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Gender in Global Politics

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Abstract. Gender refers, most basically, to the social construction of sexual difference. As such, ‘gender’ is clearly distinct from ‘sex’ (terms that are often used interchangeably in everyday language). For most feminists, ‘sex’ highlights biological, and therefore ineradicable, differences between females and males, while ‘gender’ denotes a set of culturally defined distinctions between women and men. This paper grapples with the way in which gender helps to structure global politics. It does so using feminist perspectives on International Relations (**IR**). It begins with a robust analysis of varieties of feminism, gives an overview of feminist theories more generally, and offers a feminist definition of gender. Feminists define gender as an unequal structural relationship of power. Building on a variety of the IR theoretical perspectives, IR feminists use gender to help them apprehend and comprehend why women are disadvantaged relative to men in all societies. The paper focuses on feminist perspectives on nation-states, security and the global economy. It scrutinizes gendered states and gendered nations, and stresses that the issues of identity in global politics are generally dominated by an emphasis on identification with the nation-state. The paper dilates on the masculinity of war and national security, suggesting that states’ national security policies are often legitimated in terms of masculine characteristics. This helps in the understanding why women have been so underrepresented in powerful positions in the international policy world and in militaries. Feminists consider the security of individuals to be as important as the security of states. There is an examination of how gendered economic structures of inequality, associated with a global gendered division of labour, can help in the explanation of why the majority of the world’s poor are women. The paper concludes by outlining some policy practices that are helping to lessen gender inequality.

Keywords: Gender, Feminist, Global Politics, Security, Policy Practice, Social Constructivism

1. Introduction

The study of international politics has traditionally been ‘gender-blind’. In a discipline that focused primarily on states and inter-state relations, sexual politics and gender relations appeared to be of little or no relevance. Since the 1980s, however, feminist perspectives on world affairs have gained growing prominence. To a large degree, this reflected a growing acceptance that people’s understanding of the world is shaped by the social and historical context in which they live and work. This implied, amongst other things, that global politics could be understood through a ‘gender lens’. One implication of adopting a gender perspective has been to make women visible, in the sense of compensating for a ‘mobilization of bias’ within a largely male-dominated discipline that had previously been concerned only with male-dominated institutions and processes. Women, in other words, have always been part of world politics; it is just that their role and contribution had been ignored. At a deeper, and analytically more significant, level, putting a ‘gender lens’ on global politics means recognizing the extent to which the concepts, theories and assumptions through which the world has conventionally been understood are gendered. Gender analysis is thus the analysis of masculine and feminine identities, symbols and structures and how they shape global politics. Not only does this involve exposing what are seen as ‘masculinist’ biases that run through the conceptual framework of mainstream theory, but this conceptual framework has also, in some ways, been recast to take account of feminist perceptions.

Feminist perspectives entered the international relations discipline at the end of the 1980s, at about the same time as the end of the Cold War. This was not a coincidence. During the previous years, the conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union had dominated the agenda of international relations. The decade after the end of the Cold War (1989-2000) was one of relative peace between the major powers. Many new issues appeared on the international relations' agenda. More attention was paid to economic relations. There were lively debates between proponents of economic globalization and those who claimed that it was not helping to decrease world poverty. The meaning of security was expanded to include human as well as state security. International relations began to pay more attention to ethno-national conflicts and to the high number of civilians killed or injured in these conflicts (Abolaji 2019). More attention was also paid to international organizations, social movements, and non-state actors. It is quintessential to stress that international politics is about much more than inter-state relations.

This broad set of issues seems the most compatible with feminist approaches. Feminists are not satisfied with framing international politics solely in terms of inter-state politics. While women have always been players in international politics, their participation has more often taken place in non-governmental settings such as social movements rather than in inter-state policy-making. Women also participate in international politics as diplomats' wives, as nannies going abroad to find work to support their families, and as sex workers trafficked across international boundaries. Women's voices have rarely been heard in the halls of state power or in the leadership of militaries. Nevertheless, women are deeply impacted by decisions that their leaders make. Civilian casualties constitute about 90 per cent of the casualties in today's wars, and women and children make up the majority of these casualties. Women are the majority of the world's poorest population (Abimbola 2019). Economic policies, constructed in distant centres of power, affect how resources are distributed in local communities. Broader global frameworks are more suited to investigating these issues.

Before investigating how gender is at work in these global issues, let us begin with varieties of feminism, a brief introduction to feminist theory and a definition of what feminists mean by the term gender.

2. Varieties of Feminism

Feminism can broadly be defined as a movement for the social advancement of women. As such, feminist theory is based on two central beliefs: that women are disadvantaged because of their sex; and that this disadvantage can and should be overthrown. In this way, feminists have highlighted what they see as a political relationship between the sexes, the supremacy of men and the subjugation of women in most, if not all, societies (Abo 2016). Although the term 'feminism' may have been a twentieth-century invention, such views have been expressed in many different cultures and can be traced back as far as the ancient civilizations of Greece and China. For example, the Book of the City of Ladies, written by the Venetian-born poet Christine de Pisan (1365–1434), foreshadowed many of the ideas of modern feminism in recording the deeds of famous women in the past and advocating women's rights to education and political influence. However, feminism has always been a highly diverse political tradition, encompassing what sometimes appears to be a bewildering range of sub-traditions – 'liberal' feminism, 'socialist' or 'Marxist' feminism, 'radical' feminism, 'postmodern' feminism, 'psychoanalytical' feminism, 'postcolonial' feminism, 'lesbian' feminism and so on. Two broad distinctions are nevertheless helpful. The first of these is between the feminism's first wave and its second wave. So-called first-wave feminism emerged in the nineteenth century and was shaped above all by the campaign for female suffrage, the right to vote. Its core belief was that women should enjoy the same legal and political rights as men, with a particular emphasis being placed on female suffrage on the grounds that if women could vote, all other forms of other forms of sexual discrimination or prejudice would quickly disappear. Second-wave feminism was born out of recognition that the achievement of political and legal rights had not solved the 'woman problem'. The goal of second-wave feminism was not merely political emancipation but women's liberation, reflected in the ideas of the growing women's liberation movement, one of the leading so-called 'new' social movements that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s. A key theme of this movement was that women's liberation could not be achieved by political reforms or legal changes alone, but demanded a more far-reaching and perhaps revolutionary process of social change. Whereas first-wave feminism had been primarily concerned with reform in the 'public' sphere of education, politics and work, second-wave feminism sought to re-structure the 'private' sphere of family and domestic life, reflecting the belief that 'the personal is the political'. Second-wave feminism thus practised the 'politics of everyday life', raising questions about power structures in the family and personal and sexual relationships between women and men. This shift reflected the growing importance within feminist theory of what was called radical feminism, which presents female subordination as pervasive and systematic, stemming from the institution of ‘patriarchy’ (Millett 2000; Okafor 2011; Elshtain 2012).

Since the 1970s, however, feminism has undergone a process of de-radicalization, defying (repeated) attempts to define a clear feminist ‘third wave’, but it has also become increasingly diverse. A second broad distinction within feminism has nevertheless become increasingly significant: whether feminism is defined by the quest for ‘equality’ or by the recognition of ‘difference’. Feminism has traditionally been closely associated with, some would say defined by, the quest for gender equality, whether this means the achievement of equal rights (liberal feminism), social equality (socialist feminism) or equal personal power (radical feminism). In what can broadly be called equality feminism, ‘difference’ implies oppression or subordination; it highlights legal, political, social or other advantages that men enjoy but which are denied to women. Women, in that sense, must be liberated from difference. Although socialist feminists and most radical feminists embrace egalitarian ideas, the most influential form of equality feminism is liberal feminism. Liberal feminism dominated first-wave feminism and helped to shape reformist tendencies within second-wave feminism, particularly in the USA. The goal of liberal feminism is to ensure that women and men enjoy equal access to the ‘public’ sphere, underpinned by the right to education, to vote and participate in political life, to pursue a career, and so forth. Such thinking is based on the belief that human nature is basically androgynous.

All human beings, regardless of their sex, possess the genetic inheritance of a mother and a father, and therefore embody a blend of both female and male attributes and traits. Women and men should therefore not be judged by their sex, but as individuals, as ‘persons’. In this view, a very clear distinction is drawn between sex and gender. ‘Sex’, in this sense, refers to biological differences between females and males, usually linked to reproduction; these differences are natural and therefore are unalterable. ‘Gender’, on the other hand, is a social construct, a product of culture, not nature. Gender differences are typically imposed through contrasting stereotypes of ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’.

As the French philosopher and feminist Simone de Beauvoir (1908–1986) put it, ‘Women are made, they are not born’. The idea that gender is a social construct was originally conceived as a means of refuting biological determinism, the notion, favoured by many anti-feminists, that ‘biology is destiny’, implying that women’s domestic or ‘private’ role is an inevitable consequence of their physical and biological make-up. However, it can also imply that gender differences are more deep-rooted, grounded in the quite different material and psycho-sexual experiences of women and men (Steans 2008; Squires 2009). This has led to what has been called ‘standpoint feminism’, in which the world is understood from the unique perspective – or standpoint – of women’s experience (Tickner 2002). Standpoint feminists hold, in particular, that women’s experience at the margins of political life has given them a perspective on social issues that provides insights into world affairs. Although not necessarily superior to those of men, women’s views nevertheless constitute valid insights into the complex world of global politics. In other cases, forms of difference feminism have attempted to link social and cultural differences between women and men to deeper biological differences (Adebimpe 2017; Hamzat 2019). They thus offer an essentialist account of gender that rests on the assumption that there is an ‘essence’ of man/woman which determines their gendered behaviours regardless of socialization. However, regardless of whether they have biological, politico-cultural or psycho-sexual origins, a belief in deeply-rooted and possibly ineradicable differences between women and men has significant implications for feminist theory (Held 2015). In particular, it suggests that the traditional goal of gender equality is misguided or simply undesirable. To want to be equal to a man implies that women are ‘male-identified’, in that they define their goals in terms of what men are or what men have. The demand for equality therefore embodies the desire to be ‘like men’, adopting, for instance, the competitive and aggressive behavior that characterizes male society. Difference feminists, by contrast, argue that women should be ‘female-identified’: women should seek liberation not as supposedly sexless ‘persons’ but as developed and fulfilled women, celebrating female values and characteristics. In that sense, women gain liberation through difference.

An emphasis on difference rather than equality can also be seen, albeit in contrasting ways, in the case of postcolonial feminism and post-structural feminism. Postcolonial feminists take issue with any universalist analysis of the plight of women and how it should be addressed, viewing it as an attempt to impose a political agenda developed out of the experiences of middle class women in liberal capitalist societies onto women generally (Adebola and Okechukwu 2012; Chowdhry and Nair 2012).

Postcolonial feminists have therefore resisted attempts to deal with gender injustice through a 'top-down' international policy process which treats the recipients of its intervention merely as 'victims'. Post-structural or post-modern feminists, for their part, question the idea that there is such a thing as a fixed female identity, rejecting the notion also that insights can be drawn from a distinctive set of women's experiences (Saheed 2003; Sylvester 2004). From this perspective, even the idea of 'woman' may be nothing more than a fiction, as supposedly indisputable biological differences between women and men are, in significant ways, shaped by gendered discourses (not all women are capable of bearing children, for example).

3. Feminist Theories

Feminism as an academic discipline grew out of the feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s – a movement dedicated to achieving political, social, and economic equality for women. Many feminists link constructing knowledge to political practice (Bolajoko and Ngozi 2020). This form of knowledge-building is called emancipatory knowledge. It means producing knowledge that can help inform practices to improve women's lives. The most important goal for feminist theory is to explain women's subordination, which exists to varying degrees in all societies, and to seek ways to end it. However, feminists disagree on why women are subordinate and thus, how to overcome it.

There are many different types of feminist theory. They all give us different reasons for women's subordination. They include liberal, Marxist, socialist, post-colonial, and post-modern. Liberal feminists believe that removing legal obstacles can overcome women's subordination. However, all the other approaches—which we will call post-liberal—see deeply rooted structures of patriarchy in all societies, which cannot be overcome by legal remedies alone. Marxist and socialist feminists look for explanations for women's subordination in the labour market that offers greater rewards and prestige for paid work in the public sphere than for unpaid work in the household. (Women do most of the unpaid work, even when they work for wages, thus imposing what feminists call a double burden). Post-colonial and post-modern feminists believe that we cannot generalize about all women. Women experience subordination differently because they are differently placed in and among societies depending on their class and race, as well as their gender. All these post-liberal feminist theories use gender as an important category of analysis.

4. Feminists Define Gender

Gender refers, most basically, to the social construction of sexual difference. As such, 'gender' is clearly distinct from 'sex' (terms that are often used interchangeably in everyday language). For most feminists, 'sex' highlights biological, and therefore ineradicable, differences between females and males, while 'gender' denotes a set of culturally defined distinctions between women and men. Gender either operates through stereotyping (usually based on contrasting models of femininity and masculinity), or it is a manifestation of structural power relations. This constructivist account of gender has nevertheless been challenged by essentialist feminists, who reject the sex/gender distinction altogether, by poststructuralist feminists, who highlight the ambiguity of gender, and by postcolonial feminists, who insist that gender identities are multiple, not singular.

In everyday usage, gender denotes the biological sex of individuals. However, feminists define gender differently—as a set of socially and culturally constructed characteristics that vary across time and place. When we think of characteristics such as power, autonomy, rationality, and public, we associate them with masculinity or what it means to be a 'real man'. Opposite characteristics, such as weakness, dependence/connection, emotionality, and private, are associated with femininity. There have been studies that show that both women and men assign a more positive value to masculine characteristics. These definitions of masculinity and femininity are relational, which means that they depend on each other for their meaning. In other words, what it means to be a 'real man' is not to display 'womanly' weaknesses. Since these characteristics are social constructions, not biological ones, it is quite possible for women, particularly those in powerful positions appear to many to act like 'real men'. In fact, certain feminists have argued that such behaviour is necessary for both women and men to succeed in the tough world of international policy-making (Cohn 2003: 230-231, 237-238).

Sometimes gender is thought to be synonymous with women. But feminists believe that gender is as much about men and masculinity as it is about women. Since, at the top level, international politics is a masculine world, it is particularly important to pay attention to various forms of masculinity that are often used to legitimate states' foreign and military policies. For example, characteristics such as power, autonomy, and rationality, which we have identified as masculine, are characteristics that are most valued in states' foreign policies.

But gender is about more than personal characteristics. Since, as we have seen, gender characteristics are generally unequal—meaning that people of both sexes ascribe more positive value to the masculine ones—gender is also a structure of meaning that signifies power relationships. If gender characteristics denote inequality, gender becomes mechanism for the unequal distribution of social benefits and costs. Therefore, gender is crucial for analyzing global politics and economics, particularly with respect to issues of inequality, insecurity, and social justice. Feminists believe we need to make unequal gender structures visible in order to move beyond them.

We have shown that gender is an analytical tool not just a descriptive category. Now that we have examined varieties of feminism, feminist theory and defined gender, let us look at how International Relations (**IR**) feminists use gender as a category of analysis.

5. Putting a Gender Lens on Global Politics

Feminist theories have only been widely applied to the study of international and global issues since the late 1980s, some twenty years after feminism had influenced other areas of the social sciences. Since then, however, gender perspectives have gained growing prominence, alongside other critical theories that have, in their various ways, challenged mainstream realist and liberal approaches. Feminism has made a particular contribution to the so-called 'fourth debate' in international relations, which has opened up questions about the nature of theory and the politics of knowledge generally. These newer perspectives have generally accepted that all theory is conditioned by the social and historical context in which the activity of theorizing takes place (Cletus 2019). But what does it mean to put a 'feminist lens' or 'gender lens' (or, more accurately, 'lenses', in view of the heterodox nature of feminist theory) on global politics? How can issues such as nationalism, security, war and so on be 'gendered'? There are two main ways which take account of how prevailing gender relations alter analytical and theoretical approaches to global politics. These are sometimes called empirical feminism and analytical feminism (True 2019).

Empirical feminism is primarily concerned to add women to existing analytical frameworks (it is sometimes disparaged as 'add women and stir'). This perspective, influenced in particular by liberal feminism, has an essentially empirical orientation because it addresses the under-representation or misrepresentation of women in a discipline that has conventionally focused only on male-dominated institutions and processes. Its critique of conventional approaches to international politics is thus encapsulated in the question: 'where are the women?' Making feminist sense of international politics therefore means recognizing the previously invisible contributions that women make to shaping world politics, as, for example, domestic workers of various kinds, migrant labourers, diplomats' wives, sex workers on military bases and so forth (Enloe 1989, 1993, 2000; Modupeola and Oluremi 2019). The influence of such thinking can be seen in the adoption, particularly since the UN Decade for Women (1976–85), of gender mainstreaming by the United Nations itself and other bodies such as the World Bank. However, although 'adding women' demonstrates that women are, and have always been, relevant to international political activities and global processes, such a gender lens has its limitations. In the first place, it only recognizes gender as an empirical, not an analytical, category, meaning that it widens our awareness of the range of global processes rather than changes our understanding of them. Second, by highlighting the under-representation of women in conventional leadership roles at national, international and global levels, it can be said to be unduly concerned with the interests of elite women, while giving insufficient attention to how rectifying such gender imbalances might affect the behaviour of global actors.

Analytical feminism, by contrast, is concerned to highlight the gender biases that pervade the theoretical framework and key concepts of mainstream international theory, and particularly realism. It is analytical in that it addresses the issue of how the world is seen and understood, drawing on the ideas of difference feminism. Whereas mainstream theories have traditionally been presented as gender-neutral, analytical feminism uncovers hidden assumptions that stem from the fact that such theories derive from a social and political context in which male domination is taken for granted. Key concepts and ideas of mainstream theories therefore reflect a masculinist bias. Standpoint feminism has been particularly influential in demonstrating just how male-dominated conventional theories of international politics are.

International Relations (IR) feminists use gender analysis to help them answer questions about global politics. V. Spike Peterson and Anne Sisson Runyan call this putting on our gender-sensitive lenses. Let us see what kind of questions we might ask when we put our gender-sensitive lenses.

6. Some Feminist Questions

Less than 10 per cent of the world's heads of state are women and most of the world's military personnel are men. In order to understand the lack of women in high places we might begin by asking 'where are the women?'. Cynthia Enloe (1989:8) suggests that we need to look in unconventional places, not normally considered within the boundaries of global politics, to answer this question. She asks us to consider whether women's roles, as secretaries, clerical workers, domestic servants, and diplomats' wives, are relevant to the business of international politics. She shows us how vital women in these various roles are to states' foreign policies and to the functioning of the global economy.

But making women visible does not explain why they are disproportionately situated in low-paid or non-remunerated occupations far from the halls of power. To explain this we must put on our gendered lenses and think about women's places within gendered global structures and processes that constrain their security and their economic opportunities. We might want to ask some further questions. How are the types of power necessary to keep unequal gender structures in place perpetuated? Does it make any difference to states' policy practices that their foreign and security policies are often legitimated through appeals to various types of masculinity? Does it make a difference that it is predominantly men who fight wars? Answering these questions may help us to see that what is so often taken for granted in how the world is organized is, in fact, keeping in place certain social arrangements and institutional structures which contribute to the subordination of women and other disadvantaged groups.

To help them answer these questions IR feminists use a number of different theoretical approaches that build on feminist theory more generally. Let us look at some examples.

6.1 Liberal Feminism

Liberal feminists document various aspects of women's subordination. They have investigated problems of refugee women, income inequalities between women and men, and the kinds of human rights violations incurred disproportionately by women, such as trafficking and rape in war. They look for women in the institutions and practices of global politics and observe how their presence (or lack thereof) affects and is affected by international policy-making. They ask what a world with more women in positions of power might look like. Liberal feminists believe that women's equality can be achieved by removing legal and other obstacles that have denied them the same rights and opportunities as men.

Many IR feminists disagree with liberal feminism. As we noted earlier, post-liberal feminists emphasize that gender inequalities continue to exist in societies that have long since achieved formal legal equality. They suggest that we must look more deeply at gender hierarchies in order to explain these inequalities. Post-liberal feminists draw on, but go beyond, a variety of IR approaches, such as Marxism, Social Constructivism and post-modernism. What is unique to these feminist approaches is that they use gender as a category of analysis. Let us look at some examples of each.

6.2 Feminist Critical Theory

Feminist critical theory has roots in Gramscian Marxism. It explores both the ideational and material manifestations of gendered identities and gendered power in global politics. Sandra Whitworth is a feminist critical theorist. In her book, Feminism and International Relations (1994), she claims that understanding gender depends only in part on the material conditions of women and men in particular circumstances. She suggests that gender is also constituted by the meaning given to that reality—in the other words, ideas that men and women have about their relationships to one another. Whitworth examines the different ways gender was understood over time in the International Planned Parenthood Federation (**IPPF**) and the International Labour Organization (**ILO**). She shows that changes in the meaning of gender had differing effects on these institutions' population polices at various times in their history.

6.3 Feminist Social Constructivism

Feminist Constructivism builds on Social Constructivism. Feminist constructivists study the processes whereby ideas about gender influence global politics as well as the ways that global politics shape ideas about gender. Elisabeth Prugl is a feminist constructivist. Her book, The Global Construction of Gender (1999), uses feminist Constructivism to analyze the treatment of home-based work in international law. Since most home-based workers are women, the debate about regulating this type of employment is an important one for feminists. Low wages and poor working conditions are often justified on the grounds that home-based work is not ‘real work’ since it takes place in the private reproductive sphere of the household rather than in the more valued public sphere of waged-based production. Prugl shows how ideas about femininity have contributed to the international community’s debates about institutionalizing these home-based workers’ rights, a debate that finally culminated in the passage of the ILO’s Homework Convention in 1996.

6.4 Feminist Post-Modernism

Post-modernists focus on meaning as it is codified in language. They claim that we understand reality through our use of language. They are particularly concerned with the relationship between knowledge and power—meaning that those who construct meaning and create knowledge gain a great deal of power by so doing. Feminist post-modernists point out that men have generally been seen as the knowers and that what has counted as knowledge has generally been based on men’s lives in the public sphere. Women have generally not been seen as knowers or as the subjects of knowledge.

Charlotte Hooper’s book Manly States (2001) is an example of post-modern textual analysis. Hooper claims that we cannot understand international relations unless we understand the implications of the fact that it is conducted mostly by men. She asks how might international relations shape men as much as men shape international relations. Hooper sets about answering this question through an analysis of masculinity, together with a textual analysis of The Economist, a prestigious British weekly newspaper that covers business and politics. She concludes that The Economist is saturated with signifiers of masculinity and that gendered messages are encoded in the newspaper regardless of the intentions of its publishers or authors. This is one example of how gender politics pervades our understanding of world politics.

6.5 Post-Colonial Feminism

Post-colonialists focus on colonial relations of domination and subordination, established under European imperialism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Post-colonialists claim that these dominance relationships still persist and that they are built into the way Western knowledge portrays people and countries in the South today. Post-colonial feminism makes similar claims about the way Western feminism has constructed knowledge about non-Western women. Just as feminists have criticized Western knowledge for being knowledge constructed mainly from men’s lives, post-colonial feminists see similar problems arising from feminist knowledge that is based largely on the experiences of relatively privileged Western women. Chandra Mohanty (2008) suggests that women’s subordination must be addressed within their own cultural context, rather than through some universal understanding of women’s needs. She criticizes Western feminists’ portrayal of Third World women as poor, undereducated, victimized, and lacking in agency.

We have examined some writings of IR feminists who have put on their gender lenses in order to understand why women are disadvantaged relative to men and what difference this makes to global politics. Let us now look through our gendered lenses at three important realms of global politics—nation-state, security, and economic globalization.

7. Gendered States and Gendered Nations

Issues of identity in global politics are generally dominated by an emphasis on identification with the nation-state. Such identification is particularly strong because the overlapping allegiances of citizenship (membership of a state) and nationality (membership of a nation) are focused on a territorially defined community. Moreover, the supposedly homogeneous character of the nation-state helps to explain why alternative forms of identity, such as those based on social class, gender, religion and ethnicity, have traditionally been politically marginalized. The rise of the modern women’s movement has, to some extent, countered nation-state loyalties by trying to foster a rival sense of ‘international sisterhood’, based on transnational gender allegiances, although, as with attempts by the twentieth-century socialist movement to inculcate a sense of ‘proletarian internationalism’, this has had little serious impact. Of greater significance, however, have been feminists’ attempts to demonstrate the extent to which both the state and the nation are entangled with gender assumptions and biases.

Feminism does not contain a theory of the state as such (MacKinnon 2009). Furthermore, feminists have usually not regarded the nature of state power as a central political issue, preferring instead to concentrate on the ‘deeper structure’ of male power centred on institutions such as the family. Nevertheless, radical feminists in particular have argued that patriarchy operates in, and through, the state, meaning that the state is in fact a patriarchal state. However, there are contrasting instrumentalist and structuralist versions of this argument. The instrumentalist approach views the state as little more than an 'agent' or 'tool' used by men to defend their interests and uphold the structures of patriarchy. This line of argument draws on the core feminist belief that patriarchy is upheld by the division of society into distinct public and private spheres of life. The subordination of women has traditionally been accomplished through their confinement to a private sphere of family and domestic responsibilities, turning them into housewives and mothers, and through their exclusion from a public realm centred on politics and the economy. Quite simply, in this view, the state is run by men for men. Whereas instrumentalist arguments focus on the personnel of the state, and particularly the state elite, structuralist arguments tend to emphasize the degree to which state institutions are embedded in a wider patriarchal system.

Modern radical feminists have paid particular attention to the emergence of the welfare state, seeing it as the expression of a new kind of patriarchal power. Welfare may uphold patriarchy by bringing about a transition from private dependence (in which women as homemakers are dependent on male breadwinners) to a system of public dependence in which women are increasingly controlled by the institutions of the extended state. For instance, women have become increasingly dependent on the state as clients or customers of state services (such as childcare institutions, nurseries, schools and social services) and as employees, particularly in the so-called 'caring' professions (such as nursing, social work and education).

The gendered character of the state is not only significant in consolidating, and possibly extending, the internal structures of male power, but also in shaping the external behaviour of states and thus the structure of the international system. Here, patriarchy dictates that states will be competitive and at least potentially aggressive, reflecting the forms of social interaction that are characteristic of male society generally. A patriarchal state-system is thus one that is prone to conflict and war. Moreover, such tendencies and behaviour are legitimized by the conceptual framework through which the international system has conventionally been interpreted. This can be seen, for instance, in the case of sovereignty. State sovereignty, the central principle of the Westphalian state-system, presents states as separate and independent entities, autonomous actors operating in an anarchic environment. Such an image can be seen to reflect an essentially masculinist view of the world insofar as male upbringing stresses the cultivation of independence, self-reliance and robustness generally.

Just as boys and men are accustomed to think of themselves as separate, self-contained creatures, it is natural to think that states have similar characteristics. Very much the same can be said about the stress in mainstream international theory on the national interest as the primary motivation of states. This may be seen to derive from an emphasis in male upbringing on self-assertion and competitiveness. Indeed, in this light, the classical realist belief that state egoism reflects human egoism, should perhaps be recast as: state egoism reflects male egoism.

Gendered perspectives on nations and nationalism have also been developed (Dauda 2014; Yuval-Davis and Anthias 2015; Yuval-Davis 2017). These have adopted a number of approaches, but one important aspect of gendering nationalism has focused on the extent to which women have been used to symbolize the cultural heritage of an ethnic, religious or national group. As such, gender becomes entangled with issues of national or cultural difference. This can be seen in the common tendency to depict the nation in explicitly gendered terms, usually as a 'motherland' but sometimes as a 'fatherland'. In a sense, such images merely reflect parallels between the nation and the family, both being viewed, in some sense, as 'home' and both being fashioned out of kinship or at least kinship-like ties. The rhetoric of nationalism is also often heavily sexualized and gendered, as, for instance, in the idea of patriotism as a love of one's country.

Gender images are nevertheless particularly prominent in the case of regressive forms of ethnic, religious or national identity. As these tend to stress the role of women as 'mothers of the nation', reproducers of the ethnic or national group itself as well as transmitters of its distinctive culture, they place a special emphasis on female 'purity'. This can be seen in the tendency for religious fundamentalism to be closely linked to attempts to re-establish traditional gender roles, religious revivalism being symbolized by 'idealized womanhood'. However, such tendencies can also have wider implications, not least in linking nationalist conflict to the possibility of violence against women. The notion that women embody the symbolic values of chastity and motherhood can mean that aggressive forms of nationalism target women through rape and other forms of sexual violence. The honour of men (as protectors of women) and the moral integrity of the nation is best destroyed through physical attacks on the honour of women. Incidents of gendered violence have occurred, for example, in Croatia and Bosnia in the 1990s as well as in the anti-Muslim riots in Gujarat, India in 2002.

8. Gendering Security

8.1 Challenging the Myth of Protection

We often think of men as protectors and women and children as people who need protection. One of the stories that has been told throughout history is that men fight wars to protect women and children. The high number of civilian casualties in contemporary wars, about 90 per cent of total casualties, suggests that we should be questioning this story. A large proportion of these casualties are women and children. Women and children constitute the majority of the world's refugee population. When women, often acting as heads of households, are forced into refugee camps, their vulnerability, and that of their children, increases. In wartime, women are particularly subject to rape and prostitution. Rape is not just an accident of war but often a systematic military strategy. It is estimated that 20,000 to 35,000 women were raped during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In Bosnia, rape was associated with a policy of ethnic cleansing. The strategy included forced pregnancies to make Bosnia a Serbian state by implanting Serbian babies in Bosnian Muslim mothers (Pettman 2006:101).

These stories about women in conflict situations severely challenge the protection myth. Yet, such myths have been important in upholding the legitimacy of war. Using our gender lenses to look at the effects of war on women helps us to gain a better understanding of the unequal gender relations, such as the protector/protected relationship, that legitimate military activities and hide some of the negative effects of war on civilians. Let us now look more deeply at how these gendered constructions can help us understand national and international security.

8.2 Gendering War

Feminist analysis has placed particular emphasis on developing a gendered conception of security and war (Tickner 2010). Conventional approaches to security present it as 'the highest end' of international politics (Waltz 1979). In this view, states have prime responsibility for maintaining security, as reflected in the notion of 'national security'. The major threats to security are therefore external, coming in particular from other states. In this way, the threat of violence and other forms of physical coercion are intrinsically linked to the prospect of interstate war. National security is thus closely linked to the prevention of such wars, usually through a build-up of military capacity to deter potential aggressors. Feminists, for their part, have criticized this view of security on two grounds. First, it is premised on masculinist assumptions about rivalry, competition and inevitable conflict, arising from a tendency to see the world in terms of interactions among a series of power-seeking, autonomous actors. Second, the conventional idea of national security tends to be self-defeating as a result of the security paradox. This creates what has been called the 'insecurity of security'.

Feminist theorists, by contrast, have embraced alternative conceptions of security, most commonly the notion of 'human security'. Nevertheless, the parameters of human security are sometimes unclear. While some argue that it should be confined to 'freedom from fear' (in which case the key threats to security would be armed conflict and human-made physical violence), others extend it to include 'freedom from want' (in which case poverty, inequality and structural violence become key threats). Further controversies have arisen from attempts to make the concept of human security measurable, in order to make it easier for researchers and policy-makers to apply it in practice. For example, the Human Security Gateway, an online database of human security-related resources, classifies a human security crisis as a situation where at least 1,000 civilian deaths have occurred. For some feminists, such tendencies implicitly privilege physical security and military threats over threats such as rape, loss of property, inadequate food and environmental degradation, which may not result in death, but which nevertheless lead to profound insecurity and, sometimes, vulnerability to further violence (Truong et al. 2017).

Feminists have been drawn to a broader and multidimensional notion of security both through long-standing concerns about violence against women in family and domestic life, and though an awareness of growing threats to women arising, for example, from sex slavery and armed conflict. From a gender perspective, therefore, the apparently clear distinction between 'war' and 'peace', which arises from a primary concern with the threat of inter-state war, is quite bogus and merely serves to conceal the wide range of other threats from which women suffer. The absence of war, in the conventional sense, certainly does not guarantee that people, and especially women, live without fear or safe from want.

However, feminists have gone further than simply gendering security. They have also sought to apply a gender lens to the understanding of war. For difference feminists in particular, war is closely associated with masculinity. Such an association may operate on several levels. In the first place, the dominance of men in senior positions in political and military life may mean that decisions about war and peace are made by people whose world-view acknowledges that armed conflict is an inevitable, and perhaps even a desirable, feature of world politics. This stems from a tendency amongst men to see the world in terms of conflict, rivalry and competition, whether this arises from the influence of masculine gender stereotypes or from deeper, biologically-based drives. As women, in this analysis, are less warlike than men, having a greater inclination towards cooperation, consensus-building and the use of non-confrontational strategies, the increased representation for women in positions of political or military leadership can be expected to lead to a reduced use of force in world affairs. This, indeed, may lead to a feminist alternative to the 'democratic peace' thesis, favoured by liberals, which would assert that societies become more peaceful not to the extent that they embrace democracy but to the extent that they practise gender equality at all levels. A matriarchal society would, from this perspective, certainly be more peaceful than a patriarchal one. The empirical evidence to support such thinking is nevertheless mixed, with some evidence suggesting that, while empowering women at the domestic level often translates into peaceful international politics, the presence of a female leader may at times increase the severity of violence used in a crisis (Caprioli and Boyer 2011). This tends to occur because female leaders operate in a 'man's world' and so are encouraged to adopt 'hyper-masculine' behavioural patterns.

The second link between war and masculinity operates through the role that militarized masculinity plays as a national ideal in times of international tension and conflict. This is evident in the image of the (invariably male) 'heroic warrior' and in the emphasis in military training on the cultivation of supposedly 'manly' virtues, such as discipline, obedience, ruthlessness and, above all, the ability to divorce action from emotion. Military training can even be seen as a systematic attempt to suppress feminine or 'womanly' impulses or responses. Goldstein (2001) thus observed that the most warlike cultures are also the most sexist, arguing that the link between war and gender is forged both by the ways in which masculinity is constructed so as to motivate soldiers to fight, and by the impact that war-making has on masculinity. Third, war is often justified in terms of the 'protection myth': the idea that it is the role of the warrior male to protect the weak and the vulnerable, namely women and children (Enloe 1993). In that sense, war both exaggerates the masculine/feminine dichotomy in gender relations and also serves to legitimize it. The masculinity of war was most easily perpetuated when fighting, at least in conventional armies, was an exclusively male activity.

Militaries work hard to turn men into soldiers who must go into combat. Military training depends on the denigration of anything considered feminine—to act like a soldier is not to be 'womanly'. This image of a soldier is related to the protection myth—the soldier as a just warrior, self-sacrificially protecting women, children, and other vulnerable people. The idea that young men fight wars to protect these vulnerable groups who cannot be expected to protect themselves has been an important motivator for the recruitment of military forces. It has also helped sustain support for war by both women and men. In wartime, the just warrior, who displays heroic masculine characteristics, is often contrasted with an enemy who is portrayed as dangerous often through the use of feminized and sometimes racialized characteristics. This serves as further support for the need for protection. For example, the US-led war in Afghanistan was partially justified as a heroic intervention on behalf of presumably helpless Afghani women. The Taliban response was also shaped by gendered justifications of protecting 'their' women from outside influence. Both sides in the conflict further justified their positions through the use of feminized imagery of the other (Tickner 2010).

These images of the masculinity of war depend on rendering women's role in war invisible, or as the patriotic and supportive mother, wife, or daughter. Even in exceptional circumstances, such as in the Second World War when women took over factory jobs vacated by men who went off to war, women were expected to return to traditional roles when the war was over. But now that women are being accepted into the armed forces of certain states in ever-larger numbers, the picture is more complicated. The presence of women in militaries stirs deep currents, particularly with respect to women in combat. Placing women in combat is in strong tension with our culturally embedded view of what it means to be a warrior and who the people in need of protection actually are. In certain cases, it has been strongly resisted by the military itself, with claims of its negative effect on combat readiness. It is a controversial issue for feminists. Most feminists believe that equality dictates that women should be allowed to serve in militaries. However, some feminists believe that women should reject fighting in men's wars.

It is interesting to note the degree to which the importance of militarized masculinity varies over time and place and how these variations affect international policy-making. During the 1990s, a time of relative peace—at least in the North—we were becoming more accustomed to less militarized models of masculinity. Global businessmen conquering the world with briefcases rather than bullets became our new heroes. Bill Gates, the chairman of Microsoft Corporation, a bourgeois hero who looks distinctly unwarriorlike amasses dollars rather than weapons. And, in 1992, Bill Clinton was elected President of the United States after having refused to serve in the Vietnam War.

In the United States, these softer images of masculinity ended abruptly on 11 September 2001. Post-9/11, militarized masculinity came back in vogue. After the attacks on the World Trade Centre, firefighters and police officers in New York became the new male heroes. Women disappeared from television news broadcasts as male experts briefed Americans about 'America's New War'. However, this new form of warfare, the war on terror as it was called, came with multiple gendered images. Americans saw new enemies in the form of young Muslim men, who were subjected to ethnic, as well as gender profiling under the excuse that the USA was 'at war'. Militarized masculinity influenced the 2004 US presidential campaign where both Republican George W. Bush and Democrat John Kerry emphasized their military or National Guard service as qualifications for the office of President. Clearly, this puts female candidates for high office in the United States at a disadvantage. While the 2006 mid-term elections saw Congresswomen Nancy Pelosi become the first woman House Majority Leader, only one out of the Democratic Party's top 11 women candidates to the US House of Representatives in the 2006 election was successful. Nine out of 11 of their male counterparts won. Many of them emphasized their toughness and ability to stand up to security threats during their campaigns. These trends suggests that in times of war US voters, women and men alike, show greater support for leaders who demonstrate a more obviously militarized masculinity.

We have seen that, in spite of the myth of protection, civilians are not being protected in today's wars. We have also seen that, in certain cases, such as military prostitution camps, individuals' security may be sacrificed to national security. Qualifications for leadership positions in foreign policy are often tied up with what it means to be a 'real man'. This may help us understand why there are relatively few women in these top positions and in militaries.

However, gendering war is concerned not only with exploring links between the causes of war and masculinity, but also with recognizing the differing implications of war and armed conflict for women and men. Armed conflict has traditionally been thought of as a 'man's world', the traditional exclusion of women from military life meaning that fighting, killing and dying has been carried out by male combatants. Insofar as women played a significant role in warfare, it was in maintaining the 'home front', as was evident in the large-scale recruitment of women into the workforce in developed countries during WWI and WWII. The distinction between male combatants and female non-combatants nevertheless conceals the extent to which women affect, and are affected by, armed conflict in a wide variety of ways. This certainly applies in the sense that women and girls have increasingly become the victims of war and armed conflict. The advent of 'total' war in the twentieth century meant that women were as likely to be casualties of war as men. For instance, 42 million civilians died in WWII, most of them women, compared with 25 million military deaths. Nevertheless, the development of 'new' wars has had particularly serious implications for women and girls. As these wars commonly spring from racial, religious and/or ethnic divisions, and involve the use of guerrilla and insurrectionary tactics, they lead to the victimization of civilian populations on a massive scale. It is estimated that as many as 75 per cent of the casualties in such conflicts are civilians, compared with a mere 5 per cent at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Women and children are disproportionately targeted and constitute the majority of all victims in contemporary armed conflicts (Moser and Clark 2011). A particular concern has been the use of rape and other forms of sexual violence as a systematic, organized tactic of war. War rape is by no means simply a modern phenomenon. The Old Testament of the Bible, for instance, refers to the rape of the women of conquered tribes as a routine act, in effect a reward to the victors. Indeed, random rape by soldiers has probably been a feature of all wars and armed conflicts, particularly prevalent when there has been a lack of military discipline. However, rape has also been used as a military strategy, designed to demoralize, punish or shame the enemy, with examples including the German advance through Belgium in WWI, the Rape of Nanking by the invading Japanese army in 1937–38, and the Russian Red Army's march to Berlin towards the end of WWII.

Nevertheless, modern armed conflict appears to be particularly characterized by the systematic and widespread use of rape. For instance, by 2003, the Zenica Centre for the Registration of War and Genocide Crimes in Bosnia-Herzegovina had documented over 40,000 cases of war-related rape, and between 23,000 and 45,000 Kosovo Albanian women are believed to have been raped during 1998–1999, at the height of the conflict with Serbia. These incidents have probably been a consequence of a nexus of factors – the social dislocation that typically accompanies civil strife and internal conflict, the irregular and at best semi-trained nature of fighting forces, and, not least, the potent mixture of resentment, masculinity and violence that tends to characterize extremist identity politics.

A final link between women and armed conflict is the relationship between military bases and prostitution. In one sense, history is so filled with examples of women as 'war booty' or 'camp followers' that the phenomenon of military prostitution is seldom analyzed or even recognized. However, since the 1980s there has been a growing recognition of the systematic character of military prostitution and of its implications for national and personal security. In the early 1990s, the Japanese government apologized for the sexual enslavement of so-called 'comfort women' in Korea during WWII. The extent of military prostitution around US bases in Okinawa, the Philippines, South Korea and Thailand has increasingly been understood to have been facilitated by local and national government as well as by the connivance of military authorities. US military deployments in the Gulf War, the Afghan War and the Iraq War have reinvigorated prostitution and the trafficking of women in the Middle East. Nevertheless, the significance of military prostitution perhaps goes beyond the physical, sexual and economic exploitation of women and has implications for international politics as well. For example, the exploitative sexual alliances between Korean prostitutes and US soldiers defined and helped to support the similarly unequal military alliance between the USA and South Korea in the post-war era (Moon 2007). By undertaking to police the sexual health and work conduct of prostitutes, the South Korean government sought to create a more hospitable environment for US troops, sacrificing the human security of the women concerned for the benefit of national security. Let us conclude this section by thinking how we might redefine security using our gender lenses.

8.3 Feminist Definitions of Security

Since, as we have seen, national security can be in tension with individual security, feminists prefer to define security broadly—as the diminution of all forms of violence, including physical, economic, and ecological. They suggest that we think about security from the bottom up instead of the top down, meaning that we start with the security of individual or community rather than with that of the state or the international system. This allows us to examine critically the role of states as adequate security providers. In certain states torn by conflict, the more the government is preoccupied with national security, the less its citizens, especially women, experience physical security. While state violence is a particular problem in certain states, many states formally at peace sustain huge military budgets at the same time as social spending, on which women depend more than men, is being cut.

We have seen how the security-seeking behaviour of states is legitimated by its association with certain types of masculinity. This narrows the range of permissible ways for states to act and may actually decrease the likelihood of achieving a peaceful solution to a conflict. Conciliatory gestures are often seen as weak and not in the national interest. This can also contribute to the perceived inauthenticity of women's voices in matters of policy-making.

We have also seen how most war casualties today are civilians—often women and children. But it is important not to see women only as victims. If we are to define security more broadly, we must begin to see women, as well as men, as security providers. As civilian war casualties increase, women's responsibilities rise. When men go off to fight, women are left behind as mothers, family providers, and caregivers. Instead of a warrior patriot, we might begin to think about a citizen defender as a definition of a security provider that could include us all, civilians and soldiers alike. It could also provide a less militarized notion of security.

As we said at the beginning of this section, feminist definitions of security also include economic security. Let us now turn to an examination of economic security as well as some broader issues of gender in the global economy.

9. Gender in the Global Economy

There are enormous differences in the socio-economic status of women, depending on their race, class, nationality, and geographic location. Nevertheless, women are disproportionately located at the bottom of the socio-economic scale in all societies. Three-fifths of the world's one billion poorest people are women and girls (United Nations Development Programme 2006: 20). On average, women earn two-thirds of men's earnings even though they work longer hours, many of which are spent in unremunerated reproductive and caring tasks. Even when women do rise to the top, they almost always earn less than men.

We cannot explain the disproportionate numbers of women in marginal under-rewarded economic activities by attributing them to legal restrictions and economic barriers alone. Women do not do as well as men in societies where legal restrictions on employment and earnings have long since been removed. Putting on our gender lenses we might ask to what extent these disturbing figures are attributable to unequal gendered structures in the global economy? Feminists call these structures the gendered division of labour.

9.1 The Historical Foundations of the Gendered Division of Labour

We can trace the origins of the contemporary gendered division of labour back to seventeenth-century Europe. At that time, definitions of male and female were becoming polarized in ways that were suited to the growing division between work and home required by early capitalism. Industrialization and the increase in waged labour, largely performed by men, shifted work from home to factory. The term housewife, which began to be used to describe women's work in the private domestic sphere, reinforced the gender dimensions of this split. Gendered constructs, such as breadwinner and 'housewife' have been central to modern Western definitions of masculinity, femininity, and capitalism. Even though many women do work outside the home for wages, the association of women with domestic roles, such as housewife and caregiver, has become institutionalized and even naturalized. This means that it is seen as natural for women to do the domestic work. Putting the burden of household labour on women decreases their autonomy and economic security.

As a result of these role expectations, when women do enter the workforce, they are disproportionately represented in the caring professions, such as nursing, social services, and primary education, or in light industry (performed with light machinery). Women choose these occupations not on the basis of market rationality and profit maximization alone, but also because of values and expectations about mothers and caregivers that are emphasized in the socialization of young girls. Occupations that are disproportionately populated by women tend to be the most poorly paid. Assumptions about appropriate gender roles mean that women are often characterized as supplemental wage earners to the male head of household. But estimates suggest that one-third of all households worldwide are headed by women, a fact frequently obscured by role expectations that derive from the notion of male breadwinners and female housewives.

9.2 Consequences of the Gendered Division of Labour

Gender expectations about appropriate roles for women contribute to low wages and double burdens. Women's cheap labour is particularly predominant in textiles and electronics. These industries favour hiring young unmarried women who can achieve a high level of productivity at low wages. Frequently, they are fired if they get married or pregnant. Because of expectations associated with traditional gender roles, there is a belief that women possess 'nimble fingers', have patience for tedious jobs, and are 'naturally' good sewers. When women are seen as naturally good at these tasks, it means that these kinds of work are not seen as skilled and are remunerated accordingly. Moreover, political activity does not go with female respectability. Employers hire women on the assumption that they will provide a 'docile' labour force unlikely to organize for better conditions.

Gender expectations about suitable roles for women enter into another global labour issue, that of home-based work. As companies have moved towards a more flexible labour force (less benefits and job security) in all parts of the world, cost-saving has included hiring home-based workers who are easily hired and fired. Exempt from any national labour standards which may exist in the worker's home country, home-based workers are generally paid lower wages than factory workers and are not paid at all when there is no work. Since women, often of necessity, prefer work that more easily accommodates family responsibilities, home-based workers are predominantly women. The gendered division of labour that defines women as housewives, a category with expectations that labour is free, legitimizes wages at below subsistence levels (Prügl 2009: 198).

Even when women do enter the workforce, they continue to suffer from a double burden. This means that, in addition to their paid work, women usually carry most of the responsibility for household labour. We are accustomed to think that women are not 'working' when they engage in household labour. In actual fact, such tasks are crucial for reproducing and caring for those who perform waged work. However, these tasks often constrain women's opportunities for paid work and the narrow definition of work, as work in the waged economy, tends to render invisible many of the contributions women do make to the global economy.

The gendered division of labour also affects women's work in agriculture, a role that is significant, particularly in many parts of Africa. While women do undertake cash crop production, frequently they work as unpaid family labour in small units that produce independently or on contract. Consequently, men are more likely to gain access to money, new skills, and technology. When agricultural production moves into the monetarized economy, women tend to get left behind in the subsistence (not for wages) sector, producing for family needs.

Indeed, there has been a long tradition of feminist theorizing about economic issues, particularly undertaken by socialist feminists. The central idea of socialist feminism is that patriarchy and capitalism are overlapping and interlocking systems of oppression. The sexual division of labour, through which men dominate the public sphere while women are customarily confined to the private sphere, has served the economic interests of capitalism in a number of ways. For some socialist feminists, women constitute a ‘reserve army of labour’, which can be recruited into the workforce when there is a need for increased production, but easily shed and returned to domestic life during a depression, without imposing a burden on employers or the state. At the same time, women’s domestic labour is vital to the health and efficiency of the economy. In bearing and rearing children, women are producing the next generation of capitalist workers. The traditional family also provides male workers with the necessary cushion against the alienation and frustrations of life as a ‘wage slave’. However, such gendered processes are largely ignored by conventional theories of political economy which concentrate only on commercial exchange and paid labour, thus rendering much of women’s contribution to productive activity invisible. This is further accentuated by gender biases that operate within the conceptual framework of conventional political economy, and especially economic liberalism. This can be seen, in particular, in the feminist critique of the notion of ‘economic man’ (Tickner 2002). The idea that human beings are rationally self-seeking creatures who pursue pleasure primarily in the form of material consumption, a foundational idea of market capitalism, has been constructed in line with masculinist assumptions about egoism and competition. Feminists, in other words, suggest that ‘economic woman’ would behave otherwise.

The restructuring of the economy as a result of globalization has had a number of further implications for gender relations. In the first place, it has brought about the global ‘feminization of work’. In the developing world, this has been evident in the expansion of employment opportunities for women, both as agricultural workers in, for instance, Latin America’s export-orientated fruit industry and through a process of global industrial restructuring that has seen the export of manufacturing jobs from the developed to the developing world. Examples of this include the growth of the Asian electronics industry and of clothing assembly plants in Mexico. The developed world has also witnessed the growth of new ‘feminized’, or ‘pink-collar’, jobs through the expansion of the service sectors of the economy, such as retailing, cleaning and data processing.

Although the number of women in paid work has grown, such trends have also been associated with vulnerability and exploitation. Not only are women workers usually cheap (in part because of an abundant supply of labour) but they also tend to be employed in economic sectors where there are few workers’ rights and weak labour organizations. Women workers therefore suffer from the double burden of low-paid work and continued pressure to undertake domestic labour, often, thanks to the advance of neo-liberal globalization, in the context of a reduction of state support for health, education and basic food subsidies.

Economic globalization has also unleashed dynamics that have led to the ‘feminization of migration’. Pressures in both developed and the developing countries have contributed to this trend. For instance, female immigrants have been pulled by a ‘care deficit’ that has emerged in wealthier countries, as more women have entered paid employment but with revised aspirations in terms of education and careers. Not only has this created an increased demand for nannies and maids to replace the domestic roles traditionally carried out by mothers, but it has also made it more difficult to fill jobs traditionally taken by women, such as cleaners, care workers and nurses. Major female migratory flows have therefore developed, notably from Southeast Asia to the oil-rich Middle East or the 'tiger' economies of East Asia, from the former Soviet bloc to Western Europe, from Mexico and Central America to the USA, and from Africa to various parts of Europe. At the same time, poverty in the developing world pushes women to seek employment overseas. Migrant women, indeed, have come to play a particularly significant role in supporting their families through the remittances they send home, women workers, because of their family ties and obligations, usually being a more reliable source of remittances than male workers. The pressures of globalization have therefore combined to redefine the sexual division of labour in both global and ethnic terms, creating a dependency of a particularly intimate kind, as affluent and middle-class families in the developed world come to rely on migrant women to provide childcare and homemaking services (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2013).

The global transfer of the services associated with a wife's traditional role are nevertheless most intimate when it comes to sex. The era of globalization has substantially boosted the sex industry on both a national and global level, with alarming numbers of women and girls being trafficked by smugglers and sold into bondage. Thailand, for example, has an estimated half a million to one million women working as prostitutes, and one out of every twenty of these is enslaved. Prostitution expanded rapidly in Thailand during the economic boom of 1970s, a consequence of both rising demand due to increased living standards amongst male workers and of growing supply through a flood of children being sold into slavery in the traditionally impoverished mountainous north of the country (Bales 2013). On a global level, sexual exchange has a variety of faces.

These include the growth of sex tourism, particularly affecting countries such as the Dominican Republic and Thailand, and the phenomenon of overseas, or 'mail order', brides, through which men in affluent regions such as North America and Western Europe acquire wives mainly from Southeast Asia and the former Soviet bloc. In its most brutal and exploitative form, sexual exchange manifests itself in human smuggling and people-trafficking. Estimates of the number of people involved in some kind of trafficking range from 4 million to 200 million persons worldwide, with women and young girls constituting about 80 per cent of all victims. According to the UN, 87 per cent of women and young girls are trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation (UNODC 2006). It is a problem that has particularly affected parts of Asia. An estimated 5,000 to 7,000 Nepali girls and women, for example, are trafficked each year primarily to India (Crawford 2010).

As far as development is concerned, a number of competing gender perspectives have emerged. Modernization theorists have associated economic development with the emancipation of women from their traditional roles. In this view, patriarchal control and the subjugation of women is one of the key hierarchies that flourishes in traditional societies. The growth of market-based, capitalist relations brings with it, by contrast, a powerful drive towards individualism, valuing people less in terms of status and tradition and more in terms of their contribution to the productive process. This is reflected in the emergence of more egalitarian family structures in which all family members participate more widely in the family's functions. Opportunities for women to gain an education and enter careers also expand, as modernization creates the need for a more skilled and literate workforce. It is therefore little surprise that in the UN's ranking of countries on the basis of the Gender-Related Development Index (**GDI**) and the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM), developed countries consistently outperform developing ones (Adisa 2019; Afris 2019). In short, gender equality marches hand in hand with modernity. From a feminist perspective, however, this conception of 'modernity' is constructed on the basis of essentially masculine norms. As already examined, this applies to economic liberalism, and it is therefore also evident in the idea of 'development as growth'.

A further feminist concern has been that orthodox approaches to development have failed to recognize the extent to which poverty is 'feminized'. As Abbott and Atkins (2015) put it: 'Women make up half the world's population, perform two-thirds of the world's working hours, receive one-tenth of the world's income and own only one-hundredth of the world's property'. Some 70 per cent of the world's poor are women. Senat (2019) sought to highlight the degree to which female poverty is disregarded by pointing out that 'more than 100 million women are missing'. The 'missing women' he referred to are evident in population statistics that show that men outnumber women in parts of the world like South Asia and Africa, despite the fact that the normal tendency would be for women to slightly outnumber men (although, at birth, boys outnumber girls everywhere in the world, women tend to outnumber men in adult society because of their greater life expectancy). By some estimates, 50 million women are ‘missing’ in India alone. Such trends therefore reveal higher death rates among women and girls compared with men and boys in certain parts of the world. Part of the explanation for this is the preference of some parents, motivated by economic and/or cultural considerations, to have boy children over girls, leading to the practice of sex-selective abortion or infanticide. This occurs in parts of East Asia and South Asia, and it is especially evident in China, linked to its ‘one child’ policy, and in some Indian states.

In other cases, higher rates of disease and mortality amongst women and girls result from a failure to give them the same level of medical care, food and social services as boys and men, a misallocation that is generally worse in rural areas and particularly severe for late-born girls, and even worse for girls with elder sisters. Families with scarce resources may choose to care for boys over girls because of the expectation they will grow up to be wage earners or family workers, whereas girls are less likely to earn an income and the dowry system may impose a significant burden on individual households.

On the other hand, postcolonial feminists in particular have criticized the image of women in the developing world as victims – poor, under-educated, oppressed and disempowered. Women, they argue, often play a leading role in development and poverty reduction initiatives, especially when these initiatives are based on local ownership and reject top-down, technocratic models of development. Amongst the development initiatives that have placed particular emphasis on the role of women has been the expansion of microcredit. Often seen to have originated with the Bangladesh-based Grameen Bank, which, together with its founder Muhammad Yunus, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006, microcredit has the advantage that it is an effective way of helping very poor families to form self-help groups to establish small businesses or advance agricultural or rural projects. The World Bank estimates that about 90 per cent of microcredit borrowers are women. This has major benefits for poor communities as women are more likely to invest their credit rather than spend it on themselves, and they have a better record of repayment than men. India and Bangladesh have been the main beneficiaries of such development initiatives, but they can also be found in countries ranging from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Russia to Ethiopia, Morocco and Brazil. However, the ‘microcredit revolution’ may also have drawbacks. Critics, for instance, have argued that microcredit schemes have sometimes led governments to scale back social provision, that repayment rates may be high, that they may create long-term dependency on external capital, and that, although they are often designed to empower women, an infusion of cash into the local economy may only increase dowry payments.

In this section we have seen how women are disadvantaged relative to men by the gendered division of labour. Women's relative lack of economic opportunities are not caused by market forces alone but by processes which result from gendered expectations about the kinds of work for which women are believed to be best suited. Nevertheless, when women do work for wages it undermines the legitimacy of men's domination that occurs because of men's traditional role as family providers. For women, having a job can be better than no work at all and extra cash significantly enhances the income of poor families. It also increases women's financial independence.

We can see that it is difficult to generalize about the gender consequences of economic globalization. Nevertheless, the claim that we live in a world characterized by gendered boundaries of economic inequality is undisputed. The global economy operates not only according to market forces but also according to gendered divisions of labour that value women's work less than men's. In addition, much of women's non-monetarized labour contributes to the global economy, but remains invisible. In our earlier discourse on security, we saw how masculine values influence states' national security policy and how this can be detrimental to women's political opportunities. When we discussed feminist theory, we saw that one of the goals of feminism is to produce knowledge that can help improve women's lives. Let us now look at some of the improvements that are being made by, and on behalf of, women throughout the world.

10. Using Knowledge to inform Policy Practice

Now that we understand how structures of gender inequality contribute to women's subordination, let us examine some of the efforts women are making to diminish the negative effects of these gendered structures in both the political and economic realms. Many of the improvements in women's lives can be attributed to women themselves working in non-governmental organizations (**NGOs**) and in social movements. Frequently, their actions are informed by feminist emancipatory knowledge. (It may be helpful for you to refer back to the earlier discussion about emancipatory knowledge).

The United Nations (**UN**) held its first official conference on women in Mexico City in 1975. This conference launched the UN Decade for Women (1976-1985). It was the first in a series of official intergovernmental women's conferences, sponsored by the UN. It is largely due to women organizing worldwide that the UN has put women's issues on its agenda. At the beginning of the UN Decade, women from the North took the lead in organizing. Economic issues having to do with employment and wages took precedence. By the end of the Decade, women from the South began to organize around the impact of the economic crisis of the 1970s caused by high prices for food and oil on the international market and a downturn in the global economy. Their work led to the establishment of a network of Southern women known as Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN). DAWN is not only engaged in political advocacy. Using feminist knowledge, it also publishes analyses of the impact of global economic policy on Southern countries, focusing on Southern women.

Parallel NGO conferences have been held at each of the official UN Conferences on Women. Attendance at these conferences increased from 5,000 in Mexico City in 1975 to an estimated 25,000 in Beijing in 1995 (Jaquette 2003: 336). Pressure from women's groups was important in getting the United Nations to disaggregate its data, such as its quality of life indicators, by sex. The availability of data is important in getting issues on policy agendas. Adoption of the Gender Development Index (**GDI**) by the UN Human Development Programme in 1995 was an important step in helping to formulate policies to improve women's well-being. Another important step towards gender equality was the adoption by the UN and other international intergovernmental organizations of a policy called gender mainstreaming. Gender mainstreaming requires organizations that adopt it to evaluate the gendered effects of all aspects of their institutional decision-making.

In 1996, the International Labour Organization adopted a convention that set international standards for the type of home-based work we discussed earlier. Pressure for adoption began with the organizing and lobbying efforts of the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), a trade union based in India composed of women engaged in small-scale trade and home-based work.

Table 1.1 Milestones in Women's Organizing

1975	First United Nations World Conference on Women, Mexico City, Mexico
1976 - 1985	UN Decade for Women
1979	The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) adopted by the UN General Assembly
1980	Second UN World Conference on Women, Copenhagen, Denmark
1985	UN World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the UN Decade for Women, Nairobi, Kenya
1995	Fourth UN World Conference on Women, Beijing, China
1996	Gender mainstreaming adopted as official UN policy by the UN General Assembly
2000	Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the 21st Century, also known as 'Beijing+5'. Held at UN headquarters, New York, USA
2005	Review and Appraisal of the 1995 World Conference on Women in Beijing and Beijing+5, Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), 49th Session, United Nations, New York, USA

The work of women's caucuses at various UN conferences has resulted in feminist agendas based on some of the ideas we have discussed. Women's activism has challenged the hierarchical political structures, evident at intergovernmental UN conferences, and NGO forums have practised forms of participatory democracy and moved feminist ideas into the policy mainstream of various international organizations. Women in NGOs and social movements, informed by feminist knowledge, are playing an important role in pressuring international organizations and national governments to adopt policies that will further women's equality.

11. Conclusion

Feminism can broadly be defined as a movement for the social advancement of women. However, it has taken a wide range of forms, with distinctions particularly being made between feminist traditions orientated around the goal of gender equality and those that place a greater emphasis on women being 'woman-identified'. Using a number of different feminist approaches, this paper has dilated on some of the ways gender structures global politics. We began by situating IR feminist approaches in feminist theory more generally and by offering a feminist definition of gender. IR feminists have drawn on a variety of feminist theories to help them understand why women have not been visible in global politics and why women are economically disadvantaged relative to men in all societies. They also examine broader questions about how gender shapes and is shaped by global politics. When we are sensitive to gender as a category of analysis, we can see how characteristics we associate with masculinity are particularly valued in global politics, especially in matters of national security. Feminists define security more broadly—not just in terms of the security of the state, but also in terms of the physical and economic security of individuals. Evidence suggests that women as a group suffer certain economic insecurities by virtue of being women. To explain this, IR feminists point to a gendered division of labour. Differing expectations about what is meant by women's and men's work lead to problems when women end up in lower-paying jobs and with a larger share of unremunerated work in the household.

We have seen that IR feminism can tell us some new things about global policy-making and about the workings of the global economy that other approaches do not. This does not mean that feminism can tell us everything we need to know about global politics. However, it is important to note that since all global actors have a gender identity, gender is present in all global processes. For this reason, it is hard to separate feminist approaches from other IR approaches in the same way that we can separate Realism from Liberalism or from Marxism. We have seen that IR feminism is grounded in different IR theoretical approaches, such as Liberalism, Constructivism and post-modernism. One further question we might think about is how our gender-sensitive lenses might help us to see these other approaches in new ways.

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