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Studying Global Politics in the Post-Cold War Era: Possibilities for a Feminization

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I. Introduction

International politics, as managed by men, has been configured by antagonism, conflicts, and wars which have hindered worldwide cooperation and development. That is why most scholars of world politics agree on the imperative of global peace and inclusive development. Yet there is still disagreement on how to pursue it. At the same time, the literature of world politics enjoys well-developed theories on the consequences of the actions and inactions of men but has little to say about the impacts of women's roles. In other words, existing literature has paid insufficient attention to the role of gender in world peace.

In the aftermath of the Cold War the political will for a move away from antagonism to cooperation should gather momentum. And women can play a role in this regard. Though women's positions, worldwide, may vary according to race, class, and geographical location, they are disproportionately situated at the bottom of the sociopolitical scale in all societies (Tickner, 2001:7). Therefore, redefining women's relationship to global decision-making processes becomes an all-important in attaining sustainable solutions to the structural issues that lead to division and violence within the international society.

Exploring aspects of development such as human rights, democracy – shows that society has not been friendly towards women. World development has been tied to a system that is patriarchal and thus, privileged men's interests over women's. For instance, scholarship in the area of democratization is biased against women in terms of the state institutions on which its analysis focuses. Since women have always had less access to formal political institutions, the focus of scholarship in democratization on political channels misses the means of women's participation in politics through non-formal political channels. It thus obscures the role of women.

The reasons for this are not farfetched. For instance, a widely held belief, according to Tickner (1992:3), is that

> Military and foreign policy are arenas of policy-making least appropriate for women. Strength, power, autonomy, independence, and rationality, all typically associated with men and masculinity, are characteristics we most value in those to whom we trust the conduct of our foreign policy and national interest.

Consequently, the qualities traditionally required by international politics – power, military might, politics – are those assumed to be mainly associated with masculinity. In any case, constructions of masculinity are not independent of, but dependent upon, opposing constructions of femininity. In other words, higher value is attributed in the political sphere to idealized masculine characters, which again is depicted as reflecting objective laws rooted in human nature. By treating this idealization as if it were universal laws of behavior, international relations theories provide only a partial picture of international politics.

II. Method

The writings of classical and contemporary scholars of world politics, as well as feminists, serve as the data for the essay. These writings were source from the text, periodicals, and scholarly articles on the subject matter. The data were subjected to critical interpretative analysis to fit-in with the exploratory scheme of the essay.

III. Gender and the Study of International Politics

The issue of gender in international relations is yet to receive the attention that is due to it. Instead, the issue of women has been subsumed in the battery of contending issues in the international arena. This

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suppression of women issues is for at least two reasons. First, there is the methodological problem and the epistemological issue that are constantly raise about the limit and parameters of international relations as a discipline. The disciplinary hiatus has been the undoing of the conception of women as the hidden faces in international relations. This tendency has ensures that gender issues in international relations remain in obscurity because scholars believe that the issue of gender is an intra-national matter that has nothing to do with global politics. Second, it has been argued by those who hold this view that international relations are 'high politics' while the issue of women is 'lowpolitics.' The problem has been due to the claim that the issue of gender is an inappropriate category in international relations since the discipline is gender-neutral as it cannot discriminate between men and women.

Indeed, classical political thinkers like Socrates (c. 470 – 399 BCE), Plato (427– 347BCE), Aristotle (384 – 322 BCE), Thomas Aquinas (1225 – 1274), Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712 – 1778), and Karl Marx (1818 – 1883) have traditionally ignored women or at best consigned them with inferior roles. The writings of these *heavyweights* are the very tradition that installs man to male chauvinism and hegemony. Consequently, until very recently, western literature has often emphasized the comparative inferiority of women, not because of what they cannot do, but more because of their physiological features. It is this bias of western literature on women that has continually enforced the benign neglect of gender discourse. In contradistinction, traditional western literature has consistently present men as a role models, movers, and motivators of society. Patriarchy sets up the father as the epitome of all spheres. Therefore, Hans Morgenthau's (1948) famous classic 'Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace' referred to *statesmen,* and there is no entry for 'women' in the index. Continuing in that tradition, but with a slight shift, Kennth Watz (1959) wrote 'Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis,' with only one entry for women in the index – *Women, role in government.* Therefore, in international politics, while men are assessed on their merits as individuals, women have tended to be judged as female or as a group. However prevalent and interesting such descriptions of world politics might be they are of doubtful utility to a world in search of peace and inclusive development.

In the meantime, women have been represented as the 'weaker sex' or the 'second sex' and stereotyped with such qualities as sensitive, emotional, trivial, fragile, indecisive, submissive, sentimental, unthinking, uncritical and helpless (Sankar and Rajeshkannan, 2014; Ladele, 2009). Women are socialized to internalize these qualities so that they are conditioned to derogate their sex and cooperate in their subjugation. Thus, at adulthood, the woman is assumed to have been properly school in servitude, muteness, invisibility, and dependence, with a natural acceptance of a corresponding male superiority and dominance (Uko, 2006). Though these uni-dimensional images of women were creatures of men without any reference to the complexity of women's experiences the milieu has for long helps to block women from participating in the public sphere, where policy is made, and are relegate of the realm of private.

But there have always been traditional differences between the public and the private arenas. The public associated with State administration is regarded as the realm of men, while the private, connected with the running of the household and the family, is the domain of women's roles as wives and mothers. Thus, the decision to go to war– the political decision; the conduct of it– the military opinion and more often the reconstruction of society after the war ends is usually left to men as decision-makers, while women are left with savoring the impacts. With the benefit of time, therefore, it can be said that one significant trend which runs through the works of Morgenthau and his disciples is its fixation with 'heroic' male protagonists, its treatment of women as non-existent, non-entity; its pretense that international politics is fix, and its cold shouldering of the effects of political decisions on men and women. This trend in scholarship leads to the worry as to whether the study of international relations should be limited to exploring the processes of decision making.

But then, the fact that the international system dominated by masculinity has until very recently been bedeviled by conflict and war challenges the justification for male dominance. As a matter of fact, governments, worldwide often garner support for the war by appealing to masculine characteristics to the extent that there evolved a nexus between masculinity and international conflicts. This practice is so commonplace to the extent that no attempt has been made by any of the protagonists of the male-dominated global system to excuse the nexuses. Somewhat, behind Francis Fukuyama's (1992) 'End of History and the Last Man' is the thinking that if the termination of the ideological conflict signals the end of global war, militarism, competitiveness then the roles of men in world politics are ended and women can now take the central stage with their cooperative tendencies. In another word, by his submission, Fukuyama unwilling acknowledged that wars and conflicts which have so far characterized the international system is due to the pervasive system of male dominance, assigned to the anatomical differences between the sexes and women's reproductive roles. This critique of Fukuyama's treatise minimizes the roles of both men and women in international relations.

However, the gender bias of international relations scholarship, the stereotypes, and assumptions

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that swirled around international politics align with socially learned beliefs, behavior, and expectations (not genetic and anatomical characteristics) that men are warlike, aggressive, and competitive. But these are not made in all innocence. They are filtered through a lens of traditional values and beliefs which distort perception in international politics.

As a solution to the problem, there emerged feminists' perspective in International Relations. Although the fact that women have been active in working for causes about peace is not a new phenomenon, but the emergence of active feminist perspectives in International Relations is relatively recent. Its origins can be traced to the 1980s. However, contrary to Fukuyama's thinking, the focus of feminist scholarship of international relations is beyond 'peace as a women's issue' to a focus on the fact that all citizens have vital roles to play in issues of peace and conflict. Thus, focusing on feminization of international relations may reveal the reasons why wars have so far been perpetuated. It may help to reformulate key concepts – sovereignty, power, and security – in ways that allows for new possibilities for solving current global challenges. But how can this be?

For instance, while the works of traditional theorists of international relations focus on the causes and termination of wars, feminist theorists of international politics are interested in what happens during wars in addition to their beginnings and endings. With feminists' perspective, it becomes easier to understand military capability's failures to guarantee against outside threats to state as well as their perception at being antithetical to human security, particularly those of women and other vulnerable groups within the countries. Thus, the inclusion of feminist perspective in international relations scholarship is approximately the ultimate one step forward ever taken in the discipline, in its upward march to exclusiveness. Despite all, gender inequality persists. Gender inequality persists because modern society has continued to consolidate the patriarchal tendency that had traditionally neglected women.

IV. Women Peace Hypothesis and it Limits

The women and peace hypothesis posits a distinction between the orientations of men and women regarding issues of war and peace. It claims that 'women are more pacific than men in their approach to international relations, being more accepting of compromise to resolve interstate disputes and less likely than men to believe that war is necessary or appropriate in particular conflict situations.'[1] It associates competition, competence, dominance, violence, intransigence, and territoriality with men while ascribing moderation, accommodation, compromise, tolerance, and pacifism with women.

The gendered division of power and violence to which the hypothesis calls attention is succinctly summarized in Global Gender Issues which notes that:

> Throughout history there have been numerous examples of women warriors, and women fighters exist today. In spite of this, there is a pervasive gender dichotomy that divides women and men into 'life-givers' and 'life-takers' ... As life givers, women are not only prevented from engaging in combat, but are also expected to restore "life" after a death dealing war is over. Women are expected to mourn dutifully the loved ones who fell in war and then to produce new lives for the nation to replace its lost members. [Thus] in spite of their participation, women remain associated with war's opposite-peace (Peterson and Runyan, 1993:81-82).

Feminist theorists emphasize the unique motherhood experience of women, to establish the link between women and peace by celebrating the traditionally 'female' attributes of caring and nurturance.

When the *women peace hypothesis* is taken to global politics, the 'care-giving' perspective emphasizes the universal applicability of women's predisposition toward nurturance and a more tolerant attitude toward the resolution of international conflicts (Elshtain, 1985; Scaltsas, 1992). The hypothesis argues that moreover 'maternal thinking' and 'preservative love' derived from women's practice of mothering counterbalance theories of international relations that give priority to such concepts such as power, hegemony, and hierarchy (Dietz, 1985; Ruddick, 1989). Because of its acclaim committed to values of freedom and equality, feminism seeks to expose and undermine the social and political structures based on hierarchy, domination, and exploitation. The military is judged to embody the above characteristics which are rejected as a legitimate instrument of foreign policy. This rejection, in turn, encourages anti-militarism and informs the argument that more women are more likely than men to have dovish views about global politics. Furthermore, it is argued that since women make up a disproportionate proportion of the economically disadvantaged, they are more sensitive to the disservice which the high cost of military/security centered foreign policy does.

But, there exist fundamental counters to the commonly held view of women as peacemakers and women as peaceful people. With the increase in civil wars and international terrorism in the aftermath of the Cold War, the violent side of women is being revealed. Women now act as suicide bombers, spies, snipers, leaders of rebellious groups, etc. Women made up the Palestinian 'army of roses'; the 'Black Widows' who fought in Chechnya; the 'Black Tiger' Tamil women fighting for a state against the Sinhalese in Sri Lanka,

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are a few examples of cases whereby women have been prominent as terrorists. Thus, although the 'typical terrorist' was male several terrorist groups have a strong female presence (Ness, 2008: 13). For example, there is Fusako Shigenobu (founder and leader of the Japanese Red Army); Ulrike Meinhof (of the Baader-Meinhof group in Germany); and Leila Khaled (who was actively involved with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine).

At this juncture, it is axiomatic to state that tolerance, empathy, and pacifism are not necessarily 'female' attributes but rather the norms of any population category that has traditionally had little opportunity to exercise power. Thus women's predisposition toward peace than men is, at least partly, because the exercise of public control has generally been a masculine activity.

V. Women's Human Rights in an Era of Violence

The need for a gendered perspective of international relations is more than ever before of utmost importance. In the civil wars and ethnic conflicts predicted by Fukuyama, and which has since proliferate since the end of the cold war, though women are generally excluded from the decisions leading to the wars, they are increasingly the victims of those strives. For instance, as more civilians are targeted, conflicts take toll on women. They are killed; displaced; violated physically, psychologically and emotionally; and their social structure disrupted. There are other impacts of war on women.

For instance, a correlation exists between intra-state or inter-state conflicts and domestic violence against women. As a consequence of militarized society, domestic violence increases even after wars (Cockburn, 1998; Kaufman and Williams, 2007). Unfortunately, since domestic violence takes place at home – the private sphere – it has not been adequately captured as a consequence of conflicts and wars, again, perhaps because women are the central victims. Except for the attention given by Turpin (1992), Kaufman and Williams (2013) and NiAolain (2017), the relationship between conflict, and domestic violence is yet to receive it deserved attention.

It is not in many countries that women have equal access with men to resources such as education, employment opportunities, political participation, health services, nutrition, etc. It was in acknowledgment of the fact that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adopted in 2000 gave development attention to women. Goal 3: 'Promote Gender Equality and Women Empowerment' is explicit in its call for global action on behalf of women (UN, 2000). The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted in 2015 (but which came into force in January 2016) ask states to go further than was outlined in the MDGs. Specifically, Goal 5; 'Achieve Gender Equality and Empower Women and Girls' is explicit in its submission that 'gender equality is not only a fundamental human right but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world (UN, 2015). In other words, a true definition of progress must include peace, equality, and development. There is no doubt that several attempts have been made to address the human rights concern of women (see Table 1).But there exists no ground to believe those women's rights as human rights will be achieved as long as they depend on individual states, political systems, and the male-dominated worldwide decision-making mechanism to implement them. The reason they may not be achieved is because they would result in fundamental changes to the political, social, and cultural structures of many states that are skew in favor of men.

Table 1: Important Steps towards Human Rights and Gender Empowerment

Year	Conference	Key Issue
1968	United Nations International Conference on Human Rights (Teheran)	Parents have a basic human right to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children.
1974	World Population Conference (Bucharest)	The responsibility of couples and individuals [should take] into account the need of their living and future of their children and their responsibilities toward the community.
1975	International Women's Years Conference (Mexico City)	The human body, whether that of a woman or man, is inviolable, and respect for it is a fundamental element of human dignity and freedom.
1979	Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (New York)	Article 12 calls on countries to 'take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of health care in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, access to health care services, including those related to family planning.
1984	World Population Conference (Mexico City)	Governments can do more to assist people in making their reproductive decisions in a responsible way.

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1992	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro	Agenda 21 calls for 'women-centered, women-managed, safe and accessible, responsible planning of family size and services.
1993	United Nations World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna)	The Vienna Declaration includes nine paragraphs on 'The Equal Status and Human Rights of Women', and for the first time recognizes that 'violence against women is a human-rights abuse'.
1994	International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo	Program of Action 'reaffirms the basic human rights of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number and spacing of children and to have the information, education, and means to do so.
1995	United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing)	Sets a wide-ranging, ambitious agenda for promoting human development by addressing gender inequality and women's rights.
1999	United Nations Conference on World Population (The Hague)	Drafts recommendations on humane assistance for international family planning programs in the light of the possibility that the global population could start to decline in the late twenty-first century.
2002	World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg)	Drafts resolutions to combat abject and dehumanizing poverty, stressing the importance of reforms to encourage gender equality and the rights of women in order to stimulate sustainable economic growth.
2004	United Nations Conference on the Human Rights Obligations of Multinational Corporations (Geneva)	Opens debate to create a code of human rights and gender equality obligations for businesses.
2005	United Nations Conference on Children (New York)	Creates standards to protect children from exploitation.

Source: Kegley, Charles & Raymond, Gregory (2010), The Global Future: A Brief Introduction to World Politics, United States; Wadsworth

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) of 1979 is seen by many as the international bill of rights for women. The UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on 'Women, Peace and Security' of October 2000, was followed by Resolution 1820, 'Eliminating Violence against Women and Girls,' of June 2008. It is germane to note that Resolution 1325 stresses the importance of the full participation of women in every segment of society if peace and security must be attained in the international system. Furthermore, Resolution 1820 demands the 'immediate and complete cessation by all parties to armed conflict of all acts of sexual violence against civilians' (UN Dept. of Public Information, 2008).However, while most states support the goals of these Resolutions, there exists virtually no enforcement mechanism. Thus, among the challenges standing in the way of women rights are lack of political will; lack of awareness on the part of women about their secured rights; lack of financial resources to provide sufficient services to support women; a shortage of women decision makers; and the reluctance of men (decision-makers) in improving women's status in society.

At the same time, what might have previously been the protected domain of the home, which is seen as women's space, has become part of the battlefield as suicide attacks and pilotless drones which kills its victims irrespective of whether they are civilians or combatants. This blurring of the battle lines has effectively transport the private space to the public sphere, but the people who are said to occupy the previous private space (the women) have not been given their rightful place in the in the discourse of international politics. Thus, despite Resolution 1325, conflicts have continued to be resolved with little or nil involvement of women. Again, despite Resolution 1820, there are countless examples of civil wars wherein women and children are violated, notwithstanding the protection offered by the Resolution.

VI. Women and the Fault Lines of Democracy

The advantages inherent in a democracy have been well-publicized by the *democratic peace* put forward by Michael Doyle (1986), who built on Immanuel Kant's 1795 *Perpetual Peace.* According to Doyle, 'the predictions of liberal pacifists … are borne out: liberal states do exercise peaceful restraints, and a separate peace exists among them (Doyle, 1998: 1156). Thus, because democracies depend on 'the consent of the governed' democratic governments have learned to be more hesitant to engage in war, which will be unpopular

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at home, will require public support, and will result in loss of lives and strain national budget (Rasler and Thompson, 2005; Russett, 2001; Ray, 1995).

But, it is interesting that participation in most democracies is conditioned on citizenship. And citizenship is gendered. For instance, even the most liberal definitions of citizenship are grounded in the social contract of seventeenth–eighteenth century Europe, which is base on 'male, property-owning heads-of-household … [and] thus, democratic theory and practice have been built on the male-as-norm engaged in narrowly defined political activities' (Tickner, 2002: 105). Thus, in theory, democracy promotes equality among all citizens. It offers every citizen an opportunity to influence. In reality, often democracies are patriarchal governmental structures, in which power in all its ramifications – be it political, economic, or social, etc. – is concentrated in the hands of wealthy men with the resources to gain access to high office. These officeholders are also known to mentor often and promote younger people of their kind who act like themselves. Therefore, democracy, as a system, may be construed to limit progress for women, rather than allowing them to advance (Tickner, 2002: 104-106). A clear case in point is the defeat of Hillary Clinton by Donald Trump in the 2015 United States presidential election. The foregoing suggests that no matter how sophisticated a democracy might appear to be, it can always find excuses to exclude women from the decision making process and positions of power. Moreover, there is a world of differences between rights secured and rights enjoy.

Thus, since 1900 only about 15 percent of the states of the world have had one or more female heads of state; and many of them came to power as widows of male rulers (HDR, 2008: 343-346). They conclude Margaret Thatcher of Britain, Megawati Sukarnoputri of Indonesia, Golda Meir of Israel, Corazon Aquino of the Philippines, Angela Merkel of Germany, Christiana Fernandez de Kirchner of Argentina, and Michelle Bachelet of Chile. However, these *females-in-power* exceptions show that women have never been *absent* in world politics (Wilmer, 2000) they have only remained *invisible* within the discourse of world politics conducted by men. In other words, the practice of democracy worldwide suffers from gender myopia, the denial of the existence of the barriers that prevent women from really enjoying the same rights as men. Thus, it is not enough to romanticize democratic principles; we need to know the gender that has access to the system of governance and benefit the most from it.

VII. Conclusion

While not denying that most women's lives, roles, and experiences differ from those of men, who are traditionally the decision-makers, women must be considered, as central to, and certainly as part of the search for a just world. Studies by Mary Caprioli (2005), Eric Melander (2005), Patrick Regan, and Aida Paksevicute (2003) and Mary Caprioli and Mark Boyer (2001) have shown that high levels of gender equality within states result in low levels of interstate and intrastate conflicts. So that

> The river of thought on human rights and development runs inexorably toward the emancipation of women everywhere and the equality of men and women (Worldwatch Institute, 2002).

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