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CHAPTER 23

FEMINISM

SANDRA WHITWORTH

THIS chapter will examine some of the principle tensions, but also compatibilities, between the study of international relations and feminism. It will also review briefly some of the main points of debate and controversy within feminist thinking, and the ways in which feminist insights have been taken up by global actors in world politics, such as the United Nations (UN). While much of the discussion of feminism and international relations has usefully focused on the ways in which mainstream accounts of international relations ignore its impact on gender and/or make invisible the kinds of contributions that feminist analyses can bring to processes of international relations,[1] this chapter will go in a somewhat different direction. It will examine the ways in which "gender" *does* circulate globally, and the ways in which gender has obtained something of a worldwide currency, especially in (but not limited to) questions of peace, violence, and conflict.

The global circulation of "gender" does not, however, mean that those who use gender understand it, or employ it in the way feminists intended when conceptualizing the term. Gender circulates with considerable frequency within the corridors of the UN and other mainstream institutions like the World Bank. It circulates within member states of the UN. Most of these organizations are committed to a strategy called gender mainstreaming. Although gender is used and referred to a great deal by institutions like the UN, when taken up by these international actors, gender is largely depoliticized (Whitworth 2004, ch. 5). The argument here is that the uses to which "gender" have been put globally, rather than producing a critical and politically engaged politics, have instead been part of a practice of policing

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[1] For an excellent review of these discussions, especially as they concern questions of globalization, see Rai (2004).

knowledge production, or, in James H. Mittleman's term (2004, 223), "narrative entrapment." In short, part of the transformed "lifeways" of international relations and globalization (Mittleman 2004, 220) entails the circulation of a set of understandings about gender that removes from it any examination of the ways in which relations of power sustain (or sometimes challenge) prevailing assumptions about men and women and masculinity and femininity.

1 FEMINISM AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: TENSIONS AND COMPATIBILITIES

In important ways, feminist thought and the study of international relations are very difficult and sometimes incompatible terrains to navigate. Students or scholars of international relations may use terms like states, power, and anarchy, or acronyms and abbreviations like MAD (mutual assured destruction, a way of describing nuclear-deterrence policies), IBRD (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, or the World Bank), IMF (International Monetary Fund), and WTO (World Trade Organization). They may talk comfortably about theoretical approaches that include realism, liberal pluralism, Gramscian political economy, or critical international relations theory, and they may ask questions about the relations between states, or about nuclear deterrence, arms races, structural adjustment programs, or comparative advantage.

Feminists, by contrast, may declare themselves to be liberal feminists, or feminist postmodernists. They may talk about the importance of understanding the difference between gender and sex, and they may ask how antiracist scholarship has been incorporated into analyses of global politics. The student of international relations may profess hopes to work one day for the foreign policy bureaucracy of his or her state or may pass out flyers for an upcoming "Model UN," while the feminist student may describe volunteering at a local women's shelter or make an announcement about an upcoming "Take Back the Night" march. Feminist students and scholars who encounter international relations, and international relations students and scholars who encounter feminism, regularly report confusion, miscommunication, and in general a sense that they are operating in very different worlds from one another.[2]

[2] For an entertaining account of the "other worldly" experiences of international relations scholars, see Rosenau (1993). For a discussion about the ways in which international relations scholars "just don't understand," see Tickner (1997; 1998); Keohane (1998); Marchand (1998).

The fact is, in many ways, feminism and international relations *do* operate in very different worlds[3]—one comes out of a heritage of social movement activism and critique while the other has been located in a field of study focused largely on serving the policy needs of governments. Feminist thought, as Alison Jaggar (1983, 3) writes, has probably always existed: "as long as women have been subordinated, they have resisted that subordination. Sometimes the resistance has been collective and conscious; at other times it has been solitary and only half-conscious." Jaggar's early remarks on feminist thought signal the connection of feminism to activism and resistance. Feminist activism has been directed at an enormously varied set of goals, including involvement in anticolonial struggles, struggles for reproductive freedoms (which itself has been defined in a variety of ways), organizing around violence against women, or peace and disarmament objectives, seeking to achieve civil and political rights, organizing around sexuality issues, whether in the form of "rights" for gays and lesbians or queer and transgender activism, involvement in environmental or workers' rights movements, antiglobalization activism, and development issues, to name but a few.[4]

Not only do feminists organize around a whole variety of issues, not all of which appear on the surface to be explicitly feminist; they also organize in different ways. In some cases, feminist activism has sought to show the particular impact of phenomena such as environmental damage or reliance on nuclear weapons on women and marginalized men. In other instances, feminist activism aims at achieving specific gains for women—protective legislation, for example, or the recognition of certain rights, such as reproductive rights, equality legislation, or affirmative action programs. In other instances, women organize around issues that are seen to affect communities as a whole (colonialism, globalization, or racism), in which feminist struggle forms one part of a larger movement of resistance.

The variety of activism associated with feminism is paralleled by the variety of ways feminist theory has evolved, and the varieties of "feminisms" that have emerged as a result (see Jaggar 1983; Mohanty, Russo, and Torres 1991; Whitworth 1994; Steans 1998; Zalewski 2000). There is no single or monolithic feminist theory, any more than there is a single form of feminist activism. *Liberal feminists*, for example, argue that women must be included in areas of public life previously denied them. Liberals start from the assumption that women share the same capacity for reason as men, and so on equality grounds should not be excluded from any of the important elements of the public sphere within modern societies: higher learning, government, international institutions, business, and so on. Feminists who work from this perspective collect empirical information about women's roles, and generally find that, within governments and international institutions, women

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[3] For a discussion that also uses the idea of different "worlds" (but in different ways from those used here), see Linklater, Carver, and Enloe (2004); Youngs (2004).

[4] For a review of only some of this activism, see, e.g., Alexander and Mohanty (1997, especially sect. III). See also Peterson and Runyan (1999, especially ch. 5).

remain highly under-represented. Where women are present, they are still largely relegated to clerical and support work, and do not figure prominently in the middle and upper management levels of institutions. As of June 2006, for example, women in the UN comprised some 60 percent of General Service employees, but less than 40 percent in the Professional categories (and only 15 percent of the highest professional category of Under Secretary General) (Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women 2006).

This is the kind of information that liberal feminists collect, and then they also track the reasons why women may be excluded from public or political activities. This kind of research has shown that in some cases women may be socialized away from the public sphere; or they may have differential access to educational or other opportunities needed to gain access to public life; they also may face discrimination and subtle or flagrant forms of exclusion when attempting to become more active; sometimes also the burdens of their private lives (responsibilities in the home, in the care of children or the elderly) may make it more difficult to become involved in local- or global-level political activity. For liberal feminists, the barriers to women's participation need to be identified so that they can be removed, in this way permitting those women who are interested in equal opportunity to take on the challenges of political and public life.

Radical feminists, by contrast, focus less on women's participation in the public sphere and more on the workings of patriarchy, the relations of inequality between women and men, and the ways in which—historically and to this day—men seek to control women through controlling their sexuality, their roles in reproduction, and their roles in society more generally. For radical feminists, women and men are essentially quite different from one another (and essentially quite similar to one another). Some point to biology, others point to socialization, but radical feminists tend to agree that men as a group are less able to express emotion, are more aggressive, and more competitive, while women as a group are more nurturing, more holistic, and less abstract. By this view, much of the way in which society is organized supports patriarchy and the privileging of masculine norms, which affects not only the ways in which the world actually operates, but even the ways in which we think about the world.

On questions of representation, radical feminists might agree with liberals that women ought to be represented in positions of public power, but not for the equality-rights reasons the liberals give; rather because women bring a different point of view to politics, one that is more focused on cooperation and peace. In international relations, this position is most forcefully expressed by some radical feminists who argue that, if women were in control of the world's governments, there would be no war and no conflict.[5] But radical feminists also argue that "politics" is not simply located within the traditional places that we see as political, such as government or international institutions. They argue that the separation

[5] Radical feminists are not alone in this position. See also Fukuyama (1998).

of the public and private spheres, in which "politics" exists only within the public, is untenable: The bedroom is political, as is the workplace, a daycare center, people's bodies—all (and more) are sites of politics. Radical feminists thus also suggest different forms of political activism than do liberal feminists, and will be involved, among other things, with creating women's shelters, organizing around reproductive freedoms, creating safe spaces for women to meet, and the like.

Radical feminists may reject the view of the world as offered by liberals (that everyone is largely the same), but they do not reject the project of defining what women and men are and how they are different from one another. This is where they differ from *feminist postmodernists*, who agree with radical feminism that "the political" exists everywhere, but take exception to the radical feminist project of defining women at all. For feminist postmodernists, any definition or standpoint will necessarily be partial, and indeed any attempt to posit a single or universal truth needs to be deconstructed (Steans 1998, 25). Deconstruction entails exploring, unravelling, and rejecting the assumed naturalness of particular understandings and relationships, and examining the impact that otherwise "taken-for-granted" assumptions and understandings have on our ability to act in the world and even to think about global politics. For feminist postmodernists, as Marysia Zalewski (2000, 26) explains, any truth claim is an assertion of power that silences or makes invisible possibilities that do not fit easily into prevailing discursive practices.

Some developments of postmodern thought have picked up on its focus on discursive practices but attempt also to focus on the material lived conditions of people's lives. *Feminist critical theory* examines prevailing assumptions about both women and men: what it is to be a man or woman, what is appropriately feminine or masculine behavior, the appropriate roles of women and men within society, within the workforce, the family, and so on. They often argue that prevailing norms associated with masculinity must also be examined, and likewise that these norms can have an enormous impact on men, particularly marginalized men (Connell 1995; Hooper 2001). Critical feminists insist also that the assumptions that exist around women and men/masculinity and femininity take place not just at the level of discourse. Gender depends in part on the real, material, lived condition of women and men in particular times and places, which includes but is not limited to the lived conditions of race, class, sexuality, ethnicity, and religion.

Postcolonial feminist theorists also draw on these insights and argue further that imperialism constitutes one of the crucial moments, or processes, through which modern identities in all their guises become established. For postcolonial theorists, although some feminists acknowledge the intersectionality of race, class, and gender, there is nonetheless "a discernible First World feminist voice" in international relations that does not sufficiently foreground the "erasures surrounding race and representation" (Chowdhry and Nair 2002, 10). Postcolonial feminist theory attempts to do precisely this, further unpacking the assumed universality of experience between women that earlier (and particularly liberal and radical) feminisms relied upon.

Methodologically, feminists are equally eclectic, and may pursue any number of strategies: Some are empirically oriented and seek to show "where the women are," while others reject more traditional notions of methodology and pursue instead postpositivist approaches to research (Ackerly, Stern, and True 2006). Feminists thus share no single goal of theorizing or activism, and can disagree vociferously among themselves about what the world looks like and how to study it.

Where feminism is, almost by definition, breathtakingly heterogeneous, international relations is usually seen as considerably more homogeneous. Part of that homogeneity results from the particular way in which the discipline of international relations emerged. Stanley Hoffmann (1977) once famously (or infamously, depending on your point of view) wrote that international relations is largely an American social science. As a distinct discipline of study, it became established within the United States in the post-Second World War era. Hoffmann did not mean that international relations was only "discovered" in the United States after the Second World War, because, of course, philosophers, historians, poets, economists, artists, and political scientists had discussed issues of relevance to global-level politics for hundreds, if not thousands, of years. Nor was Hoffmann entirely accurate in suggesting that it was in the United States that international relations became a "discipline" of study—as British scholars point out, the first Chair of International Relations was created at the University of Aberystwyth in Wales in 1919 and was held by E. H. Carr (much of the account of the discipline of international relations that follows is drawn from Hollis and Smith 1991, ch. 2).

But Hoffmann's observations were useful in describing the way in which programs of study at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, research centers, and "think tanks" devoted to the study of international relations began to proliferate within the United States in the post-Second World War period. As Hoffmann noted, the United States emerged from the Second World War the dominant Western power, but it had little available expertise to help guide those in its political and bureaucratic offices in negotiating the issues and problems that a "world leader" and "superpower" would confront. The US government poured research money and other forms of support into universities and research centers for the explicit purpose of creating that expertise.

So successful was this exercise that American scholars, and the theoretical lenses they developed to understand international relations, came to dominate the study of international relations (George 1994; Smith 2002). This led to a number of very unique, if quite peculiar, characteristics. Once the discipline had been created explicitly to help guide policy-makers, the question of what international relations theory ought to be "for," what its goals should be, appeared to be settled at the outset—it was a practical discipline aimed at influencing, and improving upon, the decisions of policy-makers. So close was the relationship between academia and policy-making that sometimes the academics and the policy-makers were one and the same people, circulating between positions within universities and positions

within government. As William Wallace (1996, 302) describes it, "the distinction between the academic theorist and the practical policy-maker was a matter of degree."

It was not, moreover, just any policy-makers that international relations as a discipline aimed to assist; it was, in the first instance, American policy-makers, who faced a particular set of circumstances around which they needed expert advice. The United States emerged from the Second World War the world's sole nuclear superpower, but that status would soon need to be shared with the Soviet Union— a regime largely opposed not only to the United States, but to the principles of liberalism and free market capitalism upon which it was based. The most important issues that decision-makers needed advice on, then, were those that focused on conflict and security, and in particular on the potential for nuclear confrontation between East and West.

There was also a sense that the study of international politics needed to be conducted in a rigorous and scientific manner. In part, this resulted from a rejection of idealist thought, which had prevailed prior to the Second World War. Idealism was associated with the faith that institutions like the League of Nations (created at the end of the First World War) could provide a forum in which state leaders could choose to act collectively and avoid war. But that faith was thought to have died a certain death with the outbreak of the Second World War so closely on the heels of the First. Decision-makers needed advice, by this view, based not on ideals of what humanity ought to be like, and what might be possible in world politics, but rather on what the world really was—they needed rational, objective, and realistic accounts of global politics.

The approach to the study of world politics known as realism thus came to dominate the study of international relations. Realism posited that states were the most important actors in world politics, they acted in a condition of anarchy, and they acted in the pursuit of power. Although at different points throughout the latter half of the twentieth century debates among realists erupted, in particular over quantitative as opposed to more qualitative and historical forms of analysis, the central theoretical commitments of realism (states/power and anarchy) remained largely unchanged.

From these very brief accounts it should be clear that the different worlds of feminism and international relations suggest very different visions of what politics looks like, how we ought to study it, and what the goals of that study should be. But this does not mean that there is no room for engagement between the worlds of feminism and international relations, though, admittedly, that engagement sometimes can be quite spirited. Part of the spiritedness of those discussions may come out of the ways in which feminism and international relations are of different worlds, but part of it also comes out of the many questions and concerns that international relations and feminist scholars share in *common*. For all their differences, feminist and international relations scholars are also sometimes concerned with very similar types of questions. One of the most important of these is the question of power.

Feminists are as curious about power as are international relations theorists; both want to know, for example, about the way power operates and what it takes to sustain any given set of relationships, whether between states, peoples, or institutions. But, for feminists, understanding the operations of power inevitably means examining gender (Enloe 1996, 186). For much of traditional international relations theory, concerned as it is with states, institutions, or economic processes, actual "people" enter into the picture only rarely. For feminists, by contrast, we can only understand how power operates by not simply looking at generic "people," but digging further still and examining gender. As Cynthia Enloe notes, an analysis of politics inside or between states that ignores a feminist informed analysis of gender not only underestimates power; it is "politically naïve" (Enloe 2007a, 000).

Gender is a term intended to explore the ideational, material, historical, and institutional configurations of power that together contribute to the understandings about women and men, and masculinities and femininities, that prevail in any given time or place. The ideas and assumptions that prevail about women and men in situations of armed conflict and political violence, for example, are a good way to illustrate this point (Whitworth 2004, 27). Women and men are *both* active "agents" and "victims" of conflict and political violence, but they are usually positioned quite differently: women have long been portrayed primarily as victims of conflict, while men are portrayed as actors and agents (Moser and Clark, 2001, 4). This has implications for both women and men. Women are seldom viewed as having held public power prior to the emergence of conflict, or as having served as combatants. As a result, they may experience greater freedom in organizing informal peace campaigns, but at the same time they are usually ignored when formal peace processes begin, and are normally excluded from disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programs, which give former combatants access to educational, training, and employment opportunities. Men, on the other hand, are presumed to have held power and decision-making authority prior to the emergence of conflict and to have been combatants and instigators of the conflict itself. This sometimes makes their motivations suspect when they become involved in efforts to bring conflict to an end. At the same time, however, it is men who are normally invited to the formal "peace table" once it has been established, and they are the ones who primarily receive the benefits of DDR and other post-conflict activities (United Nations 2002). Prevailing understandings about women and men, and the material conditions of their lives, can thus significantly shape their experiences in institutions, nations, or social processes like armed conflict.

Importantly for feminists, power does not simply operate "out there" in history, in armed conflict, in faraway places, or in large institutions. Power informs all social relations, from the most personal through to the global. As V. Spike Peterson (1997, 199) writes of gender, it is "hard to see and critique because it orders 'everything' and disrupting that order feels threatening—not only at the 'level' of institutions and global relations but also in relation to the most intimate and

deeply etched beliefs/experiences of personal (but relentlessly gendered) identity." The final phrase here is important—not because it suggests the primacy of gender over other relations of inequality, but rather because it reminds us how personally powerful gender is. This matters not only insofar as it points to the ways in which gender informs and impacts the most "intimate" parts of ourselves, but also because it signals just how effective forms of exclusion organized through gender can be. This is accomplished by marginalizing the feminine, by making it unquestioned to "infantilize, ignore, trivialize, or … actively cast scorn upon what is thought to be feminized" (Enloe 2004, 5).

Feminist scholars have underscored the ways in which crises of masculinity and fears of being feminized have been not only a powerful motivator for foreign policy-makers (a traditional focus of international relations scholars) but also an effective mobilizing tool for entire populations. Maya Eichler's (2006, 497) analysis of the Russian Chechen wars, for example, demonstrates the ways in which the Russian leadership of Vladimir Putin mobilized public support for the second Chechen war "on the basis of terrorist fears and masculinized humiliation." As Eichler (2006, 498, 501) argues, the second Chechen war was seen as a way to associate the Russian state with a militarized, patriotic, and orderly form of militarized masculinity, which not only served as a form of recuperation from the humiliations associated with the economic and financial experience of Russia since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the losses in the first Chechen war, but also juxtaposed Russian masculinity with a "notion of criminal, destabilizing and aggressive Chechen masculinity." Together, these ideas became an important element in securing popular support for the war.

This example is also illustrative of one final point that feminists would want to emphasize about gender: The forms of exclusion or privilege organized through gender—the ideas that constitute specifically gendered and racialized men and women, or masculinities and femininities, or nations or institutions—are never closed or fixed; rather they are constantly being produced and reproduced. This requires, as Enloe has long noted, a "lot of work;" it does not happen automatically (Enloe 1989, ch. 1 and *passim*; 2004, introduction). This means that the "natural-ness" of some forms of exclusion or privilege is never a finished project. This is why it is important also to interrogate the ways in which gender has been put into global circulation through the formal actors of global politics.

2 WHEN GLOBAL ACTORS USE GENDER

Many formal or "mainstream" actors in international relations seem recently to have been saying some of the things that feminists have argued around gender.

Many use the term gender, and numerous states and international institutions have pursued a strategy called "gender mainstreaming," adopted in the Beijing Platform for Action from the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. Though many find the term unwieldy, "mainstreaming" is intended to call attention to the importance of incorporating attention to gender through all aspects of a state's or organization's work, and to move away from simply counting the number of women who are present. Conceptually, the idea of gender mainstreaming is relatively sophisticated; it accepts the idea that gender is a social construct, not a biological fact, and that the prevailing norms and assumptions concerning both women and men will differ across time and place. Mainstreaming views gender as shaped by cultural, class, religious, and ethnic differences and recognizes the power differentials between women and men, the fluid nature of those differences, and that these differences are made manifest in a variety of ways (United Nations 2001).

Gender mainstreaming has also had some clearly identifiable impacts on various international actors. The UN, for example, passed Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security in 2000. The Security Council is known more for establishing peacekeeping missions or sanctioning the use of force in global politics (as it did in the early 1990s with the first Gulf War, and as it refused to do in 2003 in the second Gulf War). It is the only body within the UN system that can pass resolutions that are binding on the member states of the UN. Its resolution on women, peace, and security noted that women and children account for the vast majority of those adversely affected by armed conflict and increasingly those who are targeted by combatants in those conflicts. The resolution called for the incorporation of a gender perspective into peacekeeping operations and in the negotiation of peace agreements. It also called for the greater inclusion of women in peace operations, and called upon all parties to armed conflict to find ways to protect women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence during conflict (United Nations 2000).

Another international institution, the World Bank, was created after the Second World War to provide financial assistance to help in the postwar reconstruction of European countries, then later shifted its focus to development programs within the global South. The World Bank is also one of the international financial institutions that, along with the IMF and the WTO, has been targeted by antiglobalization activists for protests since the late 1990s. The World Bank has issued a variety of studies in which it insists that gender plays an important role in economic growth, poverty reduction, and development. In a 2002 report, the Bank writes: "Gender equality is a matter of development effectiveness, not just a matter of political correctness or kindness to women" (World Bank 2002, 1).

Even state leaders increasingly invoke discussions of gender, or at least women, when explaining or justifying foreign-policy decisions. US President George W. Bush, for example, has done this numerous times during his term of office, in particular when discussing the US-led interventions into both Afghanistan in 2001

after the attacks on the United States and then Iraq in 2003 in search of weapons of mass destruction. On Afghanistan, Bush (2002*b*) commented that "the Taliban used violence and fear to deny Afghan women access to education, health care, mobility and the right to vote. Our coalition has liberated Afghanistan and restored fundamental human rights and freedoms to Afghan women..." The US intervention, in short, had not only sought to address the sources of terrorist attacks against the United States; it had made women's lives better in Afghanistan. Bush (2002*a*) made the same promise when it came to Iraq: Saddam Hussein, he said, had ordered the systematic rape of the wives and mothers of political opponents, and a US intervention would bring an end to both the Hussein regime and these kinds of practices.

Thus, although feminist interventions into the field of international relations are relatively recent, and sometimes resisted by scholars of international relations, they seem to have had an impact on the way in which many of the formal actors in international relations—like the UN, the World Bank, and even the President of the United States—think through, and use, notions of gender. The question for many feminists, however, is *how* these actors use gender, and there is considerable concern and suspicion about the ends to which such discussions are aimed.

Krista Hunt (2002; Hunt and Rygiel 2006), for example, points out that the sudden interest of the United States, and the West, in the plight of Afghan women after the 11 September attacks on the United States was, at best, suspicious. There had long been information available about the systematic abuse of women in Afghanistan—much of it raised by the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan—which until 11 September had been largely ignored by Western governments and the international media. For Hunt, this meant not only that women's bodies were being "written" in a way that justified particular forms of military response, but, moreover, that the enormous impact on women that resulted from that military response was rendered, if not invisible, at least "justified."

Mainstream uses of gender, in fact, regularly seem intended to justify or accommodate existing policies or practices, not to transform them. When organizations like the UN or World Bank focus on gender, their concern is often increasing the efficiency of existing policies. Anne Orford (2002, 281; 2003) writes that, when used in this way, "a 'gender perspective' can be mapped onto existing ways of doing business" without questioning the bases of that business in the first place. The UN Security Council Resolution on women, peace, and security, for example, does not seek to alter militarized responses to conflict but asks only that the impact of conflict on women and girls receive greater attention and that women have greater opportunities to participate in formal peace-building and peacemaking processes. As noted above, for the World Bank, the relationship between gender and development is relatively straightforward: Gender equality increases economic efficiency and productivity, two goals that the Bank seeks to achieve.

Increased efficiency is a common argument used by international actors when discussing gender, and regularly both feminist activists and international

bureaucrats use this kind of language when making the case for or speaking to the advantages of gender mainstreaming. As one nongovernmental organization brief argues regarding peacekeeping, "gender mainstreaming is possible and can improve the effectiveness of operations" (International Alert 2002, 1). This approach has several consequences, the most important of which is that it turns a critical term such as "gender" into an instrument for problem-solving goals (Whitworth 2004, 120). Once the purpose of using gender becomes helping international actors become more effective in their work, a whole series of questions are ruled out of bounds; for example, whether institutions like the UN or World Bank are engaged in imperial practices through their aid-giving practices, their peace operations, and their humanitarian interventions. When used in this way, gender does not transform what mainstream international actors do; rather the use to which it is put is to contribute to helping these institutions "do better" what they already do. A focus on power is thus eliminated and the term gender is depoliticized.

3 If not International Institutions, Who?

The argument thus far has been that global institutions like the UN or World Bank regularly use the term gender, but do not actually understand gender in the way feminists intended. If this group of international actors use gender but do not understand it, who does? Disturbingly, one set of actors that does seem to understand gender as a site around which power is constituted is the military intelligence people who conduct interrogations at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay. *They* understand gender. Those who planned the sexual torture and humiliation techniques used against prisoners understand that we can discover (and in their cases, manipulate) the deeply felt expectations associated with prevailing conceptions of masculinity. The interrogations involved a systematic assault on conceptions of appropriately masculine behavior: smearing fake menstrual blood on prisoner's faces, forcing them to masturbate or simulate and/or perform oral and anal sex on one another, to disrobe in one another's presence, to touch one another, to touch women, and to be photographed in these and other positions (Highman and Stephens 2004). It is a racist and heterosexist understanding of masculinity, to be sure, but it is one that "understands" gender. Alarmingly, the people who interrogated prisoners at Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib probably never use the term gender, but they do understand it.

Zillah Eisenstein (2004) has written of the "gender confusions" at Abu Ghraib. She means by this the ways in which gender swapping (the sexual torture and

humiliation of Muslim men perpetrated by white American women) and the gender confusions associated with it were used as a cover for hyperimperialist masculinity.[6] But it is important to be clear that gender confusion should not signal that those who used these torture techniques were confused about what they were doing. As many feminists have argued, militaries have long been in the business of manipulating gender. The creation of soldiers has always involved rituals and myths that focus on messages about masculinity, manliness, race, and belonging. Soldiers in most national militaries are constituted through often violently misogynist, racist, and homophobic messages delivered through basic training, initiation, and indoctrination exercises. As Judith Stiehm (1989, 226) has written, "all militaries have ... regularly been rooted in the psychological coercion of young men through appeals to their (uncertain) manliness." What militaries do is replace that uncertainty with a hegemonic representation of idealized norms of masculinity that privilege the tough, stoic, emotionless warrior, capable and willing to employ violence to achieve whatever ends he may be ordered into. Militaries work hard to fix the identities of young men in these terms, and have worked equally hard to deny the fragility of this construction (Whitworth 2004, 172). That militaries are also quite capable of manipulating the fragilities and uncertainties of masculinity, to play into sexist, racialized, and heterosexist fears to disrupt the norms of masculinity is another component of the production of militarized men in a globalized world.

The observation that militaries and military intelligence interrogators better understand gender than apparently more benign neoliberal institutions like the UN or World Bank should cause some concern. Feminists could despair that the only actors who seem to understand gender are militaries, and that their understanding is used to accomplish violent, racist, and imperialist ends. But appreciating the ways in which militaries understand gender might also point us in the direction of trying to uncover why organizations like the UN or World Bank so persistently refuse to understand it, and indeed persistently circulate depoliticized visions of gender as part of the "lifeways" of contemporary global politics. What militaries understand is that relations of power work through gender. This is the very idea that liberal institutions such as the UN or World Bank actively resist—gender in this context is a variable ("women") that may impact and be impacted on by events in global politics and policies pursued by these institutions. Women and men may be impacted on by those events or policies in unequal ways, but recognizing this does not see "gender" as the constitution of relations of power through exclusions and privileges associated with masculinity and femininity, the very point that feminists have tried to make in using the term gender.

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[6] For further feminist discussions of Abu Ghraib see articles by Melanie Richter-Montpetit (2007), Liz Philipose (2007), and Laura Sjoberg (2007) in a special section of *International Feminist Journal of Politics* entitled "Feminist readings on Abu Ghraib" (Enloe 2007b).

Militaries understand gender as relations of power in part because, within the current era of globalization, what Arundhati Roy (2004) calls the "new imperialism," militaries are the only actors who deal in power in its most explicitly and openly violent forms. There is no contradiction for militaries openly to embrace violence and at the same time clearly "understand" gender as relations of power (even if they may never openly acknowledge that understanding). But such a position would be fundamentally contradictory for institutions and organizations like the UN or the World Bank that exercise power in much more subtle and less explicitly and openly violent forms. Representations of otherwise critical ideas like gender as depoliticized is necessary because it is the only approach that is not, for liberal institutions, contradictory. Seeing gender means seeing power—this is something that militaries have long relied on in the creation of soldiers but that liberal institutions have ignored through their conceptions of power as largely benign. For liberal institutions, truly understanding gender would require, in their case, transformation; for militaries, it is already in keeping with existing practices. Clearly one further way in which feminist activists will remain focused will be to push for precisely this kind of transformation, so that militaries do not hold a monopoly on the global circulation of ideas about gender that understand it as one of the means through which power is constituted, and that neoliberal institutions do not continue to make this relationship invisible through its circulation of understandings about gender that reduce it to simply a "variable."

4 CONCLUSIONS

As Enloe (2001, 111) has observed, "A funny thing has happened on the way to international political consciousness: 'gender' has become a safe idea." What Enloe is flagging in this statement is that the consequence of using "gender" without simultaneously exploring relations of power and inequality deprives us of some of the most important insights feminist thinking has to offer international relations (see also Sjoberg 2007). It is in its concern with power that feminism most "shares" a focus with scholars of international relations, but what should be clear from this chapter is that the way power is analyzed by feminists is dramatically different from most traditional international relations scholarship. What should also be clear from the above analysis is that feminist thinking was never intended to be "safe"—it has opened up new questions and new ways of looking at global politics that were supposed to make traditional analysts and observers rethink and unpack taken-for-granted assumptions about international relations. Feminism is supposed to make us uncomfortable, but by doing so its aim is to promote critical engagement with

very difficult contemporary political issues, and, more than this, to motivate and inspire us to act upon those issues.

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