context, as Kaldor points out, no political debate or movement is allowed and there is no possibility for political ideas or political movements to gain social substance.[36] This 'political nihilism' embodies a political voluntarism because it suppresses all forms of non-ethnic political involvement and is easily transformed into the unrestrained power of state bureaucrats.

Ethnic nationalism in East and Central Europe, is also 'fragmentative', as Kaldor further emphasizes.[37] While 'political nationalism' tends to create larger political and economic units, through assimilation/inclusion rather than exclusion, ethnic nationalism creates smaller and smaller territorial and political units. This fragmentative character of ethnic nationalism is driven by the logic of self-determination of ethnically defined nations and their claim to sovereign states which clearly define boundaries between 'us' and 'them'.

In other words, ethnic nationalism and processes of self-determination in East and Central Europe have to be distinguished from progressive demands for local and regional autonomy that advocate cultural diversity and deepen democracy. This is because, as Kaldor explains: 'local autonomy can only be enhanced through increased global or regional integration.'[38] These progressive demands are at odds with politics of ethnic nationalism and its ethnic concept of citizenship 'which promotes divisiveness rather than diversity.'[39]

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tiated responsibility for the crimes and atrocities committed during the recent conflict.

[35] Kaldor, M., 'Yugoslavia and the new nationalism', *New Left Review*, no. 197 (1993).

[36] Kaldor, M., (footnote 35), pp. 108-109.

[37] Kaldor, M., (footnote 35), pp. 108.

[38] Kaldor, M., 'Cosmopolitanism versus nationalism: the new divide?', eds. R.Caplan and J. Feffer, *Europe's New Nationalism: States and Minorities in Conflict* (Oxford University Press: New York, Oxford, 1996), p. 48.

[39] Kaldor, M., (footnote 35), p. 111.

This type of nationalism in what was formerly Yugoslavia emerged in the context of the dismantling of state socialism, accompanied by the process of creating a market economy and emergence of multi-party political system. These processes, often labeled as a 'transition to democracy', were intrinsically related to a change in gender relations, as defined by state socialism.

4. Patriarchal backlash: from state socialism to ethnic nationalism

The dismantling of state socialism in Yugoslavia has affected gender relations in a fundamental way. As some recent studies of these processes in the rest of East and Central Europe show, women are becoming increasingly 'displaced' from participation in the labor force and 'planted' back into the family and household.[40] State socialist policies for women's 'emancipation' were focused exclusively on paid labor and education for employment and, as a consequence, led to an unprecedented high level of female labor force participation.[41] Indeed, the high level of women's employment during state socialism did not mean that the inequality of women had not been inherent in the policies of socialist states.[42] However, the recent economic changes or 'marketization', and resulting pressures to restructure labor in order to accommodate needs of the market, affected women disproportionately.[43] Women were first to lose their jobs,[44] which caused their in-

[40] Corrin, C. (ed.), *Super Women and the Double Burden: Women's experience of change in central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union* (Second Story Press: Toronto, 1992); Einhorn,B., *Cinderella Goes to Market: Citizenship, Gender and Women's Movements in East and Central Europe* (Verso: London, New York, 1993); Moghadam,V. (ed.), *Democratic Reform and the Position of Women in Transitional Economies* (OUP: Oxford, 1993).

[41] Molyneux, M., 'Women in socialist states: problems in theory and practice', eds. K Young, C.Wolkowitz, and R. McCullagh, *Of Marriage and the Market: Women's Subordination in International Perspectives* (Routledge and Kegan Paul: London, 1984), pp. 55-90.

[42] Molyneux, M., (footnote 41).

[43] Einhorn, B., (footnote 40).

creasing impoverishment and a deterioration of their socio-economic status.

In Yugoslavia, women were a significant percentage of the unemployed during the state socialist period, as well as at the time of its disintegration. Before the 'transition to democracy' in Yugoslavia, employed women accounted for only a minority of the adult female population, around 1/3 in most regions, and nowhere greater than 40 percent.[45] Consequently, the majority of women, the remaining 2/3s, had to be content with an economically dependent status. The 1980s were characterized by declining rates in women's employment in all regions due to the ongoing economic crisis and restructuring. The economic crisis resulted in a drastic fall in GNP in 1989 (3 years prior to the beginning of the wars) at an average yearly rate of 18.7 percent.[46] Thus, increasingly scarce resources in the changing economy and scarcer paid labor opportunities made women even more dependent upon extended families for support.[47]

Alongside these economic changes, a decrease in women's political representation has occurred. As Einhorn and Enloe document, the level of female political representation in the parliaments of East and Central Europe has dropped from around 1/3 to 1/10 or less.[48] In socialist Yugoslavia 'women accounted for 19.1 percent of the membership in all republican assemblies and at the federal level'.[49] However, due to changes in the economic, social and political systems in the 1990s, women's political representation dropped to 4.6 percent.[50]

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[44] Watson, P., 'The rise of masculinism in Eastern Europe', *New Left Review*, no. 198 (March-April 1993), pp. 72; 78.

[45] Milic, A., (footnote 11).

[46] These data are taken from a study by Posarac,A.,at al., of the Economic Institute in Belgrade, and published in Belgrade independent weekly magazine Vreme, November 7th, 1994.

[47] Andjelka Milic (footnote 24)

[48] Einhorn, B., (footnote 40), p. 10; Enloe,C., *The Morning After: Sexual Politics at the End of the Cold War* (University of California Press: Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1993), p. 23.

[49] Milic, A., (footnote 28), p. 117.

[50] Milic, A., (footnote 28), p. 118.

There were, indeed, fundamental problems with the representation of women under state socialism, such as undemocratic ways in which delegates were elected and allocation of quotas to women's organizations, trade unions and political parties, which resulted in the election of 'token 'yes' women'.[51] However, the lack of visibility of women in the political elites of the 'new democracies' is alarming because it means that women cannot defend or promote their citizenship rights within traditional/mainstream political avenues.

The above-mentioned changes in the situation of women as the result of marketization and emergence of a multi-party political system have been crucial for the revival of ethnic nationalism. Since ethnic nationalism was partly a reaction to the experience of the state-socialist past,[52] nationalists claimed that the 'unnatural' socialist regime had substituted religion, tradition, shared blood and kin with the emancipation of the working class and women, as well as proletarian internationalism. It offered, thus, a set of values constructed as 'traditional', which could easily be perceived to be 'natural'.

According to these 'new' values offered by nationalists, women have been assigned the roles and responsibilities for the reproduction of the group as well as for the custody of cultural values and cultural identity. The construction of women as biological and cultural reproducers of their ethnic and national collectives is common to nationalist ideologies, as some studies have already pointed out.[53] These roles of women have become the role model for the 'new' nationalist family in post-Yugoslav states. Consequently, women's high rates of unemployment resulting from economic restructuring were justified and embraced by nationalists as women's long-due return to their 'sacred' and 'natural' family and household 'duties'.

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[51] Einhorn,B., (footnote 40), p. 10.
[52] For more information see Kaldor, M., (footnote 38).
[53] For more information see Wolby, S., 'Woman and nation', *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, vol. 32, nos. 1-2 (1992), pp. 81-100; Yuval-Davis, N. and Anthias, F. (eds.), *Women-Nation-State* (Macmillan Press: London, 1989) pp. 81-100.

Ethnic nationalism, however, does not declare itself to be against women as such. It needs women, but only if they conform to the roles as defined by nationalists and the corresponding gender hierarchy.[54] In order to secure this 'natural' order, nationalists establish different ways of controlling women through mechanisms of the nation-state. The control of women often violates their basic rights. The first instances of control and violation of women's rights during the transition from state socialism to ethnic nationalism were restrictions on their reproductive freedoms.

In the current context of economic, social and political transformations, restrictions on women's reproductive rights are being linked to ethnic nationalism and its tendency to define women as biological reproducers of an ethnic nation. Consequently, population growth and 'pro-life' politics have become common features in post-Yugoslav states. Drakulic documents such changes in Croatian and Slovenian constitutions and legislation.[55] Attacks on women's reproductive rights also occurred in Serbia.[56] In all cases, the church - both Catholic and Serbian Orthodox - has had a prominent role in shaping public opinion. Restrictions on women's reproductive freedoms have, as Einhorn suggests, 'severe implications for women's rights to self-determination as citizens enjoying equal rights with men.'[57] This is especially the case when nationalism is related to militarization and violent conflict.

5. Women's organizing against the revival of ethnic nationalism

Between 1988 and 1991, feminists gave increased attention to oppos-

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[54] Milic, A., 'Nationalism and sexism: Eastern Europe in transition', (eds.) Caplan, R. and Feffer, J., *Europe's New Nationalism: States and Minorities in Conflict* (Oxford University Press: New York and Oxford, 1996), p. 174.

[55] Drakulic, S., (footnote 9), pp. 123-126.

[56] Papic, Z., 'How to become a 'real' Serbian woman?', *Warreport*, no. 36 (1995a), pp. 40-43.

[57] Einhorn, B., (footnote 40), p. 104.

ing ethnic nationalism in all the regions of what was formerly Yugoslavia. The opposition was based on feminists' recognition that politics of ethnic nationalism embody and perpetate patriarchal value structures related to notions of 'brotherhood', 'common blood' and kin, and thus, jeopardize women's rights, by transforming women into the 'Mothers of the Nation' and bearers of culture of the ethnic national collective. As Nadezda Cetkovic, a founder of the *Women's Shelter*, Belgrade, explained:

> It's been hard to live in an environment where patriarchal values, in the most rigid form, have been promoted, and where even the existing women's rights have been threatened. If the ideal is a defender, soldier, then a woman is left to be the producer of the defender and soldier, thus, to be a mother; and that is immediately reflected in reproductive rights. That is exactly what has happened to us. The regime has started to promote restrictive population policies, aggressively attacking women's rights everywhere [in all the former republics], and feminists have begun to defend women's reproductive rights. That means, there have been more and more reasons for activism.

The feminist analysis of the situation of women in the context of the revival of ethnic nationalism in the region has been similar to the conceptualization of the ways in which women participate in ethnic and national processes explicated by some feminist theorists, for example, Yuval-Davis and Anthias.[58] Moreover, until the outbreak of the wars, feminists had not been interested in the independence of the former republics of Yugoslavia. These women argued that new nation-states would be oppressive and even more patriarchal than the previous socialist state and thus discriminate against women.

Following the above mentioned concerns, the participants at the *Third Meeting of Yugoslav Feminists*, held in Belgrade from March 30 to April 1, 1990, proclaimed in their statement:

> The Feminists of Yugoslavia do not accept the politics of ethnic national divisions and manipulation, promoted by the official political institutions as well as by most of the recently established nationalistic parties[...]We

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[58] Yuval-Davis, N. and Anthias, F., (footnote 53).

refuse to be a passive electorate over whose votes the new political parties will compete through manipulation[...]Feminist groups agree to assess programs offered by the political parties from the perspective of women's rights, needs and interests, as well as to critique or support them wherever they recognize the mutual interest.[59]

In this period, activism and public protests of feminists were primarily focused on the manipulation of women's reproductive rights for nationalistic demographic purposes. The changed social and political context has started to transform the character of feminist activism in the region. While prior to the revival of ethnic nationalism, their activism had reflected feminist concern to raise public awareness regarding tensions with respect to the 'woman question' - as defined under state socialism - the changing social and political context has altered the character of feminist activism into a more explicitly political form of protests against the violation of concrete women's rights in a concrete manner. Nadezda Cetkovic emphasized this difference in the following way:

> The situation [regarding feminist activism] has rapidly started to change with the revival of ethnic nationalism[...]Before [the revival of ethnic nationalism], as you know, we used to spend time on workshops, round tables, and more abstract debates. But now [with the revival of ethnic nationalism] it has become important to defend very concrete women's rights that were endangered both on political and individual level.

Thus, the changed political situation has transformed the first autonomous women's groups into women's lobbies, women's parliaments and umbrella organizations that have been established and active throughout the region of what was formerly Yugoslavia, since 1990.

These new feminist initiatives had, once again, linked women across republic/ethnic national boundaries. Their campaigns have

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[59] Cetkovic, N. et al., *Zene za zene: protesti, apeli, izjave, informacije autonomnih zenskih inicijativa* [Women for Women: Protests, Appeals Statements, Information on the Autnonomous Women's Initiatives] (SOS Hotline for Women and Children Victims of Violence: Belgrade, 1993), p. 11.

been rather successful in preventing the republican parliaments to prohibit abortion. In Croatia, for example, feminist groups founded the *Women's Parliament* in 1990, in order to protest against the Croatian Government's intention

> to effectively ban abortion. Six hundred women from all over Croatia, as well as quests from Belgrade, Ljubljana and Sarajevo, participated in the two-day session and managed to stop the ban.[60]

Although feminist initiatives against anti-abortion campaigns have been successful, the 'pro-life' aspirations of their governments remained one of the important social and political goals.

6. The beginning of the wars and women's organizing

The outbreak of the wars and the violent destruction of the country and lives of its peoples has confronted women with new forms of oppression and victimization. Feminists have reacted to this new political situation by shifting most of their activism to anti-war politics. Feminist groups were issuing protest notes to the governments and the public, expressing their disagreement with militarization and with the war-making tendencies of political elites. Some feminists have also joined anti-war groups, considering the anti-war initiative a platform for a broad social and political mobilization of people, and not solely women. Stasa Zajovic, a founder of the *Women in Black*, Belgrade, recalled her experience in such a group in Belgrade:

> In 1991, I joined the *Center for Anti-War Action*. At that time I didn't have a dilemma or problems as to whether that group is mixed [consisting of women and men] or not; simply, that was the first anti-war group addressing the issues I was interested in [...] There were very few feminists at the anti-war center, although there were a lot of women [...]

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[60] Knezevic, D., 'Rules and Rethoric Change, but reality?' *Warreport*, no. 36 (1995), p. 36.

However, the work at the anti-war center was very important for me because I've learned that the peace movement is also overwhelmed with patriarchal models of repression. Although the oppression of women has been subtler, the peace movement repeated the form of women's subordination as in the dissident movement [during state socialism]. The language was different, but the model remained the same. In addition, war and all that care for others have been shifted onto women's shoulders, although they have been literally invisible as voices of anti-war protest; and this is not a phrase. That irritated me, and I did try, as much as I could, to explain that to the women there.

Among the women involved in the anti-war initiatives were some women who had previously been engaged in the 'Mothers' Movement' that emerged throughout the region of what was formerly Yugoslavia at the beginning of the wars. These spontaneous protests of mothers first emerged in Serbia, in the summer of 1991, motivated by the federal army's intervention in Slovenia, after the Slovene unilateral declaration of independence. Hundreds of women from Serbia stormed the Serbian Parliament during its session demanding: 'return our children to us, we are ashamed to win a war of brother against brother, we want peace now'.[61] This protest was followed by similar protests in Ljubljana, Zagreb and Sarajevo, organized across ethnic national lines, and was joined by feminist and peace groups.[62]

The nationalistic oligarchies reacted immediately by repressive measures (arrests, police interrogations, infringements of individual rights) intended to stop the protests.[63] Simultaneously, the state/republic media propaganda machine was mobilized to prevent the women's resistance to militarization and war, and to use it for nationalistic purposes. This manipulation of the mothers' movement was not particularly difficult because 'from the beginning, women insisted their actions were not political',[64] emphasizing that their resistance to war is an expression of their concerns as mothers. Thus, these massive

[61] Zajovic, S. (ed.), *Women for Peace*, (The *Women in Black*: Belgrade, 1993), p. 7.
[62] Drakulic, S., (footnote 9), p. 129.
[63] Zajovic, S., (ed.), (footnote 60), p. 9.
[64] Drakulic, S., (footnote 9), p. 129.

grassroots protests of women, though highly political in essence, had not been clearly politically articulated or strategized.

'Motherhood as a space of protest' has often been a way for women to express their disagreement with the militaristic and authoritarian tendencies of the governments in patriarchal societies (for example, in Sri Lanka and Latin America).[65] De Alwis points out that, at a particular moment in Sri Lankan history, the protest of mothers that had been articulated through an available, familiar and emotive discourse of motherhood (i.e. tears and curses), was the most crucial component in an assault on a government 'that had until then held an entire nation to ransom on the pretext of safeguarding the lives of its citizens.'[66]

In the situation of the revival of ethnic nationalism in the region of what was once Yugoslavia, the women protesters resorted to a space/role that has been redefined by nationalists, and marked as critical for the realization of their ethnic national projects. When the nation is defined ethnically, the survival of 'endangered' ethnic national collectives is easily perceived as the survival of a Great Family whose members are banded together in mutual protection. Any threat to this unity, defined in terms of 'common blood' and 'common origin', must be dealt with. According to the characteristics of patriarchy, the system in which economic and political power resides in hands of the fathers, the protection of a group is considered an exclusively male activity. Women, however, have important and complimentary roles in keeping the collective 'alive' - the role of biological reproducers, and the role of guardians of cultural and ethnic national continuity. Therefore, women have become the focus of nationalist symbolism and homogenization, and are celebrated as 'Mothers of the Nation'. In such a context, the spontaneous protests of women as mothers who do not want their sons to take part in a war driven by 'the ethnic national cause' of the political elites, were in essence an expression of these

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[65] De Alwis, M., 'Motherhood as a space of protest: women's political participation in contemporary Sri Lanka', paper presented at the 1st meeting of the Women in Conflict Zones Network, York University, Toronto, November, 1996.

[66] De Alwis, M., (footnote 64), p. 3.

women's rejection of the role of mother as defined by nationalists.

Feminist activists recognized the above-mentioned character of these protests.[67] However, due to complex social and political circumstances, feminist groups had not been able to reach this heterogeneous group of women and to possibly influence further political articulation of this spontaneous women's rejection of their patriarchally defined roles. They lacked authentic linkages with the wide range of women in the region, as discussed earlier. At the time of the protests feminist groups were further blocked by the state/republic propaganda machines and power from reaching the heterogeneous body of women in what was formerly Yugoslavia. Because feminist groups had been rather small and politically marginal, as well as without even minimal financial and institutional means, they had not been able to oppose the media campaigns against the mothers' movement engineered by the official political institutions.

In such a context, the nationalistic political elites denounced protests as anti-patriotic, and helped 'some other' women/mothers to get organized and respond to the mothers' protests by demonstrating support for their warring side.[68] In Serbia, the autonomous media called this 'women's movement' - 'Women in Fur Coats', alluding to these women's ties to the political elite. The protests orchestrated by the regimes were far less massive than the original mothers' movement. However, the protests of women supported by the regimes have contributed to the failure of the massive resistance of women to the politics of ethnic nationalism and militarization. Gradually the women's original rejection of the traditional role of the 'patriotic mother' that was embedded in these protests, was politically marginalized and with the escalation of the armed conflict, was transformed into a stereotype of 'the mother of the nation, the martyr and the heroine'.

The prompt and strong reaction of political elites and their state/republic powers reveals their fear of the potential power of women's alliances in challenging ethnic national projects. The failure of the spontaneous protests of women that cut across ethnic national

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[67] Zajovic, S. (ed.), (footnote 60).
[68] Milic, A., (footnote 54), p. 180.

lines, has strengthened the differences between women grounded in their different ethnic nationality. The escalation of the wars and violence intensified the importance of these differences in women's day-to-day lives and experiences.

7. Women's anti-war groups and women's solidarity against war, nationalism and violence

As the result of the failure of the anti-war protests of women/mothers, as well as the consequence of the invisibility of women's voices in the peace movements, some feminists have begun to organize anti-war centers. Consequently, in 1991, the *Women in Black* group was founded in Belgrade. Stasa Zajovic, a founder of the group, explained as to why this form of women's organizing has been important:

> The *Women in Black*, Belgrade, is the most visibly political women's group, we express clearly and publicly our attitude towards those who produce the violence. I think that women must engage in politics because it's not something disgusting or just for men [...] There are problems with some men [in the anti-war movement], because they think that our anti-militarism is a part of our traditional women's role - mothers and sisters got together to support sons. Lots of women who have joined the group during the war have all resisted that, and have been explaining that they are not mothers and sisters, that their activism is not just that.

The group made its first appearance in Belgrade on October 9, 1991. Since then, every Wednesday afternoon, the *Women in Black* have stood in silence in the Republic Square, in the heart of the city, protesting against the war, militarism, nationalism, and violence against women. These women were inspired by the Israeli group who wore black and protested in silence against their government's actions against the Palestinians, as well as by the Italian and German women who protested their government's involvement in the Gulf War.

The silent street protests of the *Women in Black* have become a crucially important and transparent way of breaking the invisibility of

women in the peace movement. This form of protest has also required a considerable level of courage and commitment by these women, not simply in expressing their anti-war politics publicly, and thus, risking the consequences of the regimes political attacks, but also in exposing *their bodies* to the mercy of the violent attacks, often physical, of those fellow citizens who were obsessed by militant politics of ethnic nationalism in Serbia/FR Yugoslavia. The level of risk they have been taking and the amount of courage they have demonstrated are perhaps best illustrated by the fact that the *Women in Black*, Belgrade, have publicly and unequivocally expressed their political view concerning the responsibility for the wars in the region. On June 10, 1992, they issued a following public statement:

> We say that the *Serbian regime* and its *repressive structures* (Federal Army and paramilitary formations) are responsible for all three wars, in Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Serbian regime leads wars in the name of all citizens of Serbia. This way all the citizens become hostages of their imperialistic politics.[69]

Apart from risking the stigmatization and overt physical attacks by their political opponents, the visibility of these anti-war protests has also been a way to reach out to those who share the political views of the *Women in Black*, and to encourage them to join the protests. A refugee woman from Bosnia-Herzegovina, of ethnically mixed background, recalled the way she got in touch with the *Women in Black*:

> I remember it was March 8, 1994, and I was passing by, and I saw a woman who was carrying a slogan 'My Mostar [a town in Bosnia-Herzegovina] will be forever young'. That got to me, I started crying, I came up to her, asked her where she got the slogan. She told me "Come on, join me. You carry this.' [a banner] I asked: "What is this' [gathering], and she said "the group *Women in Black*' and so on, "one of our activists is here, she's from Mostar.' We talked and since then I sometimes have felt the need to go on Wednesdays when they stand, protesting against war and that's how we grew close. When I visit them, you're al-

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[69] Zajovic, S. (ed.), (footnote 60), p. 50.

ways welcome there [at the *Women in Black* headquarters]. It's not like the others [who work with refugees], who're just courteous. If there are any problems, I think I could find protection of any kind here, that they'd help me.

Anti-war politics and its visibility on the streets of Belgrade, have also helped these women to reestablish their sense of dignity as human and political beings who have been caught in the politics of violence, destruction, and intolerance. Radmila Zarkovic, a Bosnian Serb refugee woman and an activist in the *Women in Black*, Belgrade, explained the effect of these public protests against war on her sense of self:

I've joined the *Women in Black* because they are the only organization here in Belgrade which continually, for the last three and a half years, every Wednesday, protest on the street. There are other anti-war groups in Belgrade, not just women's groups, which are trying to do something against this war, but I think that it's very important to express your resistance to war publicly, on the street, [...]That helps me in a way; it helps me when I go to sleep in the evening, and when I get up in the morning; it enables me to look myself in a mirror. That's what helps me to communicate with my children in the way I think I should. To teach them how to be human, to be women, to be from Mostar [her hometown in Bosnia-Herzegovina]. To teach them that there are no divisions along national, racial, or any other lines. At the moment in this region, it's possible to express all that only on the street.

Although feminists have been persistent in their effort to organize their own anti-war group, they have continued to support and collaborate with other anti-war initiatives in Serbia/FR Yugoslavia. The cooperation among predominantly women's anti-war groups within the region of post-Yugoslav states has been a high priority for the *Women in Black*, Belgrade. They have made an effort to establish a network of these groups within the region and to link it with similar groups internationally. This endeavor has resulted in an annual meeting of women's solidarity against war, nationalism and violence. Since the summer 1992, this international meeting has been held every year in

Novi Sad, a city in Northern Serbia/FR Yugoslavia. Each year, the *Women in Black*, Belgrade, publish an extensive report of the meeting, entitled 'Women for Peace'.[70]

The significance of this endeavor is not only to be assessed by its relevance for the creation of new alliances and solidarity among women. Its importance must also be considered in the wider political context of these wars and exclusionary politics of ethnic nationalism, in which literally any form of contact across ethnic national lines has been considered as anti-patriotism and subversive to the political interests of the new nation-states. In such a political situation, especially during the years of the armed conflict (1991-1995), the participation at these meetings has been highly risky for all the women participants from post-Yugoslav states. Not just that it required an extreme personal effort to get travel documents - visas, and to commonly undertake a long and exhausting journey avoiding the war zones, but also it often confronted these women with a prospect of social and political stigmatization and a possibility of losing their jobs.[71] Regardless of these difficulties and the obstacles created by the regimes, these women have succeeded in keeping and further developing their contacts as well as some form of cooperation.

The significance of this achievement and women's commitment to keep communication across ethnic national boundaries is also revealed by the fact that during the first years of the wars, these meetings were the only organized and recurring public gatherings of the peoples who have been divided by the wars and borders of their new

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[70] Zajovic, S. (ed.), (footnote 60); Zajovic,S. (ed.), *Women for Peace* (The *Women in Black*: Belgrade, 1994); Zajovic, S. (ed.), *Women for Peace* (The *Women in Black*: Belgrade, 1995); Zajovic, S. (ed.), *Women for Peace* (The *Women in Black*: Belgrade, 1996);

[71] The difficulties these women have been confronting were disclosed to me during the 6th Annual Meeting of Women's Solidarity Against War, Nationalism and Violence in Novi Sad, August 1997, in a personal contact with a woman activist from Split, Croatia, who has been attending the meetings since the summer 1992. My participation at this meeting was funded by the Professional Partnerships Program of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada. The financial assistance is gratefully acknowledged.

nation-states. However, the effort to keep and further develop contacts and communication among women who have been divided by the new political circumstances was not without tensions. It has often been a painful experience of broken trust, friendships and cooperation. Over the years of war, however, these feminists have learned to accept differences, and to create new forms of solidarity of women in the region.

8. Differences and 'solidarity' amongst women

Feminists in what was formerly Yugoslavia, as previously discussed, have started their activism against policies of ethnic nationalism and the process of militarization by emphasizing the oppressive character of ethnic nationalism toward women. This analysis had been considered crucial for women's political claims, and thus, for solidarity amongst women and for their joint political initiatives. However, the spread of war, destruction and various forms of victimization of different ethnic national groups in the post-Yugoslav states has were new experiences for women in the region. During the first years of the wars, feminists had found some of these experiences almost impossible to share. Consequently, solidarity amongst women and an articulation of women's collaborative political action had been jeopardized. Nadezda Cetkovic, a founder of the *Women's Shelter*, Belgrade, recalled the painful experience of her first personal contact with women from Croatia. The meeting was organized by Italian feminists in February 1992, in Venice. Nadezda Cetkovic said:

> At one of the workshops we spoke about ourselves and who we are. I said that I was born in Zagreb [Croatia], that I spent most of my early childhood in Slovenia; that I completed two grades of the elementary school in a Serbian village, and the next four in Mostar [Bosnia-Herzegovina], then the next four in Djakovo [Croatia] and that later I had settled in Belgrade [Serbia]. I said that I consider all these geographical regions a part of my life story, that I love them all, and although I don't feel a need to unite them all into one state, I do feel that all these regions are *de facto* my homeland. I have friends in all these places, and I worry

what have happened to them and their children. After that, a woman from Vukovar, Croatia, took the floor. She had that horrible experience in a war zone; her husband was at the time in the Serbian captivity. She said: 'I have no tears as Ms. Cetkovic for all that nonsense, because I must have energy for my children who had been hiding in the cellar for months, and for my husband whom I must help out of the Serbian captivity.' I understood her, but at the same time all my feelings were spat at.

The political context had a tendency to impose a major division among feminists - a distinction between the aggressor and the victims. Nadezda Cetkovic continued recollection of her experience at the meeting in Venice:

Italian women were mediators, but the communication was very hard, almost impossible. I felt that the discussion was, in a way, the imposition of guilt upon us [feminists from Serbia/FR Yugoslavia]. We had already been protesting on the street here [in Belgrade], and had been exposing our bodies against the regime. That wasn't naive, because we were approached by people who were spitting at us, pushing us, pulling our hair out, shouting that we are traitors; however, all that somehow hadn't been recognized as sufficient, and I couldn't figure out what we were supposed to do - to go to Zagreb and to let the bombs fall onto our heads?! The frustration was enormous, and I did try to understand, but my feelings were hurt.

Feminist activists from Serbia/FR Yugoslavia have regarded their anti-war and anti-nationalistic politics sufficient to maintain relationships of trust with women across the ethnic national borders, as well as to develop relationships with numerous new women's groups that have been emerging since the outbreak of the wars. However, the differentiated positioning of women within and toward their ethnic national collectives, as well as the different power relations among the ethnic nations during the wars have radically shifted relations of power. This change has created a new political context in which some women could no longer perceive the previously established cooperative relationships among feminists as politically and personally acceptable.

This extremely sensitive situation has been occasionally aggravated by the influence of some international feminists and their understanding of the complex relations between gender and ethnic nationalism. The discourse of such a feminist position is best illustrated by an event at the UN Human Rights Conference in Vienna, June 1993, recorded by Benderly (1997), when the U.S. feminist MacKinnon made the following comment in response to a question posed by Belgrade feminist activist Nadezda Cetkovic: 'If you are in opposition to the regime in Serbia, why aren't you already dead?'[72]

Although all the interviewed feminist activists from Serbia, who attended the international meetings in the first years of the wars, shared the opinion that these meetings of feminists and women across ethnic national boundaries were unsuccessful, they have also acknowledged that these meetings marked the beginning of a painful, yet rather successful process of recognition of differences embedded in 'relational positionality'[73] of women within the region. As Stasiulis points out, 'relational positionality' is a concept which refers

> to the multiple relations of power which intersect in complex ways to position of individuals and collectives in shifting and often contradictory locations within geopolitical spaces, historical narratives and movement politics.[74]

The changing relations of political power in the war-torn region of the post-Yugoslav states has created a need to reconceptualize the initial feminist approach to the issues of gender in relation to ethnic nationalism. These political circumstances have resulted in the emergence of new women's groups with diverse approaches to ethnic nationalism and to new nation-states in the making. Consequently, the international meetings of feminists from post-Yugoslav states had initially resulted in these women's search for those women 'on the other side'

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[72] Benderly, J., (footnote 4), p. 67.
[73] Stasiulis, D., 'Relational positionalities of nationalisms, racisms and feminisms', paper presented at the 10th Annual Interdisciplinary Feminist Colloquium, York University, Toronto, March 1998.
[74] Stasiulis, D., (footnote 72), pp. 16-17.

with whom they still could maintain minimal communication. Nadezda Cetkovic, a founder of the *Women's Shelter*, Belgrade, explained this process:

> After these experiences we [feminists from Serbia/FR Yugoslavia] had been thinking about what can we do as we were certain that there were women who do want contact or a continuation of friendship. And then we, who did want to build something together, started to search for one another. And such women have started to appear.

The feelings of betrayal on the part of those women in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, who considered themselves *solely* the victims of Serbian aggressive politics of ethnic nationalism have been generating the feelings of guilt on the part of feminists in Serbia/FR Yugoslavia they have felt for being born into an aggressor's ethnic nation. However, there were women and feminists 'on the other side' of the ethnic national divide who, regardless of relations to their ethnic national collective, have maintained a critical position toward ethnic nationalism 'of their own people' and its politics of exclusion. Consequently, the contacts that 'survived' the first years of the wars were those between anti-nationalist feminists, predominantly from Croatia and Serbia/FR Yugoslavia, who have argued that 'the nationally constituted identities of both states were aggressive.'[75]

The context of the wars involving ethnic nationalism that originally inclined to divide feminist activists according to their 'blood ties' - to 'the aggressor's side' or to 'the victims' side', has been further intensified by the instances of the mass rape of women in the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

9. Approaches to the sexual victimization of women in war - 'patriotic' versus 'disloyal' women

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[75] Benderly, J., (footnote 4), p. 70.

The beginning of the armed conflict in the region of the former Yugoslavia, the wars in Slovenia and Croatia, has announced the beginning of tensions between feminist activists in the region. The crisis had reached its peak with the beginning of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina and soon after, instances of mass rape of predominantly Bosnian Muslim women have become public. These events, however, have also caused internal divisions among feminists and women of the same ethnic nationality. The critical point of this tension has been a difference in the approach of feminist activists to this form of victimization of women.

The polarization stemmed from feminists' different conceptualization of the intersection of gender and ethnic nationalism in determining the character of these rapes. Those feminists who stressed that women who have been raped in the war were subject to this form of abuse first and foremost because of their gender and not because of their ethnic nationality have been severely attacked as 'traitors' of their ethnic nations. Feminists who have become the supporters of the ethnic national projects and their exclusionary politics of their governments, could not accept any notion of a more broadly defined category of 'women' - one that would cut across ethnic national divisions. Consequently, they have characterized the above-mentioned analysis as a 'betrayal' of the ethnic national collective.

An example of this form of attack is the case of 5 Croatian feminists, prominent writers and journalists, who were accused by Croatian feminist-nationalists and the media as 'traitors' for publicly demanding an end to the use of female victims of rape by the nationalistic propaganda machine which had been counting the women victims according to their ethnic nationality. The 5 Croatian feminists argued that this selective counting contributes to further victimization of the raped women who have then become a weapon in the hands of local nationalists. These feminists emphasized that the raped women have been used by local nationalists for their violent struggle for territories and homogeneous nation-states.[76] The media have insisted, however,

[76] The information on this incident was issued by the feminists from Zagreb, and distributed through the international feminist network. Meredith Tax also refers to

that '[i]t is not women who have been raped, it is Croatian and Muslim women who have been raped.'[77]

The debate among local feminists, nationalists and state officials, fueled by instances of mass rape of women in the war, has also become a source of tension and polemic among feminists worldwide. Some feminist analysts saw the above-mentioned analysis of anti-nationalist feminists as a 'blanket critique of 'nationalism' or just another 'feminist version of the cover-up' of who is doing what to whom in this war, and why.[78] Such a feminist analysis emphasizes the importance of the ethnic national belonging of the raped women as the critical element in recognizing and confronting these crimes as unprecedented instances of genocidal rape. As elaborated elsewhere, this approach to the problem of rape in the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina is dangerously close to the rhetoric of local nationalists and their manipulation of raped women for the aggravation of ethnic national hatred.[79]

Rape in war, and in ethnic national war in particular, as analyses show, becomes a powerful symbolic weapon against the 'enemy'.[80] The very logic of rape as a symbolic weapon, as Meznaric explains,

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this event in her article 'Five women who won't be silenced", *The Nation* (1993), pp. 624-625.

[77] *Globus*, December 10, 1992.

[78] MacKinnon, C., "Rape, genocide, and women's human rights', ed. A. Stiglmayer, *Mass Rape: The War Against Women in Bosnia-Herzegovina* (University of Nebraska Press: Lincoln and London, 1994), pp. 198-190.

[79] Korac, M., 'Ethnic conflict, rape, and feminism: the case of Yugoslavia', eds B. Wejnert and M. Spencer, *Women in Post-Communism, Research on Russia and Eastern Europe*, vol 2 (JAI Press INC: Greenwich, London, 1996), pp. 247-265.

[80] Brownmiller, S., 'Making female bodies the battlefield', ed. A.Stiglmayer *Mass Rape: the War against Women in Bosnia-Herzegovina* (University of Nebraska Press: Lincoln and London, 1994), pp. 180-183; Eisenstien,Z., *Hatreds: Racialized and Sexualized Conflicts in the 21st Century* (Routledge: New York, London, 1996); Meznaric,S., 'Gender as an ethno-marker: rape, war and identity politics in the former Yugoslavia', ed. V.Moghadam, *Identity Politics and Women* (Westview Press: Boulder, San Francisco, Oxford, 1994), pp. 76-98; Seifert,R., 'War and rape: a preliminary analysis', ed. A.Stiglmayer, *Mass Rape: the War against Women in Bosnia-Herzegovina* (University of Nebraska Press: Lincoln and London, 1994), pp. 54-73.

rests upon 'the use of gender as a means to control communication and to sharpen the boundaries between two opposed ethnicities.'[81] The rape of the 'enemy's' women carries an important symbolic message from men to men. As Seifert points out, it communicates to men that they have been unable to protect 'their' women.[82] This in turn, I would add, functions as an important mobilizing element in further militarizing among ethnic national collectives.

The mass rape of women in the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina is documented as the systematic rape of predominantly Bosnian-Muslim women by Serb soldiers and paramilitary forces.[83] It is also documented, that 'the sexual abuse of women, has been committed by all sides in the conflict [...] Muslim and Croatian armed forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina have also raped and sexually abused women, although on a much lesser scale'.[84] Nationalistic governments in post-Yugoslav states and their war machines, however, have used these crimes against women, as stated elsewhere, for political purposes and the aggravation of ethnic national hatred.[85] Their reports focus almost exclusively on the crimes of the 'other' side, so that ethnic national membership of the rapist and a possible fetus are focal, dismissing both the raped women and the crime committed against them. This, in turn, further victimizes the abused women.

Women's groups which felt a need to support their endangered ethnic nations and their respective states in the making were the groups which Benderly describes as '[t]hose who conflated 'women as victim' and 'nation as victim', and who 'moved toward a sort of feminist nationalism, 'the patriotism of the victimized'.'[86] The central question in this dispute has been as to whether ethnic national belong-

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[81] Meznaric, S., (footnote 79) p. 79.

[82] Seifert, R., (footnote 79), p. 58.

[83] Stiglmayer, A., 'The rapes in Bosnia-Herzegovina', ed. A.Stiglmayer, *Mass Rape: the War against Women in Bosnia-Herzegovina* (University of Nebraska Press: Lincoln and London, 1994), pp 82-170.

[84] Amnesty International *Bosnia-Herzegovina: rape and sexual abuse by armed forces* (January 1993), p. 4.

[85] Korac, M., (footnote 78), p. 256.

[86] Benderly, J., (footnote 4), p. 71.

ing could be a demarcation line between women, and can it affect their struggle for women's rights. As a consequence of this crisis and separation, the initial divide among women along ethnic national lines, between 'the women aggressors' and 'the women victims', has been transformed into a split between the 'patriotic' and 'disloyal' women and feminists. This division among feminists and women in post-Yugoslav states, which cuts across ethnic national boundaries, has been a result of their differentiated position toward the violent nation-state building in the region. Stasa Zajovic, a founder of the *Women in Black*, Belgrade, explained this particular problem:

> I don't refer to ethnic national feelings, what has been happening here [in post-Yugoslav states] for years now, is that state-building attitude. To talk about our ties to a country, about the exploration of our roots, or about a different definition of a homeland or home, and about belonging, that's one thing. However, there are problems when all that is transformed into a state-building attitude, when that attitude is forced upon us, and when women are accepting it. It's easy to confuse nationalism with an actually extremely vague notion of belonging, especially in a situation when a country is endangered.

The notion of an endangered country, however, did not only characterize the ethnic nationalism of the ethnic nations that have been aggressively attacked by the Yugoslav Peoples' Army, and Serbian military and paramilitary forces. Ethnic national policies in Serbia have also actively generated fear and feelings of insecurity amongst Serbs who lived in both Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia. In doing this, the political elite in Serbia/FR Yugoslavia has been 'supported' by the exclusionary, and often violent, politics of ethnic nationalism in other post-Yugoslav states. Hundreds of thousands of Croatian Serb and Bosnian Serb refugees have been used by the Serbian nationalists as an overt example of the seriousness of the threat that is supposed to come from opposing ethnic national collectives. The atmosphere of the 'threat' and 'danger' has been affecting feminist groups in Serbia, causing some women to seize their involvement in anti-nationalist and anti-war politics while their ethnic nation is 'engendered'. Lepa Mlad-

jenovic, a founder of the *Autonomous Women's Center*, Belgrade, recalled this situation:

> We ['disloyal' women] have considered every nationalism a beginning of war, and they, some other women ['patriotic' women] have considered us - traitors. This was very painful, we were able to hurt each other just with a couple of sentences [...] However, since we ['disloyal' women] have established the *Autonomous Women's Center*, to help women victims of war, we haven't had such problems with women who work here; because the women volunteers who consider themselves nationalists have tended to move away from us. They felt that they can't find enough nationalism here [at the *Autonomous Women's Center*, Belgrade].

The distinction between feelings of belonging and state-building attitudes, as well as an acknowledgement of women's differentiated relations to them, have opened up a space for a gradual redefinition of women's solidarity and, consequently, for a new form of alliance among women in post-Yugoslavia. For anti-nationalist feminists in Serbia/FR Yugoslavia, such processes have become possible only after they have been able to confront their individual and group feelings of guilt caused by the Serbian aggressive ethnic national politics. Once they had emancipated themselves from feelings of collective guilt and responsibility for the wars and destruction, they became able to accept the fact that their resistance and opposition to the regime in Serbia/FR Yugoslavia does not necessarily imply that they have to embrace the politics of all women who belong to victimized ethnic nations. Nadezda Cetkovic, a founder of the *Women's Shelter*, Belgrade, revealed how the contacts with women in Croatia have helped the above mentioned process of emancipation:

> We [feminists from Serbia/FR Yugoslavia] have been able to admit that we don't 'speak the same language' with some women [of different ethnic nationality], but some of the feminists in Croatia don't 'share the language' with these same women, either.

These new alliances of women cut across ethnic national lines and

have, once again, reinforced contact and communication between some of the feminist groups in the region. Nadezda Cetkovic explained the core issue in this communication:

> We have again uncovered a problem that is still common to us [women from post-Yugoslav states]: that we have that patriarchal, male-opponent, in front of us, the opponent who has become more complex due to the militaristic regimes.

Enloe points out that militarization of nationalist movements 'is neither natural nor automatic', rather, militarization of nationalism involves debates over social changes that would legitimize particular militaristic tendencies.[87] She argues further that the 'principal among militarizing transformations are changes in ideas about manliness - manliness as it supports a state, and manliness as it informs a nation.'[88]

Those ethnic nationalist movements in the region which have been militarized, such as the Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian, created various pressures upon men to take up arms, as well and upon women to loyally support brothers, husbands/lovers, and sons to become soldiers. It is crucial for ethnic nationalist movements to create a 'real warrior' who is capable of fighting 'sacred' wars. As Papic argues, during fifty years of peace and state socialism, the traditional/patriarchal masculine identity had changed, under the influence of urbanizing transformations.[89] It has become more complex, tolerant, urban-like, 'softer', as well as less interested in seeking revenge for all the past tragic losses. Therefore, it takes time and a lot of war propaganda to create 'national enemies', a paranoia within ethnic national collectives, and consequently a 'real man', a 'patriot' who would fight back in 'defense' of 'the eternal enemy' of his collective.

The critical element of an aggressive ethnic nationalist ideology is

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[87] Enloe, C., (footnote 49), p. 246.
[88] Enloe, C., (footnote 49), p. 247.
[89] Papic, Z., 'From state socialism to state nationalism: the case of Serbia in gender perspective', *Refuge*, vol. 14, no. 3 (1994), p. 14.

the violence embodied in militant masculinity. Violence-oriented masculinity becomes the main means of recruiting individuals who are capable of committing insane atrocities because their masculine militant collective is the ultimate determinant of good and evil. A counter-balance of such a defined violence-oriented masculinity is emotional, committed, supportive, but passive, femininity.[90]

The realization of 'disloyal' feminists that they have a common patriarchal, male opponent has helped them to uncover a continuity of the logic of violence, and the consequent relation between domestic violence and war violence. Lepa Mladjenovic, a founder of the *Autonomous Women's Center*, Belgrade, explained this relation:

> There are parallels between stories of women in war and peace and they are important. All of a sudden, they [stories] merge, almost in a physical sense, and you come to understand that the logic [of violence] is the same in both cases. We don't say that war is the same as violence in peace, but there is that logic of violence that is rooted in patriarchy.

'Patriotic' and 'disloyal' women's groups have been in disagreement regarding the meaning of the rape of women in these wars and the way women's groups should protect the rights of the abused women. Lepa Mladjenovic explained the above mentioned difference by re-calling an event at the UN Human Rights Conference in Vienna, June 1993:

> At the Vienna conference, there was a tribunal on violation of women's human rights where the abused women from all over the world were disclosing their personal experiences of victimization. The situation itself was extremely difficult. I hardly managed to survive it. At one point a woman from Bosnia took the floor, and she talked about her experience of rape. She disclosed her experience to 500 people in the room. While she was talking, I noticed a woman from one of those pro-Muslim groups, who was going around the room and was giving out leaflets, in that same room. To me, that is a violation of the basic ethical principles, something incomprehensible. That means that she's so driven by her own

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[90] Enloe, C., (footnote 49), 247.

agenda that she can't see that there's a problem with her behavior. Some women talk about their horrible personal experiences, and some other women are taking advantage of it. These women were using a women's question as a national question, and that's very problematic. It's a question whether such women would've done something for women, if the war haven't posed a problem such as the issue of women raped in war. However, their main goal hasn't been women but the nation, and to me, from a feminist perspective, that is very problematic.

'Disloyal' women's groups reacted quite rapidly to the danger of further victimization of women survivors of rape in these wars. The *Center for Women War Victims* (CWWV) from Zagreb, for example, stated in a *Letter of Intentions* forwarded to women's and peace organizations worldwide:[91]

> We are writing this letter because we fear that the process of helping raped women is turning in a strange direction, being taken over by governmental institutions. Ministry of Health of Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina, and male gynecologists in particular. (sic) We fear that the raped women could be used in political propaganda with the aim of spreading hatred and revenge, thus leading to further violence against women and to further victimization of survivors.

Women's organizations worldwide have responded to the situation of women in these wars by gathering humanitarian aid, by sending money, and offering training for women volunteers working in different counselling programs established by local women's groups. International feminists have also lobbied their governments to set up an international war crimes tribunal as well as to change international conventions on gender-based crimes. The process of attaining an effective prosecution of gender-based crimes in the former Yugoslavia was not problem-free. Copelon et al. argue that despite of the profound success of feminist advocacy efforts for an effective prosecution of gender-based crimes, additional advocacy is crucial to imple-

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[91] December 21, 1992, unpublished, distributed through the network of women's groups in post-Yugoslav states.

ment protective measures and build a meaningful Victim and Witness Unit at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.[92]

However, the support given to 'disloyal' women's groups was not entirely unambiguous. The political situation in post-Yugoslav states, and the ways in which the international community has responded to it, has affected the contacts among local and international feminists, particularly between women activists in Serbia/FR Yugoslavia and feminists worldwide.

10. The impact of international networks on women's organizing

The support provided by international feminists has been critical for the continuity of activism of the already existing local feminist groups, as well as for the establishment of the new women's groups in post-Yugoslav states. Inasmuch as the wars have made women victims, they have also produced a need for women's organizing around issues that were part of specific women's experiences resulting from the conflict, such as: (*i*) adaptation problems of women refugees; and (*ii*) trauma as a result of sexual and other forms of abuse of women in the wars. In this respect, it can be argued that the wars have contributed to the emergence of a number of new women's groups in post-Yugoslav states.

The establishment and work of the women's groups would have not been possible without the generous help of women and feminists worldwide. In Serbia, for example, Italian feminists have been providing a financial support for the *Women in Black*, Belgrade, since the end of 1992. Due to this support, these women have been able to rent and equip an office space in Belgrade, and to establish contacts with local peace groups, as well as to start several projects with refugee women. Also, a group of women from Switzerland had provided fi-

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[92] Copelon, R. et al., 'Not just victims', *Warreport*, no. 36 (1995), pp. 29-30.

nancial support for the establishment of the *Autonomous Women's Center*, Belgrade, and their work with women and children victims of war violence. Lepa Mladjenovic, a founder of the *Autonomous Women's Center*, Belgrade, explained the importance of this support: 'Only when we got this space, had we been able to organize and to make our programs known to the public and to women.'

When these pre-conditions for work were established, feminists had been able to reach out and get in touch with women in need. The improvements in their working conditions have also enabled feminists to seek for women who are willing to work as volunteers. The women who joined feminist groups as volunteers had not necessarily considered themselves feminists. Violeta Krasnic, a feminist activist at the *SOS Hotline* for women and children victims of violence, Belgrade, is one of such young women who had joined the group during the wars. She said:

> I have become a volunteer because I was a psychology student, and I saw an advertisment at the University that the *SOS Hotline* seeks volunteers. I wasn't a feminist, I came here because I was a psychology student and I thought that I could help battered women, instead of helping, let's say, the handicapped. I have become a feminist through the work at the *SOS Hotline*. In other words, feminism didn't bring me to the *SOS Hotline*, however, that work brought me to feminism, it taught me feminism.

Along with financial support, international feminists have been offering seminars and various training sessions on women's self-help groups, feminist therapy, as well as different conflict resolution techniques. The presence of feminists from abroad has also been an important path of communication through which these otherwise war-isolated women had an opportunity to contrast their own positions and experiences with women internationally. Cockburn in her study of bridge building initiatives of women's groups in Northern Ireland, Israel and Bosnia-Herzegovina points out the complex meaning and importance of the international feminists' support to the women's

groups in these regions.[93] Her research on women's bridge-building projects in Bosnia-Herzegovina is a study of the *Medica* group in Zenica, Central Bosnia-Herzegovina. *Medica* has been established due to the financial support and long-term involvement of German feminists. Cockburn argues that:

> [F]or *Medica* the involvement of German women has had more than financial importance for the project. It has meant that Serb, Croat and Muslim women are at certain moments and in certain ways working side by side facing outwards - relating to the German feminists[...]It seems to help their cohesion that their relationships may overflow the vessel in which their home-brewed ethnic difference is normally contained.[94]

In Serbia/FR Yugoslavia, the imposition of the international sanctions contributed to feminists' feelings of total isolation from the international community. Such feelings made their day-to-day struggle against the regime as well as their work with women even harder. In such isolation, the presence of the international women was the only link to the international community. However, this crucially important support to women's groups in Serbia/FR Yugoslavia has not been given without initial problems and considerable lobbying on the part of 'disloyal' feminist groups in post-Yugoslav states. Stasa Zajovic, a founder of the *Women in Black*, Belgrade, explained the nature of these problems and a kind of political initiative the 'disloyal' feminist undertook:

> A part of the international feminist and peace movement is contaminated by the concept of the state. How otherwise one can explain the fact that a number of these groups have been more interested in the peace and women's groups in Croatia. Therefore, we had to insist, jointly with the groups [in Croatia] with which we've remained in contact, that the politics of division is very dangerous. Not because we ['disloyal' feminist

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93 Cockubrn, C., 'Democracy out of difference: women's projects as political communities, paper presented at the 2nd meeting of the Women in Conflict Zones Network, York University, Toronto, May-June 1997.

94 Cockburn, C., (footnote 92), p. 11.

groups] want to reconstruct Yugoslavia, but because we realized that the ideas of the nation and the state are contaminating a part of the international peace movement[...]To me, the central question has been - why they [some international peace and feminist groups] are supporting the same criteria as their states; that has been the most difficult experience I've had. That [such an attitude of some international peace and feminist groups] has become both vulgar and boring, because to be a Serb is not a political choice, but a geographic and cultural belonging.

As a result of such joint lobbying, the international feminist and peace groups have gradually turned part of their attention and political interest to feminist and peace groups in Serbia/FR Yugoslavia.

All the interviewed feminist activists have emphasized the crucial importance of the support and the involvement of feminists worldwide for women's movement in post-Yugoslav states. However, they all agreed, as well, that the international feminists are not a 'homogeneous category'. Zorica Mirsevic, a feminist from the *Women's Studies Center*, Belgrade, explained the differences among feminists who have been visiting from abroad:

There were those [feminists] who have been visiting us because of nationalistic reasons, and there were those who, I am certain, collaborate with some of these unpleasant institutions of their states, I don't want to use the term espionage; there were those who were here in order to build up their CVs however, there were those who have been here because they really want to help.

Feminists and other women activists in post-Yugoslav states, empowered by their own experiences of organizing in the first year of the wars, as well as by the involvement of some feminists worldwide, have embarked upon more organized efforts with women in the region.

11. Women's groups working with women in the region

The first year of the wars (in Slovenia and Croatia) has brought 'disloyal' women and a wide range of women in the region closer together, mainly due to these feminists' political activism. Organized street protests, petitions against human rights abuses, lobbying for peaceful solutions to the conflict, and organized relief work in multi-ethnic self-help groups for women victims of war violence have brought the politics of 'disloyal' women closer to the experiences of refugee women, who come from diverse socio-economic and ethnic national backgrounds.

The encounter between refugee women and feminist activists has been a two-way form of communication. Experiences of refugee women have affected and shaped the work and activism of local feminists. Because refugee women have been approached by these feminists as individuals and not as a 'category', the first contacts have helped them to begin a process of reestablishment of feelings of personal dignity. These women have been accepted as persons whose experiences, skills and knowledge are of invaluable importance to other women who have not been affected by the wars in the same way. Radmila Zarkovic, a Bosnian Serb refugee women who became an activist in *Women in Black*, Belgrade, talked about the importance of being accepted as a person, an equal, whose experience and views count: 'When I joined the *Women in Black*, from the first moment when I got here, this was the only place where I didn't feel like a refugee.' Gradually, these initial encounters have been articulated into projects and programs of work with women refugees. Radmila Zarkovic, a founder of such a program, explained the way in which the experiences of exile have shaped part of the activism of the group:

The *Women in Black* were helping some refugees before I joined them, but that was more a kind of humanitarian aid. They helped them financially as much as they could. They helped some to settle here, they paid for housing for some, they helped some to leave [abroad] [...] I remember the meeting when I told them: 'None of us refugees want you to give us something, we want to earn it, to get our self-respect back.'[...] I myself felt very bad because I couldn't work. First, you have a huge amount of time, too much time to think about events in the war and those before the

war, all that hurts. You also have the need to earn. That's the only way you can decide about your life. I told them that, and after some talks, and a talk with Jadranka [a Bosnian Serb refugee woman, a *Women in Black* activist], we came up with an idea about the project that will allow women to earn something, no matter how little.

These projects were initially designed as small income-generating projects which offered refugee women a possibility to produce handicrafts. These handicrafts were later sold through the international networks of the women's groups. The following account of a Bosnian Serb refugee woman, reveals the meaning and importance of such projects for women refugees:

No one approaches us from the human angle, except for these women's organizations and movements. And anything I'd tell you would be but a small part of how I feel. We [women in the collective accommodation] were miserable, especially us, women in our 50s, whom no one wanted for any kind of work. We'd spend our days walking, talking, generally having a hard time, and we didn't have anything to knit, or sew, until these women [the *Women in Black*] turned up. We were very mistrustful of them, thinking that they too would leave, and we'd be left with our problems. But they were persistent, and came again, and they have come many times since, and they never came empty-handed, they gave as much as they could. They gave us a chance, I won't say illusion, of some kind of a life, that we were doing something, that it was useful, that our handicrafts would be of use to somebody. And it gladdens our eyes to make these patterns, flowers, leaves, and branches. We liked it, as women, we found something in it.

'Disloyal' women's groups in Belgrade have also introduced various projects on women's history, encouraging refugee women to write their stories. Some of these stories appeared in the *Feminist Notebooks*, published by the *Autonomous Women's Center*, Belgrade. The *Women in Black*, Belgrade, have also launched a project 'I Remember', encouraging refugee women to record memories of the life before the wars and their exile. Radmila Zarkovic, the coordinator of the project, explained the rational behind this endeavor:

> I thought, why should we [refugee women] write about the war, why shouldn't we write about something nice, that'll wake some more human feelings in us, than the ones we're soaking up now, those are all negative emotions. If we remember everything that was once, no matter what borders are between us now, we can renew those human ties, and somehow that wakes up hope. It turned out that all these stories are without hate. There is no hate in them.[95]

With financial support and training provided by feminists internationally, local women's groups have also established centers to give counseling and assistance to women refugees and victims of sexual violence in war. Their experience in organizing multi-ethnic self-help groups for women demonstrates that women of different ethnic nationalities can establish and maintain relationships of mutual recognition and harmony.[96] One example to illustrate these relationships comes from the *Center for Women War Victims*, Zagreb, Croatia, where Bosnian Muslim women rejected the humanitarian aid because such aid had not been offered to the Croatian women accommodated in the same camp.[97] The work of multi-ethnic self-help groups also reveals that sexually, and otherwise physically and emotionally traumatized women are sometimes surprisingly gentle and tolerant, that they often do not hate the 'other' side.[98]

The work of multi-ethnic self-help groups for women victims of this conflict has been helping these women not only to regain their self-respect and to gradually reestablish their lives, but it has also helped create a less hostile environment. This type of work facilitates

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[95] These stories have been published as an edited volume, entitled "I Remember". The book is published by the *Women in Black*, Belgrade, in cooperation with feminist groups internationally. The volume presents the stories in the following languages: Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian, English and Spanish. Radmila Manojlovic-Zarkovic (ed.), *I Remember* (Aunt Lute Books: San Francisco, 1996).

[96] Boric, R. (ed.), *Edited Volume: Centre for Women War Victims* (Women's Information and Documentation Centre - Centre for Women War Victims: Zagreb, 1994) p. 28.

[97] Boric, R. (ed.), (footnote 95), p. 28.

[98] Boric. R. (ed.), (footnote 95), p. 31.

the reestablishment of links across the current ethnic national divide and fosters a 'reconciliation culture' among local populations. It creates an atmosphere that is open to communication across ethnic national divide in which victimized people can gradually come to terms with their tragic losses and destruction of their lives. Radmila Zarkovic, a Bosnian Serb refugee woman and an activist in the *Women in Black*, Belgrade, talked about this aspect of work with refugee women:

> We let them [women refugees] say things [...]They have every right to their bitterness [...] However, in some of those sessions, I would talk about my friends who were of other ethnic nationalities, we'd [the *Women in Black* volunteers] read a letter from Sarajevo which we got from a Muslim woman. In time they got used to being able to talk about neighbors of other ethnic nationalities. Because they came here [to Serbia/FR Yugoslavia] thinking they could never talk about them, that they have to say that 'they are genocidal' [neighbors/friends of different ethnic nationality], that 'they should all be killed,' in order to make some friends here. Then, in time [...]out of the blue friends emerged, daughters in law, neighbors, they all emerged out of the blue, who didn't exist [in their stories] up to then.

This kind of work of 'disloyal' women's groups leads to a bridging of differences as well as to a process of healing. One example of such an outcome of the work of 'disloyal' women is disclosed by a Bosnian Muslim refugee woman who has become a volunteer at the *Autonomous Women's Center*, Belgrade. She explained why she thinks that other refugees, predominantly Bosnian Serb and Croatian Serb women in the collective accommodation, accepted her:

> It took me a long time, but they've [other refugee women] accepted me finally. I think, I might be wrong, but since I've started working here at the Center, they [other refugee women] treat me differently, because they've seen that other women [volunteers at the *Autonomous Women's Center*] respect me.

The interviewed refugee women who have become involved with

women's groups in Belgrade have never previously thought of themselves as feminists. Nor that has been important for feminist activists and their work with these women. However, some refugee women have become more conscious of gender issues because of their contact with feminists. Radmila Zarkovic, a Bosnian Serb refugee woman and an activist in the *Women in Black*, Belgrade, recalled her first encounter with feminism. 'As for feminism, we, in Bosnia, didn't have a developed movement and I didn't have a developed feminist awareness. Now when I'm learning about feminism[...]I feel it [feminism] was close to me from the first moment.'

A Bosnian Muslim refugee woman and a volunteer at the *Autonomous Women's Center*, Belgrade, said: "I'd never thought about feminism before. I lived in my world. Now I know that a woman must fight for her place at home, in the family, at work. She must always express herself. I started thinking that way."

A rise of this kind of awareness has helped this woman to cope better with the problems of her sole responsibility for the lives of her children in exile. She continued:

> I'm the one making the decisions now. It took me a long time to understand that I wasn't both father and mother to the children, just their mother. I kept thinking: what would he [her husband] say. But working at the Center [the *Autonomous Women's Center*], these women have given me self-confidence. I've realized that I'm a mother, and that I have to make the decisions, that I am the one who must decide what's good and what isn't.

Feminist activists have themselves benefited from the work with women refugees. Through the encounters with these women's experiences of pain and loss, as well as through their work with these women to overcome the hardships of a life in exile, feminists have gained a better understanding of the relation between victimization and empowerment. Stasa Zajovic, a founder of the *Women in Black*, Belgrade, explained this learning process:

The most important breakthrough and a value of the work during these wars has been the work with women who have been discovering some kind of new autonomy within themselves, and I refer here to women refugees in particular. These women have overcome the role of a victim and have become empowered through some kind of confrontation with pain. It's paradoxical, but that's what it is. A struggle for women's pain and suffering to not become manipulated and misused, but rather to take it as a chance for empowerment. It sounds Christian, but our experience tells us that that's how it is[...]I call it a positive approach to crisis. We've learned to take a crisis as a challenge, and not as a catastrophe. We've learned to control our feelings by thinking positively.

This positive approach to crisis, which has been learned over the years of the wars through the work with women of diverse backgrounds and life histories, has also become one of the elements influencing these women activists' approach to the concept of solidarity among women. Stasa Zajovic pointed to this link:

That experience [of war and work with women refugees] have helped me when I was for the first time [after the break of the war] in Bosnia, in 1995. It helped me to perceive the differences among women through a new lens. The experience of the wars has helped me to perceive calmly and tolerantly the differences and the ways in which these differentiated positionings of women provoke different kinds of vulnerability [...]The reactions of women in Bosnia might've been different from my understanding of feminism, but this experience of the wars has helped me to now perceive all that in a different way. That doesn't mean that I think that there aren't differences that would be hard to overcome, but there are those which we definitively can surmount. I've started to take all that as a challenge.

12. Women's organizing and new forms of solidarity

During the early years of the wars, as previously discussed, the 'dis-

loyal' women from post-Yugoslav states were struggling to keep in contact with one another across ethnic national lines. They have also been in touch with one another via the e-mail link *'za mir'* (for peace), which was the only means of communication within the war-torn region during the years of the armed conflict. These contacts have enabled women activists to exchange experiences and newly acquired knowledge related to their work with refugee and traumatized women. This e-mail link has also served as means to exchange a support and compassion regarding tragic situations in war zones. It has also facilitated the establishment of new friendships and nurturing of mature ones. This process of communication and exchange has also become a learning process sensitive to the new and changing realities of these women's lives.

However, the duration of the wars and the changing character of 'sides' of the aggression have reinforced contact and communication among diverse groupings of women in post-Yugoslav states. As Lepa Mladjenovic, a founder of the *Autonomous Women's Center*, Belgrade, explained: 'The war had started from Belgrade, only Belgrade had weapons, more than anybody else, but later, the relations of power had changed.' The previous divide between 'patriotic' and 'disloyal' women has been gradually transformed into a less bitter opposition among women in the region. 'Disloyal' women have made an effort to establish contacts and cooperation with newly formed women's groups in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Lepa Mladjenovic, a founder of the *Autonomous Women's Center*, Belgrade, explained the importance of these contacts:

> The autonomous women's groups didn't exist in Bosnia before the war. So we went to Tuzla [Northeast Bosnia] and to Sarajevo to hear them and to get to know them. Some of the groups there are nationalistic, and I don't think that we'll be able to cooperate very much, but it was important for us to get to know them. There are groups, however, like *Medica*, Zenica [Central Bosnia-Herzegovina], which are great, and we already have lots of ideas for cooperation.

Some of the newly established women's groups, particularly from

Bosnia-Herzegovina, have joined the network of 'disloyal' women in post-Yugoslav states and they meet regularly, once a year in Novi Sad, Serbia/FR Yugoslavia, at the *International Meeting of Women Against Nationalism, Violence and War*, organized by the *Women in Black*, Belgrade. Some of these women are 'patriotic' in relation to ethnic nationalism and the new states. Others regard themselves as 'disloyal' to the ethnic national collectives and their states. Nonetheless, they are in dialogue and they make an effort to communicate across the differences between them.

The dialogue among women in post-Yugoslav states has been successful when discussing their work with refugee women and women victims of various forms of violence in the wars. It has been less successful, however, when these women have tried to embark on discussions around political questions, 'Big P Questions', as they have been defined by the local and international political powers. Women activists have realized this difficulty quite early on. Nadezda Cetkovic, a founder of the *Women's Shelter*, Belgrade, recalled when and how women from post-Yugoslav states have first become aware of this kind of problem:

> Women from the *International Coalition of Women*, organized a meeting of women from post-Yugoslav states in Geneva [1993], in an attempt to get us to discuss a document that would be an alternative to the peace negotiations between the political leaders from post-Yugoslav states. That meeting was also held in Geneva, and was organized by the UN and other international community representatives. So, when we found ourselves in a role of the state-builders, although on the margin, yet with a task to produce that imaginary official document, we entered into the same kind of disputes as those male-politicians. Thus, it was impossible to collaborate from such a position, yet it was possible to cooperate from another perspective.

Lepa Mladjenovic, a founder of the *Autonomous Women's Center*, Belgrade, defined these different positions as a difference embedded in 'the politics of everyday life' and 'the governmental politics'. The interviewed feminist activists have articulated these different posi-

tions as an expression of the socially constructed antagonism between male and female principles which commonly serve as paradigms of social and political life. As Nadezda Cetkovic explained:

> There [in Geneva] we were put in a situation where we were expected to talk about an official document, the document to be presented to the UN. Each of us somehow thought that we must think about the borders of our states, thus, to think what that state is, who is going to take away some of our rights. I call those, conditionally, the 'male-questions', because the borders have always been defined by wars, and traditionally, that has always been a male-job [...] From the position of defining borders and historic rights of the ethic-nations, we can only lose.

However, when women move away from 'the governmental politics' to 'the politics of everyday life', then, they strive for 'positive linkages', as Lepa Mladjenovic pointed out. She further explained the importance of this move:

> This doesn't mean that we, feminists, think that these 'male-politics' are not important. On the contrary, they very important, and it's important for us to get involved in them and to have our views on them. But if women's interests are more important to us than the interests of our governments, than it's clear that we have to be critical of them. Because if you build a nation-state, than women are always discriminated against, more than they are in a civic state [...] However, this still requires a lot of cooperative work.

The focus on 'positive linkages' among women in post-Yugoslav states has meant that these women have been actively working to establish even a mininum of cooperation with each other around those issues that are of mutual interest. Their work with women refugees and women survivors of war violence has become the 'space' of their mutual understanding and continual exchange. Nadezda Cetkovic, a founder of the *Women's Shelter*, Belgrade, talked about this kind of cooperation with, for example, women from *Medica*, Zenica, Bosnia-Herzegovina:

Raped women were the most numerous in Bosnia, and they were predominantly Bosnian Muslim women. So, women physicians, psychologists, in other words professionals, got together [in the *Medica* group]. They had additional training [provided by German feminists] and they were well equipped. Because we also had women who were raped in the wars, we had dilemmas on how to help them. Some of them attempted suicide and it was normal to us to seek advice from them [the *Medica* group] to see how they would handle such cases. These contacts were vital for our cooperation. We talked about problems we didn't quite know how to handle, and because they had more such cases, they had better understanding what is a result of rape and what isn't, if the problem originates from a woman's history before the rape. That was productive communication and cooperation. When you talk about these issues, you also establish a personal contact with another woman, and you exchange experiences, you trust each other because there is no ideology in it. It's a problem at stake, which has to be understood in order to be resolved.

These women's focus on 'positive linkages' has opened up an opportunity to uncover 'common denominators' in their work with women victimized by the wars and war violence. Thus, the acute, everyday problems of women they have been working with, have become the 'spaces' of these women's productive cooperation and exchange. They have also become the locations within which women are positioned in a compatible way. These are the spaces where these women feel competent and where the patriarchal hierarchy of 'right' and 'wrong' does not exist. Through this kind of communication they have been able to accept their diverse positionings as a site of 'unfinished knowledge',[99] the knowledge that is continuously redefined in relation to women's different life situations and their differentiated relations to power.

Moreover, the commitment to 'positive linkages' has been a beginning of the process of creation of 'trust in, at least, individual women citizens on the other side', as Lepa Mladjenovic, a founder of

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[99] Yuval-Davis, N., 'Women, ethnicity and empowerment', eds. K-K. Bhavnani and A. Phoenix, *Shifting Identities -Shifting Racisms* (Sage Publications: Lonodn, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi, 1994), pp. 179-199.

the *Autonomous Women's Center*, Belgrade, pointed out. She further explained the importance of the establishment of such a process:

> The civil society that we [feminist activists] want to build is intrinsically related to that trust into the other side, and to our willingness to hear what the other side has to say, as well as to a willingness of that side to hear us. In this sense, these women's initiatives are politics. They are everyday politics, thus, what the governments do is not the ultimate politics. What we [feminist activists] do is extremely important because that is what they [the governments] don't want from us. This kind of women's solidarity is against their patriarchy, and women's solidarity is, in itself, a political act.

13. In lieu of a conclusion: Beyond the politics of everyday life and the solidarity of women

The discussion in this study reveals that women's organizing around 'positive linkages' as a basis for the creation of alliances among women in post-Yugoslav states representa an important potential force for the reconstruction of the social fabric of life in these war-torn societies. As the analysis revealed, the anti-nationalist politics of the local women's groups did help refugees, and refugee women in particular, to regain at least minimal control over their lives. Moreover, the work of the multi-ethnic self-help groups has opened up a space for reestablishment of trust among local populations bitterly divided by the exclusionary politics of ethnic nationalism and the wars in the region. The reestablishment of trust has been based on these women activists' recognition that the most important parameters of the reconciliation process lay in a communication that acknowledges different experiences of pain and loss, and thus, differentiated positionings of individuals and groups of women in this conflict. These women's initiatives to establish such communication, thus, prepares a social ground for the reconciliation process, so important in war and post-war situations.

The bridge-building initiatives of the women discussed in this

study, thus, represent an important contribution for the establishment of a democratic, non-violent political culture. The culture where conflicts can be discussed, differences negotiated and thus potentially reconciled. This important contribution to non-violent political culture is a result of women's continuous engagement in negotiations with 'others' across the ethnic national divide.

'The politics of everyday life' of women's groups has a potential undermining effect on power relations within and among the post-Yugoslav states - the relations of power that have been defined by the exclusionary politics of ethnic nationalism. This potential is revealed by Radmila Zarkovic, a Bosnian Serb refugee woman and an activist in the *Women in Black*, Belgrade:

> All those efforts [women's groups initiatives] hold you up somehow, maybe it's the wish to stubbornly say: 'you can't destroy everything' [...] This struggle in the feminist and pacifist movement, it's actually all about small steps, almost invisible [...] I think it [this kind of struggle] can't change things as much as it can set them in motion. If I didn't think that way, I wouldn't be doing it, I wouldn't have a motive to do it.

This sound articulation of the actual impact of feminist activism on the situation in post-Yugoslav states opens up a question of the limitation of 'the politics of everyday life'. These politics, as articulated and practiced by 'disloyal' women, have to challenge their own inner limitations, as well the ones that are beyond the boundaries of such politics, in order to become a more powerful social and political force for change.

The 'disloyal' women's attempt to create a civil society also requires a redefinition of the previously defined strategy of 'feminism on the margin'. The parameters of this concept are embedded in the experiences of the early years of feminism in socialist Yugoslavia, discussed earlier, when the political margin was the only available space for women's autonomous organizing. This context has contributed to the creation of a socially and politically marginalized feminist community with its own alternative, but isolated, 'culture'. Their politics during state socialism can be described as 'anti-political politics',

to use Havel's term,[100] in a sense that feminists did not attempt to conceptualize their activism as a potential part of the sphere of the official politics of the socialist state. This attitude has remained the main characteristic of women's organizing during the transition of state socialism to ethnic nationalism and war. Given the fact that at the time of the disintegration of state socialism, autonomous women's groups lacked genuine linkages with wider socio-economic groupings of women, most of the feminist initiatives remained rather isolated from the society at large. Moreover, through the framework of 'anti-political politics' they have entirely separated themselves from the mainstream political avenues. Consequently, they were unable to confront the 'patriarchal backlash' and the process of militarization, in any socially and politically significant way.

On the one hand, during the first years of the wars - at the time of the major violence and destruction - this strategy had created the only possible, and indeed marginal, space for 'disloyal' women to express their opposition to the widely spread obsession by the exclusionary politics of ethnic nationalism in post-Yugoslav states. Radmila Zarkovic, a Bosnian Serb refugee woman and an activist in the *Women in Black*, Belgrade, talked about the meaning and importance of such a marginal, and in a sense isolated, space for the preservation of anti-nationalist and anti-war voices in an aggressively nationalistic environment:

> In the *Women in Black* I found, and it's not just me, but all of us, the world where we are trying to survive. Actually, we are a small ghetto, the ghetto where we move, in which we live. Outside that ghetto we don't have very many contacts. All outside contacts are somehow reduced to disputes, I don't want to say fights, but to big political disagreements. We don't want to accept divisions, racial, gender or national. We, the *Women in Black*, want to acknowledge all differences, all kinds of otherness, regardless of where they come from. It's a small group of women

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[100] Havel, V., *Living in Truth* (Faber and Faber: London, 1986). Havel uses this term in discussing the characteristics of the dissident movement in East and Central Europe. He did not, however, extend this concept to the politics of women's autonomous organizing.

and a few men, who are of different age, different sexual orientations, different national backgrounds. We are all together, and we all need each other very much.

On the other hand, however, in the new context of a *relative peace* - meaning an ending of the armed conflict, the feminist 'politics of everyday life' will be soon reaching its limits, if it will not attempt to consider even a minimal form of negotiation with the state and the political parties in opposition. Without a politically strategized demand for some form of the official political recognition of the positive outcomes of feminist politics toward the establishment of 'trust towards women citizens on the other side', such politics will inevitably remain marginalized and powerless. 'The politics of everyday life' is indeed, politics of 'small steps', which requires time, particularly in these post-conflict societies which are overwhelmingly non-democratic. However, the still essentially 'anti-political politics' of 'disloyal' women in post-Yugoslav states, gives the non-democratic governments an opportunity to persistently ignore the 'logic of life' embedded in feminist politics.

Moreover, these feminists attempt to protect and further develop women's citizenship rights, calls for the careful political consideration of negotiations with various state institutions. Victimization of women through different forms of violence is intrinsically related to the ways in which gender relations of power are structured by the institutions of the state. Therefore, to help the victimized women to successfully confront these various forms of violence implies some form of cooperation with state institutions in order to initiate a process of change. All the interviewed feminists in Serbia/FR Yugoslavia disclosed their personal awareness of the importance of the above mentioned issues. Nadezda Cetkovic, a founder of the *Women's Shelter*, Belgrade, expressed this common awareness in the following way:

I think that we'll have to articulate our position around some issues. I think that it's critical for us to know how we want to position ourselves toward the state. If we want to translate some elements of our struggle into legislation, if we want some of our projects to be funded by the state,

if we want to legalize our autonomy in a way, and at the same time, to be financially supported by the state, as is the case in a democratic world, we must articulate our strategy. The *SOS Hotline* [for women and children victims of violence] and the *Women's Shelter* [for battered women], for example, have enormous interests in cooperating with the state. Because if you want to help a woman to get out of a situation of violence, you need the cooperation of the police, of the *Center for Social Work.* You also need the financial means to help her survive while in the shelter, not to mention hours and hours of work of the women volunteers who are giving counselling.

The cessation of the armed conflict has made the issue of defining feminist positions toward the state even more urgent and important. The post-conflict situation has confronted most of the women's groups in post-Yugoslav states with a decreased interest by the international women's groups in providing further financial support.[101] Thus, most of the newly established women's groups now have to strategize ways of financing their work and projects. Nadezda Cetkovic continued the explication of the views of the feminists in Serbia/FR Yugoslavia regarding this new situation:

A future for the women's movement [in post-Yugoslav states] entails a necessity to become financially independent. That means that we must learn how to make money in order to support women and to develop our autonomous women's politics without being dependant on the financial support from the international women [...] Also, it's not good for the women's movement to depend on foreign donations, because that way you always have to keep in mind their interest, not just yours. That's why we [at the *Women's Shelter*, Belgrade] have been developing a system of the shelters operating as small cooperatives where women work and can survive on that work. This can't, however, produce a sufficient funding. But if we'll be smart enough to encourage those women who have a nerve for business, to join us, we'll eventually be able to produce a suffi-

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[101] This particular problem has been disclosed to me in personal contacts with women representatives of various women's groups in post-Yugoslav states, at the 6th International Meeting of Women's Solidarity Against Nationalism, Violence and War, Novi Sad, August, 1997.

cient funding for the women [in shelters] and the movement.

Regardless of this common awareness expressed in these women's individual interviews, the issues of the position toward the state and independent financing have not yet been on the agenda of the women's groups. For women's groups in Serbia/FR Yugoslavia, the reluctance to tackle these timely questions is related to an extremely undemocratic character of the state and the regime. Therefore, inasmuch as these individual women activists realize the necessity of some kind of cooperation with the state institutions, they also fear that such cooperation can jeopardize their autonomy, and the high moral and political credibility they acquired over the years of the resistance to the regime and the state. For such groups as the *Women in Black*, Belgrade, whose anti-governmental attitude is at the core of their politics, the issue of redefining their position toward the state is even more controversial. Stasa Zajovic, a founder of the group, said:

> As long as this state is as it is now, we don't want to have any relation to it. Perhaps I am still talking the logic of war, but if certain things [with regard to the state] won't change, it [the attitude of the *Women in Black*] can't be different. I don't think that we should participate in the official political institutions, but perhaps we could lobby the government through some political parties whit which we might establish a dialogue.

However, this attitude of the *Women in Black*, Belgrade, can also jeopardize other forms of their activism, such as their well-developed projects and contacts with women refugees. Until recently, these projects were entirely dependent on the financial support from the international women's groups. Stasa Zajovic expressed this concern:

> Financial dependence on the groups from abroad is a kind of neo-colonialism, and we're aware of that. The idea [regarding the financial independence] that is closest to us, is a kind of women's cooperative. However, I don't feel that we have really had a time to elaborate it, because of a heavy daily workload, and also because I don't think we are ready yet to face that problem, although it's a timely issue.

The question of the inner limits of the 'anti-political politics' of these women's groups is, thus, the one that has yet to be answered. Feminist activists, however, realize that the future of the women's groups and their 'politics of everyday life' is critically related to the ways in which they will negotiate some kind of cooperation with state institutions. The ways in which they will conceptualize and strategize their future cooperation with the state also depend on the further development of the contacts of trust and the new forms of alliances among diverse groupings of women in post-Yugoslav states. The interviewed women activists were all committed and determined to further pursue these endeavors. Moreover, they all consider them critical for the development of civil societies in post-Yugoslav states. If these initiatives remain successful and become broader, the initiatives have the potential to gain more social and political power.

The success of these women's initiatives, however, is also related to the relations of power which are beyond the above-discussed inner limits of their political activism. The social and political potential of 'the politics of everyday life' can be transformed into a more powerful force for change in a context of a wider international political recognition and support of such policies. The wider political context, however, has not been particularly supportive in helping anti-nationalist women's politics to gain more recognition. During the years of the wars, the diverse international political powers embarked mainly on political negotiations with the nationalistic political elites in the region, which had, primarily, the effect of bolstering the power of local nationalists and sharpening the importance of ethnic national divisions. Consequently, such a context has been weakening the potential of these women's initiatives to undermine the existing exclusionary politics of ethnic nationalism in post-Yugoslav states. The above mentioned approach to the conflict in post-Yugoslav states on the part of the diverse political powers did not encourage 'disloyal' women to reconsider their 'anti-political politics' toward the state. 'The politics of everyday life' of anti-nationalist feminists in the region, thus, remained a unique, yet rather weak, struggle to reestablish

processes of political inclusion and social integration within the region.

These women's experiences and their struggle reveal that the meanings of the politics of women nationalists and women anti-nationalist has to be assessed and understood in a specific political, social and cultural context. In a situation where nationalism is characterized by extreme, and often violent, politics of exclusion, anti-nationalist policies and 'disloyalty' of women to the nation-state has not jeopardized women's rights and freedoms. As this study shows, in the specific context of the post-Yugoslav states, these women's resistance to ethnic nationalism and war was intrinsically related to their recognition that anti-nationalism and anti-war struggle is at the same time, a struggle against patriarchy embedded in all walks of life, as well as the nation-state and its politics in the region. Thus, support for such a struggle is critically important for the construction of 'the governmental politics' in post-Yugoslav states in a less patriarchal manner.

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About the author

Maja Korac received her B.A. and M.A. in Sociology from the University of Belgrade, Yugoslavia. From 1984 to 1992 she was a lecturer at the same University. In the autumn of 1992, she has started her 'voluntary' exile, first in England, where she was a Webb Fellow at Ruskin College, Oxford, and a visiting scholar at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University of London. In the autumn of 1993, she moved to Canada where she is currently a Doctoral Candidate in Sociology, York University, Toronto. Maja Korac is presently also a research consultant of the *Women in Conflict Zones Network* project at the *Centre for Feminist Research*, York University.

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