



Julia Carolyn Sachseder (2023). *Violence against Women in and beyond Conflict: The Coloniality of Violence* (Çatışma İçinde ve Ötesinde Kadına Yönelik Şiddet: Şiddetin Sömürgeleşmesi). London New York: Routledge, 243 pages, ISBN: 978-1-003-14833-3

Even though the 21st century saw an unprecedented social and economic changes which improved women's inclusion in public spheres, yet the violence against women is a global menace which needs to be analyzed and addressed. Julia Carolyn Sachseder's¹ new book *Violence against Women in and beyond Conflict* presents an ethnographic study of gendered violence against women in Columbia which continues to impact women's emancipation in the conflicted region. This book is part of a world series in Gender in a Global/Local Worlds, edited by Jane Parpart, Marianne H. Marchand and Rirhandu Mageza-Barthel.

Violence against Women in and beyond Conflict is organized into seven main parts, dissecting the complexity associated with this global phenomenon from a regional perspective i.e., violence against women in post-colonial Columbia. The introduction Peace for Some, and a Continuum of Violence for Others of the book explains that since the signing of the peace accord in Colombia more than 800 social activists and over 200 ex-FARC members have been killed in targeted assassinations, massacres have increased, forced displacements have continued, and sexual violence has remained prevalent. Most of the acts of sexual violence and displacement have been related to paramilitaries. In this section, author points out that while violence against women occurred everywhere and across all socio-economic classes, this continuum of violence was not directed against all women and men in the same way and with the same purpose but disproportionately affected specific groups of Colombia's population, namely women and especially those of African and Indigenous descent.

The author claims that the violence continues at the same time as the peace agreement is celebrated within and outside Colombia. In author's view, the Indigenous and Afro-descendant women faced sexual violence and displacement. This book is rich in women's narratives, thoughts, and emotions. The first part of the book a State of the Art and Theoretical Perspectives on Conflict, Sexual Violence, and Displacement, explains a theoretical framework that theorizes the junctions of gender, race, and class in producing violence as part of the same system anchored in conditions of coloniality.

The author provides details of the ethnographic research carried out in Colombia. The book builds upon lived experiences of conflict-affected women. Extensive ethnographic research was conducted in 2016 and 2017 in some of Colombian rural and urban areas affected by violence and conflict. This chapter provides a critical engagement with the state of the art and existing theorizations on the relationship between the global political economy, conflict, and political violence before establishing the concept of "coloniality of violence."

This book builds on and further develops understandings of (postcolonial) gendered and racialized hierarchies in the global political economy for the purpose of legitimizing and naturalizing the production and invisibilization of violence against women. In part two, *A Feminist Ethnography of Violence in (Post) Colonial Settings*, the author explains details methodological strategies to critically discuss the positionality and situatedness of the researcher as implicated within the “colonial power matrix” Ethnographic field work, narrative interviewing, and focus group discussions were methods employed to understand war, violence, and (in)security. Ethnographic research was conducted in 2016 and 2017 in some of Colombia’s rural and urban areas affected by violence and conflict. The author conversed with more than 80 individuals. (Interviews and focus group) These included mostly women from Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities.

Author drew on rich feminist and post/decolonial scholarship. Women’s experiences are conceptualized not as isolated but as dialectically relational to e.g., gender, race, and class. The author highlights that violence against women speaks to processes of victimization throughout Colombia that are systematically produced at the intersection of transnational capital, gender, and race. Part three - *Understanding Present Through Past: Colombia’s Colonial Experience and its Armed Conflict in Historical Perspective* of the book presents the historical and political-economic developments in Colombia. Author points out how the colonial power matrix and its main promise, modernity, have been fundamental to the nation-building process along with capitalist development in Colombia. As the section argues, the transition from the colonial period was thus not a radical transformation of power structures but rather a perpetuation of the colonial/modern ontology through the (material and discursive) conquest of the “damnés”

The author highlights how since the beginning of colonialism in Colombia, the idea of racialized and gendered difference had been reinforced and continued to serve in ordering the political, economic, and epistemic relations through exclusion/inclusion dichotomies. The author contextualizes the relationship between colonialism, armed conflict and gendered violence. This book further illuminates how gender can be utilized during war and conflict either to consolidate social oppression on women or conversely, to be channeled to break it. The chapter introduces and differentiates between the involved actors, including the guerrilla groups, paramilitaries, drug-traffickers, the state, and later the United States as well as transnational corporations (TNCs). It is explained how colonialism and the formation of the nation-state have (re)produced intersectional power asymmetries and the colonial notion of the “Other” women and men as always-already devaluated.

In part four, *Women’s Experiences of Violence and Insecurities in Colombia’s Conflict*, the author describes the women’s personal accounts, backgrounds, and positionalities, their everyday experiences of violence with racialized, gendered, and economic structures in Colombia. The author quotes experiences of Colombian women and focuses on women’s relationship to land as a form of empowerment in the context of pre-existing gendered and racialized power

relations before engaging with the production of gendered and racialized violence intensified by TNCs, paramilitaries, and the state. Many women understood their construction as an Indigenous or Black woman.

In author's viewpoint, the sexual violence and internal displacement multiplicate and disproportionately affect Afro-descendant and Indigenous women in those zones that have previously been sites of violent colonization and in which global economic actors, such as TNCs, have emerging or developing mega-projects. Violence in Colombia has its roots in colonialism and is linked to gendered and racialized forms of oppression within the global political economy. Women's conflict experiences are manifestations of a continuum of gendered and racialized violence exacerbated by the relationship between TNCs, the state, and paramilitarism. The narrative insights gained through by ethnographic intersectional analysis present powerful examples of this complex correlation.

The fifth part of the book "After" Violence: Territory, Identities, and Resistance, the author highlights women's development of multiple forms of resistant agency through the establishment of "subaltern community-building" in the ambivalent context of peace and conflict. These themes add to the understanding of the political economy of violence by giving voice to and making visible some of women's long-hidden conflict stories. The chapter explains the relationship between violence and territory; the disruption of family bonds, social networks, and identity, psychological and physical health problems within a system of state's impunity. The author sees women as not only victims but also as agents in a context of generalized and structural violence in a postcolonial country with unstable peace.

In her words women built up their own support networks, participated in a variety of acts of peace building, and develop solidarity alliances, especially given the high risk of insecurities and violence many of them face, contributing to a new sense of independence and self-identity. They formed their own grassroots organizations with a focus on gendered and racialized violence. Through their engagement with each other, they worked to challenge the gendered dichotomies of active/passive and the racialized image of the "powerless" and victimized "Other" woman.

In the sixth and ultimate part of the book, "The Coloniality of Violence: Women's Experiences of Extractive Insecurities in Colombia and Beyond, the author discusses the major findings critically and systematically by highlighting its theoretical, methodological, and empirical contributions to peace and conflict studies in International Relations more broadly, to feminist global political economy and feminist security studies more specifically. Those who are primarily affected by sexual violence, their experiences are the center of the ethnographic research, corroborated with NGO reports, and other scientific studies; and it offers in-depth insights into the dynamics of violence in Colombia but goes beyond this case.

Concluding Remarks

Julia Carolin Sachseder's new book *Violence against Women in and beyond Conflict*, details the key impediments to ending violence towards women globally

explaining how ‘other’ is created and how masculinities and femininities are shaped in a post-colonial armed conflict region. Sachseder’s book is impressive, providing a comprehensive and detailed account of the issue. Although violence against women in conflict zones is a topic increasingly gaining international attention, it is paramount to foster greater discussion on the cultural, societal, political, and structural causes contributing to violence against women, making this a timely book. The foundation of the book lies on lived experiences of Colombian women which they shared with the author during her time in Colombia. The author considers her research “not as an abstract scientific undertaking but as a political practice to challenge what’s expected and expand what we know about violence, war, and peace”.

The book further explores the practices and constructs that lead to sexual violence and internal displacement in armed conflict regions. For this purpose an ethnographic research is conducted and it offers cutting-edge insights. The author argues that to understand violence against women it is important to understand the intersection of transnational capital, race, and gender because it produces as well as maintains the violence. The author highlights that violence against women is a process of victimization throughout Colombia that is systematically produced at the intersection of transnational capital, gender, and race. The book uses the Colombian armed conflict as the primary case study but develops a broader framework for theorizing and understanding the relationship between the global political economy, the history of coloniality, and intersectional constructions of gender and race regarding conflict and violence. Author sees violence against women as part of a larger system of political, social, and economic inequality that is rooted in colonialism, and exploited and aggravated by transnational capital relations. The author points out that state and non-state actors especially the paramilitaries, are involved in this violence. The book highlights implications for meaningful and sustainable peace in post-conflict contexts.

Colombia has considerable deposits of natural resources, which include coal, petroleum, and gold. Therefore, land is seen as a commodity and being the center of disputes, it is the core reasons for structural and overt violence in Colombia’s armed conflict. The book highlights how abundance of natural resources caused high levels of sexual violence and internal displacement. Armed actors in Colombia control and evacuate areas where gold deposits or other resources were present. Sexual violence and internal displacement were aggravated by global and local efforts to “clear” fertile land for (transnational) capital. Women racialized as Black or Indigenous were primary targets of sexual violence and displacement. It can be said that the author presents the global political economy of Colombia’s armed conflict.

This colonial dichotomy of human/not fully human helped construct Indigenous and Afro-descendant women as primary targets who could get raped and displaced. The state or the international community never provided any support to them. Violence not only served as part of a strategy of displacement to fragment and disintegrate the affected communities with the purpose of clearing land for the implementation of mega-projects in the extractive sector.

This book elucidates that violence against women serves symbolic and social gains through dehumanization as a symbolic attack on the entire community and as an instrument to impose social means of control by a particular gendered and racialized regime that is rooted in colonial time. The author argues that in order to understand the very structure and conditions of sexual violence and internal displacement it is crucial to understand an analysis of paramilitary group's relationship with the state and TNCs in the context of intersectional and post-colonial power relation

This book sets out a dialectic approach of why peace for some may mean violence for others. It highlights the broader social, economic, and political conditions that generate and maintain structural and overt violence in (post)conflict settings. The author skillfully carries out the complex discussion with clarity and elegance, making this reading accessible to the readers. This work is of importance and interest to students and scholars of international relations, gender studies, and conflict studies; as well as policymakers, (non)governmental organizations, and practitioners interested in conflict and security.

Beyond doubt, the book's highlights are parts three and four. These lay down the foundations for a deeper understanding of violence against women as analyzed through ethnographic research embedded in race, gender, and political economy. In part four, the chapter dealing with lived experiences of sexual violence provides a holistic perspective of violence against women in Colombia in particular.

The author brings women's voices to the fore by providing a detailed empirical analysis of their everyday experiences emphasizing on the economic, political, cultural, and social effects in terms of women's experiences of dispossession, loss of community as well as limited access to economic resources and health care. Author points out how gender and race as "embodied markers" are central in informing women's experiences and prolonging the state and effects of violence. By eliciting how vulnerabilities, positionalities, and processes of victimization affect women in various ways, this chapter, thus sensibilizes towards women's histories of agency and oppression. Author has done a more structural analysis by situating them within debates on transnational capital networks and (post)colonial constructions of gender and race. Sachseder points out how and why specific groups were more vulnerable and thus focus on specific types of violence, the involved actors, the context, and the effects on women's lives.

The author highlights violence against women as part of a larger system of political, social, and economic inequality that is rooted in colonialism, and exploited and aggravated by transnational capital relations bringing to the discussion a sociological, and international approach to the topic. She maps out the socio-cultural factors and power structures in modern societies that are contributing to sexism. Sachseder highlights that structural causes of violence against women are pervasive in the 21st century in armed conflict regions. Her unique perspective and ethnographic experiences make this book thoroughly engaging and surprising on many levels. The author's approach is courageous.

She delves deep into gender studies discussions regarding the formation of masculinities and femininities, and culture-related issues. Through a feminist perspective, she explains how violence against women in Colombia had its roots in colonialism yet that violence continued even during armed conflict and after peace negotiations.

The book is impressive in its content and structure. It is a compelling read. This book brings the contentious issue of violence against women to the forefront of the international academic debate. Sachseder's work is an essential read for all those with an interest in gender studies and international relations, politics and gender, gendered violence, women's rights, feminist theory, and conflict studies. The author's mastery of this complex discussion is presented with clarity and elegance, making this reading accessible to experts in the field as well as non-academic public.

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