

JILL STEANS

**GENDER &
INTERNATIONAL
RELATIONS**

THIRD EDITION

FULLY REVISED AND EXPANDED

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Gender and International Relations

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Theory, Practice, Policy

Third Edition

JILL STEANS

polity

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First published in 2013 by Polity Press

Polity Press
65 Bridge Street
Cambridge CB2 1UR, UK

Polity Press
350 Main Street
Malden, MA 02148, USA

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ISBN-13: 978-0-7456-7012-6

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

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Acknowledgements

My thanks go to Olivia Mooney, Heather Owen, Nadia Siddiqui and Jochebed Fening who undertook literature searches in a number of areas covered in the book. The resources which enabled this support were afforded to me by the Department of Political Science and International Studies (POLSIS), University of Birmingham. I would like to express my gratitude to three anonymous readers of the first draft of this manuscript; their helpful, insightful and constructive comments have, I hope, resulted in a much improved book. It is always a pleasure to work with Louise Knight at Polity Press. On this occasion I benefited from the assistance of David Winters too (also Polity Press). My thanks also go to Leigh Mueller for her thorough and efficient work at the copy-editing stage. Last, but not least, the writing of this book would not have been possible without the continuing love and support of Luke and Ria.

Introduction

The first edition of *Gender and International Relations* was published in 1998. At that time, there was a growing specialist literature on gender, inspired – initially – by a special issue of the journal *Millennium* devoted to the theme of ‘Gender and International Relations’¹ (1988) and the publication of Cynthia Enloe’s engaging book *Bananas, Beaches and Bases* (1989).² While gender studies and feminist theories had long been accommodated within other branches of the social sciences, prior to the appearance of these publications International Relations (IR) had not much noticed the relevance of gender in international relations/politics and had scarcely engaged with feminist theories or gender and sexuality studies.

The 1990s was also a significant decade with regard to gender issues in the practice of international politics. At the Fourth United Nations (UN) Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, efforts to ‘mainstream’ gender into all substantive areas of international and national policy, which began at an earlier meeting in Nairobi, gained significant momentum. Since 1995, gender mainstreaming has given rise to a plethora of policies and some landmark developments in international law; for example, in human rights, asylum and humanitarian intervention.

Regardless of whether or not one regards gender as now ‘mainstream’, or (still) marginal,³ both within the academic study of IR and in the practice of international politics, the visibility of gender issues has been much heightened since the first edition of *Gender in International Relations* appeared.⁴ Over the same period of time, in addition to generating a specialized literature that covers all substantive areas of study in the discipline, feminist scholars have also contributed to substantive debates within IR theory. Whereas, in 1998, the production of a text on Gender and IR necessitated the mining of related fields of study, such as Sociology, Cultural Studies, Development Studies, Women’s Studies, Gender Studies, Political Science and International Law, and the synthesis of diverse literatures in order to create a discourse on gender in IR, this time around, the challenge has rather lain in deciding what to include and what to (reluctantly) omit from this book.

Ironically, even as ‘first-wave’ feminists in IR pointed to entrenched biases in the construction of the discipline and occasionally complained about marginalization, much (not all) of the earlier literature on *gender* in IR tended to centre on *women* in IR – the first two editions of *Gender and International Relations* included. This is not to say feminist scholars, or those who adopted an – ostensibly – impartial approach to gender, wholly conflated gender and women. Feminist theory is characterized by a conviction that gender is social, not a ‘natural’ or ‘essential’ trait or facet of identity. Moreover, gender is frequently understood in relational terms (how relations between women and men are constructed), or as discursively constructed. Therefore, men and masculinities have always figured in the study of gender in IR. However, from the publication of the *Millennium* special issue and Enloe’s landmark book onwards, early works on gender in IR tended to be driven – one way or another – by the project of making women visible in international politics.

There is, of course, nothing wrong with research projects that make women visible in the field. Moreover, the ‘gender as a variable’ approach can and might be legitimately put to the service of informing policy-making that is ‘women friendly’. This is an objective of many gender mainstreaming initiatives. However, as Terrell Carver⁵ has objected, *gender is not a synonym for women*. Since the

mid-1990s, there have been debates that speak to the marginalization of men and masculinities in the literature on gender in IR. Whether or not this complaint was actually justified, at that time, is a moot point. Subsequently, there has certainly been an expanding literature on masculinities in IR. While it is acknowledged that the coverage of 'gender' in this book continues to reflect the prevalence of scholarship on women in IR, more space is afforded to contemporary work on men and masculinities.

The challenges involved in writing a book that reflects the breadth and diversity of contemporary work on gender in IR has been rendered all the more daunting by developments in the areas of sexuality in IR and in world politics. In regard to the latter, the early twenty-first century has seen significant developments in LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual and Transgender) rights. The Yogyakarta Principles,⁶ a set of international principles relating to gender identity, sexual orientation and human rights which affirm international legal standards, is a case in point. However, even as the critical interrogation of gender and sexuality was a part of the 'first wave' of feminist IR, it is an area that has been – and to a large extent still is – under-investigated in substantive research projects and, consequently, remains marginalized in much of the literature. Once again, this book attempts to counter the marginalization of gender and sexuality in the study of IR by including some discussion of both theoretical and policy approaches to gender and sexuality and by highlighting key developments and debates surrounding LGBT rights.

The major themes of this text, as the sub-title suggests, are *theory, practice and policy*. These themes serve as a useful organizing device, nicely encapsulating the content of subsequent chapters. The approach taken in this book is not theory driven, but theory does nevertheless inform discussions on the substantive issue areas and topics covered. Theory covers both theoretical approaches and debates that have informed the trajectory of development of the discipline of IR as a whole. While IR has a distinctive agenda and focus, it is but one strand of the social sciences. IR theorists, therefore, are necessarily engaged in larger, cross-cutting intellectual debates and theoretical discussions that have informed developments in social sciences and social theory as a whole. In this respect, feminist theories and theories on gender and sexuality are not 'marginal' at all, but are very much central to the social sciences, and should be recognized as such.

In the usages employed in this book, 'practice' refers to a range of things. While the discussion should not be rendered overly complex at this juncture, in a certain sense the act of theorizing is a form of practice. How we conceptualize, map and theorize gender has important consequences for how we adjudge the relevance of gender. How we think about gender, in turn, shapes the world in which we live. For example, if we take gender to be a variable, the knowledge generated by our research might better inform policy-making. However, while the reduction of gender to a **category** or variable is – arguably – necessary for the purpose of *problem-solving*, a different kind of 'problem' is thereby created. We exclude – and perhaps make invisible – social relations of gender and/or the discursive construction of gender and the practices by which gender is reproduced. Policy is implicated here. 'Practice' can also refer to the practices of states – in the making of war, in the conduct of diplomacy or in the design of foreign policy, for example. Alternatively, the term 'practice' might be used to describe the activities of non-state actors: social movements or non-governmental organizations (NGOs), who through acts of protest and dissent, or in their advocacy work and lobbying activities, try to influence events and make a difference in international relations.

The meaning of 'policy' is self-evident. However, the making of policy takes place in a variety of institutionalized contexts: in national parliaments, in regional organizations (the European Union, for example) and in international organizations. Consider here, for example, the significant influence that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has exerted over the fiscal, monetary and, by extension, social

and welfare policies of Greece, in this new age of financial crisis and austerity. Policy-making processes, the implementation of specific policies and the monitoring of policies similarly involve a range of ‘actors’, including elite decision makers within institutions and NGOs.

This book reflects both developments in the discipline and events in the ‘real world’. They are necessarily interconnected. In chapters 1 and 2, the study of gender in international relations is introduced in a way that reflects the diversity of approaches. This will better enable the user of this book to contextualize and make sense of theoretical discussions encountered from time to time throughout this book. It will also enable the reader to appreciate better the empirical focus and import of work in discrete sub-fields, such as conflict or governance for example, covered in subsequent chapters. Chapter 1 is biased towards problem-solving approaches in the study of gender in IR. It includes, however, some discussion of critiques and criticisms of such approaches. Chapter 2 focuses on feminist IR specifically and also includes a brief introduction to current work on men and masculinities and gender identity and sexualities.

Chapter 3 is devoted to what is conventionally thought to be the very core of IR – the state and inter-national, inter-state relations. Here, the state is first defined as a ‘bounded community’. There then follows a discussion of the various ways in which state identities and boundaries are constructed and how gender is implicated in the construction and reproduction of boundaries and identities.

In chapter 4, the focus turns to human rights. Human rights exemplify an alternative tradition of thinking in IR which necessarily engages with states and state practices, but which also challenges state-centric thinking. This is because discourse on human rights arises out of (ostensibly) universal values and **cosmopolitan** visions of international political organization and international society. In this chapter, these values and visions are grounded concretely in issues surrounding women’s rights and LGBT rights.

Chapter 5 is the first of two chapters that centre on peace, violence and security. This chapter engages current debates about the problematic construction of gender in discussions of conflict, peace and violence. Chapter 6 further develops the themes of conflict and peace. Here the scope of discussions initiated in chapter 5 is expanded to include security and peacekeeping. Theoretical concerns are elaborated in the context of concrete discussions of policy, notably United Nations Security Resolution 1325 (UNSCR1325). Greater coverage is afforded to critiques of policy and problem-solving measures in international relations, particularly gender mainstreaming. This chapter also affords some coverage of masculinities and issues of gender and sexuality in security and peacekeeping contexts.

Chapter 7 is something of a ‘stand-alone’ chapter in that it is not concerned with a discrete issue area or subject area in IR. It is rather concerned with (relatively) recent developments in IR theory – specifically narrative approaches (‘story-telling’) and representational practices. This includes, but is not limited to, how gender issues in international politics are represented and simultaneously constructed in the media and in cultural texts like films. The justification for including a chapter on narrative, discourse and practices of representation at this juncture is that it allows for a more lengthy discussion of complex methodological, ontological and epistemological issues. These discussions are grounded in narratives on and representations of the *War on Terror*.

Chapters 8 and 9 also form a discrete section of the book. Chapter 8 maps out the gendered nature of global political economy (GPE) and development. At the time of writing, the world is experiencing the shock waves of global financial crisis, the ripples of which are likely to continue to touch the lives of peoples across the world over the life of this text. It is important, therefore, to interrogate how gender both informs and is shaped by global political and economic processes.

Chapter 9 is devoted to the topic of global governance. Political economy and development are substantive areas of interest within the literature on global governance. Grounding discussions of global governance in the complexities of managing inter-related political, economic and social relations affords an opportunity to delve deeper into the role of international institutions and NGOs in the ‘governance’ of gender.

Chapter 10 is concerned with transnational political networks and attempts to forge political solidarity across national boundaries, concentrating specifically on the feminist movement. While focusing exclusively on feminism, the theoretical discussions of how transnational identities are constructed, the problem of unequal power relations between – in this case – women in different geographical and social locations throughout the world, and the recurring refrain that there is a need for a new, dialogic model and practice if the project of solidarity is to be realized, resonates in wider debates about transnational political action.

The conclusion briefly pulls together the core themes of the book as a whole, attempts to take stock of the field of gender and / gender in IR and anticipates possible future research trajectories.

The style of this book is very different from that of the first edition of *Gender and International Relations*. While part of the project to ‘gender IR’ necessitated the production of teaching texts, the first wave of literature had to do something more – create a discourse within the field. As such, earlier literature tended to take the form of ‘student friendly’ monographs or texts that were ‘hybrids’, so to speak: somewhere between efforts to synthesize literatures, concepts and theories that had been developed elsewhere and bringing them to bear on substantive issues and problems in IR. The task now is to produce a text that can reflect, and synthesize as far as possible current literatures and present the material in a student-friendly, coherent and, hopefully, accessible way. For this reason, this edition of *Gender and International Relations* includes more pedagogical features, such as bullet points and boxes that highlight key concepts, authors and debates and which also provide contemporary illustrations and examples.

The language of gender in IR can be challenging (**epistemology**, **ontology** and so forth). An attempt has been made herein to simplify discussions as far as possible, without falsely representing gender in IR and the literatures covered here as ‘easy’ to grasp. The discussions, arguments, debates and critiques set out in the following pages do require some effort to assimilate and understand. To assist in this task, in addition to highlighting key points and including boxes, further reading, questions for reflection and suggested seminar activities are included at the end of each chapter. An extended reading list is included at the end of the book. The author is aware that different audiences will use this book: students of IR and students in related fields of study who share an interest in world politics, but who are not necessarily schooled in the specific issues and debates that have preoccupied IR scholars. Therefore, some space has been afforded to the elaboration of the same, as and when adjudged helpful. Terms that require further explanation are highlighted in bold at first usage and included in a glossary of terms at the end of the book.

Gender in International Relations

Introduction

This is the first of two chapters that introduce the study of gender in international relations. Taken together, these two introductory chapters convey a flavour of the many ways in which one can think about gender and a number of different ways in which gender can inform the study of world politics. In the first instance, this chapter follows the logic of a ‘common-sense’ approach to gender. That is, the chapter focuses on how gender conceived as difference informs both the theory and practice of international relations. To aid understanding, concepts and theoretical discussions are grounded in substantive issues and concrete examples are supplied and elaborated. The chapter concludes with a brief overview of the debate on the distinction between ‘bringing gender into’ problem-solving approaches in IR and feminist IR. Feminist IR is afforded in-depth attention in chapter 2.

Gender as Difference

In everyday usage, the terms ‘gender’ and ‘sex’ are often used interchangeably. Indeed, one might say that the belief that gender differences are rooted in ‘natural’ or biological difference between men and women, and so are essential differences, is so prevalent that the proposition is still often simply accepted as uncontroversial. In other words, the relationship between sex and gender and the ‘reality’ of essential gender difference is imbued as ‘common-sense.’

That gender is very often conflated with sex and the meaning of gender regarded as self-evident can be demonstrated by pointing to how beliefs about gender often give rise to prejudices against groups and individuals who confound gender stereotypes. In consequence, pejorative terms come to be attached to people and types of behaviour that do not conform to this common-sense view of the relationship between biological sex differences and gender differences. Thus ‘masculine’ women might be derided for acting ‘butch’, empathetic men might be labelled ‘effeminate’, homosexuals characterized as ‘queer’ and so on. People who do not conform to widely held gender stereotypes might be castigated as odd, or deviant, or might even be represented as posing a threat or danger to mainstream society.

? CONCEPT

Intersex

Upon hearing that a friend or relative has given birth to a baby, one of the first questions usually asked is: *Is it a boy or a girl?* Having established the biological sex of a child, it is also very common for friends and relatives then to buy gifts that are deemed appropriate given the *gender* of the newborn baby. Sex and gender stereotyping begins in the very first hours and days of life and continues thereafter.

For very many people, however, the question *boy or girl?* is not so easy to answer. It is estimated that in one in every 2,000 births, the sex of the child is indeterminate. Children born with a physiology or anatomy that differs from conventional notions of what constitutes a ‘normal’ male or female are referred to as *intersex* people.¹ The condition is actually relatively common: as common as the incidence of the birth of twins. It is estimated that, in a city the size of London or New York, there will be some 100,000 people who were born intersex.²

Socially and culturally determined ideas about what is ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal’ in regard to sex and gender create tremendous psychological and social problems for intersex people (and their parents and other family members) as they try to come to terms with ‘difference’. There remains considerable ignorance surrounding the condition in societies at large. It is common for intersex people to be put under pressure to undergo surgery or some other form of medical intervention, and such is the stigma surrounding intersex that people are often denied information about their condition at birth. Today, intersex is regarded as much as a social issue as a personal one. More support groups and services are available to intersex people and their families that not only offer advice and support to individuals, but also make efforts to educate better the population at large about intersex in order to address and remove the ignorance, prejudice and social stigmatization that intersex people encounter.

Throughout history, the claim has been made that women and men are fundamentally different from one another. Very often this notion of difference has been used to support the claim that women are inferior to men. Claims about women’s inferiority alert us to the deeper issues of power that are necessarily encountered when one begins to interrogate the meaning of gender. The Greek philosopher Aristotle held that the masculine was an active, creative force, while the feminine was passive.³ Those who defend Aristotle point out that he placed equal emphasis on women’s and men’s happiness, which he thought to be vital to a good society. Nevertheless, from Aristotle onwards, the history of Western philosophical, social and political thought has been characterized by a strong and recurring theme: women and men are different and this difference matters.

From the seventeenth century onwards, the emergence of capitalism in Western states gave rise to a

body of liberal political thought. In the eighteenth century, an emerging middle class began to demand that state power be circumscribed in regard to the 'private realm' of the family and the market. This increasingly influential class of people also demanded political and legal rights and political representation. Such claims were couched in the language of rationalism: rights claims were rooted in what liberals argued to be the universal human capacity for rational thought which meant that people were able to determine their own best interests and stake a claim to a share in political power. In practice, however, the state granted rights to only a narrow group of people – white, middle-class and upper-class men who, as property owners, were recognized as holding a stake in the political community; others were excluded. Women, along with men from specific social groups – working-class men and, in some cases, men from ethnic minority groups – were denied access to political power, legal personality and citizenship and excluded from public life (denied the right to vote or seek public office).⁴ Moreover, this 'universal' capacity for rational thought was, in practice, only ever applied to men – rationality was deemed to be a masculine characteristic. The justification for excluding women from public and political life and the subjugation of women to male authority was that women were not 'rational' beings, but rather 'irrational', driven by their emotions. Therefore, women were unable to make autonomous choices and look out for their own interests – in other words, women were in need of protection.

In *The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*,⁵ Friedrich Engels famously argued that this period marked the emergence of a particular family form – the privatized family – and also the historical subjugation of women. Engels argued that, with the emergence of modern capitalism, women came to be seen as the private property, or possessions, of men. Engels' seminal work was the first of many texts that have subsequently critiqued the public/private divide as central in understanding the subordination of women. Feminist thinkers would later go further in arguing that gendered constructions of rationality as a masculine capacity and irrationality as a feminine characteristic have similarly served to justify female subjection to male power and authority.

Gender essentialism (see box below) has then served, historically, as the basis for discrimination against women. The seventeenth-century philosopher John Locke, for example, claimed that women (along with children) were inferior to men and that woman's 'irrationality' meant that she was unfit to participate in public life.⁶ Therefore, even though Locke is regarded as a liberal, his argument served as a strong justification for **patriarchy** (the dominance and/or rule of men over women). This is not to say that the construction of women (and certain classes of men) went wholly unchallenged. For example, the Venetian-born medieval author Christine de Pizan (1364–1430) is frequently identified as a forerunner of modern feminism. Similar figures have been uncovered in non-Western societies. For example, the medieval Islamic philosopher Ibn 'Arabī (born Damascus, 1165) was an early proponent of women's rights. However, these detractors notwithstanding, it was not until the late eighteenth century and the publication of Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792)⁷ that an identifiable body of thought championing women's equality emerged in the Western world.

In championing the principle of equality between women and men, early campaigners for women's rights (early 'feminists') adopted a strategy of challenging dominant, patriarchal notions of 'women's nature' and essential sexual difference. Mary Wollstonecraft argued that perceived sex differences were not natural, but rather the consequence of discrimination. Historically women had been confined to the home and to the domestic service of their husbands and children and so had been afforded few opportunities to exercise their intellectual faculties or develop skills other than those deemed

necessary for the performance of their domestic duties.

It is important to notice, however, that Wollstonecraft championed women's rights on the grounds that women were *like* men – they were *rational* beings. This notion of the rational human subject as the norm continues to serve as the foundation of liberal (human) rights claims. There has subsequently been a great deal of discussion in feminist jurisprudence on the implications of taking a historically specific and inherently gendered and class-biased construction of human nature and human **subjectivity** ('rational man') as the 'norm' or universal characteristic of people as a whole.

Even as early prototypes of what we would now recognize as the feminist movement rose to prominence in the West in the nineteenth / early twentieth centuries, claims continued to be made in the name of women's difference. Pioneering groups like the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, an early example of what we would now call an NGO, based their demands for equal rights for women not on the notion that women were like men, but on the idea that women were different from men – more compassionate, naturally peaceful and morally superior. This moral superiority was evidenced, they argued, in women's participation in the temperance movement of the same period.



Figure 1 *Members of the Women in Black peace movement stand in silent vigil on the Arcata Plaza, California, in 2005*

? CONCEPT

Gender essentialism

'Essentialism' is a term employed in academia to denote a belief that certain characteristics possessed by individuals and/or social groups, such as gender or race or sexuality, even nationality, are fixed. That is to say that core facets of the person and personal identity do not change over time and are not altered by context. Essentialism is characteristic of determinist modes of thinking that regard the constitution of the social world as a reflection of natural differences between different groups of people (and indeed animals). Approaches to gender are essentialist when gender attributes and traits are held to be rooted in biological differences: that is, men *naturally* exhibit masculine traits and behaviours, while women are feminine and so will behave in ways that express their *natural* femininity.

As social science emerged as a field of study in the late nineteenth century, sex differences were largely taken for granted, reflecting perhaps the degree to which gender differences were uncontested (or unnoticed) among male-dominated scholarly communities. In the 1920s and 1930s social scientists regarded gender as a personal attribute and the study of gender was largely confined to the study of character traits and 'sex roles'. This notion of sex roles was developed as a way of describing the social functions fulfilled by and seemingly appropriate to men and women. Generally speaking, social scientists supported the 'common-sense' view that men and women had particular characteristics that made them well suited to the performance of particular social roles. This, in turn, gave rise to the notion – and systematic study – of social deviancy (deviation from what was considered the norm or normal). Consequently, those who did not conform to this rigid gender schema often suffered social stigmatization.⁸

Today, gender essentialism – and essentialism generally – is much criticized and not widely subscribed to by scholars. Even as scientists might engage in research to locate gender differences in neurological function or hormones, most concede that socialization plays a large role in the construction of gender identities and that gendered behaviours might be as much learned as natural. Undoubtedly, the emergence of feminist theorizing and other critical work on gender and sexuality from the late 1960s onwards has done much to shake the foundations of essentialism in the academy.

Yet gender essentialism is far from dead in ‘real-world’ politics. Essentialism is a feature of various expressions of fundamentalist thought and practice, for example religious fundamentalism (Christian, Jewish, Islamic) or reactionary forms of nationalism. Here, essentialism typically manifests as intolerance to difference, such that those who do not conform to what are deemed to be the *essential* characteristics of groups are heavily discriminated against and/ or excluded from the community. Thus, religious fundamentalists not only insist that men and women conform to rigid gender stereotypes in their dress, manner and the performance of their roles, but often prescribe social norms, or enact legislation, that support heteronormativity. In many instances, transgressions are penalized or punished. In many parts of the world, openly gay men or transgender people are subjected to discrimination and social stigmatization; in some countries, to be gay openly is to risk imprisonment or even death.

There are, then, good reasons to eschew essentialism, both intellectually and politically. Nevertheless, essentialism poses some tricky dilemmas for those committed to both reformist and radical politics. It is often necessary to embrace essentialism, even as it is acknowledged to be inherently problematic. For example, insofar as gender remains a significant marker of social inequality (as will be documented in later chapters), it is necessary to employ gender as a category that can be utilized in policy-making, and, perhaps, legislation, to address substantive inequalities and discriminatory practices.

Moreover, discussions around gender essentialism and gender differences also give rise to deeper questions of whether one can speak as a woman, or make claims in the name of woman (or, indeed, as a man). The postcolonial feminist thinker Gayatri Spivak has argued for the necessity of strategic essentialism in political struggles. Strategic essentialism is a way of temporarily ‘fixing’ identity so that claims can be made in the name of marginalized groups and people – women, ethnic groups, postcolonial nations.⁹

There have been – and continue to be – several different variants of the ‘gender as difference’ school of thought within feminism – for example radical feminism, cultural feminism and standpoint feminism. There has also been a long historical association between women, the ‘feminine’ and peace. Whether or not women are actually more peaceful than men is a moot point which will be interrogated at greater length in chapter 5. It would be fair to say that the proposition is not widely supported by feminist theorists today.

? CONCEPT

‘Women and children’ in conflict

In her work on transnational efforts to advocate for war-affected civilians, Charli Carpenter (see Further reading) defends an essentialist approach to gender, even though she is fully aware that it is problematic. She argues that human rights advocates operate in the context of pre-existing cultural attitudes and political constraints. As such, they find it helpful to employ the language of ‘women and children’ when advocating for civilian protection because all sides in conflict – the warring parties, transnational constituencies and the media – are receptive to this language (see **strategic framing**). Even though such essentialist ideas reproduce gender stereotypes, and render affected men marginal or invisible,

advocates thereby gain access to affected populations that are in need and are also able to push the issue of civilians onto the international political agenda. Activists calculate that these benefits outweigh the costs that essentialism entails. Therefore, while the language of women and children as ‘innocents’ and victims of war manifest in the UN agenda to protect civilians in armed conflict (see chapter 6) remains profoundly gendered and advocates might recognize that this is a problem, invoking images of ‘innocents’ makes strategic sense.¹⁰

Gender roles as complementary

A variant of the ‘gender as difference’ approach that is making an impact on practice in world politics is the notion of **complementarity**. In the practice of world politics, complementarity is associated particularly with influential faith-based groups, such as the Catholic Church, which has championed this model of gender relations at international conferences – for example the Beijing women’s conference (1995) and conferences on population and development (Cairo, 1994). The gist of the argument on complementarity is:

- Women and men are ontologically different: two complementary components of human society.
- Complementary gender differences are necessary to the well-being and smooth functioning of society.

Gender complementarity has been marshalled as an argument against gender equality – ‘equality’ implying here ‘sameness’. Complementarity is also used to refute the claim that gender differences are at best transitory and irrelevant to how people should be treated in policy, politics, the law, or society generally.

- In place of equality, the language of **equity** is preferred.

This language of complementarity is usually adopted by those of a conservative political and social persuasion. However, it should be noted that the language of gender complementarity is supported by some feminists in non-Western societies who are not necessarily conservatives. This is because they believe that the language of equality is too closely associated with Western liberal societies to be politically persuasive or strategically helpful to women in other parts of the world. The equality agenda is represented as a foreign imposition and so resisted. Thus:

- The language of gender complementarity might serve better to improve the status of women, within certain gendered and culturally determined lifestyles, in many parts of the world.

The Beijing Platform for Action (BPA), adopted at the Fourth UN Conference on Women in 1995, imposed on states an obligation to promote and protect *all* human rights, regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems.¹¹ The BPA also called for the mainstreaming of gender issues into national and international policy-making bodies and processes. Nevertheless, the BPA allowed a degree of discretion in how these broad principles would be implemented, in deference to cultural sensibilities. In practice, those charged with the implementation of women’s human rights and gender mainstreaming often work with a notion of gender roles as complementary.

It is a matter of debate whether or not complementarity and equity are actually compatible with the individualistic language of human rights. At the Beijing conference, liberal states and activists resisted concessions to ‘difference’ fearing this would result in the watering-down of state

obligations to protect and promote women's rights. Feminists sympathetic to cultural pluralist arguments, on the other hand, supported complementarity and equity, either in deference to cultural differences or on pragmatic grounds as the only viable way to mainstream gender in policy-making within specific societies outside of the West.

DEBATE

Gender mainstreaming, empowerment and equality

Mainstreaming has rendered gender ubiquitous in policy-making processes, and yet there is considerable debate regarding the effectiveness of mainstreaming strategies in empowering women. Jacqui True (see Extended Reading) argues that mainstreaming has the potential to change institutional norms in ways that promote gender equality. Mainstreaming embeds a new language in the policy-making world and generates new policy networks at both local and transnational levels, which include non-state actors, and which further strengthen the effectiveness of lobbying on issues of gender equality. However, she also cautions that mainstreaming can be narrowly interpreted as the provision of discrete projects to address women's needs in specific contexts, without promoting gender equality. For this reason, True argues that activists have an important and ongoing role to play in scrutinizing gender mainstreaming processes.

Sylvia Walby (see Extended Reading) also points to the challenges involved in reconciling visions of gender equality and strategies to achieve equality, especially given the cross-cutting nature of social inequalities. This is particularly pertinent today as gender mainstreaming generates a growing number of initiatives to tackle (or at least ameliorate) gender inequality and gender discrimination. In the European Union, gender discrimination has been approached and addressed in a way that seemingly takes on board questions of *intersectionality* (see below), with many EU countries setting up unified equality bodies or enacting Single Equality legislation. Such measures aim to ensure equality of opportunity to all social and ethnic groups, while also taking on board discrimination on the grounds of gender, disability, sexuality and so on. However, there is a danger that, in this process, identities can be reified, while the structural dimensions of inequality are left unaddressed (see Kantola and Nousianinen in Extended Reading).

Gender as a Category of Analysis

A category of analysis is one deemed relevant in the critical investigation of any given issue area, event or phenomenon. So, for example, the instance and distribution of poverty in any given society or globally might be more accurately mapped and better understood if it is broken down into categories like age, class or gender. One way in which gender might be incorporated into the study of IR is as a category of analysis, within an otherwise fairly conventional understanding of what the study of IR entails – the major issues, processes, actors and institutions that IR scholars interrogate, such as foreign policy and war. The employment of gender as a category of analysis does not challenge the boundaries of IR as an academic discipline or field of study.

Empiricist approaches to gender focus largely on women or men as categories of analysis. An example of an empiricist research agenda is one that seeks to uncover the under-representation of women in positions of power in world politics. Such an agenda focuses on the how, when, where and what questions of women in the study of international politics. So, the researcher interested in locating women in positions of power and getting a purchase on the under-representation of women might ask these questions:

- Where are the women leaders in international relations?
- Why are so few women in positions of power?
- What difference, if any, does this make?

Uncovering the extent of political under-representation of women is further helpful in finding an answer to the question:

- Why are ‘women’s issues’ marginalized on the agenda of international politics?

At the same time, the under-representation of women in the academy is a problem, because it is likely to mean that there will be little empirical research on the position of women across the world.

Empiricism has been dismissed as an ‘add women and stir’ approach, because:

- It is based on a rationalist (implicitly liberal) approach.
- It assumes that the bias towards assuming men are the ‘norm’ can be addressed simply, both by including more women as researchers and by more ‘woman-centred’ research in any given field of study.
- Importantly, focusing on women leaves questions of *gender* (as a social relationship, or ideological/discursive construction) unaddressed.

However, as noted above, empiricism is helpful in partially redressing the marginalization of women in the study of (in this case) IR. Empirically driven work can also be *feminist* if the research agenda (and/or political agenda) is driven by a desire to confront issues of power, marginality and under-representation. Sandra Harding¹² argues for the utility of the empiricist project for ‘bringing-in’ women into areas of study where they have been previously neglected. However, at the same time, she recognizes that:

- The employment of ‘woman’ as a universal category, glosses over differences.

- Empiricism has important limitations in what it can actually tell us about gender.



Figure 2 *Participants at a meeting of European Union Heads of State, 1987*



Figure 3 Participants at the G8 summit, 2011

Therefore, Harding defends empiricism as a helpful ‘first stage’ in developing deeper gender analyses of societies, social institutions and social practices. Joan W. Scott¹³ similarly argues that employing gender as a category can actually facilitate the analysis of gendered power relations. To apply Harding’s and Scott’s argument to the ‘first wave’ of feminist scholarship in IR, in her book *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*, Cynthia Enloe began by simply posing the empirical question: *Where are the women?* She then went on to offer many insights into how gendered power relations underpinned an array of practices absolutely central to international politics, such as diplomacy and military operations.

WORLD EXAMPLE

Military expenditure and women’s security

While feminism is not solely concerned with issues of equality, equality in entitlement to health care, education, pensions, unemployment benefits and other forms of social security has been an important strand in feminist politics. One of the tasks of feminist economists (see chapter 8), has been to assess the impact of government expenditure (and expenditure cuts) on women as a group. It is pertinent to ask, therefore, *What impact does military expenditure have on women as a group?*

For poor women in the ‘least developed’ countries, access to economic and social security is still an aspiration that is very far from reach. However, feminist economists have demonstrated that the transfer of resources from the military to the civilian sector of the economy would – in all countries – reap social and economic benefits for all people, but especially women.¹⁴ In developing countries, military expenditure (often very high) has a negative impact on areas like

expenditure on health care and education, which have already been hit hard by decades of debt repayment and structural adjustment (see chapters 8 and 9).

According to a 2010 report¹⁵ published by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, in 2010 global military expenditures were estimated to be \$1,630 billion, representing an increase of 1.3 per cent since 2009. Between the years 2001 and 2009, the conflict in Afghanistan cost coalition states \$287 billion. This is equivalent to a US\$300,000 cash payment to each person in Afghanistan, one of the poorest countries in the world. The Stockholm Institute further claims that militarism increases both the scale and intensity of conflict and violence. The diversion of resources to military campaigns also evidences the failure of states to fulfil their obligations, such as the UN **Millennium Development Goals** on poverty reduction.

Gender as a Variable

‘Gender as a variable’ is a similar approach to ‘gender as a category of analysis’, but the language of ‘variables’ implies a very definite commitment to a positivist epistemology, ontology and methodology (gender as a category need not necessarily imply this commitment). Variables are factors that are deemed to be relevant when producing *explanations* of certain phenomena. Positivists assume that, through vigorous research and analysis and the testing of propositions, we can actually arrive at some tentative ‘truths’ about what factors drive events in international relations and what factors *cause* certain events (the outbreak of war, perhaps) or *explain* outcomes (for example, who gets what in the distribution of resources).

The relevance of a gender variable in international politics must firstly be established by reference to an interesting empirical feature of the international realm that has not (yet) been studied. The relevance of gender ‘does not spring to one’s eyes unless gender is actively used as an analytical tool’¹⁶ and, hence, remains invisible. If one accepts that a certain feminist sensibility is needed to notice gender in the first place (one has to believe that gender is an important and worthwhile object of study), it is then possible to expand the mainstream agenda in IR (war, foreign policy, diplomacy and so on) to include gender as a variable. Incorporating gender as a variable can tell us – positivists claim – whether, when and how gender makes a difference in explaining (state) actions in the ‘real world’.

The mainstream project to ‘bring in’ gender might be sympathetic and complementary to the wider feminist project in IR (see chapter 2). While positivists firmly believe in neutrality in their approach, this is not to say that they rule out normatively driven agendas entirely. So, the ‘gender as variable’ approach might lead to ‘women-friendly’ policies. However, this is not necessarily the case. Bringing in gender as a variable need not necessarily support a feminist project; ultimately, the aim is to understand the world *as it is* and not as one might like it to be.

‘Bringing in’ gender as a variable has been embraced by a number of high-profile IR scholars, including the neoliberal institutionalist Robert Keohane. He argues that gender might be a relevant factor in explaining the peaceful or hostile intentions of states or the likelihood of war, and so this proposition should be tested. The claim that the inclusion of more women in foreign policy-making and in the high politics of statecraft would result in the pacification of states and so decrease the incidence of war was first advanced by moral feminists in the peace movement.¹⁷ Keohane takes up this proposition, but frames it differently. He asks:

- As is seemingly the case with democracies, are states with more egalitarian gender relations less inclined to fight each other?

This hypothesis can be tested by identifying the degree to which ‘countries with highly in-egalitarian gender hierarchies behave differently from those with less gender inequality at home’.¹⁸

It is not surprising that Keohane’s thoughts would centre on foreign policy:

- Research had consistently uncovered a gender gap in foreign policy attitudes in the US in the final decade of the twentieth century, specifically a gender gap in support for the use of military force by the US to achieve foreign policy objectives.
- Prior to the attacks on New York on 9/11, gender differences in support for military action in the US were some of the largest and most consistent in the study of psephology (voting behaviour /

elections).¹⁹

Thus gender differences had direct significance for politicians attempting to gauge the public mood on the use of force. While the empirical evidence might be disputed, the *perception* of a gender gap in support for military action was a key concern for both candidates – George W. Bush and John Kerry – in the 2004 US Presidential election campaign. In the light of these data, it is interesting to speculate on how far the high profile afforded to women's rights in political speeches during the War on Terror (see chapter 6) might be explained by how female and male voters, respectively, might or might not be persuaded to support interventionist foreign policies – specifically military intervention.

The proposition that gender makes a difference in the policy-making process has been taken up by a number of scholars.²⁰ For example, a study by Caprioli and Boyer (see Extended Reading) used statistical data and multinomial logistic regression methodology to assess the record of female leaders, as leading decision makers, during international crises. The study also examined the relationship between domestic gender equality and a state's use of violence. Caprioli and Boyer claim that the results show that the severity of violence in crises decreases as domestic gender equality increases.²¹

Koch and Fulton (see Extended Reading) have used the 'gender as a variable' approach to test the proposition that the participation of women in decision making makes a difference to levels of military/defence expenditure. They conclude that:

the ability of female officeholders to represent women's interests is context dependent – varying with the level of party control over legislators and the gender stereotypes that officeholders confront. Consistent with the literature on stereotypes, we find that increases in women's legislative representation decreases conflict behaviour and defence spending, while the presence of women executives increases both. However, these effects are conditioned by the gendered balance of power in the legislature and the degree of party control in the political system.²⁵

? CONCEPT

WomanStats Project

The WomanStats Project²² is a research and database project based at Brigham Young University in the US. It was founded by Valerie Hudson and Andrea M. Den Boer (see Further reading). From their initial research on the relationship between national security and the abnormal sex ratio in Asia,²³ they began to compile comprehensive data on gender variables. The WomanStats Project contains detailed information on the status of women around the world and connects this information to data on security. The research interrogates possible connections between violence and instability at state level and gender inequality and (for example) family law. Researchers have also taken up the mantle of investigating possible connections between the status of women and the peacefulness, or otherwise, of nation-states, compared to variables such as democracy, wealth and civilization.

This database is now generally acknowledged to be the most detailed and comprehensive of its kind in the world.²⁴ It has been drawn upon by a number of national and international organizations, including the United Nations, the United States Department of Defence, the Central Intelligence Agency, the World Bank and the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. The latter used the data when crafting the International Violence against Women Act. Unsurprisingly, given the nature of debates around the 'gender as a variable' approach in IR (see below), this work has attracted criticism from some feminist scholars who argue that Hudson et al. do not address the complicated power dynamics in gender relations.

To summarize, the 'gender as a variable' approach:

- accepts that the study of IR focuses on a set of distinct problems, notably conflict and cooperation,

and on discrete areas of study like war, foreign policy or institutions;

- focuses on problem-solving in international relations;
- ‘tests’ whether or not gender is relevant in explaining specific phenomena or understanding certain policy outcomes;
- quantifies impacts on specific social groups – for example the gender-differentiated impacts of war or economic crisis.

Incorporating gender as a variable can be helpful in the formulation of gender-sensitive policies.

The ‘gender as a variable’ approach can facilitate the development of more effective policy tools and legal instruments to address the specific needs of women (or men) in conflict.

Critics of the ‘gender as a variable’ approach argue that:

- Analysis that takes gender to be a variable or category in IR is not a wholly sufficient basis for analysing gender in IR (in conflict, peace and security, for example).
- Gender as a variable necessitates an understanding of gender as a stable (if not fixed or ‘essential’) category.
- The ‘gender as a variable’ approach sets aside deeper questions about whether value-free analysis is possible or desirable and largely ignores crucial feminist concerns about gender and power.
- This approach to gender sets aside many complex ontological, epistemological and methodological issues that arise in ‘gendering IR’.
- The ‘gender as a variable’ (or ‘category’) approach rather assumes that men are the ‘natural actors’ (in conflict) and neglects the broader ideological factors and political and social processes implicated here.

Marginalizing Feminism in International Relations?

Academic disciplines develop theoretical and analytical frameworks, generate concepts, construct categories and develop theories about the world and how it works. Academic disciplines are also ‘socially bounded’ fields of knowledge or discourse in which certain forms of knowledge are institutionalized and valorized to the degree that they assume superiority to mere ‘common sense’ or opinion. This involves choices about what is ‘central’ or ‘marginal’ to specific fields of study – choices that are never politically innocent.²⁶

As noted above, when gender was first posited as central to the study of IR, some prominent IR scholars embraced gender as a category or variable. However, feminists complained – with justification – that there was an antagonism towards the project of ‘gendering IR’ when the agenda was driven by a normative and feminist commitment to change. In the US particularly, where there is strong commitment to positivist research methods in the academy, feminists found much resistance to scholarship on gender that did not conform to positivist standards of – supposed – ‘objectivity’. Poststructuralist feminism particularly was singled out for criticism (elaborated in later chapters) by mainstream (positivist) scholars.²⁷ Keohane, for example, welcomed the contribution of a feminist empiricism and feminist standpoint in IR theory, insofar as this work could potentially contribute to the study of IR as a scientific enterprise.²⁸ However, he explicitly rejected the ‘relativism’ of poststructuralism.

Feminists who adopted ‘critical’ approaches to gender (see chapter 2) expressed scepticism regarding the ‘gender as a variable’ project. On one level, it makes sense to speak of gender as a variable in societies and cultures where there is a deep commitment to gender dichotomy, because in such instances gender might well influence how one perceives, reacts to and evaluates the self and others and how one assesses situations. However, where there is deep commitment to gender dichotomies – rigid notions of male and female – gender identity is fixed by ‘subtle or not so subtle regulatory practices that sustain gender dichotomy and coherence’.²⁹ That is to say that gender cannot be taken as a given because gender is a site of social regulation – power relations are deeply implicated in the construction of gender dichotomies. Thus, the focus of feminist analyses should be how power/status is maintained in gender-schematic cultural contexts and how identities are constructed and socially regulated. In taking gender as ‘given’, questions relating to the way in which gender is configured by social relations, by various forms of social categorization and regulation, and by power relations, drop out of the picture.

At best then, the ‘gender as a variable’ approach offers only a ‘thin’ understanding of how gender is relevant to international politics; at worst, it reproduces the status quo. Gender difference is afforded the status of a variable that might be helpful in ‘doing some explaining’, but the assumption is that gender does not have to be explained. In reply to Keohane, Cynthia Weber objected that gender might be ‘performed’ as difference, but gender could not be reduced to the dispositions or the traits people carry about inside themselves. She further argued that gender cannot be viewed as a variable, because ‘one is never outside of gender’. Keohane, she argued, was seeking to confine feminist inquiry within the safety of the parameters of established discourse.³⁰ Overall, early engagements between feminists and non-feminist IR scholars did little to assuage the feeling among feminist scholars that they were destined always to engage ‘from the margins’ insofar as they worked with a radically different understanding of gender, which was rejected by the mainstream (in the US academy particularly).³¹

Subsequent to this initial debate between Keohane and Weber et al., Charli Carpenter has appealed

for a non-feminist approach to gender in IR. Carpenter³² argues that, in feminist IR, the normative focus is on improving the position of women, rather than understanding interactions between states. However, she claims that it is possible to employ the analytical category of gender to understand the ‘IR agenda’ as conventionally defined. Carpenter argued:

- It is possible to gain knowledge of how gender works in world politics without drawing upon explicitly feminist accounts.
- The analytical category of gender can be brought into scholarship in the interests of understanding the world *as it is*.
- This entails a different epistemological approach from the one most favoured by feminists, but has the advantage of (potentially) *doing some explaining* in world politics.³³

Once again, this has been read as – yet another – attempt to contain or even marginalize feminist IR. Terrell Carver counters that feminism is an ongoing political project concerned with gender oppression and this must be noticed, not marginalized on methodological grounds or hidden in ‘value neutral’ analysis. Moreover, gendering IR necessarily requires acquaintance with the feminist literature: how feminist thinking has created contemporary gender studies by fostering critique and diversity in scholarship. Carver concludes that this urge to create a non-feminist IR can be read as yet another strategy in ‘Othering’ feminist IR.³⁴

Summary

This chapter has provided an initial introduction to gender in the academic study of IR and in the practice of world politics. The aim has been to set out – hopefully in a clear and succinct way – how gender can be understood as difference. It has also aimed to show how gender – taken as a ‘given’ – as a category of analysis and as a variable can be brought into the study of International Relations. The concluding section highlighted some of the limitations and criticisms of approaches that take gender as a ‘given’ and employ gender as a settled and fixed category of analysis or variable. These points will be further developed in the following chapter.



WORLD EXAMPLE

The impact of economic sanctions

Economic sanctions are ostensibly designed to put pressure on states that are deemed to pose a threat to international peace and security and/or which are held to be violating the rights of their own populations, or specific groups within states (usually minority ethnic groups, but increasingly groups defined by gender and sexuality). In practice, economic sanctions might be used as a tool to impel **regime change**, although this is rarely, if ever, publicly acknowledged.

Studies have shown that sanctions can have a devastating impact on the economic and political stability of the country targeted, which is not entirely unanticipated of course, but also that it is women who frequently suffer the most from externally generated ‘shocks’. This is because women’s existing (unequal) socio-economic and political status makes them more vulnerable. While the purpose of sanctions might be to generate change, the impact of sanctions nevertheless runs counter to a core objective of gender mainstreaming in international security policy (chapter 6), which is to advance women’s rights. Similarly, this also runs counter to the UN’s stated commitment to advance the status of women through development (chapter 9) and thereby promote wider economic prosperity, social equality and good governance. In a study of the impact of sanctions between 1971 and 2005, A. Cooper Drury (see Extended Reading) found that sanctions impacted negatively on women’s well-being in targeted countries and that this exacerbated problems in realizing women’s rights (see also Buck, Gallant and Nossal, in Extended Reading).

Questions for reflection

- 1) Work out the ratio of male to female political leaders (Presidents and Prime Ministers) in the world today. Your findings will bear out the claim that women are heavily unrepresented in positions of power and influence in world politics, but does this make any difference to the incidence of conflict and violence?
- 2) Sceptics towards the project to 'gender IR' often argue that issues around gender differences and gender equality are not relevant to IR because they are not relevant to relations *between* states. Are they correct? If so, why? If not, why not?
- 3) What does Cynthia Weber mean when she says that one is 'never outside of gender'?

Seminar activity

In this seminar, your tutor will allot an article from the Extended Reading which employs gender as a variable in an area related to conflict and peace-building. This reading should be done in advance of the class. In addition, you should also read chapter 1 in Brooke Ackerly, Maria Stern and Jacqui True (2006) *Feminist Methodologies for International Relations*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

In the first part of the seminar, the class will be divided into smaller groups. The task is, first, to interrogate the text you have been given, paying particular attention to the data (sample, interview material and/or statistics) used to generate the claims made by the author. Second, draw up a list of any possible biases and distortions that might have arisen in the employment of these data. Third, try to think of at least three reasons why reducing gender to a category or variable results in a partial and perhaps inadequate understanding of gender in international relations.

In the second part of the seminar, the class as a whole should debate the question: 'What are the advantages and disadvantages of approaching gender as a *category of analysis* or as a *variable* in the study of world politics?'

Further reading

- Caprioli, Mary 'Primed for Violence: The Role of Gender Inequality in Predicting Internal Conflict', *International Studies Quarterly*, 49 (2005), 161–78.
- Carpenter, Charli 'Gender Theory in World Politics: Contributions of a Non-Feminist Standpoint?' *International Studies Review*, 4, 3 (2003), 153–66.
- Goldstein, Joshua (2003) *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Hudson, Valerie, and Andrea M. Den Boer (2005) *Bare Branches: The Security Implications of Asia's Surplus Male Population*, London, MIT Press.
- Smith, Dan (2001) 'The Problem of Essentialism'. In: Inger Skjelsbaek and Dan Smith (eds.), *Gender, Peace and Conflict*, London, Sage.
- Steans, Jill 'Engaging from the Margins: Feminist Encounters with the "Mainstream" of International Relations', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 5, 3 (2003), 428–54.

Useful Web links

Intersex Initiative: www.intersexinitiative.org/articles
WomanStats: www.womanstats.org/

Feminist International Relations

Introduction

This chapter is the second of two introductory chapters that aim to show how gender informs the study of international relations. What gender is taken to mean, and how gender is employed as a concept, category, variable, approach or as a particular form of critique in IR, is tied up with the bigger question of our approach to this field of study: the theoretical or analytical framework that we employ to help us make sense of world politics. This chapter provides an opportunity to develop these theoretical issues. It elaborates further on why feminists are mostly resistant to gender essentialism and regard the ‘gender as a category’ or ‘gender as a variable’ approaches set out in chapter 1 as inadequate and ultimately unhelpful. The final section of the chapter also affords some space to contemporary work on gender in IR that also tries to get beyond the tendency in feminist theorizing to privilege women as the main focus of research (even as gender is acknowledged to be relational). This section provides a brief introduction to current scholarship on men and masculinities and gender identity and sexuality.

Gender as a Power Relationship

Feminist theorists eschew the notion that gender is fixed and immutable. Raewyn Connell has argued that, after the intervention of feminist theorizing in the social sciences in the early 1970s, gender analysis began to assume the form of power analysis. Gender was interrogated as a form of power *relationship* in society. This notion that gender is *relational* remains influential in feminist theory, gender studies and masculinity studies.

In the 1970s, radical feminism:

- presented women and men as *homogenized* groups;
- represented society as being comprised of social blocs of men and women, linked by direct power relations;
- contended that men exercised power over women in (most) societies – if women were not wholly powerless, they were substantially disadvantaged;
- held **patriarchy** to be a structural feature of all social orders.

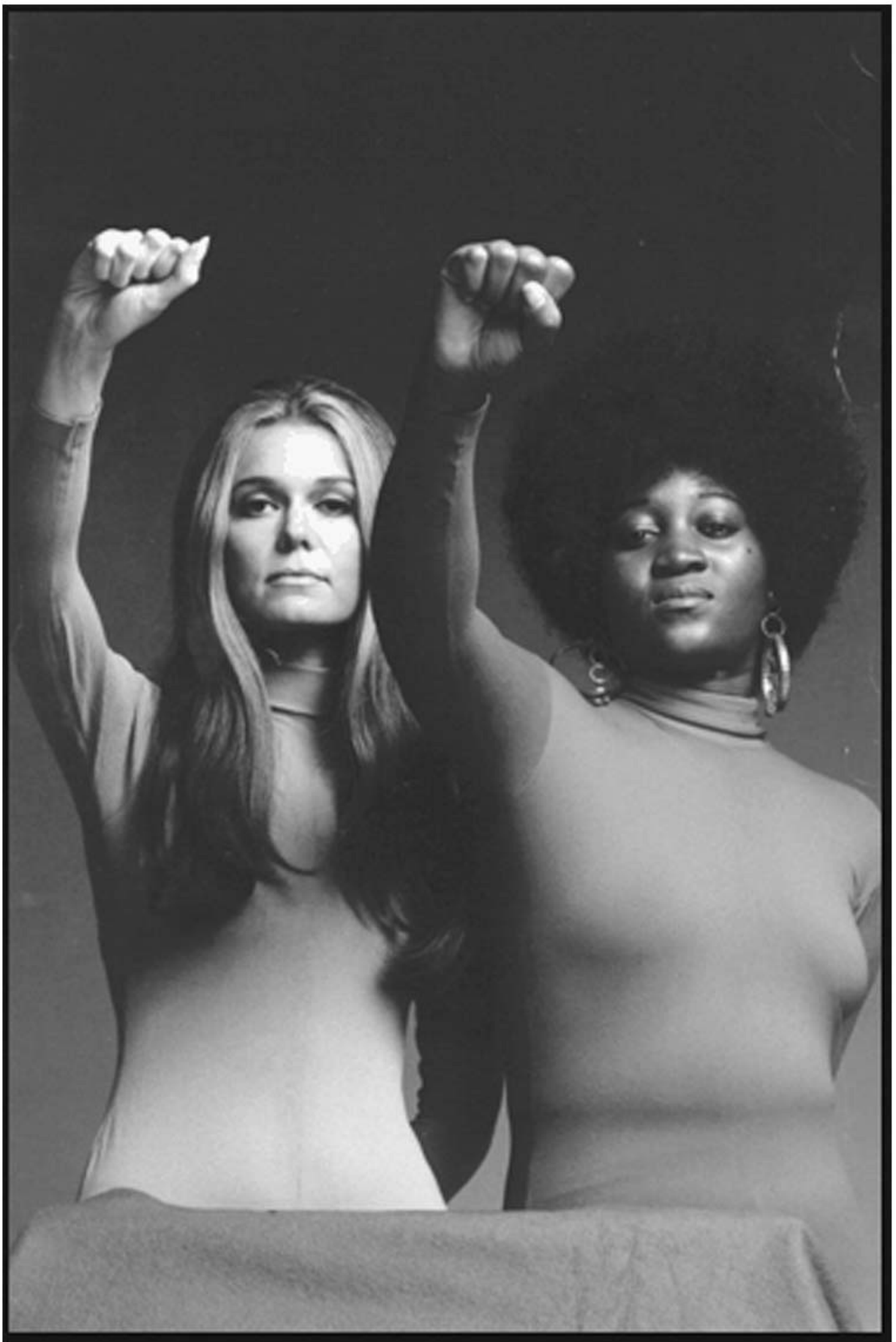


Figure 4 *Gloria Steinem, co-founder of Ms magazine, and Dorothy Pitman Hughes, child-care pioneer, c.1970*

This conception of gender as a power relationship provided a solid foundation for feminist or women's solidarity (see chapter 10), since women as a group were held to share a common interest in challenging the existing gender order and prevailing power relations. Today, gender theorists of all persuasions are less inclined to homogenize gender (or homogenize other social groups), recognizing that there are differences within as well as across social groupings. Feminists are similarly more attentive to the *specific* ways in which power works in particular societies and consequently less inclined to make sweeping statements about shared interests and solidarity among women. In contemporary feminist work, one will likely find as many references to *specificity* and *particularity* as to universalism.

The use of the term 'patriarchy' has also tended to fall out of favour. Theorists who continue to employ the concept acknowledge that patriarchy does not manifest in much the same way across time and space, in all societies at all times. Nevertheless, some strands of feminism continue to regard gender as a form of power relationship and, moreover, understand power relations in largely structural or institutionalized terms.

Gender as a Social Relation of Inequality

Gender relations are not simply or wholly a matter of identity. Gender is embedded in and reproduced by a range of social institutions and practices. Conformity to the characteristics held to be specifically ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ is encouraged – if not enforced – through social institutions as well as in day-to-day practices. Insofar as gender also carries with it connotations of superiority and inferiority – men are strong and rational, women are weak and irrational, and so on – gender can be seen as constituted by the structure of various social institutions and practices that tie gender into intricate patterns of domination.

To illustrate this argument, it is helpful to return to the concepts of ‘public’ and ‘private’ introduced in chapter 1. The division of space into public and private, and the division of social roles across public and private space generate and continually reproduce deeply entrenched inequalities. The family is a social institution, which is supported by the state. Think for a moment about the very many instances of discussion about ‘problem’ families and family ‘breakdown’ in public discourse and the amount of legislation and policy-making surrounding family life in any given society; the family and familial arrangements can scarcely be considered a wholly ‘private’ affair.

The privatization of (usually) women’s labour in the family and the home is, however, constructed as a private affair – a labour of love. This renders women in their role as principal carers economically dependent on men. The gendering of child-care as both the responsibility of women and a ‘private’ matter (within the realm of the privatized family) which should not necessarily be supported by the state places women at a disadvantage both in the home and in the labour market. While family arrangements differ from society to society, the gendering of child-care and social reproduction as ‘women’s work’ remains prevalent in societies and cultures throughout the world.

In liberal societies, the language of ‘choice’ occludes the structural disadvantage to (mainly, not exclusively) women inherent in the public/private division. Social reproduction is vital to the reproduction of human societies and so this social relationship cannot be viewed as wholly voluntary. Moreover, and again, it is supported by an array of social institutions and the state. This can be illustrated through the social and legal institution of marriage. Historically, marriage has institutionalized heteronormative gender relations, and marriage – and policies and related laws that support the institution of marriage – has placed women in a dependent position within the family. In a ‘conventional’ marriage, men will usually earn – and largely control/dispense – most of the income that accrues to the family unit as a whole. Women most often, though not exclusively, perform unpaid labour, bearing and raising children. Since social reproduction and care work is thereby rendered a *private* activity, or constructed as a lifestyle ‘choice’, rather than acknowledged as an activity vital to the survival and reproduction of the human race as a whole, women are not rewarded for this labour and so are rendered economically dependent on the male ‘bread-winner’ for long periods of their lives.

Of course, one might object that in very many instances marriages are based on mutuality and respect rather than the petty exercise of power by one partner over the other. This might be the case (and it might not be), but the point is that the *potential* for power and control resides with men, even if it might not actually be exercised. Moreover, the social and cultural conventions that produce the woman/carer linkage mean that when marriages end (for whatever reason) women will frequently find themselves in a disadvantaged position – either depending on ex-partners for child support or receiving fairly minimal support from the state, when ex-partners are unable or unwilling to support women and children. Feminists acknowledge that men can and sometimes do perform the principal

parenting role, although this is not the ‘norm’ in most societies. However, the crucial issue here is that of unpaid labour in the home and care work, vital work for the reproduction of societies as a whole. This is still widely deemed to be mainly, if not wholly, the responsibility of women in societies across the world.

? CONCEPT

Heteronormativity

The term ‘heteronormativity’ has become increasingly prominent in academic discussions on gender and sexuality since the early 1990s. The term means that heterosexuality (rather than bi-sexuality or homosexuality) is the established social norm. The deeper implication of heteronormativity is that identities and life-styles that do not conform to the norm (gay, bi-sexual, lesbian, transgender) are deemed to be *abnormal* by mainstream society. Therefore, heteronormativity can be – and often is – used to justify discrimination in regard to alternative practices and lifestyles.

This approach to gender as a relationship between men and women under-pinned by heteronormativity and supported by a range of social institutions is one that is favoured by scholars who adopt a *social relations* approach to gender. The public/private division, and issues around social reproduction particularly, are very important in social relations approaches. This approach has affinities with some strands of Marxist thought, and Marxist-feminist thought specifically, and also Critical Theory, hence the term ‘critical feminism’ will be employed to refer to this approach. In summary, the social relations framework:

- interrogates both the material and ideological relations that exist between people called ‘men’ and people called ‘women’
- understands gender to be – to a large extent – a structural form of inequality;
- understands gender relations to be supported by a range of social institutions;
- identifies ideology (for example notions of gendered characteristics, or the language of ‘choice’) as playing a crucial role in supporting and reproducing gender inequality.

This public/private division underpins the state and conceptions of citizenship (see chapter 3) and the operation of free-market/capitalist economies (see chapter 8). With regard to the latter:

- Responsibility for unpaid care work means that women – and poor women particularly – are often positioned on the margins of market society.
- The notion that women are principally responsible for child-care and, importantly, ‘naturally’ best suited to perform this role – is a particularly important factor in pushing women into lower-paid, lower-status jobs.
- When women do enter the workforce, they are often perceived as a ‘secondary workforce’ and are frequently employed in temporary, flexible and less secure and less well-paid forms of work.
- As such, gender ideology provides a justification for a specific form of social inequality.

The empirical evidence that might be marshalled to support these claims is actually strong. Not only do statistics consistently reveal a significant gender gap in rates of pay (in most countries), but also studies show that women – particularly poorer and less-educated women – are more often concentrated in flexible, temporary and otherwise less secure jobs. Consider also how, as the world has been shaken by financial crisis (2008) and ensuing austerity measures, women have been paying

the price in the form of cuts in state support for social care work (see chapter 8).

However, clearly things can and do change. To the extent that men can and sometimes do perform the role of ‘carer’ while their partner is the principal wage earner, and to the degree that not all family arrangements are based on a heteronormative model, there is space for flexibility in gender relationships and social arrangements. In many societies across the world, same-sex marriage is now a live social and political issue and the institution of marriage as a heteronormative institution is likely to be increasingly challenged in the future. A social relations approach to gender must then account for not only the reproduction of gender relations, but also how gender relations change over time. While drawing upon structuralist arguments, critical feminists:

- see ideas (the ideational) as important in effecting change;
- allow more space for **agency** in their approach;
- view gender as both a facet of individual identity – who we think we are – *and* an integral part of social institutions and practices;
- see personal life and social structures as interwoven;
- acknowledge that our sense of self (as gendered) and the social institutions and practices that support gendered relationships can and do change over time.

Placing more emphasis on the ideational realm (ideas, ideology) and allowing more space for agency avoids the pitfalls of **voluntarism** and **determinism**. Gender identity or subjectivity is held to be shaped by the day-to-day context in which we live and play out our gendered roles. Much of this is institutionalized and so fairly fixed and stable over time. Yet individuals do reflect on their identities and lives and might resist, challenge and change institutionalized gender relations. This, in turn, results in changes in the constitution of social institutions over time (policies and laws on the family have changed over time and differ from society to society). A critical feminist approach thereby allows gender and gender relations to be seen in historical context (changing over time), rather than as a trans-historical (non-changing) structure that arises out of biological differences: the sexual dichotomy of male and female bodies (as in essentialist accounts).

Gender as Performance

As the influence of poststructuralism in feminist theory has grown, gender has come to be widely understood as discursively constructed and so has been interrogated as part of a wider interest in discursive constructions and practices around gender identity and sexuality. It will simply be noted here that the emphasis on the importance of ideology in critical feminism means that there is some overlap with poststructuralism (see the discussion of Gramsci in chapter 7) – although, as will become evident as discussion unfolds in later chapters, there are also significant differences.

The notion that gender is a performance (performativity) is associated with the work of Judith Butler particularly (see box below). The use of the term ‘discourse’ here will alert you to the central importance of language in poststructuralist thought. This concern with language will be elaborated in subsequent chapters, but, briefly, poststructuralists argue that all social meaning, including the meaning of sex and gender, is constructed in the language we use to talk about the social world. Insofar as gender is discursively constructed, gender ‘floats free’ from the physical/biological **body**.

? CONCEPT

Gender binaries

The work of French philosopher Jacques Derrida¹ on the importance of binary oppositions in the construction of meaning has been influential in poststructuralist thought. In Western thought particularly, meaning is constructed through the employment of binaries – for example, culture/nature, rational/irrational, man/woman. The crucial insight here is that these terms are not accorded equal value – one is always privileged over the other. So culture is deemed to be superior to nature, and man is held to be superior to woman and so on. In the construction of binary opposites, one term assumes a role of dominance over the other. The use of binary oppositions thus both produces and legitimizes unequal gender relations. The employment of binaries of West/East has similarly been argued to be important in legitimizing the power and dominance of the Western (superior) world over the Eastern (inferior) world, and so this way of thinking is inherently ethnocentric.

Poststructuralist feminists:

- have gone farther than all other approaches to gender in contesting the notion that gender is a stable and fixed ontological category;
- argue that gender merely has the appearance of being a stable – fixed and unchanging – facet of human identity, because we continually reproduce this notion in institutionalized forms of discourse;
- the production of discourse is intimately tied up with power relations; the *subject* is a product of power relations (**interpellation**).

Institutionalized discourse includes philosophy, legal discourse, political discourse, religious discourse and so forth. However, poststructuralists are also interested in how meaning is constructed in popular culture (films, television, novels) and in everyday conversation (the stories we routinely tell and hear about ourselves and others). The discussion of discourse and language need not be overly complicated here, but it is important to take onboard five further poststructuralist claims:

- Language – or more properly meaning – is not stable, fixed or singular (see **logocentrism**).
- There is no direct and necessary relationship between the *signifier* (word) and *signified* (object it is taken to signify or refer to).

- Language is not simply used to describe things *as they are* – rather, language, or more properly discourse, brings things into being.
- Through language/discourse we construct the notion that entities have an *essence* and so render entities ontologically secure and fixed; thus discourses are *practices which systematically form the object of which they speak*.
- Discourses are always and everywhere contested – a point that follows from the claim about the ontological instability of categories.

From this perspective, there is no essence to woman or man. For poststructuralist feminists, it is problematic to confer ontological status on ‘woman’ or ‘man’, because employing ‘woman’ or ‘man’ as a category of analysis presupposes that all people of the same gender across classes and cultures are somehow socially constituted as a **homogeneous** group identifiable prior to the process of analysis. In this way the discursive consensual homogeneity of ‘women’ and ‘men’ is mistaken for the specific material reality of concrete women and men. Rather than speak of women and men, poststructuralists – like critical feminists – prefer to say ‘people *called* women’ and ‘people *called* men’ to emphasize the importance of the ideational and language, specifically in the construction of gender.

Poststructuralist feminists simultaneously resist the notion of uniquely female or male experiences, because this involves making essentialist or universal knowledge claims on the basis of experiences that are historically and culturally specific. This idea that gender is discursively constructed and continually reproduced through the language that we use and the stories that we tell about the world leads to the notion that gender is performed. Gender is not something that springs from underlying and essential differences rooted in biological sex, but is rather *something that we do*, or how we perform our identities in day-to-day life.

As a way into understanding poststructuralism, it is helpful – in the first instance – to think about *performance* in the conventional sense of the term, as it would be used in relation to acting. We perform our identities (characters) and roles (our part in the larger story/stories in which we take part and which play out around us). However, it is important to remember again that a performance is *not* the playing out of identities that *are already scripted in the body* – rooted in biology or psychology, for example. The body takes on meaning in and through performances. For example, we might perform gender in such a way as to conform to – and thereby reproduce – the heteronormative ‘ideal’. Women might put on make-up, wear feminine dresses, behave in a demure and deferential manner, while men might feel a very strong pressure to perform their masculinity as strong, unemotional (rational) and carrying the mark of authority (think of the archetypal – ‘A type’ – businessman’s dress and deportment). The important thing to notice here is that, since gender is not fixed or stable, gender might be – and often is – performed in a way that confounds, subverts or parodies conventional gender norms.

Feminist theorists have long drawn a distinction between sex and gender, eschewing *biological essentialism* (see chapter 1) and arguing that ideologies or discourses on gender work to inscribe or affix ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine’ attributes to biologically male or female bodies. However, while feminists have approached gender in a critical vein, probing into the social and political consequences of such inscriptions, nevertheless, some feminists retain a minimalist or rump essentialism in their thinking and approach. This is because many feminist theorists argue that feminism needs a female or feminine *subject* – however constructed – for both feminist theory and feminist practice/politics. Put simply, how can one make claims in the name of ‘women’ if ‘women’

do not actually exist outside of discursive construction? While not covered at length in this book, this has formed the basis of a central debate in contemporary feminist theory.²

The Complexity of Identities

Once the notion of gender essentialism is abandoned, questions regarding the complexity and diversity of identities necessarily come to the fore in discussions of gender. Postcolonial theory and postcolonial feminism have been important in highlighting the complex and cross-cutting nature of identities, including gender identities. Postcolonial feminists reject the notion that gender is a universal and homogeneous category and that women (or men) necessarily have shared interests based on their gender. For postcolonial thinkers, the experience of colonialism is of paramount importance when engaging in debates about gender. Colonial domination positioned women and men from colonizing powers and men and women in colonized countries as unequal and, specifically, the colonized ‘other’ as inferior and, very often, barbaric.

AUTHOR

Judith Butler

Judith Butler’s approach to sex–gender draws upon psycho-analytical feminist thought (for example Helene Cixous and Julia Kristeva), as well as the intellectual heritage of poststructuralism. However, she has gone further than others in her radical constructivist approach to both gender and sex. Butler does not deny the materiality of the body – bodies are, evidently, physical/material – but she nevertheless refuses to separate the material and discursive domains. In Butler’s view, the material – in this case, the body – never completely escapes from the process by which it is *signified*. However, identity – the self or *I* – does not exist prior to discursive construction. Moreover, in processes of construction, discourses of the body displace sex by gender. Put another way, human society is not made up of two sexes – male and female – which are then afforded socially constructed masculine and feminine characteristics, but rather sexed binaries of male and female are deeply rooted in the conventions of language construction – in discourses and narratives. Binaries persist not because they are constructed on a foundation of pre-existing, essential differences, but because they are continually, over and over again, reproduced in language/discourse as binary oppositions. In this way, gendered binaries construct ‘difference’ in body types and also justify binary constructions (and so too social inequalities). If this is the case, then the political project of feminism must be continually to deconstruct, destabilize and undermine binary sex–gender constructions. This would open the way for a radical understanding of gender as multiple, diverse and not ‘attached’ to the sexed body.³ Butler has gifted to feminist theory and gender theory the influential concept of performativity. Gender is what bodies *do*; gender *is* how gender is performed.

The erasure of identity or the subjugation of the culture and identity of colonized people is reflected more widely in all forms of colonial discourse. Take, for example, the famous eighteenth-century novel *Robinson Crusoe* (Daniel Defoe, 1719) in which the ‘hero’ encounters a native whom he calls ‘Friday’ (we never learn the native’s actual name), and rescues him from being eaten by cannibals (evidence of a barbaric culture). The hero then enslaves Friday and ‘civilizes’ him by instructing him in the teachings of Christianity. The text tells of the erasure of ‘native’ identity and the subjugation of the native, yet this is narrated as beneficial – Friday is first ‘rescued’ and second ‘civilized’ by the white man.

One might object that this kind of language belongs to a previous historical period and is not a reflection of the world today. However, the language of ‘civilizing missions’ is still prevalent in Western discourse on non-Western states, and very often this discourse is gendered; non-Western women are represented as ‘oppressed’ and in need of ‘rescue’. In discussions on women’s rights non-Western women are not represented as agents engaged in struggles for rights, but rather human rights are represented as a gift bestowed by a benevolent Western power, even if this entails military intervention (see chapter 7).

One might make a similar argument about the politics of gay rights, which is often unhelpfully represented as a polarized debate – and struggle – between ‘enlightened’ (Western) states and

political activists and ‘backward’ (usually developing) countries, where gay people are oppressed. In short, the politics of gender is always and everywhere tied up in wider relations of inequality and subjugation. This will be elaborated in later chapters. At this juncture it is only necessary to make a few key points:

- Issues of gender identity cannot be divorced from questions of identity more generally.
- Issues of identity are tied up with power relations, particularly unequal power relations between the Western and non-Western worlds.
- The recovery of (or construction of) a national identity is very important to postcolonial societies and postcolonial politics.
- The reclaiming of identity among *subalterns* – marginalized groups – is similarly crucial.
- Identity claims are central to a politics of resistance (to the resistance of neo-colonial domination, specifically).

It would be wrong to assume, however, that postcolonial thinkers adopt an essentialist approach to identity. Homi Bhabha’s major contribution to postcolonial thought was the concept of *hybrid identities*, a term that encapsulated the plural and diverse nature of the postcolonial world. Bhabha further argued that, under conditions of contemporary globalization, identities might be experienced as complex, multiple, intersecting, even contradictory. Nevertheless, it is sometimes necessary *strategically* to cast identity in essentialist terms. One response to the need to recognize the complexities of identity, while also allowing *the subaltern to speak*, is Gayatri Spivak’s concept of strategic essentialism.

While not exclusively concerned with the politics of feminism, this is an important theme in postcolonial feminist work. In her influential article ‘Under Western Eyes’, Chandra Mohanty castigated Western feminists for naively positing the existence of a ‘global sisterhood’.⁴ The transnational women’s movement was, she argued, actually comprised of a loose and diverse coalition of women’s groups. However, Western NGOs and activists dominated international political forums (for example, the United Nations) and used these forums to pursue a Western agenda. Women from the South had, in practice, little opportunity to articulate their own specific concerns and aspirations in these same sites.⁵ Thus, Mohanty accused the ‘hegemonic white women’s movement’ of colonizing the experiences of Third World women in advancing an emancipatory politics grounded in a Western discourse of universalism, ‘progress’ and ‘liberation’.⁶

? CONCEPT

The subaltern

The term ‘subaltern’ comes originally from the work of Antonio Gramsci, a Marxist intellectual best known for his *Prison Notebooks*. In Gramsci’s usage, ‘subaltern’ means subordinated classes and other subjugated social groups. Gramsci used the term specifically to refer to those groups most marginalized and displaced from centres of power and influence under conditions of hegemony. The term was taken up by a group of postcolonial scholars who developed Subaltern Studies in History. In postcolonial thought, ‘subaltern’ is sometimes employed in a broad sense to refer to colonized peoples. More often, the term is used in a narrower sense to refer to those groups who are most marginalized: the poorest peoples who lack access to power and resources and are, thereby, denied agency and a voice in social, economic and political affairs.

Once again, however, it is a mistake to assume that postcolonial feminists eschew all attempts to

build solidarity projects. Indeed, one reason why postcolonial feminism is *feminist* is because postcolonial feminists refuse a simplistic and unreflective embrace of a cultural relativist position, recognizing that gender inequalities and gender politics are alive and well in postcolonial countries and similarly recognizing that male elites cannot simply speak for women. Moreover, while postcolonial feminism is often conflated with poststructuralist feminism – particularly by students new to the study of gender in IR – this is also misleading. Postcolonial feminists are necessarily interested in North/ South relations (historically) and relations between the West and the postcolonial world today. Since trade, investment flows, debt and so on are implicated in these same relations, postcolonial feminists analyse both the structure of the international system and the nature of capitalist relations. The insights of Mohanty (and others) inform contemporary postcolonial feminist scholarship on global political economy and globalization (see author box on Anna Agathangelou in chapter 9). Postcolonial feminists argue that what is needed is a new kind of feminist solidarity that is forged out of recognition and respect for differences, in which the voices of subaltern groups are heard, but which also takes into account broader struggles for social justice (see chapter 10).

The complexities of identity take this discussion of postcolonial theory and practice into a further substantive area of concern – ethics. Postcolonial theorists ask:

- What does it mean, in ethical terms, to live in a world of difference?
- How should we engage ethically with ‘others’?
- How do we build a world of mutual recognition and respect?
- How can we – the peoples of the world as a whole – move beyond the divisions and oppressive practices of the past to build a common future?

In any such ethical project, it is vital that marginalized voices are heard. This does not just apply to ‘real-world’ politics, but also to the academy, a major institution for the construction and perpetuation of knowledge and one that has persistently marginalized or even silenced non-Western intellectual traditions and subaltern voices. How many texts do you find on the typical International Relations syllabi that are written by non-Western scholars? (See Ling and Agathangelou in Extended Reading.)

A central concept in postcolonial feminist thought is that of *intersectionality*. Intersectionality refers to the cross-cutting and inter-related aspects of identity – gender, sexuality, class, age, ethnicity and race. In essence, intersectionality refers to the experience of multiple identities and social locations and the multiple and varied experiences of oppression and discrimination. Intersectionality expresses the idea that specific groups of people are subjected to and experience discrimination in ways that are multiple and inter-connected. For example, while *all* women experience forms of discrimination that are justified on the grounds of gender, specific groups of women might also be discriminated against or experience oppression on the grounds of race, ethnicity or social class. Similarly, men do not form a homogeneous group who universally oppress women; class, ethnicity, location and so on create divisions among men too and, moreover, sometimes create community of interest among men and women from specific social and ethnic groups.

A number of substantive issues arise out of the insights of intersectionality; for example, how does this change the way feminists think about the *subject* in theory? In second-wave feminism, this was relatively straightforward since the subject of feminism was simply ‘woman’. Intersectionality significantly complicates the question of whether or not gender and experiences of gender oppression are truly *universal*, and so whether there is or can be a universal *subject* in feminist theory.

Furthermore, women who belong to privileged social classes and ethnic groups might be complicit in practices of discrimination against women of other races and/or women in subordinated social classes. Discrimination on the grounds of age or sexuality further complicates the issue. A second issue that arises is: what does intersectionality mean in practice? What are the best ways to tackle gender discrimination in the policy-making world, for example, if gender is always and everywhere profoundly tied up with issues of race, ethnicity, sexuality and social class and other facets of identity?

? CONCEPT

Race

The importance of race in feminist theorizing was central to critiques of White Western feminist theory during the second wave of feminism. Black feminist theorists such as bell hooks, Alice Walker⁷ and Patricia Hill Collins (see Extended Reading) argued that oppressions founded in and justified on the grounds of gender, class and race were inextricably bound together. Hence, feminism as a project that aimed to liberate women from oppressive social structures and social relations must necessarily engage with multiple forms of oppression. That White feminism had largely ignored questions of race (and ethnicity) bore testament to the privileged position of white, middle-class, Western women in relation to their 'sisters'. Black feminist thought was an important influence on Third World feminism and postcolonial feminism. Black feminists and postcolonial feminists share intellectual and political affinities (see Weedon, Extended Reading).⁸

In her 1993 book *White Women Race Matter*, Ruth Frankenberg⁹ engaged in extensive research based on interviews with white women in the United States from varied social backgrounds. Her research demonstrated that white women were largely unreflective about their own relatively privileged social position as white, and similarly unreflective about the privileged (dominant) position that white people occupied in (US) society. In this way, she challenged the deeply ingrained perception that racism was (only) a 'problem' for black people, along with the assumption that racism was evidenced only in its overt manifestation by exposing the unreflective assumption of white (the dominant group) as the 'norm' and the uncritical white gaze on a non-dominant group.

Frankenberg also challenged the notion that race was a biological category by pointing to the diversity that existed between members of racial categories; race, like gender, was not an essential category, but a socially constructed one. Race and racial difference remain salient, however, because of the social and political context in which race is constructed. The construction of race is intimately bound up with power relations and social privilege. Frankenberg asked: How does racism shape white women's lives? What are the social processes through which white women are created as social actors primed to reproduce racism within the feminist movement? How can white women's lives become sites of resistance to the reproduction of racism? Feminists could not contribute to the project of creating a just and equitable society unless these questions were explicitly confronted (see Razack, Smith and Thobani, Extended Reading).

Beyond Feminist International Relations

Men and masculinities

The discussion on gender and feminisms thus far leads to a number of key points:

- Gender is social and/or cultural, not natural.
- Gender is about the construction of femininities *and* masculinities.
- Gender identities intersect with other forms of identity.

At the same time, it is acknowledged that much of the discussion thus far has nevertheless centred on women specifically. Indeed, it is fair to say that, while an attempt has been made to reflect the complexities of masculinities better in this book, the discussion is still weighted towards *women in IR*. This bias towards women does tend to reproduce the conflation of women/gender, even as it is recognized to be problematic.

The privileging of women in discussions about gender reflects the preponderance of feminist scholarship in gender studies and the tendency – historically – of feminist discourse to privilege ‘woman’ as the subject of feminist theory. This, in turn, responds to the perception – supported by a great deal of empirical evidence – that women, on the whole and despite their many differences, tend to be subjected to discrimination and treated as unequal in the majority of societies across the world. In this respect then, the privileging of ‘women’ in feminism is a kind of *strategic essentialism*.

However, the conflation of women and gender gives rise to distortions:

- The conflation of women and gender works against a full appreciation and analysis of gender as *relational*.
- ‘Women’ as a homogenized category is problematized, but ‘men’ are often spoken of as a homogenized category.
- The full range of masculinities and the complex social relationships that exist between different groups of men, as well as men and women, is not interrogated.
- The conflation of women and gender means that the construction of men and masculinities is marginalized in IR
- There is a tendency to cast women as if they are forever and always ‘victims’.

In an article published in 1996, Adam Jones criticized what he saw as the shortcomings of the (then) feminist literature for concentrating on women/femininity and thereby failing to recognize that men are not only perpetrators but also ‘victims’ (of, in his examples, violence in war and conflict).¹⁰ What was needed to redress this imbalance, according to Jones, was a ‘more balanced feminist IR’ that addressed the position of men and masculinities in IR too. Since Jones first offered this critique of feminist IR, there has been a growing body of scholarship that studies men *as men* in international politics. Indeed, Jones has subsequently gone on to do substantial work which makes men as men visible in conflict.¹¹

Work on men and masculinities will be referred to from time to time throughout the book. Here, only a brief overview is attempted. There are a variety of ways in which work on masculinities can be developed within IR:

- Scholarship on men and masculinity in IR might be undertaken within a problem-solving approach to international relations.

Joshua Goldstein, for example, has argued that gender – referring to women and men – can be and should be employed in IR to understand ‘real-world’ issues of war in and between states.

Feminists often eschew the integration of a gender into problem-solving approaches, favouring approaches that elucidate:

- the multifaceted ways in which masculinities and femininities are constructed and reproduced (in warfare, for example).

A good example of this work can be found in Jane Parpart and Marysia Zalewski’s innovative book on *The Man Question in International Relations* (2008). Such scholarship has been important in developing an implicit, but somewhat under-developed, insight in the ‘first wave’ of feminist scholarship in IR; men and masculinity are also constructed identities and, therefore, the processes and practices whereby masculinities are constructed should be subjected to the same critical and reflective interrogation as women and femininities.

Much of the work on men and masculinities that has been done in the context of IR has been in sympathy with feminism. Such work acknowledges that women’s issues cannot be addressed in isolation from their relationship to men, and that men must also be the targets of attempts to redress gender inequalities. Making masculinities visible, and questioning or problematizing masculinities in world politics, challenge the unreflective tendency to treat men (and masculinities) as the ‘norm’ and women (and femininities) as marginal. As such, work on masculinities might:

- speak to feminist concerns with how practices of power are bound up with the construction of masculine and feminine identities;
- facilitate a deeper understanding of how the meaning of masculinity is constructed as a superiority of men (and the masculine) over women (and the feminine);
- facilitate a better understanding of how specific constructions of masculinity assert the superiority of some men over others.

In Bob Pease and Keith Pringle’s text on *A Man’s World*, the authors acknowledge the multiple meanings and practices of masculinity while insisting on studying masculinities in the context of a gender relational framework.

Masculinities in IR are also interrogated in studies that draw upon the concept of ‘hegemony’ originally developed by Gramsci. In simple terms, hegemony means ‘dominance’. Gramsci’s work developed and elaborated the role of culture in legitimizing and reproducing forms of social domination. While Gramsci was interested mainly in class, his ideas have proved useful to scholars interested in a variety of unequal social relations. As noted above, the term ‘subaltern’ originated with Gramsci. Gramsci’s social relations framework, and concept of hegemony specifically, also has something to offer feminist IR and, indeed, critical feminists often draw from his work.

Gramsci held that, through the medium of culture, the world view of social and political elites was *projected as a universal world view*, such that subordinated social classes imbued this ideology and accepted dominant social and cultural norms as universally applicable (regardless of their inherent class or gender bias).

? CONCEPT

Hegemonic masculinity

Raewyn Connell has employed the concept of hegemonic masculinity to illuminate the plural and diverse nature of masculinities, but also to capture the way in which men, on the whole, possess and/or exercise social power over women. Certain ideals or cultural norms of masculinity are projected through various media and also underpin key social institutions. The ideal or norm of hegemonic masculinity typically projects a particular construction of masculinity as strong, dominant, competitive, rational and – importantly – superior to other constructs of masculinity and to women/femininity in general. This is not to say that all men possess these characteristics, nor that dominant constructs of masculinity are not contested (by men as well as women), only that the norm is held up as an ideal, a model to which all men should aspire.

She further argues that gender should be seen in terms of social and cultural practices that construct gender relations by 'weaving a structure of symbols and interpretation around them and often vastly exaggerating or distorting them'.¹² In her view, 'to sustain patriarchal power on the large scale requires the construction of a hyper-masculine ideal of toughness, and dominance' and 'images of physical beauty in women'.¹³ Thus the male or female body does not confer masculinity or femininity on the individual – it takes on meaning through social practices.

Hegemonic masculinity might be illustrated in relation to the military as an institution. In the military, the norm of powerful, competitive, rational, forceful, strong (and so on) masculinity prevails. As Charlotte Hooper argues, soldiering has traditionally been characterized as a job that requires the masculine traits of action, physical strength, toughness and capacity for violence. The military explicitly inculcates these characteristics in soldiers. This ideal-type of masculinity is hegemonic in that it serves as a model which other men (ordinary soldiers) should emulate; other masculinities are thereby regarded as subordinate or inferior to the ideal.¹⁴ In reality, of course, men (and soldiers) are stratified according to class and race/ethnicity, while, historically, some men and some models of masculinity have been excluded from militaries altogether (gay men/masculinities). Furthermore, being a soldier is not in and of itself a marker of power. The majority of soldiers are 'foot soldiers' who fight and die in campaigns over which they actually exercise little or no control. Many men and women who make up the 'foot soldiers' come from relatively less privileged social backgrounds. Nevertheless, the military is a key institution in which hegemonic masculinity is exalted to attest to the superiority of 'real' men over 'effeminate' or weak men and to assert the superiority of men/masculinity over women/femininity in general.

As noted above, Gramsci was very interested in culture – specifically, the importance of culture in legitimizing and reproducing power relations and in embedding and legitimizing elite rule within the institutions of the state and in civil society. This interest in culture has been taken up and developed by critical theorists in IR. Gramsci's argument about hegemony can be illustrated not only by reference to the institutions of the state (the military), but by reference to cultural institutions – for example, cinema and films. The war film, for example, and the representation of the soldier or warrior in films are other ways in which one can see the projection of hegemonic masculinity in action.

Vietnam War films produced in Hollywood in the 1980s, such as *Rambo First Blood: Part Two* and the *Missing in Action* series (very popular at the time), can be interpreted – in good part – as the reassertion of a hegemonic masculinity (or hyper-masculinity), after a period of great social and cultural change in US society (the 1960s and 1970s), but also crucially, at a time when US hegemonic power had been dealt a substantial blow by defeat in war. John Rambo was born in the aftermath of a series of US foreign policy failures in the 1970s, and in the aftermath of defeat in the Vietnam War. These failures dented the self-image and self-understanding of America as a powerful, strong and heroic (masculinized) nation and led to a period of deep introspection in American society. This concern with weakness and failure resonated with broader debates about the decline of US hegemonic power and influence in the world taking place during the same period.

For some, the experiences of the 1970s engendered a troubling perception of America as a weak and *feminized* nation. Films produced about the Vietnam War or related to the War in the 1970s – for

example *The Deer Hunter*, *Heroes*, *Coming Home* and *Taxi Driver* – very much reflect themes of ‘troubled’ or ‘failing’ men and masculinities, among veterans returning deeply traumatized by the experience of war and often shunned by a society that did not want to confront the horrors of the war. Thus, film reflected the perception within the national psyche at the time of the US as a troubled and failing nation. The Rambo franchise can be read as a series of ‘revisionist’ films in the sense that the hero returns to Vietnam and – this time – ‘wins the war’. The films were a great commercial success and Rambo became a significant cultural icon in 1980s America. However, the success of these films is read by Susan Jeffords as not only a reflection of the national Zeitgeist, but also a specifically masculine response to changes in gender relations that were also occurring in the 1960s and 1970s, in the wake of the feminist and sexual revolutions, and, as such, as giving cultural expression to the real battles for the reassertion of the masculine that were going on in American society during the 1980s,¹⁵ particularly during the presidency of Ronald Reagan.

Gender, sexualities and Queer Theory

Some of the most interesting work on gender in contemporary IR has been developed in tandem with critical work on lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender (LGBT) identities in social theory and the social sciences as a whole. It should be acknowledged here that issues of gender identity and sexuality have long been debated within feminist theory. Lesbian feminist thought made a central contribution to second-wave feminism; the work of Adrienne Rich, Audre Lorde, Mary Daly and Sheila Jeffreys (see chapter 8) are a few among many examples/authors that might be cited here. It would be mistaken, therefore, to assume that feminism had not engaged with the complexities of gender identity and sexuality before the emergence of a distinctive body of *Queer Theory* in the 1990s. However, Queer Theory has both built upon, and at the same time offered, a critique of the identity-driven approach to gender and sexuality that characterizes much feminist theory.

From the 1990s onwards, Queer Theory, associated particularly with poststructuralism, has been influential across the social sciences, in the arts and in literary theory. Queer Theorists have also made important interventions into scientific discourse on gender and sexuality (in regard to *intersex*, for example; see box in chapter 1). At this juncture, and once again, a potentially long list of influential writers might be cited, but it is fair to say that Diana Fuss, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick¹⁶ and Judith Butler (see box above) have been particularly important in the development of this field. In turn, Queer Theorists frequently acknowledge a debt to the work of Michel Foucault (see Extended Reading).

Queer Theorists share a common point of departure with many feminist theorists in that they challenge the dominant construction of gender as essential – linked directly to biological sex (see chapter 1). However, Queer Theorists have gone further than feminist theorists, including the lesbian feminist thinkers cited above and early theorists in gay studies, in posing radical challenges to what constitutes ‘queer’ (or ‘abnormal’ and ‘unnatural’) behaviour. Queer Theorists radically deconstruct the normative categories of mainstream (heteronormative) society, opening up space for the expression of a diverse range of identities and experiences, including, for example, those of transgender and intersex people. In this regard Queer Theorists also pose a further challenge to identity politics per se. In line with the radical post-structuralist project of **deconstruction** and making ‘interventions’ with the aim of destabilizing identity categories, Queer Theorists question the notion of a stable subject and, by extension, a stable sexed-subject. Thus, from this perspective, ‘lesbians’ and ‘gay’ men are also, in a sense, restrictive identities with regard to sexual orientation.

Criticisms of Queer Theory cannot be developed at length here – suffice to say that, in posing radical critiques of identity and similarly undermining assumptions of stable ontological categories, Queer Theory must, in turn, face up to some difficult issues with regard to concrete political projects. LGBT politics presupposes that claims can be made in the name of sexual identities. Moreover, if all standards of normality with regard to issues of sexuality and gender are called into question – and all boundaries of ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal’ are contested – where do societies draw the line with regard to sexual practices? This problem has much engaged contemporary theorists of gender identity and sexuality (see, for example, Green, in Extended Reading).

While more work on sexuality is being produced within the field of gender in IR, Terrell Carver is justified in his observation that sexuality is still somewhat neglected, if not marginalized, within the literature on gender in IR. Carver states:

[L]GBT and Queer perspectives get a look-in, so they are not put into a closet of invisibility, but their presence seems to persist in something of a corner ... I sense that heterosexuality is rather veiled by the usual way that issues are framed around the familiar specifics of woman, violence, man, politics-and-power as-usual and so on. How much of women’s oppression actually derives from masculinities that are constructed within the bounds of heterosexuality – and not from the construction of ‘man’ or ‘masculinity’ as such?¹⁷

Issues of gender and sexuality are very much embedded in discussions of complex and diverse identities. In this edition of *Gender and International Relations*, an attempt has been made to reflect better the scholarship that focuses on gender identity and sexuality specifically, and the contribution of this work to the field. In practice, much of the discussion on sexuality is limited to current struggles to realize equality in respect to LGBT people. LGBT rights are addressed in a number of contexts – citizenship, asylum and human rights, for example. In addition, issues of gender and sexuality in militaries and in family-oriented policy developments at the World Bank are also afforded some coverage. While the engagement with issues of gender identity and sexuality is somewhat limited, it is hoped and anticipated that this will provide the student with a flavour of the broader literature. More in-depth knowledge and understanding can be gained by accessing more specialized books and articles that are included in the Extended Reading sections.

Summary

This chapter has provided an introduction to, and overview of, gender conceived as a power relationship, as a social relation of inequality and as a performance. In addition, some space has been afforded to the study of masculinities and sexualities specifically. The chapter has attempted to show how, conceived in these ways, gender can not only inform the study of International Relations, conventionally conceived, but also significantly expand the conventional study of international politics, bringing new insights to policy-making processes and practice and also pushing new issues onto the agenda in IR. Taken together, chapters 1 and 2 have aimed to demonstrate how particular understandings of gender fit with a particular theoretical position or approach – radicalism, critical feminism, poststructuralism, postcolonialism, Queer Theory. The following chapters will employ a diverse range of approaches to gender to elucidate many substantive areas of IR and international politics.



Contesting the language of gender and sexuality

Issues of gender and sexuality have proved to be highly contentious in international relations. Following the UN International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994, **autonomy** and choice in relation to sexuality were linked to reproduction and began to be articulated as women's rights. At the Beijing UN Women's Conference in 1995, claims of sovereignty and cultural relativism were evoked to challenge sections of the BPA that deal with sexuality and reproductive health. Conservative Islamic states, the Holy See and the US Christian Right formed an unlikely alliance to resist what they represented as a 'homosexual agenda'.¹⁸ At Beijing, this same coalition attempted to 'roll back' the language of 'autonomy' and 'equality'. Some 40 per cent of the entire text of the BPA was initially bracketed (contested): the so-called 'Holy Brackets'.¹⁹

After protracted negotiation, the BPA was saved from being watered down in the area of sexuality and reproductive rights to the extent that it was meaningless, when agreement was reached on retaining the language employed at the 1994 Cairo Conference whenever possible. Retaining the 'Cairo language' was a crucial political achievement for women's groups since it re-asserted the right of women to control their own sexuality.²⁰ It also had implications for LGBT rights in that autonomy and choice extended to issues of sexual partners.

However, many of these issues re-emerged five years later in New York at the Beijing plus 5 Review, a meeting designed to generate renewed momentum for the implementation of the BPA.²¹ Some Islamic women's groups, conservative Catholic women's groups and delegates of NGOs affiliated to the Vatican, which enjoys permanent observer status at the UN, objected to the emphasis given to what they characterized as 'homosexual rights' and made appeals to protect the traditional family model against homosexuals' demand for equal rights in marriage. An Outcome Document was agreed but only after a period of protracted negotiation and after the terms 'sexual rights' and 'sexual orientation' were removed from the document.²² The difficult and protracted process of negotiation at Beijing, and which has been a feature of more recent international forums on human rights, evidences that women's rights continue to be contested terrain, but struggles to attain equal rights for LGBT people generate even stronger opposition, perhaps.

Questions for reflection

- 1) To what extent – if any – is the concept of *patriarchy* useful in the study of international politics? Can you think of specific examples of where the concept usefully elucidates the nature of power relations or, conversely, where it simply fails to explain how power works in international politics?
- 2) 'You say *ideology*, I say *discourse*.' Does this distinction matter? If so, how does it matter and why does it matter? If not, why not?
- 3) Adam Jones has complained about the marginalization of men and masculinities in feminist IR. On the basis of your study of gender in IR so far, do you think this is a fair criticism or not?

Seminar activity

This seminar aims to bring together the discussion of approaches to gender in IR covered in chapter 1 and this chapter. Your tutor will allot an article from the Extended Reading which employs gender as a variable in a specific area of international relations. This reading should be done in advance of the class. In addition, you should also read chapter 1 in Brooke Ackerly, Maria Stern and Jacqui True (2006) *Feminist Methodologies for International Relations*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

In the first part of the seminar, the class will be divided into two groups.

The task of group 1 is to:

Interrogate the text you have been given, paying particular attention to the data (sample, interview material and/or statistics) used to generate the claims made by the author. You should then draw up a list of any possible biases and distortions that might have arisen in the employment of these data.

The task of group 2 is to:

Interrogate the text you have been given, drawing upon your knowledge of poststructuralist feminism.

Pay particular attention to the way in which gender has been constructed and employed in the research.

This exercise should take approximately 30 minutes.

In the second half of the class, each group should present their findings to the seminar group as a whole.

The class as a whole should now debate:

- 1) Whether the *ontological* questions fore-grounded in poststructuralist feminism matter. If so, why do they matter? If not, why not?
- 2) Whether poststructuralist approaches to gender in the study of international relations are useful. If so, why and how? If not, why not?

Further reading

- Judith Butler (1993) *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'*, London, Routledge.
- Carver, Terrell, Molly Cochran and Judith Squires 'Gendering Jones', *Review of International Studies*, 24, 2 (1998), 283–97.
- Chowdhry, Geeta, and Sheila Nair (eds.) (2002) *Postcolonialism and International Relations: Race, Gender and Class*, London, Routledge
- Connell, Raewyn (1995) *Masculinities*, Los Angeles, University of California Press.
- Jones, Adam 'Does "Gender" Make the World Go Around? Feminist Critiques of International Relations', *Review of International Studies*, 22, 4 (1996), 405–29.
- Nash, Jennifer C. 'Rethinking Intersectionality', *Feminist Review*, 89 (2008), 1–15.

Useful Web links

- British International Studies Association Gender in International Relations Group: www.bisa.ac.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=97-gendering-international-relations&catid=37-working-groups&Itemid=68
- Feminist Theory and Gender Studies Section, International Studies Association: www.isanet.org/ftgs/
- Intersex Initiative: www.intersexinitiative.org/articles
- The Men's Bibliography: <http://mensbiblio.xyonline.net>
- Queer Theory Links: www.queerbychoice.com/qttheorylinks.html

States, Nations and Citizenship

Introduction

International relations can be conceptualized in a variety of ways, as inter-state relations, as **transnational** relations or as North/South relations, for example. The study of IR has long embraced the study of many sub-state and non-governmental actors. Moreover, as the discipline of IR has developed over time, the discrete areas of study subsumed under the heading ‘IR’ have greatly expanded, embracing a number of concerns that would once have been regarded as within the purview of History, Sociology, Geography, Anthropology, Cultural Studies and, even, Linguistics and Aesthetics. The diversity of the discipline notwithstanding, the state remains central to the study of IR.

Problem-solving approaches take the state as a given. Problem solvers do not much question how and why the world is constituted as a system or society of states. Rather, problem solvers focus on the consequences of this, the problems that arise in a world so constituted and how problems that arise from this – war, for example, or trade disputes – might be addressed *within* the existing architecture. As noted in chapter 1, the relevance of gender to the problems of world order must be demonstrated in research that focuses on substantive areas of study within a framework of inter-state relations, in ways that contribute to the problem-solving project.

In contrast, critical theorists of all persuasions, including many strands of feminist thought, interrogate how the boundaries of political communities are constructed and reproduced, as well as the consequences of such constructions. Furthermore, rather than taking the state as given, critical theorists are interested in exploring possibilities for change or transformation in the state system or society of states. Gender is relevant not only to specific ‘problems’ but to the construction and reproduction of state boundaries and identities.

After unpacking the concept of the state, the first section of this chapter turns to one of the foremost problems interrogated in IR: war (violence) as a legitimized and sanctioned practice in international relations. The second section concentrates on nationalism (or, more properly, *nationalisms*) as a dominant construction of identity, and the role of nationalist ideologies or discourses in legitimizing state power and state-sanctioned violence. The third section takes a closer look at gender and sexuality in the context of citizenship and rights claims. Key areas of interest here are the role of the state in demarcating rights and obligations of citizenship and in policing the boundaries between citizens (insiders) and ‘foreigners’ (outsiders). The chapter concludes by reflecting on a number of responses to the challenges of difference in diversity in international politics that foreground ethical issues and social justice.

The State in International Relations

In IR textbooks, states are usually defined according to the following criteria. To be a state, it is necessary to have:

- a population (people);
- a territory (defined boundaries);
- a sovereign government;
- recognition (other states recognize the state boundaries and the sovereign claims of national governments).

There is an internal and external dimension to sovereignty. Internal sovereignty means that the government exercises jurisdiction over the people in a given territory. External sovereignty confers on states and governments the right to represent the national population in international transactions and negotiations. In the ‘real world’ things are not always so clear-cut. Nevertheless, the international system or international society is constituted on the basis of sovereign states, even if the politics of claims regarding statehood and sovereignty are sometimes somewhat messy. The implications of sovereignty are far-reaching. To give just two examples: first, sovereignty prescribes the legality of intervention; second, sovereignty means that individuals are not – generally – recognized as ‘actors’ in international relations.

Much like the state, sovereignty has been rather taken as given in the study of international relations, but contemporary critical approaches afford much greater space to understanding sovereignty as a ‘norm’ of international relations, or international society, which is subject to change. For example, social constructivists¹ argue that:

- Social agents produce and reproduce the constitutive principles and structures by which they operate.
- Sovereignty is a ‘norm’ established through state practice.
- Sovereignty is not an ontologically secure and stable characteristic of the state; the meaning of sovereignty – and state practice – changes over time.
- There are many examples of ‘qualified sovereignty’ – the European Union is a good example of this.

Changes in sovereignty and state practice notwithstanding, the state continues to possess significant legal powers and continues to play a core role in representing specific populations in international relations. Hence, sovereignty remains a central *norm* and foundational building block of international society.

Constructing and reproducing the state through war

The German sociologist, social theorist and political economist Max Weber² (1864–1920) first offered what has since become *the* classic definition of the state:

- The state is the body that enjoys a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence.

Weber insisted that the first order of statecraft was to transform brute power into *authority*: that is, to make the exercise of state power legitimate in the eyes of the population. In this succinct definition, Weber laid bare the implicit threat of violence that underpins the pomp and circumstance of the military parade and other rituals surrounding the offices of state.

Accounts of identity in IR have most often been linked to the creation of boundaries in the process of modern state-building. Weber had much to say about the state as a distinctly *modern* political form, meaning the state was a creature of **modernity**. His thinking about the state and violence has been an important influence on Critical Theory. Critical Theorists understand violence to be tied into the constitution of the state system. Weber believed that violence was also central to the glorification of the state, in imperialist conquest and in war more generally. However, Critical Theorists do not regard the state or state system as immutable (unchanging); there are always possibilities for transformation in the constitution of political community and so possibilities for creating new forms of political order in which the problem of violence is ameliorated, if not wholly overcome. One variant of this ‘transformative’ thinking appeals to universal principles and values that transcend the boundaries of specific states and populations. For example, Andrew Linklater³ argues that:

- There exist moral obligations between citizens (of states) and outsiders or ‘others’.
- There are possibilities for change and transformation in political communities which facilitate the development of universal standards and values; again, the European Union is one such example.

Linklater’s version of Critical Theory shares much in common with the long tradition of liberal and cosmopolitan thinking in IR. In the early twentieth century, liberal idealists did not contest the constitution of the state system per se, but rather argued that international institutions and a system of collective security were needed to overcome the tendency towards conflict and war inherent in the state system. Immanuel Kant, who provided the intellectual underpinnings of liberal idealist thinking, believed that states should be constituted as Republics. This would bolster respect for the rule of law and allow for the conduct of international relations through the rule of law rather than force. Kant’s famous essay on *Perpetual Peace* is sometimes appropriated by democratic peace theorists who argue that states that are also democracies are more likely to use law – rather than war – as a means of resolving disputes.

Poststructuralists similarly see the state as a distinctly modern form of political organization that is founded in violence. David Campbell,⁴ for example, argues that:

- State identity is constructed through processes of ‘Othering’; external ‘others’ (foreigners / foreign powers) are constructed as ‘threats’ to the state and citizen body.
- The boundaries of the nation-states are made and remade by practices like foreign policies and security policies which evoke powerful *representations* of ‘national interests’.
- The boundaries of nation-states are thus made through received narratives of political space (territory) and place (‘homelands’) and constructed and reproduced in (violent) practices (war being a prominent practice and the best example).

From a poststructuralist perspective, identity is created through narratives (stories) that people tell about who they are and their shared history, and by emotive appeals to symbols of and rituals surrounding statehood and nationhood. Jenny Edkins⁵ argues that state power is produced through war and other traumas, although this is masked in discourses and narratives on national security that

construct the state as the ‘protector’ of the citizen body. The commemoration of wars and the construction of war memorials are practices that write war into narratives of national heroism and thereby legitimate state violence. However, while there is a great deal of pessimism about the current condition of international relations in poststructuralist thought, this approach also recognizes that the practices whereby state identities and boundaries are constructed and state violence legitimated are open to contestation. It is possible, therefore, to realize a world where ‘difference’ is not always and everywhere constructed as threatening.

States, nations and nationalism

Insofar as nationalism is a dominant construction of identity and, moreover, one that is inherently bounded and exclusionary, confronting the connections between nationalism and the state is crucial to all critical thinking about the constitution of international/world order. Weber championed – problematically⁶ – the mythical cause of nationalism as a means of engendering active participation in public life.⁷ He believed that nationalism could serve as a positive source of identification, inculcating renewed meaning in a ‘disenchanted’ world. Nationalist discourse was infused with mysticism and mythology that was a characteristic of the pre-modern world, but which was, Weber believed, lacking in the rationalistic, bureaucratic, secular modern world. He also believed the nation’s identity and metal was forged through power politics and war. While not all forms of nationalism appeal directly to religious belief, ultimately all forms of nationalism are rooted in rituals surrounding sacrifice and, especially, death.⁸

Thus, Weber forged a link between the modern secular state, a conception of identity that had popular, emotive appeal (the nation and national mythologies) and the practice of war. The modern sovereign state is invested with a populist and nationalist construction of political identity, and the state project is held to be founded in and reproduced through war. So, following Weber’s argument, ‘war stories’, which poststructuralist thinkers like Edkins see as deeply problematic, are often privileged in nationalist discourses and in nationalist projects.

The construction of ‘citizens’ and ‘foreigners’

War is one way in which state boundaries are constructed and reproduced, but nation-states are not continually at war. The boundaries of political communities are also – and more routinely – reproduced in day-to-day legislation and policy-making and the policing of boundaries. Prominent examples of this are policies and laws relating to citizenship and nationality, migration and asylum.

Once again, cosmopolitan thought provides an alternative way of thinking about the problems inherent in a model of citizenship founded on nationalism and in bounded, exclusionary communities. Cosmopolitans argue that all human beings, regardless of their affiliations to particular political communities like nations, also belong to a single world or global community based on shared moral values. The project of cosmopolitanism is to cultivate the development of forms of community based on shared values. In practice, human rights tend to be evoked as the basis for new forms of community and shared moral values.

There has been renewed interest in cosmopolitanism over the past few decades as the world has become increasingly *globalized*. The implications of globalization for how we think about states and nations will be revisited from time to time throughout this book. In short, globalization:

- generates complex forms of interdependence;
- makes it difficult for individual states to manage complex interdependence without engaging in ever closer cooperation, coordination and perhaps even integration of national policies;
- has greatly increased transnational flows, including flows in human traffic: migration, asylum seekers, refugees and illegal forms of human trafficking;
- has resulted in more complex forms of identity construction as nation-states have been rendered ever more heterogeneous;
- has encouraged new forms of political organization, including institutions and mechanisms of global governance that transcend nation-states.

Cosmopolitans believe that it is, therefore, even more necessary today to reconstitute subjects (individuals) as world or global citizens who possess universal human rights. This is the only way to protect human beings from the negative impacts of globalization.

On the other side of the fence, so to speak, **communitarians** and cultural relativists provide critiques of cosmopolitanism. In distinctive ways, communitarians and cultural relativists argue that cosmopolitan theorists tend to under-estimate the tenacity of the state and the continuing appeal of the *nation-state* particularly. Moreover, while the state might be undergoing processes of *transformation*, it is by no means obsolete. For example, the *functions* of the state (what states *do*) might be changing in response to globalization and this might be simultaneously generating changes in the meaning and practice of sovereignty, but states still retain considerable powers and continue to engage in discriminatory practices that reproduce the boundaries between insiders and outsiders.

The patriarchal state?

Feminists have contributed substantially to discussions on the state and on the construction of political boundaries. Feminist scholarship on nationalism and citizenship will be covered in more detail below. Although feminist contributions to debates on cosmopolitanism and new forms of political community will not be covered in depth in this chapter, this literature should be acknowledged (see Eschele, in Extended Reading). At this juncture, feminist contributions to thinking about the state will be addressed only in relation to the concept of patriarchy (see chapter 2).

In her influential book *Towards a Feminist Theory of the State*, Catherine MacKinnon declares that ‘feminism has no theory of the state’.⁹ This is not entirely accurate. However, it is the case that there is no general consensus among feminist theorists on the degree to which the state can be seen as patriarchal. The case for the conception of a patriarchal state is as follows:

- In delimiting its ‘proper’ sphere of internal jurisdiction, the state codifies and polices the boundaries between the public and the private – for example, the state formulates and implements and enforces ideologically driven policies and legislation on birth control, marriage, taxation, welfare and so on.
- The practice whereby the state draws and re-draws the boundaries between insiders and outsiders is also gendered – for example, historically, men and women have not been treated equally in the granting of citizenship and nationality.

The Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA)

Feminists have raised the issue of discrimination in rights to citizenship mainly in respect to women (as above), but it is evident that the state also prescribes the rights of homosexual citizens in ways that support heteronormativity. This is inherently discriminatory. On 11/11/11 it was reported that US citizen Kelli Ryan and her British partner Lucy Truman, who have been legally married in the US for two years, faced separation as a consequence of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA). Truman was at risk of losing her job and, thus, her Green Card, without which she would have no right of residency in the US. With the support of high-profile politicians and the LGBT group Immigration Equality, Ryan and Truman petitioned the federal government. Ryan was quoted as saying: 'I feel as an American citizen that I should be able to have the same rights as all other American citizens and I should not be forced to choose between my country and my family.'¹⁰

There are empirical and theoretical problems in directly linking the state with specifically *male* interests, as is implied in the concept of patriarchy. Support for conventional forms of marriage and the discrimination against homosexual couples could hardly be said to serve the interests of gay men. Moreover, state practices and policies vary over time and from place to place. This is why the radical feminist conception of patriarchy as *universal* has been subjected to so much criticism. Nevertheless, many feminists continue to view the state as constituted on the basis of power relations and political processes in which patriarchal social relations are both constructed *and* contested. Thus, the processes by which the state constructs boundaries between the public and private and between insiders and outsiders have been and continue to be contested over time, but still bear the vestiges of patriarchy and heteronormativity.

The state as 'barracks community'

In Weber's classic definition of the state, the legitimation of violence is brought to the fore. This directs attention to those functions of the state that might be said to be 'coercive': functions carried out by the police and – especially – the military. If reflected upon at all by non-feminist commentators, male dominance in the institutions of coercive state power, especially the military, is usually seen as a reflection of the sexual division of labour and so as part of the *natural* scheme of things. However, Nancy Hartsock¹¹ claims that:

- Historically, discourse on political community and citizenship in Western political thought has been heavily militarized and gendered.
- The entire history of Western thought on politics and citizenship have been dominated by the themes of masculinity, the warrior ethic and death.
- Eros and power have been connected since the ideal of public virtue first took theoretical form in ancient Athens in an all-male political community.

For Hartsock, these connections continue to have resonance today. In the contemporary Western world the association of masculinity with domination fuses sexuality, violence and death. Heroic action is itself a construction in which the 'warrior hero' faces the cessation of his existence. Jean Elshtain's¹² underlying theoretical position is different from Hartsock's, but she concurs that dominant discourses on war construct the political identity of the virtuous male citizen as defined by the bearing of arms (see chapter 5). This idea – much reproduced in feminist scholarship – that there is a link between masculinity, citizenship and participation in combat (in defence of the state / political community) was taken up by liberal feminists in the 1970s, in the US particularly. Liberal 'rights feminists'¹³ in the National Organization of Women (NOW) argued that:

- Differences between men and women had been used to justify the exclusion of women from combat.
- These alleged gender ‘differences’ were actually either non-existent or transitory, but arguments about gender differences had real implications for women’s citizenship: women were seen as ‘second-class’ citizens.
- If women’s citizenship was, in some sense, second-class, then feminism required a strategy which would lead to the realization of ‘first-class’ citizenship.
- Therefore, feminists should support women in their demand for *the right to fight*.

Critics of the ‘right to fight’ campaign accused liberals of engaging in arguments about gender inequality while actually failing to theorize gender – specifically, failing to consider how ideas about gender were used to institutionalize male dominance. At first sight, this criticism might appear paradoxical since male privilege was exactly what was at issue here. However, liberals tended to assume that the state was essentially ‘neutral’ and that the citizen could be viewed as an unsexed individual abstracted from his or her social context. The only ‘problem’ was one of discrimination, which the right to fight sought to challenge. However, their detractors argued that, even though women might struggle for the right to enter into the public domain on the same terms as men, the public domain remained a space in which ‘masculine’, as opposed to ‘feminine’, values were valorized. Put simply, should feminists really be fighting for the right to kill? This notion of the state as ‘barracks community’ and the deeper implications of the privileging of masculine-identified values and militarized forms of citizenship are further developed in chapter 5.

The Construction of National Identities

Gendering nations and nationalisms

Exploring issues of identity from the perspective of gender encourages a critical assessment of the theoretical and practical processes of inclusion and exclusion in the construction of attachments and in feelings of belonging. For example, Mosse¹⁴ has argued that this sense of attachment is centred on male bonding; it has special affinities for male society. Feminist analyses of nationalisms interrogate the myth of homogeneous identity that underpins the construction of nations.¹⁵ Nationalism appeals to a sense of belonging; the nation is held to be something to which one is ‘naturally’ tied. Kandiyoti¹⁶ has argued that, in nationalist ideology/discourse, women serve as ‘the repository of group identity’ and ‘the privileged signifiers of national difference’. The image employed in nationalist ideology/discourse of the motherland as a female body whose violation by foreigners requires citizens to rush to her defence is powerful. It is because women embody the symbolic values of chastity, purity and motherhood in nationalist ideology/discourse that rape in armed conflicts is a political act through which the aggressor attacks the honour of other men. Rape in armed conflict breaks the continuity of the social (national) order which is women’s ‘responsibility’ to uphold (for an elaboration of this argument, see MacKenzie, Extended Reading).

The emotive appeal of nationalism depends, in turn, upon an image of women as chaste and dutiful. Motherhood is not then so much a personal choice, as a national duty.¹⁷ Women’s bodies and sexuality are controlled in the interests of reproducing the boundaries of national groups. This infringes upon women’s lives as enfranchised citizens.¹⁸

In short, gender analyses of nationalist discourses typically lead to the following conclusions:

- The nation is depicted in the gendered language and imagery of the ‘motherland’ or ‘fatherland’.
- The rhetoric of nationalism is thus heavily sexualized and gendered.
- Men are constructed as protectors and defenders of the nation.
- The association of women with the private domain of the home and family reinforces the merging of ‘national community’ with the construction of the selfless/devoted mother.
- Nationalist discourses legitimize male domination over women.

However, masculinity and femininity intersect with other aspects of identity like class and ethnicity; ‘male society’ and indeed female society are differentiated. Women, like men, might – and often do – have a very strong sense of identification with the nation. Women are not *excluded* from the nation, even as nationalist discourse defines ‘woman’s place’ within the national order. Moreover, despite all of the effort that goes into the making of nations, states and men, these constructions are, if not quite built on sand, always somewhat shaky, suggesting that ‘interests’ are also constructed and subject to contestation.



So far, the discussion of nationalism has centred on both positive connotations of attachment and belonging and the negative implications – for women particularly, as ‘mothers’ of the nation and reproducers of the national body. However, arguments can be marshalled in favour of nationalism and, moreover, might be supported by feminists in some circumstances and contexts. Communitarians¹⁹ need not be fervent nationalists, but do nevertheless argue that human beings are embedded in specific communities. Human beings cannot be abstracted from social and cultural contexts as proponents of ‘uni-versal’ values such as human rights suggest. Thus, bounded communities like nations are of moral significance and worth.

The assertion of national identity need not always lead to violent xenophobia; the celebration of national identity can give ‘insiders’ a positive source of strength and security without necessarily posing a threat to outsiders. Postcolonial theorists:

- value the principles of sovereignty and self-determination and champion postcolonial nationalist projects;
- see the process of decolonization as reinvigorating the nationality principle above alternative constructions of political identity;
- see strategic essentialism (chapter 1) as about the ‘fixing’ of identity in order to marshal opposition to Western dominance;
- see that resistance to Western domination – colonial and neo-colonial domination – necessitates unity and solidarity; nationalist liberation projects provide a basis for unity and solidarity;
- believe that, in making legal and political claims, notably claims to sovereignty and self-determination, it is strategically necessary to set aside internal differences and divisions in order to speak with one voice (the nation’s);
- believe that reclaiming national identity in postcolonial politics is important to subalterns as well as elites.

Contradictions in nationalist projects

Nationalist discourses tell stories about the past, present and future of nation-states. Wars (past and present), sacrifice and death are central to the construction of nationalist identities. Yet nationalism as a project is riddled with contradictions:

- Stories and mythologies about nations forget as much as they remember.
- Nationalist stories and mythologies exclude as well as include; this applies not only to ‘outsiders’ but specific ethnic, social and perhaps religious groups *within* prescribed national boundaries.
- Narratives on states and nations (and war) can serve as a site of contestation and resistance.
- Narratives/stories take different forms and are recounted and interpreted and assimilated in different contexts.
- Narratives on the nation and nationhood have to be re-invented over time.

The literature on gender in postcolonial nationalist struggles typically identifies challenges to existing gender relations as simultaneously challenges to dominant constructions of the ‘cultural traditions’ of the nation; ‘tradition’ is re-constructed and re-invented over time. The participation of women in armed struggle often poses a direct challenge to the privileged position of men within the social

order.

On the other hand, nationalism draws upon cultural values drawn from some imagined past. The search for national identity involves a 'rediscovery' of a national culture destroyed or suppressed by the experience of foreign domination. Thus, while nationalism may reconstitute the political order on a radically different basis, women continue to embody the 'tradition' of nations. 'National' and 'cultural' tradition can be evoked to justify constraints on women's activities, thus keeping women within boundaries prescribed by male elites. A similar argument has been advanced in regard to gender and sexuality; 'cultural tradition' is often articulated as an argument against LGBT rights, yet this disguises the often open and tolerant attitude towards diverse sexualities that existed in societies prior to colonization (see chapter 4).

Paradoxically, nationalist aspirations for popular sovereignty might work to extend citizenship rights to women, but changes in the social position of women can also be portrayed as a 'betrayal' of cultural or national identity. In India,²⁰ for example, movements for emancipation took place against a background of nationalist struggles aimed not only at achieving political independence and asserting national identity, but also at 'modernizing' the country. Women's struggles became an essential and integral part of nationalist struggle, because the status of women became a popular barometer of 'civilization'. In other contexts, studies have shown how struggles for changes in the position and status of women are portrayed as being based upon a 'foreign' ideology – feminism – that alienates women from 'their' religion, 'their' culture and 'their' family responsibilities on the one hand, and from revolutionary struggle on the other. Women who actively campaign for women's rights are then stigmatized and accused of betraying the nation.

In the contemporary age of globalization, the divisiveness of unchecked market forces, cultural and racial tensions, social fragmentation and political factionalism all seemingly hack away at the wobbly foundations of the national project. The concepts of **hyphenated identities** and hybrid identities have been developed in response to processes of **transnationalism** and, latterly, globalization. And yet there is another possible contradiction here, since globalization can generate feelings of insecurity and loss of identity, which in turn strengthen the appeal of nationalism as a political project.

? CONCEPT

Queer Nation / Queer Nationalism

Queer Nation was a movement formed in the US in protest against discrimination against LGBT people. The focus of this protest was discrimination in social and political life, and the constraints placed on LGBT people in their enjoyment of public space. For example, LGBT people who expressed their sexuality openly were frequently subjected to intimidation and – often – violent attacks. Queer Nationalism expresses the idea that LGBT people are and should be recognized as a distinct *cultural group*. Brian Walker²¹ regards Queer Nationalism as a new cultural form, quite distinct from 'old' forms of nationalism (based on ethnicity or religion). Nevertheless, Queer Nationalism shares features in common with other nationalisms – notably, it is founded in a social movement among people who believe that they share a distinct culture, identity and history. While Queer Nationalism is – paradoxically – transnational in nature and organization, territorial claims have been staked in the name of the Queer Nation. Queer Nationalism has both supporters and detractors. Will Kymlicka²² (see chapter 4) accepts that LGBT people have developed a group identity and group culture similar to ethnic/cultural groups, but argues for the integration of gay people into societies, with full rights that allow the full expression of identity, rather than supporting a separatist strategy.

Citizens and Others

Like nationalism and identity, citizenship serves as a prism for investigating practices of inclusion and exclusion. Citizenship demarcates boundaries on the basis of rights and obligations between insiders and outsiders. As such, citizenship embodies a rationalist, contractual understanding of relationships between members of specific communities and between citizens and ‘foreigners’. To be a citizen is to enjoy rights and privileges granted by the state that are not afforded to outsiders. It also involves political obligations by citizens to the state – notably, loyalty. As such, citizenship constitutes ‘a space within a discourse on politics that institutionalizes identities and differences by drawing boundaries, in terms of both membership and the actual political practices associated with membership’.²³

All states can – and often do – demand participation in military service in times of war (the ‘draft’), particularly by male citizens. In some cases, political obligation extends to military service in peacetime. However, on a routine basis, citizenship is constructed through policies and laws that demarcate identities and boundaries in ways that are not overtly violent (one might, of course, view all practices of exclusion as *violence* against ‘others’). In this respect too, the state can be thought of as a *gendered state*, although how and why it is gendered is not always immediately evident.

Citizenship and nationality

While there now exists a wide-spread international consensus (with notable exceptions) that women should enjoy full rights of citizenship along with men, it should be remembered that it was not until the 1933 Montevideo Convention on the Nationality of Married Women that equality between the sexes in regard to nationality was proclaimed in an international treaty.²⁴ In the early life of the UN, the Commission on the Status of Women (founded in 1946) found that it still had much work to do in addressing discrimination in nationality laws and in matters concerning marriage and the family. Across societies

- Ideas about gender justified different and usually unequal treatment for men and women in regard to citizenship and nationality claims.
- States were involved in regulating ostensibly ‘private’ decisions, concerning, for example, whom one could marry and the legal status of children.

In the West, historically, the construction of women as ‘dependents’ identified only in terms of their relationship to men, as wives (and perhaps mothers), meant that women’s citizenship was mediated by the male ‘head of household’. This has now changed. Nevertheless, dominant conceptions of citizenship in regard to the relationship between citizens and the state still largely privileges a model based on the assumption of ‘man as the norm’. For example, the European Union champions a *dual model* of ‘worker’ and ‘carer’ in the understanding of the modern-day citizen, but in practice women have been encouraged into paid work to support families, while the ‘dual care’ dimension has not been fully realized or supported by states. Vestiges of the patriarchal model remain.²⁵ In some states, citizenship claims still depend upon marriage to a male citizen and citizenship might be denied to women who ‘marry out.’²⁶ Thus, there are good reasons to insist that citizenship has been – and remains – gendered, in both conception and practice.

One Day in November

The right of women to exercise control and autonomy over their bodies in regard to sexual freedom and reproduction is often presented in terms of conflicts between liberal political and social values and religious and cultural norms. However, states pay a close interest to sexual rights, and population specifically, for a variety of reasons. These reasons include the ethnic mix of any given country in cases where ethnic divisions are divisive, development needs – labour needs or, conversely, ‘too many mouths to feed’ – or, in some contexts, the need for a large standing army for reasons of ‘national security’. Thus, according to context, population ceases to be a matter of personal/private choice, as liberals would hold, and is rather constructed as a matter of ‘national interest’ and hence within the domain of the state.

Since the break-up of the Soviet Union, a number of agencies and research institutes, including the UN, have predicted that Russia faces a looming demographic disaster. The UN predicts that Russia’s population will shrink by a fifth by 2050. The reasons for this have been much debated, but the key problem is that mortality rates now outstrip birth rates. On 11 November 2012, Sky News (UK) reported that the Russian parliament had adopted a controversial law restricting abortions, as a way to tackle the crisis. This has very clear implications for women’s rights in relation to sexual and reproductive health. Activists opposing the law argue that making it impossible for a woman to choose will worsen the problem of illegal abortion and is the wrong way to tackle the demographic problem. Olga Lipovskaya is quoted as saying: ‘Guarantees from the state for accessible education, good healthcare, good social provision are the ways to solve the problem.’²⁷

Citizenship and asylum

The 1951 Refugee Convention²⁸ is the key legal document that defines who is identified as a refugee and sets out the rights of refugees and the legal obligations of states towards them. The Convention was originally designed to protect the millions of people displaced in Europe after the Second World War. The Convention was extended in 1967. After this date, signatories were obliged to offer asylum to persecuted groups from any part of the world. The Convention provides protection for people who have a ‘well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a *particular social group* [my emphasis] or political opinion’.²⁹ Both the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and NGOs play a key role in monitoring state practice in the observance of the Convention. However, insofar as the Refugee Convention is implemented through domestic systems of law, landmark cases in individual countries are very important in the development of the law covering refugees and asylum seekers.

While refugee law recognizes *specific groups* and so can, in theory, incorporate gender-based persecution,³⁰ historically the law has tended to be interpreted in domestic legal systems in a gender-biased way. This is despite the reality that, as Valerie Oosterveld argues, ‘the faces of refugees are overwhelmingly female: women and children represent over 80 per cent of the world’s 27 million refugees and displaced people’.³¹ Since the early 1990s, this gender bias has begun to be addressed. There have been a number of landmark cases that have served to move gender issues and women’s rights to the forefront of the human rights agenda. In turn, this has had a significant impact on the development of refugee law. For example, Oosterveld cites the 1993 Canadian Guidelines on Women Refugee Claimants Fearing Gender-Related Persecution as a milestone for the recognition of gender as a category in asylum law.³²

Historically, differences between men and women in their relation to the state (the public/private division) have been overlooked. So, too, have aspects of ‘harm’ and ‘persecution’ that are disproportionately experienced by women. For example, domestic violence has been constructed as ‘private’ and so the state has avoided any culpability in failing to protect those affected. Prior to the Canadian Guidelines, rape was largely viewed as an act that occurred in the private sphere, thus

reproducing an inherently problematic – from a feminist perspective – public/private binary. Even in cases that had an overtly political dimension, victims of rape were not protected. For example, Deborah Anker cites the case of a US immigration judge who denied asylum to a Haitian woman who had been gang-raped because of her support for the deposed Haitian President. Cases involving rape were routinely dismissed until the Canadian Guidelines embraced a political and legal understanding of rape as ‘persecution of the most vile sort’.³³

Many countries around the world have subsequently followed Canada in recognizing rape as a violation of human rights. Specifically, rape and sexual violence violate the right to security of the person, and also violate the prohibition in human rights law against ‘cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment’. The development of refugee law made further advances in the wake of conflicts in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. In both conflicts, there was wide-scale sexual violence, perpetrated against women particularly. In 1998, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda declared rape to be a form of torture, regardless of whether it occurred in the context of armed conflict or of detention.



WORLD EXAMPLE

Persecution on the grounds of sexuality

In a test case brought in the UK, two gay men from Iran and Cameroon who claimed they faced persecution in their home countries were granted the right to asylum by the Supreme Court in July 2010. The ruling overturned an earlier decision which held the men could avoid persecution and live a ‘reasonable and tolerable’ life in their countries of origin if they behaved ‘discreetly’. In Iran punishment for homosexual acts can range from public flogging to execution. In Cameroon homosexuals face jail terms ranging from 6 months to 5 years. The Court ruled that to suppress or hide sexuality was to deny identity and thus constituted a violation of the right to freedom of expression and association, routinely enjoyed by heterosexual people. The case was important in marking a sea-change in the way UK tribunals and courts treat asylum cases in regard to gay people. While UK courts will continue to assess applications on a case-by-case basis to reflect the different legal, political and cultural attitudes to homosexuality in different countries, the Supreme Court guidance will need to be applied in all future applications to the UK. The UK ruling could, in principle, be applied in all countries that are parties to the Refugee Convention.³⁴

Citizenship and cultural difference

Issues of citizenship and rights are greatly complicated by the cultural differences that exist between specific groups *within* states. Such cases have attracted particular attention in the West as many states have first embraced and then rejected the principle of **multiculturalism**. In recent years, a number of Western states have publicly retracted their commitment to multiculturalism. For example, in 2011 the British Prime Minister David Cameron and the German Chancellor Angela Merkel both went on record as saying that multiculturalism had ‘failed’.

In recent years a debate about the possible tension between women’s rights and cultural difference emerged following the publication of Susan Okin’s article ‘Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?’³⁵ Okin argued that the sphere of personal, sexual and reproductive life, including laws relating to marriage, divorce, child custody, control of family property and inheritance, served as the backbone of most cultures. In all of these domains, cultural groups engaged in practices or prescribed rules that either actually or potentially limited the capacity of women and girls to live a life of human dignity equal to that of men and boys, and to live freely chosen lives. Indeed, she claimed that, where religious orthodoxy or religious fundamentalism was a strong influence over members of specific groups, it was virtually impossible for women to choose to live independently of men, to be celibate, to be lesbians, or to choose to be childless.

Okin claimed that, since the control of women by men was a prevalent feature of most cultures, and because there were clear disparities of power between the sexes, the more powerful, male members of cultural groups were generally in a position to determine and articulate the group's beliefs, practices and interests. Therefore, certain interests, needs and aspirations arising from being female might be suppressed or subordinated by an overarching cultural paradigm favouring male dominance and privilege. Moreover, cultural practices were likely to have much greater impact on the lives of women and girls than those of men and boys, since far more of women's time and energy went into preserving and maintaining the personal, familial and reproductive side of life.



WORLD EXAMPLE

The Hijab controversy

The alleged tension between liberal, secular values and culture and religion has been evident in the ongoing controversy in France regarding the Muslim veil or hijab. In France the concept of *laïcité* holds that state and religious authority are clearly separate domains. This separation of church and state was laid down in the 1905 French law on the Separation of Church and State. Historically, *laïcité* has actually been interpreted differently at different times. For example, in the post-Second World War period, it was interpreted in a way that supported religious pluralism. However, since the late 1980s, *laïcité* has been progressively interpreted more narrowly to mean that conspicuous displays of religious symbols on the person, are incompatible with the principle.

A ban on the wearing of religious symbols was enacted in March 2004. While this ban extended to all religious groups – Jews were prohibited from wearing yarmulkes and Christians were debarred from wearing large crosses – it arguably had the biggest impact on France's Muslim population, particularly women and girls. The ban on Muslim girls wearing the hijab in French schools has subsequently acquired an international dimension. Not only has this controversy generated a great deal of public debate and been extensively covered in the media beyond France, but also it has led to political protest in many parts of the world. In 2004 two French journalists were taken prisoner by the Islamic Army in Iraq in protest at the ban (they were later released).

Insofar as many Muslims believe that the Qur'an requires women to cover their heads in public space (any space outside of the family), this prohibition has been deemed by Muslim leaders and very many ordinary Muslim people as discriminatory in practice, and a violation of the rights of Muslim women and girls particularly. It has had an impact on the day-to-day life of many female Muslim children, who have either been refused entry to school if wearing the hijab, or vowed to stay away from school until the ban is lifted.

Much of the debate concerning the 'hijab ban' has centred on: (a) whether or not the Qur'an does require that women and girls wear the hijab in public or whether this is actually a cultural convention rather than a religious imperative; (b) what 'the right to choose' actually means. Supporters of the ban argue à la Okin that women and girls are placed under pressure to conform to a custom that evidences deeply rooted discrimination against them within Muslim communities. In contrast, many Muslims see this as an issue of religious and cultural identity and also a practice that is wholly compatible with the principle of gender equality. Moreover, in the context of the War on Terror and a perceived increase in Islamophobia in many parts of the Western world, the hijab ban has become – for many Muslims – a symbol of more widespread practices of discrimination.

It is important to notice, however, that this debate/dispute does not neatly divide into opposing Muslim and liberal camps. In her book *A Quiet Revolution*, Leila Ahmed (see Further reading) traces the intimate links between the veil and colonialism. She argues that colonial officials regarded the veil as evidencing the subordination and degrading of women in Islamic culture. She finds a continuation of this discourse in contemporary Western societies, particularly in the wake of 9/11. Ahmed explicitly contests this construction, arguing that a combination of political and economic factors led to the 'return of the veil' in Muslim societies. However, her overall conclusion is that wearing the veil was a means of displaying egalitarian principles and conveying the wearer's strength and authority. Far from a symbol of disempowerment, the veil was a mark of liberation for some women who chose to wear it. Many liberals and non-Muslim feminist scholars have defended the wearing of the veil (Freedman 2007, Extended Reading). On the other hand, Islamic feminist Fedela Amara has supported the position that the veil is a symbol of women's oppression.

Criticisms have been levelled at Okin's thesis (see Freedman 2007b, Extended Reading). One criticism is that she seemingly assumes that Western liberal regimes are less patriarchal than other regimes. A counter-argument would be that patriarchy takes different forms in different states and in different cultural contexts. Freedman argues that, according to context, the treatment of women might

be better in some respects and worse in others. Poststructuralists, and postcolonial feminists particularly, are apt to regard the privileging of the 'rights' discourse as a manifestation of the Western sense of superiority implicated in practices of 'Othering'. From this perspective, Okin's argument can be deemed to rest on an assumption that Western liberal regimes are farther along the road, so to speak, in respecting women's rights than other societies, invoking a progressive trajectory of unfolding liberal equality that has a certain teleological 'inevitability' built into it.

Negotiating boundaries

It was noted in the introductory section of this chapter that the purview of 'problem solvers' in IR is limited to the major contexts and main processes in and through which international relations are conducted. It follows that the problems that arise *within* the existing architecture of the state system – conflict, war, security dilemmas – will, and indeed many think *should*, preoccupy IR scholars, just as they preoccupy states (and governments).

This is not to say that problem-solving theorists are unconcerned with the normative and/or ethical questions that arise in a world of diversity. Nevertheless, there is a danger that in taking the states as given, problem-solving approaches can perpetuate the ethical problems that necessarily arise in a state system which is actually based on inclusion and exclusion. There is a further danger that problem-solving approaches reify the state system, again by taking bounded communities as given and neglecting possibilities for change.

The same criticism might be applied to those who limit the analysis of gender in IR to treating it as a variable or category. This can be helpful in developing policies beneficial to certain social groups – women and LGBT people, for example – as the asylum cases documented above evidence. However, the many and complex ways in which gender and sexuality are more deeply implicated in the construction of identities and in boundary-drawing processes are largely neglected. Insofar as the 'variable' or 'category of analysis' approach 'fixes' identity in the interests of securing ontologically stable categories ('groups'), these deeper issues of construction and the consequences of constructions are also largely set aside.

Critical theorists – broadly defined – share the concerns of problem solvers – the problems and consequences of living in a world constituted on the basis of bounded and exclusionary forms of community. However, critical theorists are deeply concerned with the ethical dilemmas and responsibilities inherent in the practices of world politics and the theorization of IR.³⁶ Many strands of feminism, poststructuralism, constructivism and Critical Theory share common ground in their advocacy of a politics of negotiation rooted in affirmation and respect for differences. Social constructivism potentially contributes to the 'critical project' insofar as norms, identities and interests are deemed to be constructed and so amenable to change.³⁷ This contrasts with problem solvers who largely accept that we must learn to live within a world in which the politics of force and domination over 'others' prevail, while also attempting to ameliorate – if possible – instances of conflict and the consequences of conflict.

Critical Theorists problematize the state as a form of political community, confront the moral and ethical implications of a world order constituted by nation-states, interrogate possibilities for change and, crucially, deploy critical and reflective thinking to foster change. Following Jurgen Habermas' model of discourse ethics, Critical Theories seek to create 'conversation across boundaries' on the basis of a shared communicative rationality (see chapter 7). The aims here are: first, to try to uncover the universal conditions of communication; second, while 'dialogue' requires participants to be

reflective about the assumptions that underlie everyday practices of communication, Critical Theorists eschew moral relativism and aim instead to arrive at (or construct agreed) inter-subjectively negotiated 'truths'.³⁸ Thus, in distinctive ways, constructivists, Critical Theorists and the 'critical' strand of feminist IR 'address ethical concerns in concrete contexts, notably in the ethical choices involved in boundary marking and processes of "Othering" in ways that confront problems of exclusion and hierarchy'.³⁹

DEBATE

Discourse and dialogue

There have been sympathetic engagements between feminism and Critical Theory (see Benhabib in Further reading, and Fraser below). In some strands of feminist thought the commitment to universalism accords with a feminist project of emancipation. From this perspective, feminism provides a point of departure and a position from which contending values and practices might be assessed and evaluated. Further, by listening to others, participants might uncover similar experiences, needs, desires and aspirations and/or goals. This marks an important stage in establishing an interactive and *inter-subjective* universalism. In this way, a dialogic politics and a dialogic ethical practice have the capacity (potentially) 'to make the claims of feminist universalism and feminist pluralism compatible'.⁴⁰ Critical feminists acknowledge that, historically, rationality has been associated with masculinity, but argue that there are dangers in jettisoning notions of reason altogether. Women have the capacity for rational thought and argument, and reason can be put to the service of feminist projects.

Poststructuralist feminists are resistant to models of dialogue based on rational argument. The language of rationalism raises deeper issues about whether or not this construction of reason is in actuality identified with Western states and societies rather than a universal capacity.⁴¹

Poststructuralist feminists also shrink from notions of 'emancipation'. The term implies a general prescription and a coherent plan. Poststructuralist feminists argue that difference has to be dealt with without falling back on the *totalizing* ideals of the Enlightenment. Instead, sensitivity to difference might enhance our ability to tolerate the incommensurable. Ultimately, poststructuralists locate feminist discourse and practice within a politics of dissent that disrupts and erodes the theory and practice of specific power regimes. From this perspective, dialogue is a process and a practice in which diverse identities are *continually* negotiated, rather than a means to an end – the end being the uncovering of universal 'interests'. In this model of dialogue, different voices are empowered in a morally pluralist feminist international ethics.⁴²

Summary

At the core of IR there are a set of normative issues and questions that – one way or another – engage with and respond to the problems that beset a world constituted on the basis of bounded political communities. This chapter has interrogated the state as bounded community and examined some of the ways in which discourses on identity and belonging and state practices – such as security and war and the framing of nationhood and citizenship – serve to reproduce the state and the national community over time. The focus has been on the varied ways in which gender and sexuality are implicated in the construction of states, nations and citizens. One issue encountered in the discussion of *difference* is that of competing claims – specifically individual rights claims and claims made in the name of bounded (national, cultural and, perhaps, religious) communities. In chapter 4 these themes are further developed in the context of discussions and practices surrounding gender, sexuality and human rights.

AUTHOR

Nancy Fraser

Nancy Fraser has engaged in a number of key debates⁴³ on the universalism/difference problematic, particularly in relation to questions of citizenship. While Fraser's work engages sympathetically with poststructuralism, it evidences an ongoing concern with material inequality and distributional issues. In an article published in *New Left Review*,⁴⁴ Fraser argues that such issues are highly pertinent in the analysis of gender, but are in danger of being displaced as questions of identity increasingly assume centre-stage in feminist theory.

Fraser claims that the recognition of difference is now fore-grounded not only within policy discourse (as in multiculturalism, for example) but also within social movements like feminism, which had previously fore-grounded redistributional issues. She acknowledges that this has occurred at 'a moment of hugely increasing transcultural interaction and communication, when accelerated migration and global media flows are hybridizing and pluralizing cultural forms'.⁴⁵ However, importantly, she also notes that it has occurred at a time when there is a 'sustained neoliberal rhetorical assault on egalitarianism'.⁴⁶ In the wake of accelerating globalization, states are becoming more culturally diverse, but – with only a few exceptions – economic and social inequalities are growing in states and societies across the world (see chapter 8).

Fraser points out that there is a danger in reifying group identities. She states: insofar as 'the politics of recognition displaces the politics of redistribution, it may actually promote economic inequality; insofar as it reifies group identities, it risks sanctioning violations of human rights and freezing the very antagonisms it purports to mediate'. The solution for Fraser lies in: 'rethinking the politics of recognition in a way that can help to solve, or at least mitigate, the problems of displacement and reification'.⁴⁷ Fraser's alternative is to recast discussions on recognition in terms of social status. Rather than affording recognition on the basis of group-specific identities, the focus should be on the status of individual group members as full partners in social interaction. She insists that this does not mean the depreciation of group identity, but rather involves making visible social subordination: how individual group members are prevented from participating as peers in social life.

In this status model, the politics of recognition does not stop at identity but seeks institutional remedies for institutionalized harms. The focus here is on culture in its socially grounded (as opposed to free-floating) forms. This model facilitates a politics aimed at overcoming status subordination by changing the values that regulate interaction and entrenching new value patterns that will promote parity of participation in social life. Thus while Fraser recognizes the reality of diversity among individuals and specific social groups, the underlying principle that informs her thought and that drives her project is one of universalism.

- 1) Is the concept of a 'barracks community' useful when interrogating the state? Or is it an outmoded and unhelpful concept?
- 2) Is there a contradiction in the postcolonial claim that identities are complex and multi-faceted and their insistence that it is sometimes necessary for collectivities (including nations) to speak with one voice?
- 3) What does Nancy Fraser mean by the 'danger of displacement and reification'? Is her approach to

the ‘politics of recognition’ persuasive?

Seminar activity

Feminist activists and many feminist academics have long argued that women should be recognized as a *particular social group* for the purposes of asylum. The following extract (abridged) is taken from a British Home Office document on *Gender Issues in Asylum*.⁴⁸ It is designed to provide guidance to Border Control officials (and other relevant parties), when assessing asylum claims and/or claims for refugee status.

4.5 Membership of a Particular Social Group (PSG)

Many women who are persecuted will be covered by other Convention grounds i.e. race, religion, nationality and political opinion, whether actual or imputed. In some cases gender may be a factor in recognizing membership of a particular social group or an identifying characteristic of such a group ...

... A definition of what constitutes a PSG is provided in Article 10(d) of the Qualification Directive, which states that:

‘A group shall be considered to form a particular social group where, in particular: – members of that group share an innate characteristic, or a common background that cannot be changed, or share a characteristic or belief that is so fundamental to identity or conscience that a person should not be forced to renounce it, and that group has a distinct identity in the relevant country, because it is perceived as being different by the surrounding society.’ ...

... Examples of innate or immutable characteristics may include gender, age, marital status, religion, family and kinship, past economic status/class, occupational history, disability, sexual history, sexual orientation and ethnic, tribal or clan affiliation. There are cases where women are persecuted solely because of their family or kinship relationships, for example, a woman may be persecuted as a means of demoralizing or punishing members of her family or community, or in order to pressurise her into revealing information.

As set out in the case of *Fornah*, women who may be subject to FGM (female genital mutilation) have been found by the courts in some circumstances to constitute a PSG for the purposes of the 1951 Convention. Whether a particular social group exists will depend on the conditions in the ‘society’ from which the applicant comes. It is frequently the way in which society perceives the group as having a distinct identity and being different from the surrounding society that helps to define the PSG. If there is a well-founded fear, which includes evidence that FGM is knowingly tolerated by the authorities or they are unable or unwilling to offer effective protection, and there is no reasonable possibility of internal flight, an applicant who claims that she would on return to her home country suffer FGM may therefore qualify for refugee status.

The class as a whole should consider and debate the following questions:

- 1) Does this document embed an *essentialist* conception of gender or is gender held to be *socially constructed*?
- 2) In context, would you say that the use of language like ‘immutable’, ‘innate’ and ‘fundamental’ in relation to gender and identity is helpful or problematic?
- 3) Would it have been possible to draw up clear and effective guidelines on gender persecution and asylum while avoiding the use of language like ‘immutable’, ‘innate’ and ‘fundamental’? If so, how? If not, why not?
- 4) What do you see as the arguments for and against FGM as a ground for asylum?

Further reading

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- Special Issue, ‘Citizenship’, *Gender and Development*, 19, 3 (2011).
- Yuval-Davis, Nira (2006) *Situated Politics of Belonging*, London, Sage.

Useful Web links

International Organisation for Migration: www.iom.int/jahia/jsp/index.jsp

Migration Information Source: www.migrationinformation.org/

The Nationalism Project: www.nationalismproject.org/what.htm

Refugees International: www.refugeesinternational.org/?gclid=CNe53_Wxp68CFQITfAodD3wsYA

UNESCO Citizenship and Gender Report: www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/SHS/pdf/Citizenship-report.pdf

UNHCR Refugee Agency: www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home

The World Citizen Foundation: www.worldcitizen.org/

Gender, Sexuality and Human Rights

Introduction

This chapter builds on the discussion of identities, citizenship and rights in the final section of chapter 3. The chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section, the development of the women's human rights agenda is charted from the establishment of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in 1946 to the 1995 Beijing women's conference. The second section covers recent developments in sexuality and human rights. The final section rehearses the universalism/relativism debate and considers approaches to human rights that attempt to negotiate the competing claims of 'universal' rights and cultural difference.

The UN and the Women's Human Rights Agenda

The struggle for women's human rights in international relations has a history stretching back to the beginning of the twentieth century. After lobbying by women's groups, the League of Nations (founded 1919) initiated a survey on the status of women around the world in regard to voting rights, property ownership, the guardianship of children and the right to work. In the post-Second World War period, human rights occupied a central place in the UN Charter.¹ The Charter:

- affirmed the 'fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, and in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small' (Preamble);
- promoted and encouraged 'respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion' (Article 1).²

The UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)³ further embedded a liberal conception of the human self or *subject* as a bearer of rights in the UN's mission. The principle of sexual equality was written into the UN Charter largely thanks to the efforts of women's NGOs, many of which were based in Latin America, and high-profile women like (then) US First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt. This marked a historic moment in international political and legal discourse as many issues previously thought 'private' and/or cultural began to be openly debated in an international forum.



Figure 6 Former US First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt reads the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights

WORLD EXAMPLE

Latin American women at the League of Nations and UN

In her book on *The Unfinished Story of Women and the United Nations* (Extended Reading) Hilikka Pietilä points out that Latin American women made a central contribution not only to the early work of the UN, specifically in ensuring that sexual equality and women's rights were addressed in the UN Charter, but also to the work of the League of Nations (see chapter 5). Thanks to the efforts of these women, the Inter-American Commission of Women (IACW), the first inter-governmental body to address issues related to the status of women, was created in 1928. The IACW went on to play an instrumental role in the development of the 1933 Montevideo Convention on the Nationality of Married Women, the first inter-governmental convention that afforded equal status to men and women in respect to nationality. While the story of women's rights often fore-grounds Western women, it should be noted here that, in respect to marriage and nationality, Latin American women actually enjoyed more rights than women in many Western countries at this time. Latin American women also played a key role in the Committee of Experts on the Legal Status of Women, established by the League of Nations in 1937. This Committee was instrumental in putting women's human rights on the agenda of inter-governmental cooperation and served as the predecessor of the CSW later established by the United Nations.

The Commission on the Status of Women

Established in 1946, the work of the CSW is underpinned by the liberal principle of equality.

Liberals regard women's human rights as one yardstick by which to measure the quality of life and justice in any given social order. The extent to which women's human rights are respected is deemed to be a measure of development and moral progress. The early work of the CSW involved:

- securing for women the right to vote, to an education and to employment.

The Commission also noted that both men and women had a role to play in the development process and in building societies that upheld freedom and equality. Since the granting of formal legal and political rights was unlikely to be an effective means of empowering women if these rights could not be enjoyed, in the 1950s the CSW began to focus on customs, laws and cultural practices which privileged men and/or were deemed 'harmful' to the health and well-being of women and girls – for example, child marriages, bride price and dowries.

In the 1960s, the focus of the CSW began to shift towards the role of women in development. This was a consequence of decolonization (newly independent states initially prioritized economic development over civil and political rights) and accumulating evidence that women were disproportionately affected by poverty. Barriers to land ownership and access to credit were also deemed to perpetuate the low status of women in many countries. However, throughout the 1960s, the Commission struggled to retain a sense of purpose as a body concerned with the status and well-being of women. Women serving on the CSW often received only tepid support and even faced opposition, often coached in the language of sovereignty, from their governments on culturally sensitive issues. Nevertheless, European members kept the rights agenda on track and slow progress was made in codifying laws in favour of women, notably in relation to nationality, domicile, marriage and divorce.

- The culmination of this work was the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1979).

In recent years, gender mainstreaming has revived the fortunes of the Commission. Mainstreaming requires a centralized institutional mechanism to perform monitoring, evaluation and coordination functions. In serving as a channel for proposals from NGOs and sometimes making use of the resources of locally based NGOs in the implementing process, the Commission has also helped legitimize the role of NGOs in national and international decision-making forums. The Optional Protocol to CEDAW (see below) further enhances the role of the CSW.

While the record of the Commission in promoting women's rights is somewhat chequered, it has been important in propelling issues previously regarded as private into the international public domain. Furthermore, the CSW has sometimes been able to negotiate the politics of nationalism, culture and competing ideological world-views. A review of the key debates in the Commission has revealed that women members, while ostensibly representing their governments, have often openly criticized their own government's record and/or position on women's rights.⁴

The Fourth UN Conference on Women at Beijing

There have been four UN conferences devoted to Women, Peace and Development. The first was held in Mexico City in 1975, the second in Copenhagen in 1980, the third in Nairobi in 1985 and the fourth in Beijing in 1995. The Beijing conference was the biggest UN women's conference to date with 47,000 participants from 189 countries. While all four conferences have played some part in the

development of women's human rights, the Beijing conference is generally regarded as the most significant.⁵

The BPA acknowledged the lack of substantive progress in advancing women's human rights and the need to develop further and embed women's human rights in international and national human rights machinery. Human rights underpinned all of the critical areas of concern set out in the BPA.⁶ The Platform:

- called for the *mainstreaming* of gender issues into national and international policy-making bodies and processes;
- affirmed the principles of freedom of choice for individual women;
- proclaimed that it was the duty of governments to promote and protect the human rights of women, regardless of their political, economic, and cultural systems;
- committed states to promoting and protecting women's rights in all spheres of life;
- created an obligation on states to address the violation of women's human rights in a variety of contexts.

The BPA thus affirmed the universal and indivisible nature of women's human rights, irrespective of the specific political, religious, cultural or familial context. The BPA is 'soft law'. Nevertheless, governments made a public commitment to the content of the BPA and so could be subsequently held to account on their record in respect to women's human rights. Governments were required to justify their actions rather than simply assert a sovereign right to organize their domestic arrangements as they see fit. However, the BPA also:

- allowed a degree of discretion in how these broad principles would be implemented;
- permitted governments to enter *reservations* on specific points. Governments were not obliged to implement those parts of the BPA on which they had entered reservations.

The mainstreaming of women's human rights was given a boost post-Beijing when former Irish Premier Mary Robinson was appointed the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (1997). She prioritized the task of mainstreaming women's human rights throughout the UN system. Insofar as human rights discourse enjoys legitimacy in many countries around the world, the language of human rights is powerful in challenging discrimination or other practices deemed to be 'harmful' to women.⁹

WORLD EXAMPLE

The Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

CEDAW was one of the major achievements of the UN's Women's Decade (1976–85). While often criticized for its weak language, at the very least CEDAW articulates an international standard for what is meant by 'equality' between men and women, grants formal rights to women, and also promotes equality of access and opportunity. CEDAW also recognizes that rights can be meaningless unless attention is paid to the economic, social and cultural context in which they are claimed. The Convention calls for changes in traditional gender roles, where these are deemed to perpetuate inequality and discrimination. The Optional Protocol to CEDAW allows women within the jurisdiction of parties to CEDAW to make complaints about breaches of the Convention.⁷ Potentially, this complaints procedure allows the implementation of the Convention to be monitored more effectively.

CEDAW was slow to obtain signatories and is notable for the large number of reservations by signatories. The refusal of the United States to ratify the convention, along with the high number of reservations, have undoubtedly weakened its moral authority and legal force. However, many governments worldwide have now enacted CEDAW; it is actually one of

the most widely subscribed-to international human rights treaties in existence. Furthermore, worldwide NGO networks have forged to promote CEDAW, and these networks have, in turn, strengthened the project of advancing women's human rights.⁸

The role of NGOs in promoting women's human rights

Since Beijing, human rights have become perhaps *the* central plank in the political activism of the women's groups worldwide.¹⁰ While the implementation of the BPA is primarily the responsibility of UN agencies, multi-lateral economic organizations and national governments, gender mainstreaming has institutionalized the link between (select) NGOs and various bodies in the UN system. The Beijing NGO forum also facilitated the inclusion of activists and non-accredited NGOs (see chapter 9) who worked outside the formal UN structure in lobbying and monitoring activities. Since the end of the UN Decade for Women in 1985, there has been a proliferation of groups organized around women's human rights.¹¹ NGOs now play an important role in promoting (**advocacy**), implementing and monitoring women's human rights across the world. In the run-up to the Beijing conference:

- NGOs participated in regional and national preparatory meetings to identify priorities and to try to influence the content of the BPA.¹²

At Beijing, NGOs:

- established a caucus mechanism to facilitate coalition building;
- monitored states' actions;
- publicized non-compliance with human rights regimes and human rights norms;
- used the media to call to account member states that they perceived to be impeding progress.

Following the Beijing conference:

- These networks grew exponentially – a development facilitated by advances in global communications technologies – strengthening the capacity of NGOs to impact on policy formulation, implementation and monitoring at both international and national/local levels.¹³
- The 'sub-contracting' of some parts of the implementation of the BPA strengthened the relationship between (selected) women's groups in civil society and the UN.

AUTHOR

Gayatri Spivak

Gayatri Spivak is widely known for her seminal essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak?'¹⁴ In this essay, Spivak pointed to how the voices of subaltern women were continually marginalized or excluded in institutionalized forms of discourse. This concern with the silencing of subaltern women was reprised in Spivak's 1996 article on the Beijing conference '“Women” as Theatre'.¹⁵ Spivak criticized such events as tremendously well-organized, ideological apparatuses. While UN conferences ostensibly represent the unity of nations and peoples, Spivak argued that they actually obscure deep divisions that exist between peoples and nations around the world – including, of course, divisions among women. The UN women's conferences were 'global theatre' that showcased the participation by women from the South and the – supposed – unity between Northern and Southern women, yet the Northern states continued to dominate such forums. Hence, Spivak continued, *the North organized the South*. The NGO forum at Beijing was similarly represented as a great global gathering of women, but the 'global agenda' was still very much Western-led, and US-led specifically. Spivak

claimed that NGOs were put together in ways that excluded the poorest women. This was as much the case with NGOs that ostensibly represent women from the Global South as it was with Northern NGOs. 'Southern' NGOs frequently comprised diaspora nostalgic to be identified with their nation of origin. This was, Spivak argued, another example of how Southern women, and poor women particularly, were *spoken for* and simultaneously silenced.

Thus, NGOs played a prominent role at all stages of the process, from participation in the pre-committee stage to implementation and monitoring. However, it is important to note here that, while not entirely excluded, non-Western NGOs, and women's groups from the Global South particularly, have been marginalized in this process (see chapter 9).

Evaluating Beijing

Beijing saw much contestation on issues surrounding sexuality, reproductive rights and sexual health (see chapter 2 and below). However, contributors to the extensive literature on Beijing frequently note that differences among both government delegations and NGOs from the North and the South were less prominent than at previous women's conferences. There was a broad measure of agreement on many of the 'critical areas of concern' identified in the BPA;¹⁶ notably in regard to violence against women in situations of armed conflict, or in the aftermath of armed conflict (see chapters 5 and 6). Indeed, some commentators go as far as to claim that, contentious issues on sexuality and reproductive rights notwithstanding, differences between government delegations and activists were dwarfed by the large measure of agreement on both the principle and the substantive content of the women's human rights agenda.¹⁷

Post-Beijing, the CSW was upbeat about the rate of progress pointing to important changes in the status and role of women around the world since the start of the UN Decade in 1976 (this is contested – see chapter 9). However, the Commission also identified continuing obstacles to the implementation process and suggested concrete actions and initiatives to overcome them. In his opening statement at the Beijing plus Five Review (held in New York in 2000), the then Secretary-General of the UN General Assembly Kofi Annan similarly put a positive spin on events, emphasizing the progress that had been made in outlawing violence against women (while acknowledging that violence against women was still widespread).¹⁸ Meanwhile, UN spokespeople at large re-emphasized the commitment of member states to the implementation of the BPA.

By the tenth anniversary of the Beijing conference (2005), some clear gains in women's human rights *could* be identified, notably a sustained challenge to what was conventionally thought to be culture or private. And yet, even as the Beijing conference was drawing to a conclusion, both academic commentators and activists perceived a gap, even gulf, between the rhetoric and reality of governments' commitments to both gender mainstreaming and the promotion of women's human rights. Amnesty International's report submitted to the Beijing plus Five Review concluded that it had proved to be a disappointment, with too many governments back-tracking on commitments made five years earlier. Amnesty contended that a handful of governments had been able to hold the review process hostage (see below). NGOs lamented the failure of states to agree on a stronger document with more concrete benchmarks, numerical goals, time-bound targets and indicators, the lack of resources provided to facilitate the implementation of the BPA and the lack of any major breakthroughs in regard to an equal share of decision making in political structures for national and international organizations. By the close of proceedings at Beijing plus Five, the atmosphere of expectation generated at the 'conference of commitments' had dissipated.

In summary, commentators on the impact of the Beijing Agenda five years on noted that:

- Despite the widespread adoption of CEDAW, violations of women's human rights in *all* societies and cultures continued to be prevalent.¹⁹
- Women's human rights continued to be contested in many countries around the world.
- Many governments still resisted the notion that they had a responsibility to respect women's human rights.
- Many states continued to resist intervention in areas regarded as within the realm of the family, culture and/or religion.
- The steps that had been taken by governments tended to be somewhat superficial and perfunctory.
- Claims of sovereignty and cultural relativism continued to be evoked in relation to sections of the BPA that dealt with sexual and reproductive health, inheritance rights and unpaid work.

It seems then that, while governments had mastered the *rhetoric* of respect for women's human rights, this had often not been translated into effective action. In their reflections on the achievements of Beijing, the CSW conceded that, while the principle of equality between women and men was now recognized as central to economic and social development and, therefore, a priority for the international community, the lack of progress was disappointing. There are a number of possible reasons for the gap between the rhetoric and realities of governments' commitment to women's human rights:

- a persistent lack of political will on the part of governments to protect all women's human rights in all spheres of life;
- the continuing under-representation of women in power and decision-making structures, which constitutes a considerable obstacle to translating commitments into concrete actions;
- male-dominated legislators and policy-making bodies are still inclined to regard gender equality as marginal to their main political priorities and goals.

The slow progress in realizing women's human rights in practice has raised critical questions about whether human rights have been or can be an effective means of protecting/advancing the status of women. If this is the case, what alternative strategies are available?

Sexuality and Human Rights

If women's rights remain little more than an aspiration in many countries around the world, there has, at least, been an international discourse on women's human rights since the founding of the CSW. It might be contended that a major shortcoming of the women's human rights movement is that in focusing on women, rather than gender, issues of sexuality as well as marginalized groups like gay, lesbian, transgender, bi-sexual people have been further marginalized in both discourse and practice on human rights, even as the politics of sexuality has been a live issue in international forums in which women's rights are debated (see, for example, the box on 'Contesting the language of gender and sexuality', chapter 2). Efforts to achieve recognition of LGBT rights as human rights at the UN date back to 1994.²⁰ This is despite a long history of gay activism on rights issues (see Extended Reading and Useful Web links) and stands as testimony to the entrenched prejudice that LGBT people have confronted – and continue to confront – in countries across the world.

The construction of homosexuality as 'deviance'

There is a wealth of evidence that homosexual practices and lifestyles have been widely accepted in societies and cultures throughout the world at various times throughout history. In the light of this, the oft-made claim that homosexuality, along with lesbianism, bi-sexuality and transgender expressions of identity are 'deviant' – wholly outside of accepted social and cultural norms and practices – must be treated with scepticism.²¹ There has been a great deal of variance in social and cultural attitudes and in laws regarding homosexual practices over time and from place to place.

Michel Foucault regarded the 'homosexual' as an 'invention': a product of changes in Western knowledge/constructions of what was 'normal' and 'abnormal' sexuality. From the seventeenth century onwards in the West, rules on sexual propriety began to emerge along with a whole set of rules relating to censorship and prohibition. In consequence, open discussion of sexuality became increasingly proscribed. In the nineteenth century, Western civilizations developed what Foucault called a 'scientia sexualis', the aim of which was to construct 'true discourses' on sex. The term 'homosexuality' is generally thought to have been first used in the late nineteenth century by a German psychologist, Karoly Maria Benkert. During the same period, one of the first texts appeared that represented homosexuality as a form of 'sexual perversity' (published in 1886 by the psychiatrist Richard Freiherr von Krafft Ebing).

Nevertheless, adopting a **genealogical** approach, Foucault uncovered how ideas about sexuality and sexual practices varied and were contested over time.²² Even during the late nineteenth century the view that homosexuality was a 'perversion' was challenged. For example, Havelock Ellis and John Addington's book *Sexual Inversion* (1897) argued that homosexuality should not be regarded as a disease or a crime, but as a form of inborn and unchangeable behaviour. Sigmund Freud, generally regarded as the 'father of psychoanalysis', believed that human beings were inherently bi-sexual and that ultimately it was social influences, and particularly familial influences, that determined the sexual orientation of the adult human being.²³

Yet the sway of discourse on homosexuality as 'deviance' has been powerful. Throughout much of the twentieth century, the (relatively) new discipline of psychology categorized homosexuality as 'pathological', largely on the basis of untested assumptions and misrepresentative samples of the sexual preferences of specific populations. It was not until 1975 that the American Psychological Association removed homosexuality from its list of mental 'dis-orders'. The US Department of

Defence continued to include homosexuality in a list of mental disorders in 1996.²⁴ This was three years after newly elected President Clinton first attempted to lift the ban on gays serving in the US armed forces (see also Somerville, Extended Reading).

DER "ROSA WINKEL" WAR DAS ZEICHEN,
MIT DEM DIE NATIONALSOZIALISTEN
HOMOSEXUELLE IN DEN KONZEN-
TRATIONSLAGERN IN DIFFAMIERENDER
WEISE KENNZEICHNETEN.

AB JANUAR 1938 WURDEN FAST
ALLE RUND UM DEN NOLLENDORFFPLATZ
VERTEILTEN HOMOSEXUELLEN LOKALE
VON DEN NATIONALSOZIALISTEN
GESCHLOSSEN ODER ZUR ANLEGUNG
VON "ROSA LISTEN" (HOMOSEXUELLEN-
KARTEN) DURCH RAZZIEN MISSBRAUCHT.

Figure 7 A memorial plaque at Metro-station Nollendorfplatz in Berlin. The Pink Triangle was used by the Nazis to identify male homosexual prisoners in concentration camps. Homosexuals 'liberated' from concentration camps by the Allied powers were nevertheless often required to serve out a prison sentence for their 'offences' in their home countries after the war.

WORLD EXAMPLE

One day in November

11/11/11. Reuters (Africa) reports that Enock Nsubuga has been jailed for the murder of Ugandan gay rights activist David Kato who was beaten to death in January 2011. While local police have denied that homophobia was the motive for the crime, homosexuality 'is taboo in many African nations' and is 'illegal in 37 countries on the continent, including Uganda'. In 2009, Uganda faced international censure when a bill proposing the death penalty for homosexuals who are 'repeat offenders' was presented to parliament. The bill was later shelved. Activists are reported as saying few Africans are openly gay, fearing imprisonment, violence and loss of their jobs.²⁵

Contesting the 'homosexual agenda' at Beijing

Allusions to 'sexuality' in the BFA provoked much controversy and contestation, particularly from conservative states and the Holy See (see chapter 2). Resistance to the language of gender and sexuality was couched in terms of defence of the 'traditional' (heteronormative) family, in which there were clearly defined gender roles. Buss and Herman argue that behind the defence of the family there lurked entrenched opposition to LGBT rights.²⁶ The BPA was saved from being watered down in the area of sexuality and reproductive rights to the extent that it was meaningless, only after protracted negotiation. Many of these same issues re-emerged five years later in New York at the Beijing plus Five Review. An Outcome Document was eventually approved in New York, but only after a protracted and contentious arbitration session, and even then agreement was achieved only after the terms 'sexual rights' and 'sexual orientation' were removed from the document. This was widely interpreted as a triumph for delegates from the Vatican.

WORLD EXAMPLE

Gay rights and the rights of 'the believer'

In June 2011, the UK Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) announced that it would intervene ahead of two cases concerning the rights of Christians – and by implication other religious groups – in the workplace which were being pursued in the European Court of Human Rights. The two cases concerned a registrar who refused to marry same-sex couples and a relationship counsellor who refused to counsel a same-sex couple. Trevor Phillips, the Chair of the EHRC, was quoted as saying: 'Our business is defending the believer.' The EHRC received much criticism in the liberal British media not only for misrepresenting the EHRC role, which is to protect the rights of people regardless of religious belief, but also as a retrograde step in English law, which recognized the fundamental right of gay and lesbian people to be protected from discrimination. Commentators further argued that the EHRC action evidenced the growing influence of religious lobbies in politics and in the area of human rights law specifically.²⁷

Recent developments at the UN

While the outcome of the Beijing plus Five Review was a set-back for gay rights, the agenda to promote gay rights through the UN's human rights conventions and machinery has made some headway in recent years.

- In 2006, a group of international human rights experts meeting in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, drafted a set of international principles²⁸ relating to sexual orientation and gender identity, the purpose of

which was to provide a universal guide on core rights that states must comply with.

- In late 2008, the EU presented a Dutch/French statement on gay rights to the General Assembly of the UN (the statement was opposed by the Arab League).
- In 2011, the UN Human Rights Council passed a resolution, supported by South Africa, aimed at combating worldwide discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, despite opposition from some African and Arab member states.²⁹
- The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights was instructed to draft a detailed report on the situation of LGBT people worldwide and to implement the Vienna Declaration and Program of Action.³⁰
- The 2011 report by the UN's High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, identified 'a clear pattern of targeted violence and discrimination directed at people because they are, or are perceived to be'³¹ lesbian, gay, bi-sexual or transgender.
- In 2011, a UN Youth Association proposal condemning all forms of violence and discrimination and further condemning both legal executions and extra-judicial killings of LGBT people was widely praised as a significant moment in instigating discourse on LGBT rights at the UN.

Pillay had previously called for the repeal of laws criminalizing homosexuality.³² Pillay's report acknowledged that homosexuality might conflict with local culture and values, but insisted that the human rights of the individual should prevail in cases where the claims of culture and individual rights claims were in conflict. However, such initiatives have been condemned by opponents as attempts to legitimize same-sex relationships (which they are). Some opponents have even gone as far as to link homosexuality to paedophilia, even though there is no credible scientific evidence to support this alleged link.

Current debates in the UN regarding LGBT rights often appear to be polarized along Western/non-Western lines. Sub-Saharan African countries like Uganda and Zimbabwe, along with Middle Eastern countries like Iran, have been the focus of much Western media attention in respect to gay rights and the persecution of LGBT people in recent years. The case of David Kato (above), for example, has received much coverage in the Western press.



WORLD EXAMPLE

The UN Human Rights Council

On 7 March 2012, Radio Free Europe reported³³ a walk-out by Arab and African states during a UN Human Rights Council debate on gay rights. It was reported that Arab and African delegations believed that the debate legitimized same-sex relations. In a message relayed earlier to council members at the meeting, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said persecution of gays was 'an attack on the universal values that the United Nations and I have sworn to defend and uphold'. Ban Ki-moon added: 'It is also a violation of international law. You, as members of the Human Rights Council, must respond.' Homosexual acts are still criminalized in 76 of the 192 UN member states. In 5 countries homosexuality is an offence punishable by death.³⁴

However, it is not the case that gay rights are uncontested in Western states, while non-Western states always oppose gay rights. As noted above, South Africa has played a leading role in promoting gay rights. Moreover, while experiences of persecution must be confronted regardless of where they take place, it should be acknowledged that discrimination against LGBT people and homophobia exist in all societies and cultures. Indeed, it might be that homophobia is a Western 'export'. Robert

Aldrich, for example, argues that the outlawing of homosexuality in many postcolonial countries is a legacy of colonization. He further argues that many Western colonizers actually sought ‘escape’ from the repressive sexual climate in nineteenth-century Europe. They found African and Asian countries more hospitable to homosexual people and homosexual lifestyles.³⁵

Are Human Rights ‘Universal’?

Despite the strides that have been made in the development of human rights norms and human rights regimes in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, questions remain about whether or not the concept or substantive content of human rights applies to all people regardless of culture, ethnicity, gender and sexuality. This discussion has also centred on whether or not human rights constitutes a useful or appropriate language in which to confront and challenge gender discrimination.

The gender of rights

It is not only conservatives and religious fundamentalists who question whether human rights are ‘universal’. Some feminists also problematize universal discourses like human rights, although for different reasons. Within feminist jurisprudence, a distinctive critique of human rights has developed concerning the specificity of human rights with regard to class, culture and – especially – gender.³⁶ Feminist critics of human rights discourse argue that:

- Human rights privileges a rationalist construct of the human being or subject.
- ‘Rational man’ is an inherently masculinist construct; it depends on the construction of the feminized ‘Other’.
- Human rights is predicated on a public/private dichotomy central to liberalism, which means that large parts of women’s experience (within conventionally gender-determined lifestyles) fall outside the scope of legal protection or redress.

Difference feminists hold that:

- Gender differences denote – in a sense – ‘real’, though not necessarily essential, differences between men and women.
- Gender differences are also manifest in the formulation of moral judgements and moral arguments.
- The social experiences of women and the problems that women face are not easily addressed within a highly individualistic rights discourse.
- Women might benefit more from the strengthening of social orderings and value systems that recognize the value of care and the role of motherhood, particularly in contributing to the good of not only families but entire communities and societies.
- At the Beijing conference, the language of complementarities (see chapter 1) was championed by those who claimed that liberal, individualistic approaches like human rights were neither appropriate, nor necessarily helpful, to women in diverse cultural settings.

One might counter that, while the concept of rights emerged in a particular historical moment and rights were originally defined in terms of the interests and needs of a limited section of the population, human rights can be claimed by other social and cultural groups.

- Rights are premised on the idea that human beings are rational beings, rationality being conceived of as the capacity to understand moral laws, or the ability to be able to determine one’s own best interests.
- Women are capable of making moral judgements, deciding on their best interests and living independent lives; women are, therefore, autonomous, rational subjects.

- The notion that *all* human beings are rational is a strong argument against patrimonial or patriarchal forms of authority.

Human rights as a political tool

Liberal feminists (see Charlesworth and Chinkin, Further reading) have defended rights discourse as an empowering tool for women.

- Human rights have been continually *transformed* as a result of political struggles to claim rights for women (and, indeed, other specific social groups).
- Human rights norms are flexible and dynamic; the definition of rights changes over time as human rights discourse is appropriated by different constituencies.
- The development of women's human rights has altered the boundary between 'public' and 'private'; for example, violence against women is now both a public and an international issue.
- When gender discrimination is framed as a human rights issue, practices that are experienced as oppressive and/or harmful can be addressed at both national and international levels.
- Governments can be held to account when they fail to apply and implement international human rights standards that they have signed up to.
- Human rights have become central to the discourses and practice of many NGOs and have been embraced by diverse social movements.
- Post-Beijing, the women's human rights agenda has served to mobilize women activists not just in the West, but across the world; 'women's rights' has thus served as a paradigmatic example of the power of international activism.³⁷

WORLD EXAMPLE

One day in November

11/11/11. On the same day that a mother and daughter were stoned to death in Afghanistan's Ghazni province for 'moral deviation and adultery',³⁸ the BBC (UK) reports that the EU has blocked the release of a documentary on Afghan women who are in jail for 'moral crimes'. The EU justified this action on the grounds that the safety of the women portrayed in the film would be put in jeopardy. Human rights activists responded that injustice should be exposed. Heather Barr (Human Rights Watch) was quoted as saying: 'It's very important that people understand that there are these horrific stories that are happening now – 10 years after the fall of the Taliban government, 10 years after what was supposed to be a new dawn for Afghan women.'³⁹

The culture of rights

Universal human rights discourse and practice can also be challenged on the grounds of cultural differences. Historically, cultural anthropologists have tended to position themselves in critical opposition to 'universal values' and 'universal' human rights. A naive defence of cultural relativism in regard to women's rights is that cultural practices do no harm to women or involve no 'costs' to women. This might be so in some instances and not so in others. However, cultural relativists argue that:

- Across the world, societies and cultures have some conception of justice and what the proper ordering of society and the relationship between the individual and the group should be. These are

not inferior to Western thinking.

- Different societies and cultures value or balance different kinds of social good and social harm.
- Western societies privilege individualism even though individualism entails social costs and can do harm to societies.
- Many non-Western cultures privilege the collective good even though this might involve the curtailment of individual freedoms and 'rights'.
- Women play a crucial role in the reproduction of group identities and in the drawing of group boundaries and so the 'good of women' cannot be separated from the good of the collective as a whole.

A related criticism is that human rights discourse is a manifestation of Western power. While claims are made in the name of *universal* rights, rights discourse is actually *specific* to the West. Similarly, while claims are made about an emerging *cosmopolitan* culture (often linked to debates about globali-zation), the evidence to support these claims are heavily contested. Moreover, there are no solid grounds (morally, politically or theoretically) to champion cosmopolitanism over communitarian visions of 'the good'; again it is ultimately a question of values.

Thus:

- Cosmopolitan and universal visions might be cast as manifestations of cultural imperialism.
- The human rights agenda can be seen as a project that is presented as *universal*, but that actually seeks to extend the political, economic and cultural domination of certain social groups in the West over the rest of the world.
- Claims made in the name of universalism and/or cosmopolitanism, undermine the autonomy of specific communities.
- While the theoretical underpinnings of their arguments differ, poststructuralists and postcolonial theorists tend to agree that:
- The promotion of human rights has been used to advance neo-colonial and neo-imperialist expansionism.
- Human rights discourse and practice are tainted from their association with Western cultural values and so are not necessarily useful to women in other national and cultural settings.

The human rights agenda inevitably becomes entangled in other political projects and divisions. The Second UN Conference on Women (Copenhagen, 1980) served as a salutary reminder that the work of the UN could not avoid becoming embroiled in the East–West and North–South conflicts. While sharing the aim of promoting women's status within specific societies, NGOs from developing countries saw the need to locate their struggles within a broader North–South context. At the same time, the resurgence of Cold War politics in the early 1980s opened up divisions between East and West and North and South over the political aspects of the Copenhagen Plan of Action. The UN was charged with 'imperialism' and attacked for the inherent racism in efforts to 'modernize' and 'civilize' the developing world and 'advance' the status of Third World women. Unsurprisingly the conference failed to produce a consensus document.

DEBATE

Female circumcision

The practice of female circumcision in some societies and among some cultural groups has long generated debate among commentators on human rights, practitioners in the field of health and those who defend cultural rights and the right to cultural identity. In human rights discourse female circumcision is constructed as 'harm' or even violence against women. Indeed, the practice was included in the section of the BPA that covered violence against women. The World Health Organization (WHO) refers to the practice as female genital *mutilation* (FGM). As the name implies, the WHO frames the practice as one that confers no health benefits on women, but can cause a great deal of harm to women subjected to the procedure.⁴⁰

The practice is, however, supported by some cultural relativists on the grounds that what 'female circumcision' entails varies from place to place and culture to culture; it does not necessarily entail 'harm' to women. Supporters have – on occasions – drawn a parallel with practices of cosmetic surgery that are widespread among women in Western societies. As Tamir⁴¹ argues: 'when is the body improved and when is it mutilated? The answer depends on one's conception of beauty.' A further defence is that, even as female circumcision is a practice undertaken to control female sexuality and so contrary to human rights, 'virtue' and 'piety' are central to the social status of women and girls in specific communities. In some African countries, for example, female circumcision / FGM is regarded as a way of preparing the girl for womanhood in accordance with cultural norms of femininity – modesty, premarital virginity and marital fidelity. Female circumcision is also defended as a practice that fosters and cements community.

Postcolonial theorists⁴² have argued that anti-FGM discourse is an extension of colonial surveillance and management of the bodies and sexuality of women in postcolonial societies, especially Africa. However, African women's voices have been raised in opposition to the practice. The Somali model Waris Dirie spoke of her own experiences of FGM (her term) in her biography *Desert Flower*⁴³ and subsequently became a high-profile UN Special Ambassador for the elimination of Female Genital Mutilation. In her view, 'Female Mutilation has no cultural, no traditional and no religious aspect. It is a crime which seeks justice.'

? CONCEPT

Asian values

Lee Kuan Yew (former Prime Minister of Singapore) famously argued that human rights promoted an individualist ethos that was at odds with the value accorded to the family and wider social group in Asian cultures ('Asian values'). He argued that to promote an individualist conception of women's rights risked undermining women's traditional role in the family and this, in turn, would encourage divorce and other social ills that beset Western societies.⁴⁴

Challenges to cultural relativism

Even as the complex politics of women's rights (and so too human rights and sexuality) must be acknowledged, it is nevertheless problematic to draw a stark distinction between the Western and non-Western world.

- The notion of a Western and non-Western world depends upon and reproduces an inherently problematic binary division.
- Human rights are not a wholly Western invention; states and peoples from various parts of the world have shaped the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and subsequent human rights treaties and conventions.
- Many cultures and societies have traditions, values and an intellectual heritage which celebrates something very like 'human rights' even though the language in which this is expressed might be less overtly individualistic.

Amartya Sen⁴⁵ has argued that the ancient literatures of Asia place as much emphasis on the importance of freedom at the individual level as do corresponding Western classics. Some Islamic scholars⁴⁶ argue that within Islam there are 'rights' akin to the human rights now enshrined in International Law – for example, rights to social security, limited government, protection from harm,

access to justice, privacy, employment protection, property, political participation and freedom of expression. Moreover, the idea that peoples and cultures can be neatly divided into homogeneous cultural groups or politically bounded groups (nation-states) has always been something of a myth.

There are clear objections to cultural relativist arguments framed in essentialist terms:

- Cultural relativists tend to represent cultural groups as monolithic; cultures are dynamic and changing, not static and ‘authentic’.
- Cultural relativists emphasize the differences between groups rather than the differences within them.
- Culture is inextricably linked with the movement of people through processes like migration, the scale of which has greatly increased in recent years.
- The globalization of communications networks and global media have both increased and intensified global cultural communication; it is increasingly difficult for people to live in any place that is wholly isolated from the wider world.
- Processes of social change in national societies have been impelled through the incorporation of human rights norms into domestic systems of law.⁴⁷
- Human rights can be cast as a response to the convergence of cross-cultural human values.⁴⁸

It is no easy task to distinguish between expressions of identity, community and culture which should be celebrated, and the (ab)use of ‘culture’ and ‘tradition’ by powerful groups to justify and legitimize their rule. Further arguments have been marshalled against cultural relativism on these grounds too:

- Cultural relativism can be embraced as part of the meta-narrative (see chapter 7) of governments who actively oppose the application of international human rights to their politics.
- Those who defend cultural relativism can – unwittingly perhaps – be implicated in state repression.
- Human rights have been evoked to empower individuals and specific social groups to mount a powerful moral attack on abusive institutions and practices.
- In many countries governed by authoritarian regimes, human rights discourse has served as an ideology or discourse of resistance.⁴⁹

While women do not necessarily experience culture as oppressive or limiting, the ‘authentic’ voice of the community can be used to circumscribe political discourse and debates about women’s human rights, through the construction of dissent as disloyalty. Clearly, culture can be experienced as either a means of providing members of a group with meaningful ways of life across the full range of human activities, public and private, or as a site of struggle and contestation over social meaning (in this case, the meaning of ‘woman’).

Discourse on women’s rights in Muslim societies can be used in illustration here. Islam is neither a monolithic discourse, nor the basis for a monolithic practice. Islamic cultures do not have a single set of discrete values – there might be, for example, manifest difference in world view between young Muslim women and older Muslim men on some aspects of religious belief and cultural practice. Islamic feminists have adopted the strategy of challenging *fundamentalist* constructions of women’s place and role and have reclaimed the meanings of ‘woman’ in Islamic religious teachings and texts.⁵⁰ Women’s groups such as Women Living under Muslim Laws employ the language of rights to draw the attention of the world to the persecution of women who challenge Islamist gendered

ideologies (particularly those propagated by Islamic fundamentalists).

However, Muslim feminists do not challenge the foundation of *all* Islamic beliefs, nor reject *all* traditions and customs. Muslim women see themselves not just as women, but also as *Muslim* women. As noted in the previous chapter, for many Muslim women adopting the veil is perceived not only as a religious requirement, but also as a political act that affirms their identities and reproduces the social and cultural bonds of particularistic communities.

Women's rights in the Arab Spring

Discourse on rights and women's rights specifically does not neatly fall into a Western and non-Western division. This can be illustrated by taking the recent (at the time of writing) *Arab Spring* as a case study. The term 'Arab Spring' has been used to describe a wave of protests and civil uprising that swept across MENA (Middle East and North Africa) states, starting in Tunisia in 2010 and quickly spreading to Egypt (see figure 8) and Libya. At the time of writing (March 2012), this wave of discontent showed no signs of abating, with bloody conflict in Syria and protests in many Gulf States. The Arab Spring might be more properly characterized as revolt against repressive regimes, and human rights discourse has been employed by some civil society groups when issuing demands for change.

Women across the MENA region have played prominent roles in the Arab Spring, not just in taking to the streets, but in the fighting – smuggling weapons and ammunition, for example. Women, like men, have lost their lives. However, as the dust begins to settle in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, it is not at all certain that political change will bring positive changes for women. Indeed, there is growing concern that, over the longer term, the position of women in these societies might deteriorate. Regimes have been toppled, but in the power vacuum that has followed, political groups have prospered that are not supportive of women's rights, or at least do not see women's rights as a priority. In many respects, the experience of women in the MENA region mirrors that of women who have participated in other post-colonial revolutionary struggles, in which promises have been made to institute rights for women, but these promises have not subsequently been honoured (see Sharoni, Extended Reading).

In Libya, the National Transitional Council (NTC) leader Mustafa Abdel Jalil has pledged to uphold Islamic law and, while refuting suggestions that this means radical Islamist rule, his pledge to ease polygamy rules has sparked alarm among women's rights activists. Alaa Murabit, co-founder of the Voice of Libyan Women, has questioned why – in a country facing so many challenges – a relaxation of polygamy laws is a priority for the new government. Initially, in Tunisia, a space opened up for 'secular' women's organizations to mobilize – demanding full equality with men – and while they still organize openly, the Islamist Ennahda party has claimed almost all the seats in government previously held by women. Tunisian activists have cited numerous examples of harassment – subtle and overt – to substantiate their concern that women are being 'pushed back'. In Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood and the ultra-conservative Salafiparty won a large majority of seats in the first two rounds of the first free parliamentary elections. Both parties have campaigned on issues of public morality and Islamic moral codes.

There is concern that women will continue to face harsh conditions of life in these newly 'liberated' lands unless they stand united and determine to keep fighting for women's rights in the new political landscape. However, across the region, women's rights activists have said that the transition to new regimes has happened so fast that it has been difficult for women – unused to

political participation, let alone assuming prominent roles in public life – to find a voice. The lack of any common platform or ideology has worked against effective action to safeguard women’s rights too. Human Rights Watch researcher Nadya Khalife has also identified political culture in many parts of the region as an obstacle to change – women’s voices are not taken seriously.⁵¹



Figure 8 February 2011: Egyptians gather in Tahrir Square to call for the resignation of President Hosni Mubarak and the beginning of political change in Egypt

Pluralist approaches to human rights

There have been a number of attempts to think beyond the stark dichotomies of ‘universal’ and ‘particular’, ‘Western’ and ‘non-Western’, in respect to human rights. For example, Jack Donnelly advocates a *cultural pluralist* position. Cultural pluralists look for something akin to ‘basic rights’ in non-Western societies, which might not be identical to Western conceptions of rights, but which are broadly and functionally equivalent.

The concept of *negotiation* has also been employed by cultural pluralists. Here, while cultural differences are negotiated, the aim is to create a world in which all people are free to deliberate and develop values that will help them live more equitable lives. However, Donnelly insists that, even though cultural differences are ‘negotiated’, there should always be a presumption in favour of universality. Thus, while allowing for some diversity and discretion in how ‘universal’ rights are interpreted and implemented in different cultural contexts, the onus is on specific communities to show that their cultural vision of human nature and/or human society is morally defensible and not incompatible with human rights.⁵²

Donnelly’s presumption in favour of universality might be viewed as something of a sleight of hand that stacks the cards in favour of a Western conception of rights. However, his position can be defended on the grounds that it is necessary for the realization of women’s human rights, because:

- Support for women's human rights requires a commitment to basic universal values.
- Ultimately, the purpose of women's human rights is to generate social changes that support and reinforce the equality, rather than the inequality, of women.
- Women's human rights are premised on the assumption that some forms of discourse (rights) foster equality while others (appeals to custom and tradition or religious authority, as articulated by male elites) often do not.
- The women's human rights agenda is not wholly incompatible with the notion of cultural rights, but cultural rights must be viewed as rights that individuals hold as members of specific cultural groups and not seen as group rights that can be asserted over individuals.
- In the final analysis, where the claims of rights to personal autonomy and choice by women contradict the dominant interpretation of what cultural identity requires, individual rights must trump claims made in the name of the group.
- Women should be able to 'opt out' of cultural practices that they deem detrimental, if they choose to do so.

Summary

This chapter has covered the theory and practice of human rights, with a specific focus on women's and LGBT rights. Along the way, philosophical and theoretical discussions on whether or not human rights are 'universal' have been broached. In addition, the chapter has attempted to convey a sense of the development of international human rights standards, how these standards are incorporated into national legislative frameworks (although not always implemented effectively) and the role that NGOs play in the development of human rights, in implementing human rights standards and in monitoring compliance. It will be evident from the discussion above that, in regard to gender and sexuality, human rights remains a highly contested and politicized terrain. The politicization of human rights will be revisited in chapter 6, where attempts to frame women's rights and gay rights as 'security' issues will receive some coverage.

Questions for reflection

- 1) What do you see as the advantages and disadvantages of adopting the language of human rights as a strategy for improving the position of women within specific societies?
- 2) In regard to issues of gender and sexuality, is Donnelly's presumption in favour of 'universality' justified? Or is this an assumption of Western cultural superiority?
- 3) Are 'dialogic' approaches to human rights useful in negotiating differences within and across specific societies? Or might 'dialogue' only reproduce existing disparities in power between participants?

Seminar activity

This is a role-play exercise. Choose one of these cases:

- 1) gay rights and the right to marry;
- 2) women's rights and the practice of female circumcision.

The class should now divide into two groups.

The issue you have chosen is currently being debated at a UN Human Rights conference.

Group 1

Members of group 1 belong to a Western-based, liberal NGO campaigning on this issue. Drawing upon your knowledge of human rights (including specific human rights conventions, if you can), marshal arguments in favour of gay marriage or in favour of outlawing female circumcision. Also consider strategies/tactics that you might employ to garner support for your campaign and deflect criticisms of 'cultural imperialism'.

Group 2

Members of group 2 belong to a government delegation which, as the sovereign power, claims to represent and defend the culture and/or religious beliefs of the majority population in their country. Group 2 should marshal arguments against gay marriage or against provisions that outlaw the practice of female circumcision. You should also consider the strategies/tactics that you will employ to garner support for your position and deflect criticism that you are engaged in the oppression of women/gays. This exercise should take 20 minutes.

You should now reconvene as one group. Group 1 should present their arguments. Members of group 2 should respond to these arguments. This part of the exercise should take no more than 15 minutes.

In the time remaining, the class as a whole should discuss:

- 1) Whether or not in the case of an impasse on this issue, dialogue might be helpful in reaching a compromise and/or accommodation by both sides. You should assume that, in entering into dialogue, both sides are sincere in their objective of achieving a compromise or accommodation.
- 2) Assuming that it is not possible to achieve accommodation or compromise in the 'real world', which group's position do you think will prevail? Why do you think this group's position will prevail?

Further reading

Ackerly, Brook 'Women's Rights Activists as Cross-Cultural Theorists', *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 3, 3 (2001), 311–46.

Buss, Doris, and Didi Herman (2003) *Globalizing Family Values*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.

Charlesworth, Hilary, and Christine Chinkin (2000) *The Boundaries of International Law: A Feminist Analysis*, Manchester, Manchester University Press.

Joachim, Jutta 'Framing Issues and Seizing Opportunities: The UN, NGOs and Women's Rights', *International Studies Quarterly*, 47, 2 (2003), 247–74.

Special Forum Section, 'Negotiating Difference / Negotiating Rights: the Challenges and Opportunities of Women's Human Rights', *Review of International Studies*, 33, 1 (2007), 5–103.

Sunitan, Mohammed Iben, Jasem Khaled Al-Sadoun and Ali Mohammed Fakhro 'Views from the Arab Gulf on the Arab Spring and its Repercussions', *Contemporary Political Affairs*, 4, 4 (2011), 501–23.

Useful Web links

Amnesty International: www.amnesty.org.uk/content.asp?CategoryID=10220&gclid=CL6V5v6Z2K4CFcImtAod0VBacw

AWID: www.awid.org/

Centre for Women's Global Leadership. Women's Human Rights Resources: www.cwgl.rutgers.edu/globalcenter/additional.html

General reading on Gay Rights: www.venusplusx.org/columbia/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/Global-Sexual-Freedom-Rights-Bibliography1.pdf

Human Rights Watch / Women: www.hrw.org/category/topic/women

Human Rights Watch / Gay Rights: [www.hrw.org/search/apachesolr_search/ Gay%20rights](http://www.hrw.org/search/apachesolr_search/Gay%20rights)

Women Watch: www.un.org/womenwatch/about/index.html

Women's Human Rights Resources database: [www.law-lib.utoronto.ca/diana/whrr/index.cfm?
sister=utl&CFID=612265&CFTOKEN=63700714](http://www.law-lib.utoronto.ca/diana/whrr/index.cfm?sister=utl&CFID=612265&CFTOKEN=63700714)

World Report 2002. Women's Human Rights: www.hrw.org/wr2k2/women.html

UN Division on the Advancement of Women (DAW): www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/daw/index.html

Conflict, Peace and Violence

Introduction

This chapter might have been subtitled: *Does gender make a difference in conflict, peace and political violence?* The first section interrogates a claim that was once often made, but is now treated with a degree of scepticism – in the academic literature at least: that is, the claim that women have a ‘special relationship to peace’. The counter-part to this argument, that war is a male-dominated domain, is interrogated in the second section. The third section focuses on literature that challenges feminine/peace and masculine/war dichotomies, through a discussion of men as victims of violence in war and by considering specific instances of women as perpetrators of violence.

The Feminine/Peace Nexus

Essentialist constructions erected on male/female, masculine/feminine dichotomies (see chapter 2) hold powerful sway in societies across the world. One of the most oft-repeated and reproduced in policy documents, political speeches, academic discourse, media texts and ‘everyday talk’ is the persistent connection between the masculine and war and the feminine and peace. Jean Elshtain contends that gendered **archetypes** of *Just Warriors* and *Beautiful Souls*, or something very like them, underpin *all* narratives on war and peace and are *endlessly* repeated.¹ Feminist studies of conflict and peace sometimes also fall into the trap of reproducing gender binaries of masculine war and feminine peace. For example, even as Ann Tickner recognized that there was nothing ‘essential’ about gender, her attempt to re-vision security from a feminist standpoint in her book *Gender in International Relations* (1992)² ultimately relied upon and reproduced this gendered binary, albeit in a way that privileged the feminine.³ Paradoxically, feminist discourse on the *right to fight*⁴ (chapter 3) repudiates archaic notions of women’s roles, but thereby pays tribute to archaic notions of men’s roles.⁵

In the early feminist movement in the West, explicit linkages were often made between the experience of motherhood and peace and between peace and women’s rights. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries:

- ‘Moral feminists’ argued that women’s special relationship to peace was forged in women’s experience of maternity.
- Maternal urges made women different from men, but women’s peacefulness was evidence of moral superiority, not inferiority.
- Women were often portrayed – and peace activists portrayed themselves – as ‘guardians of new generations’, rather than in terms of their relationship to particular children and families.
- Ergo, it was held that the inclusion of more women in government would change the foreign policy of states and engender a more peaceful world order.⁶

These early champions of peace and women’s rights can be excused such essentialist views on ‘women’s nature’ perhaps. It was not until the second-wave feminism of the 1960s and 1970s (in the West at least) that the idea that gender was socially constructed gained widespread acceptance. It should be noted, however, that this posited ‘special relationship’ between women and peace was often forged for more pragmatic reasons: the exclusion of women from political power and public space. During the nineteenth century, the spaces available for women to organize politically were severely circumscribed. Deborah Steinstra argues that Victorian social values and the liberal state circumscribed women’s access to public space, forcing women peace activists to work on war and peace issues in the private sphere of the home. While largely confined to the domestic sphere, women activists nevertheless developed awareness of themselves as political actors and set about establishing links with like-minded women.⁷

In the early twentieth century, peace became one subject on which women were empowered to speak publicly. Participation in the peace movement thus allowed women a platform from which to campaign for wider political and social change. The rallying cry of the suffragettes was: ‘Let us do our utmost to hasten the day when the wishes of mothers shall have their due weight in public affairs, knowing that by doing so we hasten the day when wars shall be no more.’⁸ The Women’s

International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), a pacifist organization founded during the women's peace congress at the Hague in 1915, rallied women of all nationalities and social classes to the cause of disarmament and ending violence as a means of resolving disputes between states⁹ (see Confortini, Further reading). The WILPF believed that mobilizing women in the cause of peace was but a first step in achieving social, economic and political equality for all people.

Today, peace and women's rights continue to be linked by activists across the world. For example, the transnational peace and solidarity network Women in Black sees the struggle to end war and the struggle to end all forms of discrimination against women as intimately connected.¹⁰ In 2011, Tawakkul Karmen, campaigner for women's rights and democracy in Yemen, Leymah Gbowee, women's rights activist in Liberia, and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of Liberia (as of 2012), were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of their non-violent struggle for women's right to full participation in peace-building efforts (see figure 9).



Figure 9 Tawakkul Karmen, Leymah Gbowee and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, joint recipients of the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize

Feminist standpoint

Feminist standpoint theory provides a theoretical foundation for the feminine– women–peace nexus. Feminist standpoint theory has fallen out of favour in academic circles since the early 1990s, because it is deemed to be an essentialist approach. However, standpoint is rather an attempt to construct *situated* knowledge. In this regard, standpoint can be considered a post-positivist position. Standpoint theorists hold that knowledge is always *situated*: constructed from a particular point of view and specific location.

One strand of standpoint theory is influenced by Marxist thought.¹¹ While social class is privileged in Marxism, here:

- Gender is understood as a social position.
- Gender is understood in terms of social subjugation.

If one takes seriously the notion that knowledge is always situated, then:

- The social position of women *as a whole* is a legitimate vantage point from which to view the world and from which to construct knowledge about the world.
- If knowledge is invested with a *feminist* sensibility, then it is possible to construct a *feminist standpoint* as a first stage in challenging ideologies and practices that produce, legitimize and

reproduce the subjugation of women.

- Feminist standpoint can inform a feminist project of emancipation.

WORLD EXAMPLE

The first International Relations feminists?

The creation of a discourse on gender in IR is commonly dated from the late 1980s. However, as Lucian Ashworth (see Extended Reading) argues, feminists have long contributed to the analysis of international politics, even though their contributions have been largely forgotten in official histories of the discipline. Ashworth argues that 'IR had a feminist phase in the 1920s and 1930s' and that 'far from being marginal many IR feminists were influential in the foreign policy debates of the time'.¹² Many were members of the WILPF and the suffragette movements. Among those who contributed to substantive discussions and debates on the inter-war Twenty Years' Crisis (1919–39) were Emily Greene Balch, Jane Adams and Mary Parker Follett, Mary Agnes Hamilton, Helena Swanwick, Virginia Woolf and Dorothy Buxton.

In Ashworth's rediscovery of these forgotten theorists, he singles out Helena Swanwick as a particularly significant contributor. A member of the League of Nations Union, and the British Labour party, Swanwick not only wrote extensively on women's rights and political participation, but also contributed to substantive discussions on the inter-war security landscape, collective security and the likely consequences of the Versailles Treaty. She wrote pamphlets on women and war in 1915, edited the journal *Foreign Affairs* from 1924 onwards, and penned articles in the newly established *Manchester Guardian*. Swanwick echoed many early twentieth-century liberals and socialists, arguing that the role of physical force in human society was declining. However, unlike her contemporaries Norman Angell and E. H. Carr, who are regularly cited in the IR 'canon', Swanwick's contribution to public debate has been largely overlooked.

Ashworth argues that these early activists provide a bridge between the ongoing activism of feminists outside of IR, and the creation of a feminist space within IR in more recent years. However, from the late 1940s onwards, as the purview of IR scholarship narrowed and realism emerged as the dominant approach in the discipline, feminist analyses were squeezed out. Ashworth argues that showing that feminism was an integral part of the IR story as far back as the inter-war period calls into question the dismissal of feminist IR as a late-comer and 'add-on' to the field. He further argues that it is important to debunk the idea, continually reproduced in IR textbooks, that the dominance of realism was the result of a successful intellectual debate. Historically, narratives have always been employed as gate-keeping devices. Integrating feminism into the history of IR in this way is, therefore, important in undermining gate-keeping practices.

Cynthia Cockburn is inspired by both critical feminism (see chapter 2) and standpoint theory. She argues that standpoint theory 'is an account of the world constituted by (and constitutive of) a collective subject, a group. It is derived from life activities and achieved in struggle. It is subversive of the hegemonic account.'¹³ She champions the epistemological commitments of standpoint and ontological foundations of standpoint approaches, while embracing other facets of 'difference'. Cockburn writes:¹⁴

From this standpoint, patriarchal gender relations are seen to be intersectional with economic and ethno-national power relations in perpetuating a tendency to armed conflict in human societies. The feminism generated in antiwar activism tends to be holistic and understands gender in patriarchy as a relation of power underpinned by coercion and violence. The cultural features of militarization and war readily perceived by women positioned in or close to armed conflict and their sense of war as systemic and as a continuum, make its gendered nature visible. There are implications in this perspective for antiwar movements. If gender relations are one of the root causes of war, a feminist programme of gender transformation is a necessary component of the pursuit of peace.

Other variants of feminist standpoint are not influenced by Marxism, but rather draw upon psycho-analytical feminist thought. Here:

- Women's socio-psychological differences are affirmed in ways that are empowering.
- Mothering is a core human activity which gives rise to a very different way of relating to other human beings and so understanding and actively forging human relationships.
- The *activity* of mothering (not biological differences per se) gives rise to a particular sensibility

and understanding of relationships as connected.

- This challenges the liberal view of human society (in the public realm specifically) as consisting of *autonomous* beings who relate to each other in ways akin to forms of contractual relationships (legal contracts, political contracts, social contracts, marriage contracts and so on).
- Empathy is privileged over reason, dialogue over instrumental forms of rational argumentation and cooperation over domination.

It should now be apparent how feminist standpoint theory informs thinking about peace¹⁵ (see Segal, Extended Reading):

- Experiences of mothering forge a ‘special relationship’ between women and peace.
- This women/peace nexus serves as a point of departure in developing a critique of conventional approaches to war and peace.
- Women are constantly forced to rediscover the necessity of speaking for peace because they are still grossly under-represented in places where decisions about war are taken.
- Speaking for peace entailed the subversive use of women’s ‘traditional place’ in the private realm as mother and ‘Other’ to challenge the terms in which public discourse on war, peace and security are conducted.
- Feminist discourse now assumes centre-stage rather than being relegated to the periphery in discussions of war and peace (see figure 10).

Criticisms of the feminine/peace nexus

The posited connection between the feminine and peace has attracted criticism from diverse quarters. These criticisms include:

- Such associations reinforce the stereotype of women as incapable of functioning in the public realm.
- Appeals to women as ‘mothers’ reinforce the notions that obligations of care are uniquely ‘women’s work’.
- Standpoint approaches are tainted with essentialism, even though this is denied.
- Conflating ‘women’ with the ‘feminine’, and the ‘feminine’ with peace, reproduces problematic masculine/war, feminine/peace dichotomies.

DEBATE

The Gilligan-Kohlberg Debate

This debate centred on apparent gender differences in moral reasoning. Lawrence Kohlberg conducted a study on the stages of moral development. Though uncovering gender differences was not the aim of his study, Kohlberg claimed that it demonstrated that girls and women – on the whole – exhibited a different form of moral reasoning from boys and men. Importantly, he claimed that the moral reasoning of girls and women was ‘inferior’. Females were not as competent as males in applying abstract concept of justice to moral problems. As ‘moral development’ infers, this difference was evidenced in boys and girls from childhood. Kohlberg’s ‘stage theory’ of moral development is still used – in some quarters – today.

Carol Gilligan¹⁶ challenged Kohlberg’s conclusions on the grounds that his sample, and so the standard by which he adjudged what was ‘normal’ (and by extension ‘inferior’), was imbued with bias. Insofar as Kohlberg’s sample already introduced a bias in favour of men, it also distorted the notion of what was ‘normal’: women were relegated to the status of ‘deviations’ from the norm and so were adjudged ‘inferior’. Gilligan countered that women’s psycho-socialization led them

to adopt a moral code which *was* different from men's, but this was not inferior. Whereas men were *socialized* to adopt an ethic of justice or an ethic of rights based on abstract concepts of autonomy and rationality, women adopted an ethic of care or an ethic of responsibility. This form of reasoning arose out of attention to concrete particulars: to the specific needs of the concrete, rather than generalized, 'Other'.

The debate is significant not only in terms of what it reveals about the propensity to assume that the male experience is the 'norm' against which women should be assessed,¹⁷ but also in terms of how *differences* generally are adjudged and the moral significance afforded to this. Gilligan claimed that women spoke *in a different voice* and that Kohlberg's methodology simply could not account for this. Of course, it is entirely possible – and indeed likely – that members of specific cultural groups, social classes and perhaps some men ('deviant' men?) in Western societies also speak in a different voice.

This debate has continuing resonance for how we think about political community and the ideals of citizenship – specifically equality, difference and diversity (see chapter 3). Should differences be regarded as irrelevant to how people are treated within any given society – for example, in the justice system or in how different social and cultural groups and different genders are assessed and rewarded in the education system? If so, then all people should be treated as *equals*. But, if all people are treated as equals, regardless of their differences, then what is the appropriate standard or norm by which equal treatment might be determined? On the other hand, if people who are 'different' are treated by a different measure or standard, would this lead to – subtle or overt – forms of discrimination? Is it actually possible to be equal *and* different? Socially, politically, morally and in every other dimension of life, how might difference be accommodated in pluralistic societies?



Figure 10 *Greenham Common, UK peace base set up in 1982. The camp lasted for nineteen years.*

Conflict resolution and peace-building

A contemporary example of how feminist theory and practice has been put to the service of peace is in work on conflict resolution and peacekeeping. Conflict resolution encompasses any activity that involves mediation, negotiation and other forms of communication and dialogue to facilitate the resolution of social conflicts and bring about peaceful relationships between individuals and groups. In the context of war and intra-state conflict, conflict resolution aims to achieve win-win outcomes as opposed to win-lose scenarios in which one group (state, nation or ethnic group) prevails over the other party.

The work of the UN involves building links between experts and practitioners, including NGOs with relevant skills in conflict resolution and peace-building. UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325), which will be covered in greater detail in the following chapter, has been a particularly significant development in this area. The Resolution covers all aspects of armed conflict in regard to women (and children) and requires that gender perspectives be built into all conflict resolution and peace-building initiatives. The Resolution also requires that women directly affected by conflicts participate directly in conflict resolution and peace-building efforts.

Conflict resolution and peacekeeping are important activities in international politics and are necessarily integral to the study of diplomacy, global ethics and international institutions. Yet, in practice, the study of conflict resolution has tended to be undertaken within institutions that specialize in peace studies. It is interesting to note that feminist scholars have often found the ‘mainstream’ in IR – which is heavily focused on the high politics and the highly masculinized realms of war and foreign policy – somewhat resistant to feminist ideas and voices. On the other hand, peace studies have generally provided a hospitable home for feminist scholarship (see Pankhurst and Macaulay, Extended Reading).

The Masculinity/War Nexus

In chapter 3, some space was devoted to the relationship between masculinity, citizenship and combat. The close link between masculinity and war and the contention that militaries are male-dominated institutions can be substantiated empirically. However, there is no good reason why women cannot serve in front-line, combat roles in war. Indeed, such women might even be lauded as Warrior Heroes. The second female British soldier killed in the conflict in Afghanistan (2001–present) was Lisa Head. The *Daily Mail*, a deeply conservative British newspaper, reported her death as ‘heroic’.¹⁸ The report, gleaned from a military press release, acknowledged that she had ‘the most dangerous job in the world’ (bomb disposal), ‘saved the lives of countless soldiers and civilians’ and was ‘the bravest of the brave’.¹⁹

If biology does not explain male dominance in militaries then alternative explanations must be uncovered in interrogating gender as social, cultural and ideologically/discursively constructed. Cases like that of Lisa Head notwithstanding, there is still a great deal of unease with the concept and reality of female warriors. Such figures pose a challenge to the deeply embedded masculine/war dichotomy and also to dominant cultural constructions of masculine and feminine identities. Moreover, gender myths continue to play a vital role in garnering support for state-sanctioned violence on the part of both women and men.²⁰ While much of the feminist literature tends to focus on the way in which female soldiers are constructed (see chapter 7), historically, pacifist men have been subjected to social opprobrium. In the British context, it was very often women who presented such men with the white feather, a symbol of cowardice.²¹

Feminist IR scholars recognize that:

- ‘Violence is not ‘hard wired’ into male biology.
- Masculinity is a construct.
- There is a great deal of variation in how masculinity and femininity are enacted or performed.
- Women’s inherent peacefulness is as mythical as men’s inherent violence.

Raewyn Connell’s work on hegemonic masculinity (see chapter 2) is helpful in understanding how gender as ideology – a ‘system of meaning’ – works to construct and cultivate a specifically militarized masculinity. Connell’s contention is supported in the work of Sara Ruddick²² (and others). It is through military training and exposure to militaristic values that ordinary men, in all their diversity, are turned into soldiers. Ruddick argues that:

- Misogyny is employed in the service of turning men into soldiers.
- Military training cultivates a ‘dominance-orientated’ masculinity.
- Boot-camp recruits are ‘ladies’ until trained to be obedient killers and *real men* (think of the ‘boot camp’ scenes in films like *Full Metal Jacket* and *Jarhead*).
- *Becoming* a soldier means learning to control fears and domestic longings that are explicitly labelled as ‘feminine’.
- Homosexual men have been (are) excluded because they represent a direct challenge to the dominant conception of what it is to be manly.
- Effeminate soldiers are frequently victims of bullying.

As Carver argues (chapter 2), heterosexuality is present, but also ‘rather veiled’ in the study of

gender in IR.²³ It is evident that the concept of heteronormativity must also inform analyses of the military as a masculinized institution and of militarized masculinities.²⁴

Connell²⁵ allows a large role for ideology in the construction of hegemonic masculinity. She argues that the 'gender system' in militaries also functions through gendered patterns of emotional attachment that exist amongst (heterosexual) men. Nevertheless, Connell regards gender relations as, in good part, *structural* in the sense that:

- The main axis of the power structure of gender is the general connection of authority with masculinity; this is complicated by the denial of authority to some groups of men (for example, gay men).
- Gender ideologies work to construct particular types of masculinity and regulate relations between them, not as incidental but as a vital precondition of them.
- Acts of violence – including state-sponsored violence – are deeply embedded in power inequalities, as well as ideologies, that privilege male supremacy.
- Violence is thus part of a complex involving institutions, social relations and the way they are organized.

WORLD EXAMPLE

Don't Ask, Don't Tell

After being elected President of the USA in 1992, Bill Clinton attempted to lift the ban on homosexual people serving in the US military. His efforts were met with strong opposition. A compromise was reached in the policy 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' (DADT – see figure 11). DADT prohibited service personnel from asking questions regarding the sexuality of serving men and women, as long as they were not openly gay or lesbian. At the same time, a serving member of the military could be dismissed if s/he demonstrated 'a propensity or intent to engage in homosexual acts'. The justification offered for this was that the presence of openly gay men and lesbians in the ranks created 'an unacceptable risk to the high standards of morale, good order and discipline, and unit cohesion that are the essence of military capability'.²⁶

The impact of this policy on gay men and lesbians was far-reaching. Fundamentally, it required homosexuals to deny a significant aspect of their identity. In practical terms, it meant that gay men and lesbians were prevented from engaging in the most innocent, everyday small talk, if this was on the subject of their plans for the weekend. Homosexual service personnel also had to live with the possibility that, if they were injured or killed in action, their partners would not be directly informed by the military. DADT was finally abolished in 2011 during Barack Obama's presidency, but only after a protracted political battle, which evidenced not only the deeply rooted prejudice (and in some instances overt homophobia) of some senior military leaders and politicians, but also the degree to which the US military as an institution continues to embody deeply rooted and stereotypical beliefs about gender.

WORLD EXAMPLE

Alan Turing

During the Second World War, the English mathematician and computer scientist Alan Turing (1912–54) was employed at Bletchley Park, the UK government's code-breaking centre. History now records that Turing's work was vital in breaking the German Enigma codes, which changed the course of the Second World War. One might anticipate that Turing was subsequently celebrated as a 'war hero'. However, as a gay man, he was forced to cloak his private life in secrecy. In 1952, Turing was prosecuted for committing homosexual acts. As an alternative to a prison sentence, Turing consented to treatment with female sex hormones (chemical castration). Eighteen months later, Turing committed suicide. The 2001 British film *Enigma* was heavily criticized for continuing to obscure Turing's crucial role in breaking the codes, even though the film celebrated the contribution of many female workers at Bletchley Park. Following an internet campaign in 2009, then British Prime Minister Gordon Brown made a public apology on behalf of the British Government for the

treatment of Turing. Brown said that the treatment of this man had been 'appalling'.²⁷

A FEW WEEKS PASS...

ISG, I JUST RECEIVED WORD THAT PFC HOWARD'S DISCHARGE HAS BEEN APPROVED.

WE JUST WANT TO MAKE SURE THAT HOWARD'S PAPERWORK GETS FINISHED AND THAT HE OUTPROCESSES WITHOUT ANY HASSLE FROM THE OTHER SOLDIERS. LET'S KEEP A CLOSE EYE ON THIS, ISG. HE IS STILL ONE OF OUR SOLDIERS.

YOU MAY ASK—
WHAT IS CREDIBLE
INFORMATION?

READ THIS.
I HOPE IT HELPS.

What Is Credible Information?

1. A statement by a reliable person that he or she observed or heard a soldier engage in a homosexual act, or state that he or she was a homosexual or bisexual, or state that he or she had married or attempted to marry a member of the same sex.
2. A statement by a reliable person that he or she had observed or discovered a soldier saying or putting in writing a statement acknowledging a homosexual act or the intent to engage in a homosexual act.

War talk

The discourse and language of war will be afforded closer attention in chapter 7. This section will only give a flavour of how feminist work has gendered 'war talk'. In realist IR theory, international relations is constructed as a domain in which states pursue rationally determined strategic interests in the context of **anarchy**, where war is an ever-present threat. Carol Cohn argues this language of strategic rationality is shared by armers and disarmers, chiefs of staff and chief negotiators in military establishments.²⁸ She adds to this the element of techno-speak, which amounts to something like a fetish of military technologies.

In the research for her influential article 'Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals',²⁹ Cohn undertook a participant observation study in a nuclear strategy think tank in the 1980s. She was interested in understanding nuclear discourse as a set of culturally grounded, accepted and acceptable mechanisms that serve to make it possible to 'think about the unthinkable' (nuclear war). What she uncovered was the routine use of abstract, sanitized language, but language which was also rich in euphemisms and which evoked images of domestication, sexuality and gender. The following excerpt is illuminating:

A professor's explanation of why the MX missile is to be placed in the silos of the newest Minutemen missiles, instead of replacing the older, less accurate ones, was 'because they're in the nicest hole – you're not going to take the nicest missiles you have and put them in a crummy hole'. Other lectures were filled with discussion of vertical erect launchers, thrust to weight ratios, soft lay downs, deep penetration, and the comparative advantage of protracted versus spasm attacks – or what one military adviser to the National Security Council called 'releasing 70 to 80 per cent of our mega-tonnage in one orgasmic whump'. There was serious concern about the need to harden our missiles and the need to 'face it the Russians are a little harder than we are'. Disbelieving glances would occasionally pass between me and my one ally in the summer program, another woman, but no one else seemed to notice.³⁰

Cohn argued that the language of defence intellectuals revealed something deeper about the process of militarization and how this process might be undergone by men and women. Cohn found it hard to contest the language or (in Gilligan's terms) speak in a *different voice*; to be listened to and taken seriously in this community, it was necessary to speak in this language.

Gendering Violence in Conflict

Sexual violence in conflict

Sexual violence is an abuse of human rights. It is also an instrument of conflict: a political act designed to undermine the morale of the opposing forces and ‘enemy’ civilian populations. It can be perpetrated as an act of genocide – an attack against a specific ethnic group (as in Bosnia and Rwanda). Mass rapes during the conflicts in Bosnia (1992), Rwanda (1994), Guinea (2010) and in Congo (ongoing, see box below) evidence that ‘brutal sexual violence has become an established part of the repertoire of conflict and coercion’. Moreover, this is often ‘directed from the highest political levels’.³¹

Historically, rape and other forms of sexual violence in conflict situations have been treated – dismissively – as ‘collateral damage’. It is only relatively recently that rape and other forms of sexual violence have been recognized as war crimes (see chapter 6). Previously, rape was a crime that went unpunished – and, unfortunately, it still goes unpunished in many instances. Militarized forms of prostitution are often indistinguishable from rape, but again, historically, militarized prostitution has been treated as an ‘inevitable’ part of war.³²

As Anne Marie Goetz and Rob Jenkins argue, growing recognition that warring parties often target citizens has generated something of a ‘paradigm shift’ at the UN in its approach to the protection of civilians. In 2009 and 2010, the UN passed Resolutions UNSCR 1820 and UNSCR 1888 to consolidate further and extend the provisions of UNSCR 1325. These Resolutions impose on member states a responsibility to take action to protect citizens from sexual violence, to equip the UN with measures to prevent sexual violence in conflict, and to address problems of accountability.³³ However, Goetz and Jenkins also point out that, just two days before UNSCR 1888 was passed, a peaceful demonstration in Conakry, Guinea, was violently suppressed. Reports documented that at least 109 women were raped during this incident. There is then, as Goetz and Jenkins go on to note, a significant gap (or gulf) between the progressive policies being designed and implemented at the international level and what armed groups are doing on the ground.



WORLD EXAMPLE

Sexual violence in Congo

There can be no more harrowing illustration of the impact of civil war on women and girls than that which has occurred in the African Democratic Republic of Congo since the mid-1990s. Described as the ‘centre of Africa’s World War’, the conflict has cost the lives of an estimated 5 million people.³⁴ While the full extent of violence against women is still unknown, Amnesty International has stated that there has been more rape and sexual violence in Congo than in any other conflict. According to one United Nations report,³⁵ 27,000 sexual assaults were reported in 2006 in South Kivu Province alone. The attacks against women have been brutal in the extreme.

Why women have been attacked in such a systematic and brutal way is not wholly clear, but common explanations focus on the desire to ‘destroy women’ and thereby ‘destroy communities’ and ‘exterminate the population’ (an act of genocide). Many of the women who have been subjected to attacks have sought medical assistance, but health-care resources are scarce and medical staff overwhelmed by the scale of the problem. The physical, psychological and emotional damage to women will endure long after the conflict is finally resolved. Further, since female virginity is prized and the husbands of rape survivors are shamed, rape survivors are frequently ostracized by communities. One observer reported that raped women were also being abused and even killed by their husbands. In Congo, brutality towards women had become ‘almost normal’³⁶ (see Stern, Further reading).

Challenging the discourse

Crimes against women in war and civil conflicts are prevalent, yet very often go unreported and unpunished. It has been women's organizations and feminist groups that have lobbied hard for changes in policy and in international law to redress the invisibility of women in war/conflict. This has been important and necessary work. However, in consequence, the representation of both women and men in conflict has become distorted. Strategic gender essentialism might be needed to 'notice' how women and children are affected in war and to direct assistance to women and children in conflict situations. However, gender essentialism is problematic when it serves to cast men as only and ever the perpetrators of violence and women as only and ever the victims of violence.



Figure 12 Gravestones at the Potočari genocide memorial near Srebrenica. It is estimated that, during July 1995, 8,000 men and boys were massacred in Srebrenica.

Adam Jones' (see Extended Reading) first intervention into feminist IR took the form of a critique (see chapter 2). He claimed that, in focusing on women, feminist IR marginalized men as victims of war. Jones has subsequently contributed to the literature on gender and violence in studies on *gendercide* (see figure 12). His work has been driven by: 'an ethical and activist conviction that certain workings of the gender variable in society are being systematically excluded from mainstream discourse on the subject, resulting in the profound distortion of some core social phenomenon, notably

violent victimisation'.³⁷ Jones has sought to demonstrate this in his analysis of both academic and policy discourse and media reporting on gender and violence.

However, while Jones' intervention was important in challenging the distortions and exclusions that do arise when rigid gender binaries are used to categorize victims and perpetrators of violence in gendered terms, it is not entirely accurate to claim that men are wholly marginalized in discussions of the victims of violence in war. Feminist scholars *do* recognize that:

- Men are also victims in war.
- Men cannot be said to have an *interest* in perpetuating war in any straight-forward sense.
- Many recruits into the military serve as foot soldiers; they serve (and often die) in grand campaigns they did not design, about which they are not consulted and which they might not comprehend.
- Militarized masculinity might be contested even by serving military personnel.
- Contemporary approaches to masculinity in conflict situations tend to emphasize how the meaning of gender is constructed in 'micro-narratives': day-to-day speech and everyday interactions in militarized contexts (see chapter 6).

It should also be acknowledged that, while activism to achieve recognition of sexual violence as a crime has tended to evoke the language of women as victims, this struggle has opened up political and legal space to address the problem of sexual violence and other forms of violence against civilians *per se*.

Women as perpetrators of violence

In their book *Mothers, Monsters, Whores*,³⁸ Laura Sjoberg and Caron Gentry challenge 'inherited notions or stories passed down'³⁹ that support and perpetuate masculinity/violence and femininity/peace binaries. In order to disrupt these gendered constructions, they draw upon a number of case studies of women who engage in what they term 'proscribed violence' in order to demonstrate that women are 'not only capable of violence, but decide to engage in acts of violence'⁴⁰ (see also the work of Swati Parashar and Megan MacKenzie on female combatants in Kashmir and Sierra Leone respectively, Extended Reading). For example, consider female suicide bombers, female perpetrators of genocide and women like Lynndie England (see chapter 7) who engaged in the abuse and torture of detainees at Abu Ghraib during the Iraq war.

Sjoberg and Gentry contend that women who engage in proscribed violence are apt to be portrayed in terms of specific archetypes, one of which is the 'monster' (see chapter 7). Women as monsters are constructed as pathologically damaged: flawed, imperfect women – a narrative that 'carries with it a weight of gendered assumptions about what is appropriate female behavior'.⁴¹ By implication, narratives contain a weight of gendered assumptions about what is appropriate male behaviour too. Sjoberg and Gentry ask:

- Why do some stories resonate while others do not?
- Who are the beneficiaries of constructions?

They find the answers to these questions in 'gender norms' that have 'been sustained throughout the ages and across cultures and uphold traditional values'.⁴² In casting the spotlight on women like Lynndie England, their purpose is not to celebrate women's violence (nor women as 'warriors'), but

rather to challenge stereotypes of women and to raise issues of agency (and responsibility) in regard to women who perpetrate violent acts. While Sjoberg and Gentry acknowledge that choices are not independent of gendered social and political contexts,⁴³ they nevertheless insist that:

- Women are not always and ever ‘innocents’ or victims of violence in conflict, but can be perpetrators of violence against women *and* men.
- Violent acts perpetrated by women cannot be seen as entirely outside the realm of their choice and agency.

Sjoberg and Gentry raise important issues here about how violence is gendered in discourse – including feminist discourse – in ways that are problematic. However, it is important to recognize that agency and ‘choice’ for both women and men are highly constrained in conflict situations. In the case of Lynndie England, for example, her actions took place in the context of a military structure – a ‘chain of command’. There is evidence to suggest that state and military elites took care to distance themselves from these actions and obscure the chain of responsibility.⁴⁴ As Suganami argues, ‘behavior at odds with the accepted morality of the age undermines the standing, influence and hegemony of the great powers’.⁴⁵ Therefore, perpetrators of violence that is proscribed in war (i.e. torture) must be constructed as *exceptional* – in this case as a ‘few bad apples’ in the US military.⁴⁶ In militaries, insubordination (refusing to follow orders) and ‘whistle blowing’ (exposing wrongdoing by one’s own government/military) by soldiers frequently incur harsh sanctions. This does not mean that women like England should not be held responsible for their actions, but it does suggest that:

- Gendered power structures and the culture of militarism underpin the execution of state violence.

In that respect, Sjoberg and Gentry’s argument that women are more likely to be constructed as ‘monsters’ is well taken, but it also muddies the waters somewhat with respect to questions of responsibility. Rather than focusing solely on women as torturers,⁴⁷ an equally important feminist question that arises from the Abu Ghraib incident is:

- What does it mean when the bodies of female soldiers are utilized by militaries and states as instruments of torture?

WORLD EXAMPLE

Pauline Nyiramasuhuko

On 24 June 2011, Pauline Nyiramasuhuko, formerly Government Minister for Women and the Family in Rwanda and the first ever woman to be charged with the crime of genocide in an international court, was convicted of the crime. Nyiramasuhuko was found to have not only facilitated the massacre of Tutsis, but also ordered and directed killings with the aim of wiping out the Tutsi population.⁴⁸

Female suicide terrorists

Key questions that arise from current discussions of women as perpetrators of violence are:

- What archetypes are used to construct and represent women who engage in acts of political violence?
- How is women's agency represented?
- What characteristics and motivations are ascribed to women as perpetrators of violence?

All three questions might be further interrogated through a study of female suicide bombers (FSBs) or female suicide terrorists (FSTs). The FST is not a new phenomenon. Historically, women have always been active participants in political struggles and insurrections, some of which have involved terrorist acts. FSTs have received much greater visibility since 1991, when a female member of the Tamil Tigers liberation/terrorist movement in Sri Lanka assassinated Indian Premier Rajiv Gandhi (he is alleged to have told a security guard not to prevent the woman gaining access to him).

Daniel Berkowitz' work on Western media representations of FSTs (Extended Reading) echoes Sjoberg and Gentry's contention that women who perpetrate acts of violence tend to be constructed in terms of a limited range of archetypes. He argues that this is because the media largely reinforce the cultural norms of society. He identifies a greater range of archetypes than Sjoberg and Gentry. For example, he argues that the first Palestinian suicide bomber, Wafa Idris, was initially represented in the Western media as a 'Woman Warrior'. However, he agrees that FSTs are most often represented as deviants – those who have 'gone astray' from ideological expectations or crossed a boundary that should not have been crossed. He also concurs with the argument that critical questions of FSTs' political motives and political agency get lost in stereotypical constructions. Dominant constructions are that FSTs are motivated by the injustice meted out to women in their own society; are damaged and/or deviant women; and, most especially, are 'terrible mothers'. In other words:

- FSTs are constructed according to 'myths' that support the dominant social order and the values of societies.

In more recent years, the spectre of female suicide bombers has received much greater prominence in US counter-terrorism strategy. Intelligence reports have begun to make mention of the use of women by Al Qaeda. This is contested by many experts in the field. However, in 2010 and 2011 respectively, two reports, one issued by the US Borders and Homeland Security agency⁴⁹ and a second published by the US Army⁵⁰ – officially aimed at deploying units, scenario developers, and trainers – have recently appeared on specialist sites on the internet, designed to provide public access to information on security and counter-terrorism. This list of 'common characteristics' of FSBs, taken from the unclassified report on FSBs published by the US Army⁵¹ is instructive:

- dishonoured through sexual indiscretion;
- grieving the loss of family members, seeking revenge against those they feel are responsible for the loss;
- having a desire to belong, to be accepted or for heroic status;
- impressionable, open to suggestion;
- unable to produce children;
- last resort to improve personal self-esteem and demonstrate the need for gender-equality.
- frequently educated and successful.

While acknowledging that FSTs might be 'educated and successful' and that some might desire to

be lauded as ‘heroes’, the report largely presents FSTs in terms of specific characteristics and motives that ostensibly arise from the gendered and cultural norms of the ‘home’ society, or as somewhat naive – even childlike. One would not expect a report published by an agency attached to the US Government to emphasize the political grievances and political aims of suicide bombers. However, the tendency to characterize FSTs in gendered terms is actually typical of much of the ‘mainstream’ media discourse and is, moreover, often reproduced in academic literature.

Frances Hasso (Extended Reading) argues that FSTs undermine what ‘Cynthia Enloe has called a “gendered culture of danger” whereby manliness is defined by the unwillingness to shy away from danger and womanliness is that which is “vulnerable to danger” and requiring protection’.⁵² She further argues that the way in which women situate themselves as gendered political subjects can undermine patriarchal (and religious and cultural) understandings of gender and women. However, she also acknowledges that stereotypical constructions of women can be reinforced in discourse surrounding FSTs. In her review of academic work on FSTs, Claudia Brunner (Further reading) similarly argues that personal motives remain prominent in the literature – the desire to redeem the family name and/or honour or escape from a life of sheltered monotony. Sexual abuse and rape are also often listed as motivations. Brunner states: ‘Women are rarely ascribed political motivation and commitment, whereas men are less likely to appear affected by personal circumstances. This notion of personal grievance depoliticizes suicide bombing and separates it from political contexts such as occupation or civil war, in which families and individuals are affected by personal tragedies that do not occur in peacetime.’⁵³

Mia Bloom (Further reading) has endeavoured to get away from explanations for FSTs solely in terms of deviant or ‘failed’ women, by stressing ‘feminist’ motivations: specifically, a protest against gender inequality. However, Brunner argues that this construction is nonetheless problematic, because:

- Such constructions reinforce the view of the developing world, and Islamic world specifically as ‘other’ to the (liberated) West.
- The specificity of geopolitical space is largely omitted.

On the other hand, one particularly hawkish strand of the literature, which speaks explicitly to the requirements of counter-terrorism policy (see Zedalis and O’Rourke, Extended Reading), refutes the notion that FSTs have motivations distinct from those of men. O’Rourke, for example, argues that the FST is ‘committed’, ‘patriotic’, motivated by ‘religious duty’ and, significantly, upholds the cultural and gender norms of her society and community.⁵⁴ Indeed, O’Rourke contends that, for the purposes of developing an effective (US) counter-terrorism policy, the only salient difference between the female suicide bomber and her male counter-part is that her femininity gives her a ‘special advantage’ of ‘greater surprise and concealment’. This makes FSTs especially lethal – claiming more victims in any given attack.

However, literature that explicitly sets out to inform (US) counter-terrorism policy necessarily incorporates a Western bias into the analytical framework and colours substantive analyses. In this respect, as Brunner argued in regard to most literature on FSTs, the analysis of characteristics and motivations embeds a logic of Occidentalism (the East is different and inferior to the West). O’Rourke, for example, holds that FSTs affiliated to Al Qaeda (again, the use of women by religiously motivated groups is disputed) fervently support the cause of Islamic terrorism despite

‘their second-class citizenship in many of these countries’.⁵⁵

Moreover, this construction of the FST as *more deadly than the male* poses a particular problem for Muslim women as (in this case) US citizens. Since 2011, US counter-terrorism strategy has increasingly focused on ‘ideologically inspired violent extremism in the Homeland’.⁵⁶ This inevitably results in the surveillance of Muslim and South Asian (MASA) communities. One report has warned that scapegoating and Islamophobia are resulting in ‘significant discrimination, violence and backlash against Muslim women’.⁵⁷ As US counter-terrorism strategy has generated greater coordination between immigration authorities and law enforcement, there is evidence that immigrant women particularly are not reporting incidents of domestic violence and trafficking, because of a fear that they will thereby ‘draw undue attention to themselves and family members’.⁵⁸

Summary

This chapter has rehearsed some long-established debates about women's association with the feminine and, in turn, peace. It has also interrogated the link between men, masculinity and war. The chapter has engaged with early forms of feminist essentialism and standpoint theory. After revisiting and extending discussions on hegemonic and militarized masculinities, first introduced in chapter 3, the final section of the chapter engaged with contemporary literature which, one way or another, challenges dominant and stereotypical views of the relationship between gender and violence. In so doing, the language of construction, representation, myths and archetypes was introduced. These themes are elaborated at greater length in chapter 7. The following chapter brings together work that approaches gender as a category or variable and critical theoretical approaches to gender, in a discussion of security and peacekeeping.

Questions for reflection

- 1) Do the epistemological commitments and ontological foundations of standpoint theory render this approach *essentialist*?
- 2) Can the historical prohibition against homosexual service personnel be explained simply in terms of social prejudice? Or do the reasons run deeper than this?
- 3) Connell contends that violence is part of a complex involving institutions, social relations and the way they are organized. What does she mean by this?

Seminar activity

This seminar will require a small amount of preparation. It will involve some small group work. Your tutor will assign two readings on FSTs. In addition to your set reading for the class, you should:

- 1) Go online and find a report of a suicide bombing perpetrated by an FST, and a suicide bombing perpetrated by a male assailant.
- 2) Print off the articles and make a few copies for other group members.
- 3) Make a few initial notes on any similarities and any pertinent differences (if any) that you see in the reporting of the attacks and the assailants.
- 4) Class members should share/exchange copies of the reports among the group.
- 5) Do you see any similarities or differences in all the reports of female and male suicide bombers with regard to their imputed characteristics and motivations?

In the second half of the seminar, the class as a whole should debate the following question:

Does the representation of women in political violence challenge or reinforce gender stereotypes of women and men's relationship to political violence?

Further reading

- Bloom, Mia 'Female Suicide Bombers: A Global Trend', *Dædalus*, 136, 1 (2007), 94–102.
- Brunner, Claudia 'Occidentalism Meets the Female Suicide Bomber: A Critical Reflection on Recent Terrorism Debates; A Review Essay', *Signs*, 32, 4 (2005), 957–71.
- Cockburn, Cynthia (2007) *From Where We Stand: War, Women's Activism and Feminist Analysis*, London, Zed Books.
- Confortini, Catia Cecilia 'Doing Feminist Peace', *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 13, 3 (2011), 349–70.
- Parpart, Jane L., and Marysia Zalewski (eds.) (2008) *Rethinking the Man Question: Sex, Gender and Violence in International Relations*, London, Zed Books.
- Stern, Maria 'Why Do Soldiers Rape? Masculinity, Violence and Sexuality in the Armed Forces in the Congo (DRC)', *International Studies Quarterly*, 53 (2009), 495–518.

Useful Web links

- NGO Working Group on Women Peace and Security: womenpeacesecurity.org/members/consortium/.
- PeaceWomen (WILPF): www.peacewomen.org/.
- PeaceWomen Security Council Monitor: www.peacewomen.org/security_council_monitor/.
- PeaceWomen UNSCR 1325 translation initiative: www.peacewomen.org/translation_initiative/.

Security and Peacekeeping

Introduction

In this chapter the focus turns to security and peacekeeping. The first section unpacks the concept of security and sets out various approaches to security. Discussions in the second section centre on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325), along with related measures to mainstream gender in security and peacekeeping discourse and practice. The third section demonstrates how both women's rights and gay rights might be framed as security issues and draws out the consequences of the *securitization* of human rights in the foreign policies and security strategies of major states.

What is Security?

Like many of the central concepts employed in IR, the meaning of ‘security’ is contested. A broad definition of security is: ‘a state of being secure, safe, free from danger, injury, harm of any sort’¹ In practice, such an expansive definition is unhelpful. Such a condition is neither possible nor desirable; there will always be some element of risk and/or danger in human existence and a state of total security is incompatible with the value of human freedom.

State-centric approaches

From a realist and latterly neorealist perspective, the state is the fundamental *referent of security*. In realism/neorealism:

- Security is concerned with how states – and national communities – ensure their survival under conditions of anarchy.
- Since international relations are regarded as akin to a dangerous *state of nature*, the role of the state is to provide protection from the actual or potential violence of excluded ‘others’ (‘foreigners’).
- Outsiders are viewed as ‘threats’, or potential threats, to the citizen body.
- Threats are largely – though not exclusively – military threats, so ultimately security depends upon military power.

The English School approach to security is concerned with norms and security arrangements. In his influential book *People, States and Fear*,² Barry Buzan argues that:

- Diverse systems of security exist: security complexes, security regimes and so on.
- Security might involve complex connections between the individual, the state and region and global security concerns and security regimes.
- The nation-state remains the central linkage in this *chain of security*, because most threats to individuals arise at the (national) societal level and the principal role of the state is to preserve the (national) social order.
- The state is, therefore, vital in protecting citizens from foreign aggression, and from injury by one citizen, or group of citizens, to another citizen / other citizens.

Human security

There is a long tradition of liberal thinking about security. This includes liberal *idealism* and *collective security* which stretches back to the League of Nations. The UN operates what might be seen as a form of ‘collective security’, or, more properly, ‘collective defence’, in the work of the Security Council. However, the UN has also promoted holistic, global and human-centred conceptions of security. The Brundtland Report, *Our Common Future*,³ is one prominent example of this. In distinctive ways, the UN’s development, environmental and human rights agendas all aspire to contribute to the building of a peaceful and secure world.

The starting point for thinking about human security is *interdependence* or, in recent decades, *globalization*. Globalization presents many challenges to the nation-state as a provider of security. For example:

- the global spread and reach of military technologies;
- economic interdependence and periodic economic crises;
- trans-boundary flows in the form of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees;
- trans-boundary pollution, resource depletion and global warming.

Human security is not only a response to challenges to the state as a provider of security, but also driven by a cosmopolitan vision. Thus, the security of all people is deemed to be equally important, regardless of nationality and/ or citizenship. The state is seen as an exclusionary form of community and the state-system as currently constituted as an obstacle to the realization of human security.

A variant of human security can be found in the *people-centred* approach, associated with the work of Ken Booth,⁴ a member of the *Welsh School*⁵ of security studies. He argues that security should be approached in terms of the ‘collectivities’ in which people are embedded, including, but not limited to, nation-states. In short:

- People, rather than citizens, should be recognized as the subject of security.
- The security of all people matters, regardless of race, class, gender or citizenship status.
- There are multiple sources of insecurity; ‘threats’ to security vary according to the gender, class, race or nationality of the individual.
- Threats to security and how threats are constituted must be viewed in particular social, cultural and historical contexts.
- Thus, poverty, inequality, militarism, mal-development and the denial of human rights or basic needs constitute security issues and security threats.



WORLD EXAMPLE

HIV/AIDS

A report published by the World Health Organization in 2009 claimed that women constitute 60 per cent of all people living with HIV. The proportion of women living with HIV has been increasing in the last ten years. Gender inequalities are implicated in the spread of HIV. For example, in some communities gender norms privilege men over women. In consequence, men are licensed to have multiple sexual partners. This contributes to higher infection rates among young women particularly (15–24 years), compared to young men. At the same time, cultural norms of femininity can act as barriers to women seeking access to information about HIV and as barriers to accessing health services once infected. Violence against women, specifically forced sex, further increases the vulnerability of women to HIV infection. UN programmes directed at the prevention of HIV infection and increasing access to appropriate health care frequently focus on the education of women, men, girls and boys, in an attempt to bring about changes in dominant cultural norms and to change attitudes towards sexuality, and fatherhood in particular.

At the same time UN programmes designed to improve economic opportunities for women aim not only to strengthen the social position and bargaining power of women, but also to improve women’s economic security. Women are then better able to cope with the devastating impact that the death of a partner might bring, and to avoid being forced into survival strategies, such as sex work, which further increase the risk of HIV infection. While the discourse on HIV and programmes directed at HIV infection and prevention are heavily focused on cultural gender norms, it should be noted that sexuality and specifically homophobic attitudes, can result in the stigmatization of HIV which, in turn, increases the vulnerability of the partners of carriers, be they women or men.⁶ (See figure 13.)

The concepts of human security and people-centred security are often linked to human rights.⁷ Liberals take the individual as a bearer of rights to be the fundamental referent of security. Liberals also believe that human security must be concretely grounded in both theory and practice in human

rights. Ultimately human rights claims come down to judgements about what it means to live a life worthy of a human being. While states are obviously important in the protection of human rights, a human rights approach to security necessitates the rethinking of dominant (state-centric) approaches to security. In the people-centred approaches to security, for example, human rights is embraced as a language in which individuals and specific social groups can make claims regardless of their nationality, gender, class or ethnicity.

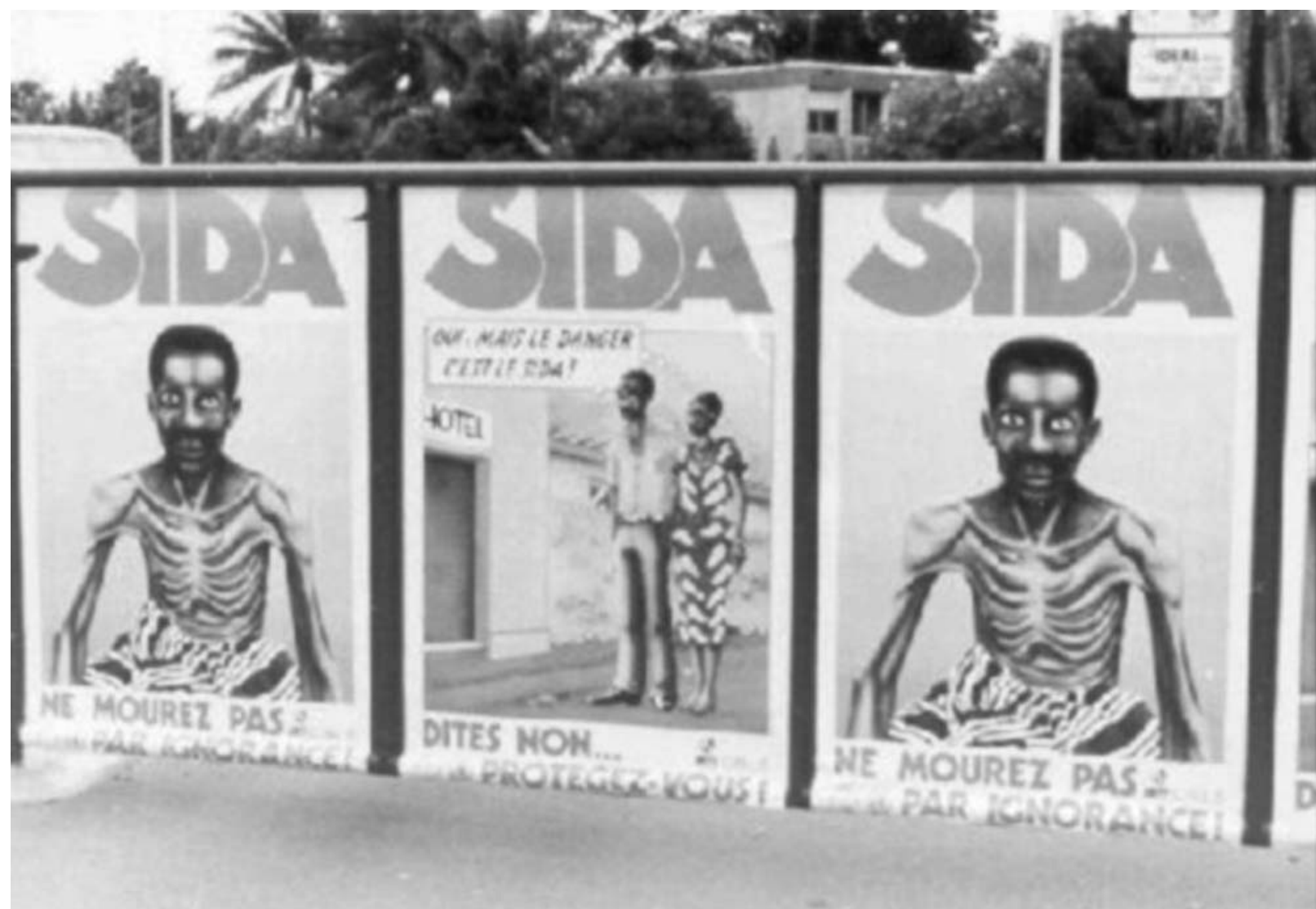


Figure 13 Poster in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, warning of the 'danger' of HIV/Aids

Constructivist and critical approaches to security

Buzan's work (above) has served as a bridge between the English School and constructivist approaches to security. Both approaches expand the range of issues which might legitimately be encompassed under the umbrella of 'security' (the 'widening' of the security agenda) and, fundamentally, who or what should be taken as the *referent* of security. As noted above, in the final analysis Buzan privileges the state, but, as Thomas Diez⁸ argues, from a social constructivist perspective:

- The object of security, or referent of security, changes over time.
- Security cannot be conceived of as an objective condition.

It is, therefore, necessary to ask:

- How is the object to be secured, constituted?
- Is the object to be secured a state, a nation or some other social group?

The project of critical security studies is to bring about a shift in the reference point of security.

- Critical security studies draws upon Critical Theory.
- To think ‘critically’ is to be reflective about the problems in existing security arrangements (i.e. the state-system) and how they might be changed in ways that further human *emancipation*.
- Emancipation involves a shift in focus away from states, power and strategic interests, to new forms of political organization.

? CONCEPT

Securitization

The *Copenhagen School* has contributed several innovative concepts to security studies, including securitization and speech acts. The concept of securitization is now widely employed in security studies. In essence, securitization is about how something or some issue comes to be constituted as a security ‘threat’. It refers to a process through which the invocation of an *existential threat* – for example, terrorism – to a referent object – for example, the state – is used to justify extraordinary action, such as intervention. This ‘threat’ does not have to be military in nature – it might be a force or process that is identified as a ‘threat’ to social order or even civilization. Securitization takes place through *speech acts*. Speech acts are things people *do* through language or, put another way, a speech act is a *performative utterance*. In order for an entity or issue to be securitized, first it must be named as such by a relevant actor. In practice, this actor will enjoy some formal status that invests the speech act with authority (a politician, for example). The ‘threat’ must have a referent object (the state, society, civilization) and there must be an audience (the domestic population or international community) who must, in turn, accept that this is a security ‘threat’ for any subsequent action (for example, intervention or specific legislation) to be legitimized.

- Booth understands human emancipation in people-centred terms (see above).

Poststructuralists make similar arguments to social constructivists in regard to the construction of states and threats, but foreground practices of ‘Othering’ in the construction of identities. Poststructuralists⁹ argue that ‘threats’ are not objective ‘facts’: threats that are out there in the ‘real world’. Threats are constructed in ‘discourses of danger’ which function to construct and reproduce state identities and legitimize state power (see chapter 3).



AUTHOR

Lene Hansen

A prominent member of the Copenhagen School, Hansen nevertheless criticizes the School for neglecting gender in analyses of security. She argues that the *speech act* framework employed in the School can work to both silence and subsume security problems. Silencing occurs when it is not possible to raise something or some issue as a security problem – for example, in instances where raising an issue might actually aggravate the threat being faced. ‘Subsuming’ occurs when security problems involve an intimate inter-linkage between the subject’s gender identity and other aspects of the subject’s identity, for example nationality and/or religion. Hansen contends that gender is apt to be marginalized within the Copenhagen School because gender is complexly interlinked with other facets of identity, seldom producing the type of self-contained, collective referent object required in this framework (see Further reading).

Feminist approaches to security

So far, a great deal of space has been devoted to various approaches to security, yet gender has only briefly been mentioned. This is because, while early contributors to feminist debates about security in IR¹⁰ challenged dominant conceptions of identities and boundaries in which traditional (meaning

realist) approaches to security had been framed, there is no one feminist approach to security.

- Standpoint theory¹¹ can serve as a basis from which to develop a holistic vision of security, grounded in the complex connections that exist among peoples, social groups and bounded communities like nation-states (see chapter 5).
- Women's human rights can – and should – be included within human rights approaches to security.
- Women's security can be subsumed within a people-centred approach; when the 'person' is a woman, gender hierarchies and inequalities in power constitute a major source of domination and obstacle to the achievement of security.
- Insofar as critical feminists regard gender as a social position of subordination, gender can be incorporated within a critical theoretical approach to security that aims to further the project of human emancipation.
- Potentially, gender can be incorporated within a social constructivist approach to security (see Hansen above).
- Gender can be incorporated within a constructivist/poststructuralist framework that focuses on discourses and practices of 'Othering'.

Feminist approaches to security are distinctive in that:

- Feminist approaches foreground gender in discussions of security; in the absence of this foregrounding, gender is often marginalized or overlooked.
- Critical approaches to security centre the *subject* of security, necessitating consideration of concretely situated subjects.
- In foregrounding gender, gender is thereby afforded attention in practice/ policy; gender assumes import as a category or variable (chapter 1).
- Gender cannot be wholly subsumed within other categories (nation, ethnicity, class and so on).

Collectively, feminist work makes gender visible conceptually and politically (for further elaboration on the distinctiveness of Feminist Security Studies see Sjöberg, Wibben and Shepherd, Extended Reading). However, as the discussion of Hansen's work (above) makes clear, gender must be viewed within the context of *intersectionality*. In non-feminist theorizations of security, the question of *how* gender 'cuts across' other categories and thereby complicates discussions of security is neglected. What this means concretely, in terms of how the subject or referent of security is understood, is similarly neglected.

AUTHOR

Cynthia Enloe

An influential contributor to feminist discussions on war, militarization and security, Cynthia Enloe asks: *what does it mean to theorize state-sanctioned violence?* She argues that, when trying to make sense of security, it is important to look at the implications of theorizing as an activity and not just at the resulting theories. Hegemonic domination is not just a question of the social relations of inequality and domination, but is also about the production of knowledge and the formulation of concepts and ideas that set the parameters for how we think about 'security'. It is also about the ability to be seen and heard. 'Rethinking' security is not only a question of adopting a global, rather than narrowly conceived national, perspective. Nor is it simply a question of broadening our definition of security to embrace a range of new issues and concerns. It is also about the capacity of people to articulate their fears and insecurities and present new 'visions'. Enloe argues that women need 'a room of their own' to theorize: space, resources, physical security. The more a government is

preoccupied with what it calls 'national security', the less women experience the physical security necessary for theorizing. Indeed, women who question their own subordination are often perceived as 'threats' to national security. She insists that it is precisely those women in the world with the most pressing need to discover the underlying causes of war and militarism and the conditions that will realize peace who have the least capacity to articulate their thoughts and be heard.¹²

Mainstreaming Gender in Peace and Security

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325

UNSCR 1325¹³ was adopted by the UN Security Council on 31 October 2000. As with other gender mainstreaming initiatives, UNSCR 1325 is a bi-product of the Beijing Platform of Action (BPA), specifically the section devoted to women in armed conflict. The Resolution requires states to undertake ‘special measures’ to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and sexual abuse, in situations of armed conflict. It sets out a wide range of measures to address the adverse impacts that armed conflict has on civilians, and women and girls specifically, as targets of aggression and violence by combatants and as refugees and internally displaced persons. The Resolution strengthens the existing provisions on civilians in armed conflict made under the Geneva Convention (1949), the Refugee Convention (1951) and CEDAW (1979) (see chapters 2, 3 and 4).

Not all provision can be covered here; only some will be cited. UNSCR 1325:

- reaffirms the role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace-building;
- stresses the importance of equal participation in all efforts to promote peace and security;
- reaffirms the need to increase women’s role in decision making in conflict prevention and conflict resolution;
- points to the need to implement international humanitarian and human rights law to protect the rights of women and girls during and after conflicts (Article 1);
- sets out specific provisions to mainstream a gender perspective into peace-keeping operations (Article 2);
- calls for the incorporation of HIV/AIDS awareness training into national training programmes for military and civilian police who will be deployed in peacekeeping operations (Article 6);
- calls for special measures to protect women and girls from sexual violence in war and in the aftermath of conflict (Articles 10–12).

Subsequent to UNSCR 1325, other resolutions have been passed to strengthen provisions relating to sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations and to equip the UN with measures to address the problem of impunity of perpetrators. These include UNSCR 1820¹⁴ (adopted in 2008), UNSCR 1888¹⁵ (2009) and UNSCR 1889¹⁶ (2010).

Evaluating UNSCR 1325

While UNSCR is not the only policy document that mainstreams gender in security, it is generally regarded as the most significant one. Its significance is as follows:

- The Resolution is afforded a higher profile than previous measures.
- UNSCR 1325 recognizes women as agents who can and should play a positive role in conflict resolution, peace-building and security.
- The Resolution goes farther than previous measures in responding to gender-specific forms of violence.

Viewed in a longer-term perspective, UNSCR 1325 can be seen as the culmination of efforts by feminist peace activists who have long sought to bring to international attention the myriad ways in

which women and girls are affected in armed conflict and the role women can and should play in peace-building (see chapter 5). UNSCR 1325 is thus deemed by many commentators to be a positive step forward (see Chinkin and Charlesworth and Cockburn in Extended Reading).

However, the Resolution has been criticized in terms of both its conception and its execution. In *Gender, Violence and Security* (see Extended Reading), Laura Shepherd maps the discursive terrains in which institutions (for example, the UN) and NGOs formulate and implement such resolutions in international policy and practices. Her purpose is not to refute the need to address gendered violence in conflict, nor to disparage the intentions behind measures such as UNSCR 1325. Rather, she seeks to interrogate how discursive constructions of gender reproduce gendered binaries and how, consequently, tensions and inconsistencies arise that ultimately undermine the efficacy of such measures.

Problems with mainstreaming gender in security include:

- Gender violence and sexual violence are both conceptualized and implemented in ways that focus on criminal prosecutions, obscuring the structural nature of inequalities which create vulnerabilities and insecurity.
- In fore-grounding gender in peace and security as an ‘issue’ or making women and girls the target of policy, the structural causes of war are sidelined.¹⁷
- Gender can be used to legitimize military interventions which have little or nothing to do with realizing security for women (and girls).

Postcolonial scholars particularly focus on:

- the impact and ongoing legacies of colonialism and imperialism;
- forms of neo-colonial and neo-imperialist domination;
- how hegemonic (Western) discourse on ‘security’ and ‘insecurity’ frame post-colonial countries according to ethnocentric assumptions.

Capitalism is implicated here since colonial and neo-colonial, imperialist and neo-imperialist projects are driven by the expansion of markets, by the search for new (and cheap) supplies of labour and by the drive to obtain and control resources (oil, for example). The concept of intersectionality refers not only to the cross-cutting facets of individual and group identities (class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality and so on), but also to ‘the intersectionality of structural inequalities at the national, regional and transnational levels’.¹⁸

Postcolonial feminists resist interventions made in the name of ‘protecting women’ or ‘promoting women’s rights’ because these ‘objectives’ are often merely rhetorical, serving to legitimize forms of neo-colonial domination. Calls for ‘justice for women’ can similarly serve to justify and legitimate neo-colonial interventionist policies.¹⁹ From a postcolonial perspective, gender oppression cannot be wholly abstracted from other forms of power relations and inequalities. UNSCR 1325 and its implementation must be viewed in the context of broader political struggles and the wider international security environment.

In her contribution to Pratt and Richter-Devroe (Further reading), Vanessa Farr argues that Palestinian women necessarily view gendered violence within the context of the wider Israeli–Palestinian conflict and so do not privilege women or women’s voices in the struggle for ‘peace and security’. Moreover, she argues that, even as some women’s organizations in Palestine do make use of UNSCR 1325 as an empowering tool (giving women a voice in international negotiations, for

example), the efficacy of this tool is actually rendered largely ineffective because of the asymmetry in power relations between Israel and Palestine. She expresses scepticism as to whether the United Nations can deliver justice to the Palestinian people.²⁰



AUTHOR

Malinda Smith

Malinda Smith's work (Extended Reading) focuses on dominant discourse on states in the Global South, and African states particularly, as 'weak', 'failed', 'unstable' or 'diseased'. She argues that representations of Africa – perpetuated by the media and also a feature of academic and policy discourse – are based on ethnocentric assumptions that depict African states as somehow imperfect when adjudged from the perspective of North American and Western European states. Such discourse serves to justify continual interventions and promote and perpetuate the dominance – economic and political – of Western states and Western-dominated international institutions. She writes:

The language commonly used to refer to Africa is quite exceptional in the lexicon of global developmental and security discourses, for what it says about Africa, how it says it, and the way in which almost all other competing accounts are pushed to the margins of what is considered conventional wisdom. The continent is referred to as an 'ailing Africa,' 'a sickly, weak continent,' a 'battered' and 'shattered' continent. The most common metaphors suggest Africa is 'a diseased patient in need of medical assistance.' Another common metaphor used to characterize the continent as psychologically ill is the notion of Africa as a 'basket case'. A survey of this kind of talk in academic and popular media discourses over the past decade illustrates how Africa is constructed as unsafe, a security threat, as existing in a brutish state of nature, and as culturally inclined towards a despotism that is dangerous and destabilising for the global commons.²¹

Smith sees these discourses as rooted in and serving to perpetuate nineteenth-century colonial narratives that depicted Africa as 'the white man's burden' and African people as 'natural slaves'. In the post-9/11 era, 'weak' and 'failing' states have been further depicted as providing an 'enabling environment' for terrorists. The 2002 US National Security Strategy makes these same connections 'between weak states, poverty, and terrorism'.²² Smith states: 'These representations do matter for how we think, talk, and theorize about Africa and, importantly, for what kind of priority the global community gives to issues relating to Africa.'²³

Sheri Gibbings²⁴ points out that Iraqi women have similarly refused to prioritize gender issues and separate them out from the wider political and security context. 'Women's rights' have been evoked to legitimize the invasion of Iraq by US and UK forces. Thus, the rhetorical use of women's rights obscures the actual motives behind military interventions. Furthermore, viewed in the context of structural factors like global capitalism, imperialism, (neo-)colonialism and the role that the UN plays in reproduction of unequal power relations, the women/peace/security agenda cannot be seen as anything other than 'utopian'.

What emerges from these deliberations is the need to contextualize the impact and efficacy of UNSCR 1325. The Resolution has been implemented in ways that have yielded tangible results.²⁵ However, in some contexts, UNSCR 1325 has served only as a technocratic and legalistic mechanism that legitimates intervention.²⁶ Depending on context, the resolution might be utilized by women on the ground as a fairly effective tool, allowing them a place at the table in discussions on conflict, peace and security. In other contexts it has served to undermine efforts to mobilize genuine political commitment to the ideals of gender mainstreaming.

Pratt and Devroe²⁷ argue that, in assessing UNSCR 1325, it is important to ask the following questions:

- To what degree has the Resolution actually been translated into programmes and measures on the

ground?

- What have been the tangible outcomes for women's lives and for peace and security?
- How has 'gender' been used and what have been the wider political implications?
- How have activists in conflict situations used UNSCR 1325?
- What are the implications of the Resolution's focus on armed conflict, as opposed to forms of structural violence which are pertinent in discussions of peace and security?
- How do specific measures and how they are implemented reconcile, if at all, the universality of the Resolution with the particularity of different conflict situations?

Asking these questions, in turn, leads to further crucial questions for feminist theory and practice (praxis), namely:

- How can feminists mobilize, support and demand women's active involvement in conflict resolution and peacekeeping without romanticizing and homogenizing the diverse experiences of women and/or diverse forms of activism?
- How can feminists mobilize, support and demand women's active involvement without providing a justification for foreign (military) intervention?
- How can feminists support non-liberal forms of women's political agency?
- Can the political force of the international feminist peace/anti-war/justice movement be maintained if difference is accounted for? If so, how?

Gender in peacekeeping

'Bringing-in' gender in UN peacekeeping missions predates UNSCR 1325. Former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali's *Agenda for Peace* (1992)²⁸ was the first attempt to re-think approaches to peacekeeping in the much-changed environment of the post-Cold War period. Part of this changed environment was the increased incidence of 'new wars': civil conflicts and low-intensity disputes that spilt over national boundaries. Eight years later, then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan commissioned the *Brahimi Report* (2000),²⁹ which recommended the incorporation of women into complex peacekeeping operations.³⁰ Bringing in women as peacekeepers is not, of course, the only way in which gender figures in UN peacekeeping operations – discussions of masculinity, and 'militarized masculinities' specifically, necessarily arise in these discussions.

The term 'peacekeeping' brings to mind notions of altruism; peace keepers are represented as 'helpers' and 'protectors'. Peacekeepers *are* involved in activities designed to provide assistance and protection to people living in societies that have been torn apart by conflict and violence and who are struggling to survive in the aftermath. In performing these roles, peacekeepers often put their own lives at risk. As Sandra Whitworth³¹ notes: 'missions have become much more complex, departing from the traditional interposition of neutral forces between belligerent groups to include, for example, military and police functions, the monitoring of human rights, the conduct of elections, the delivery of humanitarian aid, the repatriation of refugees, the creation and conduct of state administrative structures, and so on.'

Unfortunately, peacekeepers are also sometimes perpetrators of violence against civilian populations. Whitworth points to one high-profile case in which Canadian peacekeepers deployed in Somalia in 1993 brutally beat to death a local teenager, Shidane Abukar Arone. Subsequent inquiries into incidents of this kind often blame 'a few bad apples'. However, Whitworth contends that

characterizing abuse against civilian populations in this way disguises the prevalence of ‘aggressive heterosexism and homophobia, as well as misogyny and racism’ in militaries.³² Whitworth argues that, even though they are deployed in peacekeeping missions, soldiers remain soldiers, exhibiting the characteristics of ‘militarized masculinity’.³³ She continues that we should not be surprised to find, therefore, that ‘violence against women is disproportionately high within militaries’,³⁴ and so we should also expect to find that instances of violence against women perpetrated by peacekeepers are not uncommon.

Recent literature has challenged, to some degree, notions of hegemonic or militarized masculinity in peacekeeping contexts. Clare Duncanson (Further reading), for example, employs a narrative approach (see chapter 7) in her analysis of identity construction among British peacekeepers in Bosnia. She draws upon Connell’s work on hegemonic masculinity, but pays closer attention to Connell’s qualifying comments on multiple constructions of masculinity. She points out that identities might be constructed in multiple and even contradictory ways according to the specific context. She argues: ‘involvement in peacekeeping may itself play a role in the construction of alternative military masculinities’.³⁵ It is also important to understand how soldiers make sense of their activities. She asks:³⁶



WORLD EXAMPLE

Sexual violence in peacekeeping contexts

The deployment of peacekeeping missions has often been accompanied by controversy. There are many reported cases of military personnel who have been directly involved in, colluded in or turned a blind eye to violence against civilian populations. As Carol Harrington points out, new wars create environments in which sexual violence, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation flourish. Some feminist scholars have argued that soldiers are simply not suited to the task of maintaining peace and protecting civilian populations from harm (see Whitworth and Cockburn in Extended Reading). In regard to sex-trafficking, Harrington argues that: ‘Peacekeeping produces conditions for violence against women and girls in the sex industry by creating a lucrative market of buyers in highly paid militarized men, while the inclusion of human rights monitoring mechanisms almost guarantees the detection of such violence as a policy problem.’³⁷

The language of UN Protocols on trafficking, which have developed alongside UN peacekeeping in the past decade, tends to cast women as the principal ‘victims’, but also tends to focus on victim behaviour.³⁸ Harrington argues that there are ‘strong pressures against tackling the way soldiers, police and contractors treat women and girls in the sex industry’. This explains the focus on victim behaviour. For example, it informs understanding of why and how women respond to situations engendered by conflict, through migration, for example. While well-intentioned, the consequence of such victimization is that ‘anti-trafficking programmes focus on trying to change the behaviour of victims instead of targeting the behaviour of perpetrators of violence’. Discourse on the ‘victims of traffickers’ thereby constructs women as ‘passive objects of knowledge’ whose actions create their own victimization. Harrington notes that there are no serious programmes to develop strategies for studying and changing the conduct of the mostly male perpetrators of violence in the sex industry.

- Does discourse on ‘peacekeeper masculinity’ challenge the hegemony of the warrior model of military masculinity?
- Can we identify attempts to construct masculinities which are more conducive to the achievement of peace and security?
- If so, what are the implications of peacekeeper masculinity, both in terms of achieving peace and security and in terms of gender relations?

Her analysis of autobiographical sources found that soldiers often experience tensions in the expectations surrounding being manly, being a soldier and what they believed to be effective

strategies to bring about peace. Soldiers sometimes express frustrations about their roles as peacekeepers, perceiving this work to be inferior to the ‘real stuff’ of fighting. In this regard, constructions of the identity of men as soldiers seemingly conformed to ‘the traditional gender discourse and the hegemony of the traditional warrior masculinity’.³⁹ However, she also finds evidence of ‘the construction of an alternative military masculinity, associated with the practices of peacekeeping and including skills and values traditionally positioned as feminine’.⁴⁰ She concludes⁴¹ from her research that the hegemony of the warrior hero model is not wholly disrupted in peacekeeping contexts. However:

- The traditional warrior model of masculinity does not serve soldiers well in their struggles to cope with the complex and contradictory demands placed on them in peacekeeping operations.
- There are challenges to dichotomies of masculinity/warrior and femininity/ peacemaker and these challenges are not insignificant.
- In peacekeeping operations, space can open up to challenge militarism and oppressive masculinities.
- The positive qualities of ‘military masculinity’ (bravery, ambition and steadfastness) combined with traditionally feminized qualities (caring, patience and empathy) might provide a new construction of identity for soldiers which is ideally suited to peacekeeping and conflict resolution.



Figure 14 UN peacekeeper on foot patrol in Port-au-Prince, Haiti (2006)

Privatized and militarized security

The increasing use of privatized militarized security companies (PMSCs) has been seen by critical scholars of gender as an example of the (re)masculinization of security in the contemporary period.⁴² PMSCs are becoming an increasingly prominent feature of the international security landscape as governments ‘outsource’ what had hitherto been the most central of all state functions. The deployment of PMSCs in Iraq and Afghanistan has generated a great deal of unease. This is not least because PMSC personnel have been implicated in the abuse of prisoners at Abu Ghraib (see chapter 7) and the massacre of civilians in Nisour Square, Iraq.⁴³ There have also been reports of PMSC personnel involvement in rape and sex-trafficking in conflict zones (see Harrington and Gumedze, Extended Reading). Their deployment is all the more controversial because they are perceived to be less accountable than regular military personnel.

Employing a narrative approach, Paul Higate has conducted research on the construction of masculinities in both peacekeeping operations and PMSCs. Higate cautions against the representation of PMSC personnel only in terms of hyper-masculinity or militarized masculinities. He broadly supports Duncanson’s call to pay closer attention to nuance in identity construction. Higate also argues that it is necessary to develop a gender perspective that is cognizant of the intersection of other

identity markers, including race/ ethnicity and class. In his research Higate has uncovered examples of female ‘clients’ who are young, privileged and well educated, while security providers are often from lower socio-economic backgrounds, with fewer educational qualifications. These men often self-identify as ‘squaddies’, but view their clients as ‘uppity’ types who usurp their authority. Thus, in this context, ‘the gender order is derived from intersections of class and gender’.⁴⁴

Higate argues that focusing on the ‘micro-level of social practices’ reveals as much about how gender shapes security as macro-analysis of the international security order. Paying attention to everyday interactions also affords due import to the emotional factors at play in these contexts, factors often marginalized in work that concentrates on institutionalized contexts. He contends that it is in ‘the small details of everyday occupational and masculine interaction’ that ‘the threads of the gender order are woven into the PMSC industry’.⁴⁵

While acknowledging that the personnel of PMSCs are overwhelmingly men (although women are employed) who use ‘masculine talk’, such talk involves ‘a complex of socially guided, interactional, and micro-political activities that cast particular pursuits as expressions of masculine and feminine “natures”’. Put bluntly, operatives counter-pose their ‘rationality’ and expert knowledge against the ‘irrationality’ of the female clients and their lack of knowledge in the face of risk. Insofar as masculine talk constructs the role as ‘keeping women safe’ and only PMSC personnel carry arms and define ‘threats’, the protector/protected distinction⁴⁶ is evidenced here.

However, Higate demonstrates how personnel negotiate, rather than impose, ‘narratives of risk and threat upon their female clients’. This invites further analyses of how the protector/protected frame is constructed and operationalized.⁴⁷ In the context of marketized forms of security in which the ‘protected’ are also paying customers, ‘“consumers of security” negotiate, resist and challenge the narratives of risk and danger with which they are confronted by “security experts”’.⁴⁸ Thus, there is more ‘complexity, fluidity, and contingency in the everyday setting of the particular interactional gender order’ than a static understanding of the protectors/protected suggests.⁴⁹

Higate concludes that the authority of militarized masculinity in the civilian environment is not straightforward and indeed might be precarious. As such, militarized masculinity – as an authoritative force – has to be worked at, continually represented and reproduced, to be sustained. Therefore, while international politics and international security are gendered, the ways in which they are gendered are more complicated than a simple hierarchy between male protectors and female protected suggests. In ‘revealing the complexities of gendered interaction’ and how they are subverted and resisted, it becomes possible to ‘challenge the security “realities” with which we are routinely presented’. This questioning can be seen as a political act.⁵⁰

The Securitization of Human Rights

While gender mainstreaming originated at the UN, the implementation of mainstreaming strategies relies heavily upon national mechanisms and national machinery. Inevitably, therefore, the objectives of protecting women (and girls) in situations of armed conflict and integrating women's perspectives in post-conflict societies become entangled in (and subordinated to?) the major foreign and security policy objectives of nation-states. This can be demonstrated by interrogating the securitization of women's rights in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The Bush Doctrine

The promotion – ostensibly – of women's human rights in the military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq has to be viewed in the context of the *Bush Doctrine*. This term was used to describe the foreign policy and security policy objectives of the Bush Administration (2001–9). These objectives were, in turn, profoundly shaped by the War on Terror after the events of 9/11. A central plank of the Bush Doctrine was 'democratization'. In practice, 'democratization' was linked to regime change. Indeed, critical commentators regard 'democratization' as a euphemism for regime change. The major objectives of the Bush Doctrine were subsequently codified in the 2002 (and 2006) 'National Security Strategy of the United States'.⁵¹ The 2002 strategy document declared that the aims therein were underpinned by 'a distinctly American internationalism that reflects the union of our values and our national interests'. Thus, the over-riding objectives were to promote 'political and economic freedom, peaceful relations with other states, and respect for human dignity'. Hence Bush declared:

Our Nation's cause has always been larger than our Nation's defense. We fight, as we always fight, for a just peace – a peace that favors liberty. We will defend the peace against the threats from terrorists and tyrants. We will preserve the peace by building good relations among the great powers. And we will extend the peace by encouraging free and open societies on every continent.⁵²

Women's human rights figured prominently in statements made by President Bush and other core members of the Bush Administration in the run-up to interventions in both Afghanistan and Iraq. 'Women and girls' were mentioned in both the 2002 and 2006 strategy documents. The 2006 National Security Strategy explicitly alluded to: 'using foreign assistance to support the development of free and fair elections, rule of law, civil society, human rights, women's rights, free media, and religious freedom'.⁵³ The document went on to state that Free Trade Agreements would henceforth be used as tools to 'encourage countries to enhance the rule of law, fight corruption, and further democratic accountability' and vigorously 'protect the freedoms that face particular peril around the world: religious freedom, women's rights'.

The promotion of women's human rights in US foreign and security policy has been championed by some commentators. Writing in the influential journal *Foreign Affairs* in 2004, Isobel Coleman (Further reading) noted that:

significant research has demonstrated what many have known for a long time: women are critical to economic development, active civil society, and good governance, especially in developing countries. Focusing on women is often the best way to reduce birth rates and child mortality; improve health, nutrition, and education; stem the spread of HIV/AIDS; build robust and self-sustaining community organizations; and encourage grassroots democracy.⁵⁴

She went on to note that the promotion of women's rights was controversial not least because 'in some societies, women's rights are at the front line of a protracted battle between religious extremists

and those with more moderate, progressive views'.⁵⁵ This was the case in Iraq and Afghanistan. Coleman acknowledged that 'dangers' arose from these tensions. She further noted that the Bush Administration had been 'inconsistent' in promoting gender equality abroad and women's political representation (notably in Afghanistan). Nevertheless, she argued that: 'Given the importance of women to economic development and democratization – both of which are key US foreign policy objectives – Washington must promote their rights more aggressively.'⁵⁶

However, other informed commentators have been circumspect, if not cynical, about the commitment of the Bush Administration to promoting the status and rights of women in these war-torn countries. This cynicism is on account of the belief that US security policy has actually been driven by the larger objectives of regime change; the over-riding objective has been to ensure that 'friendly' regimes are left in situ post-intervention, regardless of their record on women's rights. The implementation of strategy in Afghanistan, for example, favoured warlords friendly to the US. These factions subsequently occupied key positions in the government. Human rights advocate Sima Samar, who served as Minister of Women's Affairs in Afghanistan between December 2001 and 2003, claimed that decisions were made not according to the principles of democracy, but rather by a 'rubber stamp', everything of substance having already been decided by 'the powerful ones'.⁵⁷

In the case of Iraq, Nadjie Al-Ali and Nicola Pratt argue that appeals were made in the name of 'the women of Iraq' prior to the invasion in 2003. Furthermore, high-profile female members of the Bush Administration (notably Paula Dobriansky, then Undersecretary of State for Global Affairs) led the call to action, citing the 'rape, torture and executions of women under Ba'th Party rule' as vital reasons for US intervention. Yet Al-Ali and Pratt argue that, in practice, 'These proclamations of support, however, have not necessarily resulted in the greater empowerment of Iraqi women. Rather, as symbols of the post-Saddam political order, women have become instruments for achieving (US-defined) security ends.'⁵⁸



WORLD EXAMPLE

Women's Political Activism in Post-Conflict Iraq

Al-Ali and Pratt (Extended Reading) argue that the conflict in Iraq must be viewed in the context of a society that had already been decimated by a decade of sanctions,⁵⁹ war and militarization. The invasion took place at a time when Iraq was already wrought by communal and sectarian tensions and when national institutions such as the police and military had been similarly damaged. They point out that women had already been the target of violence by factions on both sides: those that subsequently resisted the occupation and those in government.

They acknowledge that in the post-invasion period some spaces did open up for women activists, but the space for women to organize and campaign politically quickly closed down again. Activists with links to influential male politicians and political parties were subsequently able to influence the process of post-war reconstruction and political transition to some degree, but the vast majority of women were sidelined. Drawing upon the distinction between 'practical' and 'strategic' gender interests (see chapter 9), they further argue that while activism around women's practical interests has been partially successful, divisions between women along religious and secular, ethnic and ideological lines have largely worked against the strategic advance of women's interests. These struggles have also taken place in the context of continuing violence and insecurity. All of these factors have combined to undermine women's rights and push women activists to the margins in processes of national reconciliation and post-conflict reconstruction.

The Obama Administration

President Barack Obama's 2010 National Security Strategy (NSS 2010) marked a change of course in US policy, with a significant downplaying of the War on Terror. The strategy document did not use the phrase 'war on terror'. Instead, references were made to a 'global campaign against al-Qaeda and

its terrorist affiliates’ and the need to ‘bring to bear the full resources of our nation and the free world to end this scourge against humanity’. The document referred only to the need to ‘confront’ terrorism, rather than ‘eliminate’ terrorism. Terms like ‘freedom’ and ‘democracy’ were also less prominent in NSS 2010. This wording suggested an end to the military interventions that had marked out the Bush presidency.

Despite this shift in emphasis, the strategy document actually mentions women’s rights more frequently than was the case during the Bush Administration. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, a long-standing advocate on women’s human rights, has subsequently sponsored the introduction of UNSCR 1820 and UNSCR 1888 (see above). However, the language has changed in significant respects. As this commentary notes, NSS 2010 commits the United States:

to the prevention of violence against women and girls, increasing their access to justice and political participation, and combating human trafficking and other international crimes that too often exploit women – objectives long advanced by previous Administrations as well. However, the terms ‘women’ or ‘girls’ appear a total of 22 times in Obama’s NSS, compared with four in 2006. And where Bush appealed to natural law in affirming women’s ‘inherent dignity and worth’, Obama says only that women ‘should’ have opportunities equal to men’s and that ‘countries are more peaceful and prosperous’ when they do. Whereas Bush considered the fight for women’s rights a benchmark in the advance of freedom, Obama merely says that countries that respect women’s rights are relatively ‘more just, peaceful, and legitimate.’⁶⁰

While the discourse has changed, a report published by the Centre for Human Rights and Global Justice (CHRGJ) in 2012 argues that the Obama Administration is still operating in a landscape profoundly shaped by the War on Terror. While accepting that terrorism is a problem, the report notes that, thus far, US counter-terrorism policies have ‘empowered extremist groups’ and ‘emboldened extremist narratives’ in countries like Somalia, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iraq. While terrorism and extremism undermine the rights of women (and sexual minorities – see below), until now US counter-terrorism measures have failed to protect these groups and, in some instances, have made things worse. For example, in cutting humanitarian aid to Somalia (for fear it would be diverted to extremists), the humanitarian crisis in that country has been exacerbated and this has impacted on women and girls particularly badly. The foreign and security policies of the Obama Administration continue to involve political bartering, but partnerships deemed ‘good for counter-terrorism’ are often ‘bad for human rights’. Moreover, women’s rights, and increasingly the rights of sexual minorities, continue to be treated instrumentally: only of import insofar as they serve wider US security objectives. The overall conclusion of this report is that the Obama Administration has so far proved to be good on promises in regard to human rights, but not on effective action.⁶¹

The securitization of LGBT rights

The persecution of LGBT people has assumed more import in both national and international political discourse and policy-making in recent years (see chapter 4). LGBT activists have been at the forefront of campaigns to highlight human rights issues, resulting in widespread publicity and pressure on governments to act. As Rahul Rao notes, discourse and practice on LGBT rights takes the form of:

global LGBT advocacy organizations and networks such as the International Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA) set up in 1978 and the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC) founded in 1990, LGBT advocacy sections within existing human rights organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch (HRW), and the proliferation of national and international judicial decisions and ‘soft law’ instruments.⁶²

During the Bush Administration, the neo-conservative wing of the US Republican Party and allies in the Christian fundamentalist movement promoted conservative notions of gender relations and ‘traditional’ family values. However, at the same time, gay rights activists in the US (including some Republican party members) put pressure on the Bush Administration to incorporate LGBT rights into US foreign and security policy objectives. Sexuality and human rights have since assumed a fairly prominent position in the discourse of the Obama Administration. Gay rights have simultaneously achieved a higher degree of visibility at the UN in recent years and in policy discourse and in legislation enacted in many countries around the world (see chapter 4). All round, these developments have resulted in what Rao characterizes as a ‘cosmopolitan discourse of LGBT rights’.⁶³

In his article ‘Queer in the Time of Terror’ (Extended Reading), Rao problematizes discourse on sexuality and human rights in connection with foreign and security policies. This is partly because there is a marked tendency to focus on ‘Third World’ states as the main culprits and so cast these same states as ‘backwards’ and ‘uncivilized’. In many respects, Rao argues, global queer activism also assumes many of the features of liberal feminist discourse on Third World women (see chapter 9). Paraphrasing Spivak, he argues that there appears to be an eagerness on the part of ‘white gays to save brown gays from brown homophobes’,⁶⁴ with all the recurring issues of silencing and the erasure of agency in attendance. The danger is that international LGBT activism around human rights is assuming ‘the character of a modern day civilizing mission’.⁶⁵ Thus:

the construction of this discourse and a global politics of LGBT solidarity has not been an entirely benign development, free from questions of power and hierarchy. As LGBT communities have won political and legal battles in the West and have begun to assimilate ever more deeply into their respective societies, LGBT rights have become a marker of modernity, resulting in the creation of new hierarchies – what Jon Binnie calls ‘a new racism’ – in international politics.⁶⁶

Rao argues that there is a need to critically interrogate and challenge the claims, frequently made by nationalist elites in non-Western states, that homosexuality is an ‘alien influence’, imported from a corrupt and decadent West. There is much evidence – biographical, for example – which suggests that the heteronormalization of societies was tied up with colonial practices. Rao cites the example of Iran as a society which seemingly tolerated same-sex relationships prior to the nineteenth century. Heteronormativity became a marker of modernity in colonized societies, including Iran.

However, he also argues that it is necessary to confront the complicated politics of ‘Gay International’ as a first step in determining whether the project of imputed solidarity among Western-based activists and Third World sexual minorities is something worth saving. Here Rao confronts not only issues of power and hierarchy, but also the complex identities of LGBT people in diverse societies across the world. All of this renders the politics around ‘interventions’ by Western gay rights activists into the internal politics of non-Western states complex and difficult. One example cited by Rao is the campaign by OutRage! against the persecution of LGBT people in Uganda. Juliet Victor Mukasa, Chairperson of Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG), accused Peter Tatchell (of OutRage!) of making unverified allegations against the Ugandan Government which would ultimately hurt local activists: ‘You will sit safely in London while our activists in Uganda pay the price for your deeds.’⁶⁷

Moreover, LGBT human rights activism has become caught up in the politics of the War on Terror and its aftermath. ‘Problem’ states, like Iran for example, have become targets of condemnation and sanctions, while pro-Western states such as Israel have been represented as ‘gay-friendly’ nations.

This not only diverts attention from ongoing discrimination against LGBT people in the West, but also deflects attention from human rights abuses generally in states that are allies in the War on Terror, or latterly in the global campaign to ‘confront terrorism’.

It should be emphasized here that Rao is not denying that homophobia and the persecution of LGBT people are problems in states throughout the world, nor is he trivializing or condoning the persecution of LGBT people. Rather, he is arguing that the apparent tension between gay rights and respect for cultural difference must be confronted in ways that are cognizant of complex historical factors and specific political contexts. The politics of gay rights activism must also be interrogated in relation to questions of power and hierarchy which necessarily arise in engagements between the Western and non-Western world. The key questions are, therefore:

- How do we protect and respect divergent and multiple identities in an increasingly global society?
- How do we make sure that activism on behalf of some persecuted identities does not have the effect of stigmatizing other persecuted identities?

Summary

This chapter has concentrated on issues of gender and sexuality in the context of security and peacekeeping. The chapter has further developed the theme of gender mainstreaming both in international instruments such as UNSCR 1325 and in national security policies. Space has been afforded to literatures and authors who are broadly supportive of gender mainstreaming and to those who are critical of mainstreaming gender in security and peacekeeping in both conception and in practice.

Questions for reflection

- 1) Why are feminist commentators often critical of ‘problem-solving’ measures such as those embedded in UNSCR 1325?
- 2) Can the *securitization* of women’s rights and LGBT rights be viewed as a positive development in international relations? If so, why? If not, why not?
- 3) How might the concept of intersectionality be brought to bear in international security and peacekeeping? Is it possible to develop policies that take into account the complex and cross-cutting nature of identities and that are also effective?

Seminar activity

This seminar activity is a role-play exercise. It will require some preparation by students ahead of the class. In addition to the set reading, students should read the full text of UNSCR 1325.⁶⁸ The class should be divided into three sub-groups.

The task of group 1 is as follows:

The following section of text is an extract from UNSCR 1325 (2000, 1–2):

1. *Urges* Member States to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict.

You have been assigned the role of adviser to the Transitional Council in a post-conflict country.

The country will be holding its first democratic elections the following year. While the conflict is officially over, many parts of the country are still unstable and subject to sporadic outbreaks of political violence. Intelligence reports suggest that there is opposition to women's direct political representation in the legislative body (i.e., women MPs) and many women have reported that they will not participate in the electoral process because they fear reprisals from conservative forces, opposed to a public and political role for women.

Draw up a list of concrete measures that will:

- 1) increase the representation of women in the new national legislative body;
- 2) guarantee women's security both during and after the election.

The task of group 2 is as follows:

The following section of text is an extract from UNSCR 1325 (2000, 1–2):

6. *Requests* the Secretary-General to provide to Member States training guidelines and materials on the protection, rights and the particular needs of women, as well as on the importance of involving women in all peacekeeping and peace-building measures.

You have been assigned the role of adviser to the UN Secretary-General on how to implement this measure in a country which has suffered a protracted civil war. While a tentative peace has been brokered between the warring factions, security is still precarious, with sporadic violence against military personnel, officials and civilian populations. Many thousands of people have been displaced from their homes and very many displaced persons are living in temporary shelters. There are reports of illegal abductions and sex-trafficking in many parts of the country.

- 1) Identify what resources you will need to implement this measure.
- 2) Identify how you will gain access to the resources that you need, in the given circumstances.
- 3) Draw up *five* specific guidelines for the training of UN peacekeepers and private security company personnel that meet the requirements of (6).

Note. You might decide that you will need to involve other agencies and groups in your work.

The task of group 3 is as follows:

The following sections of text are extracts from UNSCR 1325 (2000, 1–2):

Expressing concern that civilians, particularly women and children, account for the vast majority of those adversely affected by armed conflict, including as refugees and internally displaced persons, and increasingly are targeted by combatants and armed elements, and *recognizing* the consequent impact this has on durable peace and reconciliation ...

Reaffirming the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace-building, and *stressing* the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, and the need to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution ...

Reaffirming also the need to implement fully international humanitarian and human rights law that protects the rights of women and girls during and after conflicts ...

... *Recognizing* that an understanding of the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, effective institutional arrangements to guarantee their protection and full participation in the peace process can significantly contribute to the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security.

- 1) Drawing upon either poststructuralist feminism *or* postcolonial feminism, interrogate the

gendered assumptions that underpin the propositions in the text above. You should identify at least *three* ways in which the language of ‘gender mainstreaming’ and the proposed measures to implement UNSCR 1325 can be deemed problematic.

- 2) Consider whether and how UNSCR 1325 might serve as a potentially or actually useful *political tool* for activists in post-conflict societies. You should provide *three* concrete examples or illustrations.

In the final twenty minutes of the seminar, the class should reconvene as one group, present their proposals and arguments, and field and respond to questions and criticism.

Further reading

- Agathangelou, Anna ‘Bodies of Desire, Terror and the War in Eurasia: Impolite Disruptions of (Neo)Liberal Internationalism, Neoconservatism and the “New” Imperium’, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 38, 3 (2010), 693–722.
- Coleman, Isobel ‘The Payoff from Women’s Rights’, *Foreign Affairs*, 83, 3 (2004), 80–95.
- Duncanson, Clare ‘Forces for Good? Narratives of Military Masculinity in Peacekeeping Operations’, *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 11, 1 (2009), 63–80.
- Hansen, Lene ‘The Little Mermaid’s Silent Security Dilemma and the Absence of Gender in the Copenhagen School’, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 29, 2 (2000), 285–306.
- Higate, Paul R. ‘Peacekeepers, Masculinities and Sexual Exploitation’, *Men and Masculinities*, 10, 1 (2007), 99–119.
- Pratt, Nicola, and Sophie Richter-Devroe (eds.) Special Issue, ‘Critically Examining UNSCR 1325’, *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 13, 4 (2011), 489–611.

Useful Web links

- Global Food Security Initiative: www.globalfoodsec.net/modules/gfs/knowledge_resource/gender_and_food
- International Centre for Gender, Peace and Security: www.c-gps.org/home/.
- UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict: www.stoprapenow.org/.
- UN Women: www.un-instraw.org/peace-and-security/research/gender-and-security-sector-reform.html.
- WomanStats: www.womanstats.org/
- Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace (South Asia): www.wiscomp.org/index.asp.

Telling Stories

Introduction

This chapter explores narrative approaches to gender, touched upon in previous chapters, in greater depth. There are large literatures on narrative and representational practices drawn from a variety of academic disciplines (IR, Politics, Sociology, Media Studies, Cultural Studies, Film Theory, Literary Theory and so on). In order to avoid making the ensuing discussions unnecessarily complicated, the chapter draws selectively upon works and approaches that are particularly influential in IR. These are set out in the first section. In the second section, the discussion turns to narratives on the War on Terror. The War on Terror has not only been extensively covered in the media, but has also generated a weight of academic literature, including a substantial feminist literature, which has contributed to making 9/11 and events that followed *the* great drama in world politics over the past decade (2001–10). Films, and other cultural texts like novels, are also influential sources of knowledge about world politics. Popular culture is similarly of political import. The third section engages with the proposition that in telling stories about world political events, film (cinema) simultaneously constructs those same events. Film should therefore be treated as a legitimate source of knowledge in the study of IR and not merely a pedagogical tool. While it might be objected that films are ‘fictional’ accounts of events, it will be argued that the distinction between ‘fact’ and ‘fiction’ is not as clear-cut as conventionally believed.

What is Narrative?

Narrative is the means by which we make sense of our everyday lives, the events we observe or participate in and/or what we experience and how we convey our ‘sense making’ to others in a coherent manner. Recounting narratives or telling stories involves abstraction from a complex (perhaps messy) reality in order to construct a simplified, coherent account that can be conveyed to an audience. In Hidemi Suganami’s¹ terms: ‘ “stories” or “narratives” are an instrument of “comprehension”, or “comprehension” – by means of which we express our understanding of a given set of events and/or acts, conceived of as an intelligible whole, or not-so-unintelligible whole, to ourselves and to others, thereby necessarily producing an explanation of it’.

Storytelling is essential to psychological and social processes of individual identity formation and in the construction of collective identities. Benedict Anderson² holds that nationalist discourses are stories about the past, present and future of *imagined communities* called nations. The historian Hayden White³ (Extended Reading) regards historical narratives as much like ‘the stories we conventionally use to endow the events of our lives with culturally sanctioned meaning’.

The cultural and linguistic turns in International Relations

The interest in narrative in IR should be viewed in the context of the cultural and linguistic turn in IR theory. While the ‘**fourth debate**’ in IR (1980s) is often represented as a debate about methodology, lurking beneath are deeper questions about language; in effect, whether we use language merely to *describe* the world, or to *construct* the world.

For positivists, the only ‘true’ knowledge is knowledge that can be tested (and potentially falsified) – even though all statements, propositions and claims reported as ‘fact’ should be treated with caution until verified and, even then, are open to future refutation. Positivists regard language as merely the means by which propositions about cause and effect relationships and *explanations* are conveyed to an audience in a way that makes sense to others. Assuming we all speak the same language, our meaning will be clear to others.

Constructivists (broadly defined), on the other hand, hold that there is no ‘truth’ out there in the ‘real world’ waiting to be uncovered. Indeed, there is no ‘real world’ outside of representation. Put another way, there are only *representations* of reality. Constructivists are, therefore, interested in how ‘truth’ and ‘reality’ are *realistically rendered or represented*. As Roland Bleiker⁴ argues: ‘representing the political is a form of interpretation that is, by its very nature, incomplete and bound up with the values of the perceiver’. We should, therefore, pay attention to how ‘representative practices themselves have come to constitute and shape political practices’. From a constructivist perspective therefore, cultural texts are representations of reality or constructions of ‘political realities’.

Rationalism

We are accustomed to thinking about narrative and/or discourse as falling into different types. Moreover, we are further accustomed to thinking that different kinds of narrative or storytelling do not enjoy equal status. For example, in secular societies, science is widely regarded as being based in fact, whereas religion is generally regarded as a belief system, more akin to mythology than ‘fact’. Similarly, statements of truth or speeches uttered by politicians might be treated with scepticism.

Political oratory is regarded as value-laden and having an ideological and/or rhetorical flavour.

Rationalists hold that decision making in public life is, or at least should be, based on rational arguments. Rationalists contend that:

- There are different rules on *how* to argue and different criteria that apply to how arguments are made and adjudged in different spheres of life: scientific arguments, political arguments, legal arguments and so on.
- In all instances, rational argument is based on formal and substantive criteria and it is this that allows us to make judgements and come to conclusions regarding the ‘truth’ or validity of a proposition.
- Members of any given community – scientists, lawyers or academics – are deemed to possess specialized knowledge which enables them to participate in discussions and debates in their respective fields.
- ‘Expert’ knowledge is regarded as more valuable than the opinion of the layman.
- Rationalist approaches in IR regard the world as a set of logical puzzles that can be unpacked through analysis and the application of reasoned argument.

Critical Theory

Some strands of Critical Theory can be viewed as an effort to recover a rational-world paradigm for human decision making and communication. Jürgen Habermas’ theory of **communicative action** is an example of this. Under suitable conditions – *an ideal speech situation* – people can advance reasoned propositions to justify their actions. The criteria for adjudicating between claims – judging whether one ‘story’ is better than others – is the *force of the better argument*. The force of the better argument is one means by which cultural claims can be adjudicated in regard to the rights of women, for example.

On the other hand, the Critical Theory of Antonio Gramsci⁵ holds that language is crucial to creating the perceptions and attitudes of both ruling and subaltern groups. ‘Common sense’ is the world-view of the ruling elite, but is often adopted by subalterns and reproduced in an uncritical, unreflective manner. Language is, therefore, fundamental in legitimating social institutions – the means whereby hegemony is established in the cultural realm. Literature, films and newspaper reports of events play an important role in fostering an illusion of consensual (national or international) unity. Gramsci used the term ‘folklore’ (ideology) to describe: ‘the ways in which language is a pastiche of a number of conceptions – religion, morality, beliefs, opinions, specific ways of seeing the world, of narrating events, and of acting ... the embodiment of a common sense orientation toward the world’.⁶

He was particularly interested in the way in which specific genres in literature and film produced common sense.⁷ For example, in the fascist Italy of Gramsci’s time, popular historical narrative films represented workers resolving their conflicts through their association with heroic figures and the heroic nation. In this way, workers’ struggles were assimilated into narratives on the larger national cause. War films very often convey a strong sense of the nation united: individuals set aside their differences (class, gender, ethnicity and so on) and pull together for the common good.

Gramsci⁸ did not hold ‘common-sense’ beliefs in disdain. Insofar as counter-hegemony (resistance) had to be constructed from the ‘bottom up’ (from the lives of the subaltern), this necessitated an understanding of everyday discourse. He believed the unreflective, passive disposition characteristic of subalterns and evidenced in everyday folklore could be transformed into

the critical disposition necessary for social and political transformation. Social change depended upon the deconstruction and demystification of social roles, social relations and social institutions. The deconstruction of language and the 'common sense' was, therefore, a political act.

Gramsci examined the position of women in society in relation to his concept of the *subaltern*. He believed that the growing cultural influence of the US⁹ was negative for women. The propagation of cultural images in the media, in theatre and in popular (Hollywood) films, along with public spectacles like beauty contests, sexualized and demeaned women. Insofar as women were a 'spectacle', all women might be considered subalterns.

Constructivism

To reiterate, constructivists regard narrative accounts as the means by which truth claims (about world politics) are *realistically presented*. Constructivists try to account for how people come to adopt stories that guide their behaviour and actions. In *The Postmodern Condition* (Extended Reading), the French post-structuralist philosopher Jean-François Lyotard argued that:

- All forms of discourse can be understood as forms of narrative.
- Narrative form is the pre-eminent mode in formulating or constructing 'traditional knowledge', including folklore and popular stories.
- Science does not enjoy any special status as superior 'truth'; science also produces its own discourse of legitimation with respect to its own status.
- Through critique and deconstruction, the assumptions, presuppositions and biases that underpin universal theories are made visible and can then be contested.
- Contestation, critique and deconstruction are political acts.

Foucault held that:

- Discourse or narrative is subject to 'rules'.
- Discourse or narrative is related to the power structures in any given society in any specific historical period.
- Discourse/narrative is a systematic form of speech/writing that 'makes sense' in specific social and historical contexts.
- Specific societies produce their own 'truths' or have their own 'regimes of truth'.
- Discourse legitimizes and reproduces particular ways of thinking and acting over time.

? CONCEPT

Meta-narrative

Lyotard is particularly associated with the concept of meta-narrative. In essence, a meta-narrative is a big idea or big story. The purpose of meta-narrative is to offer an all-encompassing explanation of human experience, of history and human knowledge. Put another way, meta-narrative is a 'totalizing schema' that orders experience and knowledge. An example of this is Karl Marx's contention that all history is the history of class struggle (an all-encompassing 'big story' about human history and progress (see also teleology).

Meta-narrative provides a framework for little stories: narratives that are recounted and make sense within the context of the over-arching big story. Therefore, in order to understand the meaning of small stories, it is necessary to ask: *What kind of story is this? And how is this story framed within the bigger story (meta-narrative)?* So, one might recount the story of the struggle for women's rights as the gradual realization of freedom for women. This story 'makes sense' within the

meta-narrative of Western liberalism which holds that history is the gradual progression of human kind from ignorance and barbarism to universal enlightenment and freedom.

Meta-narratives are the means by which specific societies and cultures justify and legitimize particular forms of power relations. For example, liberal discourse, while ostensibly championing the values of progress and human freedom, has served historically to justify colonialism, imperialism and oppression in the name of the 'advance of civilization', 'progress' and 'freedom'. Thus, poststructuralists resist all meta-narratives because while ostensibly grounded in 'universal truths', meta-narratives can be put to the service of projects that subordinate rather than liberate 'others.'

Poststructuralist feminists draw heavily upon the work of both Lyotard and Foucault (there are other intellectual influences). Gender is regarded as discursively constructed. In Judith Butler's¹⁰ terms, gender is: 'a process in which the "body" becomes objectified in discourse that takes for granted the reality of sexual difference and inequality'. It follows that:

- Gender is a product or effect of culturally and historically specific power relations.
- Masculinity and femininity are constructed in specific historical and social practices and discourses.

Feminist discourse might be considered a discourse of 'outsiders' which can be used to contest universal knowledge claims: the (feminized) 'Other' confounds 'universal' truth claims.¹¹ Thus viewed, the political project of feminism is one of deconstruction. However, feminism can also be tied up with universal discourses on progress and liberation (as in liberal feminism), which are implicated in the projection of power (of the West) and the subjugation of the 'other' (non-West).



AUTHOR

Annick Wibben

Annick Wibben (Further reading) has developed a comprehensive framework for feminist security studies that employs narrative as a key methodological tool. Starting from the position that the world is constituted by language – the stories and interpretative practices that people engage in in order to make experiences meaningful – Wibben extends the purview of both conventional security studies and also critical security studies. Much of the 'critical' world remains heavily focused on policy documents and 'official' discourse. Wibben also interrogates everyday discourse – how people make sense of security and security environments. Everyday narratives are important sites in which knowledge about security is produced. In this way, Wibben is able to demonstrate the contested and shifting terrain of 'security': a terrain marked by 'inconsistencies', 'disagreement and multi-plicity'.¹² Narrative approaches to security have long been employed by both critical and feminist security studies scholars (see, for example, Shepherd, Further reading), but in integrating narratology into her framework, Wibben extends, develops and enriches the literature.¹³

Scripting the War on Terror

The concept of knowledge as narrative or meta-narrative informs much of the feminist literature on the War on Terror. One way into this literature, in the first instance, is via the notion of *US Exceptionalism*, which pre-dates the events of 9/11. US Exceptionalism holds that the US is unique. As the story goes, not only is the US founded on the principles of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, but also historically the US has opened its doors to the oppressed of the world and continues to serve as a ‘beacon of freedom’ in the world. Forsythe¹⁴ argues that the belief that American people are blessed with exceptional freedom and goodness is held by both elites and the ‘masses’ in US society. As with any story of state and nation, the narrative on past, present and future omits much (slavery, for example), yet it is at the core of American political culture and at the heart of US *identity*.

American Exceptionalism makes sense within the ‘big idea’ or big story of liberalism as the march of progress from barbarism to enlightenment. Francis Fukuyama’s big idea in the *End of History*¹⁵ is that, in the aftermath of the Cold War and the defeat of communism, there is no ideology with universal appeal which can mount a significant challenge to liberal political and social values and the lure of the free market. While there is more than a little rhetorical flourish in Fukuyama’s text, he clearly intends that his thesis be taken seriously. Neo-conservative thinkers in the US take the idea of American Exceptionalism one stage further: it is the *historical destiny* of the US to protect and promote freedom – understood in terms of liberal social and political values and the free market – across the world.

In the aftermath of the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York on 9/11 (2001), President George W. Bush described the US as ‘the greatest force for good in world history’.¹⁶ This narrative on US identity and purpose was recounted – many times – prior to the military intervention in Afghanistan. In speeches by various members of the Bush Administration, the War on Terror was scripted as a war in which the bright cause of freedom and peace was pitted against the benighted forces of barbarism and terror. Before too long, ‘terrorism’ was routinely elided with Islamic fundamentalism, also a ‘backwards’, benighted force.

Prior to the intervention in Afghanistan by the US, and allies like Britain, peace activists and Leftist opponents in the US (and elsewhere in the world) rallied against the war, arguing that it was driven by neo-imperialist motives. Opposition did not come only from the political Left. Foreign policy realists in influential think tanks in Washington opposed the intervention as ill advised, a potential military and political disaster.¹⁷ Yet the voices of opposition in the US were muted. In the context of 9/11, the ‘official’ narrative on the War on Terror as the defence of the nation and its values had powerful appeal. Indeed, in the climate of nationalism that prevailed post-9/11, opposition was apt to be constructed as evidencing disloyalty to the nation; dissenters were in danger of being cast as ‘enemies within’.

Women’s rights as a marker of civilization

Feminist IR scholars have interrogated or deconstructed dominant discourse on the War on Terror. In so doing, they have demonstrated how these discourses are gendered. One way in which this can be illustrated is in the construction of civilization as *feminine*.¹⁸

- The feminine is equated with civilization, peace, the ‘good’, the ‘light’, the ‘whole’.

- The feminine values (of civilization) are deemed to be threatened by dark forces and so must be protected.
- Protection requires the masculinized qualities of toughness and strength.

Paradoxically, when the feminine is unreflectively elided with women (as is frequently the case), women are thereby both elevated and subjugated; put up high on the pedestal of purity (goodness and light), but at the same time represented as weak, vulnerable and in need of protection. Women who do not ‘fit the script’ are frequently cast as deviant: subversive, disloyal and even as whores. This can be seen most graphically in various forms of war-time propaganda.

In the War on Terror, several stories were recounted to justify the intervention in Afghanistan. The hunt for Osama Bin Laden was one such story. A second narrative justified and legitimated the intervention in terms of the promotion and protection of the rights of Afghani (and, later, Iraqi) women.¹⁹ President Bush went on record as ‘proud to be a part of America’s efforts to advance the rights of Afghan women and girls’. First Lady Laura Bush also joined the ‘fight against terrorism’, declaring it to be ‘also a fight for the rights and dignity of women’.²⁰ Such speeches constructed and represented women’s rights as one of the key markers of (Western) civilization.

On the other hand, Afghani women were constructed as ‘innocents’ oppressed by the forces of barbarism represented by Afghani men. Both narratives (the hunt for Bin Laden and women’s rights) made sense within the overarching meta-narrative of the War on Terror as a fight to protect and advance freedom and civilization in the face of the feared onslaught of oppressive and barbaric forces. The stories were rendered coherent through a sleight of hand that elided the threat posed by terrorism (Bin Laden) with Islamic fundamentalism (the threat posed to women’s rights).

Following Derrida (chapter 2), gender polarity can be seen to structure the meta-narrative of the War on Terror. Binary oppositions – masculine/feminine, light/dark, civilization/barbarism, national/international, Western/Eastern, self/other – and the privileging of one side of the binary over the other underpin the meta-narrative. The construction of a Western/non-Western (here explicitly Islamic) dichotomy simultaneously constructs Western women as ‘liberated’ and Eastern (Muslim) women as ‘oppressed’. As Shepherd notes, such constructions can be viewed as: ‘a variation of what Chandra Mohanty called the “average third world woman” who leads an essentially truncated life based on her feminine gender (read: sexually constrained) and her being “third world” (read: ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, domestic, family-oriented, victimized etc)’.²¹

In order to maintain the coherence and plausibility of this account of non-Western (Muslim/Afghani) women as oppressed and as the object of rescue by a Western alliance that will bring about liberation and the ‘gift’ of rights, certain things have to be omitted from the story.²² Western women were not gifted rights by liberal societies, but had to struggle to win their rights in societies that were at once *liberal* and *patriarchal*, including the US, but this is seldom acknowledged.

The Bush Administration initially regarded the secular Revolutionary Association of Women in Afghanistan (RAWA) as a potentially useful ally in the fight against Islamic fundamentalism. Representatives from RAWA were invited to meet with members of the Bush Administration, no doubt as a propaganda ploy. However, RAWA representatives did not conform to the Western stereotype of Muslim women (passive, submissive, victims) and refused to back the intervention in Afghanistan on the grounds that conflict would wreak severe damage and suffering on all Afghans and likely ‘backlash’ would make life even more difficult for women in Afghanistan. RAWA’s

advice was subsequently ignored. Thus, while the Taliban sought to silence the voice of Afghani women, it should be noted that their voices were also silenced in Western public forums.²³

Gendered Archetypes

Thus far, the discussion of narrative and storytelling has drawn heavily on the concept of meta-narrative and binary opposition. At this juncture, the focus shifts to how narratives are reproduced in popular culture and serve both to construct and to reinforce the cultural norms and ‘myths’ of society.²⁴

In this section, the discussion will be limited to two archetypes that are the mainstay of stories told about war: heroes and monsters.

Warrior heroes re-visited

In fictional stories warrior heroes usually have special features/characteristics and perform special feats. The hero will typically undertake a difficult journey into a hellish environment and then face off some evil or supernatural force. In return s/he will receive some kind of special reward. Commonly, the hero embarks on a quest for the greater good of humanity and his/her reward is to be lauded and elevated within her/his society or the attainment of some greater spiritual enlightenment. These same ‘plotlines’ and archetypes are found in narrative accounts that are widely accepted as ‘factual’ accounts of ‘real-world’ events.

Warrior heroes are not always male, but are masculinized: they possess characteristics associated with masculinity. Women usually feature in war stories as the reason for the historical quest or the prize (rescuing the princess, or winning the ‘booty’). As noted in chapter 3, in nationalist stories (of war) women are elided with the feminine and represent or symbolize the homeland: what the male heroes *fight* for. This is why actual female warrior heroes present a problem for the propagandist and are ‘out of place’ in narratives that focus on combat in war.

Women soldiers are, in a sense, always ‘bad women’; they are troublesome because they challenge or subvert gendered stereotypes (or archetypes). In stories about war, and particularly heroism in war, troublesome women are likely to be marginalized or ignored. Or, as Laura Sjoberg argues, soldiers like Lynch (see box) are not represented as fighters, but the reason for the fighting. Lynch was represented not as a soldier/combatant, but as an innocent ‘girl’ who had been saved by good (US) men from bad (Iraqi) men.²⁵



WORLD EXAMPLE

The Jessica Lynch affair

US soldier Jessica Lynch was allegedly captured by Iraqi forces and subsequently ‘rescued’ (in March 2003). The story was initially reported in the *Washington Post* and subsequently picked up by news outlets all over the world.²⁶ It was later counter-claimed that Lynch was actually injured, taken to a hospital and treated by civilian Iraqi medical staff. It was further claimed that there were no Iraqi insurgent forces in the vicinity of the hospital. The rescue of Lynch was, therefore, a clever piece of news management – or propaganda – in which the military and the media colluded in a deliberately distorted story, spun by the US Government, in order to win over public support for the war in Iraq.

What is interesting about the story of Jessica Lynch is that in the initial reporting of her capture and rescue, she was portrayed as a ‘hero’ who put up a valiant fight and – allegedly – endured a beating at the hands of a Colonel in the Iraqi Army. Later her status as a hero was negated in a very public and humiliating way, as this account graphically illustrates: ‘She was hiding in her bed just after midnight when the Special Ops team found her, in a room on the first floor of Saddam (naturally) Hospital in An Nasiriya. A soldier called her name, and without answering she peeked out from under the sheets. “Jessica Lynch”, he called, “we’re United States soldiers and we’re here to protect you and take you home.”’²⁷

Media accounts of the rescue have been read as an illustration of how female soldiers ‘struggle for acceptance and

validation in one of the most masculine of occupations' and as evidence of the continuing resistance to women as soldiers/ protectors. Howard and Prividera argue that Private Lynch's rescue was a rhetorical act designed to demonstrate US military prowess and also perpetuate the constructions of warrior heroes as masculine.²⁸

Monstrous tales

Regardless of the medium in which they are recounted, in classic war stories that focus on combat, the drama typically centres on *overcoming the monster*. The archetypal monster is a useful character for any political speech writer or propagandist and, indeed, fiction writer or film maker precisely because s/he is 'recognised throughout the world' as a creature that is 'preternatural and hostile to mankind'.²⁹ The *overcoming the monster* plot is as old as the activity of storytelling itself.³⁰

Monsters shift shape, but whatever form they take, they function as the threatening – or terrifying – 'other'. Monsters are similarly central to the construction and reproduction of state identity. For example, realist IR recounts a story of the state *as man writ large* caught up in a never-ending cycle of insecurity, power politics, war and death, in which one threatening 'monster' after another must be slain.

In his exposition on the Gothic, Botting argues that in the literature of Victorian England, the monster figure represented the underside of the humanist values of the Enlightenment (civilization), posing as a threat to those same values. While these threats often manifest as supernatural forces, ultimately the monster imaginatively represents human 'evil': social transgression, mental disintegration or spiritual corruption. Thus, the Gothic monster figure testifies to the power of narratives and representations in sustaining political and social order.³¹

Stories recounted on the War on Terror include not one, but several, 'monster stories' that mirror the plot lines of fictional stories. From the outset, terrorism was conflated with Islamic fundamentalism. In public statements propagated by representatives of US officialdom and re-told in various organs of the Western media, the War on Terror story was recounted like this: the United States (US) had fallen under the shadow of the great evil of terrorism; the US was on the precipice of a great battle between good and evil; in this battle, the US was the 'good guy', battling against the 'bad guy' of terrorism, a malevolent and – as yet – shadowy force. Before too long, this somewhat shadowy monster assumed form in the person of Osama Bin Laden.

The grafting of 'good' and 'evil' onto abstractions like states or the nefarious forces of 'terrorism' is relatively easy enough to achieve in war, with the right story and skilful storytellers (propagandists, sympathetic journalists and film makers), but these fictions have to be sustained and reproduced. In times of war, this is not an easy trick to pull off – wars have a nasty habit of throwing up contradictions. The torture of prisoners at the Abu Ghraib detention centre in Iraq is a case in point. Here, sustaining the meta-narrative of the War on Terror and the identity of the US as a 'beacon of civilization' and font of all good in the world required not only the construction of 'monsters without', but also 'monsters within'.

Monsters of war need not be women – indeed the War on Terror has produced (or written) several 'monstrous' men including Bin Laden and Saddam Hussein. However, while the casting of war as darkly masculine does not excuse monstrous acts committed by men, they are somehow rendered comprehensible. The horror of war is narrated as a masculine tragedy. When the 'monster' comes in female form, her 'preternatural nature' appears all the more abhorrent.

The construction of Lynndie England as *Monster in Chief*³² during the Abu Ghraib scandal (see chapter 5) was necessary to maintain the myth of the War on Terror as a struggle of good over evil: a

battle between the values of civilized societies and barbarous lands. For this reason, the incident had to be represented as *exceptional* and those who took part as *deviant* to sustain the myth of US Exceptionalism and sustain belief in the social and political order. England's personal narrative told another story, in which she represented herself as a different kind of archetypal character – the victim/scapegoat – but this representation did not fit the dominant script. We should not be surprised to find, then, that England particularly was singled out for special attention. In media reporting, much was made of her habit of smoking, her lowly class status ('trailer trash'), her affair with a married man and, subsequently, her pregnancy while unmarried. Her femininity was represented as deviant, unnatural and monstrous (see figure 15).



Figure 15 *An iconic image from the War on Terror: Lynndie England drags an Iraqi prisoner of war by a dog leash*

The discussion above has highlighted similarities in narrative forms, drawing upon media accounts and political speeches particularly. Policy documents and the more rhetorical aspects of academic writing similarly feature familiar archetypes and follow well-rehearsed and formulaic plotlines. This provides further evidence to support the constructivist contention that ostensibly ‘factual’ accounts of events in international politics are actually akin to fictional accounts. If different modes of discourse and narrative cannot be clearly differentiated along the lines of ‘fact’ and ‘fiction’, it follows that fictional narratives such as novels or narrative cinema, which also tell stories about and represent significant events in world politics, should also be subjected to critical scrutiny.

The Politics of the Visual

There is a growing literature in IR that engages with cultural and visual texts. Again, this literature has to be viewed in the context of the linguistic and cultural turns in IR. However, as Cynthia Weber³³ argues, constructivist IR (broadly conceived) has tended to focus on the construction of meaning in written texts (policy documents, for example). Other communicative practices, the things that we feel or see, have been neglected. While ‘narrative’ is most often used in the context of the written and spoken word, narrative can take the form of a series of visual images edited together to tell a story (as in narrative cinema/film). Most often (not always), this involves a sequence of images composed in a linear, ordered fashion. Weber claims that, like textual language, visual language has a grammar and syntax, but it is expressed differently – through, for example, the medium of still and moving images as in photography and films.



Figure 16 *A female American soldier extends a hand of friendship to an Afghani woman*

Visual images like photographs are also forms of representation that employ the technique of framing subjects to tell a story. Images tell a story even though we might not be fully conscious of how meanings are read from visual texts. In the image reproduced below (figure 16), there is much that might be said about the construction of ‘friendship’ in US propaganda. However, this particular image has been chosen because it juxtaposes the ‘liberated’ Western woman (soldier) and the ‘oppressed’ Eastern/Muslim woman. The female Western soldier might be read as ‘standing in for’ (rep-resenting) the ‘emancipated’ Western woman insofar as she evidences that the last bastion of male privilege (the military) has been breached by Western women (no doubt this was intended). The image of Afghani women, on the other hand, suggests passivity and oppression; it tells *the* story preferred by the Bush Administration and allied intervention forces. Images of veiled (read oppressed) Afghani women were commonplace in the propaganda produced during the War on Terror. Shpiro notes that: ‘in the weeks that followed the 9/11 attacks ... a host of what President George Bush delicately referred to as “women of cover” were paraded across the pages of the corporate media’.³⁴

Christina Rowley³⁵ claims that politics happens anywhere and everywhere, so popular visual language should be taken seriously as an important aspect of contemporary global communication and global politics. We routinely read gender (and race and class) from the visual clues we take in from observing people in life or on-screen. Our reading of visual information and interpretation of visual clues relies on shared cultural understandings in much the same way as does the decoding of written/spoken narrative. Rowley goes as far as claiming that in a world ‘highly dependent upon communication through visual images ... we often prioritize the visual over our other senses’.³⁶

Visual images might be considered more powerful forms of representation precisely because the effort that goes into ‘decoding’ visual texts is often obscured.³⁷ Therefore:

- The power dynamics at work in the activity of ‘looking’ must be scrutinized.

Audiences do not simply infer messages from visual texts in an unreflective mode. The degree of engagement depends upon many things, including context. We might not be aware of whether and how we are influenced by an advertisement that catches our eye momentarily, but we might be intensely engaged by a photograph we view in an exhibition or by a film that we watch in the cinema, and reflect deeply on the meaning of this text. As Berger famously noted, ‘every image embodies a way of seeing’,³⁸ but how we interpret images is influenced by our own reflexivity about what the photographer or cinematographer or director intended. Moreover, as Berger³⁹ further notes:

- We interpret images, not once, but several times as we deconstruct both the image and intention.
- Viewers derive complex meanings in the process of interacting with the ‘text’.

Reflecting on the politics of representation and the activity of looking raises interesting questions about not only what is represented and what audiences ‘see’, but also what is not – directly or overtly – represented, but is nevertheless ‘seen’ or decoded in the text. For example, in *The Celluloid Closet*,⁴⁰ Epstein and Friedman document the ways in which Hollywood’s moralistic and censorial Hays Code (1930–68)⁴¹ circumscribed the ways in which homosexuality could be represented in Hollywood films. The aim of the Hays Code was to police the boundaries of what might be deemed ‘normal’ (in effect, heterosexual) and ‘abnormal’ (homosexual) gender roles and behaviours. In consequence, gay people were not represented on screen or, when represented, gay identities were distorted or marginalized. Yet gay audiences read (de-coded) these messages in quite sophisticated ways and were also able to ‘read between the lines’. This coding and subsequent de-coding could be an empowering experience, to some degree, even if it ultimately served to reaffirm the marginalization of gays in American society.

AUTHOR

Laura Mulvey

In her seminal article ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’ (Extended Reading), film theorist Laura Mulvey argued that classic narrative cinema, and especially Hollywood cinema, put the audience in the position of the male spectator. In her analysis of films produced during the 1950s and 1960s, Mulvey claimed that women on the screen were most often represented as sexualized objects of desire (whores) or as idealized mothers (Madonnas). She saw this as a consequence of the privileging of the *male gaze* in cinema.

Mulvey was later criticized for assuming that viewers could be neatly divided up along gender lines. Critics argued that male viewers could adopt a female point of view and vice versa. This criticism extended to other social and cultural groups, who might relate to films (and film stars) in diverse ways and read the meaning of a particular film quite differently. Nevertheless, this criticism should not detract from the importance of Mulvey’s work in effecting a shift in film theory towards a greater engagement with psycho-analytic theory and feminist theory. This particular article subsequently generated fruitful discussion on the *subject position* of the viewer and greatly influenced the subsequent development of theories on spectatorship and point of view.

In summary:

- Audiences read and decipher texts in quite sophisticated ways.
- Even though an intended meaning is written into the text, the meaning might be read quite differently by different audiences.
- There is always space for the contestation of meaning.
- Filmic texts – indeed all texts – should be differentiated according to how they are produced and how they are received by different audiences.

Aesthetics and emotion in world politics

For reasons of space, this chapter has not much engaged with the broader literatures on aesthetics in IR which bring to the fore ‘non-rational’ forms of communication, such as emotion and aesthetic sensibility, in the study of international politics.⁴² Roland Bleiker and Emma Hutchinson (Extended Reading) argue that emotion has been largely ignored in IR in consequence of the long-time dominance of rationalism and positivism. Thus, an important dimension of human experience has been rendered ephemeral.

In relations between peoples and between states, traumatic events (like 9/11) have both an immediate emotional impact and a long-lasting legacy. Emotion is, therefore, important in the process of healing, recovery and rapprochement between individuals, social and ethnic groups and national communities. Bleiker and Hutchinson argue that feminist work in IR is valuable in uncovering the role of emotion in international politics because feminist theorists regard emotion as an inseparable dimension of not only ‘personal’ but also social and political life.



AUTHOR

Cynthia Weber

Cynthia Weber’s double reading of Mohsen Makhmalbaf’s film *Kandahar* (2001) illustrates how gender is scripted in cinematic representations, but can be appropriated and put to the service of quite different political projects. The film tells the story of Nafas, a refugee who returns to Afghanistan after she discovers that her maimed sister intends to commit suicide. In her first reading, Weber interprets the film as documenting not only Nafas’ journey to Kandahar, but also the lives of Afghani people and the many and varied aspects of Afghanistan encountered along the journey. The film explicitly critiques the place of Afghani women subjected to control akin to imprisonment. However, while *Kandahar*’s symbolic and narrative focus is the obscured identity of Afghan women’s individuality and image, this serves as a metaphor for Afghanistan as a whole.

The outside world – both West and East – continually ‘writes’ the meaning of Afghanistan into progressive narratives: ‘capitalism, socialism or empire’ or ‘theological narratives of progress toward a purer form of Islam’. *Kandahar* might, therefore, be seen as a commentary ‘on the non-progressive effects of these Western and Eastern temporal impositions’. The film is not an invitation for West and East to write their desires again onto what they regard as an empty landscape and thereby render Afghanistan meaningful in grand narratives of progress. In Weber’s first reading, *Kandahar* serves as a damning critique of the War on Terror.

However, the Bush Administration encouraged people in the US to watch the film because it seemingly ‘positioned the feminine as a needy and willing object of US rescue’. This reading fitted the script of the War on Terror and legitimized the intervention in Afghanistan. From the director Makhmalbaf’s perspective, *Kandahar* functioned as a cinematic lifting of the veil on Afghan women and on Afghanistan itself, while making a plea to the English-speaking world for humanitarian assistance. In contrast, *Kandahar* offered the Bush Administration a humanitarian justification for intervention – the wounded women of Afghanistan. The official US story went far beyond Makhmalbaf’s intention, justifying the use of military force to realize ostensibly humanitarian goals and visions.

Summary

This chapter has aimed to show how narrative approaches ('storytelling') and work that interrogates representational practices have been brought to bear in the study of gender in IR. The War on Terror has been used to illustrate how gendered stories and forms of representation are embedded in official discourse in world politics and in media accounts and popular culture. The War on Terror has thrown up gendered constructions of 'heroes' and 'monsters', 'good' and 'evil', 'civilization' and 'barbarism'. These gendered constructions have served to justify and legitimate certain forms of action and censor others. Actual women have been rendered largely passive in these constructions; the voices of 'Othered' women have been silenced. Critical and feminist readings of official texts (policy documents and political speeches), media sources (newspaper reports) and popular culture (novels, television and film) uncover the power dynamics at work in the construction of narratives and in representational practices, and open up space for the contestation of dominant meanings.



Questions for reflection

- 1) Lyotard argues that meta-narratives have lost their power to legitimize truth claims in our more sceptical postmodern age; as postmodern subjects, we express incredulity towards the meta-narrative. Is this also a meta-narrative?
- 2) How do representational practices constitute and shape political practices? In answering this question, draw upon any one film that you have recently seen.
- 3) According to a study by the Celluloid Ceiling,⁴³ in 2011 women accounted for 5 per cent of film directors in the United States, a decrease of 2 percentage points from 2010 and approximately half the percentage of women directors working in 1998. Do you think this matters, with respect to the number of female leading-protagonist roles in films? And to the representation of women generally in films?

Seminar activity

This is a group activity which takes the form of a class presentation. It involves some preparation. The activity should be carried out in small groups. Each group will require about 2 hours in preparation for the first part of the exercise. Since not all members of the group will be able to take a full role in the final presentation, the group should determine a division of labour for all parts of this task.

- 1) Arrange a convenient time to meet as a group in a location where you have access to the Web.
- 2) Search online for two images drawn from different newspaper reports that cover the same current international event (a war, conflict, human rights issue or protest, for example). Alternatively, find a short clip (no more than 5 minutes) from a film or documentary. (This source should be available online and should not be subjected to copyright or any other prohibition against public broadcast).
- 3) Prepare a short presentation for your class.
- 4) Show how the photographs/clip illustrate:
 - i) point of view
 - ii) the representation of gender stereotypes;
 - iii) the 'coded' meaning of the event represented.

Further reading

Brunner, Elgin M. 'Consoling Display of Strength or Emotional Overstrain? The Gendered Framing of the Early "War on Terrorism" in Transatlantic Comparison', *Global Society*, 22, 2 (2008), 217–51.

Rowley, Christina (2009) 'Popular Culture and the Politics of the Visual'. In: Laura J. Shepherd (ed.) *Gender Matters in Global Politics*, London, Routledge.

Shepherd, Laura J. (2012) *Gender, Violence and Popular Culture: Telling Stories*, London, Routledge.

Steans, Jill 'Telling Stories about Women and Gender in the War on Terror', *Global Society*, 22, 1 (2008), 159–76.

Weber, Cynthia 'Not Without my Sister(s)', *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 7, 3 (2005), 358–76.

Wibben, Annick (2010) *Feminist Security Studies: A Narrative Approach*, London, Routledge.

Useful Web links

Documentaries on the War on Terror:

<http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/search/?results=war+on+terror>

Gay and lesbian film: <http://worldfilm.about.com/od/gaylesbianfilm/>

National Geographic Archive: War on Terror: http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2001/10/1007_endfree_2.html

Nuclear Age Peace Foundation – article archive on War on Terror

www.wagingpeace.org/menu/resources/archives/articles_in_a_topic.php?catid=30

The September 11 Digital Archive: <http://911digitalarchive.org/index.php>

War on Terror – video archive: www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLB12762D94BE1412B

Global Political Economy

Introduction

This chapter maps out the gendered nature of global political economy (GPE). Ahead of the discussion of gender, a great deal of space is devoted to setting out approaches to GPE in general terms and to rehearsing debates about globalization – the nature of globalization and the way in which the phases of global restructuring have been characterized. This general discussion is necessary not only because various approaches to gender in GPE need to be located within specific intellectual traditions, but also because it is important to historicize and contextualize more contemporary feminist scholarship in GPE.

As with earlier chapters, the discussion of approaches, debates and issues is inevitably painted with rather ‘broad brush’ strokes, but the aim is to provide a general orientation to and flavour of the literature. The Extended Reading provides the nuance and specificity of context which is flagged in this chapter, but for reasons of space is not wholly conveyed. In the first section, the different approaches to gender in GPE are set out. The second section offers a gendered analysis of the differentiated impact of globalization and global restructuring. The final section of the chapter undertakes a case study of the 2008 global financial crisis – specifically the gendered impacts of current ‘austerity’ measures in the Global North and how these have reverberated across the world.

What is Global Political Economy?

Approaches to global political economy

GPE is conventionally defined¹ as an area of study concerned with the interplay of economics and politics in world affairs. Economics is concerned with: systems of production; the operation of markets; the distribution of resources across the world; the distribution of wealth across national boundaries; the linkages between the global, national and local economies. Politics is understood largely in terms of governance: here, the institutions and rules by which economic interactions are regulated (chapter 9). Global economic and political relations are regulated by states, inter-state forums such as the G8, the IMF, the WB, the World Trade Organization, the International Labour Organization and international credit rating agencies.

There are a number of distinctive approaches to GPE. Mainstream liberal and realist approaches regard the economic realm and political sphere as clearly separated. These approaches focus mainly on the relationship between states and markets. Specifically, the purview of mainstream GPE includes the production and sale of goods and services in local, national and global markets, global trade, global finance and global economic institutions. Non-state actors, such as multinational corporations, are afforded some consideration, but states and state-dominated institutions and processes of governance are the major focus when interrogating governance (this is particularly so in neorealism).

Marxist-inspired approaches to GPE, including Gramscian GPE, expand the framework of analysis beyond 'states and markets'. Gramscian approaches interrogate the major structural features of the global economy: the structurally unequal character of trade relations and the global division of labour. Gramscians also focus on the ideational and cultural dimensions of GPE (hegemony). While the changing role of the state is a core interest, Gramscians interrogate social relations of inequality as a major area of analysis. Gramscian scholars employ the concept of the subaltern to refer to those groups most marginalized and displaced from centres of power and influence under conditions of (neoliberal) hegemony.

Postcolonial theorists share some common ground with Gramscians. As Chandra Mohanty argues: 'economic globalisation has impacted on the ability of countries, and particularly poor countries, to govern their own affairs'. At the same time, 'the hegemony of neoliberalism, alongside the naturalization of capitalist values, influences the ability to make choices on one's own behalf in the daily lives of economically marginalized as well as economically privileged communities around the globe'.² Core concerns are the structurally unequal aspects of world politics, notably divisions between the developed (Global North) and developing (Global South) worlds – the legacy of imperialism and colonialism – and how these structures are created and reproduced in practices of neo-imperialism and neo-colonialism. Postcolonial scholars attend to global inequalities and global dependencies³ and the place of the subaltern (peoples on the periphery of the global economy).

Feminist Global Political Economy

Feminist critiques of 'mainstream' global political economy

There is no one feminist approach to GPE. However, there are some common areas of concern. Feminist GPE:⁴

- critiques how the field is conceptualized and mapped in 'mainstream' GPE.

This critique focuses on:

- the separation between the public and private on which both realism and liberalism are predicated;
- how 'economic' and 'political' activity is conceptualized;
- the supposed 'objectivity' of mainstream approaches.

? CONCEPT

Rational Economic Man

While mainstream political economists aspire to objective (value-free) analysis, mainstream approaches are underpinned by a particular conception of the subject. *Rational Man* or *Rational Economic Man* is ostensibly motivated by the rational (utilitarian/instrumental) calculation and pursuit of interests. The concept of Rational Economic Man is presented as *universal* (applying to all human beings), but is actually historically and culturally specific. The concept originated in the Western world at the same time as the emergence of modern capitalism when a variety of human passions were subordinated to a desire for economic gain.⁵ This concept is, therefore, class-based, culturally specific and gendered. Historically, these characteristics were associated with a culturally specific construction of masculinity.⁶ This construction extrapolated from the behaviour of bourgeois man. This model of behaviour was then taken to represent humanity as a whole.⁷ With the rise of modern capitalism, dominant constructions of 'male' and 'female' natures and social roles emerged, along with clearly drawn boundaries between public and private.

Feminist critique extends to the empirical mapping of the field in mainstream GPE insofar as:

- the household is taken into account, but only as a unit of consumption and not as a unit of production;
- productive activity and unpaid labour in the private sphere are thereby rendered invisible.

When the 'household' is taken to be the basic unit of analysis, another kind of bias is introduced. Around the world, from approximately a quarter to one-third of all families are supported solely by one parent (often, though not always, the mother).⁸ This statistic challenges the assumption that the two-parent nuclear family is the overwhelmingly dominant family form. Moreover, the assumption that family members share the same interests – implicit in the family as the 'basic unit' of analysis – disguises the conflicts of interest that might exist within the family group. With regard to the final point, to give one example drawn from Sub-Saharan Africa, men and women can have very different interests in cash-crop production. There are documented cases of men selling the rights to forestland to timber merchants, depriving women of the means to grow food and meet their energy requirements. 'Family' resources are often distributed unequally. Within families, women – in their child-bearing and child-rearing years particularly – are often forced into a relationship of dependency on the (most often) male wage earner. Gender relations (social relations) are, therefore, often characterized by

social inequalities (status) and power inequalities (dependency).⁹

This critique was very much at the heart of ‘first-wave’ feminist GPE, but it remains a central theme in contemporary feminist work. For example, Penny Griffin (Extended Reading) argues that mainstream GPE is characterized by ‘an underlying economism’ that writes gender out of the field. These valid complaints about the marginalization of gender in much mainstream GPE should not, however, detract from the contribution that feminist work has made and continues to make to the field.

Counting unpaid labour

Unpaid labour – largely performed by women – such as cooking, cleaning and care work, is not afforded value in mainstream GPE, because it falls outside a ‘states and markets’ analytical framework. Subsequent to the publication of Marilyn Waring’s landmark book *If Women Counted*¹⁰ (see box below), the mantle of accounting for unpaid labour has been taken up by feminist economists. For example, Diane Elson (Extended Reading) has contributed greatly to the modelling of gender-responsive budgets.¹¹ Feminist economics has developed alongside activists’ campaigns to accord proper value to ‘women’s work’.¹² After intensive lobbying at the 1995 Beijing conference to mainstream gender into economic and social policy,¹³ governments were required to carry out surveys to assess the amount of time women spent performing unpaid labour and to include this data in satellite accounts.¹⁴

The combined efforts of feminist economists and activists have raised the visibility of unpaid labour as an issue in international politics and economics. However, as Catherine Hoskyns and Sharin Rai (Further reading) argue: ‘unpaid work is still largely unmeasured or not counted as “productive” in the United Nations System of National Accounts’.¹⁵ The consequences of this omission are serious – not only for over-burdened women. Hoskyns and Rai claim that:

There is, we believe, a widespread and growing depletion of the capacities and resources for social reproduction – that is, the glue that keeps households and societies together and active. This glue, as is well recognized, largely depends upon the unpaid work of women at home and in the community. The capacity to do this unpaid work is currently being affected across North and South by the globalization of production, the move of women into paid work, the commercialization of services and the changing functions of the state.¹⁶

A number of feminist commentators have identified a current ‘crisis in social reproduction’ (see Bakker and Gill; Bakker, Further reading; Bezanson and Luxton; Bener’ia; Special Issue, ‘Social Reproduction’, *Review of International Political Economy* – all in Extended Reading). This crisis has been further exacerbated by the global financial crisis (2008), interrogated at greater length below.

AUTHOR

Marilyn Waring

Marilyn Waring’s book *If Women Counted* was one of the first major works to critique the invisibility of women’s unpaid labour in conventional approaches to economics and, by extension, political economy. Waring pointed to the consequences in policies that routinely attached value only to activities that had a marketable value. For example, cuts in public expenditure shifted the burden of care work onto the private sphere. In practice, it was usually women who picked up this additional workload. In cases where women were also engaged in paid work (this is very common), women assumed a ‘double burden’ of paid work and unpaid labour as carers. Women often performed unpaid work in the community at large too. Waring called for changes in the way that national accounts were constructed, so that indicators

like Gross Domestic Product (GDP) would henceforth attach value to the contribution that women made to the well-being of families and communities. Waring subsequently expanded her framework to include measures and indicators that would account for the costs of economic activity on the natural environment – also an over-exploited resource deemed to be of ‘no value’.

Feminist approaches

Since there are many strands of feminism, it should be no surprise to discover that there are a number of feminist approaches in GPE. One strand shares some common ground with Gramscian approaches in GPE:

- The subjectivity of the social sciences as a whole is recognized.
- Historical modes of analysis are employed.
- The *subject* who assesses the social and political significance of institutions and practices from a historically and socially/culturally located *subject position* is made central to the process of conceptualizing and theorizing GPE.
- The subaltern is a key concept.

Griffin (above) extends her critique of ‘economism’ in mainstream GPE to Gramscian GPE too (see below), since class is often privileged over and above (or even to the exclusion of) other social relations of inequality. Georgina Waylen (Extended Reading) similarly argues that critical GPE has not been especially accommodating towards feminist analysis. Again, this is because, while critical GPE theorizes social relations, in practice much of the empirical work of critical scholarship foregrounds class relations. However, some Gramscian scholars *do* engage with gender (see Bakker and Gill, Further reading; and Ryner and Davies, Extended Reading). Moreover, the works of Sandra Whitworth¹⁷ and Isabella Bakker (Extended Reading) are both excellent examples of feminist scholarship informed by Gramscian analysis. This body of work:

- emphasizes the role of material structures in supporting and reproducing unequal social relations;
- understands gender inequality to be rooted in the ‘privatization’ of women’s productive and reproductive labour power;
- interrogates how women’s subordination is embedded in and reproduced by ‘patriarchal’ institutions.

For example, state policies on social security provision, welfare and pensions, inheritance rights, labour legislation and taxation and the policies of international organizations (the WB, the International Labour Organization) are all implicated in the construction and reproduction of the boundaries between the ‘public’ and ‘private’. Thus, hegemonic structures, institutions and ideas combine to perpetuate gender relations of inequality.

While there has been a growth in women’s paid employment across the world – linked to globalization – that should – in principle – empower women, globalization is often detrimental to gender equality. Women are often pushed into secondary, peripheral or informal jobs, where they earn a fraction of men’s wages.¹⁸ The costs of ‘structural adjustments’ (see below) are borne by the poorest groups.

Globalization and inequality

Inequality has long preoccupied researchers and activists in UN forums (chapter 9). The issue has been pushed higher up the agenda of international politics by an increasingly vocal anti-globalization movement (see chapter 10). Insofar as inequality is linked to social alienation and crime, increasing migration and environmental degradation, even ardent supporters of the free market have taken closer interest in inequality since the mid- 1990s. Many proponents of free-market economics have shifted their stance in favour of measures that ameliorate social inequality (see 'Post-Washington consensus', chapter 9).

While there is empirical evidence to support the claim that globalization produces and reproduces social inequality, it is no easy task to establish a direct relationship between globalization and inequality. If we accept that inequality is increasing across the world (some economists dispute this),¹⁹ we must still establish that there is a relationship between these phenomena. Furthermore, while intuitively we might understand what we mean by 'inequality', there are different ways of measuring inequality²⁰ and, of course, different ways of interpreting the empirical evidence.

Robert Wade²¹ contends that, in the wake of globalization and the transition to market economies, inequality between countries and specific social groups has persisted. He claims that regardless of how inequality is measured,²² there is evidence to suggest that the world is a grossly unequal place and, if anything, has become more so in the twenty-first century. Wade acknowledges that some countries, such as India and China, have bucked this trend to some degree. However, his research findings have been contested by others, using different measures of inequality.²³

Mohanty²⁴ notes that feminist scholars have developed sophisticated frameworks of analysis in GPE. However, she argues that:

- Analysis should elucidate the concrete effects of global restructuring on raced, classed, national and sexual bodies of women.
- Class, ethnicity and other 'differences' as well as gender should be included in analysis of global social, political and economic processes.
- The micro-politics of context – of subjectivity and struggle – as well as the macro-politics of global economic and political systems and processes should be similarly incorporated in analyses.

WORLD EXAMPLE

Intersectionalities in development projects

Yvonne Braun's work on the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP) (Extended Reading) highlights 'the intersections of international development and patriarchy in the lives of three women of different generations and class status as they are affected by dislocations resulting from the LHWP in the remote highland communities in rural Lesotho'.²⁵ Braun shows how development processes have contradictory impacts. First, she demonstrates the fore-grounding of the 'masculine' imperative to generate revenue over all possible alternative ends. Second, she shows how the dislocation attendant upon the dam-building project can be seen as reinforcing patriarchy 'locally and globally'.²⁶ However, importantly, she also highlights the dangers in falsely universalizing 'women's experiences' of development, since; 'social structures, relations, processes and policies shape and constrain social experiences along axes of inequality such as race, class and gender, among other social divisions.'²⁷

Poststructuralist feminists focus on the discursive dimension of GPE (see Spike Peterson, Marika de Goede, Gillian Youngs in Extended Reading). Poststructuralist GPE insists that:

- The economy should be read as a 'text'.
- Political economy is 'written' in discursive practices.
- Discourse *produces* material effects.
- The study of GPE should embrace the 'virtual economy': financial market exchanges are less about

the exchange of concrete, material goods than the exchange of 'signs'.

- Claims made about the nature of globalization are also discursively constructed.
- Such claims are (very often) ethnocentric and empirically suspect.
- Political economy is a 'site of power': a place where identities are con-structed and the political effects of these constructions interact with material and institutional structures.

Therefore, poststructuralist feminists focus on the discursive construction of gender. While acknowledging that gender constructions have material effects, gender must, nevertheless, be read contextually. Gender cannot be abstracted from social and cultural relations embedded in particular histories and geographical places. Gender 'needs' and 'interests' are similarly constructed. Rather than viewing power in structural terms, power is understood as ubiquitous; resistance exists side by side with practices of domination. The task of feminist GPE is then to analyse specific mechanisms of power and build 'strategic' knowledge.

? CONCEPT

Micro-narratives

Jacqueline Ellis (Extended Reading) argues that, while feminist work on globalization has focused heavily on the plight of women workers,²⁸ working-class women's intellectual understanding of the labour they perform and its connection to global processes has been largely absent in the academic literature.²⁹ In her study of working-class women in the Mexican *maquiladoras*, Ellis draws upon oral histories and letters as 'theoretical texts' in order to: 'explicate the relationships between labour, culture, critical consumption, the physicality of work and the individual imagination constructed in their narratives'. She argues that 'labouring bodies harbour an epistemology, a way of knowing and understanding the world that comes out of the physicality of work'.³⁰ In this way, Ellis is also able to show how 'working-class women's narratives' elucidate 'hierarchies of race, class, gender and sexuality' that 'operate to uphold existing regimes of power in our society'.³¹

Gendering Global Restructuring

This section scrutinizes and further elaborates on feminists' contributions to our understanding of the inter-related, dynamic processes and practices that have produced worldwide political, economic and social interconnectedness.³² As with preceding sections, the discussion of gender is prefaced by an engagement with the wider literature, here to provide much-needed historical context.

Understanding globalization

In the 'first wave' of liberal globalization literature,³³ globalization was understood to have largely uniform and similar effects across the world. A central claim was that it had become increasingly difficult for states successfully to regulate the global economy, particularly global financial markets. Hence, states, international institutions and transnational policy networks constructed a new architecture of transnational or global governance (chapter 9).

The second wave³⁴ of globalization literature emphasized the uneven nature of globalization and stressed the specificity of different forms or varieties of nationally based capitalisms within the context of an over-arching global framework. This literature also noted that the various processes of globalization (economic, political, social and cultural) interacted in complex and contingent ways. There was, therefore, a need to move away from universalizing assumptions and forms of theorizing to empirical studies that would uncover the uneven and differential impacts of globalization across countries, on rural and urban populations and on specific social groups. The third wave of the literature placed much more emphasis on the discursive dimension of globalization (it should be acknowledged here that the *ideational* has always been central to Gramscian GPE).

Phases of globalization

The origins of what we now call 'globalization' can be traced back to the seventeenth century. However, the majority of scholars in GPE make a distinction between an *internationalized* and *globalized* economy. Here, globalization is viewed as a more recent phenomenon, marking a qualitatively different form of interdependence. Globalization is characterized in terms of distinctive phases. In phase one, the breakdown of the **Bretton Woods System** (1971), the oil crisis (1973), ensuing global recessions (1973 and 1978) and subsequent debt crisis (early 1980s), propelled structural changes in the global economy. Major corporations in the West responded to increased production and labour costs and recession by shifting the labour-intensive parts of the process from the Global North to the Global South.³⁵ This phase was marked by the decentralization of production: global economic enterprises exploited the cheap labour of unprotected workers in the South, while the knowledge-intensive parts of the production process remained located primarily in the North. Subcontracting became an increasingly common practice.

Far from being the 'victims' of inexorable forces (as liberals often claim), states facilitated this shift by pursuing broadly neoliberal economic policies: de-regulating markets, privatizing sectors of the economy previously under state control and enacting legislation to weaken the power of organized labour. Traditionally unionized industries, such as coal and steel, were in the front line of privatization and closure programmes in the North (see figure 18). Organized labour (trade unionism) was seen by neoliberal 'free marketers' as an obstacle to realizing *flexible* labour markets and, more generally, an obstacle to the realization of the neoliberal project.

During the first phase of globalization, in the Global North new jobs created were primarily in service industries and very often filled by women. While this was often represented in public discourse as a 'gain' for women in the labour market, it should be noted that these new jobs were often less secure (temporary/flexible forms of employment) and less well paid.

In the Global South, 'global restructuring' initially generated new jobs and new forms of employment. Developing countries also initially benefited from new investment. However, this proved to be short-lived. Following the debt crisis (early 1980s), investment dried up and states were forced to seek new loans, to re-pay debts and the very high interest on debt, from the IMF and WB. The IMF insisted on 'conditionalities' in return for new loans and the rescheduling of debt repayments. These conditionalities included: domestic austerity programmes, cuts in government spending, privatization, tax-cutting measures and the devaluation of national currencies. Collectively, these measures were commonly referred to as Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs).



Figure 18 *Miners' Strike rally in London, 1984. The Miners' Strike was a fight both for jobs and for the survival of a strong, organized labour movement in the UK.*

While there was (and remains) a great deal of variance in the extent and nature of indebtedness in developing countries, governments across the Global South responded by privatizing state-owned assets, cutting public expenditure, adopting export-led growth strategies and implementing policies that aimed to attract inward investment (from multinational companies, particularly). Export Production Zones and Free Trade Zones were established across the developing world to facilitate inward investment.

SAPs were justified on the grounds that neoliberal globalization would facilitate future growth and so alleviate poverty. Detractors argue that SAPs greatly exacerbated poverty and generated food shortages as 'cash crop' production (production for export) increased. Furthermore, SAPs undermined the political stability of many developing countries, while increasing the level of the influence by Western-dominated organizations like the IMF to a level akin to 'the direct administration of bygone colonial governments'.³⁶

The second wave of global restructuring followed the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe in 1989. The former Soviet Union and Eastern European countries adopted privatization and marketization strategies. 'Communist' states like China moved further towards trade liberalization and market-led economic reforms. Discursively/ideologically this was constructed by pro-market

politicians and economists as evidencing that there were 'no alternatives' to neoliberal capitalism.

? CONCEPT

What is poverty?

Poverty might be measured in either absolute or relative terms. The World Bank and United Nations Development Program (UNDP) frequently use income of 'a dollar a day' or less as the measure of absolute poverty (the 'international extreme poverty line'). A second measure is the number of people living on \$2 a day. A third measure is an income that is 50 per cent of the world median income, or below.

Poverty can also be measured in relative terms. Here poverty is a living standard below what is considered to be the 'minimum norm' in any given society at a given time. Amartya Sen argues that poverty should not be understood in terms of monetary income alone, but as deprivation in basic *capabilities*: what an individual is empowered to do. Other measures of relative poverty include the risk of premature death, illiteracy and/or malnutrition.

The UN Human Poverty Index (HPI) measures deprivation in four aspects of life: longevity, health, economic provisioning and social exclusion. The advantage of the HPI is that it brings together different types of deprivation in one figure. It also demonstrates that economic growth alone is not always the best way to reduce poverty broadly defined. The disadvantage of the HPI is that it is an imperfect policy tool: two countries with the same HPI may be experiencing different forms and/or degrees of deprivation and so need different types of policies to address the problem.



Figure 19 A shanty town in Manila, Philippines, 2006. In our globalized world, pockets of extreme wealth and extreme poverty often live side by side.

Feminist approaches to globalization

Feminist scholars have contributed to all three waves of the globalization literature, although it is fair to say that most of this work fits better within the second and third waves. Marchand and Runyan (Extended Reading) were notably among the first commentators on globalization to use the term ‘global restructuring’. They did so because this term better encapsulated the dynamic and inter-related economic and political processes that generated structural transformations in the global economy and changes in globalized social relations. ‘Restructuring’ also captured the growing complexity of the global division of labour, the intimate relationship between debt and development (and environmental degradation) and the often uneven and specific effects and impacts of these processes across countries and on particular social groups. The impact of restructuring and neoliberal growth strategies in developing countries has been uneven. There are significant pockets of extreme wealth in the ‘South’ while many people in Northern countries live in relative poverty.

Feminist analysis of global restructuring contributes significantly to the broader GPE literature by:

- interrogating the interconnected material, ideological and discursive dimensions of global restructuring;
- mapping changes in social relations of gender onto broader shifts and changes in capitalist production methods, market liberalization, the global division of labour and changing working practices;
- charting the feminization and (re)masculinization of the paid labour force during successive waves of restructuring (see figure 20);
- demonstrating how ideologies/discourses on gender justify and legitimize social inequalities.

Feminist GPE (along with feminist economists) has generated important empirical studies of gendered labour markets.³⁷ Liberal feminists have demonstrated how, in developed (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development – OECD) economies:

- Structural changes – the decline of heavy industry and manufacturing, for example – have generated new ‘opportunities’ for women.

However:

- Women and men’s labour are differently incorporated and rewarded differently in national economies and in the global economy.
- There remain significant disparities in rates of pay and promotion prospects for men and women, respectively.
- Women are often concentrated in ‘ultra-flexible’ forms of employment: casualized or temporary work and subcontracting.
- Women make up a high proportion of the undocumented labour force globally.
- Insofar as women have historically been deemed to be principally responsible for unpaid care work, this has an impact on the kinds of jobs and career trajectories of women *in* the paid labour force.
- There has been a growth in home-working which is often poorly paid and largely invisible even though it actually makes an important contribution to local and national economies and the global economy.

In developing countries:

- More women have entered the paid labour force.
- Women have often been favoured over men in certain jobs (textiles or microelectronics).
- However, women workers are often concentrated in ‘sweatshops’.
- Women’s skills are often defined as ‘natural’ (‘nimble fingers’) rather than learnt, and so are not rewarded.
- Growth areas like sex tourism have led to the exploitation of women particularly.

There are a range of factors that come into play when interrogating how social relations and social inequalities are constructed and reproduced. While focusing on ‘women’ and ‘men’ can be helpful in analysis and is often necessary in policy work, the use of undifferentiated categories of ‘women’ and ‘men’ is nevertheless problematic.

- Labour markets are differentiated along lines of gender, ethnicity and social class.
- Factors such as age, marital status and levels of education are also significant.
- Highly educated, highly skilled, unmarried women have been ‘winners’ (in a liberal understanding of the term) in globalization.
- Poorer, less skilled, less well-educated and married women have not fared so well and many have lost out.

Feminist GPE also interrogates the changing role of the state. In OECD economies, shifts in state policies, notably public expenditure cuts, have served to redistribute the burden of care work from the public to the private. Gender inequality as an ‘issue’ is politicized and de-politicized in different societies and in different historical periods as the line between ‘public’ and ‘private’ is drawn and redrawn. In developing countries, state ‘roll back’ has led to cuts in education and health care; this has a disproportionate impact on women and girls, exacerbated poverty (women make up the majority of the world’s poor) and increased the burden of both paid and unpaid work on women in particular.

AUTHOR

Anna Agathangelou

Anna Agathangelou has made a substantial contribution to postcolonial feminist scholarship in IR. In her work *The Global Political Economy of Sex* (Extended Reading), she addresses the intersectionalities of gender, race and class in a study of transnational migration and globalization. While acknowledging the contribution of feminist scholarship on migration, domestic labour and the global political economy of sex work, she argues that there is a need to contextualize labour and reproductive labour within the inter-related political, economic, racial and cultural dynamics of global restructuring.

Agathangelou echoes the feminist critique of liberal analyses of globalization which focus on market forces and employ the language of ‘choice’, arguing that liberal frameworks render invisible the structural constraints and the powerful economic and political interests that shape (female) migration. Drawing upon the insights of both Marxist theory and postcolonial theory, Agathangelou understands female migration to be driven by the logic of capitalist accumulation and the search for ever cheaper forms of labour. The state is complicit in structuring power relations – specifically the vulnerability of marginalized immigrant workers – because it plays a core role in mediating relations between workers and capital through the regulation of immigration and the imposition of labour contracts.

However, Agathangelou also demonstrates that the category of class central to Marxist analysis is inadequate to capture the racialized dimension of migrant labour in the globalized economy. For example, the position of female migrant workers is further weakened by the ‘securitization’ of immigration (see chapter 6) whereby immigrant workers are constructed as a ‘threat’. Immigrant workers are, therefore, positioned in a highly marginal and vulnerable position in the global economy – subject to systemic violence and abuse. She also argues that Marxism fails to grasp and theorize adequately the gendered and racialized political economy of desire.

While pointing to the systemic nature of violence, Agathangelou is careful to avoid the language of victimhood. Instead she illustrates how immigrant workers devise transnational support networks in their struggles – support networks that subvert divisions among workers constructed on the basis of national boundaries – while also raising crucial questions about the complicity of women in the exploitation of other women. In this regard, Agathangelou also contributes to the ongoing debate about the possibilities for a transnational feminist project of solidarity (see chapter 10).

Gendering the Global Financial Crisis

The causes and trajectories of the financial crisis

The global financial crisis is usually dated from 2008 (some commentators argue that the origins stretch back to the 1990s). Many economists regard the scope and severity of the crisis as akin to the Great Depression of the 1930s, which had knock-on effects around the world. While there is disagreement about the ultimate cause of the crisis (so too, appropriate responses to it), it is widely agreed that the trigger for the crisis was a collapse in the US housing market and subsequent high levels of default on sub-prime mortgages (mortgages loaned to low-income/high-risk borrowers). The immediate impact on low-income households in the US was devastating, with widespread foreclosures. The impact of these 'bad debts' was soon felt across the US banking system and, within a relatively short space of time, in other parts of the world.



AUTHOR

Juanita Elias

Juanita Elias' recent work (Further reading) has focused on the possibilities and limitations of rights-based approaches in challenging the marginalized status of women workers. This interest necessitates a close engagement with the International Labour Organization (ILO), specifically the ILO Core Labour Standards (CLS, 1998). The CLS are a set of labour standards that afford workers basic rights in the workplace. These standards might be thought of as akin to social and economic human rights.³⁸ Elias interrogates how well the CLS serves 'those women workers who dominate employment in some of the most globalized, and insecure, industries in the world'.³⁹

Her conclusion is 'not well'. She argues that the CLS are in actuality 'genderblind', while at the same time 'neoliberal-compatible': designed to operate within the (gendered) structures of a neoliberal economic development paradigm. Elias cites the following key problems: the essentially voluntary nature of labour standards; the failure to recognize the specific problems faced by women working in the formal economy; the weakness of standards when applied to home-workers.

Elias concludes that the CLS do not provide a useful tool for activists to exploit when advocating on behalf of women as workers (see chapter 4). In part, this is because there are serious limitations on the ability of poor women particularly to access rights, and also because these rights do not account for work in the 'private sphere'. Elias argues that an alternative feminist understanding of economic rights is needed, which challenges the myriad ways in which the public/private dichotomies underpin the exploitation of female labour.



Figure 20 *Women continue to be heavily over-represented in the factory workforce*

Is sex work exploitative?

There is an extensive literature that links the growth in the sex industry to global restructuring. Depending on perspective, the sex industry can be viewed as a form of – often illegal and undocumented – ‘work’ (Davies and Ryner, Extended Reading) or as a form of violence against women. Both might be seen as exploitative and harmful. However, the distinction is important in terms of appropriate legislative or policy responses. Sheila Jeffreys (Extended Reading), for example, sees sex work as ‘prostitution’. This work takes place in the context of patriarchal social relations. Sex ‘work’ is exploitative and has harmful effects (physical, emotional and psychological). Thus, Jeffreys adopts a strongly anti-legalization stance.⁴⁰ At the Beijing women’s conference, activists were divided on whether or not sex involving monetary exchange should be viewed as violence against women or as work which required better regulation to protect workers in this industry.⁴¹

In making judgements on sex work / sexual exploitation, it is necessary to consider how the industry is organized and the power relations involved. Feminists are generally sceptical of the liberal language of ‘choice’ in regard to sex work because markets are stratified along the lines of ethnicity, class and gender. Those who buy and sell sex do so on highly unequal terms. For example, structural adjustment policies have encouraged the expansion of tourism as an important foreign currency earner for indebted states (see Ferguson, Extended Reading). While sex work cannot be viewed solely in terms of the expansion of tourism, sex tourism has greatly increased. Moreover, sex work is very often conditioned by global markets and development policies.⁴² Displaced women and poor women particularly are drawn into sex work, while sex tourists tend to be men and usually come from richer countries. On the other hand, clearly, sex work is not always exploitative and sex workers might be empowered, even in instances where there are disparities of power between clients from the developed world and sex workers from developing countries.⁴³

Nicola Smith (Extended Reading) argues that macro-level analysis (of global restructuring) misses the grounded, situated and embodied experiences of sex-workers. Her analysis of commercial sex work ‘locates economic and political processes in contextually specific times and places’.⁴⁴ She argues that it is necessary to interrogate how actual bodies are affected by globalization and to consider ‘how groups and individuals explore and negotiate their structured contexts’.⁴⁵ Smith also challenges much existing feminist work on the grounds that commercial sex is not always ‘women’s work’. Women’s bodies have been sites of political contestation in debates about sex work; male and transgender bodies have been left out of the analysis of global sexual economies and so their specific subjectivities have been silenced. Rendering the field of commercial sex (discursively) as a site of struggle over *women’s bodies* has material effects ‘on real, living human bodies in the international political economy’. She argues that we need to ask: How does this relate to how we imagine the international political economy, and how does this impact upon actually existing human lives, contextually specific times and places?⁴⁶

The story of mortgage default and bad debts tends to focus on (and so blame?) those at the ‘bottom’ of the global economy (the poor). However, behind the story of mortgage default, there is a bigger story which recounts the causes of the crisis in terms of: the packaging and sale of high-risk financial products; excessive risk-taking on the part of financial institutions; greed and corruption in large parts of the financial sector;⁴⁷ failure to anticipate the problem, or to heed warnings of an impending crisis;⁴⁸ failure of governments to rein in the excesses of the global financial sector – specifically predatory lending and unsound investments by institutions and hedge fund managers in a ‘shadow economy’.

? CONCEPT

Hypermasculinity and financial crisis

Anne Sibert observes that the public outrage about the financial crisis and its impacts has been largely directed at the behaviour of the bankers. While the causes are obviously more complex than this, Sibert nevertheless argues that gender inequality in the finance industry and ‘testosterone fuelled’ risk-taking are certainly implicated in the financial crisis.⁴⁹ She points out:

A striking feature of the financial services industry is the extent to which it is male dominated. Women hold 17 percent of the corporate directorships and 2.5 percent of the CEO positions in the finance and insurance industries in the United States. In Iceland – home to a particularly spectacular collapse – it is said that there was just one senior woman banker, and she quit in 2006. As senior City of London official Stuart Fraser colourfully put it, 'There are quite a lot of alpha males with testosterone steaming out their ears.'⁵⁰

She further argues that the financial sector generally is 'hostile to women'. This hostility is manifest in large discrepancies in pay (women in UK banks are paid on average 40 per cent less than men, compared with about 23 percent less in the workforce as a whole), and the widespread practice of using lap dancing clubs in corporate entertainment. Much of the literature on masculinities and risk-taking specifically concentrates on factors like testosterone levels and is, as Sibert acknowledges, essentialist. However, the concept of hyper-masculinity (chapter 2) as a key factor in the crisis could be usefully put to the service of 'gendering' the crisis.

The 2008 financial crisis has been described as symptomatic of both US hegemonic decline⁵¹ and a crisis in global capitalism.⁵² From the initial trigger in the US housing market, the crisis unfolded through: a crisis of confidence in the global financial system and global financial institutions; the collapse of large financial institutions around the developed world; bank bail-outs by tax-payers, costing trillions of dollars; the collapse of businesses; a decline in consumer spending; a down-turn in stock markets around the world; a global economic recession; a 'credit crunch' (particularly in the rich OECD economies); and a decline in international trade.



Figure 21 *Protesters take to the streets in Greece 2010 in response to austerity measures*

The financial crisis has been global in scope. The ILO has described the financial crisis as also a ‘global jobs crisis’.⁵³ However, the impact of the crisis has been uneven across regions and countries, across particular sectors in economies, across households and across specific social groups. In the OECD economies, governments have responded to the crisis with structural adjustment policies. The basic features of these policies are austerity measures: state roll back and cuts in public expenditure. Ensuing recession and cut backs have generated widespread social unrest and protest (see figure 21).

So-called ‘emerging’ economies and developing economies have, thus far, been relatively less affected by the financial crisis than Western economies, but will be more affected over the medium to longer term. The world’s poorest regions, notably Africa, have also been spared the worst effects of the financial crisis, but, again, this is only in the short term. These countries are particularly vulnerable to falling commodity prices and will quickly feel the effects of diminishing levels of development aid. At the time of writing (2012), public expenditure was decreasing in crucial areas like health budgets across Africa.

The credit crunch in the West, the higher costs of borrowing and a fall in aid will have a more severe impact in many parts of the developing world in due course, particularly the least developed (poorest) countries. This is at a time when developing countries are already facing a ‘food crisis’⁵⁴ generated, in good part, by a switch in land use to bio-fuels. This has left many developing countries – and poor households – dependent upon food imports⁵⁵ (see Special Issue, *Gender and*

Development, Extended Reading). The food crisis pre-dates the financial crisis, but has been obscured by the extensive coverage in the Western media of debt and austerity measures in wealthier countries. Poor countries are particularly vulnerable, since they can expect no ‘bail-outs’ or similar action on the part of national governments. Instead, promises of international assistance, in the form of the Millennium Development Goals, are likely to come under pressure. The WB has recently predicted a ‘human catastrophe’ in the world’s poorest countries if more is not done to tackle the crisis and ameliorate its worst effects.⁵⁶

The impact of the financial crisis on specific social groups has also been uneven. Using the US in illustration, between June 2007 and November 2008, Americans lost an estimated average of more than a quarter of their collective net worth. The concentration of wealth in the US increased during the same period. Thousands of low-income families have lost their homes.

The gendered impacts of the crisis

The gendered impacts of the financial crisis are seldom interrogated outside of feminist circles, even though the gender-specific impacts of the crisis are evident:

- Government measures to stimulate demand have targeted particular (male-dominated) sectors of industry such as construction and the car industry.

Cuts in public expenditure, on the other hand, have had the following results:

- State ‘roll back’ in welfare impacts on the poorest groups; women are dis-proportionately represented among the poor.
- Single parent families have been badly hit; the majority of single parent families are female-headed.
- Low-income families are particularly affected when income earners lose their jobs or face pay cuts.
- Low-income groups are also more vulnerable to rising costs in food, and increased interest rates on existing debt (including mortgages).
- Cuts in social services and investment in human capital tend to affect women more than men because women carry the burden of responsibility for the care and well-being of entire families.
- Cuts in funding to government agencies and NGOs that provide social support have had an adverse impact on women – funding to groups that support victims of domestic violence are a notable example.
- Women are disproportionately employed in public-sector jobs.
- Women and workers from ethnic minority groups are particularly badly hit by job losses and cuts in pay and hours of work.

? CONCEPT

The gender of poverty

Statistical data evidence that women run a higher risk of poverty than men. Why is this? First, women are less likely than men to be in paid employment. Second, women are more likely to work part-time. Third, women are more likely to earn a low wage than men. Fourth, women’s weak position in the labour market is reflected and reinforced in old age. Women live longer than men in most countries but are less likely to have adequate pension arrangements or substantial savings.

Thus, women are more likely to be in poverty at a time when their risk of declining health and disability are higher. Fifth, one parent families run a higher risk of poverty than dual parent families. Single parent families most often have a woman as head of the family. The economic position of the sole parent is weak because of inadequate state child-care provision and low wages (there is, of course, a class dimension to this – middle-class professional women can better afford private child care). Sixth, government and private occupational social security policies also tend to discriminate against women because of their reliance on the insurance principle and full-time paid employment to calculate benefit entitlements; the labour that goes into caring in the home is ignored for the purposes of calculating social security and pension entitlements.

Pearson and Sweetman argue that the global financial crisis is ‘the last straw for many women, men and children’.⁵⁷ They state:

countries in both the industrialized and the developing world are facing a number of complex and inter-related economic challenges. The economic crisis is effectively part of a triple crisis, coming on top of a crisis in food and fuel affordability and availability. This triple crisis is threatening the wellbeing of an estimated 40 million women, men and children in poverty, and also threatens a further 120 million who are currently living just above the poverty line, and who are at risk of falling below it.⁵⁸

A new economic paradigm?

The gendered dimensions of the crisis have attracted the attention of some mainstream economists, even though their observations have not been couched in feminist terms. Paul Krugman, for example, attributes the failure in part to ‘the innate tendency on the part of even the elite to idolize men who are making lots of money and assume that they know what they are doing’⁵⁹ (see also box above, ‘Hypermasculinity and financial crisis’). Diane Elson⁶⁰ argues that the full effects of the crisis will be felt particularly in the reproductive sphere of human life: the production of human capital and labour (see also Special Issue, ‘Social Reproduction’, *Review of International Political Economy*, Extended Reading).

Sha Zukang, UN Under-Secretary General for Economic and Social Affairs, has stated that policy responses to the financial crisis must take gender equality perspectives into account to ensure that women as well as men can benefit from employment creation and investments in social infrastructure.⁶¹ Pearson and Sweetman similarly argue that: ‘policymakers, practitioners, and the lobbyists and advocates aiming to influence them, need to listen very carefully to poor women and men whose lives are being affected by the current crisis’.⁶² And yet, as Elson observes, tracking the longer-term impacts and effects of the crisis is further hampered by the invisibility of unpaid labour in official statistics (see above).

The global financial crisis has also prompted more widespread discussion on economic reform, reform of international financial markets, (re)regulation of financial markets, a ‘new Bretton Woods’ and even a radical shift to an ‘alternative’ economic paradigm. However, radical challenges to the underlying economic paradigm – Rational Economic Man as hyper-masculine, aggressively competitive risk-taker – have not generally been picked up outside of feminist circles, and the voices of feminist economists and feminist political economists are still much too marginalized or ignored in mainstream debates on the financial crisis.⁶³

Summary

This chapter has provided an overview of feminist approaches to GPE and mapped the gendered dimensions of global restructuring. Much has been omitted, particularly the details of the various

mechanisms, processes and ‘actors’ that are so important and influential in ‘managing’ global political, economic and social relations. The following chapter aims to make good these omissions by taking a closer look at gender issues within the context of global governance.

Questions for reflection

- 1) In recent years, there has been a trend in GPE towards ‘micro-level’ studies that explore narrative forms and texts within the context of ‘everyday’ practices. Does this work add substantially to feminist GPE? If so, what does it add? If not, why not?
- 2) In what ways do economic recessions have gender-differentiated effects? Can you think of some that have not been covered in this chapter?
- 3) What kind of policy responses are needed to ameliorate the gender impacts of financial crisis?

Seminar activity

In this seminar you will draw upon the knowledge you have gained of feminist economics and political economy. The activity can be carried out in pairs or in small groups. Ahead of the seminar, you should seek out statistical data which estimate the value of unpaid labour in any given country or region, or globally. Bring this information with you to class and be ready to share what you have gathered with others in the seminar.

In the first part of the seminar:

- 1) Compare the statistical information gathered by you with your partner/ other members of your group.
- 2) In your estimation, how significant is this work in the national and/or regional and/or global economy?

The second part of the seminar should take the form of a whole-class discussion.

*‘If women were paid for all they do, there’d be a lot of wages due’, sang women campaigners in the 1970s. But demanding money for unpaid domestic work is a sad indictment of the Women’s Movement, because it demonstrates that feminists have lost the battle to force men to do their share of the cleaning.*⁶⁴

- 1) Do you agree that the strategy of demanding wages for ‘house-work’ (this would include care work) is an indictment of the failure of the women’s movement?
- 2) Is the claim that men do not do their share of house-work and care work supported by the experience of class members?

Further reading

Bakker, Isabella, and Stephen Gill (eds.) (2003) *Power, Production and Social Reproduction: Human In/security in the Global Political Economy*, London, Palgrave.

Cornwall, Andrea, Jerker Edström and Alan Greig (eds.) (2011) *Men and Development: Politicizing Masculinities*, London, Zed Books.

Elias, Juanita ‘Women Workers and Labour Standards: the Problem of Human Rights’, *Review of International Studies*, 33, 1 (2007), 45–57.

Hoskyns, Catherine, and Sharin M. Rai ‘Recasting the Global Political Economy: Counting Women’s Unpaid Work’, *New Political*

Economy, 12, 3 (2007), 297–317.

Jeffreys, Sheila 'The Sex Industry and Business Practice: An Obstacle to Women's Equality', *Women's Studies International Forum*, 33, 3 (2010), 274–82.

Norton, Andy, and Diane Elson (2002) *What's Behind the Budget? Politics, Rights and Accountability in the Budget Process*, London, Overseas Development Institute.

Useful Web links

Development Alternatives for Women in a New Era (DAWN): www.dawnnet.org/

Gender and Globalisation (ESCAP, United Nations): www.unescap.org/esid/gad/Issues/Globalisation/index.asp

Gender in Development (World Bank):

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTGENDER/0,,contentMDK:20260262~menuPK:489120~pagePK:14895>

INSTRAW (United Nations): www.un-instraw.org/

Key Readings on Poverty, Growth and Inequality (World Bank):

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTPOVERTY/EXTPGI/0,,contentMDK:20263396~menuPK:524119~pag>

Oxfam: <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/our-work/gender-justice>

Poverty in Focus (Gender), International Poverty Centre (UNDP): www.ipc-undp.org/pub/IPCPovertyInFocus13.pdf

UNIFEM (United Nations): www.unwomen.org/

Women, Poverty and Economics (UNIFEM): www.unifem.org/gender_issues/women_poverty_economics/

Global Governance

Introduction

This chapter examines the institutions and mechanisms of global governance. The illustrations employed herein are drawn from global economic governance and development and, as such, they elaborate discussions initiated in chapter 8. The first section defines global governance, identifies the actors, institutions and mechanisms/processes involved and interrogates global governance as a response to the problems created by a globalized world. The second section concentrates on gender issues in World Bank (WB) policy. In the third section, the focus turns to the UN's 'women/gender in development' initiatives. The final section reviews literature that poses radical critiques of global governance, and the 'women/gender in governance' agenda specifically.

As was the case in chapter 8, some space is afforded to discussions of governance in general terms before turning to gender issues. This chapter also includes a summary of the major shifts and changes in economic governance and development over time in order to provide necessary historical context. For example, it is helpful to have some rudimentary knowledge of the legacy of debt and financial crisis in previous decades in order to understand present circumstances. Similarly, it is necessary to have some knowledge of the major debates about women, gender and development historically, in order to contextualize and appreciate the preoccupations of the current literature in this area (Extended Reading).

What is ‘Governance’?

Governance has been defined¹ as ‘the exercise of political authority and the use of institutional resources to manage society’s problems and affairs’. An elaborated definition² is:

the sum of the many ways individuals and institutions, public and private, manage their common affairs. It is a continuing process through which conflicting or diverse interests may be accommodated and co-operative action may be taken. It includes formal institutions and regimes empowered to enforce compliance, as well as formal arrangements that people and institutions either have agreed to or perceive to be in their interest.

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) defines governance as: ‘the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority to manage a country’s affairs. It comprises the mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences.’³ *Global* governance refers to the exercise of authority and systems of rule that extend beyond the boundaries of nation-states. This involves institutions (global, regional and national), networks and processes that link civil society actors (notably NGOs) with formally empowered decision makers.

The definitions above offer benign, even positive, conceptions of governance, but, as McGrew and Held note, there is a ‘hierarchy of power’ among actors which ‘moulds the architecture as well as substantive purposes and priorities of global governance’.⁴ In regard to economic governance, this includes not only international economic organizations like the WB and IMF, but also private organizations like bond agencies and ad hoc private regulators, global and regional cartels and even, perhaps, ‘integrated mafias’.⁵ While public agencies claim to represent the interests of ‘global citizens’, whether or not they actually do is a moot point.⁶ Moreover, much of the literature on women’s equality and women’s empowerment in governance presents the influence of ‘civil society’ in largely positive and beneficial terms, but not all civil society groups are necessarily supportive of women’s equality. Thus, in any discussion of global governance these key questions arise:

- What are the (discursively/ideologically constructed) norms and rules that underpin governance?
- Where is power located and how it is exercised?
- Whose interests are represented in global institutions and other governance mechanisms?
- Who has a say in global governance and who is marginalized or silenced?

Furthermore, much of the literature on governance is underpinned by a public/private distinction. Here, the focus of analysis tends to be, either solely or largely, centred on the public domain. Therefore, this literature fails to take into account the various ways in which citizenship is gendered (chapter 3) and the ways in which specific laws and policies might be conducive to women’s rights or, conversely, regressive in this respect. As Martha Nussbaum argues: ‘recognition that the lives of women are deeply and systematically conditioned by a host of social norms and expectations implies that a productive study of gender and governance must understand governance in a broader way than was customary in some earlier studies’.⁷ When gender in governance is the focus of interest, the conception of governance has to be broadened to include the private domain. The family, for example, is a site of gender relations of inequality. Governance has consequences for the private sphere, insofar as policies on health, welfare and legal rights shape relationships within the family, and also public life. Gender-sensitive approaches to governance must also necessarily address the under-representation of women in the public sphere – in governments and as decision makers in

national, regional and global institutions.

Globalization and the state

At this juncture, it is helpful to revisit briefly the debate concerning the impact of globalization on the nation-state (chapter 8). In essence, the neoliberal explanation for the emergence of the architecture of global governance holds that ever-growing forms of complex interdependence compromise the autonomy of states.⁸ States are obliged to cooperate (or even pool sovereignty, as in the EU) in order to regain some control over powerful economic (especially) and political forces that are global in scope. Consequently, inter-state relations are increasingly institutionalized.

There are, however, competing schools of globalization theory and, consequently, different views on how globalization impacts on states. Debates on globalization and governance pivot around a set of issues concerning the discursive construction of globalization and whether or not the mechanisms, norms, discourses and practices of governance *facilitate* globalization (rather than respond to it). Insofar as globalization impacts on states, on which states and to what degree does globalization have an impact? The answers to these questions have obvious implications for how far it is possible to exert political control over processes and forces now global in scope.

One key question, in which feminist economists, political economists and development specialists have much invested, is:

- Is state retrenchment (the ‘rolling back’ of the state) ‘inevitable’?

It will be unsurprising to discover that there is disagreement on this issue too. While neoliberals argue that state roll back is inevitable, second-and third-wave globalization theorists⁹ argue that the evidence for state retrenchment is contested – the degree of state roll back varies from place to place. The empirical data – on trade, states’ share of GDP, foreign direct investment (FDI) and various other indicators – does not support the ‘inevitability’ thesis. The impact of globalized financial markets is crucially important in this debate. Neoliberals argue that global financial markets work to ‘discipline’ states particularly in areas like welfare expenditure.

Critics of this view counter that capital markets, bonds markets, credit rating agencies and so forth are more tolerant of state expenditure and diversity in policy than neoliberals suggest. They question whether or not the language of *inevitability* serves to justify and legitimize state choices and shut down discussion of alternative policy options. If so, then there is room for manoeuvre in the policy options of states. States might undertake certain measures (for example, securing the independence of central banks) to insulate aspects of economic policy from political pressures and popular demands, but this is a choice and not an imperative. In short, while the role of the state might be changing,¹⁰ the state is far from ‘dead’.

Critics of neoliberal globalization theory are similarly critical of neoliberal accounts of global governance: namely that it is an inevitable – and also largely benign or even beneficial – development. Detractors ask:

- Who has power and how it is exercised?
- Do certain interests (major states, economic enterprises, big corporations, elite groups and so on) project and secure their preferences through governance structures?

Globalization, the state and gender

In previous chapters, the importance of the public/private division to discussions on gender has been discussed at length and so will not be extensively rehearsed here, save to say that:¹¹

- The state plays a central role in protecting the rights of citizens, providing for security and, in many cases, welfare needs.
- The state is not ‘neutral’ in its treatment of men and women; citizenship is gendered.
- The way in which the state understands and discharges its responsibilities is influenced by a variety of social and economic factors.
- In some instances, ethnic and religious factors are also in play.

Neoliberal globalization is driven by the profit motive; this imperative results in the promotion of only some norms and not others. The state is still charged with the implementation of strategies designed to empower women and to promote and protect the rights of women, but the norm of social development is marginalized and this has important implications for empowerment and gender equality. Common themes that come out of this literature¹² are:

- States are generally supportive of women’s ‘empowerment’ in policies that are focused on income generation.
- States are less enthusiastic about promoting norms of equal citizenship.
- States often resist measures designed to increase the influence or representation of women in government.

Global Economic Governance

From Washington Consensus to 'crisis' in global governance

The IMF is concerned with financial viability and monetary stability. While states are and remain formally sovereign bodies that enter into negotiations with the IMF, in reality there is often a disparity in power between the IMF and individual states (see box below). The IMF can thus play an interventionist role in the management of domestic economies. States seeking loans from the IMF are required to abide by conditions. Indebted countries can be required, or compelled, to undertake structural adjustments that will (in theory) enable their economies to grow and the countries to trade their way out of debt.

The WB makes loans to developing countries for development projects. While the Bank receives some resources from states, it raises most of its capital by selling bonds in international capital markets. Therefore, like any commercial bank, the WB is subject to market pressures. The Bank does, however, make some long-term, low-interest or interest-free loans to the very poorest ('least developed') countries (via the International Development Association).

WORLD EXAMPLE

Structural adjustment

Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) were implemented in most developing countries in the wake of the 1980 debt crisis. The IMF has increasingly played an interventionist role in OECD ('advanced') economies since the early 1990s: in South East Asia in the wake of the 1997 financial crisis, and in Europe (and elsewhere) in the wake of the 2008 global financial crisis. The specific requirements of SAPs vary from country to country, but it is common for the 'prescription' to include fiscal discipline, the redirection of public expenditure or cuts in public expenditure, interest rate deregulation and trade liberalization.¹³

Unsurprisingly, the role of the IMF is controversial. David Dollar and Aart Kraay claim that national governments and political elites in developing countries are often enthusiastic supporters of structural reform and free-market economics. The vociferous criticism comes not from governments, but from 'Northern' NGOs and academics.¹⁴ However, there is evidence to dispute their claim. For example, in 2004 Kenya's former Finance Minister Chris Okemo stated: 'we do not go there [to the IMF] to negotiate with these people. We go there to sign the conditions they have drawn up for us.'¹⁵ The entire process of economic governance since the end of the Second World War has been described by Bello¹⁶ as 'an iron cage of overlapping international bureaucracies and directorates that has constrained the development of the global South'.

The role of the IMF in European countries post-2008 has been similarly controversial. In 2009 Poul Thomsen, the Danish official responsible for implementing 'austerity' measures in Greece and Portugal, warned that there was a limit to what society could endure, and that social tolerance and political support for the measures also had limits.¹⁷

Since the 1980s the specific roles and functions of the IMF and WB have become somewhat blurred. Both the IMF and WB play a role in imposing monetary and fiscal discipline on indebted developing countries. The IMF is principally concerned with trade imbalances and balance of payment problems: hence an emphasis on export-led growth strategies, combined with domestic cuts. The WB advocates 'sound' financial policies and restructuring measures in order to preserve the Bank's triple-A credit/bond rating. Thus the Bank also plays a role in 'disciplining' states. The Bank is able to play this role because the least-developed economies find it difficult to secure alternative sources of credit from commercial banks. In consequence, since the 1980s, development strategies in countries across the world have become progressively more free-market-and export-oriented.

? CONCEPT

Micro-finance

Since the 1990s, the WB has been an enthusiastic advocate of micro-credit or micro-finance schemes. Such schemes provide a small amount of set-up funding to small-scale business enterprises. The aim of micro-finance is to include poor groups, especially poor women, in the development process. Micro-credit/finance is seen as a way of extending financial services to the poor, while also encouraging market-friendly development. It is believed that this is the best way to alleviate poverty.¹⁸ Advocates of micro-finance argue that it generates a 'virtuous upward spiral' of economic, social and political empowerment.¹⁹ Research on micro-credit has uncovered mixed results in regard to the empowerment of women. There are documented cases where micro-finance programmes have led to some financial independence, increased knowledge and skills and brought about changes in gender roles within households, and cases where they have been much less effective.²⁰ Critics argue that – fundamentally – offering poor women only 'micro'-credit serves to perpetuate the marginalized status of women in development.²¹

From early 1980s to the mid-1990s, both the IMF and WB advocated, or required, a package of neoliberal policies in developing countries. This was known as the *Washington Consensus*. During this period, the 'orthodoxy' in regard to the causes of debt and 'development failure' focused on the internal politics and policies of developing countries: specifically, problems of corruption and the lack of accountability of elites to civil society. This orthodoxy – that internal factors explain development failures – was contested. When measured in terms of economic growth, the results of SAPs during the period of the Washington Consensus varied from country to country. The IMF and WB were able to point to some success stories. However, many countries did not fare well; they remained under-developed, poor and indebted.²² There is no doubt that during this period, developing countries, and especially the very poorest countries, paid a considerable social cost for these market-driven reforms.

From the mid-1990s onwards, the Washington Consensus began to break down. The IMF and WB acknowledge some failures, with the caveat that governments sometimes ignored their prescriptions. The WB particularly began to shift away from the neoliberal 'orthodoxy'. Indeed, the WB's former Chief Economist Joseph Stiglitz became an open and strident critic of unfettered globalization.²³ In the wake of the 1997 Asian financial crisis, the IMF's interventionist role was again criticized by civil society groups.

In Seattle in 1999 the World Trade Organization's ministerial meeting effectively collapsed under the strain of internal disagreements and grass-roots protests that ensued in the streets (see figure 22). In February 2000, a meeting of the International Financial Institution Advisory Commission accused the WB of being irrelevant to the problem of solving global poverty, and said the IMF was part of the problem rather than part of the solution in global financial governance.²⁴ In sum, the system of economic global governance was in crisis.



Figure 22 *The Battle in Seattle. WTO protests in Seattle, 30 November 1999*

‘Good governance’

Under the presidency of James Wolfensohn (1995–2005), the WB began to articulate a ‘good governance’ agenda.²⁵ Whereas during the period of the Washington Consensus, ‘good governance’ meant the efficient management of development, from the mid-1990s onwards ‘good governance’ embraced the notion that governance should deliver basic opportunities and capabilities to citizens. However, the good governance agenda continued to emphasize problems with institution building and corruption, even advocating intervention to encourage representative government accountability to civil society and the attachment of political conditions to economic aid. Critics of ‘good governance’ argued that such ‘interventions’ were contrary to the ‘non-political’ mandate of the Bank and, in practice, were merely another means by which the Bank promoted a neoliberal agenda by remaking the institutions and practices of nation-states in ways broadly favourable to neoliberal economic and social policies.

Non-Governmental Organizations

Governance in the broadest sense of the term embraces a range of state and non-state actors linked together through a variety of networks and institutional arrangements. Arrangements between NGOs and institutions might be formalized – for example, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the UN has formalized the role of accredited NGOs in the UN system. Accredited NGOs play a role in decision-making processes and, sometimes, in the implementation of specific policies.

Gordenker and Weiss²⁶ argue that NGOs are now omnipresent in international relations. Whether

accredited or not, NGOs monitor states to ensure that they comply with policies and/or commitments that they have signed up to (at the regional or international level). In this way, NGOs contribute substantially to international discourse on global problems and possible solutions. In regard to development particularly, NGOs can have some advantages over the state in distributing development resources to poor, marginalized groups, because they are more in touch with and knowledgeable about local conditions and needs. NGOs might also possess technical knowledge or other forms of expertise that states and inter-governmental international organizations need for effective policy-making.²⁷ Thus, NGOs can bring influence to bear in decision making and policy-making.

Formally, (select) NGOs have the *potential* to influence government policy in six possible ways (although not all will apply in each specific case):

- in agenda setting (politicizing issues erstwhile regarded as non-political);
- in outcome negotiations;
- in conferring legitimacy;
- in helping to implement policies;
- in monitoring compliance with international agreements;
- in promoting institutional adaptation.

Craig Murphy adds the contribution of NGOs to practice to the list: ‘Today it is, more often than most of us realize, NGOs which run the refugee camps, provide disaster relief, design and carry out development projects, monitor and attempt to contain the international spread of disease and try to clean up an ever more polluted environment.’²⁸

Critics of global governance (as presently constituted) frequently argue that having a formal role in the ‘system’ (the WB or UN, for example) is not the same thing as having real sway with the representatives of states and other institutions and agencies. Engagement with NGOs on the part of formal decision makers is often nothing more than a public relations exercise.²⁹

NGOs are often taken to be representatives or ‘conduits’ of civil society. They articulate the needs, wants and preferences of specific interest groups / constituencies. As such, NGOs are vital if democracy is to thrive. To achieve accreditation within the UN system an NGO must be authorized to ‘speak for’ a constituency, must be democratically constituted, and transparent in regard to its finances (to guard against corruption and the misappropriation of resources). Moreover, the participation of NGOs in global governance is seen to be an effective means of increasing the accountability to civil society of both national governments and international institutions. NGOs are sometimes put together by the UN and WB to mobilize people to participate in elections.³² Thus, NGOs might be important in conveying grass-roots perceptions of issues and problems to decision makers, in providing a link between policy-makers and civil society constituencies, and in playing a role in bolstering the democratic process.³³

? CONCEPT

Transnational Advocacy Networks

Keck and Sikkink³⁰ argue that Transnational Advocacy Networks (TANs) are becoming more prominent and increasingly influential in world politics. Unlike states, TANs do not possess military power, nor do they possess great economic resources, yet they are still able to influence the political process. The key functions of TANs are: agenda setting –

reshaping the parameters and substance of debates in key areas and, sometimes, pushing new issues onto the international agenda; exerting leverage; building, shaping and reshaping alliances among civil society groups and state actors; framing issues; adding political and emotional weight to key issues / issue areas. TANs open up the field of international politics to a wider range of voices and actors who might otherwise be ignored by state actors. They also increase the accountability of states to civil society constituencies.

TANs often emerge in the space opened up by international conferences. They might also form in circumstances where civil society groups have little or no opportunity to influence the domestic political process. In such cases, Keck and Sikkink have identified something they called the *boomerang effect*, meaning that citizens or civil society groups who enjoy little or no access and influence within the domestic polity appeal to citizens and groups in other countries/societies, who, in turn, put pressure on the home state. By creating links to international and regional organizations and by linking their cause to values that are widely embraced in civil society, they are able to exercise material and moral influence over decision makers. In some instances, TANs are able to introduce new practices or ways of conducting politics, by encouraging a greater degree of engagement from non-state actors and groups and facilitating dialogue. In short TANs redefine and re-shape the 'game' of international politics³¹ (see also Carpenter, Joachim and Moghadam, Extended Reading).

Critics counter that NGOs do not involve civil society constituencies in decision making in any meaningful way. Indeed, NGOs that better represent marginalized communities and constituencies are often excluded from governance. Just how much influence NGOs have, which NGOs have influence, whether they operate independently of states and whether or not a role for NGOs is actually desirable are major areas of discussion in the global governance literature. These criticisms will be revisited and elaborated below, but to address one part of this debate, funding might compromise the independence of NGOs. To simplify somewhat, NGOs might be categorized as follows:

- independent and/or voluntary organizations (in practice NGOs are growing ever more 'professionalized');
- Government Organized Non-governmental Organizations (GONGOs): wholly dependent on public funding and tow the ideological and political line of their governments on any given issue;
- Quasi-Non-Governmental Organizations (QUANGOs): exercising a degree of autonomy, but dependent on public funding and so not wholly independent;
- Donor Organized Non-Governmental Organizations (DONGOs): receive funding from donor agencies.

DONGOs are increasingly visible in relief operations, often filling the gap left by Western disengagement from poor countries. They often deliver development assistance, or, in some cases, implement WB or UN projects. While DONGOs can exercise a degree of autonomy, ultimately they must 'frame' issues and implement measures in a way that is compatible with the objectives of donors. For this reason particularly, criticism of DONGOs focuses on their complicity in 'managing' and reproducing the neoliberal *hegemonic project*. DONGOs, critics hold, implement policies that marginalize or disem-power those very social groups which they claim to represent.

In the defence of NGOs, in regard to gender in governance specifically, it has been argued³⁴ that:

- NGOs are important in teaching women political skills; this is important because women often lack access to formal political forums and decision-making bodies in their home states.
- NGOs provide a space outside of traditional party political structures which are likely to marginalize women and gender issues, particularly in contexts where parties depend upon specific ethnic and religious groups for support.
- Relatedly, the inclusion of women in formal political processes and in party politics at nation-state

level does not necessarily translate into greater emphasis on gender issues or a higher degree of gender equality; the danger of co-option by states makes the role of NGOs all the more important in promoting gender agendas.

- NGO networks keep gender issues on the agenda at both national and international levels; in the absence of this, women and gender issues would be even further marginalized.

Hafner-Burton and Pollack (Extended Reading) argue that:

- NGOs are also skilled at *framing* issues: as strategic actors NGOs make efforts to ensure a greater and more consistent attention to gender issues in international governance.³⁵

Gender mainstreaming at the World Bank

The promotion of gender *equity* (see chapter 1) has been a strand of WB policy since the 1970s. During the 1970s and 1980s, advocates on gender issues lobbied the Bank to include Women in Development (WID – see below) objectives, but the Bank was largely resistant to the notion that it should promote social objectives like gender equality. For this reason, from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s (the Washington Consensus era), advocates adopted a strategy of formulating demands in the language of economic efficiency, stressing the efficiency gains to be had from investing in women.

As noted above, Wolfensohn's presidency saw a change in approach to gender issues at the Bank, with more emphasis on the social dimensions of development and poverty alleviation. During this time, the Bank:

- set up the 'Gender Analysis and Policy' thematic group (1995);
- set up the external Gender Consultative Group (1995) comprised of members of women's organizations from across the world;
- engaged (select) NGOs in discussions on policy, particularly in relation to SAPs.

The Bank was relatively late in implementing gender mainstreaming (compared to the UN, for example – see below). However, post-Beijing the Bank:

- publicly supported gender equity in the workplace and in private-sector development projects;
- committed to gender action plans in all of the Bank's regional operations;
- formally adopted a gender mainstreaming strategy (2001);³⁶
- began to produce an annual report on gender in development;³⁷
- launched an action plan to improve women's economic opportunities (2007).³⁸

WB gender policy:

- does not focus wholly on women; gender is understood to be *relational*;
- understands gender relations as *complementary* (chapter 1);
- encourages participation by men (especially male partners) in domestic labour and child-care.

Emelie Hafner-Burton and Mark Pollack (Extended Reading) argue that, while the Bank has been something of a late-comer to gender mainstreaming, its record on implementing mainstreaming

initiatives is actually better than that of many other institutions (including the UNDP – see below). In part, this is because there has been strong pressure to mainstream gender from internal ‘policy entrepreneurs’ among its staff, and in part because the Bank is relatively rich in resources and in implementation capacity. However, gender mainstreaming is still more likely to be effective when policies fit within the dominant ‘strategic framing’ (see chapter 1) of gender issues within the Bank.

While noting that the aims of WB policy are laudable in some regards, Kate Bedford³⁹ (see box and Extended Reading) identifies several problems with the WB approach:

- Policy is dogged by an underlying conceptual problem; this often generates clashes between officials and partners (e.g. NGOs).
- Some policy-makers still tend to think in terms of women as *targets* of policy, resulting in a clash of objectives that then manifests in policy-making and implementation.
- Gender mainstreaming is seen by some (both inside and outside the institution) as an external imposition;⁴⁰ the inclusion of men in gender policy is, in part, designed to counter such perceptions.
- The Bank grapples with the tension between achieving efficiency, increased productivity and growth and realizing social development.
- Ultimately, the Bank falls back on a ‘technocratic’ vision and approach to gender equality.

Lucy Ferguson echoes Bedford’s concerns about the lack of conceptual clarity in WB policy. In her study on integrating indigenous women into the process of development in Honduras (Extended Reading), Ferguson⁴¹ argues that international development institutions have adopted ‘gender’ as a fundamental component of any policy or project. However, the meaning of ‘gender’ is often far removed from the original aims of feminist politics – to combat unequal gendered power relations and achieve social justice. Ferguson argues that these contradictions in conceptualization and implementation ultimately account for policy failures.

The UN Development Agenda

From its inception, the UN has sought to ‘advance’ women’s status through the development process. During the first twenty-five years of its life, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) embarked on a programme of work that stimulated action in favour of women by specialized agencies within the UN.⁴² This was the origin of programmes that focused on women’s needs in development.⁴³

The UN development agencies measured development not solely in terms of economic growth, but by indicators such as life expectancy, maternal health, educational opportunities, access to clean drinking water and participation in the political process. Accordingly ‘gender empowerment’ can be measured by a similar range of indicators: access to economic, professional and political opportunities; access opportunities in education, nutrition and health care; employment; title to property; credit and freedom from violence (rape and assault) in both the public and private domains.

The UN has also been more open to the incorporation of NGOs and advocacy networks into policy-making processes than have institutions like the WB. However, the UN is also relatively weaker in terms of its capacity to implement programmes and projects that aim to empower women (see Hafner-Burton and Pollack, Extended Reading). This is a consequence of the decentralized nature of the UN’s structure, its lack of an enforcement mechanism, its relative dearth of resources and its need to negotiate and cooperate with governments that represent culturally diverse societies. For this reason, the UN’s larger role in promoting gender mainstreaming into the agendas of other institutions has been particularly important. Whatever the shortcomings of the UN, the organization has:



WORLD EXAMPLE

‘Male inclusion’ in World Bank gender policy

In her study of Ecuador, Bedford investigates male inclusion in gender policy as a target of WB policy. She argues that, in practice, policy focuses on poor men, who, one way or another, are ‘pathologised’ as ‘lazy’, ‘alcoholic’ and/or ‘violent’. Policy aims to engender changes in problematic behaviour such that these men become supportive husbands and fathers, who take some responsibility for domestic labour and care work. While the intention behind such measures is to engender positive changes in women’s lives, the effect is to shift the ‘problem’ (in development) from women to men. Poor men are now framed as ‘unreliable policy problems who fail to adhere to a complementary model of good partnership’.⁴⁴

Bedford is not contesting the view that cultural constructions of masculinity might (and often do) cause problems (violence against women, for example), nor is she denying that alcoholism and irresponsibility are problems. Rather she is pointing out that this is the *only* way that men are made visible in policy. Consequently, the focus of policy is on making ‘men more reliable partners, rather than on supporting women’s self-sufficiency’.⁴⁵ Moreover, only ‘pathologised’ men are targeted. Thus, ‘poor men appear excellent candidates for an easy resolution of tensions between unpaid care and remunerated labour that are of increasing concern to gender staff given the Bank’s efforts to get women into employment’.⁴⁶

This renders men invisible in terms of the roles that they might play in ‘a range of development outcomes better explained – and resolved – at the supra-household level’.⁴⁷ Furthermore, ‘in utilizing the complementarity policy rationale, feminists are running the risk that their interventions are complicit in the neoliberal retreat from social provisioning’, which risks leaving ‘women utterly dependent on individuals who may, indeed, be lazy irresponsible drunkards’. Moreover, ‘efforts to enhance women’s autonomy by enabling them to break attachments to men are rendered unspeakable’.⁴⁸ For Bedford, the solution is to explore alternative models of gender and familial relations and alternative policy options.⁴⁹ At the same time, feminists must be careful not to buy into complementarity arguments that actually support the reprivatization of care work (see also Kunz, Extended Reading).

Ester Boserup

Ester Boserup's *Women's Role in Economic Development*⁵⁰ (1970) is widely recognized as a ground-breaking work. In this text she demonstrated how 'women's work' is vital to the social and economic well-being of societies. Boserup challenged the idea that development should be measured by economic growth alone. Good health care, an adequate supply of food and an elementary level of education were also important indicators of development. Boserup's study added weight to the CSW's mission. Thereafter, the UN began to commission surveys and reports that documented the link between the low status of women, poverty, overpopulation, illiteracy, food shortages, malnutrition and poor health conditions.⁵¹

- provided a relatively open 'political opportunity structure'⁵² for advocates;
- been relatively conducive to the promotion of Women in Development (see below) objectives.

Hafner-Burton and Pollack argue that the UNDP has:

- facilitated transnational networking to promote, first, WID and, later, gender mainstreaming objectives;
- long incorporated gender objectives into its organizational structure and programme;
- evidenced deep institutionalized commitment to the mainstreaming of gender in development.

The UN Women's conferences

The 1973 US Foreign Assistance Act first prompted UN agencies to set up special offices that concentrated on women's role in the development process (see figure 23). By the mid-1970s, women's roles in achieving peace and disarmament had been added to the agenda. This marked the beginning of the Women in Development (WID) movement. WID rested on three related convictions:

- Women were essential to the achievement of human development.
- Both women and men had a role to play in fostering social progress.
- Women were entitled to share in the benefits of development with men.

In 1975, the first UN Conference on Women was held in Mexico to mark the beginning of the UN's Decade for the Advancement of Women (1976–85). The World Plan of Action (WPA) adopted at Mexico set out short-and long-term measures for achieving the integration of women into the development process as full and equal partners with men. A Second UN Women's Conference was held in Copenhagen in 1980 to review progress. An action programme that prioritized education, health and employment was eventually approved, although only after much disagreement and protracted negotiation (see below). A third UN Women's Conference was held in Nairobi in 1985. The Nairobi conference produced an important document called *Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000 (FLSAW)*. The *FLSAW*:

- highlighted the problems of women's double burden (see chapter 8);
- demanded equal access for women to land, property and credit;

- made reference to the need to include unpaid work in national accounts and in social and economic indicators (see chapter 8);
- alluded to the need to redefine the meaning of ‘work’;
- noted problems of widespread violence against women (as an issue related to peace);
- made some concessions to cultural sensibilities and to the practical problems that many developing countries faced in meeting their obligations;
- allowed countries at different levels of development to set their own priorities based on development needs and resource capabilities;
- required that the UN Secretary-General establish focal points on women’s issues in all sectors of the work of the organizations of the UN system; this was the origin of gender mainstreaming.

During the Decade for Women gender inequalities began to receive more sustained attention in international forums. The contribution that women made to the development process was made visible and specialist organs were set up to promote women’s needs in the development process (for example, the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and UNIFEM). The Decade for Women was also significant because governments were now required to acknowledge publicly their obligations towards women (rather than fall back on arguments about sovereignty and non-intervention in ‘domestic’ affairs). Furthermore, women’s organizations gained some access to policy-makers and policy-making processes. Non-accredited NGOs also carved out a space for lobbying on women/gender in development. Some 6,000 NGOs attended the NGO forum in Mexico. By the time of the Beijing conference in 1995, this number had grown to 35,000.⁵³



Figure 23 *The logo of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) which continues to be active in countries like Afghanistan.*

WORLD EXAMPLE

DAWN

Formed at the Nairobi conference (1985), the Global South movement Development Alternatives for Women in a New Era (DAWN) has been particularly important in re-visioning development as empowerment. The conception of empowerment deployed by DAWN goes beyond that of the UN agencies. DAWN insists that race, class, the legacy of colonialism and the position of countries in the international economic order are all important in understanding the nature and perpetuation of gender inequality. DAWN's concept of empowerment also places less emphasis on increasing women's status relative

While there were some notable developments during the UN Decade for Women, ultimately the results of these efforts were very disappointing. In 1990, when the CSW reviewed progress on the Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women agreed at Nairobi, it concluded that the status and position of women (relative to men) throughout the world had actually declined during the decade. It concluded that a fourth women's conference was needed (Beijing, 1995). The Beijing Platform of Action subsequently stressed:

- the need for women to participate fully in economic and social development;
- the need to eradicate poverty;
- the need to achieve sustainable economic growth;
- the need to secure women's equal right to land, property and credit, regardless of customary laws and traditional practices related to inheritance;
- the need for women to participate fully in economic and political decision-making processes;
- the need for NGOs to play a more central role in monitoring how the BPA was implemented to hold states more closely to account.

Women or gender?

After the Nairobi conference (1985), the *Women in Development* approach was subjected to a great deal of criticism. This will not be rehearsed here (see below), save to say that, despite all the effort that went into promoting WID, very little was actually achieved. Women's status, in absolute terms or relative to men, did not much improve during the Decade.⁵⁵ Critics argued that this was because projects that specifically targeted women ignored and obscured deeper issues of power and the highly unequal distribution of resources not only between men and women, but across countries.

Subsequently, the discourse on women in development shifted to *gender and development* (GAD). What gender and development actually means in current development-speak differs according to context. At the UN (as with the WB), employing the term 'gender', as opposed to 'women', usually means addressing the position of women in relation to men and/or 'bringing in' men – partially at least (see Bedford). In academic discourse, GAD is associated with Marxist or socialist-influenced feminism (see Waylen, Extended Reading). A GAD approach thus develops historical modes of analysis interrogating how the economy and the state are also implicated in reproducing gender inequalities. GAD analysis focuses on *strategic*⁵⁶ gender interests as well as practical needs. The focus on strategic interests, in turn, necessitates the analysis of power in the relationship between women and men (in the family, for example) and an understanding of gender as socially (and ideologically) constructed and so amenable to change.

Women, environment, development

It should be noted here that the UN 'women's agenda' has developed alongside growing awareness of the environmental impacts of development (see figure 24). Environmental activists often linked sustainable development and the women in / gender and development projects, emphasizing the roles women played in 'managing' the environment.⁵⁷ For example, women are heavily involved in cash crop production which exacerbates problems of deforestation. Population growth puts increasing

pressure on resources and exacerbates global environmental degradation; women's reproductive function is implicated here, although population growth is linked to poverty and so, ultimately, is a social and economic problem rather than one of over-population. Women often have to deal with the immediate impacts of environmental degradation – for example, spending longer hours locating ever-scarcer sources of food, fuel and water.

Research shows that nearly 50% of the world's cultures have little or no rape. What makes them different? According to the anthropologist Peggy Reeves Sanday:

"In 'rape free' societies women are treated with considerable respect... [and] a people's attitude regarding their natural environment is one of reverence rather than one of exploitation."

"Where men are in harmony with their environment, rape is usually absent."

"In societies where nature is held sacred, rape occurs only rarely."



**Honour Women....
...Honour the Earth.**

BILL PATRICK

Figure 24 *Ecofeminism poster*

Contesting Global Governance

Thus far, criticisms of global governance, and gender issues in global governance specifically, have been touched upon, but largely in the context of work that engages with the policy process. This category of criticisms tends to focus on problems in conceptualizing gender, the tension between equity and complementarity and equality, and the partial and problematic way that men and masculinities have been brought into gender in development.

There is also a literature on global governance that is critical, but ultimately promotes the reform of the architecture and processes of governance. Richard Falk,⁵⁸ for example, has identified a number of factors that obstruct the realization of what he calls ‘humane’ global governance. The neoliberal paradigm embraced by influential global economic actors is afforded special attention.

? CONCEPT

Beyond ‘Women’ in Development?

In practice, discourse on gender in development very often focuses on women, specifically the structural disadvantages faced by the majority of women in diverse societies around the world and the pervasiveness of gender inequality in different societies across the world. There have been – and, arguably, remain – good reasons why this is the case. For example, women are still heavily over-represented among the poor and heavily under-represented in positions of power, and resources committed to development – and gender/woman in development specifically – are relatively small – and often under pressure. Therefore, it remains politically and strategically necessary to continue to frame many issues as specifically ‘women’s issues’ and to continue to demand that women have a voice: that claims to action and resources are made in the name of ‘women’. Moreover, while gender cannot be conflated with women, it is by no means certain that ‘bringing in’ men and masculinities more centrally into discourse and practice in gender in development will actually strengthen efforts to promote gender equality.

Nevertheless, it is undoubtedly the case that the language of women in development distorts our understanding of very many dimensions of gender in development. As GAD theorists argue, gender is relational and, therefore, gender must be understood in terms of both women and men. Focusing on women can and often does neglect the structural dimensions of patriarchal power relations in development policy and practice – so, too, the impact of unequal sex and gender relations on the lives of both women and men. The recent work of Cornwall, Edström and Greig (Extended Reading) is important in challenging gender stereotypes, addressing the position of men (as both privileged and, in some contexts, disadvantaged). They also interrogate the potentialities for engaging men as partners in struggles for social justice.

Issues of sexuality have been similarly marginalized in discourse on gender in development. Much of the literature that does exist frames sexuality mainly, though not exclusively, as an issue pertinent to health (especially HIV) and human rights in development (see Jolly, Petchesky, and Vance and Miller, Extended Reading). A growing number of researchers (see, for example, Bedford, above and Extended Reading) are now producing work that problematizes heteronormativity in development discourse.⁵⁹

Falk is a strong advocate of human rights. He argues that the language of human rights has been appropriated and used effectively in global campaigns to shame organizations like the IMF and WB and also Multi-national Corporations (MNCs). Nevertheless, there remains great potential in human rights and NGOs to build a more open, accountable and effective system of global governance.

To some degree, the UN offered an alternative paradigm to neoliberalism during the period of the Washington Consensus. For example, the UN called for ‘adjustment with a human face’⁶⁰ to protect basic levels of education, health care and food security. The UN also promoted the Millennium Development Goals that aimed to eradicate poverty and called for the creation of an Economic and Social Security Council (Commission on Global Governance, 1995).⁶¹ The World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995) similarly addressed a range of economic, environmental and social

issues and called for more effective policy tools.⁶²

However, the UN fell some way short of directly criticizing neoliberal development strategies. Moreover, during this same period, the UN lost influence relative to the IMF and WB. As noted above, the UN is also relatively weak in implementing initiatives. Overall, the achievements of the UN in seeking to redress the global imbalance of power between North/West and South and between specific social groups have been, at best, modest and, at worst, ineffective.

The remaining sections of this chapter will now consider more radical critiques of global governance which – either by implication or directly and explicitly – question the entire *problem-solving* approach to women and/or gender in governance and development. These critiques issue from a variety of theoretical perspectives.

Hegemony and governance

Deborah Steinstra⁶³ goes further in her criticisms of the WB than either Bedford or Ferguson, for example. She argues that all of the Bretton Woods institutions are governed by an ideology and set of values that worked against genuine gender equality. Liberalization and globalization as hegemonic norms severely limited women's advancement. In his work on World Bank Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRS), Arne Ruckert⁶⁴ (Extended Reading) broadly supports Steinstra's view.

Adopting a neo-Gramscian position, Ruckert argues that transnational governance institutions play an increasingly important role in organizing social reproduction processes, particularly in peripheral countries. PRS, linked to debt relief and the provision of basic social services and human capital investments, are the most visible policy tool of the post-Washington Consensus. The conditionalities attached to PRS go beyond the economic sphere into the sphere of social reproduction (see chapter 8). These conditionalities promote the privatization of previously state-funded areas like health and education (all crucial to social reproduction).⁶⁵

Thus, representing PRS as part of the shift away from the Washington Consensus (see above) obscures the way in which the PRS serve to re-embed social reproduction processes through more inclusively oriented neoliberal development policies. This re-embedding effort does not represent a challenge to the neoliberal paradigm, but 'addenda to the market-enabling reform agenda of the World Bank'.⁶⁶ Ultimately, he argues, these innovations are forms of 'disciplinary inclusion' that aim to dampen down potential disruptions of the neoliberal order and potential unrest among the bottom tier (excluded groups) of the 'world social hierarchy'.⁶⁷

While Steinstra and Ruckert focus on the WB, similar criticisms have been levelled at the UN:

- The UN's 'women's agenda' has been profoundly shaped by the overall strategic political and ideological goals of US foreign, security and economic policies (US hegemony).
- Development processes in individual countries are profoundly shaped by the operation of global markets, by transnational investment patterns and global investment flows, by the global division of labour, trade and the policies of international and regional institutions, along with national governments.
- While champions of neoliberal development strategies can point to some success stories, the empirical evidence suggests that growth and development in many countries around the world has been stagnant or even declined in recent decades.⁶⁸
- The distribution of resources within countries remains highly uneven.⁶⁹

- After several decades of promoting women and/or gender in development, gender inequality remains a significant feature of most societies around the world.
- Gender remains a significant marker of poverty.⁷⁰

NGOs revisited

As noted above, UN agencies have long engaged with NGOs and other civil society groups. Post-Beijing, and particularly from 2001 onwards, the WB has entered into partnerships with regionally and locally based organizations (including some feminist groups) to mainstream gender into projects and policies. One of the problems in evaluating NGO engagement is that there are different ways of understanding the role of NGOs and the motives behind the inclusion of NGOs in policy-making and implementation. Gender mainstreaming at the WB might be motivated by the desire to utilize local knowledge of local conditions in policy-making, or to exploit the technical knowledge or expertise in NGOs to achieve more effective policies, or to provide necessary international public services in an economically efficient way (on the cheap?). Alternatively, the aim might be to strengthen the linkages between women's NGOs and women as a constituency in civil society and so make the policy-making and implementation process more open and democratic.

Whether engagement is driven by advocates promoting specific issues, by democracy/accountability considerations or efficiency objectives, is obviously important in assessing NGO participation. For example, if NGOs are deemed to play a representative/accountability role, we might ask:

- What strategic choices are made on whom to consult?
- Who gets to speak for 'civil society'?
- Which NGOs are excluded and why?
- Are NGOs actually legitimizing rules, norms and policies that work against the interests of the constituency they claim to represent?

On the other hand, if NGOs perform a technical or managerial role, then:

- What are these 'technical capabilities' and which specific NGOs are consulted and why?
- Are NGOs taking on responsibilities that were formally the responsibility of the state?
- Are NGOs essentially implementing neoliberal policies?

With regard to issues of advocacy, Sonia Alvarez⁷¹ argues that the degree to which NGOs can follow up on international conferences depends upon the national political context, the policy environment, the commitment of governments and the capacities and resources of NGOs.

Neoliberal social and economic adjustment policies, state 'downsizing' (or roll back) and changing international **regimes** combine to alter dramatically the conditions under which struggles for social justice unfold. O'Brien et al.⁷² similarly argue that advocacy NGOs are wrestling with an unfavourable economic climate: fighting to prevent a major retreat by women from the political arena as they struggle to survive. From this perspective, neoliberal globalization and structural adjustment have actually undermined the possibilities for effective advocacy and certainly shut off any latent potential for more democratic decision making.

Governmentality

Poststructuralists have contributed to critiques of global governance, often employing Michel Foucault's concept of *Governmentality*. Foucault's project was to understand the mechanisms by which subjects were constituted – specifically, how people disciplined themselves so that they became conformist, rational subjects. Governmentality can be defined as ‘the organized practices – mentalities, rationalities, and techniques – through which subjects are governed’.⁷³ Governmentality is, in a sense, a less direct form of governance, and, superficially, less coercive. However, it is actually more efficient because subjectivities are constructed in such a way that dominant (i.e. neoliberal) norms are internalized.

Postcolonial critiques

In the section on economic governance above, a brief allusion was made to the Filipino sociologist Walden Bello's work on globalization and governance. Bello's critique is built from the perspective of the problems facing peoples and countries in the Global South. Critiques of this kind are particularly important because they speak to structurally unequal relations and the *systematic* underrepresentation and marginalization of the Global South in the architecture and processes of global governance and, ironically, development institutions and processes.

Postcolonial feminist critiques of WID (and indeed some GAD discourse) have been likewise very important for the same reasons. To illustrate this, it is helpful briefly to revisit the Copenhagen Women's Conference (1980). This conference took place during a period of global economic recession, mounting Third World debt and the prosecution of an ideologically driven Second Cold War. East–West and North–South conflicts were very much in evidence at the conference.

? CONCEPT

Governmentality, gender and environmental governance

In Emma Foster's critique of ‘women, environment, development’ discourse and practice (Further reading), she argues that systems of environmental governance are legitimized as an indispensable response to global co-ordination over matters of environmental degradation. Foster claims that disciplinary narratives and apparatuses of international sustainable development initiatives work to construct gendered identities and naturalize heterosexual relations. For example, gendered constructions of ‘mother earth’ work to organize, and are organized by, technologies of governmentality, creating a victimized status for women. Moreover, the ‘universalizing tendencies’ within the discourses such as Agenda 21⁷⁴ further construct non-Western women as a homogenized, oppressed and victimized mass, denying the multiplicity of experiences and interests among those constructed as ‘Third World’ women.

Activists from the Global South assumed a prominent role in criticizing the WID agenda.⁷⁵ Postcolonial feminists argue that:

- The production of knowledge about ‘development’ is conditioned by the socio-political, economic and cultural context in which discourse ensues.
- Historically ‘development’ has been driven by dominant Western perceptions of the needs and circumstances of people in ‘underdeveloped’ countries.
- The WID project imposes Western values on the rest of the world – it is a ‘civilizing mission’ in which ‘Third World women’ become markers of ‘progress’.

- WID assumes Western women are more ‘advanced’ or ‘liberated’ than women in developing countries – this is highly questionable and contested.
- The notion propagated by Western NGOs and activists that there exists a ‘global sisterhood’ is similarly highly questionable and contested.
- Women from the South have, in practice, had little opportunity to articulate their own specific concerns and aspirations in sites like the UN.
- The objectives and strategies of feminism are intertwined with very different cultural and socio-political conditions.

From this perspective, forums like the UN are, to return to Spivak’s critique of the Beijing conference (chapter 5) ‘global theatre’. Reform is unlikely to bring about meaningful change. Ultimately, women from the Global South might be better served by engaging in the broader struggle to achieve a fundamental shift in the global distribution of power and resources. Participation in global governance as currently constituted merely serves to legitimize a fundamentally unjust global order.

Summary

This chapter has engaged in a selective review of the literature on gender in global governance and development. This review reveals a mixed picture on the achievements of specific target-driven initiatives and the efficacy of gender mainstreaming as a whole. Work that focuses on gender in the architecture and processes of governance, and ‘gender mainstreaming’ specifically, is valuable in getting a better purchase on how gender is conceptualized and deployed in policy-making. This work also draws attention to the many and varied ways that NGOs can and do play important roles in promoting gender issues and gender equality. For problem-solvers, this is valuable because it leads to better understanding of whether, how and when gender is relevant to the many and varied problems that arise in international relations and holds out the prospect of developing more effective policies to address these problems.

For those who approach gender in global governance from a critical perspective, interrogating gender generates deeper reflectivity on the complex nature of gender and gender identity, and the potentialities and – crucially – limitations of problem-solving approaches to gender. For example, while ‘gender mainstreaming’ is sometimes presented as a panacea for addressing global gender ills, in practice it can mean and achieve little more than greater efficiency in policy-making as women are more effectively ‘exploited’ as a resource.

The promotion of gender issues in global governance seemingly evidences the short-comings of problem-solving approaches to gender: various initiatives and strategies fall far short of realizing the feminist projects of achieving social justice for women (and men) or fully embedding women’s rights in governance.

Furthermore, structural factors are profoundly implicated in the reproduction of poverty and social inequality, which is very much tied up with discussions of gender in development particularly. The structurally unequal power relations and stark material inequalities that exist between states, peoples and specific social and ethnic groups are simply not addressed.

Questions for reflection

- 1) In the light of the criticisms that have been made of the Women in Development agenda, do you think that the withdrawal of NGOs from the UN would make the situation of poor women better or worse, or make no significant difference? Give reasons for your answer.
- 2) How would you adjudge the efficacy of NGOs in gender mainstreaming in global economic governance?
- 3) How do feminist debates on problem-solving and critical approaches to gender in IR inflect on discussions of gender in global governance?

Seminar activity

This activity takes the form of presentations made to the class. The class will be divided into three groups. The task of each group is to prepare a presentation for the class. In order to do this, groups will need to meet at a mutually convenient time outside of class in a place where they have access to the Web. The tutor should advise on the overall length (time) of each presentation and the detail, or brevity, of discussion on the key points in it. Tutors might attach credits to this presentation or link this activity to the assessment for the module as a whole (for example, an end-of-term paper, essay or examination question).

The scenario is the Rio plus 20 Meeting (United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development), which took place in Brazil in June 2012. Ahead of the meeting, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon urged co-ordinated action by development experts, civil society leaders and government officials to realize the twin objectives of social justice and environmental protection.⁷⁶

Group 1 is the delegation from the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID), a group accredited through ECOSOC that enjoys consultative status at the UN.

Your presentation should set out:

- 1) some basic information about your organization, whom you claim to represent and who funds your work;
- 2) what your status as an 'accredited' organization means and the access that this allows you to key decision makers in government delegations and in UN agencies;
- 3) what you identify as your priorities, and how your priorities are informed by your current *strategic initiatives*;
- 4) how you will use your skills at *targeted advocacy* to reach (who you determine to be) the 'key players' at the conference;
- 5) your overall assessment of what Rio plus 20 achieved (or did not achieve, perhaps) in the areas that you identified as strategic priorities.

Group 2 is a loosely organized network of activists from across the small Pacific island states. Your campaign is driven by the belief that sustainable development initiatives will not succeed unless issues of social justice are also addressed. You are not accredited at the UN, but you are able to participate in the NGO forum.

(You might like to locate and research online an organization that looks very like your own?)

Your presentation should:

- 1) provide some basic information about your organization, which constituencies you claim to represent and how you fund your work;
- 2) explain how you raised funds to attend the Summit and the basis on which you determined which members would attend;
- 3) explain what your status as a non-accredited organization means and how this affects your access to key decision makers in government delegations and UN agencies;
- 4) state your priorities in campaigning and explain how these priorities are informed by your understanding of the links between gender, social justice and sustainable development;
- 5) set out your campaign strategy.

Group 3 is the government delegation representing India at the Rio Meeting. Your presentation to class will take the form of an 'off-the-record' briefing to NGOs who advocate on gender and development issues. You should set out:

- 1) what India regards as its current development priorities and how these priorities speak to (or do not) concerns about social justice and sustainable development;
- 2) how India aims to balance the objectives of sustainable development and economic growth and manage (perceived) tensions in these objectives;
- 3) how India has been affected by the global financial crisis and how this has or has not influenced

India's negotiating position on sustainable development;

- 4) how India thinks about the relationship between gender, social justice and sustainable development;
- 5) the strategies that India employs to maximize the country's influence in the negotiations.

Further reading

- Dema, Sandra 'Gender and Organizations: The (Re)Production of Gender Inequalities within Development NGOs', *Women's Studies International Forum*, 31, 6 (2008), 441–8.
- Foster, Emma A. 'Sustainable Development: Problematising Normative Constructions of Gender within Global Environmental Governmentality', *Globalizations*, 8, 2 (2011), 135–49.
- Griffin, Penny (2009) *Gendering the World Bank: Neoliberalism and the Gendered Foundations of Global Governance*, Basingstoke, Palgrave.
- Harcourt, Wendy (2009) *Body Politics in Development: Critical Debates in Gender and Development*, London, Zed Books.
- Moghadam, Valentine (2005) *Globalizing Women: Transnational Feminist Networks*, Baltimore, Md., Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Special Issue, 'Gender, Governance and Globalisation', *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 6, 4 (2004).

Useful Web links

- BRIDGE – Gender in Global Governance Packs: www.bridge.ids.ac.uk/go/bridge-publications/cutting-edge-packs/gender-and-governance/
- Gender in Global Governance Net-Work: <http://genderinglobalgovernancenetwork.net>
- The Global Governance Project: www.glogov.org/
- Global Governance Watch: www.globalgovernancewatch.org/
- IMF – Smart Economics: www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/survey/so/2007/RES075A.htm
- International Labour Organization: Bureau for Gender Equality: www.ilo.org/gender/lang--en/index.htm
- UNDP Essays on Gender and Governance: <http://to.ly/dnE9>
- World Bank – Gender in Development Publications: <http://to.ly/djmT>
- World Bank – Gender Mainstreaming: <http://to.ly/djmU>
- World Bank – Women's Eyes on the World Bank, 1997: www.worldhunger.org/articles/wbwomen.htm

Transnational Feminist Politics

Introduction

This chapter interrogates feminist practice, feminist politics and possibilities for a feminist project of solidarity across boundaries. The chapter is divided into four sections. The first one interrogates political projects that cross boundaries – specifically, national boundaries. Here, the concept of a social movement is first considered, transnational advocacy networks (chapter 9) are then briefly revisited and, finally, the concept of solidarity is unpacked. The second section revisits discussions of the early feminist movement in the Western world. The third section considers how both feminist theorists and activists have grappled with the challenges and dilemmas of difference and, in consequence, rethought both feminist practice and the basis of solidarity. The final part of the chapter grounds these concerns in contemporary projects, re-visiting the women's human rights agenda and also examining the place of feminist politics in anti-globalization struggles.

Politics across Boundaries

Social movements

Rupp and Taylor¹ argue that feminists are ‘social movement actors’ insofar as individual feminist activists are situated within an organizational and movement context. Feminism is based on more than ideology. It is also a collective identity. Social movements are comprised of individuals and groups who embrace a collective identity and shared values. Unlike NGOs, which might be focused on discrete issue areas and/or seek to influence specific policies, social movements are directed towards achieving widespread social change by promoting an alternative set of values, beliefs and practices.² In Crow’s words, to identify with a social movement ‘is to commit oneself to it in a way that normally involves endorsing its practices and seeking to promote its interests, whilst regarding one’s well-being as intimately linked to its flourishing’.³

Rupp and Taylor identify at least three processes involved in the formation of the collective political identities characteristic of social movements:

- the creation of boundaries that mark off members of the group from ‘outsiders’;
- the development of consciousness of the group’s distinct and shared disadvantages;
- the politicization of everyday life, embodied in symbols and actions that connect members of the group and link their everyday experiences to larger social injustices.

While few commentators would contest the status of feminism as a social movement, it is, and always has been, a movement characterized by a great deal of diversity; indeed, much of the contemporary literature prefers to speak of *feminisms* and feminist movements. The unity of the movement has been severely tested at specific historical moments. While, historically, much of the literature on social movements has tended to focus on the ‘unitary aspects of collective identity and ignore significant differences of identity and interest’,⁴ contemporary feminist scholarship places much greater emphasis on the complex and dynamic processes through which boundaries of identity are constructed and on how conflict can be manifest in these processes as much as unity and a ‘sense of togetherness’.⁵

Transnational Advocacy Networks as ‘social movements’

As the history of feminist movements attests, transnational networking and campaigns has been a feature of international relations since the early twentieth century. However, interest in transnationalism has grown since the early 1980s as globalization, and advances in communications technologies particularly, have facilitated networking among civil society organizations across national boundaries.

Transnational Advocacy Networks (TANs) were covered in the previous chapter. Those discussions need not be rehearsed here. The purpose of including TANs in this chapter is rather to point out that they can share some similarities with social movements. TANs are comprised of civil society actors who mobilize their resources – particularly information and knowledge – in an effort to influence international policy. TANs are most often associated with ‘insider’ politics, accredited or affiliated to regional and international organizations, whereas social movements are regarded as more broad-based civil society phenomena that do not – necessarily – enjoy privileged access to formal

decision makers. However, while organized around issue areas – for example, human rights or global warming – the groups that make up the network very often see themselves as sharing a common cause, similar values and a collective identity. They might also aspire to effect a process of more wide-ranging social change.

In their ground-breaking book *Activists Beyond Borders* (1998), Keck and Sikkink argued that TANs embrace a diverse membership made up of researchers and advocates, social movements, NGOs and sections of local government, who work collectively and cooperatively – sharing information, knowledge and other resources in their efforts to influence policy-making in discrete issue areas. However, they explicitly included social movements within their discussion of TANs.

Solidarity

A key concept that can be brought to bear on transnational feminist politics and practice is that of solidarity. It is difficult to imagine a feminist politics that is not predicated on the basis of solidarity. However, forging and sustaining solidarity has actually been a problem for the feminist movement at different times throughout its history.

There is no single definition of the term, but solidarity is commonly understood to be based upon a sense of unity or shared feeling or action, or fellowship and sympathy/empathy among individuals. Such individuals might perceive themselves to have common interests or common values that motivate them to offer support to a group engaged in struggle, perhaps with the expectation that they would receive similar support in their own struggles (solidarity is based on mutuality).

A project of solidarity is characterized by:

- an identifiable group;
- a symbolic representation of the group;
- an emotional orientation shared by members of the group to their cause and/or community;
- shared principles and/or a feeling of empathy towards other members of the group;
- the contribution of resources by members of the group to a collective good.

The achievement of solidarity depends upon the degree to which individuals are integrated into the life of a specific community (however constituted), which in turn furnishes individuals with a common set of values and symbols around which to mobilize.⁶ One of the most powerful – and still prevalent – expressions of solidarist community is, of course, ‘nation’. Transnational expressions of solidarity subvert dominant discourses and practices based on loyalty and identification to the nation above all other groups. Nevertheless, transnational solidarity is similarly premised on notions of identity, community and symbols that generate an emotional attachment to the collective and which act as the mainspring of political mobilization.

Historically, feminist solidarity has been premised on:

- women identifying as women with other women;
- a perceived unity of purpose – to end gender oppression;
- the championing of a principle (equality and/or equal rights);
- feelings of empathy with others (as ‘oppressed’ or ‘suffering’);
- the employment of symbols that encapsulate a common identity and convey support for a common cause;

- mobilization on the basis of this identity and cause to effect change or to support others in their effort to achieve political and social change.

Historically, a politics of solidarity founded on women's 'shared problems' and the necessity of speaking as 'women' has been central to feminist discourse and practice.⁷ In contemporary feminist theory, notions of unity, common identity and shared 'interests' are much more likely to be contested. However, the anti-essentialist turn in social science as a whole has led to the re-thinking of the nature and basis of solidarity, rather than to the rejection of projects of solidarity entirely. In contemporary feminist thought, solidarity is often conceived as a relation constructed through *dialogue* and struggle.

The Politics of Feminism

First-wave feminism and women's rights

In the Western world in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, rights discourse provided a powerful language in which to make claims in the name of women. The Enlightenment discourse of social progress, equality and rights opened up space for women to challenge the social and political supremacy of men and 'liberate' women.⁸ Seyla Benhabib⁹ has argued that in the West, during this period, bourgeois men fought to secure rights against the absolutist state, but relations in the household continued to be built upon non-egalitarian assumptions. The family was a site of political interventions, for example in the realm of health, education and the upbringing of children, but the family was constituted in bourgeois discourse as an enclosed space or sphere of intimacy, a community of care held together by bonds of love, and so – largely – a private domain in which the scope for state intervention in private life was circumscribed.

As liberals, early campaigners for women's rights acknowledged the need to circumscribe the role of the state, but also recognized that this construction of the 'private' worked to privilege men. While man could not be free as long as he was subjected to the arbitrary power of the state, woman continued to be subject to the arbitrary power of the father or the husband in the family.

Inspired by early pioneers like Wollstonecraft,¹⁰ women's movements emerged in many parts of North America and Europe in the nineteenth century that both contested the demands placed on women by tradition, culture and religion and started the long struggle to mobilize women around demands for suffrage, property rights, representation and participation in political life.¹¹ While the radicalism of early liberalism was limited, these 'feminist' pioneers went beyond calls for the right to vote, in that they also demanded that male power be circumscribed in areas of life previously regarded as private.

The re-constitution of the female subject as a bearer of rights in liberal feminist discourse unsettled the prevailing gender hierarchy between the sexes. Appeals in the name of universal principles also allowed women to make concrete political demands. At the same time, however:

- The language of rights privileged the notion of the universal human subject.
- First-wave feminism – in the West – was predicated on the denial of difference.
- Liberal feminists took for granted the idea that women would be 'liberated' by escaping from the family and negotiating new identities in the public sphere.¹²

Universal claims made in the name of women detracted from the elitist and heavily bourgeois nature of the early women's movement. Caine has argued that demands for the vote, political participation and women's equality/rights largely benefited women aspiring to economic independence.¹³ While working class women would obviously benefit from the extension of the franchise, labour conditions, pay and child care were central issues in their lives and shaped the nature of their political engagement.

- Working-class women did not enjoy the time and leisure that bourgeois women enjoyed, nor did they have the resources to mobilize politically.
- Working-class women saw some community of interest with working-class men.

Marxist feminists would later take up the relationship between class and gender and develop a more sophisticated analysis of women's unpaid labour. However, class differences were recognized by early pioneers of women's rights in the US, like Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who sought to widen the social base of the women's rights movement by seeking the support of working-class women.

As elaborated in chapter 5, while women's mobilization in the name of international peace in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries necessitated women's participation in public life and the right to vote, peace activists championed their cause in terms of women's differences from men – specifically, claiming women *as mothers* could make a positive impact on world peace.¹⁴ The political activism of women was thus characterized by unity of purpose in regard to key aims – securing the vote – but also evidenced ideological differences among specific factions of the movement.¹⁵

Race and ethnicity were also significant in the early women's movement. While unity and solidarity among 'women' was widely proclaimed by these early proto-feminist activists, women from ethnic minority groups faced additional social prejudice and discrimination (for example, in the US, slavery was not fully abolished until 1865). Verta Taylor has argued that a central problem in the early women's movement was how to reconcile a view of the world fundamentally divided by sex with an actual world of many divisions.¹⁶ Leila Rupp has also pointed out that, even as the women's movement embraced other issues, it remained bourgeois and largely Western-dominated. Nevertheless, she goes on to note the 'remarkable bonds that women did forge across national boundaries and multiple languages'.¹⁷

Neither class nor race proved to be a wholly divisive issue in the women's movement. Sojourner Truth (see box below) became active in both the abolition movement and the campaigns for women's rights, while key figures in the campaign for women's suffrage like Lucretia Mott, were similarly active in both movements. Abolitionists often used the anti-slavery campaign as a platform to challenge the injustice of women's continuing subjugation.



WORLD EXAMPLE

Sojourner Truth

Born into slavery, Sojourner Truth's (her birth name was Isabella Baumfree) political activism confronted gender, class and racial discrimination (see figure 25). After slavery was abolished in the Northern United States in 1827, she fought to be reunited with her son who had been sold into slavery during childhood. In later years she toured the country speaking out against slavery and supporting women's rights. African-American men gained the vote in 1869. Women – of all races / ethnic groups – would have to wait until 1920 (some Native Americans did not become American citizens until 1924).

Sojourner Truth was the first of many African-American women who have played a central role in the struggle for civil rights, simultaneously fighting against racism and sexism. Her struggle evidences the complex, inter-related and enduring nature of social and racial subjugation. Truth ran a campaign in 1864 to end racial segregation on buses. In 1955 Rosa Parks would repeat this protest – refusing to give up her bus seat to a white man, when ordered to do so by the white bus driver.

Feminism and the politics of difference

When Virginia Woolf¹⁸ proclaimed in 1938 that 'as a woman I have no country', she was espousing an internationalist sentiment and affirming a feeling of 'universal sisterhood' shared by the majority of the members of the women's movement at that time. In the early twentieth century, nationally based

women's organizations established transnational linkages and forged solidarities across state/national boundaries. And yet, even at this early stage, when women shared a common experience of subordination and exclusion (from political life), it was evident that there was the potential for the movement to pull apart as well as pull together.¹⁹

From the 1980s onwards, questions of 'difference' became highly politicized in both feminist theory and practice. Feminism has never been a solely Western discourse or practice. Women across the world have struggled for rights at different times throughout history. Moreover, continually describing the women's movement or feminist movement as 'Western' serves to marginalize or make invisible the contribution that many women across the world have made to the 'cause'. Women's organizations from Latin America, for example, played an important role in the early life of the UN, and women from across the world now fill key positions in UN agencies and contribute to agenda setting, monitoring and implementation efforts across policy issues (see also Desai, Further reading and Moghadam, Extended Reading).



Figure 25 Sojourner Truth (1797–1883), African-American abolitionist and women's rights activist

It is fair to say, however, that the transnational women's movement has been largely dominated by

women from Western countries. In the 1980s, academic feminism became increasingly focused on questions of difference, reflecting no doubt the politics of difference manifest in the transnational feminist and women's movement during the same period. Again, this was particularly noticeable at the Second World Conference on Women held in Copenhagen in 1980 (see chapter 9). Clearly, solidarities might be forged across lines of class, gender, sexuality and ethnic differences, and across boundaries of culture and nation, but feminist projects of solidarity and transnational alliances were also fragile.

The notion that women experienced 'common oppression' was openly contested as, in bell hooks'²⁰ terms, a 'false and corrupt platform, disguising and mystifying the true nature of women's varied and complex social realities'. At the same time, the 'emotional appeal of sisterhood' was rejected on the grounds that it disguised the 'manipulative opportunism of bourgeois women'.²¹ As constructivist approaches to identity gained more adherents within academic feminism, essentialist claims were also contested.

In the 1980s:

- The shift in feminist theory, from championing 'woman' as a stable category of analysis to conceptualizing gender as discursively constructed, served to call into question the construction of 'woman' as a universal category.
- The politics of the transnational women's movement also fell under critical scrutiny.
- Activists in Western-dominated arenas like the UN women's conferences were accused of merely reproducing unequal power relations in their own discourse and practice.²²

Whereas feminism had previously been grounded in claims for political and legal equality (liberal rationalism) or substantive social equality (Marxist and radical feminism) feminist theory became increasingly focused on questions of *identity*. Constructivists hold that identity is neither fixed nor essential. Poststructuralists went farthest perhaps in challenging the notion that 'woman' was a coherent *subject* and that women shared common interests in an objective sense of the term (see box on Judith Butler, chapter 2).

At the same time, postcolonial feminists also mounted a sustained challenge to what they regarded as an unreflective and false assumption of universally constituted subjectivities, stable identities and common interests.

- The concept of intersectionality captured the cross-cutting nature of identities and pointed to the need to build a feminist movement on the basis of 'women's multiple identities, experiences and locations'.²³
- Universal claims made in the name of 'woman' were rejected in favour of an ethos of pluralism.

Re-thinking Feminist Practice

Deconstruction as politics/practice

The problematization of ‘woman’ in feminist theory and the criticism of ‘mainstream’ (meaning here Western and liberal) feminism did not lead to the wholesale refutation of feminism as a critical practice. Feminist theorists responded to the challenges posed by ‘difference’ in a variety of ways (see McNay, Extended Reading).

Poststructuralist feminists:

- recast feminism as critique;
- regarded ‘deconstruction’ as a political act which opened up space for alternative expressions of gender identities which did not conform to rigid male/female, man/woman and masculine/feminine dichotomies;
- embraced diversity and recognized the ‘other’ – the identity and experience marginalized and/or excluded in dominant discourse on gender and sexuality.

The strategic necessity of speaking as ‘women’

While liberal and radical feminist theory and practice have (falsely) homogenized ‘women’ and marginalized the experiences of many women who were not white, middle-class and/or from the Western world, it is nevertheless often necessary to make claims in the name of women. Feminists on the left of the political spectrum (Marxist and socialist feminists) point out that gender determines to a large degree one’s access to and control of resources and remains a significant marker of social inequality and poverty. Moreover, many women (though not all) continue to shoulder the burden of unpaid labour in child-bearing, child-rearing and social reproduction generally. There is, then, a material dimension to gender (and gender inequality); gender is not wholly ideational.

Insofar as there is a great deal of empirical evidence to support this claim:

- The *prioritization* of differences between women over experiences that very many women share in common undermines a feminist politics centred on challenging concrete social inequalities and unequal power relations.
- The deconstruction of ‘woman’ in radical constructivist strands of academic feminism can undermine struggles to promote women’s rights.
- Women in varied locations around the world often regard gender as a site of contestation and a mediating factor in their lives and their communities – thus, women are able to identify collectively, for some purposes and in some contexts.
- The *strategic* necessity of organizing as women and speaking as women is thereby re-affirmed.

Postcolonial feminism might be situated somewhere between radical constructivist and ‘leftist’ strands of feminist thought and practice. Postcolonial feminists have contributed much to the understanding of discourse as a form of practice and to critiques of ‘Othering’ practices in Western feminism. Postcolonial theory also elucidates the multifaceted and cross-cutting nature of identities and the complex nature of social and racial and ethnic inequalities (see Agathangelou and Turcott, and Yuval-Davis, Extended Reading). Thus, from a postcolonial perspective:

- The cause of ‘empowering’ women necessitates struggles to challenge multiple structures of oppression at different levels and in specific contexts.

So, while earlier forms of transnational feminist practice (cited above) problematized attachments to the nation-state (‘as a woman, I have no country’), postcolonial feminists argue that:

- Women and women’s political struggles are always concretely situated or located; there is no view from nowhere.
- There is no one uniform feminist practice that can serve as a blueprint or action plan for *all* women throughout the world – context is important.
- Feminist politics is embedded in deeply unequal power relations between the Global North and Global South.

If these *structural* inequalities are ignored by feminists, then unequal power relations between women situated in the North and Southern women will be perpetuated. This does not mean, however, that postcolonial feminists eschew all attempts to forge solidarity across national boundaries, nor does it mean that they discard gender inequalities in favour of championing cultural values and traditions. It is mistaken to believe that postcolonial feminists simply embrace an unreflective and uncritical cultural relativism. The concept of strategic essentialism was, after all, gifted to feminist thought by postcolonial thinkers. What is required is a radical rethink of what the project of solidarity entails.

Forging solidarity

Rupp and Taylor argue that, throughout its history, the feminist movement has been characterized by waves of activism, followed by periods of fragmentation during which the ‘continuity and survival’ of feminism as a mass movement has been called into question. There have been ‘moments of collective creation’ in which members have successfully cohered around ‘ideas, identities and ideals’ that have ‘served to provide a sense of shared purpose, or even a common bond among members’,²⁴ and moments when the diversity of women and conflicting interests have seemingly undermined the project of solidarity. The movement has thus been characterized by periods of ‘conflict and cooperation’.²⁵

The history of feminism as a mass social movement evidences that the false homogenization of women, or universal claims that actually reflect the particularity of Western women’s experiences, are unsustainable as a basis for mobilization and/or solidarity. In the 1980s, hooks argued that solidarity could no longer be founded on claims of ‘shared victimhood’ or ‘unconditional love for one another’. Such assumptions encouraged women to avoid ‘confronting the complexity of their own experiences’ and prevented activists from reflecting upon their own social status and position.²⁶ hooks stated that:

- the feminist project must be constructed on the basis of recognition of and respect for plurality and difference.

Thus constituted, feminist activists could renew their ‘commitment to political struggle’²⁷ and strengthen solidarity, since ‘women did not need to eliminate difference to feel solidarity’.²⁸

The call by hooks, subsequently echoed by both radical constructivist and postcolonial feminists, generated more research in the 1980s and 1990s that explored the intersections of race, class and gender in social movement activity. It also inspired reflection on ways to negotiate, if not overcome, such barriers and rescue some semblance of solidarity in the feminist project. Conflict was recast not as divisive, but as constructive.²⁹

- ‘Sisterhood’ – solidarity – cannot be assumed: it is an accomplishment that women must struggle to achieve.

Confronting conflict was presented as a necessary process in a ‘sustained committed struggle’ that would ‘lead towards a liberatory feminist agenda’.³⁰ To build and sustain solidarity, it was necessary to ‘respect our differences’ and to ‘affirm one another’ by understanding and appreciating the contribution that all women made to feminist struggles.³¹ If women in their diversity struggled in a supportive way to build the foundation for solidarity, solidarity could then be re-visioned as a project forged through political struggle, a struggle that ‘carries with it the willingness to accept responsibility for using conflict constructively’.³² This would allow ‘individuals united by common goals’ to ‘consciously utilise their differences and limitations to accelerate positive advance’.³³ It was imperative for activists to reflect critically upon the limitations of white, Western feminism that had privileged a primarily liberal political agenda, and to address the concerns of women around the world in ‘the historicised particularity of their relationship to multiple patriarchies as well as international economic hegemonies’.³⁴

Negotiating differences

How is it possible to forge solidarity on the basis of respect for difference? Is this project not contradictory? The response to such questions is that it is necessary to think outside rigid binary distinctions such as identity/ difference and us/them and instead try to work through multiple and cross-cutting identities and ‘interests’. Women in specific locations often share common cause with men of their own class or ethnic group. At the same time, women in varied locations also experience discrimination or oppression based on their gender. Feminist politics has to be sensitive to the specificity of gender discrimination in particular contexts. In turn, this requires that women – and especially Western women – listen to what other women say about their lives and their struggles, rather than assuming that they know best how to ‘liberate’ their ‘oppressed sisters’.

A reflective and open disposition to *listen* enhances the possibilities for achieving an inclusive solidarity. Dialogue, communication, respect for differences and a willingness to listen have to be built into feminist practice, even if this is at the expense of ideological ‘orthodoxy’. Through dialogue, differences might be negotiated (see Gandhi and Shah, and Jones, Extended Reading). A practice based on dialogue empowers women to speak as ‘women’, but also necessitates that Western-based activists critically reflect upon their own – often problematic – practices. In this way it is possible to hear what women in varied locations say about their own lives and struggles, and thereby to come to ‘understand the oppressive relations in which women are enmeshed well enough to serve them in the struggle against those relations’.³⁵

Moreover, it is often more appropriate – strategically – to offer support to grass-roots activists in their struggles than to make interventions that have neo-imperialist overtones. A dialogic model

anticipates that:

- Solidarity networks can function as a means of support and, possibly, to supply resources to locally based, grass-roots groups.
- Strategies for action can be worked out and negotiated according to local contexts.
- Solidarity networks can serve to disseminate the views of women in diverse locations.
- Alliances that are formed might be flexible and relatively short-lived, but this is preferable to an espoused solidarity that reproduces hegemonic discourses and practices that are exclusionary and ultimately divisive.

Contemporary Feminist Practice

Feminist organizing around human rights

One response to the challenge to Western liberal feminism as a dominant discourse and practice in arenas of global politics and global governance (see chapter 9) has been to re-affirm the project of universal human rights. This appears paradoxical at first sight, since human rights seemingly requires a unified (rational) subject and, moreover, is a discourse and practice that originated in the West. However, the women's human rights agenda has served to mobilize women not just in the West, but across the world. Framing specific forms of gender discrimination and specific practices in the language of human rights issues allows these issues to be addressed at both national and international levels.

Keck and Sikkink³⁶ document how an advocacy network initially grew up around the issue of violence against women and subsequently framed this issue as a violation of human rights (see also Kelly, Extended Reading). The women's human rights agenda and CEDAW specifically then encouraged the further proliferation of TANs. In framing the issue as one of human rights, activists appealed to values that are – or might well be – transcultural, thus avoiding the charge of Western-centrism or neo-imperialism (see also Joachim, Extended Reading). Keck and Sikkink point out that campaigns against female circumcision / female genital mutilation had previously been criticized on these grounds, but the re-framing of this practice as a human rights issue has defused such criticism (the issue of whether this practice does violate human rights remains controversial, however; see chapter 4).

It would be disingenuous to claim that there have been no tensions or conflicts around the women's human rights project. At the Beijing conference, for example, there was an ongoing debate regarding the implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action and CEDAW. On the one hand, flexibility in implementation allowed local contexts and circumstances to be taken into account. On the other hand, liberal human rights activists insisted that 'flexibility' would allow governments already reluctant to implement the women's rights agenda a useful loophole – a means of watering down the commitments they had signed up to.

However, Brooke A. Ackerly (Extended Reading) has argued that activists can be viewed as not only lobbyists and advocates, but also participants in a dialogue involving inter-subjective negotiation on both the concept of rights and the substantive content of women's human rights and how best to advance this project in diverse societies (see also Cornwall and Molyneux, and Feree and Trip, Extended Reading). This dialogue has centred on what human rights for women might mean in specific locales and how relevant treaties and conventions on women's human rights might be implemented most effectively to serve women in different national and cultural contexts.³⁷

Ackerly claims that:

- Appeals to international human rights norms are useful in supporting the efforts of local women's groups to promote local change.
- Universal human rights serve as valuable criteria for guiding the process of local change.
- Activism for change should be local, utilizing locally based organizations and so informed by local knowledge of the most appropriate way to promote women's human rights.
- International law can be employed as a 'contingent universal' when advocating for local change, but the precise set of rights that are treated as 'universal' is contingent on context and subject to re-

interpretation.

- Therefore, the ‘universality’ of human rights might be substantively meaningful even while the realization of human rights in practice is not uniform.

Inter-subjective negotiation is required to uncover what human rights mean for women in specific locales, and the substantive content of women’s human rights. Dialogue allows the claims of culturally legitimate deviance from human rights norms to be interrogated while also respecting plurality across and within cultures. Thus, dialogue is useful and necessary in determining how best to advance women’s human rights in diverse societies. The substance of dialogue centres on how relevant treaties and conventions on women’s human rights might be implemented most effectively in different national and cultural contexts.

In key areas such as violence against women, activists of diverse nationalities have united even though their cultural backgrounds have been varied and broader ideological beliefs diverse. Moreover, women in different cultural settings and social locations have continued to experience conflicting demands of social norms, religion and convention, but have also asserted the right to autonomy and choice, particularly in relation to marriage, family life, sexuality and reproduction.

A recurrent theme of academic studies on the Beijing conference was that the parallel NGO forum functioned as space in which activists were able to engage in dialogue on women’s human rights. Mallika Dutt noted that US women of colour were regarded as ‘American’ by women from the South, and ‘Americans’ were, in turn, perceived to be ‘arrogant, insensitive and imperialist’.³⁸ Whereas women of colour from the US had generally seen themselves as ‘oppositional forces’ in their country, they were now compelled to confront the role of the US as ‘aggressor and violator of women’s human rights’. As the principal driver of neoliberal globalization, the US was implicated in cut-backs in welfare, corporate downsizing, job losses among women and increasing levels of poverty among women in developing countries.³⁹

Dutt argues that this generated a shift in consciousness among US women of colour which has subsequently impacted on their day-to-day practices and forms of organizing.⁴⁰ So, in this instance, ‘creative tension’ did generate reflection rather than encourage separatism. Activists from the US remarked that recognizing that women from developing countries were ‘powerful voices for change’ rather than ‘victims’ was the ‘starting point in changing the dialogue between women in the US and women in many parts of the world’.⁴¹ These women described the ‘sense of global solidarity, pride and affirmation’ that they experienced in Beijing and many commented on the ‘vibrancy and power of the global women’s movement’, a vibrancy and power that contrasted starkly with the ‘lack of unity and strength in the US women’s movement’.⁴²

Feminist politics in the anti-globalization movement

Opportunities for reformist political agendas have been opened up as NGOs and TANs have participated in processes of global economic governance. Throughout all stages of the preparatory process for the Beijing conference, activists worked to highlight the gender-specific effects of ‘damaging’ structural adjustment policies forced on indebted states by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) (see chapters 8 and 9). Inequalities across, as well as within, countries and regions have been addressed in these arenas. The Expert Report on the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region, for example, explicitly recognized that issues of women’s rights and sustainable development could not be seriously addressed unless the consumption and

production patterns in the ECE region changed. Significantly European feminists also noted that women of colour in the region were particularly affected by global restructuring processes and made a massive contribution to unwaged and low-waged work.



WORLD EXAMPLE

Women Living Under Muslim Laws

Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML) is a good example of a transnational network that aims to build solidarity while recognizing that women's struggles are greatly complicated by the claims of culture, religion and national identity. Farida Shaheed argues that WLUML recognizes that the 'fear of being cut off from one's collective identity militates against women challenging "Muslim laws"'.⁴³ At the same time WLUML challenges the 'erroneous belief that the only possible existence for a Muslim woman that allows her to maintain her identity (however defined) is the dominant one delineated for her in her national context'.⁴⁴

The organization serves as an alternative reference group, enabling women to redefine the parameters of their identities. Shaheed suggests that the links with women from other parts of the Muslim world – whose very existence speaks to the multiplicity of women's realities within the Muslim context – provide an important source of inspiration for women in Muslim countries. Thus, 'WLUML makes important contributions to women's struggles for justice in specific locations by opening doors to a multiplicity of possible alternatives'.⁴⁵

WLUML's solidarity work involves initiating and responding to appeals for support from women when their human rights have been violated. Action might take the form of mobilizing international support, securing the services of lawyers, providing shelter, mediating between parties and lobbying governments. WLUML also engages in campaigns for 'the repeal of discriminatory legislation to end oppressive practices and the enactment and enforcement of legislation favourable to women'.⁴⁶ However, the practice of WLUML bears out the need to build coalitions across boundaries while also recognizing the need for 'the application of locally informed strategies of resistance'.⁴⁷ In this way, the rights and autonomy of women are at once affirmed and defended, although differing strategies and measures are utilized to realize, promote and protect women's human rights in concrete contexts.

However, reformist agendas have generated criticism – specifically, as a politics that ultimately supports a global order dominated by powerful states and economic interests and which also marginalizes or excludes the perspectives and voices of poor women, particularly women from the Global South. As a movement comprised principally of 'outsider' groups and organizations, the anti-globalization movement eschews reformism and instead struggles to achieve radical change, promoting alternative values and articulating different normative visions of how the world might be ordered. The anti-globalization movement, which is a diverse and loosely structured formation and which reflects a complex mix of social forces and identities, provides an alternative space for feminists to organize.

Chandra Mohanty, whose seminal article 'Under Western Eyes' (1980) inspired a wave of postcolonial criticism of the UN women's agenda (see chapter 9), has called for a feminist solidarity forged around anti-capitalist, anti-globalization struggles (Extended Reading).⁴⁸ She argues that cross-cultural feminist work must be attentive to the micro-politics of context, subjectivity and struggle, but also alert to the macro-politics of global economic and political processes.⁴⁹ In revisiting *Under Western Eyes*, she points out that it was not her intention to undermine or negate the possibility of feminist solidarity altogether, but rather to 're-emphasise the connections between the local and universal' and demonstrate 'how specifying difference allows us to theorise universal concerns more fully'.⁵⁰

Mohanty notes that feminist scholars have developed sophisticated feminist frameworks for understanding the gendered nature and impacts of globalization. However, she argues that we need to

know more about ‘the real and concrete effects of global restructuring on raced, classed, national, sexual bodies of women in the academy, in workplaces, streets, households, cyberspaces, neighbourhoods, prisons and social movements’.⁵¹

Globalization, along with the rise of religious fundamentalisms, constitutes a huge challenge for feminist struggles around the world. At a time when women’s rights and feminist claims are being contested on many fronts, there is a need to build cross-cultural feminist solidarity. However, this project must be attentive to the experiences and voices of marginalized communities of women, while also constructing an inclusive paradigm for thinking about social justice.⁵² As a first stage in forging solidarity, critical and postcolonial feminists identify *counter-hegemonic* sites and other counter-hegemonic groups who are potential allies in anti-capitalist struggles.⁵³

Counter-hegemonic sites and counter-hegemonic fellow travellers are to be found in the anti-globalization movement. Here activists challenge the entire project of neoliberal globalization, rather than seeking to ameliorate or manage the worst effects of globalization. The task of those who seek radical alternatives is to:

- challenge the representation of globalization as a set of inexorable and immutable forces (the ‘inevitability’ thesis);
- put questions of politics and agency back into the picture (there are alternatives);
- articulate alternative values and normative visions of how the world should be organized.

The anti-globalization movement consists of diverse and loosely organized groups of activists, with no coherent overall strategy or plan for an alternative system of governance. The movement essentially functions as a *counter-hegemonic* force. However, specific groups of activists within the movement, particularly environmentalists, have pushed for a strategy of *de-globalization*. With respect to governance issues, this entails:

- the decentralization of institutional power;
- a pluralistic and flexible system of ‘governance’;
- the inclusion of more peoples from the South;
- affording the economically and socially marginalized more say over their affairs.

WORLD EXAMPLE

The World Social Forum

The World Social Forum⁵⁴ (WSF) is widely regarded as one of the main, if not *the* principal, counter-hegemonic site in anti-globalization struggles (see figure 26). The annual WSF has grown out of political and social activism to find alternatives to globalization. A key moment in the formation of the WSF was the *Battle for Seattle*, a large-scale demonstration that took place outside a meeting of the World Trade Organization in 1999 (see chapter 9). The Forum might also be seen as a response to the World Economic Forum (WEF) that meets annually at Davos. The WEF is heavily dominated by corporate interests. WSF participants seek alternatives to capitalism and neoliberal globalization. The Forum can be considered a forum that represents global civil society in that it brings together a diverse range of social movements and NGOs. The model of organization favoured by the Forum is one of *dialogue* underpinned by a commitment to openness, democracy and plurality.

However, the WSF has been criticized for failing to meet this criterion wholly. For example, critics have claimed that it is dominated by white men (see Conway, below and Further reading). Moreover, while the WSF pushes an agenda of respect for human rights, participatory democracy and the inclusion of marginalized people and voices in global governance (see Alvarez, Further reading, Eschle and Miguashca and Vargas, Extended Reading), increased

participation by NGOs has also attracted criticism on the grounds that more radical voices are being squeezed out of the 'dialogue' and, further, that the organization is starting to resemble other NGO forums, where poor people are 'spoken for' by NGOs, but are not directly represented.⁵⁵

Catherine Eschle and Bice Maiguashca's (Further reading) claim that, in recent years, feminist activists and women's NGOs have shifted their focus away from the United Nations to gatherings like the WSF, because this forum provides a space in which to interrogate relations of domination, forms of resistance and struggles for social justice (see also Nagar and Swarr, and Parisi, Extended Reading). They argue that, while the feminist anti-globalization movement is comprised of a multiplicity of diverse groups, activists share a common view of gender-based oppression engendered by dominant political and economic structures. This lends an overall ideological coherence to feminist 'anti-globalization'. They also observe that feminist activism around anti-globalization necessitates negotiation and dialogue across 'differences' that might otherwise constitute boundaries to cooperation and collective action.

It is in the close interrogation of actual practice that Eschle and Maiguashca ultimately locate the feminist contribution to the critical theoretical project in International Relations. Interrogating activism (practice) gives rise to important theoretical tools with which to make better sense – make feminist sense – of what is, as yet, an under-investigated, under-theorized, but crucial site of globalized political resistance and alternative practice.

It should be noted, though, that the World Social Forum has been criticized on the grounds that feminist concerns and projects are often marginalized in this 'dialogue' among activists (see box on World Social Forum above). Conway (Further reading), for example, argues that:

Although women and feminists have populated the WSF in great numbers, they have persistently struggled for voice and visibility. Women regularly comprise half or more of the participants in the WSF yet remain a small fraction of the speakers, leaders, and writers of the WSF ... Feminists have been more attuned than most to the power dynamics within the open space, to the persistence of social relations of domination and inequality within the forum which mirror those in the world beyond the forum.⁵⁶

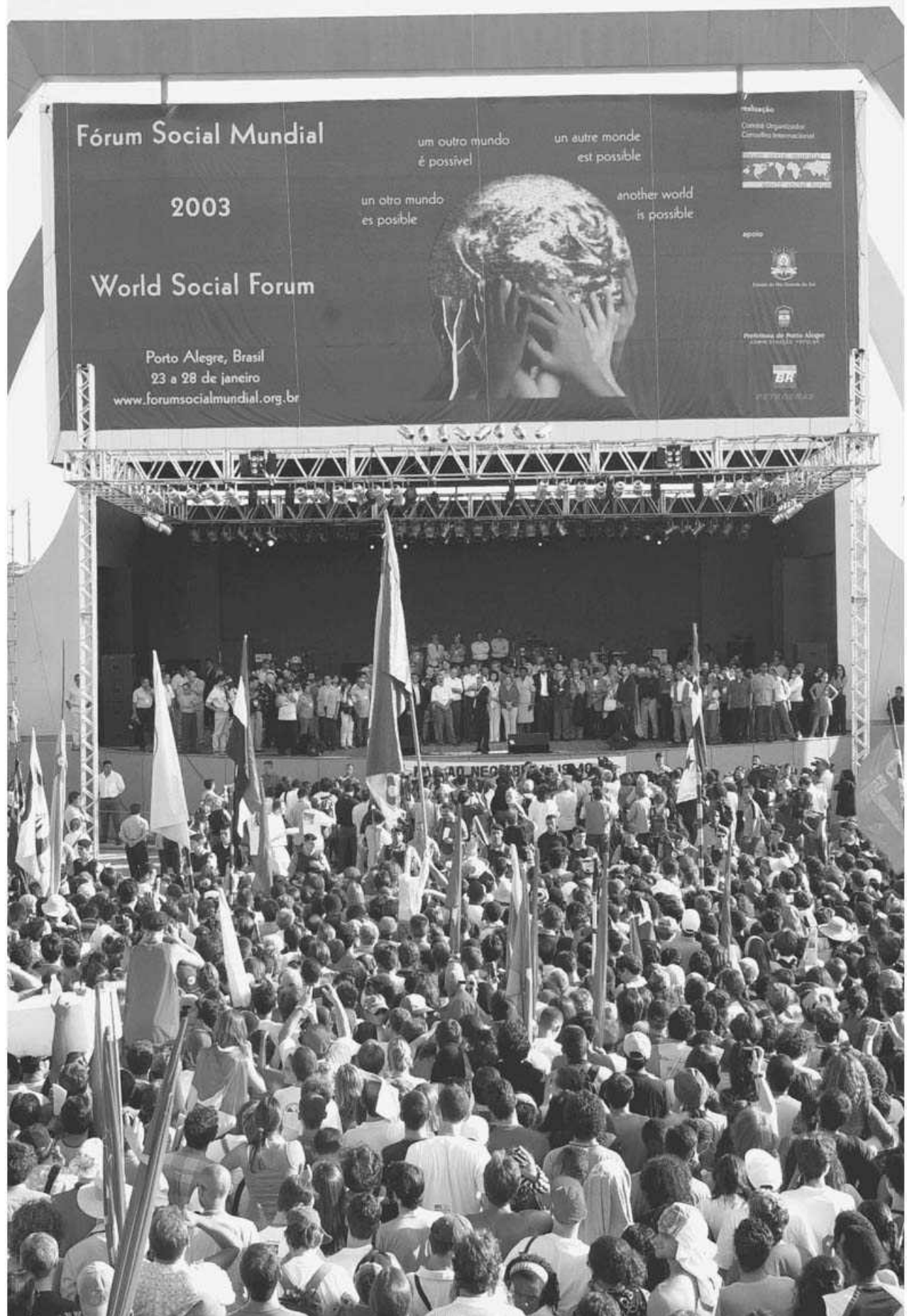


Figure 26 A gathering of the World Social Forum, Brazil, 2003

Summary

This chapter has explored transnational feminist politics and projects of solidarity in the context of some larger debates about collective identities, the subject of feminism and issues of difference. It has been argued that solidarity can be forged across boundaries if and when differences are acknowledged and respected. Further, in struggles to forge solidarity, conflict can serve to generate creative tensions and encourage critical reflection upon what divides women. In this respect conflict does not negate solidarity, but facilitates better understanding of where common ground might be constructed.

At different times and in different locations, through the waxing and waning of the feminist movement, through periods of continuity and survival, and periods of mass mobilization, the meaning and the possibility of solidarity have been worked out in the course of feminist practice. Present-day activism around women's human rights and feminist organizing in the anti-globalization movement are contemporary examples of how collective identities and political projects can unite feminist activists across boundaries, without wholly negating the differences that exist between them.

Questions for reflection

- 1) If 'woman' as a theoretical construct, category and universally constituted subjectivity, is a 'fiction', on what basis – if any – is it possible to construct a feminist politics?
- 2) Why have human rights assumed such a prominent place in transnational feminist activism?
- 3) What is needed to make dialogue a genuinely open and participatory process?

Seminar activity

Nancy Fraser (see chapter 3) has engaged sympathetically with issues of identity and difference, while insisting that material inequality and distributional issues must remain central to feminist politics. She argues that the social justice agenda, once the core of the feminist movement, is in danger of being displaced as questions of identity increasingly assume centre-stage in feminist theory and practice. She also argues that globalization is resulting in more culturally diverse states, but, with only a few exceptions, economic and social inequalities are increasing between states and among specific social groups in societies across the world (see chapter 8). The literature on the anti-globalization movement and the World Social Forum encountered in this chapter similarly points to material inequalities as key feminist issues and suggests that challenging concrete inequalities can provide a basis for a transnational feminist politics, even as questions of identity and difference are embraced within a more pluralist conception of the 'feminist movement'.

The purpose of this seminar activity is to assess critically the claim that material inequalities and the social justice agenda provide a strong basis for a feminist project of solidarity.

In preparation for this seminar, you should:

- 1) Visit this website:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_Human_Development_Index.
- 2) Identify one very high human development country (VHDC), one medium human development country (MHDC) and one low human development country (LHDC).
- 3) Visit this website: www.womanstats.org/. Access the data on women's physical and economic security from each of the three countries you have selected.

It is advisable to make a few notes on the data/statistics. You will find this helpful later in class.

Your seminar class will initially be divided into sub-groups. In your group, share with your fellow students the data that you retrieved on your three chosen countries. Try to identify any patterns or commonalities in women's experience from the data accessed by group members. Make a note of some of the most significant disparities that you find across VHHDCs, MHDCs and LHDC countries.

The class should now discuss the following question:

On the basis of the data, are there any grounds to claim that women share 'common interests' across national boundaries?

Solidarity can be secured on the basis of:

- 1) a perception of distinct and shared disadvantages;
- 2) a principle such as equality and equal rights;
- 3) or a feeling of empathy with others, as 'oppressed' or 'suffering'.

With regard to all or any one of the above criteria, are you persuaded that struggles for social justice provide a strong basis for a transnational feminist project of solidarity?

Further reading

Alvarez, Sonia, Faria Nalu and Miriam Nobre (2004) 'Another (Also Feminist) World is Possible: Constructing Transnational Spaces and Global Alternatives from the Movements'. In: Jai Sen, Anita Anand, Arturo Escobar and Peter Waterman (eds.) *World Social Forum: Challenging Empires*, New Delhi: Viveka Foundation.

Conway, Janet 'Transnational Feminisms and the World Social Forum: Encounters and Transformations in Anti-globalization Spaces', *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 8, 3 (2007), 49–70.

Desai, Manisha 'Transnationalism: the Face of Feminist Politics Post-Beijing', *International Social Science Journal*, 57, 184 (2005), 319–30.

Eschle, Catherine, and Bice Maiguashca (2010) *Making Feminist Sense of the Global Justice Movement*, New York, Rowman and Littlefield.

George, Susan (2007) *Towards a New Feminist Politics: Feminist Movement(s) and Social Movement Building*, Manila, Isis International-Manila.

LeGates, Marlene M. (2001) *In Their Time: A History of Feminism in Western Society*, London, Routledge.

Useful Web links

AF3IRM: <http://af3irm.org/>

AWID: www.awid.org

Centre for Women's Global Leadership: www.cwgl.rutgers.edu/

DAWN: www.dawnnet.org/about.php?page=us

Gender in Global Governance Net-Work: <http://genderinglobalgovernancenetwork.net>

Transnational Feminist Network: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transnational_feminist_network

Women in Black: www.womeninblack.org

Living Under Muslim Laws: www.wluml.org

Conclusion

Introduction

This concluding chapter attempts to pull together the various strands of the scholarship set out in earlier chapters, and to reiterate the contribution made by scholars who work on gender to the field of IR. To make this task manageable, the chapter is divided into sub-sections that allow the project to ‘gender IR’ to be broken down into discrete areas: the contributions to IR theory; the range of works that interrogate the construction of identities and boundaries; how these constructions are challenged at both the conceptual and theoretical level and, concretely, in ‘real-world’ legislative and policy processes; and issues of power and inequality.

Gendering International Relations Theory

In what is sometimes characterized as the ‘first wave’ of feminist scholarship in IR, feminists faced constant demands to establish their relevance, defend their position and otherwise prove their worth, by, for example, offering *the* feminist perspective on Bosnia,¹ or other ‘significant’ events or phenomena, as defined by the mainstream. The initial response was to uncover the politics at work in the construction of knowledge claims and in academic disciplines more broadly. Drawing upon the notion of discourse as a socially bounded field of knowledge, feminists contended that what counted as knowledge could not be determined merely by reference to an ‘objective’ assessment of the intellectual merit or academic worth of a work alone. Claims about what constituted knowledge arose out of consensual understandings and the judgements made by those already established in the field. Practices of gate-keeping worked to define and police the discipline’s boundaries and ‘legitimate’ subject matter. Thus, the insistence by positivists that feminist IR address a mainstream agenda was a ‘highly political’ demand insofar as it was an attempt to ‘discipline feminists as “goodies” and “baddies” in accordance with their perceived ontological, epistemological and methodological preferences’.²

An unfortunate consequence of the politics of these academic engagements was that problem-solving and critical approaches to gender came to be represented as oppositional and perhaps incompatible. Subsequently, scholars whose point of departure was to focus on the ‘problem’ first and interrogate the gendered dimensions of the specific problem second (chapter 1), demonstrated the relevance of the gender variable or successfully employed gender as a category of analysis in the field, but often described their work as ‘non-feminist’. Feminist scholars, in turn, questioned whether this kind of work/ approach cast much light on *gender* at all;³ gender had to be viewed as a power relationship, a social relation of inequality or as a discursively constructed – not ontologically stable – identity (chapter 2).

Of course, critical questions *do* arise in regard to the limitations of taking gender to be a ‘given’ – a settled and fixed category of analysis or variable – when the problem-solving approach is viewed from a different intellectual position. However, this work has nevertheless contributed substantively to gendering the field of IR in relation to policy and also gender mainstreaming, increasingly important areas of study and ones where the need for strategic framing is necessary and strategic essentialism is difficult to circumvent or wholly avoid. Moreover, these distinctive contributions to gendering IR *can* complement the feminist project (although this is not necessarily the case), by generating valuable empirical material and data and by encouraging further intellectual engagements on the strengths and weaknesses of policies and policy initiatives.

Feminist IR takes the discussion on the relevance of gender much farther than problem-solving approaches, in insisting that gender is central to IR. ‘Bringing in’ gender not only can – and should – inform the study of International Relations conventionally conceived, but can – and should – also serve to expand the boundaries of study in International Relations. The many and varied feminist contributions to IR, along with the challenges that feminism poses to conventional understandings of ‘the discipline’, will be elaborated below.

Here, one might note the many ways in which feminists have entered into the political and intellectual space opened up by critical theory (broadly conceived) and made distinctive contributions to shared concerns centred around ‘the ethical dilemmas and responsibilities inherent in the practices of world politics and the theorisation of IR’.⁴ The study of gender has also thrived within a growing body of social constructivist work. A social constructivist framework is

ontologically suited to studying norms and identities⁵ and, furthermore, increasingly occupies the territory of mainstream IR.

As noted in chapter 7, during the past decade, the linguistic turn in IR has opened up further intellectual terrain for feminists to occupy as narrative and representational practices have increasingly come to the fore. The empirical focus of this work has also broadened out the field to include visual and cultural texts and other aesthetic forms of expression. These sources are of political import. Critical and feminist readings uncover the power dynamics at work in the construction of narratives and in representational practices and allow for the contestation of dominant meanings.

The Construction and Reproduction of Identities and Boundaries

In chapter 3, IR was defined as the branch of the social sciences that was particularly concerned with practices of inclusion and exclusion in relation to the construction of boundaries between the international (outside) and domestic (inside). The relevance of gender hardly needs to be justified here: gender is central to the construction of the ‘inclusive’ and ‘exclusive’ categories that establish rights of citizenship. Furthermore, the linkage between the state, political loyalty and combat means that traditional conceptions of loyalty have been highly gendered. In mainstream IR, the nation-state has served as the primary locus for political identity and political solidarity. Nationalism provides a narrative that allows citizens and nationals to ‘imagine’ that they form a community based on shared meanings, collective identity and common boundaries. However, identities and boundaries are constructed in practices of ‘Othering’, in which ‘others’ are very often feminized.

Feminism goes further in interrogating discourses and practices in boundary drawing processes in subjecting conventional distinctions between the private and the public to critical scrutiny. Once feminist contributions were apt to be dismissed on the grounds that gender was relevant within politics (gender issues as domestic social and political issues), but not *between* nation-states. However, feminist critiques of state-centrism in IR have revealed how conceptual mapping processes serve to remove gender issues and gender relations from the field of inquiry and, thereby, render gender invisible. More concretely, both feminist scholarship and critical work on sexuality clearly elicit how gendered and sexualized identities are policed in the construction of dominant models of citizenship and how they are also contested in challenges to legislation and policies relating to, for example, nationality and asylum.

In these ways feminist IR, critical work on gender identities and masculinities and Queer Theory specifically, bring crucial and fresh thinking to the challenges of difference and diversity in international politics, in ways that fore-ground ethical matters and issues of social justice. Nowhere can this be more clearly demonstrated than in the terrain of universal human rights – specifically, in the tensions between competing claims made in the name of individuals and ‘sub-state’ identity groups and national, cultural and religious communities. These were taken up in chapter 4.

The boundaries of the state are very often carved out and reproduced in war. Similarly, political identities have been produced and re-produced in war. Curiously, IR has historically focused on war – a great deal – but has very often set aside, or assumed, the existence of extant political communities. Feminist work illustrates the complex ways in which gender is central to understanding how political spaces are carved out, how the boundaries of community are demarcated and how identities are constructed in practices of war and ‘state-making’.

When the state is re-visioned as a dynamic entity, made through practices that construct and police political and territorial borders, it is possible to see that the actual business of international politics is also profoundly masculinized. Chapters 5 and 6 explored the ways in which particular constructions of masculinity and femininity were embedded and reproduced within militaries and militarized practices. Chapter 5 discussed and problematized the connections – particularly prevalent in the early history of the international peace movement and endlessly reproduced – between peace and female-identified roles and values. This chapter also provided an opportunity to revisit, further probe and eventually strongly contest the claims of gender essentialists, through a discussion of men as victims of violence and women as its perpetrators.

Chapter 6 was, in part, also concerned with the fusion of ‘secure individual identity’ and ‘secure state identity’ in mainstream thinking about security. Here, however, both problem-solving and

critical approaches to gender were employed to interrogate the many and varied dimensions of gender in security and peacekeeping. Employing a variety of theoretical lenses facilitates better understanding of how gender features in national and international security strategies. Expanding the lenses also allows one to see the political consequences of *securitization* in regard to gender, sexuality and human rights.

The engagement with contemporary work on peacekeeping in chapter 6 raised, once again, familiar discussions on militarized masculinities and – paradoxically – the problems of violence and insecurity engendered by ‘peacekeeping’ missions. However, this section of the chapter also provided a welcome opportunity to consider contemporary research on men and masculinities which, in moving away from the usual focus on state practice and international institutions, and concentrating instead on discourses and narratives of everyday life, challenged many of the assumptions of both mainstream IR *and* much of the existing feminist scholarship.

Rethinking Identities, Contesting Boundaries

Identities and boundaries are sites of political contestation and might also be constructed and imagined very differently. Feminism, for example, is not only a school of thought – and one that is woven into academic discourse – but also a social and political movement. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and social movements seek to influence policy debates and law-making processes and forge support networks and transnational alliances across national boundaries. In chapter 9, in addition to further probing gender in regard to policy – namely economic governance and development – a great deal of space was devoted to NGOs and feminist lobbying in international forums, notably the UN. The growth and expansion of a discourse on women's human rights, along with the rise of the application of international human rights law in diverse societies, also challenge conventional demarcations of international and domestic, public and private (also covered in chapters 3 and 4).

Similarly, as was claimed in chapter 10, it is possible to identify and stand in solidarity with peoples otherwise divided by geographical location, nationality, class and/or ethnicity, on the basis of empathy with their cause, or perceived common characteristics or shared social principles. As Rupp has argued, 'women's internationalism points the way to one form of global identity, to add to the more parochial views we have of ourselves'.⁶ Expressions of collective identity and solidarity can be viewed at the level of inter-personal relationships or the nation-state, or in terms of transnational/international social forces.

At the same time, as discussions of the women's human rights agenda in chapters 4 and 9 make clear, 'universal' rights have been, and remain, a site of struggle. There are tensions between the principle of individual rights and expressions of communal identity. Any discussion of transnational expressions of identity necessitates re-visiting discussions (first raised in chapters 3 and 4) on how competing claims of identity and community play out on the site of women's bodies. One might, of course, make the same essential point in regard to LGBT rights, which are also a site of contestation in contemporary international politics.

A further recurring theme encountered throughout this book is that of the complexity of identities: the cross-cutting intersectionalities of class, race, gender and nationality. One of the most important developments in feminist IR since the late 1980s has been the increasing contribution made by postcolonial feminists. As is evident from the discussions in chapter 6, postcolonial theory also brings much to our understanding of the complex politics surrounding gender identities and sexualities, which is all too often – and problematically – framed in terms of West/non-West dichotomies and progressive/traditional binaries.

While postcolonial feminist work is not exclusively concerned with the politics of feminism (or indeed sexuality), this politics is an important theme in such work, but is given a twist in that postcolonial theorists problematize relationships between different groups of women, and activists and theorists who claim to speak for women. The same argument can and has been made in regard to gay rights activists (chapter 6). The politics of feminism has been addressed at various points in the book, but is especially pertinent to discussions of nationalisms in chapter 4 and the influence of the feminist movement at the UN, addressed in chapters 9 and 10.

A key theme of chapter 10 was the challenge involved in constructing collective identities, negotiating differences and forging solidarities among feminist activists in diverse settings and locations around the world. This discussion, in turn, harks back to feminist and critical theoretical discussions on the ethical dilemmas and challenges posed by 'difference' and the possibilities of

negotiating differences in local, national and international contexts.

Neither feminist IR, nor the broader range of critical theories that engage with issues of identity, difference, gender and sexuality, can provide concrete, definitive answers to these quandaries. Postcolonial work has been particularly important in advancing scholarship in this area, not least because it pins down these discussions concretely and so better elucidates the politics of such encounters. Power relations and material inequalities, along with cultural differences, are always tied up in struggles to forge solidarity. However, conflict can serve to generate creative tensions and encourage critical reflection upon what divides women (and other social groups) and what unites them. Conflict does not necessarily negate solidarity – conflict can serve as a positive force, making participants face up to their complicity in reproducing inequalities between people. This facilitates a better understanding of where common ground might be constructed.

Inequality and Power

Last, but not least, and following on from the above, gendering IR raises myriad challenges to the understanding of power and power relations in IR and also addresses – again concretely – social relations of inequality both within and across nation-states. The world order of the early twenty-first century, while radically changed in some respects, remains a world of stark inequalities. While there are differences between countries across the world, there are also many commonalities; and while the pattern of gendered inequality varies between regions, it is nevertheless a global phenomenon. While inequality is pertinent to many areas covered in this text – for example, citizenship, security and human rights – inequality was afforded explicit and extended coverage in chapter 8 particularly. Feminist scholars have focused heavily on how global political and economic processes and development projects produce and reproduce inequalities.

Chapter 8 also afforded closer attention to the long-standing feminist concerns with work, unpaid labour and social reproduction. The current financial crisis only serves to illustrate – yet again – how deeply embedded distinctions between the public and private support highly unequal gender relations, resulting in a structural disadvantage to those charged with the duty of care-work and social reproduction more generally. These people are very often women. With regard to questions of power, focusing on gender in IR necessarily encourages a rethinking of power relations. This is clear enough with respect to state-centric approaches to IR (such as neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism), but also applies to critical approaches, such as Gramscian IR that still tends to privilege class within an ostensibly transnational social relations framework.

The centrality of the concept of power to feminist thought and the myriad ways in which feminists theorize power have been explicitly addressed and elaborated throughout this book. At this juncture, however, it is worth noting – once again – how critical feminism, and most especially poststructuralist and postcolonial feminisms, also problematize power relations within the feminist movement. These interventions greatly complicate the project of gendering IR, yet the issues raised are too important to be conveniently sidelined in the interests of maintaining a singular and illusorily unified feminist project in international relations or IR. Neither poststructuralist nor postcolonial feminists working in IR wholly eschew possibilities for building theoretical bridges, or indeed forging concrete political projects, around, for example, the human rights agenda or anti-globalization struggles. Postcolonial theorists particularly have been at pains to stress the structural and systemic dimensions of social inequality and unequal power relations. However, while the construction of collective identities and the forging of political projects that do not wholly negate differences might be possible, the realization of such requires genuinely open participation, dialogue and respect for the validity of different voices. Again, inequality and power relations are implicated here.

In Summation

In the early 1990s, the poststructuralist theorist Rob Walker described IR as a ‘crudely patriarchal’ discourse.⁷ The discipline had largely failed to notice the relevance of gender in international relations/politics. Nor had IR engaged with feminist scholarship, despite the weight of literature on gender in other subject areas within the social sciences. In 1992, V. Spike Peterson took stock of the emerging sub-field of gender in IR and arrived at the conclusion that, as with other critical approaches, feminist IR seemed destined to, at best, merely ‘expand the margins’ of IR.⁸ This complaint about the marginality of gender studies and feminist scholarship specifically in IR has since been echoed by others.⁹ Moreover, as postcolonial theorists remind us, IR remains a discipline that is ostensibly devoted to the study of the *international*, but in reality remains heavily Western-centric. This criticism applies to the literature on gender in IR.

Nevertheless, since the late 1980s, the feminist project to ‘gender IR’¹⁰ has gathered a steady momentum. By 2001, Cynthia Enloe was able to point to successes measured by ‘how much is going on with feminist informed scholarship in lots of different parts of the world’ and ‘department by department’ in which more scholars were ‘embracing gender analyses’.¹¹ As is evidenced by the (unavoidably selective) coverage of academic research and major developments in the field of policy and practice in international politics in this book, the case for the relevance of gender to IR has been made. Moreover, along with other strands of critical scholarship, feminist IR and, in more recent years, scholarship on masculinities and sexualities have shaken the boundaries of ‘conventional’ IR on the theoretical and conceptual levels and greatly expanded the agenda of what is and is not considered to be a ‘legitimate’ focus of study in the field. Furthermore, today the field has been further enriched by the inclusion of cutting-edge work on men, masculinities and sexualities.

The project of gendering IR has achieved much since the late 1980s. Scholars working in the field have collectively generated an extensive body of work on: IR theory; the state; citizenship, political identity and the construction of the boundaries of political community; international ethics; war, conflict and conflict resolution; peace and peacekeeping; security; political economy, globalization and development; the architecture and mechanisms of global governance; and human rights issues that cut across all of these areas. As Cynthia Enloe reminded the IR community back in 2001, scholarship on gender in IR has necessitated rethinking ‘what one needs to study, to teach and to make sense of politics’.¹² In the process, this work has greatly enriched the discipline; the intellectual vibrancy and dynamism in the field at present hold out great future promise.

Glossary of Key Terms and Concepts

This appendix elaborates on concepts and terms that have been employed, but not defined, in the main body of the text. It is included for quick and easy reference. Further reading is recommended.

Advocacy

Advocacy is an activity undertaken by individuals or groups, not elected to political office, who attempt to influence policy-making or political decision making (usually on specific issues or in the name of specific groups). *Transnational* advocacy is an attempt made by groups or individuals to influence decision making on specific issues, or on behalf of a given constituency, or in a discrete area of policy, in a country other than their home state. Advocacy *networks* emerge among groups or individuals located in various countries who coordinate their activities in order to increase collective influence in decision making in a discrete area of policy or on a specific issue.

Agency

Agency is the ability to act in a way that exerts an influence in/on one's world. Agency can refer to the individual or be collective. Agency implies reflexivity – action directed by conscious thought. Agency is usually juxtaposed to the concept of determinism (below), which implies that structural factors over which the individual has little or no control and which the individual or collective is frequently unaware of or does not reflect upon, largely determine the course of an individual's life. The structure/agency debate is a core debate within the social sciences.

Anarchy

In the context of International Relations, anarchy means the absence of centralized, sovereign authority, or simply the absence of government. The term is commonly used to describe the nature of the international system or international society.

Archetype

An archetype might refer to a symbol or a recurring pattern of symbols, a category of some type (a thing) or, when applied to people, a generic personality type or stereotype.

Autonomy

Autonomy is the ability to formulate policies or make decisions without entering into cooperation with others (in the context used herein, other states).

(The) Body

The concept of the body is associated with poststructuralist thought particularly. The body refers to the physical or corporeal body. Poststructuralists contend that the physical body has no inherent meaning. In effect, biology or physiology does not confer meaning on the body; rather, the meaning of the body is inherently social and/or cultural. The construction of meaning in relation to the body might

involve an imposed regime of physical training. For example, military training is a practice whereby the militarized – strong, muscular, fit – body is realized. The meaning of the body is internalized so that individuals engage in practices of self-discipline – through a regime of diet and exercise, for example – in order, in this case, to achieve a socially and culturally determined idea of feminine beauty or masculine strength.

Bretton Woods System

The Bretton Woods System (BWS) refers to a system of monetary and financial regulation based on a system of fixed exchange rates underpinned by the gold standard (the convertibility of dollars into gold). The BWS was established at the end of the Second World War. The name is taken from a district in the town of Carroll, New Hampshire, USA, which hosted the Dumbarton Oaks conference in 1944 between the allied powers. The system collapse in 1971 (although the major institutions survived) after the United States abandoned the gold standard. Subsequently, there have been attempts to re-institute systems of monetary and financial regulation, including most notably (and so far successfully) the European Exchange Rate Mechanism.

Category

A category is an entity or thing deemed to be defined by particular characteristics or properties that render the entity distinct from other entities; for example ‘man’ shares distinctive characteristics or properties that set him apart from the category ‘dog’. While the notion of ‘category’ appears to be straightforward, in reality it is actually often tricky to identify specific categories. For example, democratic peace theory utilizes the category of ‘war’, but in practice it is difficult to determine precisely how ‘war’ is distinctive from other forms of social conflict involving violence. Moreover, it is difficult to pin down the essence of an entity outside of the process of social construction. Hence the feminist question: *Does ‘woman’ actually exist?*

Complementarity

Complementarity is a doctrine based on the idea that – in this case – men and women have different, but complementary, roles and responsibilities. The notion of complementarity usually appeals to biological differences, but might be promoted in the name of cultural differences. In contemporary practice related to gender in international politics, it is associated with religions (for example, Christianity, Judaism and Islam), but has been embraced by others who defend culturally determined gender roles. Complementarity differs from the concept of egalitarianism which stresses equal roles and responsibilities in a way that is indifferent to biological/physiological or cultural differences. However, it is also quite different from notions of inherent differences which justify discriminatory treatment – for example, the doctrine of male chauvinism that holds that men are both different from and superior to women. While associated with religious thought particularly, complementarianism is an element of some strands of feminist thought, notably *difference feminism*. There are philosophical and cultural variants of complementarianism: the Chinese notion of Yin and Yang, which denotes forces of interconnectedness or interdependence in the natural world, is one such example.

Communitarian/Communitarianism

Communitarianism holds that the human being or self is inherently social. Hence, the individual’s sense of identity and self-understanding – what it means to be human and what it means to be a self or

I – is embedded in a specific communal context. Thus, communitarianism offers a critique of liberal notions of the autonomous self abstracted from community and also of the doctrine of universalism which holds that all human beings share common moral values and rights irrespective of the specific communities in which they are embedded.

Communicative action

Communicative action is closely associated with the work of Karl-Otto Apel and Jürgen Habermas. Communicative action can be seen as an attempt to establish solid grounds on which to base and adjudge normative/moral arguments – for example, on what it means to live a good life, what human beings owe to one another or what is a ‘right’ action. While such questions cannot be answered by appeal to some transcendental subject or uncontested universal principle, they can be decided through rational argument. Communicative rationality might be seen as a response to the challenges of postmodernism and cultural and philosophical relativism.

Cosmopolitan/Cosmopolitanism

The doctrine of cosmopolitanism holds that all human beings belong to a single moral community (or, in some uses, belong to a single *communicative* community). While cosmopolitanism is associated with the concept of global citizenship and/or world government, it does not necessarily entail the demise of more limited, bounded and particularistic forms of community (such as the nation). For example, some strands of cosmopolitanism envisage membership of multiple forms of community, stretching from the local to global levels. The principle of and commitment to cosmopolitanism is not undermined as long as membership of any given community is compatible with a shared – universal – commitment to core values, rights and responsibilities. Thus, the principle of cosmopolitanism is realized, for example, when nation-states subscribe to, implement and respect universal human rights conventions.

Deconstruction

The term ‘deconstruction’ is associated particularly with the French philosopher and social theorist Jacques Derrida, although the term has come to be associated with poststructuralism more generally. Poststructuralists claim that nothing exists outside of the text, meaning that all social meaning and ‘social reality’ are constructed through the language (including symbols and signs) that we use to construct reality and meaning. Deconstruction is the act of taking apart or dismantling any given text to see how meaning has been constructed – through, for example, the juxtaposition of oppositional terms – man/woman, good/evil, light/dark.

Determinism

Determinism is the idea that human behaviour is wholly conditioned and constrained (largely or entirely beyond human control) – for example, human behaviour is predetermined by biology or absolutely constrained by social structures and institutions.

Empiricism

Empiricism is the idea that the only valid knowledge is knowledge gleaned through the senses – for example, through observation of phenomena in the empirical world.

Epistemology

Epistemology is a branch of philosophy concerned with knowledge: specifically, what it means to *know* things or have knowledge about the world and on what basis we can make knowledge claims.

Equity

In simple terms, equity means ‘fairness’: what any given society deems to be a fair distribution of resources among people and specific social groups, or what is deemed to be ‘fair’ treatment. The notion of equity is, therefore, distinct from the concept of equality which means affording an equal distribution of resources or treating all people and social groups according to a universal standard or principle. ‘Fairness’ is a vague concept and so equity is ultimately determined by a (posited) consensus on what is ‘fair’ in any given society.

Fourth debate (post-positivist debate)

In International Relations the fourth debate or post-positivist debate largely centred on methodological questions, while also raising related ontological and epistemological issues. This debate pitted positivists against reflectivists or post-positivists. While the debate can, and often does, serve as a useful way of categorizing different approaches to IR or as a means of recounting a story about theoretical developments in the discipline, it is not uncontroversial. Detractors claim that the exchanges that did take place during the fourth debate often had the character of participants talking past one another, rather than critically engaging (so were not actually ‘debates’ at all). Moreover, insofar as it is simply a way of characterizing different approaches, it is not actually a ‘debate’ at all.

Genealogy/Genealogical

Genealogy is associated with the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche and, in more recent times, the French philosopher and social theorist Michel Foucault. In essence, it is a method employed to identify the connection between ‘truth’ and power. Thus, rather than tracing the evolution of dominant ideas or posited truths (on, say, social deviancy, or sexuality), a genealogical method examines how certain conceptions or theories come to establish a socially dominant and widely accepted status even though they are contested. Genealogy interrogates how (contested) discourses and alternative ‘truths’ circulate and compete and how, ultimately, power relations determine the outcome of such contests in relation to truth and meaning. In this way it is possible to discern how socially accepted truths are configured within specific knowledge–power relationships.

Homogeneous

This term is used to denote categories of persons or things that are deemed to be essentially the same: uniform or comparable in kind. In social science the term is often employed in a critical vein to challenge the idea that people or groups share certain features or circumstances in common to the degree that all members of said group should be treated as essentially the same. An example of this is when terms like ‘Muslims’ or ‘women’ are employed in ways that infer that members of this group form an undifferentiated, uniform category or entity (in reality there is a great deal of variety within such groups).

Hybrid/Hybridity

‘Hybridity’ (a not uncontroversial concept) has been employed (especially in postcolonial theory) to

refer to new forms of culture and identity that are the result of trans-cultural contacts and mixings. Homi Bhabha used the term in the context of his calls for a ‘third space of enunciation’ in which it would be possible to recognize the mutually constitutive nature of the colonizer and colonized and so open up ways of speaking about ‘self’ and ‘other’ that avoided polarizing oppositional postures.

Hyphenated identities

The term ‘hyphenated identities’ expresses the idea that there exist multiple social and cultural bonds that individuals or specific social groups experience. It is particularly, though not exclusively, associated with diaspora or people whose parents (or one parent), or grandparents, came from a different society, culture and/or country from the one in which the individual or group now lives. So, for example, one might be an American citizen and possess a strong sense of identity as an American, but also feel that one shares a cultural and/or social bond with people from other parts of the world, as an African-American or Italian-American. Hyphenated identities bear testimony to the problems inherent in unreflectively mapping identity onto constructs such as ‘nations’, even as the entire notion of inter-national relations as a field of study rather takes for granted that a culturally and ethnically homogenized national identity is the norm.

Interpellation

Originally employed in Marxism, and in the work of Louis Althusser particularly, to refer to how the subject is produced through ideology, the term ‘interpellation’ is now more commonly employed in poststructuralism to refer to how the status of the subject is produced through specific configurations of power relations.

Logocentrism

A term employed in linguistics and metaphysics to denote the belief that meaning is ultimately located in discourse or language, or alternatively, a single object which the word refers to or represents. A simple example of logo-centrism is the idea that the ultimate meaning of the world is located in God. The word ‘God’ thus refers to or represents the ultimate source of knowledge and meaning.

Methodology

A methodology is a process followed when conducting research / undertaking experiments in any given field of study. The specific method or process followed is determined by the underlying theory of knowledge and/or underlying philosophical assumptions that drive the research project.

Development Goal

Established at the 2000 UN Millennium Summit, the UN Millennium Development Goals are eight specific targets that member states undertook to achieve by the year 2015. These targets included halting the spread of HIV/ AIDs, halving global poverty and achieving universal primary education.

Modernity

Modernity denotes a historical period following Feudalism. The emergence of the ‘modern’ world was characterized by inter-related processes of social, economic and political change – specifically, the rise of capitalism, the institution of the secular state and the state system, the decline of religious belief and the rise of science and increasing adherence to rationalism as a dominant mode of

knowledge. While the terms ‘modernity’ and ‘Enlightenment’ should not be conflated, modernity is nevertheless also commonly associated with the rise of universalistic and secular forms of thought and ideologies such as liberalism and Marxism.

Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism is the idea that multiple cultural communities co-exist within the boundaries of a larger political entity (usually the nation-state). Co-existence usually implies a degree of separation, which might take the form of separate schools for example. While all citizens will share the same rights and obligations in relation to the nation-state, in some circumstances specific legislation might be enacted to accommodate cultural differences.

Ontology/Ontological

In philosophy, ‘ontology’ refers to the nature of existence – what can be said to exist. Ontological issues are closely related to discussions on categories and categorization. So, for example, to ask the ontological question *Do women exist?* is not to question the actual existence of people called ‘women’ or the materiality of sexed bodies, but rather to question whether or not ‘women’ constitute a stable and fixed ontological category (see above). Ontological questions might be – and commonly are – posed about many of the key concepts routinely employed in International Relations. For example, the state might be taken to ‘exist’ in the sense that the state usually has a clearly defined territory, a recognized government and a population, although constructivists would counter that, in order to maintain statehood, the state must continually reproduce its existence through discourse and practice. To say that the *state is an actor* is to make an ontological claim. However, in this context, the state is clearly an abstraction, not a *concrete* entity that possesses and exercises agency.

Patriarchy

The literal meaning of patriarchy is ‘rule of the father’. In feminist thought, patriarchy is taken to mean the privileging of men and the masculine over women and the feminine in any given social order. The concept has been criticized on the ground that it seemingly infers that all men are powerful and all men exert power over women. The concept of patriarchy also appears to overlook instances where women exercise power over other women. However, the concept of patriarchy can account for wider disparities in power and more complex power relations without losing all coherence. Not all men have to be exercising patriarchal power – directly exercising power – for a system of patriarchy to exist, nor do all women have to be entirely without social power. For example, patriarchy can be seen as a system that disproportionately privileges the masculine and/or confers social power on men and thereby normalizes gender inequality and discrimination against women as a whole. So, if women are deemed to be in some way ‘unfit’ for, or ‘unsuited’ to occupy, positions of political high office and this proposition is widely accepted, women will be generally disadvantaged vis-à-vis men in contests for such positions, regardless of whether or not there are exceptions to this ‘rule’ and regardless of the fact that the majority of men never occupy the high offices of state. In this example, the actual empirical evidence of women’s grossly unequal access to and representation in the high offices of state power would suggest that while some societies are more overtly patriarchal than others, patriarchy is – in this sense – universal.

Regime

In International Relations a regime is the ‘implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures around which actors’ expectations converge in a given area’ (Stephen Krasner, ‘Structural Causes and Regime Consequences: Regimes as Intervening Variables’, *International Organization*, 36, 2 (1982), 185–205). Examples of regimes are international conventions that set down norms, principles and rules that states are expected to implement and use as a guide in decision making. The Bretton Woods System (above) was an example of a regime.

Regime change

In this usage ‘regime’ refers to political regime or government. As the phrase implies, ‘regime change’ refers to the replacement of one regime by another. This might occur as a result of a putsch or coup d’etat. However, regime change is often associated with the intervention of an external power or force in order to compel change in a way that is favourable to the interests of the intervening power.

Strategic framing

To frame an issue strategically is to highlight those aspects of the issue which are most likely to illicit the desired response (for the framer). Thus, strategic framing taps into existing dominant constructions of particular issues or public consciousness on any given issue. This might involve the use and/or manipulation of stereotypes, in order to accord the issue greater attention or salience within the public policy world. An example of this would be references to ‘women and children’ as ‘victims’ in war. In reality, men might also be victims in war and women might be victimizers in some instances. However, it is the language of ‘women and children’ that resonates with the target audience.

Subjectivity

‘Subjectivity’ refers to the way in which individuals conceive of and experience the world. It is associated with perception, consciousness, values, emotions, memory and any and all other factors that influence the construction of identity and how a person sees, interprets and makes sense of the social or natural world of which s/he is a part and with which s/he interacts. Subjectivity is contrasted with objectivity, which is an attempt to strip away all such factors so that we ‘see’ and understand social and natural phenomena *as they really are*.

Teleology

A doctrine is teleological if the flow of events or course of action is understood and interpreted by reference to the final end state. For example, the doctrine of Marxism is teleological in that the theory interprets the course of history as the unfolding of events that are moving human society towards the final end state of communism. However, this interpretation of events already presupposes the same final end (i.e. communism).

Transnationalism

‘Transnationalism’ refers to any process – economic, political or cultural, for example – that connects peoples across national boundaries or which affects people across national boundaries. ‘Transnationalism’ usually refers to relationships forged between civil society groups, at sub-state level.

Voluntarism

‘Voluntarism’ is the idea that the will is the driving force in human motivation. In more general usage, it is associated with the notion of free will – that people exercise free or voluntary choice in their actions, as opposed to being constrained by determining factors or driven by emotional impulses over which they have little control and of which they might not even be aware.

Notes

INTRODUCTION

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CONCLUSION

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