

Chapter 3

Empire-building and Coerced Sexual Activities in Post-invasion/occupation Iraq

Introduction

In an interview with Nicola Pratt (2011, p. 613), discussing United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, Susan Abbas, director of the Iraqi women's leadership, stated:

I do not believe that there are any women that faced the challenges of lack of security and peace more than women in Iraq. For a very long time, women in Iraq have been living with wars, conflicts, and occupation.

Before the First Gulf War, Iraqi women enjoyed relatively good socio-economic, cultural and political conditions. However, both the 1991 and the 2003 US-led invasions had a detrimental effect on the Iraqi economy. With regards to sexual gender-based violence (SGBV), while this may have been an issue prior to these invasions, the 2003 Anglo-American military intervention contributed to an increase in SGBV and a decline in women's rights. It is useful to unpack this in a bit more detail. During the 1970s, women's status and rights were formally encoded within the new Iraqi Provisional Constitution. This granted women equal rights before the law. Changes were also made to labour, employment and Personal Status Laws. These granted women enhanced education and workplace opportunities and greater equality in marriage, divorce and inheritance (Human Rights Watch [HRW], 2011). However, after over three decades of conflict, Iraq's political and economic landscape had weakened dramatically. This can be attributed to the 1980 attack on Iraq, the 1990 invasion and occupation of Kuwait – followed

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by the coalition military response in 1991 – and the subsequent economic sanctions endorsed by the Security Council (see Kamp, 2009, p. 197). Following Iraq's defeat during the First Gulf War, in order to consolidate power, Saddam Hussein turned to religious fundamentalists and conservatives for support. This had a detrimental effect on women. Restrictions on their freedom of movement were reinstated and their protections under the law were removed (HRW, 2011). Following the most recent US-led intervention in Iraq (2003–2011), insecurity and sectarian violence increased exponentially. Social and economic instability, as well as looting and violent attacks, characterised the post-invasion period in Iraq. Iraqi women and girls became victims of domestic violence, abduction, honour killings and rape (Al-Ali, 2018; HRW, 2003, 2011, 2014a, 2014b; Oxfam International, 2009).

Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) have committed serious human rights violations, crimes against humanity and war crimes, including genocidal violence, in both Iraq and Syria. As ISIS will be revisited in the following chapter, it is worth taking a moment to trace the origins of this extremist group. The roots of ISIS can be traced back to 2004 and Musab al-Zarqawi. Al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian, formed al-Qaeda (AQI) in Iraq, pledging his allegiance to Osama Bin Laden (The Week, 2019). Zarqawi was killed by a US drone strike in 2006. Following his death, AQI was merged with other insurgent groups to form Islamic State in Iraq (ISI) (Muir, 2017). After a series of interventions by the US-led coalition in Iraq, resulting in the death of the new ISI and al-Qaeda leader, Ibrahim Awad al-Badri (also known as Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi) became leader. In 2013, he consolidated forces in Iraq and Syria to create ISI and Syria Levant (The Week, 2019).

In 2014, the group announced the creation of a caliphate in Iraq, renaming themselves Islamic State (Muir, 2017, The Week, 2019). As Muir (2017) notes, the group has undergone a series of name changes throughout the course of its history. This, he argues, reflects the ever-changing nature of its members and their manifestos. ISIS came into use when the group began taking over large parts of northern and eastern Syria in 2014. ISIS is the name I will be using in this and in the following chapter. While it is generally agreed that the caliphate in Iraq and Syria has collapsed (Chulov, 2019), at the time of writing (July 2019), the group itself has not been defeated (The Week, 2019).

In Iraq, ISIS have used suicide bombings and improvised explosive devices, as well as car bombings, to kill civilians. This is in addition to launching chemical attacks against civilian infrastructure and populated areas. They have engaged in unlawful killings and executions, including public beheadings and other acts of torture. Rape and sexual slavery, as well as other acts of sexual violence have also been committed by the group.¹ Other crimes perpetrated by ISIS include: forced marriage, trafficking and the recruitment of child soldiers (HRW, 2017, 2018a).

¹Al-Ali (2018) provides a critique of the selective focus on rape and sexual violence at the expense of other forms of SGBV perpetrated by ISIS in Iraq. See also Foster and Minwalla (2018) for a critique of the media's reporting of these crimes.

They have also imposed severe restrictions on women's freedom of movement (HRW, 2017, 2018a). As noted above, a more detailed analysis of ISIS is provided in the following chapter with reference to the atrocities committed in Syria. Given the aim of this chapter – to examine the gendered impact of the US invasion on civilian women – the focus of analysis is limited to the period up to, and including, the formal withdrawal of western forces in December 2011. Here is a brief overview of this time period. In March 2003, the US-led invasion of Iraq was launched, and formal occupation commenced in May 2003 (Hagan, Kaiser, Rothenberg, Hanson, & Parker, 2012). Saddam Hussein was captured in December 2003 and coalition forces withdrew from Iraq in 2011. My reason for focusing on this period is to illustrate the cause-and-effect relationship between the invasion and occupation, and women and girls' involvement in coerced sexual activities within and beyond the conflict zone.

In terms of the post-invasion period, and the removal of Saddam Hussein, a key focus of this chapter is UNSCR 1483 (2003, p. 4). Of relevance to this chapter is section 14, which states:

[T]he Development Fund for Iraq shall be used...to meet the humanitarian needs of the Iraqi people, for the economic reconstruction and repair of Iraq's infrastructure, for the continued disarmament of Iraq, and for the costs of Iraqi civilian administration, and for other purposes benefiting the people of Iraq.

We will examine the impact of the US economic regime in more detail in due course. Briefly, according to Whyte (2007), this economic 'shock therapy' experiment was based upon the profit-seeking activities of US companies. This was a western capitalist agenda that did not benefit the Iraqi people (Whyte, 2007; see Hagan et al., 2012 for a detailed review of the economic cost of the conflict). Throughout the course of this chapter, I examine its impact on women and girls.

Outline of the Chapter

This chapter addresses both the direct and indirect consequences of the 2003 Iraq invasion and occupation. Criminologists have described this offensive action in Iraq as a State crime, a crime of aggression and an illegal intervention under international law (Kramer & Michalowski, 2005, 2011; see also Whyte, 2007 who describes this economic agenda as a war crime that violates the Hague and Geneva treaties). What follows is a gendered analysis of this criminal invasion and occupation. Pre-war security and gender relations in Iraq will be compared with the situation post-invasion/occupation. Using the example of forced prostitution – and drawing on women's and men's differential involvement in informal economies – I will argue that economic policies, specifically the privatisation agenda of the west and its illegal occupation, resulted in women either being forced into the illicit economy as a means of survival or, trafficked for sexual slavery by profit-seeking (male) criminal networks who exploited the informal economy in post-invasion/occupation Iraq.

By focusing on the experiences of women and girls, I am not suggesting that men and boys have not suffered in the aftermath of this invasion/occupation. Indeed, we know that men and boys have been victims of the following: abductions, executions, beheadings and religiously motivated attacks, sexualised violence and torture in detention (this is unpacked in detail in Chapter 6), as well as forced disappearance and forced recruitment. They also make up the majority of casualties and fatalities (Inter-agency Information and Analysis Unit [IAU], 2008). However, my reasoning for focusing on women is threefold. First and foremost, I want to move beyond the immediate impact of the invasion and occupation to draw attention to structural as well as interpersonal forms of violence (distinction provided below). Second, by focusing on women's situation pre- and post-invasion/occupation, I am able to scrutinise the gendered justificatory narratives used in the lead up to the military intervention. Briefly, the war on terror narrative – created by the Bush administration – used the long-term oppression of women as a justification for invading Iraq (Nayak, 2006; Shepherd, 2006; Stabile & Kumar, 2005; Steans, 2008). However, in the context of Iraq, as will be demonstrated, this was not the real motivation for the invasion (more on this shortly). And third, focusing on women and girls underscores how SGBV is part of a continuum of violence that is both produced and reproduced during armed conflict.

As with the previous chapters, I will examine how gender and the violence(s) of war/armed conflict are connected at the macro-, meso- and micro-levels. While certain forms of SGBV existed prior to the invasion/occupation, this chapter demonstrates how they were exacerbated as a result of US and UK economic policies linked to the invasion. While it is possible to attribute the rise of ISIS to the power vacuum that was left behind following the withdrawal of coalition forces in 2011, this is not the focus of this chapter.

The chapter begins with a discussion of the terminology and analytical frameworks that are used. This is followed by a critical reading of the lead up to the invasion and the justificatory narratives surrounding it. To underscore the fallacy of this narrative, pre-war gender arrangements and forms of GBV are compared with the situation post-invasion/occupation. Before exploring the informal economy in post-invasion/occupation Iraq – specifically Iraqi women's involvement in forced prostitution – we will examine women's involvement in coerced sexual activities in both old and new wars. In this section, I will also review the various feminist positions on this. Up to this point in the book, we have considered two examples of the deliberate targeting of women during war/armed conflict. In the first case, we explored the woman-as-nation thesis and how women and their reproductive bodies became victims of genocidal violence. In the second case, we examined the tactical use of rape within new war economies. In this and the following chapter, we will advance our discussion by considering examples of women who are victims, survivors and agents. We do so by unpacking their victimisation vis-à-vis coerced sexual activities, as well their participation in such (forced) acts.

Drawing on the political economy approach, the latter part of the chapter will demonstrate how GBV, in the form of forced prostitution, can be linked to

top-down macro-level economic policies and practices such as global capitalism and neoliberalism. In simple terms, and for the purposes of this chapter, neoliberalism, to borrow from Isenberg (2011), involves transferring the control of the economy from the public to the private sector. The goal is to create a more efficient and effective government, while at the same time strengthening the economy of the country (Isenberg, 2011). Returning to Connell's (1998, 2005) globalisation masculinities (discussed in the previous chapter), this chapter argues that the invasion of Iraq was a pre-emptive strike based on masculinities of empire, postcolonialism and neoliberalism.

Terminology

Article one of *The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women* [DEVAW] (United Nations General Assembly, 1993, p. 2) defines violence against women as:

[A]ny act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

The definition of violence against women contained within the DEVAW also includes trafficking and forced prostitution.

GBV refers to two broad categories of violence against women: interpersonal and institutional/structural (see the report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, United Nations General Assembly, 2013a). The former includes physical, sexual, economic, emotional and psychological forms of violence and abuse. The latter refers to any form of structural inequality or discrimination that maintains women's subordinate position (United Nations General Assembly, 2013a). Structural violence is particularly gendered. It refers to women's lack of access to employment, education, welfare, healthcare and social, economic and political infrastructure. Women are vulnerable to this type of violence during war/armed conflict. They are also vulnerable to it in peacetime societies, particularly ones that are deeply patriarchal, where material inequalities between men and women are high and women's status as equal citizens is undermined. In this chapter, forced prostitution is considered a form of structural GBV. As will be demonstrated in due course, on an architectural and systemic level, women were denied access to the formal labour market as a result of the invasion/occupation. As such, their involvement in forced prostitution – resulting from a lack of employment opportunities – constitutes a form of structural violence.

This chapter will also consider cases where women and girls were trafficked for sexual purposes and forced into prostitution. Both trafficking (for sexual purposes) and forced prostitution (as a form of structural GBV) are included in the DEVAW and increases in both can be traced back to the US-led invasion/occupation. Distinctions between these two will be addressed in the latter part of this

chapter however, for now, and for ease, forced prostitution will be used to refer to both practices.²

Analytical Framework

This chapter draws on the feminist political economy approach (outlined in the previous chapter) to examine coerced sexual activities in post-invasion/occupation Iraq. True (2010, pp. 44–45) identifies three elements within the feminist political economy model: the first is the division of labour within the gendered public–private sphere; the second is the ‘contemporary global, macro-economic environment’; and the third is the ‘gendered dimensions of war and peace’. This chapter will draw on the second and third elements, demonstrating how they are interconnected in the case of Iraq. In my example of forced prostitution in post-invasion/occupation Iraq, a political economy approach enables an analysis that links macro-level economic and political foreign policy agendas, such as neoliberalism, with GBV (forced prostitution) taking place at the local level within and beyond the conflict zone.

Empire-building in Iraq

Now that I have outlined the terminology and the analytical framework, I will examine the motivations for the invasion and occupation of Iraq. For certain criminologists, ‘economic interests, geopolitical concerns, military power projection, and imperial domination were the primary motives for invading Iraq’ (Kramer & Michalowski, 2011, p. 106). This argument made by Kramer and Michalowski (2011) is one that I share. In my own work, however, I unpack the gendered impact of this imperial geopolitical endeavour. I will do so here in relation to the public face (i.e. the justificatory narrative) of the Bush administration’s war on terror. Following the 9/11 attacks, the US began its war on terror. Since then it has attempted to overthrow regimes in Afghanistan and Iraq. The US reoriented its security strategy to create the right of pre-emptive self-defence. As Kramer and Michalowski (2005, 2011, p. 101) note, according to the principles of international relations, as reflected in the UN Charter, the fact that a US-led coalition invaded ‘a sovereign nation without provocation or legal authorization’ makes this act illegal and a State crime. Official narratives used by the Bush administration in the run-up to the invasion used the plight of Iraqi women to justify its political and economic interests in Iraq. Indeed, during this time, the US State Department publicised the abuses (e.g. rape, torture and beheadings) women had suffered under the Iraqi regime (Al-Ali, 2018). Likewise, in the UK, under the direction of Tony Blair, the then Prime Minister, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office were vocal about human rights abuses against women in

²Although referred to as ‘the war in Iraq’, this invasion and occupation and, perhaps, more importantly, the consequences of this offensive action, are best aligned with the new war doctrine (see Introduction).

Iraq (Al-Ali, 2018). Many have criticised the timing of this sudden interest in the human rights abuses taking place under Saddam Hussein. For years, activists had been trying to draw attention to these crimes, and yet, by and large, their voices went unheard (Al-Ali, 2018).

Jabbara (2006) provides a detailed analysis of representations of American and middle eastern men and women following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. These, she argues, were used as part of the campaign to promote military intervention in Iraq, as well as Afghanistan. These gendered and racialised images in newspapers, news-magazines, advertisements and internet sites, played a crucial role in the justificatory war narrative (Jabbara, 2006). As Jabbara (2006, p.252) argues, colonial and imperial histories were drawn upon 'to sell a war agenda'. Readers will recall my discussion of the postcolonial feminist critique in the previous chapter. Framing our analysis within masculinities of empire and post-colonialism, we can use this critical feminist postcolonial lens to reveal how the ostensible rescue narrative of 'white men saving brown women from brown men' (Spivak, 1988, p. 92) was, in reality, a hyper-masculine, orientalist pursuit to 're-masculinise' the US empire following the 9/11 attacks (Al-Ali & Pratt, 2009b; Nayak, 2006; Richter-Montpetit, 2007; see also Foster & Minwalla, 2018). As succinctly put by Riley (2013, p. 51) and Cockburn (2012, p. 29) respectively: 'the U.S does "do women", but only when it suits the goals of empire-building' and 'wars are not fought "for" gender issues in the way that they are sometimes fought "for" oil resources or "for" national autonomy'. Indeed, we see this reflected in US foreign policy spending. According to the US State Department, during 2003–2004, the US committed \$21 billion to the reconstruction project in Iraq (Caprioli & Douglass, 2008). Yet only a fraction (\$500 million) was allocated to supporting the social and political needs of Iraqi women (Caprioli & Douglass, 2008).

GBV Before and After the 2003 'Humanitarian' Intervention in Iraq

Examining 'society's hierarchy of gender, ethnicity, political and civil rights' (Davies & True, 2015, p. 7) in pre-conflict situations will facilitate a better understanding of how and why GBV is used during war/armed conflict (see Alsaba & Kapilashrami, 2016; Leatherman, 2011). Furthermore, if we want to unpack the gendered dimensions of war/armed conflict we need to pay attention to 'local histories and prewar gender relations', as well as to the 'global processes...within which they are embedded' (Cohn, 2013, p. 27). To this end, the chapter will now consider pre-war gender relations in Iraq, comparing them with the situation post-invasion/occupation. I will also consider the impact of macro-level economic policies on local gender relations, specifically women's and men's differential involvement in the informal economy.

Even under Saddam Hussein's regime of religious conservatism, women still enjoyed certain freedoms. These included freedom of movement, access to education and access to employment opportunities (Al-Ali, 2005, 2018). However, as Al-Ali (2018) points out, when we consider the 35-year (1968–2003) history of

the Ba'ath regime,³ it is important to acknowledge the contradictory and changing policies towards women and gender. This, as she notes, challenges any generalised or indeed simplistic assessments of this period. For example, women living in urban parts of the country, who were not engaged in opposition politics, fared better than those based in rural areas or those affiliated with opposition groups (Al-Ali, 2018; see also Sjoberg, 2006b, 2007). However, this changed significantly following the US-led invasion.

In the words of Susan Abbas - interviewed by Nicola Pratt (2011, p. 614):

The presence of the occupying international troops in Iraq has contributed to the increase in violence against women and girls, because the occupation has caused the collapse of [S]tate institutions, the disintegration of social control mechanisms, and the spread of extremist groups that target and use women. Extremist groups deliver their messages by targeting women, either by killing them or kidnapping them, or even threatening them, leading to forced migration.

Let us unpack this in more detail.

Increases in violence, fear of rape and sexual violence, as well as the military presence, excluded women and girls from participating in public life and from attending school, going to work and accessing health care, or simply leaving their homes (HRW, 2003). Professional women and female political activists were killed, and armed groups attacked women's organisations and family-planning clinics (Lee-Koo, 2011; Peterson, 2009). To reiterate: even before the 2003 invasion and occupation, the 1990 economic sanctions had a considerable impact on the basic infrastructure of Iraq. This led to major social and economic strain for ordinary Iraqi families. Limited electricity, restricted access to healthcare and a shortage of food and water made women's domestic responsibilities even more demanding and labour-intensive post-2003 (Peterson, 2009). Al-Ali (2005, p. 744) lists child mortality, malnutrition, increased rates of cancer, 'epidemic diseases and birth defects' as some of 'the most obvious "side-effects" of the sanctions regime'. High unemployment and the breakdown of the economy also had a huge impact on the day-to-day lives of Iraqi women (Al-Ali, 2005).

In addition, the level of everyday violence in Iraq increased throughout the invasion/occupation. Despite the promises, freedom and democracy did not prevail following 2003. Instead, Iraq was plagued by waves of violence as well as social, economic and political chaos. As a result of the invasion/occupation, there was an increase in women's victimisation of random 'street' violence; domestic violence; violence perpetrated by militias and armed groups; targeted abuse and abduction; rape and sexual abuse; and violence committed by the multi-national

³This was a totalitarian Arab-socialist regime that governed life in a one-party State under the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein. This party ruled over every aspect of public and private life (see Faust, 2015).

forces in Iraq (Oxfam International, 2009, p. 5; see also HRW, 2003, 2011, 2014b; Lee-Koo, 2011; Peterson, 2009). Accurate data on SGBV in Iraq during this period (2003–2011) is hard to come by. However, the IAU (2008) provides a detailed review of 113 reports documenting GBV in Iraq between 2003 and 2008. They recorded 21,000 cases of GBV between March 2003 and May 2008. These included murder, abduction and the ill treatment and torture of male detainees; honour-related violence; religiously motivated attacks; the killing of male and female professionals; trafficking and forced prostitution; as well as rape and sexual violence. According to one report, between April 2004 and September 2005, 400 women and 35 men were raped in Baghdad alone, and 60 females were raped between February and June 2006, while 80 were sexually assaulted. In the conclusion of their report, the IAU (2008, p. 22) noted: '[i]t appears that the situation, rather than improving, has worsened especially in the context...of the ongoing war in Iraq'.

Given the stigma attached to victims of rape, it is plausible that the actual number of victims and survivors is much higher than the figures provided above. What seems to be clear is that there was an increase in rape against women during this period (2003–2011). This rise in sexual violence accounts for the dramatic increase in honour killings during this time. Honour killings were used to remove the shame attached to raped women and restore lost family honour (Lee-Koo, 2011). The Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) Ministry for Human Rights reported 166 honour killings in 2007 and 163 in 2008 (see United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, 2008). The KRG passed the Family Violence Law in 2011 with the aim of criminalising domestic violence and honour killings. However, officials did not enforce this law, and HRW (2014b) reported that male family members continued to attack and kill female relatives following the implementation of the law.

A Feminist Analysis of Informal Economies in Iraq

To reiterate: a political economy approach looks at the relationship between GBV and macro-level processes of political and economic power. When the formal economy collapses, people are forced into illicit economies (Sjoberg, 2013). '[A] key feature of illicit economies is the re-commodification of women and children as "resources" to be trafficked and exploited' (Raven-Roberts, 2013, p. 45). Following military intervention and the collapse of the formal economy in Iraq, women were pushed into prostitution as a means of survival (see Dakkak, 2007; Enloe, 2010; Peterson, 2009; Riley, 2013; Sjoberg, 2013; Zoepf, 2007). Alternatively, they were trafficked for sexual slavery by profit-seeking criminal networks who exploited the informal economy. In both examples, female bodies were reduced to commodities and used as currency within the informal economy in post-invasion/occupation Iraq.

Informal economies in post-conflict situations consist of coping, combat and criminal (Peterson, 2009). To paraphrase Peterson (2009, pp. 42–43), coping economies are aimed at survival and the social reproduction of families and households. Strategies may include trading organs, selling infants for adoption,

entering children into sexual slavery and/or selling daughters into early marriage. Combat economies are motivated by military goals. They directly supply and support fighters and insurgents. Finally, criminal economies are concerned with profit making. They directly or indirectly supply and fund conflict-related activities.

Informal economies are gendered in the case of Iraq (Banwell, 2015b; Peterson, 2009). Despite unemployment levels rising for both men and women in post-invasion Iraq, men were much more likely to resort to combat and criminal activities. Conversely, women were much more likely to engage in coping economies, involving informal activities which included, but were not limited to, forced prostitution. Feminists have suggested that, as a result of their perceived impotence and emasculation – caused by unemployment, an inability to provide for and support their families and the presence of foreign forces – men engaged in aggressive behaviours (Lee-Koo, 2011; True, 2012). Indeed, as Lee-Koo (2011, p. 1629) notes, the decision by the Coalition Provisional Army to remove the Iraqi Army left 300,000 Iraqi men unemployed. As argued in the previous chapter, marginalised masculinities resort to aggressive behaviours to reconstitute subordinated masculine identities. In this case, these behaviours manifested both directly, through physical violence, and indirectly, through engaging in combat and criminal economies. Involvement in the latter included, but was not limited to, trafficking, looting and/or kidnapping to support financial and political endeavours (Peterson, 2009).

As discussed above, decades of conflict had devastating consequences on the economy of Iraq. Another effect of over three decades of conflict was (and is) the large number of widows and female-headed households in Iraq. Margaret Owen provides a sobering account of the plight and needs of conflict widows and wives of the disappeared in her article *Widowhood Issues in the Context of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325*. Referring to the *UN Division for the Advancement of Women (UNDAW)* 2001 report, she states: '[w]idowhood is one of the most neglected of all gender and human rights issues' (Owen, 2011, p. 616). At the time her article was published, it was estimated that there were between one and five million widows and wives of the missing in Iraq. Describing widowhood as a 'social death', Owen (2011, p. 618) argues that, because of discriminatory practices in matters relating to 'inheritance, land and property rights', generally speaking, these women are among the 'poorest of the poor' (see previous chapter for a discussion of this in the DRC). As a 'survival' strategy, children of widows were removed from school to help support the household. Daughters were more at risk of having their education revoked and were at a higher risk of underage marriage or trafficking (Owen, 2011). The following section of this chapter will address coerced sexual activities (and others) in more detail.

Sexual Slavery and Coerced Sexual Activities During Old and New Wars

The distinction between old and new wars was established in the Introduction. Despite the differences, coerced sexual activities have existed across both types. Indeed, throughout history, women have been enslaved for sexual purposes and,

as Kempadoo (2001, p. 30) notes, prostitution around military bases has been well documented in ‘India, Hawaii, Vietnam, the Philippines, Japan and Korea’. She states:

[T]he operation of foreign...troops at various times in history has produced particular forms of prostitution where the military, often in collusion with the local [S]tate or government, tolerated, regulated, or encouraged the provision of sexual services by local women to the troops.

It is interesting that Kempadoo (2001) uses the term prostitution rather than forced prostitution as I would argue that women, in these situations, have been coerced into providing sexual services. In this book, coerced sexual activities will refer to forced prostitution, sexual slavery and survival sex (also referred to as transactional sex). I will define each of these before considering their prevalence across old and new wars and the feminist contribution to this subject.

Forced Prostitution

In the document, *Elements of Crimes* (International Criminal Court (ICC), 2011, p. 9) enforced prostitution is defined as:

The perpetrator caused one or more persons to engage in one or more acts of a sexual nature by force, or by threat of force or coercion, such as that caused by fear of violence, duress, detention, psychological oppression or abuse of power, against such person or persons or another person, or by taking advantage of a coercive environment or such person's or persons' incapacity to give genuine consent.

It is also acknowledged that ‘force’ does not necessarily involve ‘coercion from a third party’. It can also reflect a lack of alternative means of survival (End Violence Against Women, 2014, p. 3). Article 6 of the UN General Recommendation on VAW acknowledges that poverty and unemployment can ‘force’ females into prostitution (as cited in End Violence Against Women, 2014). Furthermore, understanding force or coercion as a feature of women and girls’ poverty and unemployment, means treating gender inequality as a form of force (End Violence Against Women, 2014). In this sense, forced prostitution is a form of structural GBV. In my discussion below, I will consider forced prostitution as a form of structural violence as per the definition of force outlined above. I will also address instances where women and girls are trafficked for sexual purposes and are forced into prostitution. Human trafficking, as defined by Article 3 of the *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons*, can be demarcated along three lines: the act (recruitment, transportation and transfer); the means (threat or use of force, coercion, abduction, fraud and deception); and finally, the

purpose (sexual exploitation, forced labour and slavery (see United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2010).

Sexual Slavery

Sexual slavery is listed as a crime under the Rome Statute of the ICC. It is defined in *Elements of Crime* (ICC, 2011, p. 8) as:

The perpetrator exercised any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership over one or more persons, such as by purchasing, selling, lending or bartering such a person or persons, or by imposing on them a similar deprivation of liberty.⁴

The perpetrator must also have ‘caused such person or persons to engage in one or more acts of a sexual nature’.

Survival Sex

This refers to situations where individuals provide sex in exchange for food, shelter, accommodation or any other means of survival (Chalmers, 2015; Levenkron, 2010).

Coerced sexual activities vis-à-vis war/armed conflict are both historical and contemporary. As established in Chapter 1, Bengali women were forced into prostitution during the 1971 Liberation War; and across Europe, the Nazis created a system of ‘[S]tate-controlled brothels’ during the Second World War (Chalmers, 2015, p. 186; Levenkron, 2010; Sommer, 2010; see also Person, 2015 for a discussion of forced prostitution in the Warsaw Ghetto). Reports note that both sexes engaged in survival sex during the Holocaust (for a more detailed discussion, see Chalmers, 2015; Fogelman, 2012; Levenkron, 2010). However, as Collins (2017) argues, the most prominent example of sexual slavery during this time took place in Asia. Thousands of women from Korea, China, Japan and the Philippines were forced into sexual slavery by the Japanese army (Heit, 2009; O’Brien, 2016). As many as 200,000 women, mainly Korean, were forced into prostitution during this time (Heit, 2009). Referred to as ‘comfort women’, their role was to provide sexual services to soldiers located at ‘comfort stations’⁵ (Argibay, 2003;

⁴*Elements of Crime* is a document that contains more information regarding articles 6, 7 and 8 of the Rome Statute.

⁵It was believed that the institutionalisation of prostitution would prevent further incidents of rape and sexual violence against local women. Prior to the establishment of the comfort stations, members of the imperial army had raped and mutilated Chinese women in 1937 in the city of Nanking (Argibay, 2003; Collins, 2017; Heit, 2009). Referred to as the ‘Rape of Nanking,’ estimates suggest that between 20,000 and 80,000 Chinese women were assaulted (Collins, 2017). The Rape of Nanking was part of a larger targeted attack against civilians by the Japanese army

Collins, 2017; Motoyama, 2018; O'Brien, 2016). These stations were situated in Japan, the Philippines, China, Indonesia, Hong Kong and Thailand. For most of the comfort women, recruitment involved deception, coercion and force, and once recruited they were beaten and raped. The stories of the comfort women remained untold until the 1980s and 1990s. In 1992, the UN identified the comfort women system as a crime against humanity, and as a system of sexual slavery contrary to international law. Then finally in 1993, following a long period of denial, Japan finally accepted responsibility for the comfort stations (see Motoyama, 2018 for more details). As noted above, more recently ISIS abducted and enslaved Yazidi women and forced them into sexual slavery (more on this in the following chapter).

The subject of coerced sexual activities in the context of war/armed conflict is a contentious one. Feminists disagree on where female victimisation ends, and agency, if exhibited at all, begins. Let us explore this in more detail.

Feminist Debates About Coerced Sexual Activities

We begin with Fogelman (2012). Fogelman (2012, p. 22) prefers to use the term 'entitlement rape', rather than survival sex. For her, terms such as 'sex in exchange for food' facilitate victim precipitation. According to her analysis of 'survival sex' during the Holocaust, this was an act of rape, where, in this example, the male perpetrator feels entitled to rape the female victim because he believes he has done her a favour. In line with Fogelman's analysis, more recently scholars have described coerced sexual activities, particularly when children are involved, as sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) (Ferris, 2007, Freccero, Biswas, Whiting, Alrabe, & Seelinger, 2017; Highgate, 2007; Karim & Beardsley, 2016; Mudgway, 2017; Nduka-Agwu, 2009; O'Brien, 2011; Olivius, 2016a, 2016b).

Since the 1990s, there have been reports of this violence against local women and children by aid workers, peacekeepers, humanitarian workers and community leaders in post-conflict, crisis and emergency settings. In 2003, the Secretary General produced a Bulletin entitled *Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse*. In it, sexual exploitation is defined as:

[A]ny actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes including but not limited to profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.

(Heit, 2009). According to estimates, between 260,000 and 350,000 civilians were shot, stabbed and burned alive during the massacre (Collins, 2017). Based on the 'pressure cooker theory', discussed in Chapter 1, it was believed that these 'comfort stations', by offering sex on demand, would satisfy men's innate sexual appetites. This would then curtail their desire for/need to rape.

While sexual abuse is defined as: ‘the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal coercive conditions’ (United Nations Secretary General’s Bulletin, 2003). This type of survival/transactional sex has been documented in peacekeeping missions in Kosovo, the DRC, West Africa, Haiti, East Timor and Cambodia (Karim & Beardsley, 2016; O’Brien, 2011). In this context, local women and children provide sex in exchange for food or other aid.

Many of the allegations of SEA by peacekeepers emerged prior to 2000. It was only in 2003 that the then UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, prohibited SEA by UN forces (Mudgway, 2017; see Ferris, 2007 for more details of the responses by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the UN more generally). Since this time, the UN has adopted a zero-tolerance approach to SEA, banning peacekeepers from exchanging sex for money or for food. Despite this, transactional sex between peacekeepers and local women persists (Karim & Beardsley, 2016). In the last few years, research has uncovered SEA against young male refugees (Freccero et al. 2017; I will return to this in Chapter 6).

Feminists have criticised the UN zero-tolerance approach for the lack of agency women are afforded and for failing to consider the legitimacy of survival/transactional sex (Mudgway, 2017). Feminists such as Diane Otto (2007 as cited in Mudgway, 2017; Nduka-Agwu, 2009) believe that ‘survival sex’ – even when entered into as a result of poverty/unemployment – does involve consent and therefore should be treated differently from sexual offences such as rape, forced prostitution or sexual slavery. However, as Mudgway (2017, pp. 1456–1457) states:

The assumption that these women are exercising agency in their ‘choice’ to engage in survival sex oversimplifies the reality of such relationships. It is not about agency...it is about survival.

And yet, Otto is not alone. Other feminists have raised concerns about reductive explanations of women’s involvement in survival/transactional sex and the global sex trade more broadly (see Kempadoo, 2001; Kimm & Sauer, 2010; Sjoberg, 2013; Sullivan, 2003). In particular, concerns are raised around either/or binary positions that frame actions as either free or forced; voluntary or involuntary (O’Connor, 2017, p. 9). These writers encourage us to adopt a more nuanced approach, one that appreciates the complex nature of the choices women make in conflict and post-conflict settings.

These debates can be mapped onto larger debates about sex work and prostitution. Briefly, these fall into two main categories: abolitionists/radical feminists and sex radicals (Carline, 2011). The former view prostitution as a form of violence against women. They believe violence is intrinsic to prostitution and ‘the distinction between “forced” and “voluntary” prostitution is... a myth’ (Weitzer, 2005, p. 935). For these feminists, some type of coercion, exploitation and domination is always present (Weitzer, 2005). At the other end of the spectrum are the sex radicals who adopt a more progressive outlook. They reject the notion that prostitution or sex work more generally, ‘...is always already exploitative and

victimizing...’ (Carline, 2011, p. 316). They prefer to use the term sex worker and argue that sex work can and should be regarded as a legitimate form of labour.

While I recognise the merits (and indeed the shortcomings) of both viewpoints, I believe that, in the context of coerced sexual activities during war/armed conflict, we should adopt Liz Kelly’s (1988) notion of a continuum of sexual violence, where at one end of the spectrum we have rape and aggressive acts of sexual violence, and at the other end, we have a range of consensual acts that are submitted to under duress and coercion. For my discussion of forced prostitution and survival/transactional sex in Iraq and Syria, respectively, I will employ Sjoberg and Gentry’s (2008, p. 18) ‘relational autonomy approach’. This approach views individual choices as ‘...neither completely independent of context (reactively autonomous) nor entirely involuntary (dependence), but somewhere in between, where they maintain identity independence but decide in a socially constrained world’. Put simply, ‘...no choice is completely independent either of its chooser or its context’ (see also Sjoberg, 2007).

In cases where women have been trafficked for sexual purposes (Iraq) or have been enslaved for sexual purposes (Syria), I lean more towards the radical feminist viewpoint and regard these as acts of violence against women, where coercion, exploitation and domination are clearly present.

Having outlined the various types of coerced sexual activities relative to war/armed conflict, as well as the debates that arise when we try to understand women and girls’ relationship to these behaviours (victims or agents), we will now consider such activities in post-invasion/occupation Iraq.

Trafficking, Sexual Slavery and Forced Prostitution in Post-invasion/occupation Iraq

The Forced Migration Review reports that almost 3,500 Iraqi women went missing between 2003 and 2007. The likelihood is that many were trafficked for the purposes of sexual slavery and forced prostitution (Dakkak, 2007; HRW, 2011; Marcovich, 2010). In a more recent report for *Reuters*, Emma Batha reports that at least 10,000 women and girls were abducted or trafficked for sexual exploitation since the start of the war in 2003 (Batha, 2015). Iraq is the country of origin. Key destinations include Syria, the United Arab Emirates and other countries in the Gulf (HRW, 2011).

In a report for BBC news, Lina Sinjab (2007) investigated the experiences of Iraqi female refugees in Syria. She shares the story of Rafif, a 14-year-old Iraqi girl who, banned from earning money in the formal economy, was forced into the illicit economy in order to survive. She worked in clubs making \$30 dollars a night but could earn \$100 dollars if she agreed to go with men to their private villas. She says:

A woman came and spoke to my mother, who agreed to send me to these places. We needed the money. I have already been arrested for prostitution and sent back to Iraq, but I came back with a false passport.

As Sinjab reports, not all women ‘chose’ to enter the industry. Nada, a 16-year-old Iraqi girl, was left by her father at the Iraq–Syria border where five men kidnapped her and took her to Damascus. She was raped, sold and forced to provide sexual services. Hassan (2007), reporting for *The Independent* in Damascus, came across a similar story of female Iraqi refugees forced into the illicit economy in order to survive. She states: ‘no one knows how many end up as prostitutes, but Hana Ibrahim, founder of the Iraqi women’s group Women’s Will, puts the figure at 50,000’ (Hassan, 2007). Hassan (2007) interviewed Fatima, an Iraqi refugee and mother of two, who went to Syria after her husband was killed. Like Raffif, she was denied access to formal employment and had to resort to selling sex in order to survive. These are three examples, but they represent a larger problem. As a UN refugee worker noted at this time: ‘[w]e are coming across increasing numbers of women who do not manage to make ends [meet] and are therefore more vulnerable to exploitative situations such as prostitution’ (as cited in Sinjab 2007).

In their 2010 report, *Prostitution and Trafficking of Women and Girls in Iraq*, the Organization of Women’s Freedom in Iraq (OWFI) documented over 70 cases of trafficking and forced prostitution in 2008. They estimated that at least 200 women and girls were sold into sexual slavery each year. The report is based on a police investigation into a criminal ring responsible for trafficking 128 women from the province of Diyala in 2007 (HRW, 2011; OWFI, 2010). Many of these women and girls, some of whom were as young as 12, had been displaced and had either been tricked into prostitution as part of the criminal economy or sold sex as a survival mechanism (coping economy) (Zoepf, 2007). In addition, prostitution exposed these women to sexual violence and abuse, which can lead to sexually transmitted diseases and exposure to HIV/AIDS (Sjoberg, 2013).

Arranged and forced marriages were also used as a means for traffickers to transport women internally and internationally. In some cases, the families were responsible for forcing the girl into marriage in order to alleviate dire economic circumstances (HRW, 2011; U.S. Department of State, 2012). Here, we can draw on Cohn’s (2013) observation that women’s unequal status and vulnerability leave women and girls open to sexually exploitative relationships. The activities of traffickers can be placed in Peterson’s criminal economy. As HRW (2011) note, these are sophisticated and complex criminal networks. Younger girls, especially those under the age of 16, were the most lucrative. Girls as young as 11 and 12 were sold for up to \$30,000, while older women were sold for around \$2,000 (HRW, 2011).

In terms of forced prostitution, as a form of structural GBV, OWFI (2010) report a substantial rise in the number of women who engaged in forced prostitution following the 2003 invasion/occupation (see also Marcovich, 2010; Micha, About-Atta, Macaud, & Barnes, 2011).

Jamjoom (2009) shares the story of Wedad, who recounts her experience of becoming a prostitute:

It was extremely difficult to make the decision to do this, because nobody goes into this wanting to do it. My situation forced me into it because I couldn’t find a job and the government didn’t have a job for me.

Yanar Mohammed, who works for OWFI, estimates that there were thousands more women like Wedad, who were forced into prostitution. Speaking in 2009, she states: '[i]n many of the cases, this is what happens. She is either a widow or an orphan of this war, and she has no alternatives' (see Jamjoom, 2009). Similarly, in 2007, in an interview with Zoepf (2007) in *The New York Times*, Sister Marie-Claude Naddaf – a nun from the Good Shepherd convent located in Damascus – stated: 'so many of the Iraqi women arriving now are living on their own with their children because the men in their families were killed or kidnapped'. She continues: 'I met three sisters-in-law recently who were living together and all prostituting themselves. They would go out on alternate nights...and then divide the money to feed all the children'.

According to a report by HRW, in 2011, female victims of trafficking, and those who engaged in forced prostitution, were subjected to harsh and unfair treatment by the Criminal Justice System. Many of the women and girls caught up in the illicit economy found themselves in prison. The Iraqi government prosecuted and convicted female victims for illegal acts committed while they were being trafficked, for example, for using false documents and engaging in prostitution (HRW, 2011). At the time of their report, HRW (2011) accused the Iraqi government of doing little to tackle the trafficking of women and girls. They highlighted the lack of criminal prosecutions brought against those engaged in human trafficking and the negligible support for victims. Furthermore, despite the implementation of counter-trafficking laws in 2010, enforcing this law was not a priority for authorities (HRW, 2011).

At this point, it will be useful to return to our discussion of coping, combat and criminal economies. For Peterson, prostitution is a reflection of how these economies intersect (Peterson, 2009, p. 56). She states:

[...] an upsurge in prostitution subjects increasing numbers of women and girls to adverse conditions that impede their role in social reproduction, while it simultaneously 'satisfies' male desires for access to women's bodies in the combat economy (occupying forces as well as Iraqis), and provides illicit profits for pimps and traffickers in the criminal economy.

Employing a gendered lens allows us to appreciate that forced prostitution – either as a coping strategy or through trafficking – is not a natural or necessary part of war/armed conflict. As argued earlier, it is linked to macro-level, structural exploitative economic systems.

Masculinities of Empire, Postcolonialism and Neoliberalism

Forced prostitution (as a means of survival) and the trafficking of females for sexual purposes are examples of the physical and structural GBV that was perpetrated against women and girls in and out of Iraq. True (2010, p. 40) argues that, when trying to address global violence against women, many approaches fail to make connections between the impact of the '...financial

crises, macroeconomic policies and trade liberalisation' and the occurrence of GBV. What is missing is a political economy approach that provides a thorough gendered analysis of the socio-economic (and political) conditions that facilitate GBV. Attention needs to be paid to the relationship between global economic processes, such as neoliberalism, which operate at the macro-level, and forced prostitution (both as a means of survival and as a result of trafficking), which operates at local level.

Jacobson (2013, p. 228) argues that the neoliberal model has had a profound global impact across the 'industrialized North and the developing South'. She traces the implementation of this model to the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank (this was also discussed in the previous chapter; see also Kempadoo, 2001 who discusses this in the context of the global sex trade). As a result of war/armed conflict, and the economic crises of the 1980s, national governments in developing regions borrowed from these two western institutions. Their loans were approved on condition that these countries adopted the neoliberal model (Jacobson, 2013). As Isenberg notes, military subcontracting and privatisation are just some elements of neoliberalism (Isenberg, 2011). In the context of Iraq, and under the leadership of the Bush administration, to paraphrase Looney (2004, p. 1):

Globalization, free markets, and reduced government involvement in the marketplace were regarded as the necessary components for rapid economic recovery in Iraq. For Iraqis, however, neoliberalism, particularly in its 'shock therapy' form, is just another example of an imprudent [w]estern experiment imposed upon a fragile state.

The key political justification for the imposition of this neoliberal regime was the argument that it was the only way to eradicate corruption from within Iraq's public sector (see Whyte, 2007 for a more detailed discussion). Yet, neoliberal reform in Iraq has come under widespread criticism from both within and outside the country (Duncanson, 2013; Looney, 2004). Herring and Rangwala (2005, p. 668), for example, argue that the economy of Iraq has been reconstituted from the top and from the bottom, reflecting a range of globalising agendas. Furthermore, they argue that, in order to understand how Iraq was reconstituted, we need to consider 'national, international and transnational' currency and investments; 'institutions of global neoliberalism' and US empire-building (Herring & Rangwala, 2005). Put simply, the Iraqi State, contrary to section 14 of UNSCR 1483 (2003), was locked into a neoliberal economic model. This is a constituent element of 'imperial globalization', a term coined by Herring and Rangwala (2005, p. 668). As such, we can apply Connell's masculinities of empire, post-colonialism and neoliberalism (Connell, 1998).

Space will not permit an in-depth review of the various Executive Orders (aimed at privatising the Iraqi economy) that were issued by the Coalition Provisional Army (see Whyte, 2007). Suffice to say, in addition to the 'profound and

perhaps irreversible structural consequences for the Iraqi economy', under the Anglo-American privatisation agenda, 'national and international laws were... subordinated to neoliberal principles of economic organization' (Whyte, 2007, pp. 182, 186). In other words, this top-down socio-economic model, endorsed by the Coalition Provisional Army, involved western corporations and elites (those at the top), taking control over Iraqi oil revenue (those at the bottom) (Whyte, 2007; see also Duncanson, 2013).

Jacobson (2013, p. 229) argues that the neoliberal agenda – clearly a violation of UNSCR 1483 (2003), specifically the section concerning the development fund for Iraq – had gendered impacts. Speaking specifically about the gendered impact on war-shattered economies, she notes that neoliberalism involves 'shrinking the [S]tate', which leads to cuts in welfare and public spending. This monetary reduction, Jacobson argues, has an impact in precisely the areas that could be most enabling and empowering for women and girls affected by conflict. As demonstrated in this chapter, the privatisation of the economy in Iraq had a detrimental effect on females, particularly widows and female-headed households, where women and girls were forced into prostitution as a survival mechanism or, were trafficked for sexual slavery by profit-seeking criminal networks who exploited the informal economy in post-invasion/occupation Iraq.

Conclusion

A feminist ethics of war (discussed in the previous chapter) pays attention to interpersonal *and* structural forms of GBV during war/armed conflict. In the context of Iraq, this means acknowledging, as I have done in this chapter, the gendered consequences of this invasion and occupation, particularly for civilian women and girls, but for civilians more broadly.

The goal of this chapter was to unpack how neoliberal policies inform the violence(s) (both interpersonal and structural) of armed conflict. This chapter has demonstrated how the privatisation agenda of the west triggered the collapse of the formal economy in Iraq. This was replaced by an illicit economy which resulted in interpersonal and structural violence against women and girls. The detrimental impact of globalisation masculinities in Iraq forced women *and* men into the illicit economy. This chapter provides another example of how gender informs the experiences of victims, survivors and perpetrators, revealing the ways in which armed conflict impacts males and females in qualitatively different and differential ways.

Although the time period referred to in this piece is between 2003 and 2011, we can observe more recent examples of men's and women's engagement in informal economies within and beyond the conflict zone. This will be done in the following chapter with reference to Syria. Departing from the analysis provided here, in my discussion of survival sex in Syria and beyond, I unpack the relationship between extreme weather events, such as droughts, and coerced sexual activities.