Gender, International Relations, and the Development of Feminist Security Theory

National security discourses are typically part of the elite world of masculine high politics. Statesmen, diplomats, and the military conduct the business of states, and too often war, imbuing the relations and processes of the society of nation-states with an atmosphere seemingly devoid of women and an interest in issues of concern to women. The academic discipline charged with theorizing this world, international relations (IR), has only recently made a place for feminist analysis, and then only grudgingly. Academic feminism and IR are contemporaries, each developing through the war-torn twentieth century and motivated by some of the same international events, although work in IR often overlooks women’s contributions, such as the 1919 International Congress of Women, which ran parallel to Versailles (Grant 1992, 86). While in some respects estranged from the mainstream of IR, feminist and gender scholars have launched an important critique of the core issues of the discipline: war, peace, and the quest to secure the boundaries of the nation-state. In a rapidly changing, post-9/11 world, feminist voices must be heard if the international system is to achieve a more comprehensive security in the face of terror networks, technowar, and mounting civilian casualties.

The term security itself has been wrought with ambiguity and has recently taken on the status of an essentially contested concept in the discipline. Within international relations, discussions of international security traditionally revolve around issues of war and peace in an international system of sovereign and self-interested nation-states, with a particular focus on issues of military strategy. In this view, the provision of security is entrusted to the state, with the assumption that states protect and secure the members of the political community from threats emanating from the dangerous, foreign realm outside state boundaries. However, feminists and other critical scholars have started to inquire into the meaning of this

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concept by asking just who is being secured by security policies? Against the illusion of total security, feminists contest the possibility of a perfectly controlled, coherent security policy that could handle every international contingency. Security for women struggling with everyday patriarchy, as Christine Sylvester observes, “is always partial . . . elusive and mundane” (1994, 183).

In this essay, I survey the relatively new but promising IR feminist literature on international security, highlighting the functions of feminist scholarship in any disciplinary intervention—the critique of existing theory, the reconceptualization of core concepts, and the expansion of empirical knowledge (Boals 1975; Jaquette 1976). A review of feminist security theory scholarship (FST) indicates important successes in another task of feminist analysis—rendering the familiar strange, in this case by problematizing the naturalness of “security” (Harding 1991, 142, 149; cited in Tickner 2001). Through a dialogue fostered with political theorists, peace activists, and policy makers, FST has subverted, expanded, and enriched notions of security for more than a decade by making at least four theoretical moves. First, IR feminists question the supposed nonexistence and irrelevance of women in international security politics, engendering or exposing the workings of gender and power in international relations. This entails the recovery of women’s experiences, the recognition of gender-based exclusion from decision-making roles, and the investigation of women’s invisibility in international theory. Second, FST questions the extent to which women are secured by state “protection” in times of war and peace. Third, FST contests discourses wherein women are linked unreflectively with peace, arguing that the identification of women with peace be balanced by recognition of the participation, support, and inspiration women have given to war making. Fourth, and more recently, feminists have troubled the assumption that gendered security practices address only women and have started to develop a variegated concept of masculinity to help explain security. I discuss these contributions in three sections, treating theoretical innovations in feminist

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IR, the conceptual development of the discipline’s core issues, and the empirical expansion of IR theory.\(^2\)

**Critique of existing theory: Challenging “realism”**

With its progenitors among the European émigrés disillusioned with the “idealism” that they assumed to be a cause of World War II, the orthodox approach to IR known as “realism” developed in Anglo-American academic and policy circles following the war (Morgenthau [1948] 1967; cf. Tickner 1988). Realists, as the name implies, dedicated themselves to the dispassionate study of international reality, focusing on “what is” in contrast to the utopian visions of “what should be,” which they saw typified in doomed schemes such as the League of Nations (Carr [1939] 1964). Privileging the state and the military sector and viewing violence as endemic to the international system, realist prescriptions gained ascendancy in cold war U.S. academic and governmental discourses of strategy and security. Because realists saw conflict as inevitable in anarchy (an international environment unsanctioned by any higher authority), “security” entailed the pursuit of power conducted by statesmen strictly guided by considerations of national interest and unimpeded by moral deliberations. During the 1970s, academic realism transformed itself into “neorealism.” Inspired by the scientific successes of microeconomics, neorealists overcame their preoccupation with great statesmen and diplomats and positioned their work squarely under the rubric of U.S. social science. Settling on the systemic level of analysis, which discounted domestic politics, neorealists applied their analysis and science of deterrence to the “bipolar” structure of an international system divided between two transcendental superpowers (Waltz 1979).

With the end of the cold war, a window of critical opportunity opened as issues of the environment and substate ethnopolitical violence suddenly became more salient. Growing awareness of the limits of neorealism, the dissolution of the Soviet bloc, the uniting of Europe, and the new relevance of ecological and economic threats prompted some scholars to reevaluate “what (or who) is to be secured, from what threats, and by what means” (Krause and Williams 1996, 230; cf. Crawford 1991; see also Campbell 1992). Some scholars gradually broadened security to encompass economic,

\(^2\) While international security is the focus of this review, feminists continue to make important contributions in other IR issue areas, e.g., international political economy (Marchand and Runyan 2000) and international organization (Meyer and Prügl 1999). For overviews that trace the development of feminist IR theory, see Murphy 1996; Tickner 2001; True 2001.
environmental, and social sectors (Buzan 1991), while others promoted an emancipatory vision of security, linking it with the releasing of individuals from the constraints not only of war but also of poverty, meager education, and political oppression (Booth 1991). Feminist incursions into the field of IR security can be usefully situated on the widening side of the “widening” versus “narrowing” debate: the former argues that the scope of the neorealist concept of security needs to be expanded to address a range of threats, utilize a broader spectrum of methodologies, and address mounting ethical concerns (Kolodziej 1992); the latter argues that a move beyond the study of military force would deal a serious blow to the field’s intellectual coherence while distracting from serious threats (Walt 1991). Critical security discourse has generally invoked, but not engaged, feminist scholarship, and even approaches that imagined societal sectors of security (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998) have yet to take gender seriously (Hansen 2000).³

Feminists in IR argue that realism, dominated by elite, white, male practitioners, is a patriarchal discourse that renders women invisible from the high politics of IR even as it depends on women’s subjugation as a “‘domesticated’ figure whose ‘feminine’ sensibilities are both at odds with and inconsequential to the harsh ‘realitics’ of the public world of men and states” (Runyan and Peterson 1991, 68–69). Feminists in IR explain the exclusion of women from foreign policy decision making by pointing to the “extent to which international politics is such a thoroughly masculinized sphere of activity that women’s voices are considered inauthentic” (Tickner 1992, 4). Women’s traditional exclusion from the military and continuing lack of access to political power at times presents women with a “catch-22” situation. For example, the importance of a candidate’s military service as a qualification for government office in U.S. political campaigns puts women, who cannot appeal to this experience, at a disadvantage in obtaining the elite status of national office and thus the ability to affect defense and security policies (Tobias 1990; cf. Elshtain 2000, 445).

However, the FST critique is not limited to strategies for getting more women access to corridors of power; feminists also direct our attention to the gendered structure of IR theory. As the title of a classic IR text indicates, the study of international politics has been concerned first and foremost with Man, the State, and War (Waltz 1959). In this book, neorealist Kenneth

³ It is notable that two of the most prominent academic volumes treating the challenges to traditional security theory from the vantage point of the mid-1990s did not include any contributions from gender analysts (Katzenstein 1996; Krause and Williams 1997).
Waltz turns to the canons of political philosophy for an explanation of the causes of war by asking whether wars are caused by human nature, by the internal structure of states, or by the international system. An important component of the study of IR is a self-positioning in the tradition of Western political theory—tracing an intellectual lineage to Machiavelli and Hobbes—particularly as it concerns the state. Feminist analysis of this pedigree shows that the feminine has long served as a symbolic threat to militarized Western conceptualizations of political community, from the ancient Greeks to the twentieth century; Aeschylus’s Furies and Machiavelli’s Fortuna are but two examples (Harstock 1983). Rebecca Grant (1991) argues that a gender bias in IR, transmitted unproblematically from Western political thought to the study of IR, results in the question of gender being taken as irrelevant. For Grant, IR’s interpretation of Hobbes allows “no room for the question of how gender relations affect the transition out of the brutish state of nature and into society,” while Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s famous stag hunt, often invoked as a parable of the problems of security, ignores the familial relations that control the hunter’s defection from the hunting circle (10–15). Taking men as the sole political actors and citizens, the political theory borrowed by IR postulates a domestic/international divide premised on the private/public distinction that relegates women to a space outside politics (9).

Jean Bethke Elshtain’s rich blend of political theory, personal narrative, and history, *Women and War* ([1987] 1995), serves as a rejoinder to the discipline’s philosophical conceit and issues a key challenge to the domestic/international divide that Grant identifies. In a sweeping survey of the discourse of war from the Greeks onward, Elshtain details women’s complex relationships to the body politic, and thus to war, as they emerge from the narratives (war stories) that are constitutive of war. Elshtain focuses on the ways in which war’s “productive destructiveness” inscribes and reinscribes men’s and women’s identities and thus the boundaries of community: “War creates the people. War produces power, individual and collective” (166–67). Reacting to what she sees as the onset of scientism and hyperrationality in academic IR, Elshtain critiques the retreat into abstraction that the quest for scientific certainty produced in “professionalized” war discourse and attempts to revive the bond between politics and morality broken by Machiavelli. By reifying state behavior, Elshtain argues, the realist narrative ignores human agency and identity: “No children are ever born, and nobody ever dies, in this constructed world. There are states, and they are what is” (91).4

4 One criticism of Elshtain rightly spots her U.S.-centric “myopia” but maintains that
Sensitive to the importance of language and narrative in matters of security, Elshtain critiques what she calls the “strategic voice,” an authoritative discourse that is “cool, objective, scientific, and overwhelmingly male” ([1987] 1995, 245). According to Elshtain, this realm of expert language, with its talk of “peacekeeping” missiles and village “pacification,” separates ordinary citizens from civic life. Drawing on fieldwork initiated at a summer program for nuclear strategists during the last decade of the cold war, Carol Cohn’s (1987) analysis of the “technostrategic” discourse of nuclear defense intellectuals casts a feminist eye on the thinking that shapes the practices of national security. Using an ethnographic, participant-observer strategy, Cohn shows how the planners’ use of gendered euphemisms, exemplified by the talk of nuclear virginity and the association of disarmament with emasculation, contributed to a willful, discursive denial of the strategists’ accountability to “reality”—the potential cost of strategic decisions in terms of human life (1987, 1990). While denial of the horrors of nuclear war may be an occupational hazard of nuclear planning, to achieve success (in terms of professional standing and collegial status) participants must legitimate their positions by assuming the masculine—that is, tough, rational, logical—position in the gendered security discourse. The masculine position is also available to (and must be taken by) women who want to be taken seriously, while they limit their “feminine” contributions for the sake of legitimacy (1993, 238). Cohn thus shows how both men and women are implicated in, constituted through, and positioned by gendered security discourse. Realizing that merely adding women to the profession will not eliminate the degradation of “feminine” ideas, Cohn suggests that the task ahead is a revaluation of gender discourse (1993).

Elshtain’s and Cohn’s recognition of the importance of gendered language is an example of the key FST theme of the everyday politics of security. With skillfully crafted vignettes, Cynthia Enloe’s Bananas, Beaches, and Bases (1989) amplifies this theme, providing an important blueprint for FST and its revisioning of security. By finding gender in national security issues both traditional (military bases and diplomacy) and innovatively ordinary (sex tourism and women’s peace movements), Enloe contests the restriction of security to “high politics” alone. As Marysia Zalewski (1994) has noted, Enloe’s ontological project locates women’s
ordinary lives in the international political continuum, while her epistemological curiosity leads her to pose questions such as “where are the women?” that challenge the taken-for-granted irrelevance of women in world affairs. By attending to the experiences of prostitutes, flight attendants, chambermaids, and diplomatic wives, Enloe demonstrates the ordinary workings of gendered power as it supports the practices that constitute international relations. For example, Enloe shows that military bases in foreign countries can lose their “protective cover” in the communities they are installed in if relations with the native population sour. This means that states pay more attention to base women, brothels, and the dating habits of their soldiers than is publicly understood. Likewise, diplomats and the foreign service rely on the hospitality of the domestic space, and their wives’ entertaining talents, to create the trust and confidence necessary for the international relations of negotiation. In one study, building on Enloe’s work, Katharine Moon (1997) details how the United States and South Korea became “partners in prostitution” through the sponsoring and regulation of a systematic, regulated sex trade surrounding U.S. military camp towns. Moon shows how sexual politics and state security alliance politics intertwined in the 1970s when the dependent Korean government tightened its control of prostitution in an effort to persuade the United States to maintain its regional presence as a guarantor of Korean security.

Reconceptualizing core concepts: Security
Elshtain’s and Enloe’s works are widely seen as having cleared the ground for the feminist critique of IR, raising the profile of gender-sensitive critiques of security politics. Feminist security theory emerged from a cross-ideological, trans-epistemological, multivoiced conversational debate among multiple feminisms, including liberal, empiricist, modified-standpoint, and qualified postmodern perspectives, among others. While not addressing an IR audience specifically, the publication of feminist work on issues of war and the military, especially Women, Militarism, and War, edited by Elshtain and Sheila Tobias (1990), and Women and Men’s Wars, edited by Judith Stiehm (1983b), also promoted the later formation of feminist IR in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Along with Ann Tickner’s Gender in International Relations (1992), two edited volumes culled from landmark conferences, Spike Peterson’s Gendered States (1992a) and Rebecca Grant and Kathleen Newland’s Gender and International Relations (1991), collected important essays on security topics. By the mid-1990s, a number of single-authored surveys of fem-
inist IR, including Jan Jindy Pettman’s *Worlding Women* (1996) and Sylvester’s *Feminist Theory and International Relations in a Postmodern Era* (1994), featured full treatments of security issues (see also Steans 1998; Peterson and Runyan 1999).

Tickner’s book in particular presents an early feminist critique of the realist tradition and the first step to evaluating prevalent notions of security from a gender-sensitive perspective. With its military focus, IR security studies had become, according to Tickner, a “dysfunctional” response to the challenges of human and environmental security. As Tickner explains, realism stresses rationality, strength, power, autonomy, and independence, qualities as associated with foreign policy and military affairs as they are with masculinity (1992, 3). She problematizes as well the exogeniety of domestic affairs in the realist account and shows how ostensibly objective realist national security studies attempt to explain the causes of war through a discourse that privileges a view based on hegemonic masculinity. While realists take power as the coercive means by which states obtain security at the expense of other states, Tickner suggests instead that an ethos of “mutual enablement rather than domination” could underlie a positive-sum notion of security inspired by peace activism (1992, 65). Like Elshtain, Tickner challenges the realist aversion to morality in IR, questioning the adaptation of a set of public (and thus international) values as a basis for security so wildly at odds with the values we “espouse at home” (1992, 138).

Applying gender as a category of analysis to show the possibility of a more comprehensive notion of security, Tickner traces the linkage between the system of international relations (and its theorization) and multileveled, gendered insecurities. Against realism’s assumption of autonomous states and its prescription of self-help in a hostile anarchical environment, Tickner argues that the threats of the nuclear age, cross-border environmental degradation, and evidence of increasing international cooperation demand that interdependence be taken seriously (1992). For Tickner, the assumption that there is order within and anarchy beyond the bounds of the community effects a divide between international and domestic politics that mirrors the public-private split that feminist theorists argue perpetuates domestic violence. Tickner rejects the analytic separation of explanations for war into distinct levels and the identification of security with state borders, arguing that violence at the international, national, and family levels is interrelated, ironically taking place in domestic and international spaces beyond the reaches of law (1992, 58, 193). Feminists in IR find the levels-of-analysis approach particularly inappropriate to their concerns because the problem
of the system of patriarchy cannot be addressed solely by reference to particular actors, whether they are men or states (Brown 1988, 473).

**Recasting the state**

Like Tickner, many IR feminists problematize the state and raise questions as to its status as protector of women. Peterson argues that, in addition to its relegation of sexual violence and its threat to the private domestic realm, the state is implicated in the ways that women become “the objects of masculinist social control not only through direct violence (murder, rape, battering, incest), but also through ideological constructs, such as ‘women’s work’ and the cult of motherhood, that justify structural violence—inadequate health care, sexual harassment, and sex-segregated wages, rights and resources” (1992c, 46). However, while not denying the possibility of limited protection offered by the state (Harrington 1992), FST contests the notion of protection—“the exchange of obedience/subordination for (promises of) security”—as a justification for state power (Peterson 1992c, 50). Peterson likens the state’s provision of security for women to a protection racket, “implicated in the reproduction of hierarchies and in the structural violence against which they claim to offer protection” (1992c, 51). In addition, Stiehm argues that the state typically denies women the opportunity to be societal “protectors,” assigning to them the role of “protected” despite the predatory threat often posed by their ostensible guardians (1983a). Governmental attempts to achieve total security versus an external threat can result in predictable oppression: “The problem is that the potential victim is both more accessible and compliant than the marauder. Because the protector is embarrassed and frustrated by his failure to protect, he restricts his protectee instead” (373). By circumscribing the possibilities of the female deployment of legitimate force, the masculine state effectively denies the development of what Stiehm calls a “defender” society, one “composed of citizens equally liable to experience violence and equally responsible for exercising society’s violence” (367).

**Reconceptualizing violence**

In *Gender in International Relations*, Tickner introduces an important theme of FST: the recognition of *structural violence*, a term borrowed from peace research (Galtung 1971), which she uses to designate the economic and environmental “insecurity of individuals whose life expec-
tancy was reduced, not by the direct violence of war but by domestic and international structures of political and economic oppression” (Tickner 1992, 69). Peterson claims that a feminist rethinking of security must first inquire into how structural violence comes to be understood as natural and unproblematic and then work to politicize and reveal the historically contingent nature of such structures (1992a, 49). While women have long been peripheral to the decision-making processes of global capital, the international political economy can render women insecure through the gendered division of labor, the discounting of work in the home, the dictates of structural adjustment programs, the ravages of poverty, and the violence of sexual tourism and trafficking in women—all issues that generally do not get the attention of orthodox practitioners of IR (see Pettman 1996). Likewise, although the care of the environment, a transnational issue requiring collective action, is not a priority of IR theories that privilege the power and instrumental rationality of nation-states, Tickner contends that feminist configurations of security must take note of the need for global economic restructuring and urge a shift from the exploitation of nature to the reproduction of nature (1992). Such a global restructuring might start with the recognition that environmental degradation is not gender neutral; women are affected disproportionately by environmental insecurity, “especially in developing countries where the link between poverty, women’s status (or lack thereof), imposed development policies, and environmental degradation is a complex but intense one” (Elliot 1996, 16).

In sum, the foundation of FST combines a rejection of realism, an interrogation of the abstractions of strategic discourse, an awareness of the connection between women’s everyday experience and security, a critique of the state, and the recognition of the effects of structural violence with a strong normative and transformative vision, evidenced by its focus on inequality and emancipation. For Sarah Brown, the goal of all IR theory should be “the identification and explanation of social stratification and of inequality as structured at the level of global relations” (1988, 461). Tickner claims that social and gender justice must be at the heart of any enduring peace; political, economic, and ecological relationships characterized by domination and subordination cannot coexist with authentic security (1992, 129). She further proposes that empathy, mediation, and sensitivity, all devalued as feminine principles, could play an important role in building alternative modalities of human behavior. According to Tickner, a shift away from the citizen-warrior-patriot, an exclusionary civic ideal predicated on certain types of wartime sacrifice, and a questioning of the premium placed
on military success could aid the development of a less militarized version of national identity, one more conducive to relations with foreign others and to the recognition of the validity of male and female experiential contributions (1992, 137).

Reimagining peace and war
Conceptually, FST investigates and problematizes the relationships between women, security and peace, and war. The unreflective conflation of “peace” with “security” is a dubious move, for it “construes difference as threat” (Runyan and Peterson 1991, 86). Peace, as Elshtain has observed, is an “ontologically suspicious concept” as it is inconceivable without war, and binary understandings of war and peace often rely on degraded notions of the feminine and deny the disharmony and disorder of social and political life (1990). Although war is largely a masculine institution—historically men have been its primary planners and prosecutors—feminist scholars have argued that the complex interrelationship between masculinities and war needs careful investigation. Feminists note that, though drill sergeants and misogynist training are employed in the attempt to turn men into warriors, this conditioning does not convince the majority of men to fire their weapons in battle (Elshtain [1987] 1995, 207; Tickner 2001, 57). For sure, beliefs in the masculinity of war and the inherent aggressiveness of men are undermined by contemporary warfare, which “seems to require, as much as physical aggression, a tolerance of boredom or the ability to operate a computer under stress, characteristics that are neither distinctly ‘masculine’ nor heroic” (Ruddick 1989, 151–52).

Mary Burguieres usefully identifies three possible feminist approaches to peace: a position that accepts stereotypes about male bellicosity and the pacific female nature and espouses the potential peaceful benefits of maternal thinking; one that rejects notions of gender difference and female nonviolence as disempowering to women and emphasizes women’s right to equal standing on issues of war and peace; and a stance that attacks militarism by rejecting both stereotypes, arguing that “war is rooted in patriarchal, military structures which are supported by the behavior of both men and women” (1990, 9). Sara Ruddick argues that feminist politics is consonant with the practice of peacemaking and indeed can catalyze a latent peacefulness in maternal practices focusing on the protection and nurturing of children (1989). However, considering Betty Reardon’s (1985) suggestion that feminist and peace research projects be
merged, Sylvester (1987) warns that such a merger may obscure the diversity of women’s different relationships with peace seen, for example, between the mother and the woman warrior.

Feminist security theory recognizes the ways that women, though they are absent from our war stories, are implicated in war-making practices. With questions such as “without women’s activities, would wars be possible?” feminists remind us that women have played a part in the story of human warfare other than “waiting and weeping” (Pettman 1996, 127). To explain the absence of women in our war stories, Elshtain presents two archetypes, “Just Warriors”—“man construed as violent, whether eagerly and inevitably or reluctantly and tragically”—and “Beautiful Souls”—“woman as nonviolent, offering succor and compassion”—that work to fix men as combatants and locate women as noncombatants while failing to represent pacific men or violent women throughout history ([1987] 1995, 4). Elshtain spotlights the “Ferocious Few,” presenting narratives of the woman warriors, Spartan mothers, vengeful settlers, and female revolutionaries whose violence and battle stories undermine common expectations of the women/war nexus. If we want to understand why female violence is seen as an anomaly to be read out of the history of war, Elshtain suggests that we look to the marginalization of women as juridically constituted and politically accountable subjects in the West, a position that leaves women in a realm coded “potentially uncontrollable . . . overpersonalized and vindictive” ([1987] 1995, 169). By contrast, “male violence could be moralized as a structured activity—war—and thus be depersonalized and idealized” (169).

**Expanding empirical knowledge: Peace/war/masculinity**

Building on this conceptual framework, FST highlights women’s wartime roles as victims, protesters, promoters, and participants. In contrast to realists, who focus on the causes of war, many feminists emphasize the effects and consequences of war on civilians, who have constituted an increasingly large proportion of casualties throughout the twentieth century (Tickner 1997, 625). Expanding the subject matter of IR to wartime sexual violence, FST attempts to uncover the political and symbolic nature of a phenomenon assumed to be natural and private.

**Investigating sexual violence**

As Susan Brownmiller has made clear (1975, esp. chap. 3) rape in warfare has a long history: documented in the religious wars of the Crusades, the American Revolutionary War, the German invasion of Belgium in World
While peacetime does not always bring security, women have traditionally played important roles in international peace movements. At the International Conference on Women at the Hague in 1915 on the eve of World War I, the spirit of female internationalism resulted in calls for the rejection of war, refutation of the idea that war was waged for the benefit of women, and resistance to the role mothers were asked to play in breeding “cannon
fodder” (Costin 1983, 154; see also Berkman 1990 and Tickner 1992). Tickner traces, through peace conferences such as the 1985 Women’s International Peace Conference in Canada and the 1985 World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women in Nairobi, the development of a realistic (but not realist) feminist perspective on security, one grounded in immediate threats to women’s survival and based not only on the absence of war but also on the securing of social and economic justice (1992, 55). With increasing participation in United Nations–sponsored peacekeeping missions, some point to the benefits of certain skills of female peacemakers in establishing rapport with local civilians, preventing female weapons smugglers through more effective searches, and lowering levels of harassment and violence against civilians (Olsson and Tryggestad 2001).

Feminists in IR have drawn particular lessons from the 1981 Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp—a protest against the installation of U.S. cruise missiles in the United Kingdom—to demonstrate feminist strategies of resistance against state security practices. These protestors, by evading and breaching the security of the base itself, tracking and documenting the movement of weapons officials claimed were unobtrusively placed, dancing on missile silos, and using innovative legal strategies such as arguing that the deployment constituted genocide, demonstrated a novel subversion of orthodox notions of security (Sylvester 1994, 184). As Enloe writes, “a military base easily penetrated by a group of non-violent women was no longer a military base” (1989, 79).

Feminists who focus on debates surrounding women’s increased participation in war and their lives in the military as soldiers (Stiehm 1989) face the challenge of explaining women’s recent inclusion in the discourse of war. Some feminists argue that men’s absolute control of the legitimate use of force must be resisted if women are to achieve equal citizenship, and they maintain that the influx of women promises to change the ideological makeup of the military while mitigating the effects of masculine honor on the duty of soldiering (Stiehm 2000). Grant sees a tension between the feminist epistemological commitment to base theory on women’s experiences and the increasing correspondence between men’s and women’s experiences in military and combat situations, which may potentially lead to compromised feminist claims from the margins (Grant 1992).

However, women’s participation—in the military and high politics—continues to be seen as a security risk in the discourses of international relations. Women are often seen as “nationalist wombs” too valuable as reproducers to be wasted in combat (Pettman 1996, 145). Popular
reservations over women serving in positions important to foreign policy are a fact of U.S. security politics, as evidenced by the media coverage and popular reaction to Patricia Schroeder’s display of emotion upon her 1987 withdrawal from the U.S. presidential primary race (Tickner 1992, 2–3). Among military men, unit cohesion and physical fitness are most often used as examples of the detrimental effects of women’s presence in the military, but gender analysis undermines these arguments. Joshua Goldstein finds evidence to suggest that the celebrated phenomenon of male bonding is “generic bonding in an all-male setting, and is accessible to women in mixed-gender settings” (2001, 407). Examining the widespread male apprehension within the military to gender-normed physical training (PT) “standards” for women, Carol Cohn finds that this opposition is a symbolic stand-in for hostility toward women in the military that can no longer be expressed openly (2000). It seems that militarized masculinities, like lizards in nature, communicate by doing push-ups.

Recently, one prominent U.S. observer of foreign affairs has argued that both the pacific nature of women and their increasing political participation and influence on decision making in the developed world will lead to a more cooperative and less conflictual international relations—a “feminized” world politics. However, he argues that such a “matriarchal” world politics must be resisted by developed democracies, as they are vulnerable while threatened by authoritarian rogue states directed by “young, ambitious, unconstrained men” because in “anything but a totally feminized world, feminized policies could be a liability” (Fukuyama 1998, 36). Tickner has contested this view, arguing that its association of women with peace, highly contested within feminism, along with its conservative realist assumptions, justify the exclusion of women from international politics and distract from the IR feminist agenda of recognizing the “need for diminishing socially constructed gender hierarchies that result in the devaluation of women’s lives and their economic and social contributions to society” (1999, 9).6

**Masculinity and militarization**

Since Enloe’s claim that “making women invisible hides the workings of both femininity and masculinity in international politics” (1989, 11), masculinity has been a key, though until recently understudied, theme in FST (Zalewski and Parpart 1998; Hooper 2001). Arguing in favor of granting female agency rather than succumbing to the perception of women as “victims or problems” (1992, 142), Tickner’s critique draws on the work

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6 See also Ehrenreich et al. 1999; Ling 2000.
of Robert Connell to focus on “hegemonic masculinities,” not essentialized men, and she recommends that we take inspiration from feminine characteristics rather than holding them as markers of female moral superiority (Tickner 1992, 137). For Connell, these “configurations of gender practice” represent “the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy” and thus are a mutable, “historically mobile relation” (1995, 77). As Charlotte Hooper has observed, taking into account the male dominance of the field, IR “seems a particularly appropriate site for an investigation into masculinities, and particularly into their dominant, or ‘hegemonic,’ forms” (2001, 5). To this end, Craig Murphy (1998) catalogs several different types of masculinity in international politics: the good soldier, the civilian strategist, the military son, the good comrade, the fashionable pacifist, and the Sisyphean peacemaker. For Murphy, these hierarchically ordered but interacting subordinate masculine roles support the dominant “good soldier” role that in turn buttresses the inequitable world social order.

Applied to IR, the study of masculinities offers insights into the practices that sustain security. Connell argues that relationships between different masculine types are the basis for military organization: “physically violent but subordinate to orders on the one hand, dominating and organizationally competent on the other” (1985, 9). The U.S. military in the 1940s developed technological advances in nuclear weapons and logistics that increased the importance of a certain masculinity—“the professionalized, calculative rationality of the technical specialist” (Connell 1985, 9). Originally understood as feminine due to the “sedentary” nature of “keyboard work,” information technology has taken on a meaning with more power for middle-class men as a result of personal computer marketing campaigns and violent games (Connell 1995, 55–56). According to Steve Niva, the 1991 Gulf War gave rise to a new iteration of hegemonic military masculinity, “tough and highly militarized but also sensitive and compassionate,” counterposed to the type of masculinity represented by Saddam Hussein (1998, 119). Niva notes that media coverage of this newly hegemonic masculinity focused on “computer programmers, missile technologists, battle-tank commanders, high-tech pilots, and those appropriately equipped and educated for new world order warfare” at the expense of grunts and foot soldiers, thereby accentuating the American technological and societal superiority (119). The U.S. “military’s new ‘technowar’ paradigm for capital-intensive, high-technology warfare highlighted the differences between economies and political systems and, thus, the superiority of Western men over other men” (119). Enloe asks whether UN peacekeeping forces evoke different, less militaristic masculinities than
those who soldier for the nation-state (1993). In terms of structural violence, Connell sees a threat in the rising hegemony of a “transnational business masculinity” exemplified by globally operating business executives and their network of political and military contacts (2000, 26).

The study of IR masculinities is accompanied, as Zalewski notes, by the danger that a concentration on gender “could all too easily focus on men or masculinity and create the belief that all are equally oppressed and disadvantaged by gender” and “make invisible the actual practices of domination” to the detriment of feminist politics (1994, 409). However, the alternative, to take masculinity as undifferentiated and unproblematic and to continue to see the oppressive position of masculinity as inevitable and immutable, makes continued research in this direction seem worth the risk.

Conclusion

Feminists working on security issues have articulated a normative “revision” of what security could mean if gender were to be taken seriously. Feminist security theory interrogates the philosophical, academic, and political underpinnings of gendered insecurity and articulates an alternative vision of security. This vision entails revealing gendered hierarchies, eradicating patriarchal structural violence, and working toward the eventual achievement of common security. In its critique of existing theory, FST takes on realism, revealing its philosophically transmuted gender bias and androcentric framework. Reconceptualizing core concepts of IR, FST expands and contests realist notions of security and demonstrates why impoverished assumptions of autonomy and overly parsimonious levels-of-analysis approaches must be abandoned for a vision of an interconnected, interdependent international system. Feminist investigations of the gendered peace/war nexus have resulted in the expansion of empirical knowledge, contributing to a fuller account of women peace workers, women warriors, wartime sexual violence, and militarized masculinities. Recent international developments suggest several more unexplored avenues for future FST research.

Feminists in IR have not given adequate attention to military hardware and weaponry and have left the relationships among war, gender, and technology understudied (with the exceptions of Tobias et al. 1982; Hooper 2001). The “revolution in military affairs” and the prominence of artificial intelligence in military planning are in need of feminist intervention (see Adam 1998; Halberstam 2001). Elshtain draws attention to the paradoxical U.S. military policy of “combatant immunity,” the consolidation of a new
norm of “riskless warfare” that combines an extremely low tolerance for U.S. casualties with aerial bombing campaigns that punish foreign non-combatants (especially women and children) (2000, 447). As technoscience and battlefield automation continue to influence the practice of war and as the abilities and physical presence of the warrior are alternatively enhanced or removed altogether, the inconsistency Elshtain identifies is likely to remain a challenging issue for feminist security theory. Bringing feminist critiques of science and war to bear on the study of technoscientific state violence could improve our understandings of the discourse of “networked warfare” as well as the “smart bombs” that will torment civilian populations for the foreseeable future. The use of networks and cellular phones by terrorists during the September 11, 2001, attacks serves notice that information technology–enabled networks are now as much a part of women’s and men’s insecurity as they are of the securitizing efforts of nation states.

As state managers in the West and elsewhere struggle to capture and contain the diffuse threat of terrorism using the tools of statecraft, FST must work to recover the experiences of women after September 11, not only as (he)roes but in their multiple roles across levels and borders. As the more “private,” domestic element of the September 11 phenomenon, the anthrax attacks from within the United States on the postal system and its everyday recipients have gone without official blame, explanation, or sustained media coverage, yet they affected the lives of anyone who opens a mailbox daily. The war in Afghanistan demonstrated both gender’s power to legitimate national security goals and the easy acceptance of remasculinization during times of war (Tickner 2002). The vital, often gendered, negotiation of cultural relations between the West and Islam and the effects of state antiterror campaigns on civilians are problems that military campaigns in Afghanistan or Iraq are not designed to address and traditional nonfeminist theories of IR are not entirely equipped to handle. The U.S.-led global war on terror seems to exemplify the type of gendered, multilevel insecurity that IR feminists have raised to our critical attention.

Ironically, the policy world of nation-states has recently begun to outpace the academic discipline of IR in its acceptance of feminist issues, as evidenced by the rapid diffusion of “gender mainstreaming” bureaucracies and gender-sensitive policies across states from a diverse range of cultures and levels of gender inequality (True and Mintrom 2001, 29). The adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 in October of 2000 was a watershed that should provide those interested in gender and security with many new research opportunities to study the ways the incorporation of a gender perspective and female participation affect peacekeeping and the
security of women and men. With its multileveled, ethical approach, feminist security theory offers the best hope that these challenges—technowar, the “war on terror,” and peacekeeping—can be met with an eye toward the reduction of gendered global insecurities in the difficult years ahead.

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References

Resolution 1325 recognizes the role of women in peace building and the prevention and resolution of conflicts and calls for study of the impact of conflict on women and girls. It marks the first time the United Nations has taken formal action on gender issues. For discussion, see Olsson and Tryggestad 2001.


Stiehm, Judith Hicks. 1983a. “The Protected, the Protector, the Defender.” In Stiehm 1983b, 367–76.
