

> FEMINIST APPROACHES TO INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY IN THE POST- COLD WAR PERIOD



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Image: A placard using an image by Shepard Fairey on the March of Women in Salt Lake City, Utah.



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This article reflects on the trajectory and development of feminist scholarship since the end of the Cold War. It begins with a statement of 'feminist intent', moving then to consider the post-Cold War introduction of feminist scholarship into the academic study of international politics, namely the discipline of *International Relations* (IR). I will then offer some snapshots of key feminist approaches connecting these up with contemporary global political issues. The concluding sections will return to re-consider the opening statement of 'feminist intent', first through a discussion of four globally significant women, then offer my views on the contemporary relevance and import of feminist scholarship in the context of global politics both in theory and in practice.

Opening Statement

All these theories yet the bodies keep piling up (Zalewski 1996).

It is quite an undertaking to discuss the range of feminist approaches in relation to international politics over a 30-year period, not least given the vast amount of feminist scholarship that has been done over that time. But this opening statement or 'pause for thought', is less about the commonplace challenge of academic distillation and review, but rather specifically connected to the relentless consistency of problematic assumptions made about this provocative body of thought which can rob it of its primary worth. As such, I start with the statement that the work of feminist scholarship on global politics is largely intended to be powerfully destabilising. This remains the case even if destabilisation seems politically and educationally unpalatable. Undeniably, a primary aim of this corpus of feminist scholarship is to create a body of theory and practice with enough agency and traction to make significant structural, epistemological, conceptual and political changes both to the ways international politics is studied, as well as fundamentally alter the violent ways in which much of global politics continues to manifest itself. It might be considered that this scholarly aim of feminist work sounds provocative and overly ambitious, not least given the consistently assumed goal of feminism is typically understood to be simply about including women into the varied realms of high politics. An accompanying assumption is that this inclusion is merely in the service of supporting the theoretical and political agendas of conventional international politics. My claim is that this branch of feminist scholarship has a exceedingly far-reaching aim, and indeed very similar to the one that the discipline of international politics itself was founded

upon (and has manifestly failed to achieve), namely to impose a significant halt to the egregious and relentless violence that continues to blight the contemporary global political landscape. Furthermore, the claim of feminist scholarship is that it has much greater potential than the discipline of International Relations to bring about this kind of change. I open with this somewhat provocative statement as the serious intention and work of feminism can so readily evaporate. I hope to seize reader's attention in this important volume right from the start; the stakes are far too high to not take the destabilizing work of feminism seriously.

Introduction: Feminist Scholarship and International Relations

The discipline of International Relations (IR) is integrally linked to the rhythms of the global political landscape. Emerging as an academic discipline in 1919 subsequent to the horrors of the Second World War, IR's theorizing, methodological approaches and political attention have since been focussed on producing effective knowledge about the international realm (Brecher & Harvey 2005). Traditionally this has involved attention to the more obvious political sites of states, government, politicians and globally significant wars, with conceptual and empirical attention consistently revolving around security, anarchy and violence. Theoretically, the discipline has been dominated for many decades by the triad realism, pluralism and structuralism, though it is realism – a form of 'realpolitik' - which remained the overwhelmingly dominant theoretical approach (Smith 1994). It was not until the 1980s that other theoretical approaches began to garner some traction. Indeed, following the fall of the Berlin Wall and the emergence of the post-cold war period, there was something of an explosion of theoretical approaches in IR, a list of these would include critical theory, postmodernism, poststructuralism, feminism, and constructivism (Brecher & Harvey 2005). This plethora of theories (especially compared to the previous six decades) spawned an abundance of articles, books, workshops, conferences and new teaching programmes notably in the US, Canada, the UK and Australia. In tandem with these theoretical inroads, critiques of the philosophical and epistemological underpinnings of most, if not all, conventional theories and methodological approaches was underway, typically framed as the 'post-positivist' debate (Smith, Booth & Zalewski 1996). As such, the post-Cold War period appears as a distinctly apposite political and intellectual moment from which to give an account of one of these new approaches, namely feminism. Yet given the heavy dominance of realism for over six decades, it is important to question more closely why these global changes would have had such a disciplinary and theoretical impact? *What exactly changed in 1989?*

One answer is that two stark instances of failure and surprise triggered the avalanche of new work in the discipline of IR. The surprise was the collapse of the Soviet Union and the thawing of the Cold War; the failure belonged to the discipline of IR. As Christine Sylvester put it, 'Few realists of any ilk would have argued that

states voluntarily go out of business and dismantle their territorial authorities. This the Soviet Union did' (2002: 7). For scholars and practitioners of 'realpolitik', this abandonment of power and sovereignty was astonishing. And as a discipline integrally connected to high political analysis and policy making, especially in the United States, IR's failure of insight and predictive powers was forcefully felt. The rapidity of the changes led many to challenge academic understandings of international politics focusing attention on IR's limitations (Brown 1993: 2). Further fuelled by many of the insights of 'continental philosophy' (insights which had been taken up in other disciplines such as Sociology and Political Theory some decades before), epistemological critiques of IR's theoretical foundations grew exponentially. As such, this confluence of IR's theoretical weakness and a potentially unruly world order paved the way for theoretical and empirical intrusion by a host of scholars ushering in the 'destabilizing decade' of the 1980s (Sylvester 2002: 9). Here feminism took centre stage with conferences and workshops for mainstream IR audiences in London, Boston and Los Angeles, the birth of the 'Feminist and Gender Studies' section of the *International Studies Association*, and the 'Gender and International Relations Group' at the *British International Studies Association*. These developments worked to place feminist scholars and their work in institutionally recognised positions. Books and articles then proliferated,¹ and mainstream IR teaching programmes began to include some feminist or gender courses, at least on the Anglo-American educational scene.

"THE IMMEDIATE POST-COLD WAR PERIOD SAW FEMINIST SCHOLARSHIP ENTERING A VIGOROUS INTELLECTUAL CLIMATE IN THE DISCIPLINE OF IR."

Thus, the immediate post-Cold War period saw feminist scholarship entering a vigorous intellectual climate in the discipline of IR. One of the ground-breaking books published at that time was Cynthia Enloe's *Bananas, Beaches and Bases* (1989). This remains a core text in the study of feminist international politics to this day.² In 1989, it was notable for its prolific use of visual methodologies, its very limited reference to the core theories, texts or authors of conventional IR, and, crucially, its central attention to women and the workings of gender, specifically masculinity and femininity, both in the context of behaviours and concepts. This inevitably meant that *Bananas, Beaches and Bases* focussed on sites of international politics long deemed irrelevant, trivial or 'simply domestic', including diplomatic wives, prostitution, tourism and domestic servants. Enloe's ground-breaking 1989 book is rightly credited for starting an intellectual and political feminist trail exposing how deeply the international political system was indebted to the work of women and the working of masculinity and femininity.³ This work was not 'simply' about women, it was about demonstrating that by focusing on women and gender, it could be much more clearly illustrated the extent to which power goes into the constitution of

international politics than conventional theories could comprehend. As Enloe put it, 'the international politics of debt, investment, colonization, national security, diplomacy and trade are far more complicated than most experts would have us believe (1989: 197)

Post 1989 In Feminist Theory And Practice

In the midst of a fluid European order and the sudden loss of what was assumed to have been a stable bi-polar world (Smith 1994), the immediate post-cold war era seemed an unlikely time to focus undivided attention on Cynthia Enloe's central question about international politics which was, and largely remains, 'where are the women'? Though in the context of the (new) Europe, it was becoming increasingly apparent that women were regularly faring badly, especially in the former Eastern Europe. In one of the more obvious sites of politics – political participation and representation – women had previously been very active. Post 1989, their representation began to rapidly decline (Einhorn 1992). As contemporary writers noted, 'women had been present at the big demonstrations, on the happy streets, but disappeared from the negotiating tables' (Kiss 1991). In employment too, women were amongst the biggest losers. Additionally, their reproductive rights became a prime target for political management often becoming the first issue to which post-communist governments turned their attention (Kiss 1991, Einhorn 1993).

However, in order to properly cultivate feminist analyses post-1989, rigorous theoretical analyses were clearly called for. Early formulations of feminist scholarship in IR included developing theoretical typologies, specifically liberal, socialist Marxist, radical and postmodern. This was accompanied by more philosophically inspired analyses with the labels empiricist, standpoint and poststructural (Zalewski 1993). Liberal and social Marxist feminisms were obviously aligned politically with liberalism and socialist/Marxism. Thus, liberal feminism drew heavily on liberalism paying clear attention to the sanctity of the human 'self' and all the rights that have developed attached to that self especially since the Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Ostensibly simple, liberal feminist scholars wanted the 'rights' of man' to extend to include 'the rights of woman'. Key to this kind of analysis was the distinction between sex and gender, which in truth, was a ground breaking move within the annals of feminist thought as it severed the supposedly natural or biological realm of 'sex' from the culturally and socially constructed realm of 'gender'.⁴ If women had traditionally appeared to not belong in the political or public realm, or not to have the same rights as men given their more natural (or indeed 'God-given') private or familial and reproductive roles, the relatively new knowledge that women were 'simply' humans too, meant women might, indeed should be included empirically, representationally as well as in theoretical analysis. That women were not included in this way, in relation to the study and practices of international politics, was manifestly apparent. Indeed, the absence of women in

the teaching or IR, or the authorship of work on international politics works was stark. 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)?

The absence of women in the high political landscape of wars, inter-state relationships and political leadership was indeed obvious. The lack of interest in what might be regarded as women's more traditional activities and concerns was clearly securely regarded as an appropriate omission. What use could theorizing motherhood or domestic work be to the study and practice of global politics? It might be the case that women were 'sometimes' visible as occasional leaders or mythical warriors, but the high politics of the international was very clearly understood as 'man's work', oftentimes explicitly stated as such (even today). As such, a central aim for liberally inspired feminists was to have the equal worth (to men) of women recognised, for women to have the same political and public opportunities as men, and, crucially, for gender – that cultural artifice deemed responsible for so much damage – to steadily evaporate with the end aim of a future without gender, a just future would be one without gender'. In its social structures and practices, one's sex would have no more relevance than one's eye color or the length of one's toes (Okin 1989: 171).

“WHY HAVE WOMEN BEEN CONSPICUOUS ONLY BY THEIR ABSENCE IN THE WORLDS OF DIPLOMACY AND MILITARY AND FOREIGN POLICY-MAKING?”

How has liberal feminism fared in global politics? There are many women political leaders now, still a minority if perhaps a decreasing one. Women serve in large numbers in militaries around the world and the bans on women serving in close combat are disappearing almost daily.⁵ Gender as a concept has been mainstreamed in the thinking and practice of many national governments and international organisations. The United Nations is a key actor here, not least since the ground-breaking Security Council Resolution 1325 introduced in 2000 which was the first formal and legal document from the Security Council that required parties in a conflict to prevent violations of women's rights, to support women's participation in peace negotiations and in post-conflict reconstruction, and to protect women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence.⁶ The two most recent relevant Resolutions include SCR 2106 & SCR 2122 both in 2013.⁷

In many ways the success of liberal feminism seems clear. Though for many feminist international relations scholars, this success is dubious. It is the case that the majority of feminist scholars welcome inclusive practices for women, rather

the troubling issue relates to the tacit acceptance of conventional (oftentimes articulated as 'malestream') political and theoretical agendas and practices. Plus, the acceptance of the standard of 'human', which is, by historical default, most often elite, white and male. As a corollary, liberal feminist work tends to support the invisibility and lesser worth of women's traditional lives, behaviours and work, be default ignoring the imbalances and biases and discriminations this wreaks upon many women globally. In the current geo-political order, liberal feminism has, many argue, been co-opted in the service of neo-liberal agendas and practices. I will return to this point.

As might be expected, the philosophical underpinnings and political commitments of socialist/Marxist⁹ feminisms are integrally connected to analyses of the economic realm and the class system. The conjoining of Marxist work on the economy, class and capitalism and the everyday turmoil of lived lives, along with the socialist feminist emphasis on the distinctive use-value and exploitation of women in the global system, has produced a wealth of insightful scholarship on global gendered political economies. Early work included Maria Mies' tracing of work of the 'consumer-housewife' as an exemplar of the 'optimal labour force' (1986), both in the 'underdeveloped and overdeveloped countries' (1986: 126). Also, Cynthia Enloe's work on the gendered politics of 'the banana', through the figure and life of the singer Carmen Miranda (1989/2014). Enloe also began the dense trail of work tracking the international use of 'domestic servants' and the links with international debt policies' (1989/2014). Significant conceptual work in the area of gender and political economy has demonstrated that perceptions about appropriate roles for men and women (and accompanying race and class dimensions) saturated and structured many of these personal kinds of decisions and activities. Beliefs around romance and love as well as reproduction and family honour nurtured rich grounds for huge reservoirs of cheap or free labour. However, they remained typically understood as private, domestic and/or cultural. And certainly not the business of international politics analysts.

Currently the tracks of this work are theoretically and practically very well illustrated in the Global North's entrepreneurial ambitions for women and girls in the Global South. One example of this involves the corporate social responsibility agendas of international big business and finance. The World Bank, for example, has embarked on major collaborations with two private sector actors: the 'Global Private Sector Leader's Forum' and the 'Girl effect campaign' (see Calkin 2016; also Calkin 2015). The latter is also notable for its sports-conglomerate and celebrity endorsements. Philanthropic intentions notwithstanding, Sydney Calkin argues that the co-mingling of gender and big business/finance capitalizes on the potential entrepreneurial power and resources of women and girls in a globalized economy in the service of agendas of the Global North. The political use of gender to pursue the humanitarian and other agendas of the Global North is not new; a significant moment marking the immediate post 9/11 period was the radio address by the then First Lady Laura Bush on the plight of the women

of Afghanistan offering further rationale for the subsequent invasion by the United States. Serious questions remain in the current international political landscape about the ever increasing economic and development focus on women and girls including: Girl Effect, Girl Up, Girl Rising, G(irls)20 Summit, Because I am a Girl, Let Girls Learn, Girl Declaration.⁹ What might we make of the current use of gender as a tool of such financial and political use-value to the Global North?

The final dual stream of feminist-theorizing work in International Relations involves radical and postmodern feminism which are both much less obviously connected to familiar political commitments or the conventional political spectrum. Though the radical tributary of feminist work is very closely associated with the revolutionary and resistance political and social movements evident in many western societies in the 1960s and 1970s, including women's rights and civil rights/black power movements. A central aim of this genre of work was to place women at the centre of political and analytical attention, and to raise issues traditionally of more concern to women, right to the top of political, education and cultural agendas. 'Where are the women' - a deceptively important question at the core of much radical feminist work, appears a seemingly benign one at one level, or just an empirical or issue based one. Yet it raises profound epistemological questions about the foundations and systems of knowledge going back to the alleged founding fathers of modern thinking including Plato and Aristotle, as well as those more recent such as Jean Jacques Rousseau, John Stuart Mill and Immanuel Kant to name just a few. The critique of foundational knowledges is also a hallmark of postmodern and/or poststructural feminisms. I will return to these points. In the subsequent three decades since the end of the Cold War, a vast amount of feminist scholarship has been produced and

Athena, in the center of the painting, the goddess of wisdom and the arts, crowned with a helmet and wearing a mantle to which is tied the head of Medusa. Athena is an icon of femininity that has been projected intensely in the contemporary political and social imaginary.



gender has become central to United Nations policy and discourse. Women and gender, it seems, have a secure place in the theory and practice of international politics. Currently in feminist IR scholarship, the 4-pronged typology of feminist theory which I have introduced are less visibly deployed, however, they were very much part of the development of the field. Subsequent academic work represents more of an amalgam of approaches, perhaps with a leaning toward poststructural methods, and with a great deal more work being done using postcolonial, queer theory and associated creative methodological approaches which includes analyses of images and popular culture and the 'everyday'. I want to move now to add some nuance to the discussion by taking a brief diversion to consider four women of international political significance, two contemporary and two from ancient times.

Four Women

The four globally significant women are Aung San Suu Kyi, Malala Yousafzai, Athena and Medusa. First, I will briefly introduce them, moving then to consider some reasons we might regard them as important to reflect on, if in something of an interlude in this essay, in a consideration of international politics and feminist-theorizing.

Aung San Suu Kyi and Malala Yousafzai are two women very much in the current international political media and spotlight. Aung San Suu Kyi, known colloquially as 'the lady',¹⁰ is well known for her long fight for democracy in Myanmar. A woman regularly presented in the western media as an enigmatic, even romantic figure, described by one commentator as 'fragrant'; she was awarded a Nobel peace prize in 1991. She has been in the news more recently for allegedly tuning a 'blind eye' to what has been described as the ethnic cleansing of the minority Rohingya Muslim community in Myanmar. In an open letter to the UN Security Council, more than a dozen Nobel laureates have criticised Aung San Suu Kyi, for a 'bloody military crackdown on minority Rohingya people', warning of a tragedy amounting to 'ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity'.¹¹

As a young girl in Pakistan, Malala Yousafzai was very active and vocal (including blogging) about the right for girls to be educated. She was shot in 2012 by the Taliban at the age of 15 on her way to school for her views and activism. Malala (known worldwide by her first name especially since the publication of her 2013 biography) came to England for medical treatment recovering well enough from her injuries to begin going to high school in Birmingham. She continued to speak up for the rights of girls to be educated and in 2014, Malala became the youngest person ever to win the Nobel Peace Prize.¹² In 2017 she was appointed UN ambassador for Peace and took up a place as an undergraduate at Oxford University. She was also one of the Nobel Prize winning signatories of the open letter to the UN Security Council rebuking Aung San Suu Kyi. Two globally significant women on the contemporary international political scene. How do

their stories and lives help us to better to understand the work and significance of feminist international relations scholarship?

Not contemporary women, but a strong lingering presence in political, social and cultural imaginations are Athena and Medusa. Athena - a mythical Greek goddess of wisdom, war, heroism and crafts, the capital of Greece still bears her name. In UK culture her emblem, spirit and name has been taken up by the 'Equality Challenge Unit' which spear heads and directs gender equality charters in some of the UK's top educational and research institutions – the Athena Swan charter.¹³ One of Athena's memorable deeds was to transform Medusa's head into a terrifying sight, one swarming and writhing with hissing snakes holding the power to turn men into stone if she caught their eye. A head ultimately severed by Perseus at the bidding of Athena. Statues of Perseus brandishing the severed head of Medusa is a regular feature in museums around the world.

The story of Medusa has channelled its way right through into the 21st century, the most recent mediatised reincarnation of this image has Donald Trump in the place of Perseus and Hillary Clinton as the severed head of Medusa (Beard 2017). And though there are many ancient variations of the story, one particular version persists. Medusa was the only one of three sisters known as Gorgons that was born a mortal. The story has it that Medusa was once very beautiful but was cursed by Athena who gave her snakes for hair. Medusa's misdemeanour

The Young activist Malala Yousafzai attends TimesTalks Presents: I Am Malala at The French Institute on August 19, 2014 in New York City.



had been to violate the sanctity of one of Athena's temples by 'laying with' Poseidon. This story of punishment and Medusa's eventual beheading by Perseus has powerful contemporary resonance. Yet as Mary Beard (2017) and Susan Bowers (1990) articulate, a different story might have held imaginations and had subsequent philosophical and epistemological import; the one in which Poseidon raped Medusa, and Athena's 'punishment' was rather to save Medusa from ever being violated again.

All four women are iconic, and all four are embroiled in global politics in one form or another. They stand as emblematic figures of womanhood, though they matter and come to matter in our thinking about international politics, if in different ways. The question of Aung San Suu Kyi's ostensibly vacillating position as a harbinger of peace is not one at issue here, readers will have varying views on this. Rather, we might think about her iconic status in relation to liberal feminist visions of female inclusion, especially as global political leaders. It is very clear that we cannot (ever) count on women acting in 'peaceful' ways, though it seems the case female leaders are rarely able to escape being identified by their gender, usually as icons at one end of the good woman/bad woman spectrum or the other – as warriors, peaceniks, heroines or simply evil. Women remain marked by her gender; indeed, their gender tends to disallow more than one iconic status at a time. Malala's gender placing in the contemporary geo-political

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landscape story has become particularly attractive to western audiences, not least given it fits very easily into the colonialist furrow that Gaytri Spivak (1985) so powerfully and succinctly articulated as 'white men saving brown women from brown men.' At the same time that Malala's story supports traditional masculine-laced politics of protection, it also has been given the air of a neoliberal feminist success story, an individualist female triumph over the dark forces of gender traditionalism. One extraordinary woman intrepidly emerging from a mass of 'ordinary' women (and think of the way women from the 'Greater Middle East region' are regularly depicted by the media), but also so eagerly requisitioned by powerful western political institutions is significant. And it is striking that the mythical figures of iconic woman-hood, Athena and Medusa still lay claim to contemporary popular and philosophical imaginations. That one of the most impactful ways to represent the 'battle' between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton at the time of the US Presidential campaign and election in 2016-2017 (humorous intent notwithstanding) using the hyper-gendered and brutal reincarnation of the conventional and long-standing narrative of Perseus, Athena and Medusa – this reveals a great deal about how contemporary knowledge systems work.

21st Century

"Men my age dictate this war" Mr Dawson in Dunkirk.¹⁴

What rises to the mediated surface of current global political landscapes? What assails our vision and minds on a daily basis? One thing that has clearly changed radically since the end of the Cold War is the vast development of the internet and associated social media use. A current globally significant example of this (an exemplar of sorts) is US President's Donald Trump's twitter habit. As I write, the possibilities of a potential nuclear war with/via North Korea is taking twitter centre stage. Other focal points in my daily news feeds include the plight of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar; Brexit of course, especially from my vantage point as someone living in the United Kingdom. And culturally? One of the latest big movies is *Dunkirk* – perhaps coincidentally released in the midst of some turmoil around Brexit negotiations. A film full of men of course and almost no men of colour. And with one of two women perhaps (hard to catch sight of them). Does this matter? Is the stark 'white maleness' of a popular movie something we should pay attention to as IR scholars when we are faced with a US President threatening the annihilation of another country as he did in his first speech to the United Nations in September 2017? Or in a world in which the Russian President and North Korean leader relentlessly exhibit variable levels of behaviour of what might be called 'vexatious masculinities'? And what of the slew of hurricanes wreaking havoc in the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea? Questions about climate change and environmental degradation are surely high on our international political agendas, if intermittently, though it is, of course, the poorest people who suffer most; no change there. The main contemporary change is that celebrities come to the rescue in much more visible and self-promoting ways that ever possible before without social media.

There is something of an obsession with the idea of dramatic changes in our political landscapes, often taken for granted as the ones to pay close attention to, such as the end of the Cold War. Instead we might focus for a moment on the film *Dunkirk*, a major drama (from the past of course), but in popular culture form it does not readily appear to be of much significance in the context of the concerns of this volume. My daughter wonders why there are so few women in it, surely a woman could have been cast at the helm of the small boat at the centre of the film's rescue narrative? Or a teenage daughter rather than a son slipping unnoticed into the craft, so he could join his father and elder brother in the rescue mission? Of course, it is a film about an event in the Second World War, so a film of its time, a common assumption being that history cannot simply be re-written to satisfy the morals and much less the gender agendas of the early 21st century. There has, however, been much 'social-media chatter' about the 'whitewashing' of the film.¹⁵ And indeed the dubious 'blitz-spirit' imparted dovetailing nicely with the current revival of 'protecting the homeland' spirit prevalent in both the UK and the US. But how very easy it has been to render unknown the violence, not least the rapes and sexual assaults that took place so regularly during bombing raids in the Second World War.

Scholars of feminist international relations insistently ask which stories (of the many available) retain or return to take centre stage, whether about war, or the global economy, or appropriate work for men and women – which of these stories persistently rise to the surface and retain political and theoretical attention? I suggest to my daughter that *Dunkirk* is very much a film about male heroism and though any director might choose to bend the ‘facts’ a little to tell and sell a story, female heroism does not have the same impact or story telling facility. It is the case that a good many recent highly popular films such as *Eye in the Sky* and *Zero Dark 30* (‘blockbusters’ which capture the attention of millions of people world-wide) feature female leads are often seen in senior military roles. Though recent research suggests that these female leads (always white) function to promote a form of ‘ethical whiteness’ (Charania 2017), once again supporting conventional international political agendas.

“BEGINNING WITH THE RECOGNITION THAT WOMEN AND THE TRADITIONALLY ‘FEMININE’ HAVE BEEN RENDERED ABSENT OR IRRELEVANT IN THE REALM OF INTERNATIONAL POLITICS, IT APPEARS THAT THE REMEDY IS NOT SIMPLY TO ‘ADD WOMEN IN’ –AS IF THEY WERE MEN.”

I opened with a somewhat provocative statement about the intent of feminist scholarship. It might be perceived that I ‘overstate’ the case to draw attention. Yet I maintain that the feminist critique of the underlying knowledge structures on which studies of international politics relies, and which are drawn from long standing philosophical, political and even mythical foundations, poses a very significant challenge. Beginning with the recognition that women and the traditionally ‘feminine’ have been rendered absent or irrelevant in the realm of international politics, it appears that the remedy is not simply to ‘add women in’ -as if they were men. The challenge to the study and practice of international politics demands much more rigorous and effective work in both theory and practice. There have been some notable changes on the global political landscape since 1989, but just a cursory glance will confirm hardly a dent in the realm of global violence, perhaps an increase. Of course, feminist scholarship cannot resolve all these violences, but the vast corpus of knowledge produced since 1989, knowledge which stems for questions drawn from the submerged work and activities of more than half the world’s population, bears much more serious and sustained attention.

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- Zero Dark 30* (2012), Director Katherine Bigelow, Writer Mark Boal, Columbia Pictures.

Notes

- 1 There is a wealth of literature currently, please see <https://genderandsecurity.org/projects-resources/syllabus-collection> for examples from contemporary teaching syllabi and the *International Feminist Journal of Politics* <http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rfjp20> Also see Laura J Shepherd (2014); Gentry, C, Shepherd, L.J. and Sjoberg, L (forthcoming 2018); Zalewski, M (2013); Bleiker, R (ed) (forthcoming 2018); Steans, J (2013).
- 2 Now in its 4th edition (2014).
- 3 There were earlier texts notably Jean Bethke Elshtain's *Women and War* (1987) though it is *Bananas* which captured centre stage and imaginations at that time.
- 4 Key to analysis on gender is the traditional and persistent hierarchical relationship between masculinity and femininity. However much the expectations around these characteristics and behaviours varied culturally and across time, their oppositional and hierarchical character remained constant. A good deal of work has been done on masculinities in the field (e.g. Parpart & Zalewski 2008).
- 5 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-36746917>
- 6 <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/>
- 7 <http://www.un.org/press/en/2013/sc11149.doc.htm> <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/issues/women/wps.shtml>

- 8 Whether more 'socialist' or 'marxist' or 'dual system' was the subject of much debate – see Hartmann
- 9 http://www.huffingtonpost.com/shenila-khojamoolji/girls-of-the-global-south_b_11353958.html
- 10 Perhaps related to the film about Aung San Suu Kyi of the same name (2011)
- 11 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/dec/30/nobel-laureates-aung-san-suu-kyi-ethnic-cleansing-rohingya>
- 12 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-23241937>
- 13 <http://www.ecu.ac.uk/equality-charters/athena-swan/>
- 14 Mr Dawson, played by Mark Rylance, (who is the man at the helm of the central small 'rescue' boat) makes this comment in response to the young airman he has pulled from the sea who has suggested he (Dawson) is too old to be doing this (embarking on a rescue mission).
- 15 <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/how-nolan-forgot-the-desis-at-dunkirk/articleshow/59717595.cms?from=mdr>

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