

## *Feminism and the Challenges of the 'Post-Cold War' World*

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### Abstract

Women's political participation is increasing in many countries around the world, but their participation in democratic politics has not altered the neoliberal consensus that is harmful to their interests. Two reasons for this are explored here: the impact of the Cold War in shaping the post-Cold War discourse on markets and states, and the anti-state bias of much of contemporary feminist theory. The essay calls for a rethinking of the consequences of difference theories for feminist political practices, and for a renewed focus on redistributive issues.

### Keywords

political representation (of women), democratization, globalization, Cold War, neo-liberalism, the state, difference and egalitarian feminism, Latin America

At a time when gender quotas have been adopted by political parties from Argentina to France and women are making new inroads into cabinet (although only rarely chief executive) positions, it is worth remembering that less than a decade ago scholars were lamenting that politics was the last bastion of male power and would likely remain so. Articles on women politicians worldwide are regularly featured in the *New York Times*, from Marta Suplicy, the 'sexologist and monied Marxist' who was elected mayor of Sao Paulo (20 November 2000) to the outspoken Makiko Tanaka, who contended with Prime Minister Koizumi for his post and later served as his outspoken foreign minister (5 April 2001).

The shift from ridicule to support for women in politics has taken place along many fronts. Parties have adopted gender quotas, which could have a substantial impact on women's formal representation and on legislative agendas (Jaquette 1997; Thomas *et al.* 1998; Swers 2001). Elected leaders are

increasingly sensitive to demands that they appoint more women to cabinet level positions. Today, surveys show that many voters think women candidates are more honest and even more capable than men. A Gallup poll in six Latin American cities, for example, found that 'sixty-six per cent [of those polled] believe that women are more honest than men, and eighty-five per cent that women are good decision makers'. Sixty-two per cent thought women would do better than men at 'reducing poverty, seventy-two per cent at improving education, fifty-seven per cent combating corruption, sixty-four per cent at protecting the environment, fifty-nine per cent at managing the economy, and fifty-three per cent at conducting diplomatic relations' (Women's Leadership Conference of the Americas 2001).<sup>1</sup>

Improving the political status of women has become a goal of international institutions, bilateral donors and such internationally minded foundations as Ford and Soros.<sup>2</sup> After two decades of soft-pedaling politics, focusing on women's economic development and then on human rights, the Fourth UN Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 and the Beijing + 5 virtual conference in 2000 made women's political representation a priority, in tandem with the global turn to democracy.<sup>3</sup>

Women's formal representation is indeed improving, but at a slow pace compared to the explosion of women's political activism over the last three decades. Characterized as democracy 'from below', the rise of women's organizations is one of the most striking political phenomena of the late twentieth century, and appears to be continuing apace into the new millennium.

The coincidence of the Third Wave of democratization and women's growing politicization raises important questions about how these two trends are related. This essay argues that the political content of the current wave of democratization continues to be shaped in important ways by the Cold War. It asks why the political mobilization of women has not produced a more vigorous challenge to neoliberal economic policies nor addressed broader issues of inequality. It concludes that, although women's participation is having a positive impact, contemporary western feminist theory is offering little concrete support and failing to address the most critical issues for women of the Global South, including the need for a renewed commitment to redistributive politics and a recognition of the need to reform, as well as transform, politics.<sup>4</sup>

## THE COLD WAR AND DEMOCRATIZATION

The most recent wave of democratization did not happen simply because people suddenly grew tired of living under repressive dictatorships. Democracy became a more promising option only as the Cold War wound down. From 1947 to 1989, intense ideological and military competition between the two superpowers made democracy an unlikely outcome for the weak states of the contested 'Third World'. Many observers concluded, erroneously, that

democracy could not be 'exported' because it was culturally unsuited to countries outside the western tradition.

Although there was progress toward democracy in Southern Europe and Latin America in the late 1970s and 1980s, 1989 marked a decisive shift in perceptions. The conventional wisdom now is that we are in a new era, and that the growth of social movements and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) – with women playing key roles – has greatly enhanced the prospects for genuine international cooperation and for more humane, accountable and democratic governments. With the possible exception of the Middle East, few argue today that culture is a barrier to democracy.<sup>5</sup>

But the view that 1989 is a watershed ignores the ways in which the past shapes the present. After WWII, the most radical developing states tried to combine rapid development with social justice using revolutionary socialist models. Revolutions brought external realignment as well, as countries switched from the 'Free World' to the Eastern bloc.

Within each bloc, dissidents called for reforms that would bring them closer to the ideological models of the other. In the West, the persistent threat of revolution in many countries legitimized internal repression and provoked external – usually US – intervention. Despite its democratic rhetoric, the United States often supported dictators, who were seen as more likely than elected leaders to resist 'communist takeover'. Under these circumstances, a few developing countries – for example, India, but also Costa Rica, Colombia, Venezuela and Jamaica – were able to maintain democratic institutions. In the Eastern bloc, force also played a role as leaders like Castro and Mao proved quite willing to repress their populations, and the Soviet Union deployed troops to quell resistance in Hungary in 1956 and in Czechoslovakia in 1968.

The 'transition fever' that began in Southern Europe and Latin America in the 1980s and continued into Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa in the 1990s replaced authoritarian regimes with electoral democracies in many countries throughout the world. But ethnic conflicts, the failure to provide decent levels of economic growth, persistent corruption and increasing levels of violence (ranging from drug wars to kidnappings for profit) are undermining popular support for democratic reform, although few countries have reverted to outright dictatorial rule.<sup>6</sup>

Democratization is taking place in a highly unusual international environment, which is dominated not only by a single superpower but also by a single economic model. Whether or not we are in fact at the 'end of history', with no real rivals to liberal capitalism, we are still living in the era of 'supply side' economics. The ideological spectrum has narrowed. Marxism is no longer viewed as a viable economic alternative, yet the conditions that made countries ripe for revolutionary change – the concentration of economic power and the widening gap between rich and poor – are not improving and may even be worsening.<sup>7</sup> Some countries and regions are doing well, including China and Eastern Europe. In many countries, however, growth rates are below what they were before market reforms were adopted.

The belief that 'There is No Alternative' to the neoliberal economic model has several consequences. Politics no longer turns on domestic or global class differences, but is displaced onto identity, although terms like 'ethnic conflict' and 'radical Islam' obscure the economic dimensions of these conflicts. States, which were resisted as authoritarian oppressors and dismissed as hindrances to economic growth, have not regained credibility. Instead, weakened by structural adjustment programs and denied an effective role in regulating markets, states are increasingly seen as ineffective, and politics as an arena for cronyism and corruption. Reforms to increase transparency and the rule of law are slow in coming (Rotberg 2002).

We have no new term for the current international system. But its designation as the 'post-Cold War' era indicates a deeper truth: it is not simply the successor to but also the result of the Cold War.<sup>8</sup> In very crude terms, the Cold War taught us that the state is bad and that markets and civil society are good.<sup>9</sup> Those who are still taking up arms for a cause are widely seen as caught in a 'tribal' past or in a revolutionary time warp; the assumption is that they will eventually be brought into the real world by the forces of globalization. In the meantime, however, there are failed states and bankrupt economies for which the US-led international system takes little responsibility. In the wake of September 11, the US government is committed to a war on terrorism, but refuses to 'bail out' Argentina. The Bush Administration vowed to increase foreign aid in Monterrey, its Treasury Secretary remains skeptical and there is little sign of flexibility on trade, especially in agricultural products which account for most exports from the Global South.

Globalization is said to be the prime mover of the current international system, but the term covers a set of distinct and often contradictory processes. It includes such positive elements as the Internet, which enables groups to connect and coordinate across national boundaries, and the wider acceptance of a common understanding of human rights. On the negative side, the world economy is dominated by large, multinational firms – and international criminal mafias – powerful enough to evade national and international efforts to control them. Globalization is disrupting local systems of production and local, culturally distinct, patterns of consumption.

Women's organizations have thrived in the post-Cold War environment, taking advantage of the positive elements of globalization. Their success has been nurtured by a series of international conferences sponsored by the United Nations and by various advances in international norm-setting, including the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (Winslow 1995; Meyer and Prugl 1999). Women's groups have resisted global homogenization, claiming different cultural experiences and a variety of women's and feminist perspectives (Basu 1995; Marchand and Parpart 1995).

Critics argue that multinational corporations exploit labor, and appear to prefer cheaper and more docile female workers. Many doubt that 'freer' markets and 'comparative advantage' will produce economic growth for all,

or whether growth is the highest good. In the post-Cold War world, the balance of terror has been replaced by scores of small-scale wars that, although not so visible to publics in the North, are taking a daily toll in civilian lives and displacing many more, creating a growing population of refugees, the majority women and children. Women, sometimes voluntarily but often not, migrate to become exploited servants and prostitutes (Narayan 1995; Ucarer 1999; MacKie 2001).

Under neoliberalism, countries are pressured to adopt economic reforms that have particularly harsh implications for women. The reasons for this are simple: the primary goal of structural adjustment is to reduce inflation to provide a predictable climate for investment and growth. Unable to tax effectively, states must cut back on government spending. This disproportionately affects women and children by reducing social services and state employment; it also means cutbacks in health and education spending, with long run implications for the quality of life as well as for the labor force competitiveness that the model demands (Elson 1991; Bakker 1994; Çagatay *et al.* 2000; essays in Marchand and Runyan 2000 and Kelly *et al.* 2001).<sup>10</sup>

Opening up economies to trade and foreign investment through tariff reductions and privatization of government-owned firms is intended to increase productive efficiency, but often brings higher unemployment and has yet to prove a reliable path to sustained growth. In the former socialist economies of Eastern Europe, women are more likely to be fired first. In Latin America, male unemployment has pushed more women into the labor force to ensure family survival. The jobs they take are the least desirable, often in the informal sector or as part time employees, lacking social security and health benefits. Few in either region would argue that privatization has put productive assets in the hands of women (Aslanbeigui *et al.* 1994; Williams 1994; Jaquette and Wolchik 1998; True 1999).

I am not a foe of globalization; overall, freer trade and greater links of all kinds are better, not worse, for the world, in my judgment, and the real issue is how to set the conditions for globalization, not how to derail it. Globalization has 'winners' and 'losers', and gender is not the only factor in deciding who these will be, except insofar as all market solutions tend to disadvantage women who must also take primary responsibility for reproductive work.

But women's participation has not provided a basis on which to challenge the neoliberal model. What is striking to me is how little attention feminists have paid to these issues.<sup>11</sup> The important exception is the opposition of many feminists to globalization which, when successful, produces protectionist policies with potentially devastating effects on women workers around the globe.

One reason why economic and redistributional issues have been put aside is certainly the end of the Cold War. Marxism is out and postmaterialism is in.<sup>12</sup> Few want to go back to romanticizing revolutionary violence or to the repressive and anti-democratic regimes on the right or the left. The triumph of market solutions has framed policy debates in ways that are hostile to the state and to 'welfare' politics.

Feminists are not alone in not having the answers. But I think that trends in contemporary feminist theory are also contributing to the marginalization of these issues (Jaquette 2001). Feminists may still be committed to forms of democracy that 'dismantle social hierarchies', as Ann Tickner maintains (2001: 124), and there is a growing and useful literature on the effects, both negative and positive, of globalization. But few appear to recognize the stake feminists have in a capable state and there is little sign among feminists of a reawakened appetite for the politics of economic justice, not only for women, but across the board.<sup>13</sup>

#### THE POSITIVE EFFECTS OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION

Women's organizing over the past three decades has been a feminist success story. Since the first UN Conference in 1975, the growth in the number of women's NGOs – local, national and international – has been astonishing.<sup>14</sup> Attendance at the NGO conferences that parallel the official UN meetings on women is often taken as a rough measure of the growth of women's organizations, and it has shown an exponential curve since the 5,000 who attended the Mexico City conference in 1975, to an estimated 25,000 in 1995. The very success of NGOs has raised fears of 'NGO-ization' – that women's organizations are becoming increasingly professionalized and coopted, and are losing their grass-roots base and their role as agents of change (Alvarez 1999; Ghodsee 2001).<sup>15</sup>

Women have also been increasing their formal representation, much more slowly but still significantly. This trend is not clear from the aggregate data because the per centages for Eastern Europe and Russia fell markedly as communist legislatures were replaced by freely elected bodies (Jaquette and Wolchik 1998; Rueschemeyer 1998). Many countries and many more political parties are experimenting with gender quotas. Twelve nations in Latin America and several countries in East and Southeast Asia and Africa have adopted quota laws, and India and Bangladesh have tried reserving seats for women on local governing councils. France has passed 'parity' legislation (Kramer 2000) and several other European countries have quotas, either required by law or voluntarily adopted by political parties. Although their role is rarely acknowledged, gender quotas help explain the success of the Nordic countries in electing a high per centage of women legislators.<sup>16</sup>

Quotas raise important issues. Whether they can ensure that more women are elected depends largely on whether women are placed in 'winnable positions' on party ballots. Whether quotas increase women's representation is a more complicated question. Some have argued that quotas actually decrease the legitimacy of women's participation, especially when women candidates are the wives or relatives of male politicians or when women are given seats in recognition of their party service or social prominence, and are then replaced by other honorees in the next electoral cycle. Researchers have

already identified several problems: quotas have been abused by male-dominated parties; women in office have been marginalized; elected women may not be interested in women's issues; and women do not always agree about what their interests are (Htun 2000; Tremblay and Pelletier 2000).

However, at this relatively early stage, feminists are right, I think, to defend quotas because they give women greater political experience and allow for what Anne Phillips has called the 'politics of presence' (1996). Hege Skjeie and Birte Siim support quotas on the grounds that the Nordic experience shows that '[g]rassroots participation and local activism cannot alone solve the problem of political exclusion' (2000: 353).

As quotas are debated (and the number of parties and governments willing to experiment with them is certainly impressive), advocates use both egalitarian and difference arguments. It is common to see quotas defended on the grounds that women should have an 'equal voice' and that they should be represented to bring women's 'different perspectives' and political styles to bear.<sup>17</sup>

Internationally, there is some empirical evidence that women do think differently about politics and believe they can affect political priorities and the norms and practices of hitherto male-dominated legislatures and cabinets. The Inter-Parliamentary Union recently published a survey of women in politics designed to explore this issue (Waring *et al.* 2000).<sup>18</sup> Eighty-two per cent of the politicians who responded believed women had perceptions of politics different from those of men (30). Nearly three-fourths felt that the absence of women affected the content of legislation (106), although those in executive positions saw competence, not gender, as the key issue (124). Changes noted in legislative norms and practices included a softening of language and more conciliatory styles of negotiation and debate (47–51), although several women politicians responded that they still encountered a strongly male institutional culture. Seeking 'solutions, not power', the report suggests, women showed an 'impressive ... consistency of vision' (32) on new governmental priorities, including not only women's rights, but also sustainable development, concern for the environment and for the rights of the weak and marginalized.

Parties were the main point of access for about three-fourths of the women surveyed; about a third cited involvement with NGOs (81) and a slightly greater number attributed their political careers to involvement with social work. Over 32 per cent reported themselves on the left, 31 per cent in the center and 16 per cent on the right (55). Three fourths reported that party rules and regulations had been modified to include women (57), although many still complained that 'men's resistance is still strong' (59). Most respondents were aware of special efforts made by their parties to promote women and many understood that electoral systems affect women's chances of success (91), yet half felt that parties remained hostile to women (55). Eighty per cent supported quotas for women, but only 20 per cent reported that their parties had taken steps to put women in winnable positions on party lists (67).

Evidence that women have different priorities and styles seems to suggest the value of feminist theories of difference. But, in addition to the concern that women representatives may be confined to dealing with 'women's issues', difference feminist research has produced some judgments that should be reassessed, in my view. One of these is a tendency among feminists to favor the new civil society, populated in substantial part by women and women's NGOs, and oppose the state. Although there are important exceptions, feminist IR and social movement theorists tend to portray the state as coercive and male-dominated, and see civil society as offering a different basis for politics,<sup>19</sup> or even as an alternative to the state itself. This image is particularly appealing to researchers who work with women's groups in the Third World, but it finds support in Northern critiques of the liberal state and from those in IR who see the state in decline (e.g. Cox 1996).

A second is the rejection of 'egalitarian' feminism as simply imitating the male model, and of 'universalism' for marginalizing those who differ from the dominant (white, male) norm (Young 1998). The alternative has been to recognize difference – of class, culture, race, gender – and to suggest that citizenship be constructed through identity (but see Moghadam 1993; Nash 1998).

I strongly favor increasing women's descriptive representation, whether or not that produces feminist outcomes, and I have great respect for those who are working to bring this about in the new and restored democracies. I am concerned, however, that, in debating the failures of liberal feminism, we have let other, increasingly more urgent, issues slip by. How convincing are the feminist critiques?

## THE CIVIL SOCIETY VERSUS THE STATE

Feminists criticize states on grounds that are particular to feminism, but also on grounds they share with other theorists and citizens across the ideological spectrum. They have argued that the liberal democratic state was neither liberal nor democratic in its failure to recognize the citizenship of women, slaves and individuals without property. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, suffrage expanded to include those who fought in wars, which opened citizenship to more men, but not to women, and arguably helped militarize the state (Hartsock 1989; but see Snyder 1999). In the twentieth century, state power fed on itself, producing genocide and totalitarianisms of the left and right. Democratic states were able to justify repression at home and intervention abroad in the name of defending democracy, suggesting that democracy alone is no guarantee of respect for the rights of others.

What Anne Phillips has referred to as the 'gender amnesia' of liberalism, Carole Pateman sees as a foundational flaw in the contract theory of the state. In Pateman's widely accepted view, social contract theory, on which constitutional democracies are based, hides a prior sexual 'contract' that



legitimizes male dominance of women and divides public from private (Pateman 1988).<sup>20</sup> The classic liberal state of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries evolved to the liberal welfare state and adopted women's suffrage in the twentieth. But women's suffrage did not produce a bloc vote to defend women's interests, and the welfare state took over the patriarchal roles of fathers and husbands, extending to (poor or widowed) women minimal economic support in return for the right to control their bodies and behavior (Gordon 1990; Sarvasy 1994). In general, feminists criticize the evolving western notion of citizenship as inadequate because it is based on competition and individualism, not cooperation and community.<sup>21</sup>

Max Weber's view that the state would inevitably become more bureaucratic to meet the rising demands of voting populations proved correct. Nearly three decades ago, Kathy Ferguson pointed out that bureaucracies are hierarchical and, with power derived from technical knowledge and backed by state coercion, structurally hostile to women (1984). In some cases women have been able to use the state to promote feminist goals; the 'femocrats' in Australia are the best example (Eisenstein 1996; Pringle and Watson 1998), and women in Brazil also succeeded in harnessing the state to a feminist agenda in the 1980s (Alvarez 1990). But the experience with women's 'machineries' has not been all that encouraging (Stetson and Mazur 1995; Waylen 2000); gains are reversible, and bureaucracies are often quite resistant to feminist goals (Staudt 1997). In Latin America, experience with repressive regimes, the continued domination of political parties by male elites, and the unwillingness of most administrations to take on the Catholic church, especially to defend women's reproductive rights (Htun 2003) have made autonomy a virtue (Barrig 1994; Beckwith 2000; Yamamoto 2001).

Some see the state as the agent of a technocratic rationalism, and agree with Jurgen Habermas that the state is encroaching on the 'lifeworld', limiting human agency and spiritual meaning. Like many feminists, Habermas favors a 'decentered society' over one that is state-centered. Habermas's ideal of politics – as an open conversation among equals – contrasts with liberalism's tolerance of apathy and inequality (Habermas 1996; but see Fraser 1991).

In some feminist interpretations, the state is suspect because it is militarized (Hartsock 1983; Zalewski 1995; Zalewski and Parpart 1998; Enloe 2000). Judith Stiehm (1982) has described the state as a 'protection racket': men claim the right to control women on the grounds that they are defending them – from threats men themselves create.<sup>22</sup>

These objections are reinforced by those who argue that the state is in decline, and that the international system is on the brink of undergoing a structural change that will rival the rise of the nation-state in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. One vision of the future is that state functions will increasingly be taken over by international organizations and NGOs. For those who think states are the major source of violence and repression in the world, the decline of the state opens the possibility of a 'networked' world, with fluid borders and grass-roots participation, governed by consensual international norms.<sup>23</sup>

The state is also suspect to women's movements that arose in opposition to it. If the state is hierarchical, coercive and technocratic, social movements seem to represent the opposite qualities: they are horizontally structured, built on solidarity rather than self-interest, and based on women's daily lives. Women's groups may be isolated from power, but they are 'authentic'; they may be ephemeral, but it is difficult for power hierarchies to take hold when groups are short-lived, fulfilling Hannah Arendt's dictum that 'power comes into being only if and when men join together for the purpose of action', and disappears when 'for whatever reason, they disperse' (1965: 174). A world made up of social movements and grass-roots organizations suggests to some the possibility of a consensual, decentralized politics, a world of 'power to' or 'power with', not 'power over' (Hartsock 1983: 223-5; Mansbridge 1996: 60-1).

Because they are usually formed to meet immediate local needs, the argument is that women's groups stretch the boundaries of politics, making private issues public and recognizing that individuals are dependent on one another. The Madres of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina have often been seen as a compelling illustration of this ideal. Demanding that the Argentine military return their disappeared children 'alive', the Madres helped force out a repressive dictatorship by turning their private suffering into a public cause. Declaring 'We Are Life', they 'transcended politics' placing the preservation of 'fragile human life above the instrumentalities of technocratic power' (Elshtain 1996; but see Feijoo' 1994).<sup>24</sup>

## EQUALITY VERSUS DIFFERENCE

The idea that civil society organizations should be autonomous and that they represent a new way of doing politics is reinforced by arguments from difference feminism. In the United States, women's understanding of difference, which began with their own exclusion, was deepened by painful confrontations between white feminists and feminists of color in the United States, and further reinforced for those who worked and lived in countries of the Third World. It taught feminists to be wary of generalizations about women, and to take difference seriously.

Iris Young argues that notions of 'universalism' and 'impartiality' have not always promoted justice but have supported hypocritical claims to both equality and community. She observes that the universal ideal was used by 'civic republicans' in the United States to reject interest group pluralism on the grounds that it 'privatized' politics and abandoned any notion of the common good. But in Young's view, the notion of the common good implied by universalism assumes homogeneity among citizens. Claims to fairness based on universalism deny ongoing patterns of discrimination and gender as 'racial exclusions that were once explicit are now expressed more subtly' (Young 1998: 403-4).

Young's case against liberalism incorporates Carole Pateman's analysis of the sexist origins of the liberal state, Nancy Hartsock's critique of male power, and Carole Gilligan's gender perspective on moral reasoning. In Young's view, privileging the universal over the particular reinforces the division between public and private, making the public a realm of 'manly virtue and independence', while 'emotion, sentiment and bodily needs' were confined to the family (1998: 405; Hartsock 1983). Drawing on Pateman's analysis (1989) of the liberal state as a curb on the 'disorder' of women, Young finds that the public realm of citizens 'achieves unity and universality only by defining the civil individual in opposition to' women's natures, which embrace 'feeling, sexuality, birth and death, the attributes that concretely distinguish persons from one another'. Young's description of the 'universal citizen' as 'disembodied, dispassionate (male) reason'; and her position that to be 'impartial' is to 'exclude human particularity' echoes Gilligan's view that male (Kantian) reasoning reduces moral problems to 'mathematical equations' and ignores human interdependence (1982: 37).

Some have criticized Young for making difference an end in itself, and see identity politics as the problem, not the solution. Jodi Dean takes on Young's logic, arguing that it is not necessary to choose between difference and universalism, and pointing out that a dialogic politics requires that even private space be 'open and indeterminate', not 'dictated by identity' (1996: 9). The public sphere is not 'a sacred, universal sphere immune to particularity' nor need we assume that the 'bodily, sexual, affective' aspects of our lives lack 'universal status'. Birth and death are universal, not particular, human experiences. Although 'premature' universalization can silence differences, universality as a criterion of justice does not override particularity. Rights are 'organized expectations of generalized others' that do not translate directly into policy or action. To do so requires the acceptance 'of our most basic feelings and experiences as embodied emotional beings', because rights cannot be decided in the abstract (Dean 1996: 86–7; see also Nash 2001). Dean resists the characterization of the public and private as deeply divided spheres representing incompatible values.

## SOME PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF DIFFERENCE FOR POLITICS

Difference arguments have had positive effects on the credibility and success of women in politics, especially in those cases where women candidates and appointees are seen as less corrupt or more public-spirited than their male counterparts. But there may be costs as well. Marian Sawer maintains that difference arguments for electing women appeal to 'deeply cynical and apathetic' electorates. Rationales based on 'utility' (women can help us win) rather than 'justice' (women deserve equal representation) may help 'convert power holders to the cause' of electing more women but, she warns, women's

claims to equal representation should not be contingent upon their ability to deliver difference in politics (2000: 377, 363).

Citing Anna Jo'nasdo'ttir's work (1991), Skjeie and Siim argue that, in the case of the Nordic countries, difference arguments for electing and appointing women reinforce 'the legacy of two centuries' in which women's place has been defined according to what the 'good woman' could and should do. Like Sawyer, they worry that if women do not show they 'represent something different from what men stand for, the easy conclusion may be that there is no point in [their] presence'. Women should be represented on the grounds of equality, not because they 'make a difference' (2000: 335–6; Jaquette 1990).

A second implication of difference is the strategy of autonomy. Feminists differ on whether the state can be made more 'women-friendly' (Jones 1990), and therefore on whether women's groups should cooperate with the state or keep their distance, and the conditions of politics in many developing countries have led states and political parties to coopt women's groups, causing them to alter their agendas and lose credibility (Barrig 1994; Price 2001; Yamamoto 2001; Ghodsee 2001).

But few feminists defend the state, although it is the only social institution with the legitimacy, scope and credibility to deliver any of the goods feminists seek, from reproductive rights to affirmative action or the recognition that engaging meaningfully in the public sphere provides.<sup>25</sup> Those who imagine a new international system based on transnational NGOs and international institutions ignore the fact that norms adopted internationally depend on states to implement them.

On the issue of the state and redistribution, in the United States, which plays a critical ideological and financial leadership role in the international system, the term 'welfare' has become an epithet. But feminist impatience with the liberal state makes it difficult to counter those who favor 'market solutions' to social problems. I fully support efforts to give women greater economic power, but greater access to the market can never achieve anything like parity for women, who remain disproportionately responsible for sustaining families.

Despite its very real successes, egalitarian feminism has failed to alter the basic terms of this equation for most women. Difference feminism shows promise in its efforts to address this issue by revaluing care (Folbre 2001; Rothschild 2001; Clement 1998), although it has yet to find a way to make markets respond, and risks adding a feminist rationale to the traditional justifications for a gendered division of labor. Working from either a care or a 'gender and development' perspective, however, it is difficult to imagine how to proceed without engaging the state.

Local and grass-roots movements can make a difference in women's lives, both materially and in women's sense of self-confidence and efficacy. But, in most countries, women's groups must work closely with governments or remain on the fringe. The devolution of power to local entities is often seen as a boon to women because women's organizations are often neighborhood

based and know local issues well. But local power structures can also be hierarchical, patriarchal, corrupt and even repressive, and in the end it is still necessary to rely on bureaucracies to get things done. Despite criticisms, the experience with 'women's machineries' is not all negative (Sawer 1990; Pringle and Watson 1998), and perhaps it is time to consider systematically how bureaucracies can be made more responsive, rather than assume they are intractable (see Cockburn 1991; Staudt 2001).

In countries where there is a strong civil service tradition, the problem with bureaucracies may be as much a result of public ambivalence about redistributive policies as a structural flaw of bureaucracies themselves (Cloward and Piven 1998). Where civil service norms are weak and bureaucracies are a primary source of employment, corruption must be addressed before the state can act effectively or legitimately. This suggests an important role for civil society groups. It is precisely in their ability to push bureaucracies into reform, monitor their actions and provide real accountability, and not just as 'service delivery' mechanisms, that NGOs have strong roles to play (Yamamoto 2001). In the Nordic experience, Skejje and Siim conclude, a more inclusive citizenship arises from the combination of social activism 'from below' and political integration 'from above' through political parties and institutions, not one without the other (2000: 357). In Drude Dahlerup's words (1994), feminists will have to 'learn to live with the state'.

Ironically, the recent success of women's social movements may have deepened the rift between feminists and the state. Social movements helped overturn authoritarian regimes and they are linked to like-minded groups across national boundaries (Keck and Sikkink 1998). As the example of the Madres shows, the social movement model of civil society encourages the belief that it is possible to create a world that avoids the pitfalls of male power, because women defend human rights and moral principles, not 'interests'.

But a world of 'power to' and 'power with' without 'power over' is only a chimera. As Jane Mansbridge makes clear, even when goals are arrived at by free and open communication, implementing them is likely to require that some be coerced to cooperate: democracies require coercion so they can act and not 'overly privileg[e] the status quo' (1996: 47). As unanimity is unlikely when groups in a society are seeking social change, progressives must rely on the state's 'power over' to achieve 'power to'. 'Democratic coercion' differs from authoritarianism because democracies follow agreed-upon procedures to ensure that all views are represented. Recognizing Young's point that liberal universalism can exclude, Mansbridge suggests that Charles Beitz's concept of 'complex proceduralism', which engages the 'irreducible plurality of substantive interests associated with the idea of political fairness' be employed to insure that all relevant voices are heard (1996: 54).

Carina Perelli (1994) has tried to show why the Madres in Argentina do not represent a promising democratic model. In addition to issues of internal democracy, social movements like the Madres are not 'self-limiting', as is

often claimed, but make 'maximalist' demands because moral claims are by definition non-negotiable. This may be appropriate for human rights protests but cannot become the basis for political bargaining among valid claimants for limited resources. A politics of moral purity is not dialogic; eventually all groups are forced to portray themselves as 'uncompromising', to the detriment of politics and, ultimately, of justice. The feminist reconstruction of politics cannot be done by replacing interests with non-negotiable moral claims, by moving from the 'politics of redistribution' to the 'politics of recognition' (Fraser 1998), or by substituting civil society for the state.

#### TOWARD AN OLD-FASHIONED RADICAL FEMINISM

To date, women's representation has not altered the neoliberal rules of the game. Sawyer observes that those issues 'with price tags', such as demands for increased childcare and equal pay, are 'incompatible with current globalizing economic agendas' – and therefore are often rejected out of hand (Sawyer 2001: 167). Latin America offers encouraging evidence of women's political mobilization and feminist awareness (Alvarez 1990; Jaquette 1994; Stephen 1997), but with little impact on these issues. In some cases, women's representation has had the unintended effect of legitimizing governments that have adopted neoliberal macroeconomic policies but avoided the 'second generation' reforms to ensure greater social justice. In Peru President Alberto Fujimori promoted women, giving a false democratic patina to a regime that was authoritarian and corrupt, although democratically elected (Blondet 2001). Latin American NGOs are the 'good women' who supplement faltering state welfare services with communal kitchens, community schools and primary health care.

My comments are not directed toward women or women's movements in Latin America, or elsewhere in the Third World, the vast majority of whom are managing heroically under the most difficult circumstances, inside and outside the state. I am deeply concerned that First World women's movements are offering little more than symbolic support. Too few feminists today are old fashioned enough to write about economic justice. Politics has become 'identity', 'text' or 'performance', and 'radical' has come to mean moving beyond 'narrow' economic concerns. Influential feminists have attacked the liberal state, dismissed impartiality and universalism as outdated Enlightenment notions, and reject 'rights talk' as selfish and individualistic.

With few exceptions, those in the North who are in a position to affect the direction of feminist energies are failing to raise redistributive issues at home or abroad. Perhaps we think we must all be economic realists, even as we dream of a politics without power. Or perhaps we in the North are all too comfortable with the way global resources are currently distributed, or con ourselves into thinking that opposition to globalization is a sufficient response.

New developments in feminist theory provide the comforting impression that we continue to move forward. But we are keeping our eyes wide shut as inequalities increase, safety nets shrink, and states, though formally democratic, suffer drastic declines in capacity and legitimacy. In Brazil in the 1970s, women who had not yet discovered feminism were called 'sleeping women'. Perhaps today we are the ones who are taking a nap.

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## Notes

- 1 Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart (2001) associate more progressive attitudes on women with higher levels of modernization and postmaterialism, but not in Eastern Europe. The Middle East presents a contradictory picture. Women were active in the *intifada* and women have been elected to the Iranian Parliament, but the reassertion of traditional gender roles has become part of the larger politics of Islamicization. For discussions of identity politics and women see Moghadam (1993) and Peterson (1996).
- 2 Women's participation has been a focus of US bilateral aid for democratization. See Carothers (1999).
- 3 By 2000 the international women's conferences had become logistically unwieldy. Many attended Beijing+5 events in New York, but the global 'grass-roots' dimension relied on the Internet.
- 4 Colome *et al.* (2001) apply the 'gender lens' to governance in a series of essays comparing Europe and Asia.
- 5 Boroumand and Boroumand (2002) argue strongly against applying cultural arguments against democracy to the Middle East. On women and political liberalization in the Middle East, see Brand (1998).
- 6 It is widely recognized that many electoral democracies are not very democratic, which has led to a new literature on 'hybrid regimes' and an evolving vocabulary, including terms like 'pseudodemocracy' and 'competitive authoritarian regimes'. See Diamond (2002).
- 7 For the debate on whether inequality is increasing, see Dollar and Kraay (2002) and several comments in *Foreign Affairs* (July/August 2002). High population growth rates are coming into conflict with authoritarian regimes in the Middle East, with potentially negative consequences for democracy and women.
- 8 During the first half of the Cold War there was increased support for welfare

programs in the United States, perhaps in competition with the Soviet Union's claims that it could generate both economic growth and social justice. The War on Poverty was an ambitious example of this. But from the late 1960s on, attitudes shifted, and the guns and butter policies of the Johnson Administration led to inflation and eventually to Reaganomics at home and 'market' reforms abroad. In the United States today, redistributive claims are easily dismissed and CEO perks and corporate corruption have only become an issue as the failures of ENRON and Worldcom endanger the stock market and threaten the inflow of international capital. Latin American elites followed the US lead through most of the 1990s, but the election of populist Hugo Chavez in Venezuela and the meltdown in Argentina are signs that the neoliberal consensus may be cracking. Europe and Japan have sustained a more 'statist' model, but arguably at the expense of growth and transparency.

- 9 Bernard Lewis offers this definition of civil society:

In the more generally accepted interpretation of the term 'civil society,' civil is opposed not to religious or to military authority, but to authority as such. In this sense, the civil society is that part of society, between the family and the state, in which the mainsprings of association, initiative and action are voluntary, determined by opinion or interest or other personal choice, and distinct from – though they may be influenced by – the loyalty owed by birth and the obedience imposed by force.

(2002: 110)

Lewis lists trade unions, professional associations, clubs, sports teams, as well as political parties and corporations. Of those, I would argue that corporations and political parties be excluded, the first on the grounds of their economic role and the second because, in the cases I know best (Latin America and the United States), NGOs distinguish themselves clearly from parties which, unless they are so small that they fail to achieve electoral representation, are part of government. Theorists of social movements distinguish them from 'interest groups'. See Cohen (1985).

- 10 The irony is, as Paul Krugman (2001) points out, that the United States imposes 'monetarist' austerity programs on weaker economies while it uses Keynesian policies to stimulate consumer demand at home.
- 11 Of course, there are important exceptions to this generalization, among them Runyan (1999), Cook *et al.* (2000) and Peterson (2002). Stienstra (1999, 2000) deals with several of the issues raised in this essay.
- 12 Although Alexander and Mohanty (1997) argue that 'capitalist feminism is a contradiction in terms' and that feminist democracy must be based on 'socialist principles'. I sympathize with their position, but doubt that socialism will be the blueprint for the future, even if neoliberalism fails.
- 13 Among those who are not writing specifically for feminists, Barbara Ehrenreich (2001) and Kevin Phillips (2001) are sounding the alarm about worsening patterns of inequality in the United States.



- 14 The number of NGOs having consultative status with UN-ECOSOC grew from forty-one in 1948 to 337 in 1968 to 1,350 today, according to Yang (2001). The rate of increase of women's NGOs is at least as great. See discussion in Stienstra (2000) and Tickner (2001: 110–20); for the role of women's NGOs in international conferences, see Meyer and Prugl (1999).
- 15 Regional variations in NGO–government relations deserve more systematic study. In East Asia, NGOs seem to be viewed as successful when they receive government subventions, and only fringe groups prize their independence (personal interviews in Hong Kong and Taiwan 2001). US and European NGOs are considered 'independent', but compete for government contracts and receive more than half of their budgets from state support. Yang reports that 66 per cent of the funding for American NGOs, 76 of Canadian and 85 per cent of Swedish NGOs are provided by their respective governments (2000: 25). In Latin America, NGO autonomy has been a major issue for feminists. See essays in Jaquette (1994); for Eastern Europe, Ghodsee (2001); Yamamoto (2001). True (2003) provides a comparative perspective.
- 16 Many factors, including electoral systems (proportional representation, first past the post, multimember districts) affect the per centage of women and other underrepresented groups who are elected. See Norris (1993); Rule and Zimmerman (1994).
- 17 For a succinct summary of equality and difference arguments for women's political participation, see Marian Sawer (2000). For the view that these can lead the post, multimember districts) affect the per centage of women and other
- 18 The survey was sent in 1998 to Presiding Officers of all Parliaments who were each requested to ask ten current women members of parliament or previous candidates or prior office-holders to respond, limiting the total from each country to ten, with only two from any given political party. The responses represented answers from 'about 200 women politicians in sixty-five countries' (Waring *et al.* 2000: 174–93).
- 19 For a thoughtful discussion, see Hawkesworth (2001).
- 20 For a critique of Pateman's view of Hobbes, see Jaquette (1998) and her reply (Pateman 1998).
- 21 These feminist critiques of liberalism parallel Carole Gilligan's (1982) distinction between an 'ethic of rights' and an 'ethic of care'. See Lister (1997) for a nuanced feminist analysis of citizenship.
- 22 The new focus on women in peacekeeping and peacemaking is opening up new ways of thinking about these issues See Tickner (2001: 57–64).
- 23 E.g. Richard Falk's world-order approach, which can 'bring forth new conceptions of a more just world order based on global civil society', as Tickner describes it (2001: 101).
- 24 Jean Elshtain illustrates the point by comparing the human rights commitment of the Madres of the Plaza de Mayo to 'rights talk': 'For them, human rights was no vehicle for entitlements, it was a way to express the timeless immunity of their rights from the depredations of their governments. It was a way to say "“Stop!” not “Gimme!”' (1996: 141).

25 Although Pringle and Watson (1998) argue that:

Given that so much depends on the extension of democracy, the 'against the state' discourse, which has informed radical practice in Britain, is rejected here, and we believe rightly so, in favour of the consolidation and democratic reform of the constitutive principles of the liberal state.

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