1. Read the text

FEMINISM, GENDER AND GLOBAL POLITICS

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. 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 a 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' (see p. 417) (Millett 1970; Elshtain 1981).

Since the 1970s, however, feminism has undergone a process of deradicalization, defying (repeated) attempts to define a clear feminist 'third wave', but it has

- **First-wave feminism:** The early form of feminism from the mid-nineteenth century to the 1960s, which was based on the liberal goal of sexual equality in the areas of legal and political rights, particularly suffrage rights.
- **Second-wave feminism:** The form of feminism that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, and was characterized by a more radical concern with 'women's liberation', including, and perhaps especially, in the private sphere.
- **Radical feminism:** A form of feminism that holds gender divisions to be the most politically significant of social cleavages, and believes that these are rooted in the structures of family or domestic life.

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 (see p. 416). '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 (1908–86) 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 (Squires 1999). 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 (Tinkner 1992). 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. 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 2005). In particular, it suggests that the traditional goal of gender equality

● **Liberal feminism:** A form of feminism that is grounded in the belief that sexual differences are irrelevant to personal worth and calls for equal rights for women and men in the public realm.

● **Androgyny:** The possession of both male and female characteristics; used to imply that human beings are sexless 'persons' in the sense that sex is irrelevant to their social role or political status.

● **Difference feminism:** A form of feminism that holds that there are ineradicable differences between women and men, whether these are rooted in biology, culture or material experience.

● **Essentialism:** The belief that biological factors are crucial in determining psychological and behavioural traits.

CONCEPT

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.

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 behaviour 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 poststructural 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 (Chowdhry and Nair 2002). 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'. Poststructural or postmodern 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 (Sylvester 1994). From this perspective, even the idea of 'woman' may be nothing more that 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).

'Gender lenses' 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 (see p. 4), 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 (Steans 1998). 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 2009).

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

CONCEPT

Patriarchy

Patriarchy literally means rule by the father (*pater* meaning father in Latin). Although some feminists use patriarchy in this specific and limited sense, to describe the structure of the family and the dominance of the husband-father over both his wife and his children, radical feminists in particular use the term to refer to the system of male power in society at large. Patriarchy thus means 'rule by men'. The term implies that the subordination of women both reflects and derives from the dominance of the husband-father within the family. Millet (1970) thus suggested that patriarchy contains two principles: 'male shall dominate female, elder male shall dominate younger male'. A patriarchal society is therefore characterized by both gender and generational oppression.

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). 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 (see p. 449) itself and other bodies such as the World Bank (see p. 373). 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. In a pioneering analysis, J. Ann Tickner (1988) thus reformulated Hans Morgenthau's six principles of political realism (see p. 57) to show how seemingly objective laws in fact reflect male values, rather than female ones. Morgenthau's account of power politics portrays states as autonomous actors intent on pursuing self-interest by acquiring power over other states, a model that reflects the traditional dominance of the husband-father within the family and of male citizens within society at large. At the same time, this gendered conception of power as 'power over', or domination, takes no account of forms of human relationship that may be more akin to female experience, such as caring, interdependence and collaborative behaviour. Tickner's reformulated six principles can be summarized as follows:

- Objectivity is culturally defined and it is associated with masculinity – so objectivity is always partial.
- The national interest is multi-dimensional – so it cannot (and should not) be defined by one set of interests.
- Power as domination and control privileges masculinity.
- There are possibilities for using power as collective empowerment in the international arena
- All political action has moral significance – it is not possible to separate politics and morality.

● **Gender mainstreaming**: The attempt to 'mainstream' gender into decision-making processes by requiring that, before decisions are made, an analysis is carried out of their likely effects on women and men respectively.

● **Masculinism**: Gender bias that derives from the portrayal of male or masculine views as either superior or as objective and rational.

2. The discussion.

1) The text states that second-wave feminism shifted focus to the private sphere, arguing that "the personal is the political." How does this principle challenge traditional definitions of politics, and what are its practical implications for analyzing power in everyday life?

2) The text suggests first-wave feminists believed that winning the right to vote would cause "all other forms of sexual discrimination... to quickly disappear." Why was this assumption flawed, and what kinds of discrimination persist even after achieving legal equality?

3) Radical feminism introduced the concept of "patriarchy" as a systematic cause of female subordination. Is this a useful concept for understanding gender inequality today, or does it oversimplify the complex sources of power and disadvantage in modern societies?

4) The text lists numerous feminist sub-traditions (liberal, radical, socialist, etc.). How does this internal diversity strengthen or weaken feminism as a coherent political movement for social change?

5) Second-wave feminism sought "women's liberation," not just political emancipation. What would constitute true "liberation" for women in the 21st century, and how would we know if it has been achieved?

6) The text traces feminist ideas back to ancient Greece and China. What is the significance of this long history? Does it suggest that the struggle against patriarchy is a fundamental and enduring aspect of human civilization?

7) The key distinction between the first and second wave is the focus on the "public" versus the "private" sphere. In which sphere do you believe the most significant barriers to gender equality remain today, and why?

8) The text defines feminism in terms of challenging the "supremacy of men and the subjugation of women." What role, if any, should men play in the feminist movement? Can men be true allies in dismantling a patriarchal system from which they may benefit?

9) First-wave feminism largely worked within the existing political system to gain rights, while second-wave feminism demanded a "revolutionary process of social change." Which approach is more effective or necessary in the current era?

10) While not explicitly mentioned in the text, the existence of "postcolonial" and "lesbian" feminism hints at the concept of intersectionality. How does recognizing that women face different forms of oppression based on race, class, and sexuality complicate the unified goal of "the social advancement of women"?

GLOBAL ACTORS . . .

THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

Type: Social movement

An organized women's movement first emerged in the mid-nineteenth century, focused on the campaign for female suffrage, the defining goal of feminism's 'first wave'. By the end of the nineteenth century, women's suffrage groups were active in most western countries. Although the goal of female suffrage was largely achieved in developed states in the early decades of the twentieth century (it was introduced first in New Zealand in 1893), gaining votes for women, ironically, weakened the women's movement by depriving it of a unifying goal and sense of purpose. It was not until the 1960s that the women's movement was regenerated with the birth of the 'women's liberation movement'. Often viewed as feminism's 'second wave', this reflected the belief that redressing the status of women required not just political reform, but a process of radical, and particularly cultural, change, brought about by 'consciousness raising' and the transformation of family, domestic and personal life. This radical phase of feminist activism subsided from the early 1970s onwards, but the women's movement nevertheless continued to grow and acquired an increasingly prominent international dimension.

Significance: The impact of social movements is difficult to assess because of the broad nature of their goals, and because, to some extent, they exert influence through less tangible cultural strategies. However, it is clear that in the case of the women's movement, profound political and social changes have been achieved through shifts in cultural values and moral attitudes brought about over a number of years. Beyond the earlier achievement of female suffrage, feminist activism from the 1960s onwards contributed to profound and far-reaching changes in the structure of western societies. Female access to education, careers and public life generally expanded considerably; free contraception and abortion on demand became more available; women enjoyed considerably greater legal and financial independence; the issues of rape and violence against women received greater prominence, and so forth. Such changes brought about major shifts in family and social structures, as traditional gender roles were re-examined and sometimes recast, not least through a major increase in the number of women in the workplace. Similar developments can be identified on the international level, as the advancement and empowerment of women came to be prioritized across a range of international agendas. This happened, for example, through an explicit emphasis on women's empowerment in development initiatives, via ideas such as human development (see p. 356), human security (see p. 423) and women's human rights, and as a result of the adoption of 'gender mainstreaming' by the UN and bodies such as the World Bank.

However, the significance and impact of the women's movement has been called into question in a number of ways. In the first place, advances in gender equality, where they have occurred, may have been brought about less by the women's movement and more by the pressures generated by capitalist modernity, and especially its tendency to value individuals in terms of their contribution to the productive process, rather than their traditional status. Second, the sexual revolution brought about by the women's movement is, at best, incomplete. The expansion of educational, career and political opportunities for women has been largely confined to the developed world, and even there major disparities persist, not least though the continued under-representation of women in senior positions in the professions, business and political life, and in the fact that everywhere household and childcare responsibilities are still unequally distributed. Third, the women's movement has become increasingly disparate and divided over time. The core traditions of western feminism (liberal, socialist/Marxist and radical feminism) have thus increasingly been challenged by black feminism, postcolonial feminism, poststructuralist feminism, psychoanalytic feminism, lesbian feminism and so on. Finally, social conservatives have accused the women's movement of contributing to social breakdown by encouraging women to place career advancement and personal satisfaction before family and social responsibility.

3. Render the text.