Women, Gender, and World Politics

PERSPECTIVES, POLICIES, AND PROSPECTS

Edited by
Peter R. Beckman
&
Francine D'Amico

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Preface

In this book, we explore a relatively new question in the study of world politics: What is the connection between gender and world politics? We do so by considering a range of viewpoints, some traditional, some new. Although many of the contributors employ a variety of Feminist perspectives, this is not exclusively a Feminist treatment of the question. Rather, we and the contributors to this volume brought our own training and experience to two basic questions: Does gender matter in world politics? How might students of world politics go about answering this question?

Some of us suspect that gender is quite important, so much so that a failure to consider it renders our understanding of world politics incomplete, incorrect, or undesirable. Others of us may be more skeptical, not certain that gender is important or as critical as other factors might be. Although we cannot encompass all the diverse literature that has emerged on women, gender, and world politics, we can provide informed commentary on three key areas: (1) the effect of gender and a gender awareness on our thinking about world politics; (2) the ways in which world politics has had a specific effect on women; and (3) how a gender consciousness might change the agenda of world politics and create a different future.

In a companion volume to this text, *Women in World Politics,* we examine the questions, Where are the women? How have women, from those in top leadership positions to women in revolutionary movements, shaped world politics?

We see the book you are now reading as an important complement to traditional textbooks on world politics. Its structure parallels the traditional texts, but it adds a critique of the tradition and suggests a new way to think about world politics. It makes women and women's experiences the

focus, broadening and deepening our perspective on world politics. We hope that this will be a clear, useful introduction for those unfamiliar with the field. In spite of the different voices in this text, it reflects with some fidelity the energy and insight of those who have attempted to develop a new perspective on world politics.

Why should we look at gender? Women have always been involved in world politics, although their participation has often been obscured. Some have been leaders of nations; some have gone to war; some have served as diplomats. Many have made it possible for men to lead, to wage war, and to conduct their nation's business abroad. Women have been the victims and beneficiaries of wars, trade agreements, and alliances. Indeed, as Cynthia Enloe suggests, we need to expand our notion of "world politics" so that we may see women's ongoing connection to world politics—from making it possible to sustain military bases overseas to a government's ability to acquire foreign exchange. At the very least we should know what world politics has meant for half the human species. And we should ask why women's role in world politics and the effect of world politics on women have been obscured.

Second, we can predict with some certainty that women will become increasingly involved in all aspects of world politics. 1992 was called "the year of the woman" in U.S. politics. The continuing global movement for sex equality has reduced legal barriers to formal political participation and has encouraged more women to seek political and governmental positions. The growth in the number and activity of nongovernmental organizations has expanded the paths to participation for women. Increasing political participation by women suggests that the concerns that women articulate—be they about equity, human rights, world peace, or whatever—will have a more prominent place in the international political arena. In addition, the end of the cold war may create a political context that permits greater participation by women and a greater attention to their concerns, as policies predicated on the East-West confrontation decay.

Third, by thinking of gender, we may be better able to respond to the normative question, What *should* world politics be about? Does a greater attention to gender allow us to envision and shape a more peaceful world? Would it encourage us to change the tendencies in our various cultures to devalue women? Can a gender consciousness provide us with different values, which in turn would lead us to make different choices as citizens?

Fourth, by thinking of gender, we have the possibility of making important advances in our theoretical understanding of world politics—not just of future world politics, but of the past as well. Even if gender or the ideas raised by a gender consciousness do not ultimately provide a new conceptual or normative means of addressing world politics, at least the questioning of our existing beliefs and theories may reveal some of the hidden assumptions that merit greater thought.

This project began in the mid-1970s, in an exchange between a teacher and a student in an introductory world politics course. The student wanted to know what role women played in world politics and why there was no discussion of gender in the textbook. The perplexed teacher, after tossing out the names of several women policy makers, allowed that it was a good question. A dialogue began and developed as the student went on to become a teacher in the same field. A decade later, the two of us found ourselves in conversation, regretting the fact that while some academics had begun to work with this "good question," there were no textbooks for introductory world politics courses that addressed the issue of gender. We said that it was a project that really had to be done, and was something we might try to do—after completing all the other projects in which we were immersed.

In 1989, over the coffee and cake at the wedding of a mutual friend, we talked again about the need for such a book. Our idea to "do something" translated itself into an outline for a book and dozens of calls and letters to individuals asking if they might be willing to contribute a chapter. And we discussed the questions and ideas that began to emerge with the students in our classes. This anthology, then, is the product of an ongoing student-teacher dialogue, and we invite you to participate in the discussion.

That more than a dozen diverse contributors were willing to consider these questions is a tribute to their interest and patience and to the importance of the questions themselves. We are grateful for the opportunity to work with and learn from them. In addition, we want to thank several anonymous reviewers, as well as Zillah Eisenstein and Judith Reppy for their thoughtful criticism, and, most particularly, Sophy Craze and Lynn Flint at Bergin & Garvey for their support and encouragement. Others who helped make this book possible include the library reference staffs at our colleges, particularly Debra Lamb-Deans at Ithaca College; Donna Freedline at Ithaca College; and Hobart and William Smith Colleges and the Ithaca College Office of the Provost, which provided financial support. And for our students, our patient families, and our many friends and colleagues who along the way expressed interest and offered support and suggestions, we are thankful.

We hope that the readers of this book will be provoked by our efforts. As we suggest in the last chapter, the future began when you picked up this book.

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Introduction

Francine D'Amico and Peter R. Beckman

The study of world politics has traditionally focused on the relations between states. In this view of the world, women seem almost invisible, since few have been leaders of states. There are the exceptions, of course, from historical rulers such as Catherine the Great of Russia or Elizabeth I of England to contemporary national leaders such as Margaret Thatcher or Corazon Aquino. Such women, however, are often regarded as unusual in a world of power, high stakes, threats, and war. Such an environment is said to be a man's world, and these women are doing "a man's job." They are the visible exceptions that prove the "rule" that world politics is ultimately a male endeavor.

To the extent that political leaders, scholars, and citizens see the world in this way, they—and we—may have a woefully incomplete understanding of world politics. The experience of half the human race is ignored or interpreted to fit within this traditional view. We set out here to discover the relationship of women to world politics. To do that, we have organized this text around three related questions:

1. How do we think about world politics? Traditional *perspectives* on world politics say little or nothing about women. Is that because decisions about world politics "have pretty much been stag affairs"?[1] Or have those perspectives simply overlooked women, perhaps because men have devised the theories from their own experience? Whatever the reason, women will remain invisible until we know how to look for them. But when we start looking for women, we find something else—*gender*—and that concept enables us to reformulate the question: How does gender help us think about world politics?
2. How do new perspectives help us understand how the *policies* pursued by states and international organizations have affected women? Have women been affected in ways different from men?

3. What are the *prospects* for the future? Having (re)discovered the connection between women and world politics and assessed the relation, we need to ask what tomorrow might—or should—bring.

There is another important question: How have women been *participants* in world politics? We cover that question in a companion volume, *Women in World Politics.*[2]

WORLD POLITICS

In order to answer these questions about perspectives, policies, and prospects, we need to develop a set of concepts and review some of the basic questions about women and their relationship to the political world. At times, however, the very concepts we use can hinder our understanding. Consider the definition that we used for world politics at the beginning of this chapter: the relations between states. A "state" (or "nation") is an intangible thing, a mental construct that allows us to talk in a shorthand way about what *humans* with particular capabilities, positions, and interests do. That is, an official from the United States might talk with an official from Israel, or the individuals organized in the armed forces of the United States and other nations might use force to expel individuals in the Iraqi army from Kuwait. Our shorthand versions might be "The United States promises aid to Israel" or "The United States and its coalition allies defeated Iraq in the Gulf War." This shorthand obscures the fact that *males* have typically done the interacting. It also masks the possibility that women, too, have been involved.

The definition of world politics as "the relations between states" also reflects a tradition of seeing the state as the only entity in world politics worthy of consideration. From this traditional perspective, participants in world politics are "soldiers and states*men,*" and textbooks written from this perspective focus on *Man, the State, and War* and *Politics among Nations.*[3] If there are few women making and implementing foreign policy, then focusing on women seems unimportant for an understanding of world politics. On the other hand, if we expand our vision about who or what participates in world politics, we increase the number of places where women might be found. Three types of entities immediately suggest themselves in addition to the state: international organizations such as the United Nations and the European Community, transnational organizations such as IBM and General Motors, and nongovernmental international organizations such as the International Red Cross and Amnesty International.

There is another tradition imbedded in thinking of world politics as the relations between states: a focus on what some call "high politics," or issues such as war and peace, national security, and prestige, which seem bound up with the state. That perspective, while important, does not encourage

us to think about other ways in which humans interact across national borders that may be more connected with their day-to-day concerns, such as employment, pollution, and a sense of belonging to a particular cultural community. State leaders and international organizations as well as citizens' groups and nongovernmental organizations are paying increasing attention to these issues, as the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 1992 or the various conferences on AIDS testify. When we think of world politics as including these issues of "low politics" as well, we expand our scope of inquiry to include economic and environmental issues and the relations between governments and their citizens (human rights). Women may now be increasingly visible in world politics, as they are active on and affected by these issues.

SEX AND GENDER

But are "women" what we are looking for? Once again, the very concepts that we use may confuse us. In common parlance, the terms "woman" and "man" often refer to one's biological *sex.* As you will see, we suggest a different meaning for these two terms. Perhaps it is better to use the terms "female" and "male" when we refer to this biological difference, which is primarily expressed in physical characteristics (notably genitalia), in the different roles that each sex has in the physical process of reproduction, and in the different levels of certain chemicals within the body.

Does one's biological sex express itself in politics, leading to distinctive attitudes, values, and behaviors of females as compared to males? Some argue that it does. Perhaps, as Sara Ruddick suggests, the reproductive/nursing functions of females lead them to be more caring of others than males are.[4] Or, as Doreen Kimura has argued, "The bulk of the evidence suggests . . . that the effects of sex hormones on brain organization" lead to differences in the way in which males and females solve intellectual problems.[5] Or perhaps those hormones have continuing influences: Melvin Konner has hypothesized that different amounts of testosterone in the two sexes account for greater aggressiveness in males.[6] The biological thesis thus claims that there are certain *essential, natural* characteristics of males and females that at least pressure them to think and behave in different ways. From this perspective, biological sex seems the crucial feature for us to consider when considering females and world politics.

There is, however, another viewpoint, one that distinguishes between sex and *gender.* Gender refers to characteristics linked to a particular sex by one's culture. For instance, some claim that aggressiveness and a desire to dominate are—at least in Western societies—*masculine* gender traits and that men are expected to exhibit them. Women are expected to show different, *feminine,* traits. But instead of these traits being linked to a particular sex because of biology, the gender perspective argues that most, if not all,

gender characteristics are *cultural* creations, passed on to new members of a society through a process called socialization. If a culture assigns a particular characteristic such as aggressiveness to a particular sex, the practices of child rearing and language generally mold most individuals in that culture to accept and enact those characteristics. Sandra Harding calls gender "a systematic social construction of masculinity and femininity that is little, if at all, constrained by biology."[7] Thus, we need a concept such as gender to stand apart from biological sex to describe what it means to be a "man" or a "woman" in a particular society.

GENDER AS DIFFERENCE

We need not think that *either* "nature" (biology) *or* "nurture" (culture) creates those differences. *Both* are likely to be involved, but in different degrees and different ways. For our discussion, we will call the differences between men and women gender differences, principally because we suspect that culture is more prevalent in this matter. Thus, when we think of *gender-as-difference,* we concentrate on the differences between men and women, or on the characteristics said to be masculine or feminine, such as aggressiveness.

We still need to ask if there really *are* meaningful gender differences. Many people believe so. For instance, in a recent poll of U.S. citizens, 58 percent said that men and women were basically different regarding "personalities, interests, and abilities."[8]

There are persistent cultural stereotypes or generalizations about specific gender characteristics. In Western culture we often find these paired characteristics that are said to describe gender differences. Notice that they are framed as opposing but related characteristics. Men are said to be rational. Women are of an opposite characteristic: not rational—that is, emotional.

Masculine	*Feminine*
rational	emotional
resolute	flexible/fickle
competitive	cooperative
assertive	compliant
domination oriented	relationship oriented
calculating	instinctive
restrained	expressive
physical	verbal
aggressive	passive
detached	caring

Let us suppose for the minute that most men—either because of biology or socialization—display the masculine characteristics listed above. We can hypothesize that those characteristics may shape world politics in particular ways. For instance, men—as leaders, elites, and citizens—may tend to look on the actions of other states as attempts to gain an advantage. The world from this perspective appears to be a *zero-sum* world, where the gains of other states come at the expense of one's own state. In such a circumstance, one attempts to impose solutions on other states favorable to one's interests through a calculated mixture of threats and promises. Other states, led by men, pursue the same strategy. In this world, it presumably pays to be tough and unyielding, making world politics a never-ending cycle of conflict with little cooperation.

Conversely, if we replace those masculine characteristics with the stereotypic feminine ones, world politics of a quite different nature might emerge. Other states' actions might not seem as challenging; indeed, more often they would appear to be supportive of the interests of one's own state. Perhaps international issues would be defined as problems to be solved through a creative, flexible discussion, rather than as power contests in which winners impose solutions on losers. World politics would be a *positive-sum* game, where everyone wins.

And—continuing our hypothesis linking gender characteristics to a particular sex—if we wanted to *create* a particular world politics, we might ask, Should women replace men in positions of power? Should we resocialize men to have feminine characteristics? The concept of gender allows us to think about change in creative ways. And it encourages us to ask if there *should be* gender differences. The social construction of these opposing characteristics denies the *commonality* of what it means to be human: Each of us can be both rational *and* emotional, competitive *and* cooperative.

We have said all this on the assumption that meaningful gender differences exist. But do public beliefs and stereotypes reflect reality? After all, even in the poll cited above, 40 percent felt that gender differences did not exist. Moreover, our own experiences can contradict claims about gender differences. All of us, for instance, know men who are not aggressive and women who are. The scholarly evidence about gender differences is mixed. It casts doubt on claims of systematic gender differences, although aggressiveness seems to be more common with men.[9]

Some men are not aggressive, and some are very aggressive. Perhaps the conscientious objector and General George S. Patton, Jr., might symbolize the extremes. Most men probably fall somewhere in between. The same can be said of women. Why is there this variation within each sex? If biology determined certain characteristics, we would expect a clear distinction between men and women, with relatively little variation within one sex. Culture, on the other hand, can overlay the biological pressures to think or act

in particular ways with different messages about attitudes and behavior appropriate for women and men.

Culture, in fact, may provide *similarly sexed* individuals with *different* messages. For instance, upper-class males may manifest less overt aggressiveness because their class position has instilled in them the belief that one essentially gets what one wants from life. Males from the working class may be socialized to believe that getting is a matter of pushing (and upper-class males may have been socialized to expect pushy behavior from the lower-class males). Class, race, ethnic background, and the like may lead to diversity in how members of a particular sex think and act. To say that aggressiveness, for example, is a characteristic of males may be accurate in the main, but it may obscure important variations among individuals. We therefore need to be careful in our statements linking men or women to world politics.

Similarly, an attempt to generalize about gender and world politics runs the risk of seriously misunderstanding gender differences when we *compare societies.* Women in a particular society may act differently from men in that society, but they may also act differently from women in other cultures. Indeed, women in one culture may be expected to exhibit behaviors associated with men in a different culture.[10] To the degree that cultures differ on gender characteristics that are relevant to world politics, generalizations about women and world politics will be limited—and seriously incomplete—unless we are aware of the differences.

Thus, there are real limitations for the concept of gender as difference and its usefulness for us in making generalizations. Perhaps at best we might be able to say that gender differences do have consequences for world politics but that the consequences will differ according to the culture and the specific individuals whom we are considering. On the other hand, we do not want to miss generalizations that may be applicable for many societies and to world politics as a whole.

GENDER AS POWER

There is, however, another way to think about gender. The *gender-as-power* viewpoint claims that gender really speaks about a *relationship* between humans, a relationship that is based on power. This viewpoint begins by noting that the characteristics associated with a particular sex were not handed out by chance as in a lottery. Rather, this argument goes, societies found it useful to allocate certain values or characteristics to men and others to women. Historically, the allocation established and reinforced the dominant position of men, creating the condition known as patriarchy: men's control over women. If men are taught to be dominant in a relationship, and women to be subordinate, the inequality perpetuates itself. If "mascu-

line" characteristics are prized, and "feminine" characteristics less valued, the existing power distribution is sustained.

The conception of gender-as-power allows us to take a further step: to suggest that our whole way of *thinking* and *talking* about humans is based on power. The very terms "women" and "men" are a reflection of that power.[11] To label individuals as "women" (or "men") is to exercise power, for the label creates for human beings a set of expectations about who they are, who they are not, and what range of choice is available to them.

Gender-as-power argues that women and men are made, not born. They are created by those labels—labels that open some doors and close others. Labeling creates a fictitious being ("you are 'a woman,' " "you are 'a man' "), but it is a harmful fiction for two reasons. The label denies the commonness that makes us all humans and perpetuates inequalities because the humans carrying one label have more rights or privileges than those carrying the other label.

To think of gender as power may give us new insights into world politics. For instance, consider the term "politics." It brings to mind elections, votes by legislators, and diplomatic negotiations. But what about violence in the home or rape? Typically, we say that those actions are not about politics but fall in another sphere, the private or personal sphere. The political or "public" sphere of elections, voting, and diplomacy has traditionally been associated with men, while women have been associated with the private, personal realm of the home. This gendered division of the political from the nonpolitical has meant that issues in the "private" domain such as wife beating or rape did not appear for a long time as political issues because they seemed unsuitable for public consideration. They were, after all, "private matters."

Thus, the way in which culture defined gender made certain things politically invisible, and women became invisible as political beings as well. Women "naturally" did not belong in world politics, the most public of the political realms. "Tis no less unbecoming [in] a Woman to levy Forces, to conduct an Army, to give a Signal to the Battle," declared a late sixteenth-century Briton, "than it is for a Man to tease Wool, to handle the Distaff, to Spin or Card, and to perform the other Services of the Weaker Sex."[12] Many people today share similar sentiments.

With a *gender consciousness,* however, we can see women as political participants beyond the Margaret Thatchers of the world. Women struggling against wife beating, rape, and *suttee* (the cremation of the wife on the husband's funeral pyre) are engaged in politics. Indeed, breaking free of the traditional definition of politics allows us to see anyone who tries to effect a change in her or his life as a political actor. Politics, therefore, is shaped by all individuals who strive to put those "personal" issues on the political agenda. And as individual efforts coalesce and develop connections across

borders in the attempt to change lives, these personal struggles become part of world politics itself.

Gender-as-power does suggest a generalization that might be true across different cultures and time periods: Women and women's values, orientations, and behavior are generally devalued by society. This devaluation is a result of unequal power: Men have power over women.

This generalization about gender as an expression of men's power over women has provided Feminist scholars of world politics with a different way to think about their subject. Cynthia Enloe, for instance, begins with the Feminist point that the creation of public and private spheres is an expression of men's political power in domestic politics. She then suggests that we apply this insight to world politics. Once we do this, we have a

> radical new imagining of what it takes for governments to ally with each other, compete with and wage war against each other. . . . Governments depend upon certain kinds of allegedly private relationships in order to conduct their foreign affairs. Governments need more than secrecy and intelligence agencies; they need wives who are willing to provide their diplomatic husbands with unpaid services so these men can develop trusting relationships with other diplomatic husbands. They need not only military hardware, but a steady supply of women's sexual services to convince their soldiers that they are manly. To operate in the international arena, governments seek other governments' recognition of their sovereignty; but they also depend on ideas about masculinized dignity and feminized sacrifice to sustain that sense of autonomous nationhood.[13]

In Enloe's view, gender—which she thinks of as power that defines masculine and feminine and that structures the relationships between men and women—underpins world politics.

Our discussion of the concepts of sex, gender, gender-as-difference, and gender-as-power has provided us with clues about how we might rediscover women in world politics. We can look for sex: What women have been involved in world politics? We can look for gender differences: In crises do female policy makers behave differently from their male counterparts? We can look for gender relationships: Do women support their nations in war in ways that maintain their subordination to men? There are many questions, many paths to follow. How shall we proceed?

CONNECTING WOMEN, GENDER, AND WORLD POLITICS

Cynthia Enloe's prescription for the student of world politics is clear and compelling: "It is always worth asking, 'Where are the women?' "[14] Clearly, one could treat women as *actors* in world politics, and this theme is explored extensively in our companion volume, *Women in World Politics.* In the book you are now reading, we look at women as actors, too, but

principally from the perspective of theories of world politics. That is, we begin our inquiry with a principal concern with this general relationship: gender → world politics. Does gender have an effect on world politics, and in what ways?

In Part I, we turn to the *perspectives* that scholars have fashioned in order to describe and explain world politics. In their search for women, Peter R. Beckman, Karen A. Feste, and Francine D'Amico ask what role sex or gender plays in four traditional theories of world politics: Realist theory, Behavioralism, Pluralism, and Critical Theories. We will not be divulging too big a secret to tell you that these traditional theories do not seem to be aware of sex or gender as important considerations. The contributors then ask what might happen if sex or gender were introduced into each theory.

J. Ann Tickner and Sandra Whitworth critically assess traditional theory from a Feminist perspective, for Feminism is the only perspective that has made gender a central feature for understanding the world. Indeed, the Feminist perspective suggests that because traditional theories are too much a part of a Western intellectual tradition that equates men and men's experience with the human experience, they should not be retained. Tickner and Whitworth use Feminist theory as a powerful means of broadening our understanding of world politics. Tickner recasts Realist theory while Whitworth examines several varieties of Feminist theory to see how each might envision world politics. Part I closes with Hamideh Sedghi's examination of Third World Feminist perspectives on world politics. She suggests that these perspectives are a needed balance to the tendency of equating Western experience with human experience.

Thinking of women or gender as a shaper of world politics is an important step, but this needs to be complemented with a exploration of women as *targets* of world politics as well. How do women experience world politics? Is the experience different from that of men? For example, beginning in the 1960s the U.S. Agency for International Development promoted population limitation as a strategy for economic development but emphasized controlling *women's* reproductive capabilities through government-run campaigns to manipulate women's behavior.[15] Women in the Third World experienced U.S. foreign policy quite differently from the way in which men did.

Thinking of women as objects of world politics can be a helpful corrective to assuming that men's experiences are equivalent to human experience. Equally important, if world politics has a differential effect on men and women, what women *as actors* may want to make of world politics may depend heavily on how they have been *affected* by world politics. As world politics feeds back into the lives of women and men, it may create quite different incentives to respond.

Part II discusses how three types of *policies* have affected women. Jean Bethke Elshtain and Rebecca Grant examine the effect of security policy: