

Contributions of feminism to security studies

[Law](#), [Security](#)



The contribution of feminists to security studies have been described as four separate categories; where the International Relation feminists query the hypothetical nonexistence and peripheral nature of women in international security politics, interrogate the extent to which women are secured by state protection in times of war and peace, critique the ever ever-existence assumption that gendered security practices address women only and contest the discourses wherein women are linked unreflectively with peace.

Feminists have conceptualized the core concepts like security, the state, violence, war and peace while at the same time uncovering new hardheaded knowledge about sexual violence in war, gendered participation in armed conflict as well as the masculinity of militarization (Carpenter, 2002: 300).

International Relation feminists have studied specific empirical situations to deduce explanatory as well as ethical theories of International Relation.

They have traversed the crisis in Bosnia, African peace keeping operations, civil military relations in South Korea and the wars in Iraq. Though some of the emerging exemplar of human security as well as Copenhagen school stress the significance of individuals within the security issues they still fail to recognize that not all individuals face those issues the same. Feminists have decided to make women noticeable as subjects in international security (Edkins & Epstein, 1997: 120).

They portray attention to the invisibility of female and gender subordination within the theory and practice of security politics. Less than 10% of the heads of state of the world are women. Feminists ask why this should be the case and how this is likely to affect the structure as well as the practice of

global politics. The empirical case studies of the more current new generation feminists have mainly focused on hitherto underrepresented issues like military prostitution, sensitive households, domestic service as well as home-based work which are always performed by women.

Through the use of gendered lenses, we are able to see that in spite of the myth that wars are fought by men as a way of protecting the 'vulnerable people', a category to which women and children are assigned, women and children represent a significant portion of the casualties in the recent wars. And while they are underrepresented as military casualties in terms of their participation in militaries all over the world, they are overrepresented as civilian victims in terms of their percentage of the population in war zones.

Women and children make up between seventy five to eighty percent of the refugees displaced by the effects of war. Feminists have drawn the attention to the frequency as well as the severity of wartime rape, characterizing it as a war crime, as genocide and extreme form of torture. War affects women drafted to provide sex to the soldiers. For instance, more than one million Korean women have suffered in the same way since the beginning of the Korean War (Moon, 1997: 112).

Looking at the sound effects of war on women, we are able to gain a better understanding of the unequal feminine relation that sustains the military activity. Whereas feminists highlight the essentiality of seeing women understand conflict and war, they too put emphasis on how these gendered constructions are able to help us understand not just some of the causes of war but certain ways of think about the nature of security have been

legitimized at the expense of others. Gendered lenses do not just show where women are during conflict and war but also the structure of war and conflict.

Realists define security primarily in terms of state security. A state that is secure is one that is positioned to protect its physical borders against an anarchical global system. Neorealists put much emphasis on the anarchic international system's structure. In this case there is no sovereign to regulate the state behavior. They paint states like Bosnia, Somalia and Iraq as unitary actors whose internal structures as well as policies are less crucial than the anarchic condition for explaining their insecurity and security.

The power seeking nature of a state together with the military capabilities are viewed as avenues designed at increasing security of the state; security specialists believe that the habit of power seeking so as to promote the level of security explains much of the international behavior of the states. Poorest Nations of the world have active military operations within their borders. Consequently, the conflicts contribute to high number of civilian casualties to the extreme structural violence which is done to people when their basic requirements are not met as well as environmental destruction.

Security is all about an individual safety. The survival of an individual is therefore the key to his or her safety. But survival has always been threatened by bombs, but this is not even all. Inadequate food, healthcare, shelter, and transportation threatens the physical integrity of the bodies of individuals, and the most affected are women and children. The safety of an

individual is of importance than just being able to stay alive. It is also about the ability to have a home and raise a healthy family.

Most women in war affected countries spent the better part of their lives in refugee camps and have never known the meaning of a happy leaving. According to feminists, security is about the safety issues which affect the lives of people, mostly women (Edkins & Epstein, 1997: 208). Civilian casualties, power outages, food shortages, structural violence, militarism together with the human rights are security issues. The lives of women can be insecure even when the states feel safe.

Security has to be seen from marginalized members of the societies, those that are highly susceptible to insecurity. Feminist security prioritizes justice together with emancipation. Feminism exclusively contributes the perspective of how the lives of women demonstrate the violence in the events that are not traditionally perceived as security threats. Without Gender, Security is Incomplete Scholarly work that accepts a gender-subordinating world the way it appears akin to the history of a victor: no matter how good it may be, it is incomplete with adverse moral problems.

This is verified by the look at the non-combatant principle of immunity and what feminists refer to as an illusion of the protection of women or the protection racket. In her piece of writing, *Women, Children and other Susceptible Groups*, Charlie Carpenter emphasizes the importance of gender in international advocacy concerning the protection of civilians through reference to the beliefs of the advocates that their message is likely to be

salient in case it is understood in terms of defending women and children particularly (Carpenter, 2002: 302).

The immunity structure of women has been greatly distorted through reliance upon the proxy of women and children for civilians. The distortion is likely to affect the protection in sub-optimal ways. There is need for a clear understanding of what needs protection and why. The principle of immunity within the just war tradition is hazy and highly subject to considerable manipulation for political purposes. This kind of problems may be enough to cause the current lack of effectiveness.

Whereas the principle of immunity appears to protect women, in real sense, it risks the lives of women and also perpetuates gender subordination at the same time. The modernization of the Malaysian economy in 1970's led to an increase in the number of the underpaid and exploited foreign female household workforce within the country. It was a case of rejecting the traditional economic validation due to the fact that the economic theory overlooks the involvement of the state or the social dynamics that surround foreign domestic worker involvement.

In order to win the support of the middle class and lessen the ethnic tension, the state of Malaysia backed the hiring of foreign female domestic workers and the workers worked in slave-like conditions. In such a case, just like in many other countries, the state played the role of manipulating class, gender as well as race to control power in order to benefit a few citizens and disadvantage others. The scholars reveal gender that is entrenched within

the power structures and consistence with the critical International-Relations theory, ultimately aimed at changing the status quo.

The works of feminists contribute to the realm of the protection in an untraditional way. For instance, they bring to light the insecurities that women have inside and outside of the traditional war zones. To add on that, because they have the ability to recognize the physical, ecological, structural as well as sexual violence as security threats, they appropriately apply security on the individual level. Through underscoring human safety, mainly at the political margin, feminists refocus security discourses from the policies of the state to the lives of the individuals.

Certainly, wars are known to threaten safety. But oppressive relationship of work as well as sexual slavery also threaten it and therefore has to be recognized as universal issues of the human insecurity and justifiable topics within international security. Through bringing about the discussion and concentrating on how the ideas on how gender affects and are affected by politics, the constructivists of feminism build on the foundation that is availed by the social constructivists. In his book, *Modern Security Studies*, Collins examines international dialogue and law in relation to home based work.

He reveals that the dominantly home-based female workforce is highly undervalued. Because the work takes place in a private sphere, it is not considered to be legitimate by many. As a result, women suffer low wages as well as poor working conditions without being provided with an opportunity to change their circumstances. Due to the fact that the workforce is

dominantly women, the institutionalization of the rights of the workers is vital to feminists. In terms of war, the constructionists of feminism try to determine the reasons as to why the issue of security remain absent within the mainstream of security discourse.

For example, though not included in the description of conventional warfare, the economic sanctions on Iraq between the Gulf wars had incredible security impact on Iraqi communities as well as the citizens, excessively on women. While implementing the policy, the United Nation Security Council was aiming at instigating the opposition of the citizens to the government of Iraq. In a sense, through making the residents of Iraq suffer, the United Nation hoped they would revolt against their government.

This kind of policy at the end of the day became a war against the innocent citizens. Whereas the well-off Iraqi in government or in the upper class were able to acquire goods through black market, the majority with lower incomes, particularly women, children as well as the elderly could hardly get anything. Though the sanctions do not constitute a declaration of war from those concerned, military attacks, they contribute to emergence of war. Feminists mainly focus on the physical as well as the structural violence existent on the ground within the affected communities.

And for them, conventional wars as well as economic sanctions both deserve recognition as significant and momentous security issues (Sassen, 2000: 508). Concerning the use of language in society as well as the effect on our understanding of the reality, poststructuralists stress the relationship that exists between knowledge and power. In most societies, those who possess

intellect also have the capability to frame most crucial agendas and discussions, that endow with them the needed power. Traditionally, men are known to dominate the sphere of learning and intelligence.

On the other hand, women are viewed as less intelligence followers who react to the supremacy of men. In particular, feminists stress the linguistic dichotomies in international security discourse which favor the attributes of masculinity. Pairs of words like strong/weak in security studies have obvious gender link because women are stereotypically feeble and more emotional. Feminists perfect in one of these divisions are point out that the gendered as well as racial implication within them have direct consequences (Collins, 2007: 28).

Through donating inferiority of a given gender or race, the dichotomies shape the current perception of gender within our society. Through the demolition of the hierarchical language, feminists hope to minimize the hierarchy in our realism as well. Postcolonial Feminism Just as feminists assert a society exists with knowledge that mainly set forth by men, postcolonial feminists find fault within the knowledge that is solely based upon the experiences of the privileged western women. They do not consider female' a homogenous category.

The class, geography, race and culture experienced by individual women tend to change their perception of the world. Accordingly, postcolonial feminists' state that contrary to the beliefs of western women, almost all women do not have the same level of emancipation needs and wants (Jackson, 1998: 70). They are fond of fighting the stereotype of the third world women as poor,

victimized and lacking in agency. In due course, the feminists believe that gender subordination takes place through interaction of gender, culture and race.

Through acknowledging this fact, they aspire in defining the needs of the women based on the factors rather than creating a universal list of them. Sexualized Discourse and War Sexualized discourse within the international security takes place in varied form and aspects of the military and war. For instance, in weaponstechnologygendered language pervades the discourse. When a weapon is first created, the makers refer to it as if it is a male being born. When it is completed, it penetrates the enemy lines the same way men penetrate women.

The aggressive sexual language eventually joins with feminine language to make war seem civilized in spite of its violent nature. The abuses, for instance rape that occur during the war go away completely unmentioned (Collins, 2007: 78). Within the international security dialogue, there are cases of sexualized and gendered discourse. When describing the Gulf Wars, various politicians as well as other people draw a comparison of the situation to the sexual intercourse. During the discussion of the overthrow of Saddam, the U.

S officials mentioned the frustration that though the forces had ' penetrated' the ' inner sanctum', they had not yet achieved a satisfying outcome.

International Security on the Lives of Women Quite a number of Feminists employ a more micro-level scrutiny in determining the effects of international security on individual lives of women. For example, (Hansen

2000) tries to improve the analysis of feminists of foreign policy through asking them why, how and when the governments use women not just on a gendered ideology but also as instruments of foreign policy.

About the South Korean women ' working' for the military of the U. S. , Hansen concludes that individuals and organizations should incorporate military prostitution within the global security discussion of the gender rules in war times. Conclusion In an attempt to broaden the sphere of security studies, feminists emphasize those aspects of security that have been ignored by the dominant socialscience. They recognize the presence of women in international security politics and query the state protection which women supposedly receive in time of war and peace (Elshtain, 1995: 49).

They also scrutinize the alleged link between women and peace and show that gendered discourses usually affect the entire population. Through highlighting the differences and also exploring the current literature relating to feminist security learning, this review was aimed at showing the reasons as to why the aspects of commonly ignored aspects are actually critical to the study of security. Instead of simply being a supplement to the prevailing security theory, feminist security studies require utmost consideration to enable full understanding of the world.