INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, FEMINISM, AND THE GLOBAL SOUTH

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ABSTRACT

The International Relations discourse has been dominated by the major ideologies of realism and liberalism, which are typically Western male perspectives. Feminists have provided significant challenges to this dominant vision of International Relations, but they have also recognised a parallel position for the global south. However, the distinctive character and culture of these nations, as well as their colonial history, have generated a dilemma about the applicability of mainstream feminist perspectives to the global south. It will also attempt to locate women from developing nations within the canon of feminist research in international relations.

Key Words: *International Relations, Critical Theory, Feminist International Relations Theory, Global South, Women*

FEMINIST RE-INTERPRETATION OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Gendered western political ideas inadvertently entered the field of International Relations (IR). The foundation of the discipline was established on gendered perspectives, and the state in which women had no role at all was given priority. The fundamental ideas within the discipline, such as war, peace, and security, were presented and theorised on the basis of the masculine paradigm. The historical expansion of the status of women as the "protected category" rather than as active citizens who defend the nation also contributes to the issue of women's exclusion from the discipline. Because their bodies don't suit the stereotype of realistic politicians or warriors, women are left out of historical accounts of the founding activities of the IR. They also lack civic rights, which would eventually give them the authority to write idealistic works. Heroism builds the state, and these kinds of actions have been linked to men (Sylvester 1994: 80).

The pre-theoretical reflections of IR were already gendered before the field itself emerged. The ancient books by Machiavelli and Hobbes, to which the field of international relations traces its roots, consider women as an unseen force in politics. Women continue to be concerned by the Machiavellian division of the private and public spheres and the confinement of women to the private domain. As Machiavelli puts it, *"*It is better to be adventurous than cautious, because Fortune is a woman, and if you wish to keep her under it is necessary to beat her and misuse her;

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and it is seen that she allows herself to be mastered by the adventurous rather than by those who go to work more coldly. And so, like a woman, Fortune is always the friend of a young men, for they are less cautious, more ferocious, and command her with more audacity" (2005:87). Women were also marginalised and passive in Hobbes' imagined social contract.

The works of Morgenthau on foreign policy and statecraft were linked to the masculine power archetype, which was completely connected with men. In order to give it (IR) a more objective flavour, more scientific rigour was introduced with the birth of structural realism, which was intended to explain the "naturalness" and evident security-seeking behaviour of the nations in anarchical international politics. The Theory of International Politics (1979), written by Kenneth Waltz, offers an "embryonic" structural explanation of international politics that breathes new life into realism. As a result, the masculine foundation of the discipline was further strengthened, which held that the world order was essentially anarchic, lacked a central authority, and relied solely on the squandering of power for state survival. The feminine discourse in international politics has been completely erased. Waltzian structural analysis of IR, which views anarchy as the predominant aspect of the international system in the absence of a government, fails to acknowledge that the political sphere of no government is actually a gendered ruled space, which excludes the possibility of (disorderly) women in politics (Sylvester 1994:114).

Liberal and neoliberal institutionalism also excluded feminine discourse from the field of international affairs. It is a common misconception that feminine discourse is close to liberal or idealist interpretation, but this is not the case. At least in theory, unjust social relations could be included in the Kantian commitment to emancipatory goals of justice and peace, but this tradition is problematic for feminists because the idea of universal justice has been developed from a definition of human nature that excludes or diminishes women (Tickner 1997:617).

Halfway through the 1980s, feminists entered the discourse surrounding the field of IR together with the critical school and started to push its limits and begin expressing their opinions on crucial international relations problems, including war, conflict, and global security. Through a number of activities, feminists are working to undermine the male epistemologies that underpin the field of international relations. In contrast to decontextualized unitary states and chaotic international institutions, feminist theories of international relations have placed a greater emphasis on the social, political, and economic contexts of individuals. In addition, the feminists began their endeavour to reinterpret the ideas of security and conflict.

WOMEN OF THE GLOBAL SOUTH AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Does the feminist project include all women? Do women experience the same levels of marginalisation worldwide? The global south was marginalised throughout the development of international relations as a field, almost in the same manner as that woman. The voices of theorists

from the Global South only began to be heard in the exclusive International Relations (IR) field in the late 1980s and early 1990s.Around the same time period, feminists began their attempt to rethink the subject matter of IR. Although western IR feminist theorists took into account the general trends of western ideas in this reinterpretation of the field of IR, they too often failed to comprehend the context. As a result of her placement in the Global South, women from the Global South were not fairly represented in this feminist reinterpretation of international relations.

In the 1990s, scholars began to consider the possibility that there may be at least three histories in every culture–"his", "hers", and "ours". Previously, "his" and "ours" are generally assumed to be equivalent (Jane Flax cited in Sylvester 1994:20). In spite of the fact that the issue of the non-incorporation of "every culture" is recognised, scholars such as Tickner (1992:7) have pointed out that the gendered characteristics associated with femininity and masculinity change through time and space. Western literature has mostly failed to "incorporate" the understandings that come from "every culture's point of view. This reductionism issue persisted in Western feminists' approach to theorising feminist reinterpretation of fundamental concepts, in which the experiences of women from the Global South were either included alongside those of Western women or continued in the same vein as previously. By using such an approach to theorising, there is a greater risk of misunderstanding, inconvenience, and more marginalisation of women in the global South, which increases the risk of the feminist mission going awry. Because the feminist project is fundamentally critical, its normative and political commitments are reasonably evident. The prescriptive character of these political commitments, however, raises concerns about the extent to which feminism in and of itself exhibits universalizing (and, thus, excluding) tendencies (Hudson 2005:159). The western feminist prescription is unsatisfactory, if not a total failure, without addressing the agency of women's liberation and that of patriarchy, which is likely to transform depending on context.

Western feminist theories of International Relations have been criticised for being skewed and reductionist since they treat women as a single, homogeneous group. The feminist scholarship that is post-colonial, third-world, and post-modernist fought for their voices to be heard and highlighted the democratisation of feminist theory itself in the late 1980s. The seminal work of Chandra Mohanty Talpade (1987) was a ground-breaking effort in recognising the influence of the universal project in Western feminist literature that was causing the women of the Global South a great deal of inconvenience. According to Mohanty, the intentional positioning of the category of women, regardless of her setting and the methodological stance taken by feminist researchers, has led to the perception of third-world women as ordinary. This woman's life is fundamentally truncated as a result of her feminine gender (i.e., being sexually restricted) and third-world status (read: ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, religious, domesticated, family-oriented, victimised etc.). This portrayal contrasts with how Western women often portray themselves.

CONCLUSION

Even though oppression and the issue of exclusion are shared by all women worldwide, they are also the outcomes of a range of variables and the historical positions that women have had in different parts of the world. The numerous patriarchal agencies in diverse cultures need to be identified, and the various agencies' resistances need to be recognised, while taking into account the contextual differences. As Nadera Shalhoub Kevorkian (2009:13) has pointed out "the history of the powerless and the process of knowledge creation should not be based just on what has been written but importantly also on people who have been denied a voice and space in history up to now." By embracing the diverse perspectives, the gaps in the "Global sisterhood" may be addressed, which would benefit the reinterpretation of the International Relations discipline.

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