



Gender issues

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READER'S GUIDE

This chapter asks why feminist scholarship and gender issues have come so late to the study of international politics, and suggests how asking feminist questions might make a difference. It then identifies different kinds of feminism, and traces the shifting debates about gender relations and sexual difference. The rest of the chapter explores a gender analysis of several aspects of globalization: deregulation and structural adjustment politics, the changing international division of labour and the 'export' of women workers; rising identity politics, and in particular the uses nationalisms make of women, and women's different responses to nationalism; and the ways women's transnational alliances and international conferences have globalized gender issues.

Introduction

International Relations has long been taught and theorized as if women were invisible: as if either there were no women in world politics, which was only men's business; or as if women and men were active in and affected by world politics in the same ways, in which case there would be no need to 'gender'

the analysis. Now feminist scholarship is visible, if still marginal, and women's and gender issues are the focus of transnational politics. Both feminist understandings and women's organizing provide us with perspectives that contribute a more inclusive view of globalization.

Gendering international politics

Feminist international politics

Feminist scholarship is often strongly resisted by academic gatekeepers, for it reveals the partial and gendered nature of intellectual work which is built on (elite?) men's experiences. But feminism has come even later to International Relations, one of the most masculinist of the social sciences. Suggested explanations include that the discipline is male-dominated, and so more likely to reflect men's interests and fears; and that the way the discipline constructs its subject matter makes most people, including almost all women, disappear. Its focus on the 'high politics' of diplomacy, war, and statecraft called up a world of statesmen and soldiers, who were assumed to be male. Even when international political economy became a concern, this often took the form of analysis of relations between states and markets, or of structures of domination and exploitation. In either case, **gender relations** were rarely considered a necessary part of the analysis.

The intellectual field, or territory, further disguised women and gender relations through its distinction between the domestic or the inside of states, and the international or the in-between of states. In the process differences within states, including gender differences, were relegated away from its interest, and left to other disciplines like Political Science and Sociology. At the same time, world politics was often characterized in terms of conflict, competition, security (defined as military security), and power (demonstrated through the threat or use of force), drawing on a particular notion of human nature that was **gendered**, and also perhaps class and culture specific.

But many women have written on and thought about war and peace. The discipline of International Relations was established in 1919 in the wake of World War I, in the hope that there should never again be such a war. However, it ignored the critiques of women organizing for peace, including those who had held the Hague peace conference in 1915, in the midst of that war, and who opposed the punishing conditions imposed on Germany at its conclusion

on the grounds that it would spread poverty, disease, and enmity through Europe, and generate further conflict (which it did). This is why feminists are concerned to ask whose experiences are being taken seriously? Whose understandings of politics, including international politics, become the material for theorizing about, and acting in, 'the world'?

Where are women in global politics?

Feminist questions unsettle assumptions which reflect only (some) men's experiences. In an early feminist intervention in the discipline, Cynthia Enloe asked the question: 'Where are the women?' (1989). She found that women often were there, even where we might not expect them: keeping a military base going, for example, or as the majority of workers in export-processing zones.

Asking the question 'Where are the women?' can suggest different kinds of answers. For some, it leads to 'the famous few'—to name Indira Gandhi, Margaret Thatcher, or Golda Meir, for example. These particular women were strong leaders who showed no hesitation to use force in international conflicts. This led some to say that the only difference between men and women is that women are so rarely in power; if they are, they behave like men. Others argue that in national and world politics, only those who play the main game well will succeed. It may show more about contemporary politics as **masculinist**, than about whether women and men are 'different'. So, too, men who appear compassionate or seek to negotiate away from conflict may be accused of being wimps, 'women', or girls.

Others use the question 'Where are the women?' to identify places where women are not, because they are women. Until very recently, and still in many states, women were prohibited from combat roles, which in turn made it impossible for them to rise to commanding levels in their state's armed forces. But not just any man is seen as a soldier. The fierce debates over whether gay men should be

allowed to serve are similar to those used against women soldiers: that they may break down under fire, or threaten group cohesion. Here military service is associated with men, and with certain kinds of masculinity.

Asking 'Where are the women?' reveals women in places where, otherwise, we might not look for them. Feminists take women seriously as knowledge-makers about the world. This means seeking to learn from their experiences of politics and global processes. Women are often under-represented in formal politics, as heads of state or parliamentary representatives or executive bureaucrats for example, though in the Scandinavian states, they are now close to equal (see Fig. 27.1). Women are more likely to organize in other politics, in social movements, and in non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for example. Through these politics, women were actors in global politics long before they were noticed in the study of International Relations.

Discovering gender

Asking 'Where are the women?' usually reveals women in different roles, for example, different relations to the military, or the market, compared with men. When we find women, we find gender relations. So war stories from very different states tell of brave soldier men, the protectors, and the women they protect, who wait, and weep, and have more sons for the killing (Elshtain 1987). These stories construct men as the agents of the state or nation, and women as passive, regardless of what actual men and women are doing. These constructions in turn place pressure on peaceful or unwilling men to fight, to protect 'women and children'. They disguise some women's active support of or participation in wars, including as warriors. And they force conditions of dependence on women, who are expected to be grateful for this protection, even when they do not wish it.

The gendered war script is not an exception. The citizen is often presumed to be male, with public responsibilities, while women are relegated into the

family, the domestic world. In foundation stories in political theory, women were also relegated away from the world of reason to one of emotions and passions, making them unreliable citizens, and even dangerous to men. The public/private split coincides with other splits, like reason/emotion, mind/body, and male/female. These are gendered divisions: they associate certain kinds of character or behaviour with a particular gender. The 'male' side of the dichotomy is usually given more value, and privileged, while the female side is devalued. In the process, 'gender' becomes both relational and a power relationship.

Feminism makes several very important strategic claims here. The first is that women's experiences are systematically different from men's, even from men of their own family or group. Another is that all social relations are gendered; so we experience our class, or race, for example, in gendered forms. We do not experience our gender alone, or in isolation from other social identities, including for example whether we are citizens, where we live, or our age. And gender is constitutive of other social relations. This reveals as partial those representations of social relations including global politics that appear gender-neutral, but on closer examination turn out to universalize (elite) men's experiences and knowledge.

Key points

- Gender analysis and feminism came late to International Relations.
- Women's experiences of and ideas about world politics were rarely admitted to the discipline.
- Asking the question 'Where are the women?' makes women visible in world politics.
- Making women visible also reveals gender relations as power relations.
- Feminism claims that women's experiences are systematically different from men's and that all social relations are gendered.

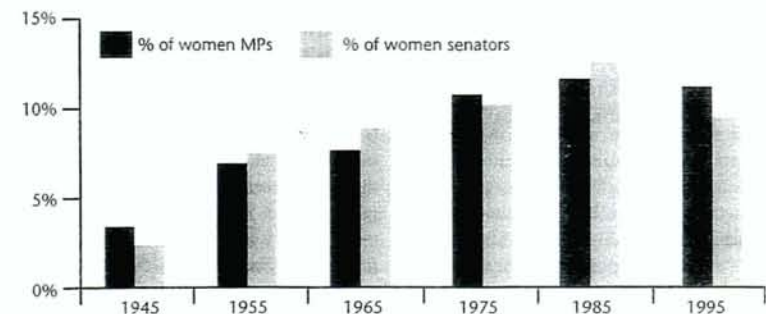
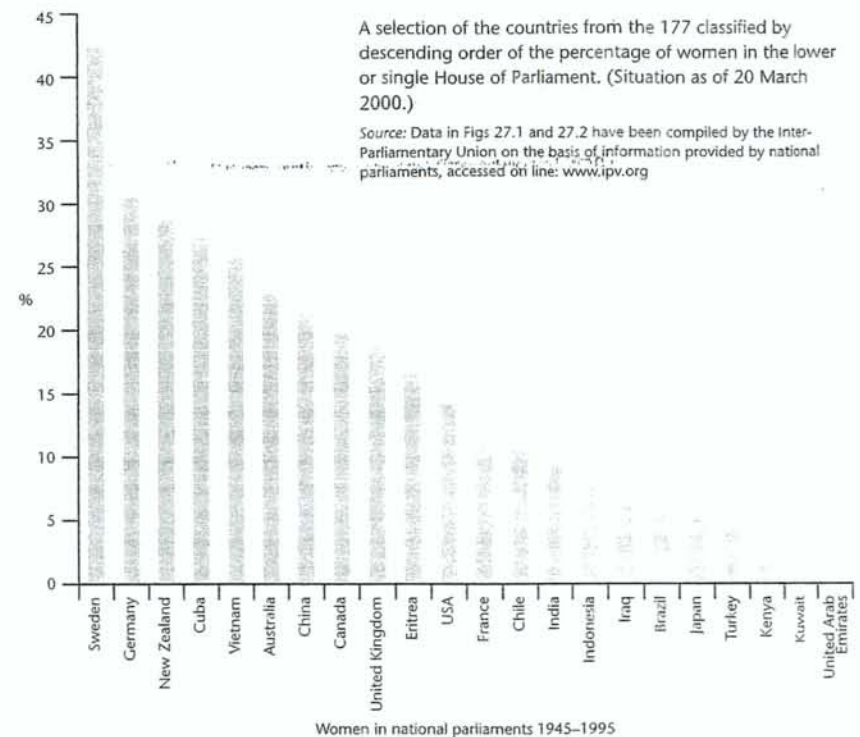


Fig. 27.1 Women's political participation

Sources: *New Internationalist*, April 1995, and *World Government Directory*, 1994.

Feminisms

Feminism is often identified as Western. There is a very complicated politics here about who names feminism, and whether other women's struggles for equal rights can be called feminist, even if they themselves do not use that name. But it is not true that either feminism or women's rights movements were only or largely of Western origin. So in a number of Asian and Middle Eastern colonies, 'the woman question' arose in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, alongside or in connection with early anti-colonial nationalism. These early feminists were familiar with suffrage struggles in other places, and some travelled to participate in international conferences.

The politics of feminism

Second-wave feminism came to prominence in a number of Western states in the 1970s, alongside or in uneasy relations with other social movements for a more inclusive citizenship and social rights. Feminism had a rather different relation to socialist states, whose treatment of women as workers and their support for women working outside the home allowed state leaders to declare that they had solved the woman question. That has made post-cold war feminist organizing in these states very difficult, both because of the association of women's rights language with state socialism, and because the rush to marketization and deregulation of their economies swept away many of the gains that had led socialist state women to see Western feminists as 'coming from behind'. This helps explain the declining numbers of women in parliamentary politics in East European states. Generalizing to 'Third World' states is even more difficult, given the variety of pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial experiences to include.

We might describe feminism as a **political project** to understand and, therefore, to change women's inequality, exploitation, or oppression. But any generalizations about feminist politics globally are made even more difficult by the **differences** within femi-

nism, within and between states. First-wave feminism was concerned with suffrage, with women's legal and civil rights, including their rights to education. Many of these early feminists were active in other politics—as socialists, or anti-colonial nationalists, or pacifists for example. So too second-wave feminists had very different politics, that affected their understanding of sexual difference, for example, their views on the possibility of alliances with progressive men. In the 1970s and 1980s, these differences were often summed up under labels of liberal, radical, and socialist feminist. While many feminists are not easily put under one label, and the lines of difference and alliance shift over time and place, the differences between them are important for thinking about gender, and about strategies necessary to overcome gender inequality or oppression.

Very broadly, **liberal feminists** are equality feminists, seeking an end to women's exclusion from or under-representation in office, power, and employment. They seek women's equal rights in the military, including in combat, for they see women's 'protection' as a way of keeping them from power, and their dependence on men as compromising their claims to full citizenship, which is usually understood to include fighting for one's country.

Other feminists are critical of liberal feminists as seeking equality in masculinist institutions on men's terms. In different ways, they seek to change the institutions themselves to be women-friendly. They disagree, however, on what lies at the heart of the problem. So **radical feminists** see women's subordination as universal, though taking different forms at different times. Some argue women are a sex-class, systematically and everywhere subject to men's sex-right, or their claims for access to their bodies, children, and labour. Violence against women is seen as key to keeping women resourceless and 'in their place'. They also draw attention to sexuality as politics.

Cultural feminists include those who see women as different from men, more nurturing and peaceable for example. They do not reject 'women's values', as

liberal feminists do, but they argue that these values are just what world politics, and ecology, now need. Some cultural feminists are accused of essentialism, of representing these values as naturally women's, and so reinforcing the gendered stereotypes that underpin women's oppression. Others see women's values more as learned skills, as women are almost always those responsible for the care of children, health and community. They argue that men, too, can learn to nurture.

Socialist feminists put together class and gender, finding that a class analysis alone leaves out much that women experience. It cannot explain why women are those responsible for reproductive and family labour, why women are so over-represented among the poor, or why gender inequities, often reinforced by violence against women, continue even where women are integrated into the workforce.

These classic lines of difference in feminism are less clear these days, and are now supplemented by naming other feminisms. So in the 1980s **black** and '**Third World**' feminists accused white feminists of ignoring race, culture, and colonial relations as also affecting women. These locate white women in ambiguous ways, as oppressed in relation to gender and perhaps class, but privileged by their membership of the dominant race and/or culture, and by citizenship rights in rich countries. However, geographic location or social identity cannot predict a person's politics. Some Third World feminists are liberal feminists, seeking admission to their state or profession on equal terms with men, while others are socialist or left feminists who are concerned to build alliances across class lines between elite and poorer women, for example. Some white feminists also pursue anti-racist theories and politics.

Developments within feminism in recent years have shifted both theory and practical politics, for example, **post-modern feminists** have added to growing recognition of differences between women. These shifts have unsettled the category 'woman', raising issues about who speaks for 'women'. Whose experiences as women are not reflected in feminist knowledge-making and politicking? There is an ongoing tension in much feminism between equality and difference claims; between trying to build up the category woman for political purposes; while try-

ing to tear it down in the face of its use against women (Snitow 1989). This is made even more difficult in these times of growing right-wing and fundamentalist movements, which seek to discredit feminism and attack women's rights.

Sex and gender

Different feminisms, then, have different views on gender relations, and how to change them so they do not routinely count against women. The conversations and sometimes conflicts between these feminisms have taken us further in understanding gender relations and sexual difference. Jane Flax asks 'how do we think, or do not think or avoid thinking about gender' (1987). Just because gender is not made visible in many accounts of the world or our lives does not mean that it is absent. What then does a gender analysis contribute to our understanding of international and increasingly globalized politics?

Gender is often used as a code word for women. This does draw our attention to the ways in which dominant groups can normalize or naturalize their own identities—they name others while remaining themselves unnamed. But of course men have gender too, just as white people are also 'raced', and dominant culture members have culture.

An important early second-wave feminist intervention made a distinction between sex and gender. Sex was seen as biology: we are born male or female. Gender was seen as a social construction: what it means to be male or female in any particular place or time. This distinction was politically very important, for women have been badly done by biology, in its explanations of their inequality or extra burdens as natural, an inevitable extension of their child-bearing difference. It built on the fact that while women's work appeared to be universal, just what that work involved, and how sexual difference was understood, varied from society to society, group to group, and over time (see Box 27.1). More recently, Men's Studies have explored the social construction of masculinities.

The distinction between sex and gender made room for a feminist project—for if gender is a social construction, it can be changed. It has also enabled us to explore different meanings of gender. Gender is

Box 27.1 Women's work

Much work in society goes unrecognized and unvalued—work in the household and in the community. And most of it is done by women.

Human Development Report 1995 estimated that, in addition to the \$23 trillion in recorded world output in 1993, household and community work accounts for another \$16 trillion. And women contribute \$11 trillion of this invisible output.

In most countries women do more work than men. In Japan women's work burden is about 7% higher than men's, in Austria 11% higher and in Italy 28% higher. Women in developing countries tend to carry an even larger share of the workload than those in industrial countries—on average about 13% higher than men's share, and in rural areas 20% higher. In rural Kenya women do 35% more work than men.

In some countries women's work burden is extreme. Indian women work 69 hours a week, while men work 59. Nepalese women work about 77 hours, men 56. Moldova women work about 74 hours a week, and in Kyrgyzstan more than 76 hours.

Human Development Report, 1996.

as performance, suggests that we select and negotiate our ways through social possibilities and expectations. Gender as process reminds us that gender never just is, but rather that much work goes into its reproduction. Some feminists fault gender constructionists who continue to use the sex–gender distinction, for reinforcing yet another dichotomy nature and nurture—and for treating the body as a neutral 'thing' on which gender difference is written. They find it more productive to think about sexual difference, and stress embodiment—that our first place of location is our body. By drawing attention to bodies, they say, attention is inevitably drawn to sexual difference.

Women's politics and contests around gender, though still anchored often in local and particular sexual politics, are now increasingly globalized. These politics are a response to the gendered impact of globalization, and also take advantage of the opportunities for communication and organization transnationally that globalization offers. The rest of this chapter will pursue the changing international sexual division of labour, crises of the state in the face of globalization and restructuring, and rising identity conflicts. It will conclude by looking at women's politics, which are also being globalized.

Key points

- Feminism is not restricted to Western states.
- Contemporary feminisms are diverse in their understandings of the difference gender makes, and how to stop this difference from counting against women.
- Since the early 1980s, the issue of differences between women has become visible in feminist politics.
- Women's rights are not being progressively achieved. Today there is a global-wide backlash against women's rights.

a personal identity—how do I experience being a woman? a social identity—what do others expect of me, as a woman? and a power relation—why are women as a social category almost always under-represented in relations of power? Gender is political—it is contested, by men and women who regularly subvert, challenge, or bolster gender difference, at home or in other places, by feminists who seek women's liberation, and by anti-feminists, who seek to take back what women have won through struggle. Gender may be the basis for a mobilized political identity—of which 'feminist' is one. So too is the Australian anti-feminist women's group called Women Who Want to be Women.

Lately, some feminists have developed more fluid representations of gender. 'Doing gender', or gender

Gender in the global political economy

Until recently, women and gender relations rarely appeared in studies of the international political economy (IPE). An exception was development studies (though these often remained separate from IPE). From 1970, feminist critiques and women's NGOs made visible the ways in which development planners overlooked women, including their roles as workers, owners, and entrepreneurs, as well as in subsistence and family production. They pointed out both that women were differently affected by development, often losing access to land and resources, and expected to take on additional work; and that the outcomes of development policies were affected by already existing gender relations, including local notions of what was women's work.

Women in development

The international Decade for Women (1976–85) generated a huge amount of material on women's lives, and the discriminations they faced. It also documented the gendered effects of development, and provided a base for the themes of peace, justice, development—which came out of the third women's conference in Nairobi in 1985. In the process, it supported a new field, known as **Women in Development (WID)**.

There are very different approaches to WID, including between liberal feminists who seek to integrate women more equally into development, and other feminists who see development, currently defined, as damaging to women. They seek the empowerment of women, including through participation in development decisions that affect their own lives and choices.

Not all women are poor, in the 'Third World' or elsewhere. But no state treats its women as well as its men. Some years ago, it was said that women did one third of the paid work, two thirds of the productive work, for one tenth of the income and less than one hundredth of the property. Now it is likely that the figures are even more against women.

The Human Development Index (HDI) is based on

three measures: life expectancy at birth, educational attainment, and standard of living. The Gender Development Index (GDI) measures these too, but adjusts for the disparity between women and men in each case. The Gender Empowerment Index (GEM) measures relative empowerment between men and women in political and economic spheres, and in terms of political representation.

A series of global crises, in terms of trade dependence, debt, and restructuring, have hit women especially hard. The conditions imposed on states in return for loans include structural adjustment policies, deregulating finance, liberalizing trade, favouring export industries and reducing social services and public support, including food subsidies.

These policies are not restricted to poorer 'Third World' states. They are evident in former and some

Table 27.1 Gender disparity—GEM, GDI, and HDI rankings (1999)

| | GEM rank | GDI rank | HDI rank |
|----------------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Norway | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| Sweden | 2 | 5 | 6 |
| Denmark | 3 | 14 | 15 |
| Canada | 4 | 1 | 1 |
| Germany | 5 | 15 | 14 |
| United States | 8 | 3 | 3 |
| Australia | 9 | 4 | 7 |
| United Kingdom | 16 | 11 | 10 |
| South Africa | 18 | 84 | 101 |
| Cuba | 21 | 53 | 58 |
| Mexico | 33 | 48 | 50 |
| Japan | 38 | 8 | 4 |
| China | 40 | 79 | 98 |
| Indonesia | 71 | 88 | 105 |
| Kuwait | 72 | 35 | 35 |
| Bangladesh | 83 | 123 | 150 |
| Turkey | 85 | 73 | 86 |
| United Arab Emirates | 96 | 45 | 43 |
| Pakistan | 101 | 116 | 138 |

Source: United Nations Human Development Report 1999

existing communist states, where marketization has similar effects, including removing state provision of many services that supported working women. They are reshaping Western states, too, as their governments give up on much economic regulation and cut back on social security and public enterprise.

These dramatic changes are part of the globalization of production and of 'the market'. Within states, they represent a dramatic shift from public to private expenditure, and from state to family, especially women's, responsibilities. We live in times of high unemployment, polarizing wealth within and between states, reducing state provision and growing impoverishment. These are gendered in their effects. **First**, cut-backs in state services like health, education, and social security especially affect women's employment opportunities. **Second**, women are everywhere overwhelmingly responsible for family and household maintenance, and must compensate through their own time and labour when (often inadequate) state support is reduced or removed. **Third**, the cost of globalization is not evenly spread: the 'feminization of poverty' refers to the growing proportion, as well as numbers, of women and their children living in poverty. This is in part a reflection of the worldwide trend, so that now between a third and a half of all families do not have a male breadwinner. The gendered effects of restructuring, then, amount to a massive crisis in reproduction. This has led UNICEF to identify an invisible adjustment, which is women's responsibility, largely unaided by those who allocate resources and wealth elsewhere.

The changing international division of labour

Fourth, the changing international division of labour is gendered. Transnational corporations go on the global prowl for cheap labour, which often means women's labour (Enloe 1992). Especially since the 1980s, increasingly competitive trading and labour deregulation in many states has accompanied the rise of a largely female marginalized workforce, with a core of skilled and professional workers who are mainly male.

Women are concentrated in poorly paid work, including part-time and outwork. This partly reflects

many women's juggling between their domestic and their paid work. But it also reflects the construction of women workers as cheap labour—or, more accurately, as 'labour made cheap'. In many different cultures and states, women's labour is seen to be temporary, filling in before marriage, or supplementing husbands' income. At the same time, they are seen as 'naturally' good with their hands, patient and docile, and so particularly fitted to do work which men would not tolerate. Assumptions about women's work means that it is often classified as unskilled, even where, like sewing, it is seen as skilled if men do it. In these ways, particular constructions of femininity enter into the organization of work, and shape its status and rewards. So women are now the vast majority of workers on the global assembly line, in factories and in export processing zones, where their gender and often their youth help keep wages down.

The export of women

Women or girls come from rural areas into the towns or cities, into export processing zones or to military base servicing areas, or cross state borders in search of work. They may be their family's only income earner. This in turn unsettles gender relations, and gives those women experiences which range from liberating to extremely exploitative or downright dangerous.

Where once the labour migrant was presumed to be male (and often was), now about half of all those outside their country of birth are women. In some particular migrant labour flows, women are in the overwhelming majority. Many are domestic workers and child carers. They are part of a **global flow** of women from poorer states to wealthier ones, from Indonesia, Sri Lanka and the Philippines to Japan, Hong Kong, and oil-rich Middle East states (see Box 27.2), and from Central and South American states into the United States. This labour migration was largely unnoticed until the Gulf War revealed some 400,000 Asian women workers in Kuwait and a further 100,000 in Iraq. There are between 1 and 1.7 million women in the domestic worker trade from South and South-East Asia alone. This trade reinforces the assumption that it is women who are

Box 27.2 The export of women from Indonesia

- According to the International Labour Organization legal labour migration from Indonesia rose from 5,000 during the 1969–74 period to about 650,000 in the 1989–94 period. 62.8% went to Saudi Arabia, 19.4% went to Malaysia and 6.3% went to Singapore.
- Illegal labour migration is reliably thought to add at least another 500,000 to this number. Wages payable to illegal workers are estimated at one-half the wages payable to registered migrant workers.
- During the 1984–94 period two-thirds of these migrant workers were women working in domestic services. Women leave high rates of unemployment and poverty in rural Indonesia in search of wages to support themselves and their families.
- The Asian economic crisis of the late 1990s worsened the situation for Indonesian women as unemployment and lowered wages meant many had to seek work in the informal sector and many were forced into prostitution. In times of economic crisis women are often the first to lose work.

International Labour Organization, 1998, Emigration Pressures & Structural Change: Case Study of Indonesia.)

responsible for domestic labour, even where that labour is paid for and releases other women to go into paid work.

This **traffic in women** is big business. Recruitment agencies, banks, and airlines profit from it. So do the exporting states, in the form of remittances, for example, an estimated \$3 billion per year to the Philippines. This trade contributes to those states' search for hard currency in the face of growing debt pressures, and relieves unemployment at home. It is therefore unlikely that the home state will act strongly in support of their citizens' rights when women are subject to abuse in other states; though another factor is their own poor record in labour and women's rights.

This trade in women reflects power and wealth relations globally. Those South-East Asian states exporting domestic workers had an average annual income in 1992 of \$680, while those importing

women had an average income of \$10,376. It also has implications for states' standing, as some states become associated with servant status. In a further complication, the gendered representations of national difference reinforce earlier colonial and racist images of South-East Asian women as exotic and sexually available. In this way, the export of domestic workers is not so different from the international purchase of 'mail-order brides', and the international sex tourist industry. Women's organizations work transnationally to publicize the dangers in all these forms of trafficking in women, and to support the women caught up in these traffics.

Other forms of labour migration are not so obviously sexualized, though they may also involve exploitative working conditions and insecure rights in relation to both work and residence or citizenship. Many migrants move to and take up work in older industrial cities in Western states, and do work in clothing, textiles, electronics, and information services for example not so different from that which women do in some 'Third World' states. In conditions of urban decay, high unemployment, and cut-backs in public expenditure and services, migrants can easily become scapegoats for other people's troubles. In this way, globalization and migration become targets in politics against 'outsiders'. **Racism** marks the boundaries of national belonging, and immigration and citizenship become major political issues. In these circumstances, those who are seen as different often organize in defence of their own rights, and may use their perceived difference as a basis for organizing. Instead of reducing differences between people, these aspects of globalization appear to heighten difference and intolerance.

Key points

- Feminist critiques, women's NGOs and the Decade for Women helped generate 'Women in Development' (WID).
- WID includes very different approaches to gender and development.
- Recent crises associated with intensifying globalization and restructuring impact on women in particular, generating a crisis in reproduction.

- The 'export of women' is big business, and also contributes significantly through remittances to poorer states' economies.

- Migrants and foreign workers are often scapegoated for rising unemployment and social distress.

Gender and nationalism

While we do now live in 'the world as a whole' for some purposes, we also live in a world where difference and particular political identities are as important as ever—perhaps more so. This can be seen in the resurgence of nationalisms and ethno-nationalisms and the rise of revivalist or fundamentalist religious politics globally. These identity politics usually call for a return to an imagined past. Women's roles and gender relations are a key element in the construction of the past and in the political mobilization of these identities.

Where the nation is feminized, men are the responsible protectors. But women have obligations to the nation, too. Here we can trace a move from **nation-as-woman** to women as **mothers-of-the-nation**. This symbolic use of women and their confinement within roles as mothers can mean the policing of their bodies and behaviour, especially in wartime or in times of heightened identity conflicts.

Women and nationalism

Women are seen as the physical **reproducers** of the nation: they are 'nationalist wombs' (Enloe 1989). This makes it important that women have the right children, with the right men. They are also seen as social reproducers and cultural transmitters, bringing up their children as Palestinian for example, even—or especially—if they do not have a state of their own. Women are also seen as **signifiers of difference**, marking the boundaries of belonging. For this reason, much importance is attached to women's clothing and movements, especially their relations with those outside the nation. Beyond the symbolic uses made of them, women are also agents in or against nationalist politics in their own right.

It is easier for women to mobilize in support of nationalist causes, if this cause is in power in their state or region. Some women do organize in movements that are dangerous for others, including other women. So there are many women supporters and some leaders of the Indian right-wing Hindu movement, and some of these women participated in violence against Muslim women and children. Many Serbian women supported the Serbian nationalist project, which involved systematic violence against women as part of 'ethnic cleansing'.

Box 27.3 Women at the peace table

In conflict and war women bear great responsibility for the physical, educational, and economic well-being of their families, for caring for the wounded, for maintaining the national economy. They have also been increasingly targeted as weapons of war as they are raped, forced into marriage, abducted, and attacked. However women are not invited to the tense and delicate negotiations for peace. Indeed the culture of militarism so present during conflict tends to reinforce gender-based discrimination. In spite of resistance to their participation women are developing strategies for their voices to be heard at the peace-table. They form community groups and non-government organizations that campaign and lobby the peace process and international forums. Their strategies have been creative—in the Philippines women initiated peace zones to protect their children from recruitment by the militias and the army.

Women often take the lead in developing grass-roots movements to bring about peace because the men are away fighting. In Northern Ireland issues such as child-care, education, health, and micro-enterprise brought women together—Catholic and Protestant—to co-operate in resolving shared problems. It was from here that women came to launch a powerful campaign to bring about peace and be included in the peace process. The numerous grass-roots women's organizations came together to politicize and form the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition.

Sustaining peace requires commitment from people at the grass roots, it is they who must build lasting reconciliation and peace. The involvement of women in peace negotiations leads to ensuring a peace agreement that builds lasting peace at all levels.

(United Nations Development Fund for Women),
2000, *Women at the Peace Table*.

Gendered nationalism

Since the end of the cold war, there has been an upsurge in identity conflicts. **Nationalism** is unsettling the presumed coincidence of nation and state. While in the past nationalism was more associated with progressive politics, for example in anti-colonial nationalism, nowadays it is often cast in exclusivist terms against 'the other'. In the process, women get caught up in nationalist politics in different ways, and identity politics come to impact on gender relations.

The language of nationalism is **familial language**—home, blood, kin. The state is often imagined as male, and the nation as female. The nation is often represented as a woman under threat of violation or domination, so that her citizen-sons must fight for her honour. The 'rape of Kuwait' told a typical story—of a feminized victim, with male villain and male hero fighting for her possession. These stories associate boundary transgression with sexual danger, and also associate proving manhood with nationalism and war. In these ways, regardless of what actual men and women are doing, men become the agents of nationalism and women passive or national possessions.

However, in some states women from dominant nationalist groups or states have organized in support for other women. Israeli **Women in Black** demonstrated in support of Palestinian women, and Belgrade feminists also demonstrated as **Women in Black** against Serbian nationalist aggression. These women have been subjected to much threat and sometimes violence, for their loyalty is supposed to be to their community, and not to women, or people more generally. At the same time, the idea of **Women in Black** has been taken up in many states experiencing nationalist violence, in expressions of solidarity with women across nationalist lines (see Box 27.3).

The high symbolic value attached to women in community conflicts makes them susceptible to attack from their own men, if they are seen as disloyal or rebellious. It also makes them especially vulnerable to attack from men on the other side, as a way of getting at their men. So mass rape in war and identity conflicts is not only war spoils. It is also a war strategy aimed at humiliating the enemy men by showing they are unable to protect their women.

War rape has a long history, though it is not usually regarded as political. So despite evidence of mass

rape and of military sexual slavery in World War II, these were not prosecuted as war crimes. The recent visibility of sexual violence as part of war, especially in terms of the former Yugoslavia, but also of the Korean and other South-East Asian women forcibly recruited in to Japanese military brothels in World War II, is partly due to feminist work within states, to name rape and other violence against women as crimes against women, not against the honour of men. It is also a sign of globalizing gender issues, especially in the form of women's rights' claims.

Key points

- Nationalism is usually called up in gendered language.
- Women get caught up in nationalist politics in their construction as mothers of the nation and as markers of difference.
- Women also participate in or oppose nationalist politics.
- Women's symbolic significance in nationalism makes them vulnerable to violence, including war rape.

Globalizing gender issues

Women organizing in the face of global processes and documenting the impact on women become players in new global politics.

Naming **gender-specific violence** against women has been part of women's transnational politics. Violence against women in their homes is the most common crime in the world. It knows no boundaries, in terms of class, culture, or nationality. Other kinds of violence against women vary by region or take culture-specific forms. There has been an increase in dowry-burnings in India; in many states there are still 'honour' crimes which see husbands, fathers, and brothers exempt from punishment after killing women whose behaviour the family opposes; female genital mutilation maims and often kills girl children and women in some North African states.

Transnational women's movements

In some states, women are subjected to bodily violence through forced contraception or abortion, as in the China one-child policy. Many poor, racialized, and minority women in Western states face discrimination and lack of care in terms of health and social choices. There is now an **international women's health movement**, which struggles with different state policies and practices, and different views within women's NGOs and outside them, over how to secure women's sexuality and reproductive rights. 'Third World' women point out that these must go beyond individual rights, to ensure enabling conditions to access choice, including maternal and child health more generally. The 1994 international conference on population and development in Cairo was crucial in mobilizing women and building regional and global linkages. But even rhetorical gains are at risk in these backlash days. And there is no easy unity or single political position on these issues among women either.

International women's conferences

International conferences and preparations for them have been especially important in globalizing women's issues, networks, and alliances. The first two women's conferences in 1975 and 1980 (see Box 27.3) witnessed conflicting priorities between First World and Third World women. By the Nairobi conference in 1985 there were alliances across these divides, and more evident splits among women from the same state or region, especially between state-sponsored women's organizations and more radical dissident or exiled women. But Nairobi did place women's issues on the international agenda, and generated webs of connection between women's NGOs across state borders.

In recent years, women's activism has impacted on other kinds of international conferences. At the 1992 Earth Summit for example women named gender as shaping relations with the **environment**, including women's primary responsibilities for fuel and water in much of the world. They also identified militarism as the cause of much environmental degradation. The 1993 Human Rights conference was even more significant in highlighting **women's rights** claims internationally. In the lead-up to the conference, a series of preparatory committees and regional women's NGO meetings made their concerns visible. The Bangkok (Asia-Pacific) regional forum identified **five priority issues** to take to Vienna. These were violence against women, the international traffic in women, rising fundamentalisms (which usually target women's rights), military rape as a crime, and women's reproductive rights.

Women's global political campaigns helped win the adoption of the UN General Assembly Declaration against Violence against Women in 1993. This represents a significant advance in global gender issues. It recognizes violence as gender-based, supported by structural conditions which include women's subordination, and calls on states to punish perpetrators of violence whether in public or private places. It rejects religion or culture as excuses to abuse or discriminate against women. There are still

Box 27.4 Globalizing gender issues through the UN system

| | |
|---------|---|
| 1946 | The Commission on the Status of Women |
| 1975 | International Women's Year |
| 1975 | Mexico Women's Conference |
| 1976–85 | UN Decade for Women |
| 1979 | UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women |
| 1980 | Copenhagen Women's Conference |
| 1985 | Nairobi Women's Conference |
| 1993 | Vienna Human Rights' Conference |
| 1993 | UN General Assembly Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women |
| 1994 | Cairo International Conference on Population and Development |
| 1995 | Beijing Women's Conference |

huge problems with implementation, but this declaration does politicize violence against women, and give states formal responsibility for the security of women.

Over 30,000 women attended the NGO forum at Huairoo, which ran parallel to the official fourth international women's conference in Beijing in 1995. In many states and in regional meetings, there was a process of consultation which culminated in the Platform for Action, which identified 12 crucial areas and strategies for pursuing them (see Fig. 27.2). The conference recognized the disproportionate costs to women of restructuring. It also witnessed reactions against women's rights which meant that much effort went into defending earlier gains. Of the themes of equality, development, and peace, the first took priority, though the NGO forum especially recognized the interconnections here.

Box 27.5 Women's global political campaigns

Women's global political campaigns include a number of conferences that have been significant in pursuing justice and equality for women. Women have called governments to account for their actions, using benchmarks such as the United Nations Declaration for Human Rights and various conventions. They have also used these forums to establish commitments from governments regarding their performance on gender justice. The most recent was the 1995 Beijing International Women's Conference. This established a Platform for Action (PFA) that commits the 189 signatory governments to certain targets and as such it also represents a set of compromises. The commitments include: closing the gender gap in primary and secondary education by 2005; women should have at least a 30 per cent share of decision-making positions.

To date (early 2000), only six countries have achieved approximate gender equality in secondary school enrolment plus at least a 30 per cent share for women of seats in parliament or legislatures plus an approximate share of nearly 50 per cent paid employment in non-agricultural sector activities.

The targets from the conferences focus on closing gender inequality in education and health, however the conferences failed to endorse targets related to women's poverty and economic inequality. It is hoped that these issues will be addressed in the next Platform of Action to be developed.

(UNIFEM (United Nations Development Fund for Women), Biennial Report 2000 (preview), *Progress of the World's Women*.)

Key points

- There are now different transnational women's movements, for example, for women's health and reproductive rights.
- International conferences, especially women's conferences, have been very important in building transnational women's networks, and in putting women's issues on the global agenda.

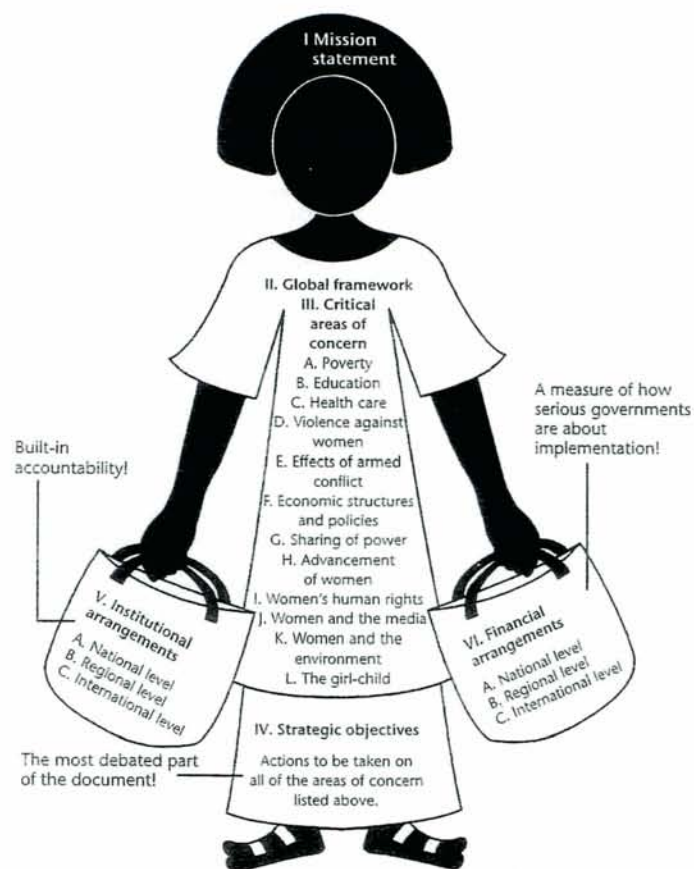


Fig. 27.2 Anatomy of the platform for action

Source: *The Tribune*, no. 54, August 1995.

- Recently, there has been a new visibility of women's rights claims.
- The Beijing conference is seen by some as an

example of global feminism in action, while for others it illustrated the difficulties facing women's rights struggles globally.

Conclusion

Gender is a relevant category for analysis in global politics. Globalization affects women somewhat differently from men, though how it does so also depends on women's other identities and interests. In times of intensifying globalization which affects everyone, the state is no longer either willing or able

to act in support of a global response. At the same time, both global restructuring and rising right-wing identity politics threaten hard-won gains, and in turn generate more women's activism. Now women are organizing transnationally, and gender issues are globalizing in the process.

QUESTIONS

- 1 Why did feminism come so late to International Relations?
- 2 What difference does it make to ask the question 'Where are the women?' about global politics?
- 3 What difference does it make being female, or male, in your experience?
- 4 What do you understand by gender?
- 5 What is feminism? What might different kinds of feminism contribute to our study of globalization?
- 6 What are the different approaches that are summed up under the label Women in Development?
- 7 What effects has globalization had on women, and on gender relations?
- 8 Why is there an increasing feminization of migrant labour, and of the global assembly line?
- 9 Are notions like the export of women, the global trade in women, or international traffic in women useful for tracking some global flows?
- 10 Discuss women's contradictory relations with nationalism.
- 11 Discuss the role of international conferences in putting women's rights on the global agenda.
- 12 Can we talk about global feminism, or transnational sisterhood?

GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

General

Beckman, P., and D'Amico, F. (eds.), *Women, Gender and World Politics: Perspectives, Policies and Prospects* (Westport, Conn.: Bergin & Gervy, 1994). This text pursues the question 'Does gender matter in world politics?' through the study of world politics and policies.

Enloe, C., *Bananas, Bases and Beaches: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (London, Pinter, 1989). This book asks 'Where are the women?' and reveals them in many different

roles in international politics, in militaries, in export production, in prostitution and the sex trade, and in diplomacy.

Nelson, B., and Chowdhury, N. (eds.), *Women and Politics Worldwide* (Newhaven: Yale University Press, 1994). This useful resource book begins with overview chapters about women's different experiences of politics, and then has a number of chapters about women's participation in politics in different countries.

Peterson, V. S., and Runyan, A. S., *Global Gender Issues*, 2nd ed. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1999). This text analyses gender in global politics, the gendered divisions of power, violence, and labour; and the politics of resistance, including women's politics.

Pettman, J. J., *Worlding Women: A Feminist International Politics* (London: Routledge, 1996). In this book, I explore aspects of global politics only briefly touched on in this chapter. It is organized in three sections: the gendered politics of identities, of war and peace, and of the international political economy.

Sen, G., and Grown, C., *Development, Crises and Alternative Visions: Third World Women's Perspectives* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1987). This is a brief but broad-ranging review of the gendered impact of debt, dependence, and exploitation in Third World countries, and women's responses to these challenges.

Steans, J., *Gender and International Relations*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1998). An accessible exploration of feminist critique in International Relations, and gender analysis of nationalism, war, security, international political economy and development.

Tickner, A., *Gender in International Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992). A careful feminist critique of mainstream IR approaches to security, international political economy, and ecology.

WEB LINKS

www.unifem.undp.org The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) works to ensure the participation of women in development planning and practice.

www.law-lib.utoronto.ca International Human Rights Database (DINA) is a comprehensive database of electronic materials for human rights research.

www.un.org/womenwatch Women Watch: an Internet gateway for the advancement and empowerment of women.