

# **FEMINISM AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

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# CONCEPT OF FEMINISM

- Feminism is basically a movement and ideological position that aim to define, establish, and achieve the political, economic, personal, and social equality of the sexes .
- feminism is about achieving equal rights for both men and women with no intended biased advantages to women.
- Society believes that woman and man are different.
- Feminism seeks to investigate stereotypes and biases based on genders and believes these are created and perpetuated by patriarchal system.

- **Feminism says this inequality is not due to their biological or sex-based differences rather conceptual category of 'gender'**
- **Millions of people manifestly or covertly believe the idea that there should not be equal rights and equal opportunities for men and women.**
- **Feminism does not depend upon mercy or realization of male conscience for acceptance of equality of both sexes.**

# .....In a Nutshell

- Feminism feels that society should view, recognize and respect women's experiences, identities, knowledge and strengths crucial to their social being and they demand and deserve empowerment rights to actualize this vision.



# FEMINISM IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Feminists examine gender stereotypes in international relations.

Inclusivity is vital to feminism. It also talks of Intersectionality.

Intersectional feminism is acknowledging the interplay between gender and other forms of discrimination: -

Like race, age, class, socioeconomic status, physical or mental ability, gender or sexual identity, religion, or ethnicity.

# Mind-Map of Intersectionality in Feminism



- Feminism, together with the new approaches mentioned above, contested the power of the mainstream.
- Feminism challenged the ontological and epistemological foundations of IR and tried to expose the gender biases in the central terms such as power, autonomy, rationality, security and state.
- Challenges mainstream's understanding of critical concepts

- There is no single Feminist IR Theory but be it Marxist, Liberal or Post-Structuralist, feminists aim to realize one of the three feminist projects in IR identified by V. Spike Peterson (Peterson 2004).
- Classical Realism builds its assumption on human nature but human nature under discussion in the works of Thucydides, Machiavelli and Hobbes is the nature of man (Shepherd 2010, 6).
- Feminists argue that IR scholars continue to theorize global politics in a way that make women invisible.

- Feminism in IR owes its emergence to reflectivism its other offshoots -: constructivism, post-structuralism, and postcolonialism.
- Feminist theory has challenged women's *near complete absence* from traditional IR theory and practice.
- This absence is visible both in women's marginalization from decision-making .
- It is assumed that the reality of women's day-to-day lives is not impacted by or important to international relations.
- Women are almost half of the planets human occupants and affected badly by conditions of war, battles ,conflicts and violence.



**Cynthia Enloe**  
**Leading Feminist in IR**

- One of the most influential works in feminist IR is Cynthia Enloe's "*Bananas, Beaches and Bases.*" (1989)
- She also critiques global as well as U.S. militarization, specifically the roles women play in combat.
- She argues that the U.S. military model trains men to be the protectors of women and then produces an environment in which women are the victims of physical violence.

- A major goal of feminist IR (Cohn 2013; Eager, 2014; Tickner 1997) is to analyze, highlight and even out gender inequalities often ignored in masculine or male-centric international theory.
- As J. Ann Tickner noted about the discipline of IR in 1992: “Why are there so few women in my discipline? If I teach the field as it is conventionally defined, why are there so few readings by women to assign to my students? Why is the subject matter of my discipline so distant from women’s lived experiences? Why have women been conspicuous only by their absence in the worlds of diplomacy and military and foreign policy-making (1992: 1)?”

# FACTS LEAD TO POSITIONS

- Feminist employ method of deconstruction to question prevalence of patriarchy in IR.
- By challenging assumptions about masculine and feminine gender roles usually responsible in deciding what women and men should or can do in global politics.
- Former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon' in his 'UNiTE' drive figured out that up to seven out of ten women experience violence at some point in their lives, interestingly against 600 million women due to cultural reasons this violence is not yet considered a crime.
- Violence against women is prevalent globally and is not specific to 63 *International Relations Theory* any particular political or economic system.

# KEY NOTIONS

- It is argued if women have significant voice in IR or *High-Politics* as decision-makers and influencers than IR could attain new orientations.
- in 2015 the World Bank estimated that globally women made up just 22.9% of national parliaments.
- Diana Thorburn notes, “there can never be a truly singular voice of feminist foreign policy simply because of the diversity of views within feminism itself.”
- Tickner argues that IR is gendered to “marginalize women’s voices,” and stresses “that women have knowledge, perspectives and experiences that should be brought to bear on the study of international relations.”

- The wars in ex-Yugoslavia that began in 1991 draws special attention to the role of rape, as a symbol of subjugation and humiliation, a means of propagating the superior race, and a theme for mobilizing ethnic rage.
- However it has been argued that “women are not more pacific than men in their attitudes toward international conflict”.

- Feminist scholarship on war emphasizes that men are seen as the sole actors in war while Women are seen just as acted upon throughout conflict and conflict resolutions. Its victims as grieving widows and mothers, selfless nurses and anti-war activists. (Swati Parashar(*Gender Matters in Global Politics*)).
- Carol Cohn and Sara Ruddick in their article “Feminist Ethical Perspective on Weapons of Mass Destruction,” (2003) proposed “anti-war feminism”: A position tat opposes the use of weapons of mass destruction either for military, political, or deterring purposes, without completely rebuffing all forms of warfare.
- Feminism in IR seeks to explore how gender issues and values could and do play a role within international relations ?

- For example, In challenging the concepts of a state defending its national interests, feminists would ask: who is defining the national interests? If women were included in such discussions, would the national interest be interpreted differently, and if so, how? How would such an outlook change foreign policy?
- The dispute over the role of women on active duty in the US invasion of Panama and in the Gulf War (where 30,000 women were among the half million US soldiers deployed) served to underline how much resistance to change there is on this question by the military apparatus and the public, as well as the complexity of the underlying issues, not least from a feminist perspective.

## .....To Conclude

- **Gender as a variable can't completely claim to explain the complex and multidimensional global politics on its own, still has sought attention to hidden, unexplored and ignored aspects and provided new perspectives to the Mainstream IR.**

***THANK***

***YOU***