Chapter 12

Feminism

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Framing Questions

- **Are feminist international relations theories necessary for understanding international politics?**
- **What basis do feminist international relations theories provide for understanding international politics?**
- **How have feminist international relations theories influenced the practice of international politics?**

Reader's Guide

This chapter introduces the reader to international feminism, highlighting the gains made during the United Nations Decade for Women (1975–1985) in collecting information about and data on women's experiences, roles, and status globally. Feminist international relations theories that emerged soon after the decade's end drew from varieties of feminisms and the wealth of knowledge developed during that time to critique the exclusion of women and gender from the discipline of International Relations. Feminist international relations theories are diverse, proliferating, and transforming the field and practice of international politics. This chapter defines liberal, critical, post-colonial, and poststructural international feminist theories and illustrates the purchase they provide on issues such as global governance, war and violence, and international political economy.

Introduction

The end of the cold war and the emergence of new theoretical debates set the broader context for the introduction of feminist international relations theories into the discipline of International Relations. These two events, one global and the other disciplinary, together reduced the credibility of the dominant approaches in the discipline of international relations in two ways. Both the unexpected political alteration in the international system and the introduction of influential new actors in world politics—such as international networks, non-state actors, and users of social media—required new forms of understanding and new methods of research. Additionally, within the social sciences, explanatory theory (which holds that the world is external to and unaffected by theories of it) was rapidly losing credence because identity and cultural politics challenged its ontology (ways of being), epistemology (ways of knowing), and methodology (ways of studying) (**see the Introduction to this book**). Instead, what is often called constitutive theory (which holds that the world is intrinsic to and affected by theories of it) was deemed the better choice, because it eschews ahistorical and transcendental explanation. It also allows for the study of language, identity, and difference—all of which seemed necessary for understanding the complexity of world politics in which struggles over social identities and cultural meanings are inextricable from demands for reforms in institutions and law.

Box 12.1 Why 'feminism' and not 'human rights'?

Some people ask, 'Why the word feminist? Why not just say you are a believer in human rights, or something like that?' Because that would be dishonest. Feminism is, of course, part of human rights in general—but to choose to use the vague expression human rights is to deny the specific and particular problem of gender. It would be a way of pretending that it was not women who have, for centuries, been excluded.... It would be a way of denying that ... the problem was not about being human, but specifically about being a female human. For centuries, the world divided human beings into two groups and then proceeded to exclude and oppress one group. It is only fair that the solution to the problem should acknowledge that.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2012), We should All be Feminists (New York: Anchor Books)

Feminist international relations theories are constitutive, interdisciplinary theories and the only ones within the field of International Relations that consistently prioritize the study of women and/or engage in significant debates over the meaning of gender (**see Box 12.1**). The meaning(s) of gender is (are) contested within feminist theories and within feminist international relations theories. For now, we can start with Terrell Carver's statement that 'gender is not a synonym for women' (1996). Although more will be said on definitions of gender (**see Ch. 17**), it is fair to say that at the start of feminist international relations theorizing, gender was understood to be primarily about social construction of biological sex differences (**see Box 12.2**).

Box 12.2 The social construction of gender

'Throwing like a girl' is one way in which we can understand social construction—having female sex characteristics is presumed to define the innate capacity to throw a ball. And yet we know that access to sports and training opportunities, and expectations and encouragement to do so, have nothing to do with biological sex. Instead, they have everything to do with social order and expectations. Therefore 'throwing like a girl' is neither natural nor accidental. Moreover, the very statement is laden with judgment as to the worth of such a throw. To throw 'like' a girl is an insult. To throw like a girl is to be lesser in relation to throwing like a boy—supposedly its only and natural opposite.

According to feminist theorists, these binary oppositions—in which the primary and superior one (i.e. man) defines the desired norm (i.e. masculinity) and the secondary inferior one (i.e. woman) functions as the failure of the norm (i.e. femininity)—structure most social, political, and economic meanings. The opposition is not simply symmetrical but is also hierarchical. In other words, what we associate with masculinity is encoded as privileged and positive, while what we associate with femininity is encoded as subordinate and negative. This encoding 'de-valorizes not only women, but also racially, culturally, or economically marginalized men' (Peterson, 2003: 14). For example, to be rational, autonomous, and independent is associated with men and masculinity, while to be irrational, relational, and dependent is associated with femininity. Feminists argue that these hierarchical binaries function as ahistorical and fixed, and they are presumed to be self-evident and universal. This constrains understanding of the *construction* of differences, which cannot be reduced to the simple opposition of men versus women, because these binaries are falsely taken to *explain* differences.

What is feminism?

An introduction of feminist international relations theories must begin with a working definition of **feminism**. There is no one single definition of feminism, just as there is no single definition of liberalism or Marxism. Notwithstanding this, it would be correct to say that feminism is fundamentally rooted in an analysis of the global subordination of women—which can occur economically, politically, physically, and socially—and is dedicated to its elimination. Feminism promotes equality and justice for all women, so that women's expectations and opportunities in life are not unfairly curtailed solely on the basis of being a woman. Consequently, feminism is also an analysis of power and its effects.

Feminism has contributed to the development of new methods of research and forms of knowledge. Making women's diverse experiences, roles, and status visible required that feminists re-examine and rewrite histories which either excluded women altogether or treated them as incidental, and that they reformulate basic concepts to address their gendered definitions. For example, feminist historians re-conceptualized conceptions of power to demonstrate how women exercised indirect, personal, or private forms of power when denied the opportunity to exercise power directly, socially, or publically. In doing so, feminists have tried to understand what women are saying and doing, rather than relying on what men are saying about, and doing to, women. This effort had the effect of denaturalizing women's experience, roles, and status as simply given by their biological sex, instead exposing the ways in which social, political, economic, and cultural relations constructed interpretations of women's identities, experiences, status, and worth.

Feminism informs both theories and vibrant social movements, making the interplay among theorists, practitioners, policies, and practice a vital part of its definition and generating an evolving sense of what it means to be a feminist or to practice feminism. Consequently, definitions of feminism have changed over time, reflecting changes in both social contexts and understandings of the situation and status of women. Issues of race, colonialism, and sexuality that emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s bring this into particularly sharp focus, and they continue to inflect feminist theories and feminist movements today (**see Chs 11, 17, and 18**).

During the late 1970s and early 1980s, global South and global North feminisms struggled to accept and incorporate the experiences of lesbian/bisexual women into their analyses of subordination and into their movements for liberation, while women of colour (in both the global North and South) challenged white women (in both the global North and South) to confront their racism and their privileging of white experiences as a template for feminist action. Although it may be difficult to imagine now, lesbian/bisexual women were explicitly and implicitly asked to hide their sexuality for fear that it would jeopardize the credibility of the feminist movement. Cast as 'abnormal' and 'deviant', lesbian/bisexual women confronted the homophobia of the feminist movement and questioned its claim to universal 'sisterhood'. Barbara Smith, an influential political activist and a founder of the powerful black feminist Combahee River Collective, wrote in the 1990s: 'Feminism is the political theory and practice that struggles to free all women: women of colour, working-class women, poor women, disabled women, lesbians, old women, as well as white, economically privileged heterosexual women. Anything less than this vision of total freedom is not feminism, but merely female self aggrandizement' (1998: 96).

Similarly, women from the global South argued that 'feminism as appropriated and defined by the west has too often become a tool of cultural imperialism'. In the words of Madhu Kishwar, a pioneering Indian scholar and activist, 'the definitions, the terminology, the assumptions … even the issues are exported west to east … and we are expected to be the echo of what are assumed to be the more advanced movements of the west' (1990: 3). These critiques challenged the presumptions of particular Western, European feminisms that perjured, rejected, or colonized indigenous forms of feminism, and ignored the legacies of imperialism and exploitation. Many women from the global South were loath to define themselves as feminist. The great Nigerian novelist Buchi Emecheta explained it this way: 'I do believe in the African type of feminism. They call it womanism because, you see, Europeans don't worry about water … you are so well off' (Adeola 1990). The words of Kishwar and Emecheta also

highlight the disconnect that many women from the global South felt about the priorities of global North feminism. After all, if you don't have access to clean water or daily meals, what does formal legal equality really mean? Who decides upon the priorities of a feminist agenda? Who shares in it?

It is difficult to convey the depth and intensity of these debates among women and the fury and hurt they expressed. Yet these tensions and debates informed the evolution of feminism and feminist movements as—in a process not yet ended nor fully successful—each strove for a more integrative understanding of women's experiences and status and, in particular, to gain purchase on the ways in which they intersected with other elements of identity—such as race, sexuality, class, geographical location, and age. To understand women's experiences, status, and roles, the differences among women as well their similarities had to be at the forefront of any organizing. Thus, feminism is not only about asking, in the words of International Relations theorist Cynthia Enloe, '*where* are the women', but also ensuring that her question is nuanced to ask *which* women are *where*?

It was not until the 1970s that we were even able to begin to answer these questions, for until then we lacked the information to do so. The International Women's Year Conference of 1975, held in Mexico City, was the most visible origin of women's global organizing for the twentieth century. As a result, in 1975 the United Nations formally designated 1976–1985 as the United Nations Decade for Women. This was pivotal because it encouraged and legitimized research and action on the experiences, roles, and status of women globally, highlighting not only the stark absence of attention to women, but also the magnitude of women's contributions. Research on women's lives and opportunities signalled the validity and importance of women's issues. If at the start of the Decade for Women 'study after study revealed the lack of statistical data and information about women', by its end this was less true (Arvonne Fraser, *The UN Decade for Women*, Westview Press, 1987, p. 21). It was during this decade that the United Nations Fund for Women (now known as UN Women) and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INstraw) were founded, and the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) entered into force. Think about that: it was only about 50 years ago that the international community accepted, and somewhat grudgingly at that, that knowledge and understanding of women's experiences, status, contributions, and concerns were worth pursuing. The knowledge subsequently gained was ground-breaking, revelatory, and revolutionary.

For instance, Ester Boserup's book *Women's Role in Economic Development*, published in 1970, challenged conventional economic and social development programmes by proving that women were essential to productive—as well as reproductive—processes and to developing nations' economic and social progress. This led to an entirely new development agenda at the United Nations, 'Women in Development'. Until that time, international and national actors and organizations did not recognize or support women's essential economic roles, productive and/or reproductive. Moreover, the waged and unwaged work of women was seen as incidental to the overall progress and development of the state. Most significantly, the work undertaken during this decade exposed the fundamental inequalities of women's status and experience both globally and domestically. To be clear, it was not that there were no international movements or organizations dedicated to increasing the opportunities and status of women before this time (for example, **see Case Study 12.1**). Rather, it was because the United Nations Decade for women was the first extended period of time when the United Nations and its member states were forced to grapple with the experiences, status, and roles of women globally, as a direct result of lobbying *by* women, and ultimately to take responsibility for alleviating the subordination of women.

Thus, we can argue that women suffer global subordination because we now know, through data collected over the last decades, that neither states nor households distribute resources and opportunities equally between men and women. Consider some relevant statistics from 2013–14 taken from the United Nations' report *Progress of the World's Women* (http://progress.unwomen.org/en/2015/). Globally, women earn 24 per cent less than men. In the United States, women make approximately 78 cents for every dollar that men make. When this figure is broken down in terms of race, African American women earn 64 cents for every dollar that men make, and Latinas only 56 cents. Worldwide, women do 75 per cent of unpaid labour in the home, while in 100 of the 173

Case Study 12.1 Women's International League of Peace and Freedom

Suffragists Mrs P. Lawrence, Jane Addams, Anita Molloy

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The Women's International League of Peace and Freedom (WILPF) is the oldest formal women's international peace organization in the world. It began in 1915 at an international gathering of women who had come together during the First World War endeavouring to end that war and all wars. In the decades since, WILPF has been a strong and vocal actor in pursuing world peace through economic and social justice, women's rights, and disarmament. From its inception, WILPF articulated the necessity of including women, and women's experiences, in all elements of international and domestic politics. One of its first efforts was ensuring that the mandate of the League of Nations addressed the participation and status of women in international politics, and that the League undertook an inquiry into the legal, social, and economic status of women—the first of its kind. Throughout its history, WILPF has been forced to deal with many of the divisive issues caused by its original membership and organization as Western, primarily European, affluent women. However, as historian of its work Catia Cecilia Confortini writes, even if WILPF was not founded as a self-consciously radical organization, it evolved into 'a leading critic of militarism, racism, sexism, environmental destruction, and unfettered capitalism, emphasizing the connection between all forms of oppression and exclusion' (Confortini, 2012: 8). One of its recent notable successes has been its leadership (through its spin-off PeaceWomen) in monitoring the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda.

The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda is the concerted result of the effort of feminist organizations and civil society to educate the United Nations and other international and national actors and organizations as to the necessity of the equal and full involvement of women in all processes of peace and security. Since the passing of the historic resolution SC 1325 in 2000, the first ever Security Council Resolution to directly address the role of gender in conflict, seven more resolutions have advanced and detailed the ways in which gender, understood as one axis of difference, matters in understanding and resolving conflict. Although these resolutions have been widely hailed there is a significant gap between aspirations and actual support, and implementation is plagued by a lack of political will and economic commitment by member states.

The resolution SC 2242, passed in October 2015, centralizes WPS as a necessary element in all efforts to address the challenges of international politics, including rising violent extremism, climate change, and displaced peoples. In a well-regarded change, rather than simply mandating and training women's organizations to participate in peace processes, the emphasis shifted to training all peace negotiators in gender-sensitive and inclusive peace processes. It also underscored the need for women in positions of leadership, and for more funding to be directed towards all of these ends.

Question 1: WILPF's trajectory has changed over its decades of activism; what would have influenced this change?

Question 2: The WPS agenda has only taken root in the United Nations since 2000; what changes in international politics contributed to its introduction?

countries assessed in the 2015 World Bank report *Women, Business and the Law*, women face gender-specific job restrictions which impede their ability to earn an income outside of the home (World Bank 2015). In 2015, only 11 women were heads of state while over 60 per cent of women remained functionally illiterate. In 2011, due to feminist organizations' work and lobbying, the United Nations recommitted itself to researching and collecting accurate statistics on women. In particular, it is developing what it calls the Evidence and Data for Gender Equality that it hopes will contribute to movements for women's equality and empowerment.

The United Nations Decade for Women sparked an outpouring of resources and information through the work of women's organizations, networks, and gatherings, as well as the flourishing of research and analysis on the women's experiences, roles, and status. It could no longer be said that women did not matter to the study of international relations, or that feminists had no claim on influencing and explaining the events of international politics. And, yet, the discipline of International Relations was silent. It was within this context that feminist international relations theorists began to make their mark on the discipline of International Relations.

Key Points

- Feminism has no single definition.
- Feminism is concerned with equality, justice, and the elimination of women's subordination and oppression.
- Feminism and feminist movements struggle with issues of inclusion and exclusion, specifically regarding race, sexuality, class, and geographic location. By asking not only 'where are the women?', but also 'which women are where?', feminism and feminist movements work towards overcoming exclusions.
- Without feminism and feminist movements, women's experiences and roles would have remained of little importance or interest to states.
- Feminism and feminist movements have succeeded in radically changing the understanding of international organizations and states regarding women's significance for and contribution to international politics.

What is feminist international relations theory?

Feminist international relations theories arose from a disciplinary dissatisfaction with the conventional and dominant theories and methods of International Relations during the late 1980s. Feminist scholars such as Marysia Zalewski, Ann Tickner, Jan Jindy Pettman, and V. Spike Peterson, to name only a few, had no interest in advocating or defending any particular dominant approach. Rather, the positivist, rationalist theories of realism/neorealism and liberalism/neoliberalism were seen as restricting the pursuit of knowledge about international politics writ large, as well as excluding different post-positivist approaches to international politics, such as interpretive, ideational, or sociological approaches (**see Chs 6, 7, and 9**). Feminist international relations theorists pointed out that neither the positivist nor post-positivist approaches paid particular attention to women, much less to gender. To remedy this, feminist international relations scholars were intent on identifying and explaining how the essential theories, concepts, and case studies of International Relations were, at the very least, partial, biased, and limited because they reflected only (certain) men's experiences, roles, and status. As Charlotte Hooper explains, feminist scholars made obvious how 'the range of subjects studied, the boundaries of the discipline, its central concerns and motifs, the content of empirical research, the assumptions of theoretical models, and the corresponding lack of female practitioners both in academic and elite political and economic circles all combine and reinforce each other to marginalize and often make invisible women's roles and women's concerns in the international arena' (2001: 1).

While feminist international relations theorists first advocated, at a minimum, for including women in the study of international politics, it was with the full recognition that to do so was not simply to expand the scope of the field, but also to radically alter its predicates. The study of women would not only introduce a new subject, it would also demand a critical analysis of the presuppositions and presumptions of the existing discipline. V. Spike Peterson describes these initial efforts as simultaneously deconstructive, in their critique of the state of the field, and reconstructive, in introducing new methods and theories for understanding international politics (1992).

One of the most obvious examples of feminist international relations theorists' deconstructive and reconstructive work is their analysis of the concept and practice of the state. Women have long been absent from or sorely underrepresented in institutions of state and global governance. Representation of women is one of the ways that the United Nations measures the degree of inequality within and across states (see the United Nations Development Programme Gender Inequality Index). The absence of women and/or low numbers of women in positions of government indicates a state that is gender unequal. Gender unequal means that not only are women underrepresented empirically, they are also neglected conceptually as their particular experiences and skills are not integrated into the practice of government. In addition, women are denied the social and political, and sometimes economic, power imparted by these positions. Once this was empirically demonstrated, feminist international relations scholars queried: why and how had this occurred? And why had the discipline, through liberalism or realism and its derivatives, not previously addressed these questions? One of multiple, complex answers pivoted on the very concept of the state itself: how it had been theorized and defined historically and politically.

Drawing on feminist work in history, anthropology, and political theory, international feminist theorists

demonstrated how the concept and practices of the state in its emergence, and even as it changed over time, consistently excluded women from full participation. In addition, feminist international relations scholars critiqued the discipline's uncritical reliance on such texts and scholars as Hobbes' *Leviathan* and Machiavelli's *The Prince* in articulating its basic precepts. Most immediately, as feminist philosophers and theorists made clear, these authors wrote at a time and in a context in which women lacked full legal status and were considered the property of a male guardian. Women were relegated to ancillary, privatized, and apolitical roles that undermined their economic and social stature and centralized male control. Broadly speaking, this relegation was justified through recourse to arguments that held that women were to be protected from politics due to their innate weakness and emotionality rooted in their reproductive capacity. Feminist political theorists agree 'the tradition of Western political thought rests on a conception of "politics" that is constructed through the exclusion of women and all that is represented by femininity and women's bodies' (Shanley and Pateman 2007: 3). Feminist theorists demonstrated that this tradition of thought, to which conventional international relations scholars turn, was fundamentally predicated on the absence and insignificance of women, as well as highly constructed interpretations of women's character and, essentially, reproductive heterosexuality.

In fact, as Carol Pateman underscores, according to Hobbes, the subordination of women through heterosexual marriage is a necessary step in the establishment of civil society and eventually the state. She writes 'through the civil institution of marriage men can lawfully obtain the familiar "helpmeet" and gain the sexual and domestic services of a wife, whose permanent servitude is guaranteed by the law and sword' (Pateman 2007: 67). Thus, the state regulated that men were rulers and women were to be ruled through a constant state of legal and social violence. Consequently, the state could not be said to be a neutral concept or institution, but is a 'main organizer of the power relations of gender' in both its formal expression and effects (Peterson 1992: 9).

Evidence of this organization of the power relations of gender emerges through an examination of how gender affects the beliefs about, and the institutions and actions of, soldiering and the military. Feminist scholars study how beliefs about masculinity and the roles men are expected to play as protectors of women and as rulers of the state directly impact conceptions of soldiers as male and militaries as masculine. Expectations and beliefs about masculinity are constitutive with expectations and beliefs about soldiers, such that states institutionalize militaries to reflect and consolidate men as soldiers, in part by excluding women from combat as incapable. As Megan MacKenzie demonstrates through her research in Sierra Leone and the United States, holding to this premise requires that we ignore the history and evidence of women's participation in combat. She argues that women's forceful exclusion from the military simply reaffirms male prowess in combat and persists 'primarily because of myths and stereotypes associated with female and male capabilities and the military's "band of brothers" culture' (MacKenzie 2015: 1). As Aaron Belkin points out, this construction of masculinity through the military also has repercussions on men who are not, in effect, soldiers within the band of brothers. These men must justify and defend their own manifestations of masculinity. Soldiers 'attain masculine status by showing that they are not-feminine, not-weak, not-queer, not-emotional' (Belkin 2012: 4). In this way, masculinity is dissociated from some men and is no longer their property by birth, and the fixed binary distinction of men (protectors/rulers) and women (protected/ruled) is shown to be constructed through the interaction of beliefs, institutions, and politics, which in turn informs and reflects gendered states. Now, the inclusion of women and the relaxation of the norms and requirement of heterosexuality in many state militaries points to the possibility of new configurations of the relationship among military, state, and gender.

The simple empirical question initially posed—where are the women?—led to a re-examination of the historical, conceptual question of the state's formation and emergence. This, in turn, prompted investigation of the effects of the state's historical and conceptual evolution, which ultimately helped to explain the absence of women in state governance and the fundamental gendering of the state. The regulation of social and political relations that ground the state (marriage and the subordination of women) and structure the state (military) are fundamentally relations of power which take women and gender as central to their operation. This analysis also suggests that international relations scholars' theorizing about state and militaries must deconstruct any facile notions of protector/protected as a natural relationship. Such a conception is decidedly not natural but legislated; and its effects lead to, for example, the erasure of violence done in the name of protection and violence wielded by women (compare Sjoberg and Gentry, 2007).

Key Points

- Feminist international relations theories are deconstructive and reconstructive.
- Prior to the late 1980s, international relations theories did not consider the role of gender or of women.
- Feminist international relations theories introduced the study of gender and of women and prompted a critical analysis of the existing discipline, and its fundamental concepts, such as states and power, as defined by realism, liberalism, and its derivatives.
- Gender is not a synonym for women, but includes both men and women in its purview.
- Feminist international relations theories conceptualize the state as a gendered organization of power.

Gender and power

Among scholars of gender, how gender and power are defined and understood to be related varies according to the conceptualization of gender itself. Elisabeth Prugl distinguishes the use of gender in at least three ways, each of which has implications for understandings of power (2001). As she notes, some scholars treat gender as an empirical variable that explains social, political, and economic inequalities, whereby gender is understood as the biological (sex) difference between men and women. Power, then, rests in social, political, and economic hierarchies. This is the approach of liberal feminist international relations. Others identify gender as a social construct that exists in social practices, identities, and institutions. Gender becomes the social interpretation of biological (sex) differences, and power rests in the practices, identities, and institutions that interpret and fix those differences. This is the approach of critical feminist international relations. Finally, some argue that gender is an effect of discourses of power. In this reading, gender is neither biological difference, nor is it the social interpretation of biological difference, but is itself constitutive of that difference. This understanding of gender identifies it as 'code' for the operation of power, and gender becomes an analytical category that is not necessarily linked to male and female bodies. This understanding of gender requires thinking of gender as a useful analytic even if male and female bodies are absent. This is the approach of poststructural feminist international relations (**see Ch. 10**). Post-colonial feminism is defined less by its theorization of gender, as it encompasses at least two of the approaches—critical and poststructural—in its scope (**see Ch. 11**).

Considering these differences in interpreting gender, it is logical that gender scholars rely upon a diverse range of methodological approaches that examine institutions, agents, discourses, and symbols in the production and reproduction of gender in international politics. And, although this chapter discusses four types of feminist international relations theories, this is an analytic separation for ease of explanation; it does not mean that there are only four or, indeed, that these four are wholly conceptually distinct.

Four feminist international relations theories

Liberal feminist international relations

Liberal feminism challenges the content of International Relations, but it does not challenge its fundamental epistemological assumptions (**see Ch. 7**). Liberal feminist international relations theorists advocate that the rights and representation conventionally granted to men be extended to women. To correct gender inequality, liberal feminists focus on changing institutions, in particular increasing the representation of women in positions of power within the primary institutions of national and international governance. They also highlight the need to change laws to allow for women's participation, which they believe will also correct the distribution of power between the sexes. A recent global initiative to achieve gender parity in international tribunals and courts exemplifies this approach. Noting that 'as of September 2015, the Inter-American Court of

Human Rights has no female judges; the International Court of Justice has 15 judges and only 3 are women; the United Nations Human Rights Committee has 18 members and only 5 are women', the Center for Justice and International Law through its organization Gqual argued 'when only a small fraction of the global population creates, develops, implements and enforces rules for all, the legitimacy of their decisions and policies, and even of the institutions themselves is called into question ... the inclusion of women in these spaces is important for equality and to improve the justice we all deserve' (Gqual website).

According to liberal feminist international relations theorists, gender inequality is a major barrier to human development and leads to greater incidences of war and violence. In their book, Hudson et al. maintain that gender inequality, by which they mean the subordination of women, is itself a form of violence (2012). Through an impressive collation of quantitative data (available at http://www.womanstats.org/) the authors argue that the higher the domestic index of social, political and economic inequality between men and women within a state, the more likely it is that force and violence will be used to settle disputes both within and among states. They contend: 'the fate of nations is tied to the status of women'. Mary Caprioli similarly claims that gender inequality makes conflict both within and among states more likely (2004). For these authors, systemic gender inequality and discrimination against women are the root causes of violence.

These are fascinating studies and are well received by policy-makers and the discipline of International Relations. They also raise important questions regarding what exactly is the mechanism by which gender inequality increases risks of violence. Is it, as Hudson et al. (2012) and Hudson and De Boer (2004) suggest, rooted in male sexuality (and a surplus male population) and the evolutionary heterosexual reproductive practices? Caprioli cautions that 'rather than focusing on the genesis of, or justification for differences between the sexes, the more important question should concentrate on how those differences are used to create a society primed for violence' (2005: 161). Other feminists suggest that these scholars do not make clear why both questions cannot be investigated simultaneously. They suggest that a more comprehensive approach addresses questions regarding the genesis, justification, and use of the differences between the sexes, rather than presuming that we know in advance what these differences are and that accepting them is the necessary starting point for analysis.

Critical feminist international relations

Critical feminists question liberal feminisms for relying too faithfully on the neutrality of their methods, and for their vision of power as a positive social good that can be successfully redistributed without fundamental social change. Many of these feminists highlight the broader social, economic, and political relationships that structure relational power, and they often draw from Marxist theories to prioritize the role of the economy, specifically critiquing the dominance of capitalism as the desired mode of exchange. Critical international relations feminists, drawing on socialist ideas, pay particular attention to the unequal diffusion of global capital accumulation. As Iris Young puts it, 'women's oppression arises from two distinct and relatively autonomous systems. The system of male domination, most often called "patriarchy", produces the specific gender oppression of women; the system of the mode of production and class relations produces the class oppression and work alienation of most women' (1990: 21). Therefore, drawing from both Marxist and socialist thought, critical feminist scholars identify gender and class oppressions as interdependent and intertwined (**see Ch. 8**). Scholars including Whitworth (1994) and Prugl (1999), studying international institutions such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Planned Parenthood Federations, demonstrate how gender is produced and reproduced through the institutionalization of divisions of 'paid' and 'unpaid' labour. V. Spike Peterson's innovation of 'triad analytics' broadens the view of institutions and economies by analysing globalization through the intersection of reproductive, productive, and virtual economics upon which the global economy rests. In her analysis, Peterson draws attention to the 'explosive growth in financial markets that shape business decision-making and flexible work arrangements' and the 'dramatic growth in informal and flexible work arrangements that shapes income generation and family well being' (2003: 1). The devaluation of women's work; the still extant differential valuing of reproductive and productive work; the '**double burden**' of household labour and waged labour that women carry disproportionately; and the massive global shifts in the structure of work itself all influence the worldwide feminization and racialization of poverty.

Like postcolonial feminist theories, these critical feminist theories are wary of **gender essentialism**, which is the assumption of the sameness of all women's experiences by virtue of being female. They critique the normalization of white, affluent women's experiences as universal and instead highlight the dynamic and intersectional facets of identity, of which gender and sex are but two elements. Like postcolonial feminist theorists, critical feminist theories also emphasize the tight link between feminist theorizing and feminist actions, in part due to their recognition that the marginalized, exploited, and colonized have much to teach about the violent practices of global politics in particular locations. Maria Stern (2005) illuminates how the violence of war saturates the intimacies of self and family. Stern questions why the experiences of Mayan women are not considered 'valid texts of world politics', as they illuminate the constitutive topics of war, violence, and security central to the discipline of International Relations (2005: 56).

Critical and postcolonial feminists were united in their excoriation of the use of feminism, specifically liberal feminism, by former President George W. Bush and his administration to justify the ground wars in Iraq and Afghanistan; to distinguish the United States from those whom it targeted; and, subsequently, to appropriate the putative emancipation of Afghani and Iraqi women as evidence of their victories. According to many feminists, however, not only did this 'embedded feminism' falsely claim a monolithic feminism to be wielded against a supposedly savage Islam, in order to once again 'save' Muslim women, it distracted from the detailed empirical evidence that Afghan women are not now free from violence but rather continue to experience it in other forms (Hunt 2006: 53).

Postcolonial feminist international relations

Postcolonial feminism 'link(s) everyday life and local gendered contexts and ideologies to the larger, transnational political and economic structures and ideologies of capitalism' (Mohanty 2003: 504). Focusing on the particular situations, experiences, and histories as materializing colonialism within these larger patterns is a means to confront the universalizing instinct found in much of feminist theorizing.

Postcolonial feminism seeks to situate historical knowledge of the contours of colonialism and postcolonialism as intersecting with economic, social, and political oppression and change, highlighting the centrality of conceptions of gender and of women to colonial regimes and their continuing effects. Imperialism demanded 'complex household arrangements where white colonizers officially mandated a system of superiority and disdain against' local communities and peoples. 'Yet colonization would not have functioned without these local communities and peoples—especially nannies, maids, houseboys, gardeners, prostitutes, pimps, soldiers, and other coerced workers for the colonial state' (Ling and Agathangelou 2004: 518).

Rules governing proper and improper sex were key to the maintenance of difference between the colonized and the colonizer, and control of sexualities was fundamentally differentiated according to race and position. Only white men were free to have sex with whomever they so desired, often in exploitative proprietary relations of rape and concubinage with women of colour. In contrast, men of colour were policed as savage sexual libertines against whom white women were to be protected and preserved. Highlighting the link between individual households, materiality, and sexuality, postcolonial feminists reminds feminism that not all women are colonized equally. Women from the global North benefited from imperialism as the 'inferior sex within the "superior race"' (quoted in Pettman 1996: 30).

Postcolonial feminism takes as its point of entry the recognition that the feminism of the global North is rooted in and dependent on discourses of rights and equality that were, and arguably are, of pre-eminent concern to Western Europe. Rey Chow describes this as the Eurocentric 'hierarchizing frame of comparison' (Chow 2006: 80). Postcolonial feminists also underscore that while colonialism and imperialism may be formally past, its effects are not. Norma Alarcón describes this as the 'cultural and psychic dismemberment ... linked to imperialist racist and sexist practices [that are] not a thing of the past' (Alarcón 1999: 67). Certainly, the expansion of characteristics said to identify the enemy in a time of global war rejuvenates and vivifies racial and colonial characterizations of the enemy. For example, in the contemporary war on terror, the freedom of Muslim and Arab men and women, or those who appear to be so, is subject to increased scrutiny through policing and surveillance. The number of traits said to identify the threat—'travelling while brown'—intensifies the alliances consolidated by race and class, while testing those made only by sex (Sharma 2006: 135).

Additionally, women from the global South are all too often depicted and treated as 'an object of protection from her own kind', to justify the concerted efforts of 'white men saving brown women from brown men' (Spivak 1988: 296). Thus, as feminist scholars note, the existence of those so designated in need of protection frequently becomes a *rationale* for violence, as it did when the United States launched its ground wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. For this reason, postcolonial feminists resist the imposition of women's rights 'as all too often conceived in terms of paternal relations of protection and benign salvation rather than exercises of agency and sovereignty of women for themselves' (Kinsella 2007: 218; **see Case Study 12.2**). Moreover, the embedded feminism of the United States' efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan obscured the decades of agency and mobilization of Iraqi and Afghan peoples on their own behalf. Instead, former President Bush and his administration (standing in for the global North) portrayed such efforts as the exclusive actions of the United States. In addition, postcolonial feminists suggest that the individualism and autonomy implicit in the definitions of rights and liberties are culturally ill-suited, and that collective and relational rights are a better fit.

Case Study 12.2 The Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan

Demonstration of the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) in Peshawar, Pakistan

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The Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) was founded in Kabul, Afghanistan, in 1977. It was founded to promote women's rights and social justice; to increase women's participation in social, political, and economic activities; and to advocate for a secular democratic state. Its goals were women's emancipation, the separation of religion and politics, economic democracy, eradication of poverty, and networking with other national/international pro-democracy and pro-women's rights groups based on the 'principle of equality and non-interference in internal affairs' (Brodsky 2004: 169).

Founded only a year before the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan, RAWA expanded its activities to resist Soviet rule. RAWA never aligned itself with any other resistance movements, many of which adhered to a more stringent interpretation of Islam than that practiced by RAWA's members. RAWA is anti-fundamentalist, but not anti-Islam. Meena, the charismatic founder of RAWA, was murdered in 1987 because of her unrelenting criticism of both sides in the war—Soviet and fundamentalists. In response, RAWA began to hold more public events and to reach out for international support from other women's and human rights organizations. One of RAWA's members, all of whom use pseudonyms for safety, shared: 'we knew there would be more assassinations and imprisonment if we kept silent. If we had a public face and we could make ourselves more known, we could scare the enemy' (Brodsky 2004: 98).

During the Soviet rule and the resultant civil war that preceded the advent of Taliban rule, RAWA members (women and 'male supporters') opened schools in Afghanistan and Pakistan, housing, educating, and employing men and women who fled from Afghanistan due to unremitting war. Under the Taliban, RAWA members in Afghanistan went into hiding; many members were killed and wounded and their families threatened and harmed by the Taliban. Notwithstanding this threat, under which it had always operated, RAWA opened underground schools to educate women and girls and founded a magazine which members circulated clandestinely. Every activity RAWA undertook meant its members risked immediate death if discovered, and their lives were actively circumscribed by daily and minute security concerns.

According to RAWA, the rule of the Soviets, the warlords, and the Taliban were marked by similarity in repression and brutality that varied primarily in degree and justification. RAWA roundly criticized the invasion by the United States, not only for its premise but also because of its effects. Moreover, RAWA members noted that indigenous women's rights networks and organizations' expertise and knowledge were utterly ignored in the push to 'liberate' them. RAWA itself was characterized as too radical and dogmatic in its critique of all forms of economic, political, and social repression, and in its advocacy for an Afghan democracy.

RAWA has stated: 'RAWA believes that freedom and democracy can't be donated; it is the duty of the people of a country to fight and achieve these values. Under the US-supported government, the sworn enemies of human rights, democracy and secularism have gripped their claws over our country and attempt to restore their religious fascism on our people.'

Question 1: What forms of feminism can you identify in this short description of RAWA?

Question 2: Why would RAWA be or not be an ally to the United States' ground war in Afghanistan?

Lastly, with the international community only now beginning to respond to climate change and the devastating impacts of resource extraction and environmental exploitation, postcolonial feminists call attention to it as another manifestation of the legacies of imperialism (**see Chs 24 and 30**). They highlight its differential impact on the global South, the global poor, and specifically women and girls within those categories. Among the global poor, climate change disproportionately affects women and girls. They comprise the majority of the globe's small-scale farmers and are primarily responsible for producing food to feed their families and their communities. For example, in Asia, women cultivate more than 90 per cent of rice, and in Ghana women produce 70 per cent of subsistence crops. Yet women and girls are struggling due to climate-induced changes affecting temperatures, rainfall, disease, weather patterns, and crop failure. While recognizing this fact, postcolonial feminism cautions against the construction of women and girls as especially responsible for conservation, as being 'closer to nature', and as especially vulnerable, without any corresponding increases in their authority or agency (Arora-Jonsson 2011).

Poststructural feminist international relations

Poststructural feminism draws most specifically from the scholarship of Judith Butler. Butler argued, contrary to the commonplace and accepted definition that gender is the social construction of sex, sex is in fact constructed by gender. As might be imagined, her argument caused no end of consternation for it challenged the seemingly stable and shared attribute of a biological sex of all women. Without this fixed and permanent referent in sex itself, how could it be that 'women' could exist, much less be united across differences of class, sexuality, race, and location? Butler explains that 'originally intended to dispute the "biology is destiny" formulation, the distinction between sex and gender' in fact masks the cultural construction of sex itself. In other words, sex is not the foundation or origin of gender, but is itself an effect. To understand gender as 'a social category imposed on a sexed body' assumes that the sexed body is itself not an effect of power (Scott 1999: 32). To help us grasp this argument, Butler introduces the concept of gender performativity, which simply means that gender is not what we are, but rather what we do. Cautioning against misinterpretation, Butler points out that gender is not simply what one freely chooses to do (it is not an unfettered performance), but that performativity occurs within highly regulated contexts including that of normative heterosexuality. Socially, one becomes a woman by taking on the imperative to identify with the female/femininity and to desire the male/masculinity. This production of identity is not accomplished in one act, but rather requires constant iteration and bears with it the constant possibility of failure. As Sarah Salih explains, 'gender is a "corporeal style", an act (or a sequence of acts), a "strategy" which has cultural survival as its end, since those who do not "do" their gender correctly are punished by society' (2002: 58). Evidence of this is seen in the worry, discussed previously in the section about the United Nations Decade for Women, that the presence of lesbian/bisexual women would undermine the credibility of the feminist movement through their 'deviant' sexuality. Cynthia Weber, along with other queer theorists, draws from the insight about normative heterosexuality, or the 'heterosexual matrix', to continue to analyse how bodies are never merely described, but are constituted in the act of description, calling upon international relations theories to recognize the punitive and productive circulation and regulation of homo/heterosexualities as fundamental to world politics (Weber 2015).

As well as subversively reworking gender/sex, poststructural feminism illuminates the constitutive role of language in creating gendered knowledge and experiences. Laura Shepherd (2008) shows this in her analysis of the constitutive effects of the discourses formalized in UN Security Council Resolution 1325. While purporting an emancipatory intent, the Resolution consistently reifies women and girls as passive victims of violence even as it seeks to promote them as agents of change. In a slightly different vein, Kathy Moon uses interviews, archival research, and discourse analysis to demonstrate how the sexual economy of prostitution figured in the US–Korean security relationships of the mid-1970s (1997). Charlotte Hooper examines the masculinization of states and states' masculinization of men through a rereading of central economic texts and journals (2001). Overall, what these scholars demonstrate is how gender is created through the workings of international politics and, in turn, how paying attention to this construction reveals relations of power that are otherwise overlooked.

See Opposing Opinions 12.1 for discussion on whether feminism influences states' foreign policy decision-making.

Opposing Opinions 12.1 Does feminist foreign policy change states' foreign policy decisions?

For

Feminist foreign policy places gender equality at the crux of foreign policy decisions. During her US Senate confirmation hearings to become Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton vowed, 'I want to pledge to you that as secretary of state I view [women's] issues as central to our foreign policy, not as adjunct or auxiliary or in any way lesser than all of the other issues that we have to confront.' Margo Wallström stated that the Three Rs of feminist foreign policy are rights, resources, and representation.

Feminist foreign policy makes a difference in how states act. In 2015, Sweden did not renew a decades-old trade agreement with Saudi Arabia, in part because of that state's treatment of women. This caused a diplomatic scandal, as well as predictions of the loss of billions to Sweden's economy. In 2010, the United States Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review—a blueprint for US Department of State and the US Agency for International Development—integrated gender into its foreign policy goals and began tracking dollars spent on women-focused programming.

Against

Feminist foreign policy does not place gender equality at the crux of foreign policy decisions for its own sake, but merely to legitimate conventional policy goals. Margot Wallström explained that 'striving toward gender equality is not only a goal in itself but also a precondition for achieving our wider foreign, development, and security-policy objectives'. Likewise, Hillary Clinton stated in an interview: 'This is a big deal for American values and for American foreign policy and our interests, but it is also a big deal for our security.'

Feminist foreign policy makes no difference in how states act. As Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton never sanctioned other states for their treatment of women and girls. For example, Saudi Arabia remained a vital partner for the US national security strategies in the Middle East, and after promises not to 'abandon' Afghan women and girls during the drawdown of US troops in Afghanistan, the United States did little to ensure their security. Sweden's relatively weak stature internationally allows it to proclaim a feminist foreign policy without any real risks, and it has yet to engage in any complicated issues of multilateral foreign policy (such as the conflict in Ukraine) under a feminist foreign policy.

1. As Swedish scholar Ulf Bjereld suggests, do 'military defense and feminism represent two branches of the same tree: that citizens' security is guaranteed by having a strong military and that the feminist agenda is guaranteed through diplomacy, aid, and other arsenals beyond defense'?
2. Are feminist foreign policy and the Hillary Doctrine iterations of an imperial feminism that serves the interests of only (some) sovereign states and obscures their true goals of military and economic dominance?
3. Does it matter if feminist foreign policy doesn't change state behaviour? How else could it have significant effects on international politics?

Conclusion

Feminist international relations theories are relative newcomers to the discipline of International Relations. However, even in a short period of time, feminist international relations theories have demonstrated the crucial importance of including women, and theorizing gender, when attempting to make sense of international politics. Feminist international relations theories draw from a long history of feminist theorizing and actions to make specific claims about the concepts of International Relations—such as security, the economy, war, and trade—as well as its methods of study. Feminist international relations theories employ a wide range of methodological approaches, but they share a focus on understanding gender as an analytical category, not simply a descriptive one. In addition, feminist international relations scholars straightforwardly examine how gender is a relationship of power, one that affects all individuals, institutions, and interactions in international politics. Bringing this to the fore of their research and methods, feminist international relations scholars demonstrate the difference that gender makes.

Questions

1. Name two ways in which the United Nations Decade for Women changed international politics.
2. What methods do feminist international relations theories draw on to conduct their research?
3. How does the study of gender affect our understandings of the role of women and men in politics?
4. How do theories of power differ among the four different categories of feminist international relations theories?
5. Which feminist international relations theory posits that 'gender is doing', and what does this mean?
6. The Revolutionary Association for Afghan Women (RAWA) is best described as what type of feminist organization: liberal, critical, post-colonial, or poststructural?
7. The Women's International League of Peace and Freedom (WILPF) is best described as what type of feminist organization: liberal, critical, post-colonial, or poststructural?
8. Why is post-colonial feminism concerned with the question of climate change?
9. Would a liberal feminist find a poststructural feminist critique of heterosexuality convincing? Why or why not?
10. In which ways are international feminist theories necessary for the study of international politics?

Further Reading

Ackerly, B. A., Stern, M., and True, J. (2006), *Feminist Methodologies for International Relations* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press). Introduces a wide variety of feminist methodologies and examples of their use.

Agathangelou, A. M., and Ling, L. H. M. (2009), *Transforming World Politics: From Empire to Multiple Worlds* (London: Routledge). A stimulating theoretical and empirical discussion of the impact of imperialism on world politics.

Al-Ali, N. S., and Pratt, N. C. (2010), *What Kind of Liberation?: Women and the Occupation of Iraq* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press). An informed critique of the United States' claim to liberate the women of Iraq.

Alexander, M. J., and Mohanty, C. T. (1997), *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures* (New York: Routledge). A feminist classic and a continuation of the discussion of colonialism and feminist practices and theories.

Biswas, S., and Nair, S. (2010), *International Relations and States of Exception: Margins, Peripheries, and Excluded Bodies* (London: Routledge). An analysis of contemporary international relations, discipline and practice with specific regard to marginalized and excluded peoples and subjects.

Jauhola, M. (2013), *Post-tsunami Reconstruction in Indonesia: Negotiating Normativity through Gender Mainstreaming Initiatives in Aceh* (London: Routledge). A critical, post-colonial feminist examination of institutions and redevelopment in Indonesia.

Rai, S. (2008), *The Gender Politics of Development: Essays in Hope and Despair* (New Delhi: Zubaan). After working in development and gender politics for over twenty years, Shirin Rai sets forth the relationship of gender politics and state formation in post-colonial states, focusing specifically on India.

Tickner, J. A. (2014), *A Feminist Voyage through International Relations* (New York: Oxford University Press). An overview of the work of one of the most influential feminist international relations theorists, with old and new writings over the course of her career.

Wilcox, L. B. (2015), *Bodies of Violence: Theorizing Embodied Subjects in International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press). A poststructural feminist analysis of violence and embodiment.

Films

Enemies of Happiness, http://www.pbs.org/now/shows/309/
Pray the Devil Back to Hell, http://www.forkfilms.net/pray-the-devil-back-to-hell/
Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's speech 'We should all be feminists', https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hg3umXU_qWc

Online Resources

To access more learning resources for this chapter go to www.oxfordtextbooks.co.uk/orc/baylis7e/