

Book Review: Women, Peace, and Security:

Feminist Perspectives on International Affairs by Caroline

Leprince & Cassandra Steer (editor)

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“Where are the women?”

This question arises from Cynthia Enloe concerning the contribution of women in global politics (Enloe, 2014). This is also the main idea behind the book, which is an edited volume from a workshop of Women in International Security (WIIS)-Canada in 2017 for their tenth anniversary. Canada adopted the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) on the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda in October 2000. However, since Canada employs the adoption as its foreign policy priority, implementing it on its overseas military and peacekeeping missions, as it has no history of armed conflict (Reichrath, 2010). Thus, the impact of UNSCR 1325 adoption on Canadians is more on deployed military women and families than on Canadian women in general. With the Women in International Security (WIIS) workshop in Canada, Canadian feminists are eager to see women’s contribution to the global WPS agenda extend beyond Canadian experiences.

The book, published in 2021, is titled “Women, Peace, and Security: Feminist Per-

spectives on International Affairs.” Edited by Caroline Leprince and Cassandra Steer, sixteen feminist scholars contribute to the ten articles in the book that discuss feminist perspectives on international relations (IR) by tracking the adoption and progress of the WPS agenda in security studies. The articles take case studies from Canada and cases from Africa, the United States (US), and its near cross-border areas. It is divided into three parts. The first part discusses the feminist approach in IR analyses. The second part focuses on Canadian military dynamics, discussing the gendered concept of military culture and institutions. The third part highlights how the feminist movement and tools empowered women from all walks of life at the domestic and local levels.

In the first chapter, the introduction chapter, Leprince and Steer examine the underrepresentation of female researchers in international relations studies, highlighting the disparity in recognition between female and male academia. Feminist researchers in the fields of International Relations (IR) and international law, such as Cynthia Enloe, Jac-

qui True, Judith Ann Tickner, Brooke Ackerly, Hilary Charlesworth, and others who coincidentally come from the Global North, have advanced various theoretical frameworks aimed at stimulating discourse on gender within the IR discipline, while concurrently pushing for gender equality and the inclusion of women in positions of influence. IR feminist researchers critique the marginalization of women's voices and other marginalized groups through their personal experiences and examination of narratives. The historical exclusion of women's participation in international affairs, such as at the Hague conference following World War II, is one of the instances (Tickner & True, 2018) that calls for an update to IR's theoretical frameworks. According to True (2008), the exclusion of women's points of view and contribution to international politics stems from the specific paradigm (realism, liberalism, and others), epistemology (positivists, non-positivists, and postpositivists), and methodology in international relations. The main argument in chapter one resonates with the aforementioned feminist scholars' reviews of international relations studies.

The second part consists of three chapters, starting with chapter 2. Chapter 2 by W.R. Nadège Compaoré discusses one of her fieldwork experiences as a female researcher in Ghana, Gabon, and South Africa. She finds a gap in power dynamics between interviewees and herself in interactions during her autoethnography research. She identifies how her attributes (age, gender, race, citizenship, and occupation) affect the interaction (outsider and insider status), per-

ception, and distinction between herself as a researcher and participant among local people. These factors are essential for feminist research, as feminist research pays attention to the power dynamics concerning identities, stakeholder relationships, and social and political location that affect the decision to include and exclude research subjects (Ackerly & True, 2020). As a reflection, Compaoré highlights the importance of understanding intersectionality in knowledge production for young researchers. Intersectionality is a fundamental feminist analytical tool as it allows the imbrication of race and gender in a social and political setting that women face daily, in addition to other factors such as class (Ackerly & True, 2008).

In Chapter 3, the author explores the metaphorical framework of soft and hard power notions within foreign policy formulation and the pursuit of national security objectives. According to Tanya Monforte, the epistemology analysis toward soft and hard power is gendered and commonly found in the Global North's policy decisions and outcomes. The author demonstrates that this metaphor influences both female and male political leaders in its portrayal in the media and its impact on their current circumstances. Monforte proposes utilizing the smart power idea as a viable option, wherein it is categorized into a binary framework to achieve equilibrium between the application of hard and soft power in equal measure. Finally, Monforte highlights the potential of evolving concepts to foster fresh perspectives and diminish entrenched gender stereotypes within media and policymaking.

Chapter 4 captures Leah Sarson's comprehensive analysis of feminist research methods and research designs within the field of IR. The article commences with a concise examination of feminist methodology. It follows with a conversation transcript from a 2017 WIIS-Canada panel presenting three IR feminist scholars: Maya Eichler, Heather Smith, and Sarah Tuckey. The panelists expressed their challenge of finding an alternative research design that aligns with the feminist agenda while moving away from the positivist framework. As multidisciplinary researchers, the panelists are seen as less IR researchers due to their contribution to other disciplines. On the other hand, conferences and institutionalized systems often fail to recognize feminist approaches. The article illustrates how IR feminist scholars deal with research methodologies and academic recognition.

The second part, Chapters 5 and 6, examines Canadian military culture, system, and community. Chapter 5, authored by Rebecca Jensen, centers on the issue of gender-based violence (GBV) in the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF). This chapter explores the interplay between masculinity and femininity, attitudes, language, and actions, which contribute to the manifestation of abusive behaviors toward the weaker party, particularly women. Such behaviors are perpetuated by the existing hierarchical power dynamics and the prevailing masculine culture within the military's chain of command. The inherent structure of military institutions often results in victims of sexual assault being compelled to coexist with their

assailants in the same environment. Jensen advocates for transformative cultural shifts to safeguard the well-being of sexual assault survivors within military institutions.

Meanwhile, Leight Spanner's topic in Chapter 6 is military spouses' employment. The primary emphasis of the analysis pertains to the interplay between gender and power, both of which are deeply ingrained into the military system through the implementation of traditional Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) policy. The contention posits that the implementation of policies promoting masculine dominance has had an impact on the employment status and opportunities available to military spouses, defined as individuals who are married or in a common-law or conjugal relationship with a military service member. The position of military spouses is gendered by power dynamics, resulting in their position as second-class members. Moreover, the notion of a two-person career has inadvertently imposed a sense of obligation on military spouses to actively participate and perform their responsibilities inside the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) institution. The impact is visible on household finances, as military families rely solely on soldier income because military spouses have limited space and work hours that make recruiters reluctant to hire them. Military spouses struggle with employment difficulties that affect their fulfillment and their households' economic stability. Moreover, adhering to traditional gender norms results in military members encountering social disapproval when they avail themselves of "parental leave" to assist their spouses with

household responsibilities. The author proposes implementing gender-responsive policies by the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) to address the existing policy gap between military troops and their spouses.

The third part focuses on feminist activism and women's empowerment. Chapter 7, authored by Rasema Coronado, Toulia Drimonis, and Elisabeth Vallet, examines the political dynamics in the US election 2017 about feminist movements in Washington, DC, and the adjacent cross-border regions spanning from El Paso to Montreal. The rise of a conservative narrative within the realm of US politics, spearheaded by President Trump, shaped the way the media and public perceived women's attitudes, behaviors, and bodies. The presidency of Donald Trump has had a significant impact on women residing in proximity to cross-border regions, resulting in state-sanctioned acts of abuse. Consequently, the present state of affairs regarding the women's march movement in El Paso exhibits a greater degree of obscurity when juxtaposed with its counterpart in Washington, DC. To conclude the chapter, the authors propose that fostering the advancement of feminist movements in the United States is crucial for amplifying women's political involvement. The general public and political parties should actively contribute to this cause.

Chapter 8 of Sharon Hamilton's work delves into examining a significant court case in Canadian history called the Person Case. This case revolves around the Famous Five, a group consisting of Emily Murphy, Nellie McClung, Irene Parlby, Louise McKin-

ney, and Henrietta Muir Edwards. The case aimed to establish a legal definition of "person" encompassing women's status within the Canadian legal framework. The author presents a comprehensive account of the feminist activism undertaken by the Famous Five in their efforts to address the structural obstacles posed by the law and bureaucracy of the Senate while seeking to amend Section 24 of the British North America Act. The essay elucidates the utilization of creative media by the Famous Five as a strategic instrument for disseminating their messages to specific target audiences.

Chapter 9 examines indigenous women's activism related to decolonization issues. The article suggests that the indigenous people, especially women, are still experiencing the effects of the colonization system. The article is a reprint of the speech by the president of the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC), Francyne D. Joe, in the WIIS-Canada 2017 workshop, followed by a commentary on the speech. In the written speech, Joe argues that Indigenous women's safety in Canada is the state's responsibility, as Indigenous people have been affected by colonization, which resulted in changes in women's positions and roles in society from a matriarchal to a patriarchal system—Lianne Leddy, an indigenous woman from Serpent River First Nation, authors a commentary to the speech. Using a post-colonial perspective, the chapter explains the colonization system in Canada through state policies. The lack of access experienced by Indigenous women in Canada contradicts the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People

as a global norm. The authors suggest that dedicating more effort to supporting indigenous women in reclaiming their traditions and personal safety is vital to achieving social justice in Canada.

The conclusion chapter, chapter 10, ponders upon the questions conveyed in the introduction chapter, “Where are the women?” and “Where is the gender-based analysis?” against the background of the UNSCR 1325 WPS Agenda. The author, Cassandra Steer, concludes that some progress has been made on women’s contribution to global politics and security issues. Notwithstanding the progress made, gender-based violence (GBV) continues to persist, exerting its influence on individuals of both genders throughout various domains. Still, the author admires the women’s narrative and authentic leadership, citing their forthrightness and persistence as practical approaches. Steer proposes to use feminist research methodologies, including story-telling and discourse analysis, in order to examine power dynamics within the scholarship critically. In order to be ready for the structural change that will also affect women’s future generations, it is crucial to consider all of the different viewpoints, voices, and experiences on women’s issues. Equally important, feminist researchers must celebrate and commemorate any advancement made since it will help prepare the next generation of women leaders, who will inevitably encounter the arduous obstacles of their time.

The book presents a range of viewpoints about implementing the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS)

Agenda, as evidenced by its ten essays. The book presents a collection of case studies primarily focused on Canada, illustrating the approaches both state and non-state actors employ in addressing women’s issues. Although the development of the WPS agenda is acknowledged, the book highlights that it remains significantly distant from its desired state. As an extraordinary publication on the WPS agenda’s adoption, the book brings reflection on what an upfront feminist idea should look like, followed by questions of what impact we can expect from this perspective, as well as what the key difference between this perspective and other schools of thought on peace and security issues?

One of the notable features of the book lies in its loyalty to feminist issues through the presentation of narratives that delve into women’s experiences from a distinctly female standpoint and are authored exclusively by women. For example, it is a breath of fresh air to the security issues when women in story-telling style are upfront about their female-specific experiences, indigenous women nonetheless, as shown in chapters 2 and 9. The candid conversation held by feminist scholars in Chapter 4, which discusses their challenges within academia, is notable due to their ability to evoke a raw emotional response that resonates with numerous women in academic settings. It is regarding their research experiences and their non-positivist research approach, which feminist research typically employs and, at times, is considered less academic.

Chapter 3 is a thought-provoking article as it presents a compelling argument that

critically examines the fundamental concept of power in international relations (IR), especially the conception and operation of hard power. It intriguingly posits that the concept of power is inherently biased toward masculinity for its alignment with security. At the same time, it implies that “soft” aligns with notions of weakness and femininity in policymaking, such as women’s roles as agents of peace (pages 42–43 and 46). The author critically examines international relations security studies, specifically focusing on the fundamental idea of power, its origins, and its implications for global dynamics. A similar opinion was shared in Chapter 4, in which the discussion implied that the methodologies and themes of IR scholarships are overwhelmingly masculine (page 78). Fieldwork studies conducted on the military in chapters 5 and 6 remind the readers of the perpetual challenges surrounding gender dynamics in an assumed masculine institution, such as the military, that do not go away despite the structural reform that has been made in the case of Canada. Feminist researchers can offer a set of methodologies for the security sector’s policymaking that align with the feminist perspective. Studies in Part 2 of the book serve as triggers to spark further discussion both in feminist research methodologies and policymaking about finding the solution to the nexus between power dynamics and gender beyond relying on institutional changes.

Furthermore, the book elucidates how the Western feminist paradigm differs from Eastern WPS concerns. As a global norm, WPS diffuses differently throughout

different geographies in dealing with women’s issues, as evidenced in this literature. At present, the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, which pertains to the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Agenda, has been adopted by 104 UN member states and regional organizations such as the European Union (EU), African Union (AU), Organization Security and Co-operation Europe (OSCE), and various others, into their respective policy frameworks (Tickner & True, 2018). Nevertheless, the issues about WPS values in the key pillars of Participation, Protection, Prevention, and Relief and Recovery still exist due to the need for more apparent languages worldwide (George & Shepherd, 2016).

The book practically offers different concepts to non-western countries and expands the familiar notion of feminism from a Western perspective that focuses on women’s emancipation for gender equality rights. The book explores the binary concept, such as intersectionality, that brings more development in IR narratives and practices. However, when it comes to human rights, these concepts may need to be understood when applied to cultural transformations and face challenges in addressing non-Western indigenous values. The adoption of WPS emerged when countries democratized and spread women’s voices and rights into policy adaptation at local and national levels (True, 2016). However, despite the acceptance of the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda by United Nations Member States, including nations in the Global South, there remains a lack of accountability

in the implementation of Regional Action Programs (RAPs) or National Action Programs (NAPs) (George & Shepherd, 2016). The African Union has included the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda in its regional policy framework. However, it has limited its implementation by primarily emphasizing the involvement of women in the context of gender-based violence, as noted by Hendricks (2017). The commitment of the African Union can be attributed to the experience of conflict among its member states. However, despite this commitment, it has yet to be realized entirely due to financial constraints and the persistent lack of progress in addressing the underrepresentation of women in political structures, practices, and behaviors (Hendricks, 2017). Furthermore, it is essential to note that gender-based violence toward women by military soldiers still exists in its peace unit (Hendricks, 2017). The WPS issue is a broader scope of women's issues interconnected with other issues such as human security, economy, and social aspects, and also the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 (Arostegui, 2015; Osland et al., 2020).

The book aims to discuss the relevance of women's livelihood in WPS. Alternatively, it proposes new theoretical developments, such as women's narrative, as an acceptable research method without the need to provide generalizations to be considered academic, thereby allowing readers and researchers to explore further WPS discussion. However, the direct correlation with UNSCR 1325 is rarely found in all chapters. Nevertheless, it offers perspective on how essential intersec-

tionality ideas are for women and marginalized groups. Further, the book has provided a productive discussion on women's issues in several major IR theories, such as constructivism and post-colonial theories, using discourse analysis, historical analysis, and narrative storytelling.

The critical point that should be highlighted is how readers might encounter ambiguity regarding how to differentiate the feminist agenda in the feminist movement from WPS as a global norm that departs from the authors' various methodologies. However, the ambiguity may be advantageous because it helps readers realize that it is not necessary to distinguish between the two in order to comprehend feminist concepts on a practical level. Indeed, the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda is a set of norms emerging from women's activism; however, the limitations on which scope covers WPS issues might need to be clarified in this book. Similar ambiguities can also be found in Chapter 4, which discusses the concept of multidisciplinary analysis in which international relations studies and international law intersect. The question arises while reading Chapter 3, which covers soft and hard power metaphors into smart power, seen from the binary concept of masculinity and femininity: How can this binary concept be accepted and applied in Global South policymaking? The book also repeatedly summarizes each chapter in the introduction and conclusion parts, but this might offer an easier description for readers since the scope of discussion is extensive.

Lastly, the audiences for this book may vary, and it will be highly beneficial

specifically for women's activists, feminist scholars, or academia that needs an in-depth discussion on feminist literature. Equally significantly, the book will benefit readers interested in expanding feminist scholarship in IR. On the global norm adoption notion, the national cases presented in this book serve as a primary tool for reflection. Then, the comparison with other countries and different geographies might increase knowledge production for a better understanding of the global norm and its adoption.

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