



Technium.

51/2023

2023

A new decade for social changes

Technium

Social Sciences

Powered by

PLUS
COMMUNICATION



International
Communication & PR



Feminism: An Alternative Approach to International Relations

Ajay Kumar

Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Ramanujan College, University of Delhi, Delhi, India

ajay.kumar@ramanujan.du.ac.in

Abstract: Almost half of the world's population is women, so how can it be possible that any discipline is one-sided or only male-oriented? Similarly, all meta-theories cannot impose rules and regulations on the whole world as international relations theories just by being malevolent. In this case, the only alternative is to foster feminist theory, not ignore them as often occurs in IR theories, which implies demeaning them through various conceptions. This can be considered a one-sided perspective or approach to understand the world, which divides men and women into supremacists and subordinates respectively. Feminist IR, therefore, stands as an alternative approach to understanding the masculine IR that questions it as well as provides 'reflective theories' from literature to psychology to history, and has been seeking a safe place in IR for the last four decades as a serious academic discipline. This article will try to examine the feminist theories of the IR discipline as an alternative approach, for which descriptive and analytical method was adopted for this explanatory research. As a result, it has been found that feminist IR has searched out the gap between IR theories and it has been given a new shape to IR discipline in the form of a critical feminist IR theory as an alternate.

Keywords: Gendering, Liberal feminism, Post-structural feminism, Realistic Paradigm, Reflectivism, Social constructivist feminism, Standpoint feminism

1. Introduction

Many changes and shifts were noted in the international order after the Second World War, which differed from the traditional theories of inter-state wars and conflicts. The rise of ethnic conflicts and tensions, violent trans-state actors and groups, and the relatively peaceful end of the Cold War were significant markers of a changing international arena where the state was no longer the only player [1]. It called for different and diverse approaches to view international relations (IR) not only as a sequence of states and relations between them but as one where many actors and institutions are involved [2]. The feminist approach is one of them which view the international realm primarily through a gendered lens as a distinct perspective.

Three great debates in IR are considered challenging metaphors to each other namely—Realism versus Liberalism or Idealism (between the 1920s and 1930s) known as the first great debate. In this great debate, the feminist perspectives were not paid heed to, but later on, the debate was viewed through a gender lens. Richard Ashley argued that the classical realists' notion that meaning is contingent and socially constructed opened the space for feminist IR [3]. Traditionalism versus Behaviouralism (or between history and science in the 1950s and 1960s) was considered the second great debate which launched a Neo-Neo debate in IR too as Neo-realism versus Neo-liberalism or Neo-Marxism (known as inter-paradigm debate in the 1970s). Feminists at this time also tried to lay the groundwork for not only building a theory but also examining facts, whether they could be tested in a given

context or not. This debate would have been more insightful if it had assimilated the neglected and mostly excluded perspective of feminists. The most recent great debate which is known as the third debate which is between Rationalism versus Reflectivism or critical stance (in the mid-1980s which was between positivistic and post-positivistic approaches). For instance, the first two theories are considered rationalist theories (liberalism and realism), whereas on the contrary radicalism influenced reflectivist theories [4].

The feminist approach to IR emerged from the third debate between positivist and post-positivist scholars in the mid-1980s. Positivist notions within IR that held that the field is a value-neutral arena where definitions and structures such as anarchy, security, power, and the nation-state are set in stone and are self-explanatory were challenged. Post-positivists questioned the bedrock of IR as a discipline, its basic knowledge structure, and ideals, and argued that the discipline needs to be analyzed more critically. They called for pluralism and greater diversity in IR, which until then had been dominated by realists and liberals. The feminist approach was one of them which gave tough competition to positivism in respect of IR. In this debate, the feminist approach was not included explicitly, but in this era, the feminist outlook not only situated itself to the emerging realities but also provided a space for furthering the great debate. This may be regarded as the fourth great debate in IR.

Undoubtedly feminism has been divided into three waves by scholars. The first wave of feminism (1848-1928) dealt with the right to vote and property rights; the second wave (1960s–1990s) focused on equality and anti-discrimination, while the third wave of feminism, which began in the 1990s, involved female heteronormality with redefining gender. Sometimes these waves are known as the “Big Three” schools of feminist thought as Liberal, Marxist, and Radical feminist schools of thought [5].

2. Objective of the Study

This article will attempt to find out whether feminist interpretation of IR theories stands out as a new or alternative approach to IR.

3. Methodology

A research approach is a process accepted by the researcher to collect, analyze and interpret data. In this sense, a feminist approach is an alternative approach to the IR discipline because it collects, analyses, and interprets data differently or represents the feminine discourses since it believes that the whole IR discipline is represented as masculine. Therefore, a descriptive and analytical method has been adopted to achieve the above-mentioned objective.

4. Challenging the Realistic Paradigm

Feminists believe war is a gendering activity whereas realists believe that **wars** are inevitable that associated with human (read male) nature. Realism has been equated with masculinity. Realism lays stress on military force as a tool of **power** with underlining **autonomy, sovereignty, and anarchy and security**. Here too, many feminist see a hidden assumption of masculinity. They consider war as a male occupation. In their view, men are the more war-loving gender and women are more peaceful. A possible link between the male sex hormone and war, according to biologists, is the aggressive behavior in male animals. It is argued by many scholars that war is in the nature of men due to their inability to give birth

[6]. Thus, according to Nancy Hartsock, war gives meaning to life and provides men an opportunity through heroism... opportunities that women potentially get through childbirth. In contrast, women are portrayed as more peaceful than men - whether due to biology, culture, or both. Some feminists emphasize the unique abilities and contributions of women as peacemakers. They emphasize the role of women as mothers or potential mothers. Because of such caring roles, it is believed that women are more likely than men to oppose war and more likely to seek alternatives to violence in resolving conflicts [7].

Jean Paulette Bethke Elshtain takes this account in her popular book *"Women and War"* published in 1987; she examined women's roles in war as contrasted against masculine roles and raises the point of why these concepts are important to society. Starting with an investigation of America's societal interpretations of gender roles during the war (the man as a valiant fighter and the woman as a pacifist), she argues that men can be poor civilian soldiers since they are oriented to a dangerous kind of eager adolescence in the warfare, while women may be enthusiastically patriotic and may have a kind of necessary maturity, which is essential to successful combat. She also examines the myths such as men are 'just warriors' and on the contrary, women are 'beautiful souls', these myths recreate and secure the social position of women as non-warriors and maintain men's identity as warriors. She described how these myths are underestimated by the reality of female belligerence and sacrificial male love, as well as the moral imperatives of just wars [8].

According to Elshtain, women have served as collective, culturally designated 'beautiful souls' in Western culture [8]. Women are considered innocent and associated with peacefulness and purity. As non-belligerent, women cannot defend themselves and they require male protection. That's why during wartime women serve at the 'home front' caring for their children, and they are not involved in the conflict. But they support the 'just warrior' by reflecting men that they admire men for their heroic behavior. Objectionable identities, such as that of pacifist men and bellicose women are marginalized in history during a process where gender identities are unmatched by gendered norms as they do not highlight the constructed gender images. Moreover, female violence does not consider a part of the national narrative [8]. That's why; it is mandatory to perceive how and why those gender roles are created [9]. Thus, Elshtain rejects the realists' connotations such as aggression, violence, power, etc. which have been deliberately associated with the men in realist thoughts of IR.

The realist idea that nation-states are selfish and always seek power first is borrowed from a Hobbsian logic of 'Human Nature', which is also characterized by self-interest. It is this—supposedly objective knowledge that is challenged by feminist theorists, as a masculine assumption rather than an understanding of human nature as a whole. IR feminists manifest that elements of social reproduction and development also attribute to 'human nature', not just domination and aggression. For feminist thinkers, international order is not a state of war or anarchy but a constructed social hierarchical order which contributes to and maintains gender subordination. Women's experiences in **war**, **conflict**, and **diplomacy** are either ignored because it is subsumed under 'universal' (or so-called male) experience or are not acknowledged or recognized. As Judith Ann Tickner claims, IR is gendered to 'marginalize women's voices', and women have knowledge, perspectives, and experiences that should be brought to include in the study of IR [10].

In 1988, she published an article entitled ‘Hans J. Morgenthau’s Principles of Political Realism: A Feminist Reformation’ in *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*. To challenge this claim that the discipline of IR—traditionally defined by realism—is based on a masculine worldview, she criticized Hans Morgenthau’s six principles of political realism.

Tickner contests each of Morgenthau's principles in her account.

- (1) She argues that objectivity is connected with masculinity whereas human nature is both masculine as well as feminine and,
- (2) National interest cannot be defined only in terms of power as it is a multidimensional concept that at the global level might require cooperation.
- (3) The definition of power itself needs to be broadened to not only mean domination over others (power over) but also collective empowerment (power with) and,
- (4) There can be a separation between political action and morality.
- (5) While agreeing that the moral aspiration of a particular country cannot be universal, there needs to be an emphasis on common moral elements of humanity that would help on building the international community.
- (6) She also argues that focusing on the autonomy of the political sphere makes it exclusionary, especially for feminine issues. Moreover, autonomy itself has been associated with masculinity [11].

It was the reply of Morgenthau’s political realism which claimed that politics is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature; interest is defined in terms of power; that moral principles could not be applied to the action of states and that the international political sphere is autonomous [12].

Along with a critique of political realism, Tickner raises the question of the masculine language which is formally used for war and conflict. For instance, a soldier is trained to have masculine traits to be aggressive, rough, and tough while the reality is that military training depends upon the disrespect of feminine behavior—a soldier should act like a soldier, not as a woman [11]. On the contrary to this conception, Tickner asserted that there have been countless wars where women have equally participated in the battles. They participated in various kinds of activities, such as killing, using weapons, commanding armed groups, spying, looting, etc. [11]. Unfortunately, even whenever women reveal more bravery and violence than men in warfare, it is still said diplomatically that they fight like men. Because in the ‘*men's world*’, the word bravery is considered only as a masculine quality or virtue. However, it is also a debatable issue for feminists. Some feminists emphasize that equality manifests that women should be allowed to serve in militaries. However, a few feminists believe that women should reject fighting in men’s wars [11] because men's mentality cause of war generally. In this way, Tickner explains how masculinity and its associated virtues have been linked with war in international politics.

V. Spike Peterson edited a book in 1992 titled ‘*Gendered States: Feminist (Re) visions of International Relations Theory*’, in her chapter on ‘*Security and Sovereign States: What Is at Stake in Taking Feminism Seriously?*’, she investigates the contradictory nature of the notion of **national security** for women along with the sovereign state system which is complicit in structural violence against women, not only this, states also offer important forms of protection for women. Raising seriously the question “What difference does gender make?” writers of the volume are seeking some new direction in the IR discipline by observing role of

gender in the realistic conceptual characteristics such as sovereign state systems and related notions of **security**, **autonomy** and **identity**.

Another prominent scholar Christine Sylvester challenged the mainstream IR regarding war and security in her article “*War Experiences/War Practices/War Theory*” published in 2012 in *Millennium* journal. She argues that IR ignores a fundamental part of the war, which is too necessary to know. She argues that to understand the war we must take into consideration the experiences of those who are affected by it. She also challenges the research that is conducted to understand the war; she asserts that regarding conducting research into war as an experience, we require appropriate methods, in which interviews and discourse analysis should be included, which is sometimes associated with other methods. In order to understand the war, we have to think differently from the theoretical and philosophical investigation, we have to understand the security issues that lead to the war [13].

Generally, we study realism and neo-realism emphasizes power in terms of national interest and fostering the idea that all politics is a struggle for power. Some feminists argue that the core assumptions of realism—power, sovereignty, and anarchy reflect how males tend to interact and see the world [14]. In this view of feminists, realism simply assumes male participants when discussing foreign policy decision-making, state sovereignty, or the use of military force.

Rebecca Grant and Kathleen Newland (1991) in the introduction to their book *Gender and International Relations* argues that the realist theory basically endorses *patriarchy* because, for it, patriarchy is necessary for maintaining social order and the state. It is for this reason that women are excluded from many prevailing definitions of the state. So-called IR theory only favors men and excluded women because it is ‘men’ who are identified with the state [2].

Similarly, feminist **security studies** aim to broaden the narrow confines of 'security' and bring domestic violence, rape, poverty, gender subordination and ecological destruction under global security threats. Joan Wallach Scott, a prominent feminist theorist, seeks gender and its power dynamics in international relations theory and practice, asserting that the power relations deep-rooted in international structure and politics are legitimized in respect of relations between men and women and that the legitimizing of war has been carried out in gendered terms [15].

5. Questioning the Liberal Tradition of IR

Liberal feminism does not fundamentally challenge the traditional ideas of IR; it questions the contents such as democracy, citizenship, cooperation, rights, community, democratic peace, self-determination, enlightenment, equality, etc. This feminism looks at the roles women play in world politics and asks why they are marginalized. They provide significant value to women in politics, for instance, women have served as prime ministers such as Indira Gandhi for India, Benazir Bhutto for Pakistan, Margaret Thatcher for the United Kingdom, Sirimavo Bandaranaike for Sri Lanka, and Golda Meir for Israel. Vijay Lakshmi Pandit served as the first woman president in the UN General Assembly. In 2006, the General Assembly elected a fourth woman as its president named Sheikha Haya of Bahrain. The British House of Commons elected Betty Boothroyd as its first woman speaker and the

United States House of Representatives elected Nancy Pelosi as its first woman Speaker in 2007, etc. All this indicates a breakdown of male domination of high political positions and of major offices in international relations or global affairs where they play a significant role in decision making, policy-making, and their implementation, but suppose to be **marginalized** [16].

Liberal IR feminists analyze the role of the **gender gap** in international politics and the disproportionate effect of war on women in the form of sexual violence and trafficking under the **democratic peace**. They deplore the exclusion of females from positions of power in IR but do not believe that including women would change the nature of the international system. They call for more females and contend that the presence of more women leaders would facilitate peaceful and humanitarian policies. Why are women marginalized? Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) answers this question, For instance, she gave forceful arguments for promoting women's rights in her two texts: *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1786) and *A Vindication of the Right of Woman* (1792). She argues that women are naturally inferior to men is not the main reason for their plight rather it is a lack of proper education because men and women were provided different types of education since their childhood and they both had different mental faculties and statuses. Thus, the chief difference between both the sexes was not natural but brought about by differences in their upbringing, and most specifically this difference was maintained by their educational practices. Thus Mary Wollstonecraft discovered gendering in education that helped women for getting their **rights**, and fought for themselves at the international level [17] [18].

Betty Friedan in her text, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) argued that women in the decades after the Second World War had suffered an identity crisis, for it was assured that women felt happy and fulfilled as fulltime wives and mothers and felt guilty if they pursued careers. The prevailing belief was that women who are truly feminine should not work, receive education, or hold political opinions. This text gave voice to thousands of American women's exasperation and discouragement with their limited gender roles and helped spark widespread public activism for **gender equality** [19] [20]. Thus, she rejected liberal ideas such as citizenship, cooperation, rights, self-determination, and equality within the states.

Furthermore, Ester Boserup shows a critical analysis of **modernization** and **development** theory in her work *Women's Role in Economic Development* (1989). This analysis also did not go beyond the logic of equality and efficiency. She also highlighted the limitations that were hindering women in the era of development in the name of allotting traditional rights on land to men with the introduction of mechanization of agriculture. This had created an ever-increasing gap between men and women in economic and social terms [21].

An eminent American political theorist, Cynthia Holden Enloe, in her book *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* which was published in 1989, raised the question in her text *'Where are the women?'*, encouraging women as IR scholars that women inhabit international politics and describing that women are crucial actors in the international system. Similarly, she dares to say that *what is personal is political* and *what is political is also international*. She focused on deconstructing the division between what is considered international and personal, highlighting how international politics influences and is shaped by the daily activities of both sexes—men and women—and in turn

how these activities are based on *gendered identities*. For instance, traditionally, the military and war-making have been identified as masculine effort, which is connected with the idea that men are warriors and protectors, by the same reason they are legitimate armed actors who fight for protecting those who need protection such as women, children, and non-fighting men. In practice, this has meant that the various ways those women contribute to conflict or war and experience them have been considered peripheral or excluded/outside the realm of IR considerations. For instance, the issue of sexual and gendered violence in war and conflict has only recently merged into the international agenda. By comparison, mass rapes of women during and after World War II were not prosecuted because the incident was either considered an unfortunate byproduct of war and conflict or was ignored. This has since transformed, in the 2002 Rome Statute recognizing rape as a **war crime**. However, this recognition has not led to the reduction of war or conflict-related sexual violence and this form of violence is everlasting endemic (regularly found in a particular place or among a particular group of people and difficult to get rid of) in many conflicts around the world, as does impunity for its being [22].

Moreover, Cynthia Enloe, in her text *'The Morning After: Sexual Politics at the End of the Cold War'* (1993) looks at the end of the Cold War and places women at the center of international politics. It focuses on the relationship between the politics of sexuality and the politics of militarism; she observes the changing definitions of gender roles, sexuality, and militarism at the end of the twentieth century. Enloe finds that the politics of sexuality has already changed irreversibly. Women seek the probabilities of demilitarization and democratization in a still largely *patriarchal world*. New opportunities for much freedom are realized in emerging social movements such as gays fighting for their place in the American military, Danish women organizing against the European Community's Maastricht treaty, and Filipina servants rallying for their rights in Saudi Arabia. Enloe also recorded the current assaults against females as newly emerging nationalist movements re-established the privileges of masculinity [23].

In *Nimo's War, Emma's War: Making Feminist Sense of the Iraq War* (2010), Enloe looks at the United States' invasion of Iraq in 2003 through a gendered lens. She analyzes the war through American housewives and Iraqi women and how their lives are becoming increasingly militarized. She highlights how their roles as women, specifically women as a category, ensured the smooth functioning of the war machine. How women took on roles as diverse as being caregivers to wounded soldiers to becoming prostitutes near military bases to support their war-torn families. She talks about how conflict-ridden situations facilitate opaque marital contracts paving the way for sex-trafficking and money laundering. However, hardly any of this is acknowledged when one talks about the Iraq War or any war for that matter. There is a masculinization of the field of war and conflict, where women are made completely invisible. Even in security discourse, the specific targeting of women through *rape* and *sexual violence* is seen as an effect of war, rather than as a major military tactic used by nations for ethnic cleansing and genocide [24].

Laura J. Shepherd in her article *'Gender, Violence and Global Politics: Contemporary Debates in Feminist Security Studies'* (2009) argues that "through material acts of violence, discourses of gender are given physical form", for example, when Iraqi prisoners in Abu Ghraib Jail in Iraq were tortured and physically abused they were forced to perform sexual acts on each other, and forced to 'behave like women', to undermine their masculinity. This

reinforced the *gendered power relations* that insist on the superiority of masculinity over femininity and heterosexuality over homosexuality [25]. Thus, Shepherd challenges the democratic peace in the gendered mechanism.

In 1989, Robert Keohane argued in his article titled *International Relations Theory: Contributions of a Feminist Standpoint* that feminist analysis could only provide limited insight into international relations, and could help indicate where women were victims of patriarchy or were excluded from political processes but lacked the empirical strength to construct testable hypotheses [26].

Cynthia Weber answered this doubt in her article "*Good Girls, Little Girls, and Bad Girls*" (1994) that the object of study can be affected by the observer and the observation itself, concepts have contextual relativity and are malleable, and traditional IR does not fully account for the dynamic, fluid boundaries of international relations and gender. Traditional empirical research and so-called testable hypotheses may have *male biases* that by their very nature may not include or take into account complex gender elements [27]. It was not only Cynthia Weber who illustrated this but also other feminist theorists like Sylvester and Tickner.

Like Keohane, Francis Fukuyama also published a text titled *Women and the Evolution of World Politics* in 1998 in which he suggested that feminists tend to see only men as aggressive and women as peaceful. But Annick T.R. Wibben (2004) replied to this in her article "*Feminist International Relation: Old Debates and New Directions*", by saying that Fukuyama completely misread, oversimplified, or missed entirely the variety of theories and methodologies promoted by feminist IR [26].

In 2001, Joshua S. Goldstein, in her work '*War and Gender*', questioned why wars, old or new, occur and how conflict affects gender and vice versa. This research sought to bridge traditional IR and feminist IR approaches by using a combination of positive research and notions of gender as a constructed concept, contributing to the discussion by arguing that the relationship between war and gender remains persistent and is intertwined across cultures and times [28].

Marysia Zalewski (1995) in her article '*Well, what is the feminist perspective on Bosnia?*' points out the extent to which perceptions about gender differences in the security sector are deliberate. Ideas of the masculinity of war and the image of the manly soldier have reinforced/maintained the patriarchal system. *The traditional exclusion of women from armed combat was a mechanism designed primarily not to protect them, but to protect male privileges.* In the process of escalating or perpetuating armed conflict, beliefs, and myths about masculinity and femininity act on their own or are consciously manipulated by authorities [29].

However, Jacqui True (2003) described in her book '*Gender, Globalization, and Postsocialism*', the gendered construction of consumer markets in the Czech Republic. Here sex and gender were re-employed in marketing and advertising campaigns, presenting women as sexual objects and Western products as masculinizing. True links the creation of *gender-based consumer markets* with the creation of *gendered labor markets* (2000), an increasingly feminized public sector, and masculinized private and foreign enclave sectors. And she links

them to the construction of a *gendered civil and political society*, the masculinization of politics, and the feminization of the civic sphere. She remarked in conclusion that "Globalization and gendering processes are inextricably linked" [30]. Thus, liberal feminists challenge all liberal contents such as equality, freedom, rule of law and human rights, open markets, security cooperation, promotion of liberal democracy, and globalization etc. which divide the world into 'blue and pink' consumerism.

6. Marxian Feminist Theory

For Marxist feminists, capitalism is the primary oppressor, for socialist feminists it is **capitalism plus patriarchy**. For socialists or Marxist feminists, the theory of world politics focuses on the patterns by which the world capitalist system and patriarchal systems of power systematically disadvantage women in comparison to men. Zillah R. Eisenstein in her book "*The Female Body and the Law*" (1988) distinguishes between **oppression** and **exploitation**. She believes that both men and women are exploited in the capitalist system, but due to the patriarchal system, the oppression is only of the woman. Primarily this oppression is sexual, both within and outside the family [31]. This kind of feminism fostered the radical feminists which seek the relationship between two Saxes as unequal based on subordination and domination. Simon de Beauvoir's book '*The Second Sex*' (1952) is considered a classic and provides a seminal understanding of the meaning of gender. She argued that women are not born as women but gradually acquire the definition of a woman through their role play in society [32]. In this way, she was the first feminist to lay the foundational definition of gender. Radical feminists believe that gender is a set of socially constructed characteristics that define what we mean by masculinity and femininity. For radical feminists women are capable to display masculine characteristics and vice-versa. According to Simon de Beauvoir, **gender is a system** of social hierarchy in which masculine characteristics are more valued than the feminine and **gender is a structure** that signifies unequal power relationships between males and females [33]. For example, Carol Cohn, in her book "*Wars, Wimps and Women: Talking Gender and Thinking War*" (1993), shows that the language of defense intellectuals hinges on a concept she describes as "gendered discourse"—in the form—a set of interrelated words, images, and associations that form the basis of how we see ourselves as men and women [34]. Later on, this radicalism became the pioneer of difference feminism, feminist critical theory, and feminist post-modernism, feminist post-colonialism, feminist post-structuralism and feminist social constructivism [34].

7. Difference/ Standpoint feminism and IR

Difference feminism focuses on strengthening the feminine and valuing the unique contributions of females as women. Difference feminists do not think that women can do all the same things as men or vice-versa. Due to their better experience in nurturing and human relations, women are considered to be potentially more effective than men in conflict resolution as well as group decision-making. Difference feminists believe that there are real differences between the genders that are not merely social constructions but cultural principles too. Some of these are called cultural feminists. Cultural feminists believe that men and women are inherently different. Moreover, they think that feminine characteristics should be highly valued. The most well-known cultural feminist is Carol Gilligan who wrote a classical text '*In a Different Voice*' (1982). By arguing that the 'woman' has not been so much misdefined by men, but it has been ignored and undervalued. If women are nurturing and

valuing personal relationships then these attributes are to be valued, and they say that men should learn such skills from women [35].

Some of these feminists believe that it is not just social construction but there is also core biological essence to being male and female. However, most feminists believe that the difference in women is determined more culturally than biologically. Thus, these feminist perspectives form a *standpoint* from which to observe, analyze and criticize the traditional paradigm of IR. This approach sometimes called *essential* feminism. This first stream shakes the field's core, often from a base of feminist standpoint thinking. Basically, standpoint feminists want to correct the male dominance of our knowledge of the world [36]. Carole Pateman (1988), for example, suggests ways to re-evaluate Thomas Hobbes' perspective of the state of nature (the chief metaphor for the international state system) along with the 'civilized' conditions associated with legitimately governed nation-states. Pateman (1988) speaks both of the state of nature and the state of lawful domestic order as underwritten by a *sexual contract*: women were conquered in the wars of nature, owing to the handicap of having to defend themselves while also defending their children, and were turned into family-members-as-servants who, thereafter, have had a notoriously troubled relationship with public citizenship also [37]. That's why due to being a domestic slave, she could never become a proper citizen and neither was she the head of the state. Because of this women were kept out of the IR discipline. This shows that the states were not based on public *consent*, and international system has also been following this trend or sexual contract pattern.

Jean Paulette Bethke Elshtain (1940–2013) was an American political philosopher who completed her Doctor of Philosophy degree from Brandeis University in Massachusetts in 1973 and wrote her dissertation on *Women and Politics: A Theoretical Analysis*. The reflection of Elshtain work on International Politics had shown from her examination of the role of gender in describing the division between the public and private spheres in political theory. In her book, "*Public Man, Private Women*" (published in 1981), she examined the history of political thoughts that make the distinction between man and woman. She argues that with the decline of ancient Greece and the rise of Christianity, the dramatic change had come in the two spheres but gender has been vital in demarcating the two spheres. This book establishes the significance of gender in informing how 'the political sphere' is identified and linked with 'male' characteristics allegedly. She focused in her work on gender construction of the difference between domesticity and the political sphere as she turned towards international relations [38].

8. Critical theory and feminism

Like the critical theory of IR critical feminist theory also germinated from Gramscian Marxism. It seeks both ideational and material manifestations of gendered identities and gendered power in international politics. For instance, Sandra Whitworth, as a feminist critical theorist, claims in her book *Feminism and International Relations* (1994) that contemporary feminist theory has its roots in social movements directed at changing unequal power relations between women and men. Therefore, the main goal of feminist theory is to understand how the current social system, which many feminists believe is marked by discrimination and oppression, came into being and how this knowledge can be used towards its change. While claiming that knowledge emerges from political practice, many feminists do not believe in, nor see the need for, a separation between theory and practice. However, feminists disagree on

what they believe is female subordination as well as how to explain and overcome it [39]. Thus, Sandra Whitworth tries to explain her feminist theory as Robert Cox asserts that undoubtedly every theory is problem-solving and critical but *the theory is always for someone and for some purpose*. Like Sylvester, Nalini Persram believes that feminist international relations can be better acknowledged as a critical international feminist theory of politics [40].

9. Social constructivist feminism

Social constructivist feminist theory in International Relations looks at how gendered identities play role in international politics. Social constructivist feminists do not view gender as merely a variable of analysis like liberal and realist feminism, but as a core component that influences structures and individual relationships. The constructivist feminist theory emphasizes the idea of gender and *how it upholds unequal global material conditions*. For instance, Elisabeth Prügl, as a feminist constructivist, in her book *“The Global Construction of Gender”*, published in 1999, focuses specifically on people who work at home for pay. She explores the debates and rhetoric surrounding home-based workers that have happened in global movements and multilateral organizations since the early 1900s in respect of tracing changing conceptions of gender over this century. Prüggl describes, home-based workers, both urban and rural, engage in various activities such as sewing garments, making lace, embroidering, rolling cigarettes, peeling shrimp, weaving carpets, preparing food, polishing plastic, editing manuscripts, processing insurance claims, and assembling artificial flowers, umbrellas, and jewelry. These home-based workers, who are mostly female, are widely recognized as underpaid and exploited. In exploring these women's plight, she describes the rules that have separated home and work and, in the process, originated a diverse array of distinctly gendered identities, including that of the working mother as a social problem, the wage-earning worker as a male bread-winner, the crafts-producing woman as the symbol of Third World nationhood, the woman micro-entrepreneur as the heroine of structural adjustment, and the new androgynous home-based consultant/freelancer/teleworker as the exemplary worker of a malleable organized global economy. That is why this dispute reached the Homework Convention of ILO in 1996 [41].

In her book *Transforming Masculine Rule: Agriculture and Rural Development in the European Union (2011)*, She observed East and West Germany as case studies, she shows *how European agricultural policy has soldered long-standing gender-based inequalities and how feminists have used liberalization as an opportunity to challenge such inequalities*. She produced a zoom-in view of the power politics involved in government policies and programs in the Altmark region in the German East and the Danube Forest region in the West by the comparison and playing role of the European Union's rural development program named LEADER. In identifying mechanisms of power, she demonstrates how these mechanisms operate in arguments over gender relations within the state system. Her feminist-constructivist approach to global restructuring as a gendered process brings to the fore the multiple levels of governance and the diversity of gender constructions operating in different societies. Ultimately, she provides a new understanding of patriarchy as diverse, disputed, and in variability [42].

10. Post-Structural and Post-Modernist Feminism

Post-structural feminism pushes further the analysis of gender in **security studies** by examining how societies shape masculinity and femininity (and how both concepts differ over

time and between societies), especially through language. This feminist approach is often referred to as a third feminism, that came after liberal feminism and radical feminism [43]. It talks about binary linguistic constructs like order/anarchy, developed/underdeveloped, national/international etc. in international relations, which perpetuate masculinity over femininity and try to empower it. They mostly follow Jacques Derrida for deconstruction the theory and Michel Foucault for 'power is everywhere & comes from everywhere' and argued that language is ontologically significant. Charlotte Hooper's book '*Manly States*' (2001) is an instance of post-structural or post-modernist textual analysis. She highlighted in her text that International Relations is widely a masculine manifestation where the idea of power, violence, and velour are seen as exclusivity of the realist world. This is at times, an unintended but inevitable fact and is widely accepted [44].

Judith Butler, in her best-known book, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), and its sequel, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (1993), explores the concept of gender performativity which is in turn linked to power, security, and its paradoxical qualities. Gender is an assignment that does not merely happen once, it is a continuous process. Women are assigned a sex at birth and then a killing of expectations follows which continues to 'assign' gender to women. The powers that do that are part of a tool of gender that assigns and reassigns norms to bodies, organizes them socially, but also vibrant them in directions contrary to those norms. So *gender is a doing*. Thus, postmodern feminism is not only theorizing feminism but also seeking an identity [45] [46].

Understanding gender as a social construct that creates power relations permits us to know that socio-cultural norms and traditions are extremely gendered, to the extent that they also are involved in the production/reproduction of violence. The relevance of discourse is essential since everything can be constituted through language. For instance, Laura J. Shepherd argues in her article '*Gender, Violence and Global Politics: Contemporary Debates in Feminist Security Studies*' (2009) that violence is, therefore, deeply involved in the construction of gender relations, and in "hegemonic masculinity" [25]. Since discourses are created of a linguistic system in which concepts have been 'charged' by masculinity, violence is, therefore, a process and performance of that masculinity, for example, establishment in linguistic terms as men are after all men. Similarly, postmodern feminists such as Carol Cohn have sought to deconstruct the language of realism, especially as it reflects the effects of gender and sex, for instance, the first atom bombs were male by their name 'Fat Man' and 'Little Boy'. The coded telegram sent to United States authorities about the hydrogen bomb simply said, 'It is a boy'. But the aircraft that dropped the atom bomb on Hiroshima was called 'Enola Gay', female gender. It was named after the pilot's mother. Another example is naming the French atom bomb test sites in the South Pacific which were all given over women's names. These efforts seek sex and gender through the literal meaning of realism [47]. Thus, postmodernist feminists explore and examine the language/gender of war which is colored in a feminine and masculine manner.

11. Post colonial feminism

Post-colonial feminists work at the intersection of class, race, and gender at the global level, and especially analyze the gendered effects of transnational culture and the unequal division of labor in the global political economy. Post-colonialists focus on domination and

subordination that was established by European imperialism in the 18th and 19th centuries. They believe that these dominant relationships persist and that they are formed into the way Western knowledge portrays people and countries in the global south in the present.

For instance, in her essay *'Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses'* (1984) Chandra T. Mohanty, argues that Western feminist scholarship has underestimated all women in the 'global south' to the individual versus the collective other as poor, undereducated, victims, oppressed, etc [48]. Mohanty's next essay *'Feminism Without Borders'* (2003) begins with her effective critique of Western feminism and in the end rethinks that piece based on her latest thinking about how gender matters in racial, class, and national structures of globalization. Thus, this book provides a critique of Eurocentric and Western developmental discourses and the racial, sexual, and class-based assumptions of Western feminist scholarship. She believes that women's subordination must be differently understood in terms of race, class, and geographical location and that all women should be seen as agents rather than victims. She emphasizes that while writing on women in the global south, Western feminists must be considerate of the context of the global hegemony of Western scholarship. This includes the production, publication, distribution, and consumption of information and ideas [49].

12. Conclusion

Feminist approaches have been instrumental in forcing scholars to recognize gender biases despite claims of scientific objectivity in IR. The discipline of political science especially IR is fraught with gendered notions. Feminists challenge gendered notions of IR by highlighting how our current concepts of international politics are based on male behavior. For instance, they manifest that human political behavior is not universal, but rather context-specific based on variables such as race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, geographical locations, culture, and gender. Feminists argue that the political world should not be constructed based on stereotypical masculine characteristics and certainly cannot be fully understood using a male-centered analysis. This notion of universality based on male experience and characteristics is perpetuated in IR theories, which aim to explain how world politics works. Moving beyond the 'high politics' of IR's official knowledge makers, such feminist writings have broadened the formal field of disciplinary international relations, breaking down its exclusionary restrictions and exposing hidden aspects of international politics which many constructivists fail to recognize. In giving voice to those considered marginalized in international politics, feminist writing validates their knowledge and position and it disrupts hegemonic accounts. But more than that, those marginalized interpretations serve to frame feminist projects that compare *what is* with *what ought to be*, rarely providing prescriptions for a better future, but a point of departure for a better understanding of the world. Steve Smith and Patricia Owens claim that the focus may more accurately be on 'gender' rather than 'women' because the categories of 'women' and 'men' and the concepts of masculinity and femininity are highly contested in much feminist research. Similarly, the distinctions of liberals/socialists, etc. are also somewhat misleading, in that these categories do not quite match the diverse works of feminist scholars, especially in contemporary works in which elements of each 'type' are often integrated. Whatever feminist researches are, these are too critical, constructive, and post-modern in this sense, the metaphors or paradigms of IR are increasingly indeed being challenged by feminist research as an alternative approach or reflective theories to IR discipline.

References

- [1] Cherian, J. S. Feminist Approaches to International Relations. The Hindu. June 28, 2023, [cited 2023, August 7] Available from <https://www.thehindu.com/specials/text-and-context/feminist-approaches-to-international-relations/article67016933.ece>.
- [2] Thorburn D. Feminism meets international relations. SAIS Rev. Int'l Aff.. 2000;20:1. <https://doi.org/10.1353/sais.2000.0051>
- [3] Smith S, Booth K, Zalewski M. International Theory. Positivism and Beyond. 1996. <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511660054>
- [4] Waever O. The rise and fall of the inter-paradigm debate. International theory: Positivism and beyond. 1996 Jun 13; 149:185. <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511660054.009>
- [5] Deveaux M. Feminism and empowerment: A critical reading of Foucault. Feminist studies. 1994 Jul 1; 20(2):223-47. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3178151>
- [6] Saloom R. A Feminist Inquiry into International Law and International Relations. RogeR WilliAms ul ReV.. 2006;12:159.
- [7] Hartsock N. Foucault on power: a theory for women?. In Feminism/postmodernism 2013 Apr 15 (pp. 157-175). Routledge.
- [8] Elshtain JB. Women and war. University of Chicago Press; 1995 Jul 15.
- [9] Sjoberg L. Women fighters and the 'beautiful soul' narrative. International Review of the Red Cross. 2010 Mar;92(877):53-68. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s181638311000010x>
- [10] Burguieres MK. Feminist approaches to peace: Another step for peace studies. Millennium. 1990 Mar;19(1):1-8. <https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298900190010201>
- [11] Tickner JA. A feminist voyage through international relations. Oxford University Press; 2014 Feb 3. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s1743923x15000203>
- [12] Morgenthau H, Politics among the Nations: The struggle for power and peace. Nova York, Alfred Kopf. 1948. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-531-90400-9_83
- [13] Sylvester C. War experiences/war practices/war theory. Millennium. 2012 Jun;40(3):483-503. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0305829812442211>
- [14] Weber C. International relations theory: a critical introduction. Routledge; 2013 Nov 12. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003008644-1>
- [15] Scott JW, Rao A. Women's Studies International: Nairobi and Beyond.1988.
- [16] Goldstein JS. International relations. Pearson Education India; 2008.
- [17] Rosenje MO, Soluade ZO. An Analysis of Feminism in International Relations. Review.:1. 2022.
- [18] Slijepcevic, Dusanka, and Dragana Vilic. "Gender (in) equality in (European) society." *Technium Social Sciences Journal* 47 (2023): 339-354. <https://doi.org/10.47577/tssj.v47i1.9391>

- [19] Topini C. Betty Friedan and The Feminine Mystique (1963): A Feminist Political Debate. In *Writing Women's Lives: Autobiography, Life Narratives, Myths and Historiography International Symposium 2013*.
- [20] Refiloe, Nkadimeng, and Malesela Edward Montle. "Patriarchal Stereotypes That Marginalise African Women: A Feminist Analysis of Sindiwe Magona's Beauty's Gift (2008)." *Technium Soc. Sci. J.* 26 (2021): 836.
- [21] Boserup E, Kanji N, Tan SF, Toulmin C. *Woman's role in economic development*. Routledge; 2013 Jul 4. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315065892>
- [22] Enloe C. *Bananas, beaches and bases: Making feminist sense of international politics*. Univ of California Press; 2014 May 16. <https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520957282>
- [23] Enloe C. *The morning after: Sexual politics at the end of the Cold War*. Univ of California Press; 1993 Oct 10. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2082775>
- [24] Enloe CH. *Nimo's war, Emma's war: Making feminist sense of the Iraq war*. Univ of California Press; 2010. <https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520945951>
- [25] Shepherd LJ. Gender, violence and global politics: Contemporary debates in feminist security studies. *Political Studies Review*. 2009 May;7(2):208-19. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-9299.2009.00180.x>
- [26] Wibben AT. Feminist international relations: Old debates and new directions. *The Brown journal of world affairs*. 2004 Jan 1;10(2):97-114.
- [27] Weber C. Good girls, little girls, and bad girls: Male paranoia in Robert Keohane's critique of feminist International Relations. *Millennium*. 1994 Jun;23(2):337-49. <https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298940230021401>
- [28] Prügl E. Feminist international relations: the state of the field. *Gender and Politics: The State of the Discipline*. 2012 Jul 10:175-98. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvddzq1d.11>
- [29] Zalewski M. Well, what is the feminist perspective on Bosnia?. *International Affairs*. 1995 Apr 1;71(2):339-56. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2623438>
- [30] True J. *Gender, globalization, and postsocialism: The Czech Republic after communism*. Columbia University Press; 2003 Dec 31. <https://doi.org/10.7312/true12714>
- [31] Eisenstein ZR. *The female body and the law*. Univ of California Press; 1988.
- [32] Oksala J. The method of critical phenomenology: Simone de Beauvoir as a phenomenologist. *European Journal of Philosophy*. 2023 Mar;31(1):137-50. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejop.12782>
- [33] John B, Steve S, Patricia O. *The globalization of world politics: an introduction to international relations*.
- [34] Cohn C. *Wars, wimps, and women: Talking gender and thinking war*. na; 1993. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400863235.227>
- [35] Gilligan C. Revisiting "In a Different Voice". *LEARNING Landscapes*. 2018;11(2):25-30. <https://doi.org/10.36510/learnland.v1i12.942>

- [36] Hekman S. Truth and method: Feminist standpoint theory revisited. *Signs: Journal of women in culture and society*. 1997 Jan 1;22(2):341-65. <https://doi.org/10.1086/495159>
- [37] Sylvester C. Feminist Theory and gender studies in international relations. *International Studies Notes*. 1991 Oct 1:32-8.
- [38] Elshtain JB. *Public man, private woman: Women in social and political thought*. Princeton University Press; 2020 Jul 21. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv131bvkg>
- [39] Whitworth S. *Feminism and international relations: towards a political economy of gender in interstate and non-governmental institutions*. Springer; 1994 Nov 12.
- [40] Persram N. Politicizing the feminine, globalizing the feminist. *Alternatives*. 1994 Jul;19(3):275-313. <https://doi.org/10.1177/030437549401900301>
- [41] Gringeri CE. Book Review: *The Global Construction of Gender: Home-Based Work in the Political Economy of the 20th Century*. *Affilia*. 2001 Aug;16(3):388-90. <https://doi.org/10.1177/088610990101600311>
- [42] Prügl E. *Transforming masculine rule: Agriculture and rural development in the European Union*. University of Michigan Press; 2011 Jul 20. <https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.2146717>
- [43] Kristeva J, Jardine A, Blake H. Women's time. *Signs: Journal of women in culture and society*. 1981 Oct 1;7(1):13-35. <https://doi.org/10.1086/493855>
- [44] Williams, K. P. Review of *Manly States: Masculinities, International Relations, and Gender Politics*, by C. Hooper]. *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs)*, (2001), 77(4): 969–970.
- [45] McIntosh M. Review of *Gender Trouble*. *Feminist Review*. 1991;38:113-4. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1395391>
- [46] Turner BS. Review of *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* in *Contemporary Sociology*. 1995;24(3):331-4332. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2076481>
- [47] Cohn C. Sex and death in the rational world of defense intellectuals. *Signs: Journal of women in culture and society*. 1987 Jul 1;12 (4):687-718. <https://doi.org/10.1086/494362>
- [48] Mohanty CT. *Under Western eyes: Feminist scholarship and colonial discourses*. *Boundary 2*. 1984 Apr 1:333-58. <https://doi.org/10.2307/302821>
- [49] Thobani, S. Review of *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*, by C. T. Mohanty. *Hypatia*, 2005, 20(3): 221–224. <https://doi.org/10.1353/hyp.2005.0110>