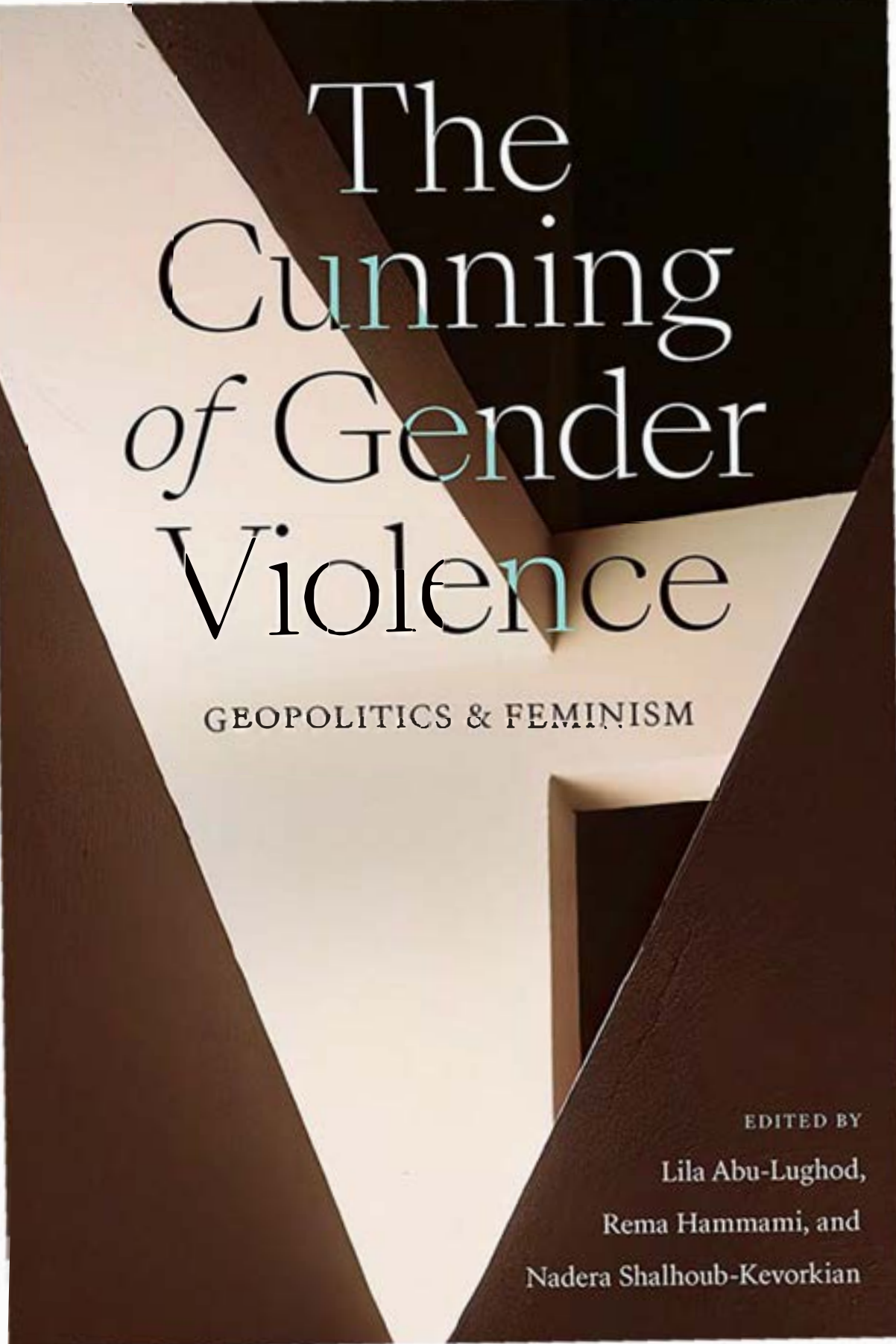




The Cunning *of* Gender Violence

GEOPOLITICS & FEMINISM

EDITED BY

Lila Abu-Lughod,

Rema Hammami, and

Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian

The Cunning of Gender Violence

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We dedicate this book to our families and loved ones in hopes that it will contribute to making a better world for everyone.

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INTRODUCTION · *Lila Abu-Lughod, Rema Hammami,
and Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian*

Circuits of Power in GBVAW Governance

Over the course of the last few decades, violence against women (VAW) and, subsequently, gender-based violence (GBV) have emerged as powerful agendas within international governance and law, increasingly folded into practices of state sovereignty and global security. What were once marginalized feminist concerns about the gravity of various forms of gendered violence and the silence that surrounded such harms now sit firmly at the nexus of powerful global networks of institutions and practices that have recast governmentality, human rights, development, and humanitarianism in line with post-9/11 global security rationales.

How did this happen? What are the politics, ideologies, and geographies of this feminist agenda? What are the modes and channels of operation of what we might call the master category of GBVAW (Gender-Based Violence/Violence Against Women) as both a technology and apparatus of rule? We use the awkward acronym GBVAW to denote the fusing of the normative agendas of “Violence against women” that rose to prominence in the 1990s and its later conjoining with the category “Gender-based violence” into one power-knowledge complex within contemporary global governance. We use the ordinary term “gender violence” (small g) to distinguish forms, formations, and lived experiences of violence as they intersect with other forms of oppression. These extend beyond or exceed the standard normative limits set by GBVAW and we are particularly interested in the contradictory effects these regulatory forms and norms have on those who are the subjects of violence as they experience gendered forms of violence inscribed on their bodies, lives, and social relationships. Has the conviction about the urgency of addressing violence against women and other forms of

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gender-based violence translated into better lives for the people it wanted to protect? These are key questions that lie at the heart of this book.

The Cunning of Gender Violence explores the dynamic political and institutional circuits that GBVAW inhabits, traverses, consolidates, and animates. It traces the silences and omissions of these categories and exposes, through carefully researched case studies, how prevailing assumptions that organize GBVAW may be affirming, enabling, or sustaining rationales and systems of power that are harmful, and at odds with the intentions of the feminists who pushed for them. The particular regions on which we focus, the Middle East and South Asia, are crucial analytical sites for developing this understanding because of the ways religion and racialized ethnicity, particularly “the Muslim question,” appear so deeply embedded in the logics underpinning GBVAW in international governance. Activists who view the uptake of VAW and GBV into global governance as a feminist victory regularly express concern about these dynamics of racialization and Islamophobia, but tend to downplay them as uncomfortable baggage that burdens or hijacks the work of combating gendered violence. Yet the case studies presented in this book suggest that these dynamics may not be *external* to the ways the GBVAW agenda works but rather integral to whatever success this feminist agenda has had in previous decades. That is what we mean by the “cunning” of gender violence. In using this Hegelian term, we follow the leads of Elizabeth Povinelli (2002) whose *Cunning of Recognition* focused on the double-binds imposed on Indigenous Australians by the apparently benign liberal multicultural policies of recognition, and Nancy Fraser (2009) who puzzled over “the disturbing convergence” between some of second wave feminism’s ideals and the demands of an emerging new logic of capitalism: post-Fordist, transnational, and neoliberal. The “cunning of history,” Fraser argued, lay in the ways that the women’s movement’s economic and cultural visions were split such that their “utopian desires found a second life as feeling currents that legitimated the transition,” a transition at odds with the movement’s vision of a just society. Povinelli and Fraser’s use of “cunning” highlights the way in which marginalized groups’ demands for justice become entrapped and transformed through the politics of inclusion, but in ways that are Janus-faced. Systems of power appear responsive by taking up the language of injury and redress, while re-articulating their substance according to political rationales profoundly inimical to the original demands, as well as to the needs of those who made them.

Similarly, we find that, in practice, the GBVAW agenda often translates into exclusions and violences for those in whose name it claims to operate as

protection or redress. The rhetoric of doing feminist good has become embedded in imperial and repressive state projects whose goals are antithetical to the basic principles of justice and dignity that feminism advances, often appearing as an active instrument in their logics. Through codification into legal norms and standardized frameworks and interventions, GBVAW has become a highly mobile technology almost immune to the specifics of the geopolitical and national contexts in which it operates. It shores up existing forms of structural and racialized violence and opens new pathways for militarized intervention. Even in the best of circumstances, the measures it offers for care or redress are incommensurate with what is actually needed. Too often, victims and those who seek to support them find themselves trapped in a coercive reiteration of the distorted truths demanded by the logics of power in order to access fragments for survival from the deeply flawed forms of care on offer.

At the time of the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, the harnessing of a feminist agenda to legitimize a project of imperial military intervention in the name of protecting Afghan women seemed like an exceptional and obvious instance of political instrumentalism (Abu-Lughod 2002; Hirschkind and Mahmood 2002; Kumar 2021). The ensuing decades have shown that GBVAW's entanglement with imperial projects has become the ongoing global order of things. In the case of the US invasion of Afghanistan, the instrumental use of VAW rallied a vital chorus of feminist criticism, whose foresight has been tragically borne out in the 2021 ending of the US occupation (and where echoes of the original debate about imperial intervention to "save women" continued to reverberate).¹ Over the subsequent two decades scholarship critically analyzing specific domains of GBVAW's ever-expanding reach has grown exponentially.² Yet many of the forms of state criminality and humanitarian rescue that we examine in this volume, and the novel ways in which GBVAW has been operating as an agent of global securitization in the conflicts in Iraq and Syria, remain less interrogated. When epistemic violence is embedded in what Engle (2020) calls the "common sense" of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV), how do feminists resist co-optation?

There is perhaps no better evidence of the apparent success of what began as a radical feminist effort to produce a global consensus around the wrongs of gender-based violence than the awarding of the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize to Nadia Murad and Dr. Denis Mukwege. Both were commended for campaigning against rape and sexual assault as a weapon of war. The award seemed to represent a momentous shift in public consciousness and atti-

tudes. Murad's lawyer, Amal Clooney, representing Yazidi survivors like Nadia Murad, later argued passionately in the Security Council that it had a chance to stand on the right side of history if it passed another resolution against rape and sexual violence in conflict: Clooney called it their Nuremberg moment (Ford 2019).

This Nobel Prize captures the paradoxes of the feminist achievement of making gender-based violence a serious matter of international concern, as well as its cunning. While the prize did recognize the personal and political courage of these two activists, the sleight of hand is in how the act of recognition works to confirm a regime of truth deeply at odds with what the award appears to validate. Here recognition implicitly pulls together and consolidates a series of deeper truth claims around race, gender, and violence: gender violence and its perpetrators are located in savage, racialized distant places and others; its victims suffer from the singular violence of bodily violation; and the liberal West (including its invading troops and peacekeepers) are the elect agents for their protection and rescue. The "international community"—including interested governments, corporations, arms dealers, or contractors—is rendered innocent of any role in producing the conditions for or sustaining these conflicts and the vast range of violence and destruction they incur, even while the most cursory historical analysis of the conflicts in Iraq and Syria, or in the Democratic Republic of Congo (where Dr. Mukwege treats rape survivors), would suggest otherwise.

The appeal to the Security Council itself is suggestive of another dimension of the cunning of recognition at work here. The feminist achievement of getting international governance institutions to finally acknowledge violence against women within their mandates has been attained at the price of singling out sexual violence in war as the sole focus of UN conventions, protocols, resources, and interventions. Feminist victories focused on making sexual violence in conflict a war crime (and a crime against humanity) at international tribunals over the 1990s set the stage for the achievement of the first Security Council Resolution, UN1325, that addressed gender violence.³ Both in that original iteration as well as in the subsequent Security Council affirmations of the importance of addressing gender violence in war and conflict, sexual violence is the privileged and near-exclusive category of concern. The negative ramifications have been manifold for those seeking redress from violence (gendered or not) in the context of war and conflict, as well as for those who seek an end to war and armed conflict altogether. But sexual violence has been a very productive category, discursively subtending racial rationales for imperial intervention and materially

through the economic flows that accompany these initiatives to protect or alleviate the suffering of those victimized by sexual brutality. One cannot ignore the ever-widening employment opportunities and career paths this category enables for lawyers, journalists, security contractors, politicians, and military personnel, along with psycho-social counselors and a growing cadre of global experts in everything from democracy promotion to gender mainstreaming in conflict. Around this grows a whole GBVAW knowledge industry of expert technical reports that recycle self-serving analyses and prescriptions.

The Cunning of Gender Violence focuses on the selective ways a visionary feminist project has folded itself into world affairs. For us as scholars and journalists who work within or on marginalized or violated communities, either in deadly conflict zones or sites of “ordinary” state violence, it has been important to foreground the experiences and voices of targeted groups and individuals even when analyzing the legal and bureaucratic apparatus that claims to address gendered forms of violence. How does GBVAW speak to the experience of Palestinian girls in Jerusalem trembling as they are threatened by police, dogs, and settlers on their way to school? How do women’s organizations in Gaza confront the limits put on them by international aid organizations’ definitions of how to respond to the layers of catastrophic violence women experience there at the hands of the Israeli state (whose violence must be bracketed)? Can it address the lynching of young Muslim men in India while the state insists on looking the other way, all the while fomenting divisions between Hindus and Muslims? Is it able to encompass the complex stories of Iranian women political prisoners anxious about potential sexual violence by guards because this threatens their sense of self as modern political subjects rather than as “women”? GBVAW traffics in honor crimes and female genital cutting as cultural violence; can it see the collusion of state and religious authorities in Pakistan in responding to a transgressive social media star whose biography challenges conventional scripts of feminist agency versus victimization? Or a US administration intent on racially securitizing its borders and immigration policies while fueling Islamophobia? How do the personal and political fuse and how can we disentangle gender from other aspects of being, experience, and location for those subjected to violence?

GBVAW is both strategic and selective, highlighting some perpetrators of violence while erasing others. Gender violence in weak or “failed” states is highly visible and individual perpetrators can be and are prosecuted at the International Criminal Court (ICC), as Nesiah shows in her chapter, while

similar kinds of violence are invisible when in the hands of strong states that are usually allies of the West (Clarke 2019). Our concern is the way the GBVAW agenda may solidify rather than upset or challenge existing geopolitical logics of power and exclusion; we note the epistemologies of civilizational difference and racialized hierarchies that subtend these logics.

We pose three sorts of questions about the everyday geopolitics and political geographies of GBVAW. First, we ask how GBVAW travels. What are its channels, paths, and means—its political ecologies? Second, we ask what this category—as object, as knowledge producer, and as apparatus of social intervention—makes possible or impossible. What does it enable and disable? We consider political alliances and institutional structures; legal reforms and social movements; women’s activism, NGOs (nongovernmental organizations) and social media; refugee asylum and human rights claims; discursive and media frames; as well as political economies. Third, we ask what narrative frames define and confine our fields of vision about violence, occluding, sidelining, or masking some powers and forces that inflict or enable violence. We track these frames not just in our ethnographic studies but in the analyses of policies and governmental practices and the seductions of hegemonic representations in the media.

We try to foreground the distinct ways violence is experienced by those subjected to its multiple forms, sensitive always to the ways it marks bodies, senses of worth, and connections to community. Because all of us work in and on regions where Muslims live or have been made into special objects of surveillance or intervention, we can never ignore the deadly ways that religion, race, and ethnicity have been implicated in GBVAW. How does this historic condition underwrite feminist engagements with geopolitical projects?

FEMINIST GENEALOGY: A PYRRHIC VICTORY?

The literature on how a well-meaning transnational activist feminist project (combatting violence against women globally) was able to ascend to become a set of norms in the UN system and legal instruments in international law focuses on the ways women’s rights linked up with human rights to translate harms to women’s bodily integrity into the existing international rights regime (Keck and Sikkink 2014; Merry 2006). The programmatic outcomes of that initial strand of the movement’s strategy can be seen primarily in how GBVAW evolved into a global regulatory biopolitical project of

instantiating women's rights and protections from bodily harm through the dual international frameworks of development and humanitarianism and their attendant flows of material aid and expertise. Within Development, the VAW agenda became translated into a plethora of national "best practice" technologies, where states of the Global South sign on to legal norms and adopt modular packages of governmental techniques designed to prevent, treat, and ultimately eradicate violence against women (Goldfarb and Goldscheid 2016; UN Women 2016; Johnson 2010; Merry 2006).

Within humanitarianism, the language changed to GBV and the rights strand of the original agenda evolved into norms and modular frameworks through which humanitarian assemblages became charged with treating victims of VAW within conflict zones and humanitarian spaces and preventing the recurrence of such violence under the auspices of their temporary sovereignty (IASC 2015; Dolan 2015).

Although the original feminist anti-VAW project attempted to universalize women's experience of violence and thus bridge both the racial/ethnic cleavages that marked second wave US feminism and the neocolonial hierarchies that ordered First and Third World subjects, the GBVAW regulatory/biopolitical project that has evolved over the past twenty years or so seems to reproduce these ontological divides. Now it is not only "white women saving brown women from brown men" that organizes the agenda but a vast apparatus that includes an army of UN bureaucrats, international NGOs, aid workers, private security companies, military specialists, UN peacekeeping missions, human rights lawyers, and high-level governance experts. GBVAW as global governance increasingly appears to be a mechanism through which certain masculine "others," particularly Muslim men, have been demonized and criminalized even as what is variously called dominance or carceral feminism has triumphed in the international sphere on the basis of an allegedly universalist critique of patriarchy (Bernstein 2019; Halley 2018; Halley et al. 2019).

The genealogy of the linkage of the original VAW agenda to the contemporary global politics of securitization, including ongoing iterations of the War on Terror such as in the most recent guise of Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) lies in the specific feminist conceptualization put forth about the relationship between VAW, militarism, and armed conflict.⁴ The 1990s were crucial for this, particularly in documents emanating from the 1995 Beijing UN Fourth World Conference on Women but then reiterated through feminist mobilizations around international courts and tribunals that succeeded in criminalizing sexual violence in war on the grounds that

women's rights to bodily integrity were human rights. Those earlier iterations framed the relationship primarily in terms of women's greater vulnerability to specific types of violence in war due to their gender (and thus their need for protection), as well as their greater capacity for peace (Cohn 2008).

The current framing of gender violence against women as the normative issue of global security was then developed by activists within what became known as the "Women, Peace and Security agenda" (WPS). Feminists mobilized within the emerging UN "human security" discourse in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War and the result was the key UN resolution 1325, on Women, Peace and Security. An ensuing norm cascade put gender violence at the center of twenty-first-century global geopolitics (Engle 2020; Hudson 2012). That agenda was a conscious project to harness violations of women's rights to the new human security agenda emerging within global institutions by reframing VAW *as a cause* rather than simply a consequence of war and conflict. Securing women's rights (read primarily as bodily integrity) was no longer simply a human rights issue, as it was in Beijing, but a means to advance global security.⁵ As Carol Harrington (2011) has pointed out, this reframing was enabled by the perfect geopolitical storm of the new world order that had emerged in the aftermath of the Cold War. This storm included the coming into being of a US-dominated unipolar world; the rise of the so-called new wars, epitomized by the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC); the emergence of the human security framework and the highly problematic Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine that enabled imperial military intervention in the name of protecting populations; and the criminalization of rape as "a weapon of war" based on mobilizations around the hypervisibility of sexual violence in the armed conflicts of the Balkans, followed by Rwanda, Darfur, and the DRC (Zarkov 2020).

The timing of this particular linkage between women's human rights and the emerging security discourse was ill-fated: less than a year after passage of Security Council Resolution 1325, the world witnessed the events of 9/11. Along with the tragic loss of lives and the greater losses that would result from the responses to these events, hopes of a post-Cold War peace dividend and promise of the human security agenda were demolished under an ascendant global security regime called the "War on Terror."⁶ Violence against women and global security were not decoupled but remained paired in the operations and iterations of this ongoing war machine. The instrumentalization of violence against women as a *casus belli* in the US war on Afghanistan was actually a harbinger of the post-9/11 new world order.

If the critical feminist legal theorists who have brought into question the imbrication of the feminist agenda against gender violence with the juggernaut of securitization (e.g., Engle 2020; Engle, Nesiah, and Otto 2022; Ní Aoláin and Huckerby 2018) did so through following developments in international legal institutions, as anthropologists, sociologists, and those committed to regional study and ethnography as well as to close readings of cultural forms linked to the Middle East and South Asia, we take a different route in this book. We consider the specific political contexts of those subject to these agendas, the role of media in furthering the policies of national and international institutions as “common sense,” and the experiences of those scarred by the everyday violence in peace and war that these GBVAW institutions and imperatives have sought to address.

Combatting gender violence no longer can be seen simply as a feminist project gone global. It is inextricable from the political projects that carry it forward. GBVAW put in the service of a variety of political and geopolitical projects can sequester from view many of the lived experiences of violence in the contemporary world. We are concerned about the ways it can operate to flatten, simplify, and narrow the perceptual fields through which gendered violences can rise to visibility, as well as how it may evict from the frame imperial complicity in the production of the very violences feminist activists are seeking to prevent, mitigate, or eradicate.

The Cunning of Gender Violence interrogates these framings, practices, networks, and shifting dynamics of power. Tracking mobilizations of the GBVAW apparatus and the networks along which it travels enables us to examine key features of the intersecting political orders and uneven force fields of our current world. Our sense is that GBVAW has been recomposed according to the logics of the larger security or governance projects of which it seeks to be a part. Its “uptake,” modest as disappointed practitioners claim it is, has involved a process of recalibration that risks making feminist concerns about gender violence active instruments in hegemonic political projects. Just how this occurs, and with what profound effects, are subjects taken up in various ways by the grounded case studies brought together here.

To better understand the way violence works in the global governance of the intimate and the ways it sustains global and local inequalities, conferring hierarchies of civilizational status, we follow the multiple circuits of power in which it is entangled. We interrogate the global and local op-

erations of GBVAW in the wider matrices of violence that mark everyday lives. These are hidden and apparent, fluid and shifting, and they work through plural modes and operations. Since gender violence and its treatment through GBVAW lie at the center of multiple global political arrangements and dynamics of governance—imperial, colonial, settler colonial, and authoritarian—the book is divided into four parts, each of which interrogates the relationship of gender violence to the codified GBVAW agenda in a major political formation of governance and rule. The chapters in part I examine the co-implication of gender, violence, and religious difference in the dominant political formation of the global security world order. Part II shifts the focus to the modalities through which states and political institutions perpetrate or enable forms of gendered violence and asks why these remain largely invisible, or are only selectively made visible, by GBVAW in international governance. Part III traces the contemporary itineraries and evolutions of the GBVAW apparatus in the context of two key arms of global governance: the civilizational industries that intervene in other parts of the world in the name of “development” or “humanitarianism.” Codified GBVAW works in tandem with both the epistemologies and rationales of these three circuits or modalities of governance in the new world order—securitization, state criminality, and the projects to uplift victims for the sake of capitalist development, or save them from the ravages of armed conflict and mass displacement. Part IV consists of reflections by journalists about the complicity of Western media in legitimizing these dynamics of power through the ways they structure reporting on gender violence.

PART I: SECURITIZATION

Launched as part of the War on Terror after 9/11, the grip and reach of the ideological and militarized governance and surveillance formation that goes under the banner of securitization have expanded dramatically over the last two decades. Security has cemented global alliances among powerful and pliant nations from the United States and France to Pakistan and Kenya, escalating fear of terror, proliferating measures and institutions of counterterrorism, and converging in the past decade on a consensus that violent extremism is the threat.

The first four chapters examine some of the ways feminist GBVAW projects are imbricated in these politics of security and counterterrorism. They provide context for the way Nadia Murad was singled out for care and ac-

claim, balancing appreciation of the feminist achievements this Nobel Prize affirms with the dangers inherent in the way it has consolidated a tight rhetorical nexus between gender and religion, with sexualized violence having come to practically define religious “extremism.” We are witnessing a thickening of the circuits of globalized securitization and the growing legitimization of criminalizing Muslim men, as an earlier Nobel Prize awarded to a schoolgirl victim of Muslim men’s violence signaled. Malala Yousafzai, shot by some Taliban in Pakistan allegedly for promoting Muslim girls’ education at a time when empowering girls was being pushed as the neoliberal solution to global poverty (Khoja-Moolji 2015, 2018; Murphy 2013; Hengeveld 2017; Siddiqi, this volume) captivated world attention. Between that incident and the deplorable sexual violence perpetrated by a newer militant Islamist group that emerged in response to the US invasion and occupation of Iraq, not Afghanistan, the enemy shifted. Girls are now to be saved from “violent extremists” in the widening global War on Terror (Abu-Lughod, this volume; Al-Bulushi 2018).

Vasuki Nesiah fills in the genealogy of feminist engagement with security and counterterrorism and the troubling entailments of the long efforts through the Women, Peace and Security agenda to criminalize sexual violence in conflict. The title of her chapter, “Lawfare, CVE, and International Conflict Feminism,” is a provocation to attend to the ways gender is being weaponized on global terrain and a reminder of Audre Lorde’s (1984) warning that the master’s tools can never dismantle the master’s house. Suspicious of the way key international feminist legal organizations were so quick to celebrate the arrest in 2018 of Al-Hassan Mahmoud, the Malian former chief of the Islamic police and member of Ansar Dine, an Islamist paramilitary group, on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity to be adjudicated in the International Criminal Court, Nesiah considers the novelty of the charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity in light of the developments since 2000 of International Conflict Feminism: he is accused of the persecution of the Timbuktu civilian population “on the grounds of religion and on the grounds of gender.”

Lila Abu-Lughod introduces the term “securifeminism” to name this phenomenon of the engagement of feminists with security in the wider arena in the United States and Europe in which religious culture has come to be blamed for gender violence. “Securifeminism” examines the process by which a range of women’s rights advocates have maneuvered to participate in the fast-growing initiatives of the last decade or so to Counter Violent Extremism (CVE) or Prevent it (PVE). This enterprise is often called

soft counterterrorism. Many feminist advocates caution about the human rights risks of securitization. Despite ambivalence within the global international feminist community, including those working within the Women, Peace, and Security framework, about this, she notes that a surprising number of feminist practitioners have promoted themselves as uniquely positioned to combat “extremism” on the basis of their experience and expertise in addressing gender violence, thus engaging with the logics outlined by Volpp and Jakobsen in the next two chapters of attributing gender violence largely to Muslims. Critical of the mainstream security discourses and sensationalized media reports about Muslim women who began traveling to Iraq and Syria to join the Islamic State (challenging the formula that had exempted women from the extremist category) even cautious organizations like UN Women and International Crisis Group produced reports that cited flawed policy papers with attention-seeking titles like “The Sultanate of Women” (Patel 2017) or “Caliphettes” (Rafiq and Malik 2015). The cadre of diverse professional gender experts and governance feminists (Halley, 2018, 16) find themselves caught in troubling contradictions as they seek inclusion in the entwined spheres of GBVAW and security whose outlines Nesiah has traced.⁷

Leti Volpp’s dissection of the Trump administration’s attempts to limit immigration through successive versions of the Executive Order on “Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States” in 2017 reveals exactly how this logic of linking gender violence to security has worked to devastating effect for so many. An apparently “feminist” concern with “honor killing” as an element of GBVAW was inserted into a project that blocked people from entry and vilified Muslims by collapsing differences among them and presenting them, on the basis of misleading and unsubstantiated data, as potential security threats. Volpp considers the curious inclusion in the first two versions of the Executive Orders of clauses identifying “honor killing” as a problematic practice by “foreign nationals” that warranted their exclusion, revealing one way that GBVAW becomes “a proxy for xenophobic exclusion.”

The project of protecting women from violence is in this case clearly wedded to Islamophobia, as all the legal challenges to the “Muslim Ban” have argued. But in the same way religion and gender were conjoined in the publicity around Nadia Murad and the case of the Yazidis, a key element of the Executive Order was the way it smuggled in a special dimension of “extremism.” Once refugee admissions were to be resumed, priority was to go to refugees from “minority religions.” This was intended, as Trump announced

on the Christian Broadcasting Network, to assist persecuted Christians.⁸ Muslim immigrants, in other words, were to be banned not only for their potential for terrorism but because they endanger liberal values of tolerance and Christianity itself, an example of what Jakobsen argues in her chapter is characteristic of the way the secular and religious are bridged in the political management of sexual violence. Volpp's conclusion is significant for appreciating the ways GBVAW and security have become conjoined: the specter of violence against women playing a key role in the Trump administration's exclusion of Muslims with the rhetoric and illusion of (concocted) data working together to fuel a phantasm locking "foreign terrorist entry" to a culturally specific form of harm in the GBVAW arsenal.

There is a larger context in the United States for this particular and extreme moment of mobilization against "the Muslim threat" through gender. In "Because Religion," Janet Jakobsen unpicks the epistemological process by which disparate threads in American public discourse about gender, sex, and religion have been woven together to produce the common sense that "religion" (particularly excessive religion) causes "gender violence." This alchemy has been used to make the policies of US administrations successive to George W. Bush's that use violence to confront those deemed patriarchal and labeled terrorists seem sensible. If the general view in the United States is that religion is a source of conservatism regarding gender and sexuality, she shows that it is more crucial to this common sense that the world is divided into secular liberal versus religious conservative but that religions themselves split into good (moderate) and bad (fundamentalist), and that Christianity is more aligned with secular moderation than Islam. These beliefs come together to produce a coherent truth claim: that religiously based violence can be attributed to Islamic extremists.

PART II: STATES OF VIOLENCE, UNRULY SUBJECTS

Part II shifts the focus to the modalities through which states and political institutions perpetrate, manipulate, or enable forms of gendered violence. State political violence targets individual bodies and populations through various technologies. These are violences often hidden by the dominant focus on states' security "necessities" and international GBVAW discourse and legislation that target nonstate actors whether in war or peace, or that concentrate on what are presented as localized forms of patriarchy. Some scholars have developed the concept of state crime to capture these forms of

violence, referring to the overlapping area between human rights violations and state organizational deviance mediated by the degree of the perceived legitimacy of the actions involved (Green and Ward 2000).⁹ Yet it is rare for this literature to recognize how deeply gendered state political violence is.

Feminist scholars of state crime and militarization have shown that gendered violence is central to state-making and sustaining state power (Ali et al. 2019; Visweswaran 2013). We have to look beyond the most apparent violent tactics of control by states to see how violence reorganizes social structures, alters everyday relations, and impacts affect (Grewal 2005). State violence can even work through humanitarian registers of sympathy, “stealing the pains of others” (Razack 2007), creating new “grammars of rights, or producing colonized populations in need of saving.” Here the state emerges as a benevolent patriarch reaching into every aspect of life (Bhan 2014; Varma 2016).

When analysts of Governance Feminism note the way feminists began to “walk the halls of power” they risk reproducing Euro-America as the site of feminist theory and activism, rendering the Global South a site of mere application of theory and policy imitation. Decolonial and postcolonial critiques and Third World International Law reject analyses that close their eyes to state repression and the actual experiences of violence. As such they raise broader questions about state crime (Nesiah 2021). Censure or prosecution of such violence has involved international institutions, tribunals, and resolutions from the International Criminal Court to the UN Security Council. However, Engle, Nesiah, and Otto (2022, 175) warn that the successful projects of what they call International Conflict Feminism “have reinforced many dangerous aspects of both feminism and international law, as they have used a focus on harm to women—particularly sexual harm—to aid in the legitimization and extension of coercive state power, often against marginalized individuals and communities, and less powerful states.” In other words, in the ways international human rights law appeals to states and their apparatuses to “investigate, prosecute, and punish non-state actors for serious human rights violations against women,” it often “remove[s] direct responsibility from states, pinning sexual violence on individual actors on all sides of a given conflict or on non-state actors who the state is simply responsible for punishing.” Kamari Clarke’s (2019) analysis of the racial overrepresentation of individual African perpetrators in the emotive cases brought before the ICC reveals the patterning of blame and the affective dynamics of accountability. Addressing both gender violence and the apparatus of GBVAW from a state crime perspective assists in detecting the ways

state violence works through gender and allows feminists to engage with the violence of state institutions and law, draws from indigenous conceptualizations of justice, examines everyday life and politics, and goes beyond the state and its local and global capitalist economy.

Based on rich ethnographic and textual analyses of diverse situations in Iran, Israel/Palestine, India, and Pakistan, the chapters in part II reveal the fluid but deadly dynamics of gender violence for which state regimes should be held accountable. While acknowledging the ways nation-states are inevitably shaped by international power politics, these chapters concentrate on forms of gendered violence that are inflicted by or in the service of state power and ruling elites. This violence can be direct, administered by punitive state institutions and agents, or it can be indirect, connected to states through their promotion of patriarchal or nationalist ideologies that incite or condone violence or through creating the conditions that constitute or enable violence.

If the persistent efforts of feminists over the past two decades have resulted in global attention to gender violence that is visible in the frames of GBVAW, there has been less political interest in exposing the violence of state ideologies and practices such as the intimate violence of house invasions by armed men, solitary confinement and physical torture under arrest, or the frightening interrogations that reveal the level of surveillance one is under such that even a woman's shampoo brand is known. This has made feminism a silent bystander for many everyday forms of state criminality. There are many reasons why state actors, institutions, and structures are not held accountable. There are the fictions of state sovereignty in the current world order. There is the faith in the inherent legitimacy of states' monopoly on violence. On a practical level, the difficulties of documenting state violence, particularly in states with high levels of political surveillance and securitization and with weak independent infrastructures of monitoring and free media, compound the problem. Governments can and do manipulate or suppress information and mask and reframe what might otherwise be recognized or classified as state criminality.

So while GBVAW has been criminalized in the global arena through a range of international legal instruments and institutions of varying efficacy, the culpability of states for forms of gendered violence—whether in cases such as those analyzed in these chapters including the policing of schoolgirls in Israel/Palestine (Shalhoub-Kevorkian), the deeply gendered “communal” violence that plagues postcolonial India (Grewal), the rape and threats of sexual violence in political prisons in Iran (Talebi), or even the

layered enforcement of gendered norms of sexual propriety that Khoja-Moolji tracks in the Qandeel Balochi “honor killing” in Pakistan—is less apparent, despite the devastating consequences for vulnerable citizens and subjects.

The cunning of gendered violence can be integral to the workings of state power, whether wielded in biopolitical governance or subtending authoritarian or necropolitical colonial political projects of exclusion and expulsion. The ways gendered violence undermines communities, is used to withhold rights and citizenship or suppresses dissent, and reinforces social hierarchies and discriminatory norms should all be counted as state crimes of GBVAW. State perpetration of gender violence can be direct and visible, as in militarized checkpoints or prison torture cells. More often, though, it is indirect—unacknowledged, operating through forms of incitement, silence, or tacit encouragement of groups and individuals to use violence with impunity. In the case of structural and psychological violence, it is gendered in the ways it weakens and dismembers communities, invades the most intimate aspects of life, assaults the senses, and orchestrates affects. Although practices such as rape as a weapon of war and political torture are recognized as state crimes, we need to attend also to the ways that states enforce discriminatory social hierarchies that constrain the behavior and damage the lives of their citizens or subjects. State violence can govern, as the Palestinian prisoner Walid Duqqah (2010) put it eloquently, without “making noise.”

The literature on state crime has not always considered gender violence. Yet when “state crime” occurs in patriarchal social orders, women and girls are particularly vulnerable. Denying equal access to social, political, educational, and economic power, or subjecting women and girls to institutional neglect, could be considered gender-based state crimes (Shalhoub-Kevorkian and Ihmoud 2016). Where women are excluded or subordinated, gender-based violence also tends to be treated as natural. Gendered violence extends to men and boys of minoritized groups, as well as to sexual minorities. Some of the most egregious instances of gendered state crime are the violences that target women from marginalized social groups, because, as scholars like Smith (2003) and Thobani (2015) have shown, race and class always intersect with patriarchal structures. The dynamic is intensified in colonial conditions, wars, or after natural disasters.

States govern through biopolitics—controlling and managing bodies and livelihoods. In imperial, colonial, and postcolonial states, the bodies of devalued “others” are terrains of political, social, legal, religious, and cul-

tural struggle. Feminist scholars have brought out links between control over women's bodies and control over nature and the occupation of land (Merchant 1980; Caputi 1993; Ruether 1975). The symbolic connection between women and "mother earth" as well as women's responsibilities for reproduction tends to give them a special place in ideologies of the national collective (Yuval-Davis 1980). When women are made to carry the burden of reproducing the social order, the power of "other" women to ensure their community's continuity in colonial conditions is threatening.

That states' violence can be driven by racist, nationalist, and religious beliefs and agendas is an important aspect of the biopolitical. These routinized forms of violence are legitimized by arguments about the need to counter threats and protect citizens. If, as earlier chapters showed, Muslim groups are increasingly criminalized in a securitized global sphere—framed as perpetrators of religiously motivated and "extremist" gender violence—in the chapters in this part we glimpse the ways states govern through religious divisions, identities, and ideologies that they use to subject their citizens to gendered forms of violence. In these states in the Middle East and South Asia, we can see how violence works through demonizing internal groups through ethno-religious ideologies, whether Islamization, Hinduization, or Judaization, not to mention political differences and class.

Some feminist scholars have refused to normalize state atrocities whether in prison cells or in occupied, militarized, or colonized spaces such as refugee camps, reserves in Canada, or at the US border with Mexico. These scholars have also highlighted the ways gendered state violence works through cultural, ethnic, racial, or religious logics. Turning a blind eye to the criminality of states by accepting their framings of the violence they inflict as necessary for security or for humanitarian ends makes it easier to recognize and condemn GBVAW in the savage acts of racialized others. The violence hidden by the rhetoric so pervasive in the global security discourses analyzed in the chapters in part I—of saving minority women from their bad cultures or of defending peace, democracy, and liberal ideals—characterize state discourses in many situations.

States escape censure because, as a number of scholars of state crime have noted, they often deflect blame as part of a strategy of denial, outsourcing violence to nonstate groups they can disavow (Chambliss 1989; Green and Ward 2009; Ward and Green 2016; Jamieson and McEvoy 2005; Cohen 2001). Among the methods Jamieson & McEvoy (2005) describe, for example, are nonformal collusions with "indigenous terror groups" to operate counterinsurgency actions against a common "enemy" that the state itself

has already abjected.¹⁰ Inderpal Grewal's analysis of the "random" violence against Muslim men under the current Hindu nationalist regime in India shows that the outsourcing can be more subtle and indirect. Khoja-Moolji's analysis of how the naming of murders as "honor crimes" similarly distracts from alternative explanations that would implicate the wider political conditions and the responsibilities of the state and religious institutions for the individual violent crime. When there are material or political benefits to other states, allies, or the international system from the forms of state violence, there is little motivation from outside the state to intervene in national affairs. The international arms trade illustrates this dynamic perfectly as it abets the gendered violence of militarized policing as well as the ready availability of lethal weapons to be used by individuals.¹¹

The forms of state violence that GBVAW feminists have succeeded in uncovering tend to be those in failed or unstable states where the violence appears lawless and there is little international stake in protecting state regimes. In stable or powerful states, such violence tends not to trigger international interference, especially when directed against internally "otherized" groups. Yet critical feminist scholars, as noted above, have been skeptical about the efficacy of criminal law to address gender-based violence and the totality of the penal apparatus, whether within states or through the international system (Ní Aoláin 2014; Razack 2004; Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2015). Scholars who take Third World approaches to international law (TWAIL) warn that the focus on sexual and gender-based violence as the ultimate crime has displaced other feminist and human rights concerns including social and economic inequalities (Nesiah 2006; Nesiah 2011, 43). The carceral and legal turn in this zeal to prosecute SGBVAW internationally has also hardened conservative gender and sexual norms (Bernstein 2019; Engle 2019, 2020; Halley et al. 2019), resulting in the creation of what Kapur (2018) called a "liberal fishbowl."

Doing gender through law, then, problematic enough in the international sphere, is no less problematic in the case of trying to regulate state crimes of gender violence. If we are to keep at our moral center the concern with human harm, we should use the experiences and voices of those who are subjected to this violence to grasp the intertwined and accumulating consequences of state criminality. This is precisely what the chapters in part II do. As Hartman (1997) writes in *Scenes of Subjection*, the bruised body of Frederick Douglass speaks to us about the violence he suffered as a slave but even more about the slave-master relation. The hurt bodies of the victims of

state crime tell us as much about the suffering and pain the victims experience as the kinds of violence their oppressors inflict.

Each of the chapters in part II centers the experiences of the subjects of state violence to expose its intertwined and accumulating force. But to return to Hartman (1997; 2019), we are reminded that in addition to exposing and acknowledging the forms of direct and indirect gender violence that states wield, we must listen and look for refusals, resistances, and expressions of power of violated subjects if we do not want to redouble this violence. The voices shared in these chapters are replete with such stories, even as they uncover and dissect the gendered violence of what should be recognized as state crime. We read about the street protests by Muslim women and their allies in Shaheen Bagh, Delhi. We hear the defiance of Palestinian school girls “talking back” against their “daily torture” on the way to school. We follow the incisive words of a provocative social media star who dared to scandalize a prominent religious cleric, calling out the moral hypocrisy of the patriarchal Islamized Pakistani state. The survival and refusal to give up or give in of the imprisoned women dissidents Talebi introduces us to from the Islamic Republic’s political prisons cannot fail to move.

Inderpal Grewal’s chapter, “GBV and Postcolonial India,” analyzes visual, print, and social media representations of terrible forms of violence in the recent history of India to show that what have been made to appear as communal mob violence or random cases of individual violence must not be exempted from the projects of state governance. Examining the representations of gendered violence against Muslim men and women that have blighted the nation under the Hindu Right government, from the Gujarat “pogrom” in 2002 to the recent spate of “lynchings” of Muslim men as the BJP came to power, she suggests that these should be understood instead as the gendered technologies of power through which the government seeks to render Muslims a subordinated minority group along with Dalits and Adivasis. That these spectacularized violences, mostly by Hindu cadres or individuals and directed at non-Hindu minorities, should be recognized as indirect forms of state violence is evident in the relative impunity for the perpetrators and the way the population is incited to violence by the government’s nationalist ideologies.

Shenila Khoja-Moolji provides a different example of the indirect ways states can be responsible for gendered violence. In “The Politics of Legislating ‘Honor Crime’ in Contemporary Pakistan” she takes the spectacularized case of Qandeel Baloch, a young Pakistani social media star who was strangled to death by her brother in what was immediately characterized as an

“honor killing.” The murder was used by women’s rights advocates to push through a stalled legal bill, coercing the state into appearing to step up as a defender of women and their rights. The problem Khoja-Moolji raises in the Pakistani case is analogous to that which Engle, Nesiah, and Otto (2022) raise about the limits of the law in the turn to the state in international feminist efforts to criminalize gender violence. State institutions are strengthened and state regimes are absolved of complicity.

Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian’s “State Criminality and Gender-Based Violence” documents one of the modalities of direct violence in the settler colonial state of Israel. Listening to Palestinian school girls in Occupied East Jerusalem talk about the effects of the harassment and intimidation they experience on their daily walks to and from school, violence coming from Israeli soldiers and police, as well as settlers and bystanders, Shalhoub-Kevorkian concludes that these acts should be treated as state crimes of gender violence and even sexual violence.

Talebi’s “Power, Subjectivity, and Sexuality in Iranian Political Prisons” offers a haunting analysis of a case of direct state violence and shows how its gendering works as much through the body as the psyche. Writing about the stories of three Iranian political prisoners, Talebi shows both how the violence inflicted by the state to crush political dissidents was gendered and how women prisoners experienced the violent practices of prison guards, emboldened as agents of the state, when these included threats of sexual violence and actual rape. The specific ways that religious ideology and moral language justified systematic violence toward prisoners under Khomeini’s regime is a sobering reminder of the ways state power disempowers threatening groups and individuals by demonizing and dehumanizing them.

PART III: CIVILIZING INTERVENTIONS: DEVELOPMENT AND HUMANITARIANISM

The chapters in part III focus on GBVAW within three main circuits of contemporary global governance: development aid, humanitarian intervention, and the refugee asylum regime. Superficially, these apparatuses of bio/geopolitical governance might appear as more legitimate channels through which feminist aspirations to do good “out there” in the world might be achieved since they are tasked with civilizational uplift and rescue rather than militarized containment and suppression. But as the studies in

this part show, much of the same “baggage” that GBVAW carries through its inclusion in global security regimes is present when operating through humanitarianism and development.

The particular circuits through which this master category and its allied technologies travel are diverse bureaucratized fields of action, producing ever-evolving reigning objects of intervention, linked to the particular governing rationale to which GBVAW has attached itself. Here it appears in a variety of guises: as global norms against child marriage carried by development agendas in Bangladesh (Siddiqi); as a dense humanitarian infrastructure charged with delivering pedagogies against domestic violence to Gazans immiserated by war and international sanctions (Hammami); and as frameworks of acceptable queerness to validate Iranian LGBTI asylum claims in the refugee regime’s Turkish borderland (Shakhsari). In each case, we see how a particular and singular form of injury is drawn out of its complex history and social life, made legible through being flattened and repackaged into a matrix of abstract universal rights, girded with norms of evidence, and put to work through rules of bureaucratic procedure that activate specific technologies of intervention. This process of making the particular social ill legible as GBVAW always involves scripting it across the dualism of backwardness (cause) and civilization (solution) that is a foundational metonym of this master sign. In all three chapters, Islam is a salient part of the context; thus, the scripting relies on ready-made Orientalist assumptions that render local culture (represented as Islamic patriarchy) as the cause of the particular “violation” in need of the particular global intervention.

The authors all center the voices and experiences of those made subject to the salient category of injury and its allied technologies that are operating in their context. Through close ethnographic readings, they uncover the mechanisms through which GBVAW translates into a powerful force in everyday lives of individuals and communities in contexts marked by modes of global dispossession. In particular the chapters highlight the entanglements of local activists, NGOs, or frontline workers. We find them trapped between the rigid frames and racialized representations of the global interventions and the urgent need to find context-specific solutions for individuals and communities whose forms and source of injury always exceed the normative limits of GBVAW. As such, the chapters offer a critical counter to one of the longstanding arguments for continued feminist inclusion in global institutions; that despite their limitations, GBVAW frameworks and their allied resources are empowering to women’s rights activists on the ground. Rather than empowerment and changed consciousness, what the

cases show is frustration, resignation, or just making do with the deeply flawed resources and the coercive relationship of dependency in the absence of any alternatives.

Dina Siddiqi's contribution traces the history of GBVAW's enmeshment with development imperatives in Bangladesh and its most recent ruling category, "child marriage," now posited as a critical obstacle to achieving the country's economic development goals. Globally, development institutions and their reigning agendas were some of the first circuits (along with international human rights law) where GBVAW's antecedent (VAW) gained traction in global governance. Sally Engle Merry's foundational 2006 book charted this particular story of feminist negotiation at the centers of power while providing some early hints of how it unfurled within development agendas of post-colonial states on the ground. Indeed, early on, the dominant narrative of GBVAW as feminist success story was dogged by counteranalyses that emerged from situated ethnographic readings of its operations in the developmental contexts of Latin America (Alcade 2011; Parson 2010), Southeast Asia (Kwiatkowski 2011a, 2011b), Africa (Archambault 2011; Hodžić 2009; Abramowitz and Moran 2012), the South Pacific (Jolly, Stewart, and Brewer 2012; Biersack, Jolly, and Macintyre 2016) and Turkey (Shively 2011). Much of this work relied on Merry's concept of vernacularization of women's human rights, but also exceeded it. These studies testified to the problematic gulf in the concept of "local translations" between normative rights frames and context-specific understandings of gender violence, as well as showing how "best practice technologies" of intervention were at odds with the needs of victims and the situated knowledge of antiviolence frontline workers and activists. These early studies, however, tended to assume that GBVAW circuits of knowledge and resources, though problematic, were largely geopolitically benign.

In contrast and in parallel were works that focused on national contexts where GBVAW's entry was obviously tethered to an epochal geopolitical project of the time: the post-Soviet "democratic-transitions" of former east bloc countries (Hemment 2004; Fábíán 2010; Johnson 2009; Johnson and Robinson 2006). These highlighted its embeddedness within flows of aid and expertise accompanying neoliberal shock doctrine policies and the differential power between this highly resourced Western feminist agenda and emergent local women's organizations seeking independence from repressive state feminisms while grappling with the violent outcomes of Western-led structural adjustment. GBVAW was revealed as a powerful, well-

resourced agenda capable of eclipsing local feminist meanings and reshaping organizations and activists in ways that foreshadow arguments in this part of *The Cunning of Gender Violence*.

These works were written more than a decade ago, and there has been little subsequent research on GBVAW's new power constellations and evolving frames of intervention as it circulates through development agendas into postcolonial nation-state governance.¹² Dina Siddiqi's contribution does just that by focusing on the sudden appearance of the category of "child marriage" as an object of developmental concern in contemporary Bangladesh. She interrogates how this novel and unanticipated category propounded by international organizations pulls in and rallies state agencies, local activists, and NGOs to produce a common sense that eradicating child marriage is an urgent imperative for attaining Bangladesh's economic development. Originally listed as one among many "harmful cultural practices" in GBVAW normative definitions, Siddiqi locates this category's rise to prominence in the evolving rationales of corporatized neoliberal development at the turn of the millennium. While earlier neoliberalized development agendas centered the laboring body of the Third World woman as a "good investment," she is now displaced by the powerful economic potential of girls. Hence the shift in GBVAW priorities of concern; domestic violence against women is now eclipsed by the "intractable cultural norm" of child marriage. In contrast to the earlier literature, Siddiqi's analysis highlights new players within the global constellation through which GBVAW circulates within development imperatives; corporate-sponsored foundations fronted by celebrities now round out the list of UN institutions, bilateral aid agencies, and international NGOs. To unravel these larger operations of power, Siddiqi centers the history of women's issues and activism in Bangladesh; the gendered social worlds that shape young women's desires; and the ways in which local NGOs and activists negotiate between need and skepticism in relation to global agendas.

The chapters by Hammami and Shakhsari focus on GBVAW's integration in two interlinked circuits of humanitarian governance: the interventionary assemblages tasked with managing "humanitarian emergencies" and the bureaucratic apparatus of the global refugee asylum regime. Again, through centering their analyses on those made subject to its operations, they are able to expose the real-world effects of the limiting frames and technologies and the context-specific dynamics of power and dependence they produce for activists, victims of violence, or their wider communities.

Scholarship on GBVAWs, humanitarian variants has exploded over the past two decades, reflecting the ascendance of humanitarianism to its current dominant status in global governance (Barnett 2005; Duffield 2001). In comparison to the literature on its Developmental variant, the analyses of GBVAW's integration into various arms of post-Cold-War humanitarianism is highly critical, but dominated by feminist legal and IR scholars who highlight the dangers of the sexualized and racialized assumptions subtending the discursive frames and legal instruments of the main humanitarian agendas such as sexual violence in war, refugee asylum, and sex/human trafficking. Ethnographically informed scholarship that interrogates GBVAW's Humanitarian variants from the perspective of those targeted by its operations is more limited and overwhelmingly focuses on the category of sexual violence in war (SGBV) given that this category remains the supreme ruling object having a monopoly in humanitarian discourse and representation, programming, and scholarly literature.¹³ The consistently damaging findings of these latter ethnographic studies raise acute questions for any narrative of "feminist achievement."

The contributions by Hammami and Shakhsari find much in common with the critical analyses offered by these ethnographic studies of SGBV, but join a few others (Grabska 2011; Lokot 2019; Olivius 2016a, 2016b; Mai 2018; Luibhéid 2018; Giametta 2016) that defy its hegemony by focusing on alternative categories and formations of humanitarian GBVAW that have been marginalized. How does humanitarian GBVAW operate in contexts such as Gaza's "humanitarian emergency" or as "sexual humanitarianism" in the refugee regime bureaucracy tasked with managing LGBTI+-based asylum claims? In both cases, although sexual violence is missing, many of the critical insights from the ethnographic literature on SGBV still apply. This suggests that the rationales and logics that initially formed around "sexual violence in war" continue into humanitarian GBVAW's other forms and sites of intervention.

Critical ethnographies of SGBV interventions highlight how the affective power of combatting sexual violence is indivisible from its material productivity: it is a very lucrative category of human suffering across global publics. On the ground, this results in large and selective resource flows to treat this particular harm, creating reinforcing loops of what Heaton (2014) has called "perverse incentive structures." Humanitarians, local communities, and victims are incentivized to keep reproducing the singular SGBV narrative in order to capture the aid to which it is linked.¹⁴ Victims and communities constantly express frustration with the way humanitarian resources

are channeled into this singular category of harm. They consistently voice needs that are at odds with its frames: housing, financial support, work, and education for their children. Similar to the findings on Yazidi refugees cited in Shackle's chapter, interventions are also at odds with the context-specific needs and socially embedded forms of care prioritized by actual victims of sexual violence. Veit and Tschörner (2019) link this lack of a context-specific response back to the political economy of SGBV; local "problem contexts" must be framed within reigning global mandates, technical frames, and networks in order to capture their allied funding streams.

The dynamics exposed by ethnographic studies of SGBVAW reflect the political and economic inequality that underpins humanitarianism more generally. Didier Fassin (2007, 2011) has called this a politics of life marked by hierarchies of humanity. The massive imbalance in resources and power between humanitarian caregiving and precarious aid recipients creates a relationship of dependency that forecloses much of the latter's agency. With most access to care channeled into the limited frames of interventions, the outcome is a coercive form of care that forces individuals, local activists, and sometimes whole communities to engage in what Utas (2005) has called "victimcy," presenting themselves as victims within the well-known scripts in order to survive (Meger 2016). This form of "humanitarian paternalism" (Barnett 2010) often appears indistinguishable from control.

In Hammami's analysis of GBVAW operating within humanitarianism in Gaza, we see how the category of "sexual violence" continues to be salient through its absence. For the humanitarian assemblage operating there, it is the desired, relentlessly searched-for but mostly elusive, normative object of their longing. This open-air prison, saturated with multiple forms of Israeli colonial violence and buttressed by a layer of devastating international sanctions is guilefully categorized as a "protracted humanitarian crisis" which activates a subset of humanitarian GBVAW interventions that are reserved for postconflict transitions or intractable refugee situations. In the absence of SGBV, these take the form of "norm changing pedagogies" that target the "backward culture" at the root of Gazans' already predetermined gender violence problem. Hammami centers her analysis on local mediators, Palestinian women activists, and NGO frontline workers caught between the coercive logics of GBVAW "best practice frameworks" and the need to find relevant solutions for victims and women more generally in a context where funding for humanitarian interventions circulates within a political economy of mass immiseration. Like elsewhere, this creates its own coercive dependency and perverse incentive structures. Humanitarian GB-

VAW in Gaza emerges in her analysis as a self-referential operation of power: a closed circle of recurrently fabricated expert “evidence” of Gaza’s epidemic level of domestic violence, justifying the need for ever more “awareness raising” workshops and public antiviolence campaigns that dispense with the messy and expensive work of providing practical solutions to the problems voiced by Gazan women or by the local frontline women’s organizations that attempt to meet them. The chapter brings back into the frame what GBVAW in Gaza evicts: the collusion of the humanitarian apparatus with the geopolitical rationales of Israeli violence, as well as a counterworld of more relevant home-grown Gazan responses to gender violence, including those offered by women activists of the Hamas governing authority.

Shakhsari focuses on GBVAW within “sexual humanitarianism” (Mai 2014): the recent and uneven recognition of nonnormative sexuality and gender identity as criteria for asylum within the global refugee regime. Centering the experiences of Iranian queer and trans asylum seekers trapped in the refugee borderland of Turkey, Shakhsari shows how they attempt to navigate through the trap laid by the rigid norms and procedures that adjudicate both refugee and LGBTI+ recognition and eligibility for rights of asylum or citizenship. As much of the literature on asylum for LGBTI+ individuals within the logics of sexual humanitarianism makes clear, discursive humanitarian technologies impose a rigid script of nonconforming gender and sexual identity based on hegemonic Eurocentric models to which the asylum seeker is forced to conform (Fassin and Salcedo 2015; Giametta 2016; Miller 2004; Sabsay 2013). These homonormative (Duggan 2002) and homonationalist (Puar 2007) scripts not only serve to reproduce the sanctification of the Western sexual rights regime, including its “sexual democracy” (Fassin 2010), but as Shakhsari’s chapter shows, are usually in conflict with the lived realities and lifeworlds of asylum seekers made subject to its logics.

In the case of Iranian trans and queer asylum seekers, GBVAW operating through sexual humanitarianism identifies vulnerability to gender confirming surgeries by the Iranian state as the singular category of violence through which they might be recognized as worthy of asylum. Shakhsari underlines how this exclusive focus on what is designated “state-perpetrated torture” obscures more immediate forms of violence, as well as the complicity of the international refugee regime in sustaining them. In the case of Iranian asylum seekers this includes the devastating effects of Western sanctions on Iran that generated the need to seek asylum in the first place. It also erases messy, counterfactual understandings: reducing the complex history of Ira-

nian state policies toward LGBTI+ identities to the geopolitically convenient Orientalist trope of violent homophobia.

Shakhsari also underlines the much greater coercive power exacted by the frames of care offered by GBVAW as sexual humanitarianism. As per Ticktin's (2016) argument, the contemporary asylum regime is predicated on exclusion and suspicion; it must separate out the exceptional, innocent, deserving "real refugee" from the mass of undeserving migrants. Thus, overcoming suspicion of LGBTI+ asylum seekers and proving oneself deserving of care go far beyond a performance of innocence and "victimcy"; it includes proving the "truth" of one's gender or sexual identity when queer and trans bodies are already assumed to harbor deception.

As an activist on behalf of Iranian LGBTI+ asylum seekers, Shakhsari confronts the acute dilemmas that normative inclusion into the refugee asylum regime creates. What can activists do when the only mechanism to save precarious lives involves actively mobilizing civilizational tropes around race, culture, and sexuality that the system demands? Does accepting the logic of saving individual "exemplary victims" make activists complicit in the asylum regime's fundamental work of evicting the mass of refugees from humanity?

Variations on these dilemmas are voiced across the critical ethnographies of GBVAW in humanitarianism already touched upon earlier. What is striking is that despite laying bare the glaring gaps, erasures, and forms of bodily, social, and political harm produced by these ruling frames and their technologies, those who present these critiques regularly offer a caveat. They insist that their intention is not to bring about the end of donor interventions or activisms, no matter how compromised, mismatched, or irrelevant to needs, because without them actual victims would be left with nothing. This represents a tragic recognition by critical feminist and queer scholars and activists that within the contemporary landscape of global geopolitics and its civilizational rhetorics, it is only these flawed and sometimes injurious forms of humanitarian care that are on offer. We address these dilemmas and search for alternatives to this tragic stance in the conclusion.

PART IV: MEDIA FRAMES

Deepa Kumar's *Islamophobia and the Politics of Empire: 20 Years after 9/11* considers the media as a key node in what she analyzes as the matrix of anti-Muslim racism. The dominant spheres in the matrix are the security appara-

tus, politicians, think tanks, and academia, and she notes the flows between them, in ways that our work on the circuits of power to which GBVAW attaches notes. However, the media are crucial in shaping public understandings. If Grewal's chapter on India reveals the power of media to name, hide, expose, and incite, Kumar is sensitive to the internal differentiations within the institutionalized fields of media, roughly characterizing the media's role and connections to the other spheres of power, at least for the US and Britain in terms of mainstream, progressive, and right-wing media.

The media are indeed crucial to the framing of problems and solutions in relation to gender violence as well, and the chapters in this final part are all by practicing journalists who alert us to the way coverage of gender violence, at least in the US and Britain, are tied to the logics of securitization, state power, and the rescue industries of development and humanitarianism we examine in this book. The silencing of critical questions about the deployment of the GBVAW common sense is evident in Rafia Zakaria's attempt to investigate a legal case in Michigan that coincided with the introduction of national programs directed at women immigrants that involved surveillance and profiling at national airports in the name of protecting them from female genital cutting. This is an iconic form of GBV that links culture and religion and that, like the "honor crime" that Volpp analyzes in her chapter on the "Muslim Ban," has been made a prominent cause by the Ayaan Hirsi Ali Foundation in particular, as a good example of the matrix of think tanks, politicians, and right-wing media that Kumar exposed as producing the racialization of Muslims that stokes Islamophobia. She shows how certain questions about the political mobilization for anti-immigrant discourse and policies of exclusion in the United States and Europe are untouchable. No scrutiny is allowed of the policing and surveillance of Black and brown women's bodies through "public health" measures like Operation Limelight at British (see Khoja-Moolji 2020) and American airports.

Writing against the limited framing devices imposed on reporters working for Western media who cover gender violence in "other" places like Pakistan or Iraq, or even in racial minority communities in the UK, British journalist Samira Shackle reveals the ways stereotyping and homogenization in coverage of violence against Muslim women remove women's agency and blame culture and religion. Reflecting on her experiences as a journalist running up against editors who reframe her stories or working with colleagues in the field as they try to research stories such as those of

the Yazidi women and girl survivors of ISIS with troubling ethical practices, Shackle suggests guidelines for the important work of reporting on gender violence that might help break the narrative frames and lessen the complicity of media in those matrices of power that reinforce Islamophobia, xenophobia, and securitization. Responsible reporters should not shy away from reporting on gendered violence, even when it risks racializing communities, as so much reporting in Europe and the United States does. Besides listening to the women and foregrounding their agency, they should place incidents within their wider political contexts and histories, including the ways that states fail their citizens. These are precisely what our scholarly essays in this volume do.

Humanitarian emergencies and the sexual violence of conflict situations are key topics of news reporting, as they are the sites of feminist GBVAW interventions, whether legal as Engle (2020) documents or humanitarian, as in the case of Gaza analyzed by Hammami in this book. Nina Berman, a photojournalist who has long worked in the context of the Balkans that catalyzed the establishment of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in 1993 that prosecuted wartime sexual violence, writes about the ethics of journalistic practices and representations of sexual violence. She reveals the marked differences between what is allowed and encouraged in the American and European media in depicting dark-skinned “victims” in Africa—Congo, Sudan, Rwanda—and what is conventional for the US context, whether in reports on campus rape or coverage of American soldiers’ acts during the Vietnam War.

Feminism has succeeded in recent decades in making sexual violence a serious subject for reporters, not just a women’s side issue. But the question is *how* this subject is treated, especially through photographic essays. Using examples such as the celebrated *New York Times* photo feature on the released Chibok girls from Boko Haram in Nigeria, the *Time* magazine cover with an anonymous naked pregnant rape victim now living in Uganda, who, like many of the Chibok girls, had become the subject of Christian humanitarian care, and the invasive and prize-winning *Newsweek* photography project on the children of rape in Rwanda, Berman shows how the impulse to bestow dignity and humanity is undermined by the ethical failures to protect identities, the systematic racial stereotyping, and the depoliticization of these dressed-up or dressed-down victims. Instead of instigating investigations of accountability and justice, they are rendered objects of benevolent humanitarian saving. In this, the mainstream media becomes another circuit in which

GBVAW operates, undermining its resistance to the dominant political forces that contribute to the vilification of Muslim and dark men that continues to justify military interventions and the “War on Terror.”

FEMINIST CONUNDRUMS:

HOBSON’S CHOICE OR FAUST’S BARGAIN?

The reasons for the “success,” productivity, visibility, and wide public embrace in popular culture and international policy of the GBVAW agenda are complex and, as this book argues, troubling. There is plenty of criticism from within about the agenda’s failure to deliver an end to gender violence, despite high-profile global rituals such as UN Women’s annual “16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence” and not insignificant funding for feminist forums, policy initiatives, and organizations, all the way from local grassroots women’s organizations in Kenya and Pakistan up to the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum and UN Security Council. There is no question that a diverse set of feminist activists have worked hard over decades and in good faith for the goals of addressing and condemning gendered violence.

Much of the praxis-focused feminist literature bemoans the fact that these efforts have not had the intended or desired impacts, noting how alliances with the law, security, and international institutions have neither created the infrastructures to adequately protect or support victims nor to bring perpetrators to justice. The mainstreaming of GBVAW has been especially disappointing to those who lament the watering down of feminist aspirations and emancipatory visions as compromises that had to be made to gain traction for their struggle to confront the scourge of gendered violence, from domestic abuse to sexual violence in war. In her ambivalent analysis of the emergence of Governance Feminism (defined as the varieties of feminism and feminists who have entered into or worked with institutions of power—national or international) Halley has identified what she calls the “five c’s” that alignments with power risk or entail: collaboration, compromise, collusion, complicity, and cooptation (Halley 2018, xiii). Some who charge that the feminist agenda was hijacked or puzzle over the existence of strange bedfellows prefer Nancy Fraser’s (2009) observation that feminism’s “uncanny doubles” have come to roam the halls of institutional power (e.g., Engle, Nesiah, and Otto 2022). Given this disappointing record, continuing arguments for engaging with GBVAWs’ institutional circuits tend to render

them as a feminist Hobson's choice. Take for instance, Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, currently the first feminist appointed Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms While Countering Terrorism.¹⁵ She outlines the conundrum that she, like others, faces because of this engagement with security regimes and the WPS agenda:

While accepting the real harm caused by terrorism and counterterrorism for women in many parts of the world, it is important nevertheless to give serious consideration to the potential negative effect on the WPS agenda of its becoming harnessed to the pursuit of broader military and ideological goals. I accept that the decision whether to be within or without the terrorism and counterterrorism sphere is a form of Hobson's choice for feminist activists. The "exile of inclusion" [Otto 2009] forces compromise, requires concessions and entails forgoing the option of objection to many of the basic premises of the collective security system. To remain outside is to forfeit the possibility of exercising any influence on the decisions and actions that affect the lives of millions of women and girls across the globe living through situations of extremity and violence. (2016, 278)

Posing it as a mutually exclusive choice between influencing or forfeiting the possibility of influencing "decisions and actions" with ramifications for women and girls globally is a longstanding argument used by feminists who have gone for inclusion.¹⁶ *The Cunning of Gender Violence* regards the conundrum as more of a Faustian bargain than Hobson's choice. As the studies in this volume suggest, another dimension of the cunning of GBVAW lies precisely in presenting feminists with a false choice between inclusion for influence or exclusion as an "inability to act." This framing legitimates the simplified categories and institutional embedding of GBVAW as the only way to address gender violence. In turn, this begs the question: What type of feminist influence and feminist action does inclusion produce?

A dispiriting assessment by intelligent and engaged activists in a report by the International Crisis Group marking the twentieth anniversary of the WPS resolution exemplifies the problem. The report, entitled "A Course Correction for the UN Women, Peace and Security Agenda," highlights the agenda's "too few and too modest gains" as well as the real harms it creates for women through aligning their needs with state security priorities such as countering terrorism. Yet instead of presenting a robust challenge to the logics of securitization, militarization, and humanitarian rescue, the report concludes with the ongoing common sense; it recommends even more inclusion of "civil society units within both the UN Counter-Terrorism Exec-

utive Directorate and the UN Office of Counter Terrorism” to give “women activists a platform to relay concerns” and assure that gender considerations run through evolving security policies (International Crisis Group 2020, 18).

These pleas for inclusion and the promotion of feminist advocacy for more substantial mainstreaming of gender into the workings of hegemonic power politics are part of the problem, likely doing “more harm than good,” as David Kennedy (2002) earlier charged human rights work. Inadequate attention to gender or the absence of women from what these groups characterize as the masculine world of security and state power is a minor problem compared to what our chapters reveal about the effects of GBVAW’s imbrication with major circuits of power in undermining feminists’ capacity to identify and call out the specific modes and causes of so many forms of violence that poison lives and suppress possibilities.

Missing from the calculations of “engagement versus forfeiting influence” is a reading of the nature of power in the rationales wielded by these hegemonic institutions as well as a critical accounting of the politics of feminist representation on which “inclusion” is based. As Dianne Otto points out in relation to the WPS agenda, “[I]t is puzzling that there has been so little feminist debate about the wisdom of engagement with the patently undemocratic and secretive Security Council, the seat of power of the world’s superpower(s), whose permanent members are also the world’s largest arms dealers” (2014, 160). She adds: “Abandoned are feminist commitments to democratic and transparent decision-making, to bottom-up rather than top-down politics, to cooperation rather than power politics, to justice as well as order, and to critiques of imperial, military and unaccountable power” (2014, 163).

But perhaps another dimension of the cunning of GBVAW is that not all of the institutional circuits of global governance that carry it forward appear to be such patent sites of militarized superpower interest as the Security Council. This certainly applies to the variegated governmental assemblage we call the United Nations with its myriad global conferences and forums, infinite number of expert meetings, and proliferating agencies covering everything from Indigenous rights and arms control to human rights and climate change. The hard power of security, militarism, and economic neoliberalism are all enmeshed with these openings for “civil society” to participate in building a better world. Arguably, at a founding moment of GBVAW’s entrance into global governance—the 1995 Beijing World Conference on Women—these “soft” openings were accessed productively by a diverse range of women’s movements answerable to their organized constituencies

across the global south and north.¹⁷ At the very least, transnational feminist activists of that era such as Peggy Antrobus recognized that changing the status quo inside these institutions depended on the pressure of activists and social movements from outside of them (Antrobus 2005).

But in the subsequent post-Cold War era, as many of the chapters here reveal, the nature of hard (and soft) power that the United Nations wields across the globe dramatically changed. So did the nature of “civil society” forums and the representational politics of those who attend them. In a recent review of the impact of Beijing twenty-five years on, the authors note the loss of the enabling role that UN global forums had played in the 1980s and 1990s for women activists and movements from the south and north (Sandler and Goetz 2020). They argue, however, that this is compensated for by the emergence of independent initiatives, citing the largest contemporary global women’s rights conferences that are convened by the US-based NGO called “Women Deliver.” Described as the world’s highest profile women’s rights organization, it is led by a CEO; has myriad corporate sponsors; and provides consultation to the G-7, international agencies, and even the private sector as it advances “the investment case for gender equality.”¹⁸ In the contemporary institutional circuits of GBVAW, this narrowly framed corporatized platform is what now stands in for any notion of deliberative politics exercised by transnational women’s activists. This should at the very least raise the critical question of who is included in the institutional processes of “inclusion” and what, if any, constituencies they represent.

Moreover, driven by the urgency to address the horrors of sexual violence in war and conflict, feminists may have seized on the power of international institutions to bring public attention to human rights violations around gender. But in the process, as Engle (2020, 78) notes, feminists “backgrounded or suppressed commitments to more nuanced conceptions of ethnicity, culture, sexuality, and women’s agency.” Nicola Pratt put it more bluntly. Pratt argues that the WPS agenda “re-sexed race,” reproducing “the racialized–sexualized and gendered hierarchies of colonialism” (2013, 776–77). The racial-sexual hierarchies are even more apparent in security discourses and the “War on Terror,” which leads Pratt (2013, 780) to characterize the WPS 1325 resolution as an “imperialist feminist project (Orford 2003) rather than a transnational feminist project from below (Al-Ali and Pratt 2009, 4–8).” Indeed, through our case studies, we can see the consistent ways that the GBVAW discourse, supported by social and mass media, appears to have made its gains on the backs of racialized others, whether as individuals, groups, or nation-states. This cannot be disavowed as “unfortunate bag-

gage” that has hijacked a good project: rather we see GBVAW carried forward on the global politics of Islamophobia and racialization.

Here the cunning lies in how it confers generic identities on women and sexual minorities or other vulnerable groups to which a set of abstract rights and values can be attached, values that consolidate a colonial feminist imaginary and politics of uniting around these generic categories of victims in need of being freed from the prison houses of their cultures, religions, and patriarchal communities. As Inderpal Grewal (1999) suggested early on, these universalisms and the imputed solidarities to which they gave rise masked and misrecognized the differential power among feminists presumably “united in global sisterhood” as well as the structure of geopolitical power in which their efforts gained traction.

What has this narrow definition and selective visibilization of what constitutes gender violence—as object of knowledge and intervention—kept out of the frame? Who is benefiting from the GBVAW apparatus and who is being harmed? Engle’s astute observation of the grip that sexual violence has gained over the WPS agenda led her to conclude that “when human rights became the primary avenue for feminist interventions in the new conflicts, their focus on ending the abuse of women *in* war, rather than on ending war itself, side-lined or transformed the women’s peace advocates and their aims” (2020, 124). Across the spectrum of critical studies of GBVAW projects, we see the same imperative to refrain from talking about structural factors and to focus only on the personal stories of gender violence.¹⁹ This is one of the costs of “inclusion.” When Iraqi women activists, following the US invasion of their country, spoke at a UN WPS-sponsored forum and openly voiced their concerns and priorities in terms of the destructive impacts of US imperialism and militarism as well UN sanctions, instead of sticking to the script about women as victims and peacemakers, the reaction of their feminist hosts was to figure out how to prevent such an embarrassing and destructive form of messaging from happening again (Gibbings 2011).

We also share with Halley and colleagues a concern with the distributional effects and practices of these narrow frames. Can a careful distributional analysis of the differential workings of the GBVAW apparatus in different places reveal more about who is benefiting and who pays the price for its success and uptake? Over more than two decades, it has produced ever-expanding opportunities for scholarly experts, professional consultants, development and humanitarian bureaucrats, and practitioners. It has established feminist think tanks and academic centers that offer a range of

WPS and other related university degrees enabling career paths of future GBVAW professionals. It has also produced a plethora of NGOs and networks and provided women employment in male-dominated UN peace-keeping missions. And as we show here, it also creates frames of possibility and limitation for scholars, journalists, international activists, and perhaps most significantly, for local activists. The chapters on Gaza, Bangladesh, and Iranian LGBTI+ refugees show that rather than offering “empowerment,” local activists and frontline antiviolence workers often find themselves desperately trying to negotiate through the deeply constrained and irrelevant frames in order to extract some way of getting the resources to do the real work of addressing gender violence. And even this access to the deeply compromised aid GBVAW provides is premised on disguising what they are doing and obscuring what they know intimately about the complex causes of gender violence in their context. When instead they try to call out the agents of global power, neoliberal destitution, and militarized destruction as the fundamental forces of violence in their lives, their benefactors erase their voices. *The Cunning of Gender Violence* suggests that only the vicissitudes of experiences with gender violence and analysis of the workings of the GBVAW apparatus at different scales can give us answers.

In short, the cunning of GBVAW is that in its efforts to foreground forms of gender violence, it forecloses a radical questioning of the very systems that are producing the conditions for so many forms of gendered violence and harm, many of which are not even named as such. It has become a form of capital in the rise of the security state and world order, in the execution of state violence and criminal behavior toward abject or vilified “others,” and in the growth of a global regime of humanitarian mitigation that serves to bandage the wounds of victims the geopolitical system itself has produced.²⁰ How much can the GBVAW apparatus treat other forms of slow, structural violence, including “legitimate” state violence, when its efficacy depends on its attachment to existing forms of power that are responsible for these violences?

Our sensitivity to these issues has emerged both from our theoretical orientations and our locations and commitments to the everyday lives of the subjects of violence who are the objects of these hegemonic strands of feminist antiviolence intervention. Though often lapsing into a feminist singular in our critique of GBVAW, we see feminisms as always a diverse and evolving plurality of epistemologies, locations, projects, and possibilities—and yes, sometimes dominations and enclosures. As such, we do not call for a “time out” from feminism, because this would grant the form of feminism

that is at the center of our critique here the singular status that it attempts to assume. We have pointed out the danger, erasures, and colonizing moves of the versions of feminism that have a singular focus on women (whether or not in the language of gender). Though driven by concerns for those inscribed by gender, we do not presume it can be disentangled from race, class, indigeneity, and other historical and contemporary forces and markers of difference and inequality. We understand governance as both biopolitical and necropolitical (Mbembe 2019), rather than just a matter of law and policy, and thus share fundamental ground with the long traditions of feminist activism and thinking centered in the Third World/Global South that assume feminism is indivisible from broader struggles for social and economic justice, and view geopolitical inequality and power as fundamental feminist concerns. And as is obvious, given the regions where we are located or attached, we share with postcolonial, indigenous, anticolonial, and decolonial feminists elsewhere a profound awareness of the continuing power of ongoing material and discursive legacies of colonialism on the lives of women and men in our contexts.²¹

Our primary locations in scholarly rather than policy worlds, perhaps, along with our alignments with world regions that have been targeted for intense militarization, securitization, policing, surveillance, and violent management, means that “inclusion” is not part of our political sensibilities and lifeworlds. At the same time, the location of some of us within militarized “conflict zones”—contexts targeted by GBVAW and where the lines between local activists and scholars are more blurred—has meant that we have first-hand experience grappling with these interventions as they unfurl on the ground. This makes us highly attentive to the dilemmas they produce. Our contributors have listened closely to those in harm’s way, looking with them at the range of violences that frame their lives. Rather than offering a singular answer to the dilemmas raised by GBVAW, we instead start by asking: How might a different politics emerge if we centered the narrative of GBVAW on the voices, experiences, and readings of gender violence from its so-called global margins? Perhaps we might be able to see that these silenced “margins” are really at the center of how feminism(s) might actually be returned to its place as a radical, expansive, and truly inclusive transformative project.

Acknowledging the genuine concerns and critical internal debates within feminist communities, the question that an intervention like ours provokes is: What alternatives could there be? How can we take gender violence seriously as real and disturbing—and abhorrent—while challenging the

GBVAW apparatus that has been developed over the past decades to address it, marked by its exclusivist foci and specific channels of operation? Can the dense networks of power be disrupted and undone as we hold firm to the ethical responsibility to respond to violence? The careful, detailed, and close studies of policies, representations, and the everyday stories of those subjected to violence in *The Cunning of Gender Violence* offer clues about how to rethink feminist projects to address gender violence so as to escape the Faustian bargain that embeddedness requires.

There are many ways we might subvert the cunning of GBVAW. A first step is to map this cunning. If securitization, state violence, corporate developmentalism, and humanitarianism are all recognized as in themselves violent, then we must attend to how they are gendered and what GBVAW does and does not do when it attaches itself to them. We do this by tracking GBVAW in the work of Executive Orders to International Criminal Court rulings to UNHCR offices to programs for Combating Extremist Ideologies. We do this by looking to the everyday experiences of the subject(s) of violence, whether lynched, searched, or threatened alongside the cultural representations and the vocabularies deployed to justify such violence. The best clues in the studies in this book come from close listening to people in specific situations, whether Pakistani social media stars like Qandeel Baluch or Iranian trans asylum seekers in Turkey, political activists imprisoned in Iran or Palestinian activists struggling to meet the needs of women in their Gazan community under siege. Their everyday stories and their analyses offer alternatives to the ossified categories and definitions of GBVAW that circulate through and across policy domains, reports, and funding proposals. Can the faces, the names, and the narrations of these individuals, in their specific locations and within the contexts of their histories and memories, form the backbone of such alternative understandings of violence?

By privileging the insights and resistances of survivors we come to appreciate their multiplex identities as women, men, youth, heterosexual and homosexual, trans and cis, refugees, migrants, lower class or ethnicized minority, Pakistani, Indian, Palestinian, Nigerian, Iranian, and immigrants. Their political histories, their current contexts, and their places in society are as crucial to their stories as their gender. Legal work, like many other kinds of interventions, risks codifying and emptying the categories of content. Vocabularies of suffering and languages from the daily lives of those involved push against this standardization. Establishing bonds with the subjects of violence does not privatize individual ordeals or subsume them under wider stories of political economy or geopolitical power; it keeps the search open for feminist

language and praxis against gender violence based in the ethics of what bell hooks and Amalia Mesa-Bains (2018) call “the homegrown.”

Untangling the multiple entwined and layered forms of violence that devastate the lives—physical, social, and psychic—of so many around the world is a first step to resisting the selectivity of the violences that are made visible, the willed blindness to “collateral” harms, and the suspension of judgment about the complex political interests at stake in the worlds we inhabit. We fail the subjects we care most about if we let antiviolenence feminist projects get caught up in and then inadvertently shore up apparatuses of rule that are inimical to the political convictions and wider visions of justice that feminisms, at their best, seek to embody.

NOTES

- 1 Calls for US troops to stay in order to protect gains made for Afghan women were now pitted against the stark history of twenty years of unending violence and insecurity and an impending future looking similar to what all Afghans faced at the outset of the US invasion.
- 2 The analysis offered here draws on the diverse range of critical feminist work that continues to grow on specific domains of GBVAW’s operations, be it from international law and feminist legal theory (Halley 2006; Halley 2018; Halley et al. 2019; Engle 2020; Otto 2010, 2014; Nesiah 1996, 2006, 2011, 2012; Razack 2004); feminist international relations (Jabri 2004; Zalewski and Runyon 2013; Eriksson Baaz and Stern 2013) and security studies (Carpenter 2006; Meger 2016; Pratt and Richter-Devoe 2013; Shepherd 2008; Zarkov 2018, 2020); post-colonial feminism (Grewal 2005; Chowdhury 2011); critical humanitarian studies (Ticktin 2011); the emerging school of Queer IR (Puar 2007; Luibhéid 2018); as well as studies in anthropology (Merry 2006; Hemment 2004).
- 3 This was achieved at the International Criminal Court and the International Criminal Tribunals for the Former Yugoslavia and subsequently for Rwanda.
- 4 It comes as no surprise that fifteen years on from the original achievement of UNSC 1325, marking the UN Security Council’s initial recognition of women’s vulnerability to violence in war, UNSC 2242 explicitly includes the language of “preventing violent extremism” (PVE) within the purview of its ongoing Women Peace and Security mandate.
- 5 A relationship subsequently consecrated in 2010 by then US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, and colloquially known as the “Hillary Doctrine.” See Hudson and Leidl 2017.
- 6 For more on the costs of the post-9/11 wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, see Brown University’s “Costs of War project” (<https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/>).

- 7 Note the similarity to the language of DDR (disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of ex-combatants) well known in postconflict state and peace-building operations.
- 8 Katie Reilly noted this in a *Time* magazine article from January 27, 2017: “President Trump Says He Will Prioritize Persecuted Christians in Refugee Policy.”
- 9 Critical legal scholars and criminologists have struggled to define the concept of “state crime” and to draw its boundaries. The difficulty of defining state crime is related to the way its practices appear normal and may even be legal. Most now accept this delineation: “[G]overnmental or state crimes are illegal, socially injurious, or unjust acts which are committed for the benefit of a state or its agencies, and not for the personal gain of some individual agent of the state” (Kauzlarich, Matthews, and Miller 2001, 175). State crimes thus can include human rights violations such as genocide, war crimes and torture, police violence, and corruption in the control by elite groups of national natural resources. Green and Ward (2000) go further to include any state actions that violate citizens’ human rights, whether they are deliberate or through failure to protect individuals and groups. Others emphasize the structural foundations of liberty and rights that provide humans with basic opportunities and conditions for well-being; they would brand as criminal the failures of states to provide food, shelter, or medical services.
- 10 For an example in Israel, see Shalhoub-Kevorkian and David (2015).
- 11 For the Israeli context, see Mazali (2016).
- 12 For exceptions, see Siddiqi (2015), Roy (2017), and Kowalski (2018).
- 13 The scholarship on SGBV has been criticized for fetishizing sexual violence (Boesten and Henry 2018; Meger 2016) and producing a “sexual violence industry” (Douma and Hillhorst 2017). Sexual violence in conflict emerges as a particularly potent category of human suffering put to use in the affective politics of mobilizing compassion for distant others—what Didier Fassin (2011) has termed *humanitarian reason*. The power to rally humanitarian sentiment is inseparable from representations of sexual violence that rest on and reproduce colonial tropes around race, sexuality, and gender. Sexual violence becomes a marker of racialized “other” masculinities rather than a general marker of militarized masculinities in war (Boesten 2015; Eriksson Baaz and Stern 2013; Hilhorst and Jansen 2012; Mertens and Myrtilinen 2019; Mertens and Pardy 2016). Wars are de-historicized and de-contextualized so that they can be reduced to savage conflicts carried out by backward cultures (Abramowitz and Moran 2012; Autesserre 2012; Eriksson Baaz and Stern 2013; Zarkov 2018, 2020). Particularly through the discourse of “rape as a weapon of war,” sexual violence marks a line between just civilized wars and unjust savage conflicts, inviting humanitarian intervention in the latter where all local men are figured as armed perpetrators and all local women civilian victims (Engle 2020; Hilhorst, Porter and Gordon 2017; Mertens and Pardy 2016). This power-knowledge formation evicts all other types and structures of violence (and their

genealogies and histories) as well as other victims (e.g., men) from humanitarian concern.

- 14 SGBV interventions hold a near monopoly on aid: in one case, it garnered twice the amount of funding available to cover the basic needs of 1.4 million Congolese IDPs (Heaton 2014). In many contexts, the only medical care available to entire populations is devoted to sexual violence (D'Errico et al. 2013; Autesserre 2012), a situation reflected in the Nobel Prize award to Dr. Mukwege.
- 15 She reports to UN Human Rights Council on the effects of counterterrorism regulations on the rights of women, girls, and family. See Ní Aoláin's 2020 report: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Terrorism/Pages/Annual.aspx>.
- 16 Back in 2003, Jacqui True, a leading academic in WPS circuits, framed the dilemma in similar terms saying that it was "not how feminist scholars and activists can avoid cooptation by powerful institutions, but whether we can afford not to engage with such institutions, when the application of gender analysis in their policymaking is clearly having political effects beyond academic and feminist communities" (True 2003, 368).
- 17 For a counter view, see Spivak (1996).
- 18 In 2020 former and current staff publicly challenged the organization for its toxic environment of structural racism and discrimination against Black, Indigenous, and people of color, and LGBTQA+ people, as reported by Talha Burki in her 2020 report published in *The Lancet*, "Report Released on Women Deliver Allegations," available at [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(20\)32330-8/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)32330-8/fulltext).
- 19 In the Sangtin Writers Collective and Richa Nagar's *Playing with Fire* (2006) a collective autobiographical project about experiences with gender violence of a group of grassroots activists in India, the consequences of challenging the social hierarchies within a large national NGO and refusing the demands for public personal confession that are the bread and butter of donor support were astonishingly punitive. In a settler colonial situation such as that of Palestinian Bedouin women in the Naqab, the cunning of gender violence lies in turning the source of their dispossession and displacement into the primary and benevolent referent for saving them from pain. Using VAW discourses and Resolution 1325 forced women to both individualize and ahistoricize their pain. Only stories of divorces, imposed marriages, and other family problems could be told, ignoring what the women all saw as other dimensions of their suffering (Shalhoub-Kevorkian et al. 2014.)
- 20 This is similar to what Meister (2010) argues for the perpetrators who now promote themselves as the champions of human rights.
- 21 We do not invoke the concept of transnational feminism readily because despite agreeing with much of Chandra Mohanty's initial definition, the term has become vexed by its politically polyvalent use. For a critique on transnational feminism, see Conway (2017).

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