

Keynote Lecture

Elisabeth Jean Wood (Yale University)

## Rape as a Practice of War: Towards a Typology of Political Violence

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Gästehaus der Universität Bremen, Auf dem Teerhof 58, 28199  
Bremen

Much of the literature whether academic, policy or journalism holds that when rape occurs frequently on the part of an armed organization, it is a strategy (or tactic or weapon) of war. But this presumption does not explain the well-documented variation in conflict-related rape. In particular, some cases of conflict-related rape are better understood as a practice: it has not been purposefully adopted as policy for group objectives at some level of command but is nonetheless tolerated by commanders and driven by social interactions among combatants. Departing from principal agent models of political violence, I emphasize the horizontal, social interactions between combatants in addition to the usual vertical relationship between the combatant and commander to develop a typology of conflict-related rape that distinguishes between rape as a practice and as organizational policy. I analyze when rape is likely to be prevalent as a practice and as a strategy, emphasizing not only the gendered norms and beliefs of the society from which combatants come but also those of combatants and commanders as re-shaped by socialization processes within the organization. I conclude with a brief assessment of the argument's implications and suggest that the typology is relevant for analysis of political violence in general.

Elisabeth Jean Wood is Professor of Political Science, International and Area Studies at Yale University and a member of the External Faculty of the Santa Fe Institute. She is the author of *Forging Democracy from Below: Insurgent Transitions in South Africa and El Salvador* and *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador*. Among her recent articles and book chapters are "Ideology and Civil War: Instrumental Adoption and Beyond," "Multiple Perpetrator Rape during War," "Transnational Dynamics of Civil War," "Rape during War Is Not Inevitable: Variation in Wartime Sexual Violence".

The presentation takes place in the framework of the workshop "International Interventions against Sexual and Gender Based Violence in Conflict", organized by Alex Veit and Lisa Tschörner. **Admission to the general public is free of charge. To register please send an email to [veit@uni-bremen.de](mailto:veit@uni-bremen.de).**