

Contending Images of World Politics

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CHAPTER 14

A 'Gendered Global Hierarchy'?

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As a metaphor for our time, 'a gendered global hierarchy' may be an unfamiliar and even disconcerting image to many. Unlike other metaphors in this book, a gendered global hierarchy is not associated with any particular author, text or origin. In fact, at present this metaphor has no single meaning and therefore has perhaps less currency in the literature of International Relations than some of these other metaphors. Rather, there is a rapidly growing body of research, writing, teaching and activism we might label 'feminist IR'. In some respects, all variants of feminist IR are critical of a gendered global hierarchy, but they differ significantly on what constitutes this hierarchy, how it is produced and sustained, and how we might move beyond it. While there is, then, no single or simple image, an examination of the various interpretations of a gendered global hierarchy brings us to an important site that other pictures of world politics miss, one which has important implications for the theory and practice of world politics.

In many ways, a snapshot of mainstream IR itself depicts a gendered global hierarchy. The discipline is largely dominated by Anglocentric and Eurocentric male practitioners and by masculinist constructs, such as sovereignty, national security, *Realpolitik*, and military might. It is also focused on public sphere activities – power politics, foreign policy, militarism, war – that are defined as masculine and dominated by men. More recently, the male-dominated activities constituting big business and global financial power have become a focus of IR as well. Moreover, mainstream depictions of IR represent a world of hierarchical social relations among inherently competitive, power-seeking nation-states. In sum, the discipline and its mainstream image renders women, the activities associated with women, and/or constructs, identities, practices and institutions associated with femininity virtually invisible. What feminists argue is that this gendered

(masculinist) image is not only 'inaccurate' and hence generates flawed analyses of world politics; it is also biased in ways that effectively produce and reproduce a variety of global hierarchies that are linked by their denigration of the feminine as weak, dependent, irrational and uncivilized.

This chapter argues that feminisms provide powerful conceptual lenses which systemically challenge the givens and parameters of conventional IR theory and practice. This claim has several components. First, feminists transgress disciplinary boundaries to generate more wide-ranging and inclusive analyses of social relations. Their study of world politics draws upon and links areas of inquiry, such as family relations, domestic violence, welfare economics, and ecological issues, that are neglected in mainstream accounts. Second, feminists also transgress 'levels of analysis' and the public-private divide to generate more systemic or holistic analyses. For example, they examine how individual internalization of gender stereotypes (for example, masculinity as competitive, unemotional and 'in control') interacts with sociocultural inputs (for example, patriarchal religious beliefs, pornography, violent entertainment) and with gendered divisions of labour (for example, politics and the military as 'men's work') to fuel international relations that are competitive and conflictual (for example, dominated by men seeking autonomy and control through direct and indirect violence). Third, feminists acknowledge that their work is informed by normative/political commitments. The specifics of that commitment vary tremendously: there is no single feminist vision or agenda. But the very existence and acknowledgment of a commitment to 'improving the conditions of women' links and strengthens feminists even as it also works against feminist projects by fuelling resistance from those not committed to gender equality.

In sum, the lens that feminisms provide poses challenges to conventional analyses by integrating insights and research on gendered identities (how we think of ourselves and behave as gendered social beings), on gendered communication systems (how naming, concepts, language and world views are gendered and how this affects all social relations), and on gendered institutions (how divisions of labour and authority structure unequal divisions of autonomy, privilege, security, resources, and power). Given this array of issues, we begin to see how feminist IR is not easily captured by any single metaphor, and how it constitutes not only a critique of specific IR claims but a transformative project on no less than a global scale.

What then does the image of 'a gendered global hierarchy' encompass? What do we mean by feminist IR? And why has feminist IR emerged only recently? I begin by setting the context for the emergence of feminist IR and then consider several ways to depict its meaning and significance. The first of these has to do with epistemological differences that shape how feminists, and others, variously deploy the dichotomies of male-female and masculine-feminine. The second considers three overlapping feminist

projects that underpin and inform feminist IR and provides examples from feminist IR texts. I conclude by discussing the strengths and weaknesses of viewing IR through feminist lenses.

Context: Why Feminist IR Now?

All images and perspectives are dependent on historical context for their meaning and salience. Feminist IR could emerge because feminist activism had politicized gender oppression (for example, inequality of rights, opportunities, resources; sexual harassment and violence), and made women's issues visible and global. Of particular relevance to IR, the United Nations Decade for Women (1975-1985) and its related conferences not only provided global fora for women's issues, but also instituted data-gathering on the actual conditions of women worldwide. At the same time, feminist scholarship demonstrated that gender influences not only who we are and how we act but also how we think and, therefore, how we make knowledge claims. In various academic disciplines, debates in social theory were unsettling conventional claims about objectivity and science. Referred to as the 'third debate' in IR,² critiques of the discipline's 'givens' raised or re-opened many foundational questions. These disruptions made it more likely that alternative vantage points and critical challenges could emerge.

But given the masculinist image of IR depicted above, the discipline has been particularly³ reluctant to acknowledge, much less welcome, feminist interventions. In Ann Tickner's words, 'international politics is such a thoroughly masculinized sphere of activity that women's voices are considered inauthentic' (Tickner, 1992, p. 4). From this, we begin to see how and why the discipline constitutes difficult, even hostile terrain, for women and especially for feminists. However, by the late 1980s, even reluctant disciplines were vulnerable to feminist pressure.

In 1988, the London School of Economics formally initiated the study of 'gender and IR' through a seminar course and a special issue of its journal, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*.³ Conferences, panels, articles, and books followed. The Feminist Theory and Gender Studies section of the International Studies Association provided institutional visibility in 1990. I circulated a thin but rapidly growing 'gender and IR' bibliography until 1993, when the volume of relevant material exceeded my ability to track it comprehensively.⁴ Given its relatively recent and heavily resisted interventions, feminist IR has gained a remarkable foothold in the discipline. A very extensive and wide-ranging literature exists. IR feminists have institutionalized their presence at conferences and in curricula, and have recently launched a journal devoted to feminist international politics. As a

particular sign of healthy growth, a 'second generation' of IR feminists is already visible, pushing in new directions and further eroding disciplinary, territorial, and race/ethnic/class boundaries.

Epistemology: What Difference Does it Make?

Whereas all proponents of feminist IR seek to improve the conditions of women in some sense, the variance among them in what this means and implies is considerable. Like any lens on social relations, feminist perspectives can be distinguished by reference to what issues (bodies, politics, economics, violence?) are focused on and how knowledge/truth about those issues or topics is produced (empirically, analytically, comparatively or intuitively?). It is important to note that the two questions are not separate but interactive. Stated simply, the latter refers to epistemology – or the study of truth claims, as in 'How do we make claims to know?' 'How do we generate evidence and conclusions and attribute validity to them?' I can only treat these complex issues briefly here, but they are important for grasping how feminist IR spans a range of positions, which generate multiple interpretations of the image of a 'gendered global hierarchy'. Epistemological positions also affect responses to feminist IR. I return to this point in the conclusion. Of course, epistemology is also key to current social theory debates, which centre on how we understand the relationship between knowledge and power. In this sense, epistemological practices are quintessentially political.

At the risk of oversimplification, the epistemological distinction I wish to draw between positivist and postmodernist orientations centres on questions of language and power (for fuller discussion, see Peterson, 1992; see also George, 1994). Positivists make two interacting assumptions: that subjects (knowers) can be separated from objects (that which is known), and facts (generated through the application of scientific method, which separates subject from object) can be separated from values (the subjective taint of the knower's desires, opinions, interests). A further assumption follows: that reality exists independent of the subject's participation in it, so knowers (and the power relations within which they exist and act) can be separated from that which they study.

Postmodernists are sceptical of these claims, and especially the dichotomized, either-or separations that are assumed. They argue instead that reality is better understood not as rigid boundaries but *relationally*. Specifically, they argue that the world we study is a social construction in the sense that humans/subjects 'create' meaning and intelligibility through the mutual (inter-subjective) constitution of symbols, language, identities,

practices and social structures. This is not to argue that the physical world does not exist independent of subjects but that it has no social *meaning* independent of that which is 'imposed' by human thought and action. Hence, knowers cannot stand 'outside' of the reality they observe because their participation in that reality is a necessary condition for the object observed to have any social meaning. That is, *both* subject and object gain their meaning and intelligibility by reference to their location in a system of meaning and social relations, including power that encompasses both. From this perspective, subjects and objects are not categorically separate but necessarily exist in a relationship shaped by inter-subjective meaning and social/power relations. As a consequence, 'absolute' objectivity is illusory, the relationship between knowledge and power becomes central to evaluating all claims, and language becomes central – and political – insofar as it constitutes the meaning system of intelligibility and order.

By denying the categorical separations that are fundamental to positivism, postmodernists reject 'either-or' thinking (dichotomies) as a distortion of social reality. They emphasize instead the relationships that link beliefs and actions to language and power. This becomes crucial in feminist debates – and in feminist IR – because the dichotomies of male-female and masculine-feminine play so central a role in feminist claims. As one consequence, 'a gendered global hierarchy' means different things to different feminists.

Diversity and Complexity: a Continuum of Feminisms and Images

While there is overlap among all feminist projects, the diversity among feminists renders many different images of a gendered global hierarchy. To impose structure on the imagery, I identify three overlapping feminist projects and locate particular feminist IR projects along a continuum that spans positivists and postmodernist orientations.

Typically, the initial feminist project is a deconstructive one: exposing the extent and effects of masculinist bias. This exposes the omission of actual women and their activities while also documenting how 'woman' is represented as deviant from or deficient in respect to male-as-norm criteria. For example, the model of universal human nature (as atomistic, greedy, and competitive) that underpins IR is in fact based upon interpretations of the experiences of a particular subset of humans (males) in a particular context (modern Europe). Hence, these cannot be accurate claims about all *humans* or even all males. Consider how a model based on females who mother would foreground not independence, selfishness or competition but mutual

aid, 'altruism', and cooperation – that is, *relationships* – insofar as these are essential for sustaining group existence. It is not simply that mothers are doing something different than the men depicted, but that the very existence of adult males *depends* on mothering and other cooperative activities. To ignore this is to misrepresent *human* social relations. In short, androcentric (male-as-norm) assumptions have generated systemic bias in knowledge claims and cultural ideologies. One sense of a gendered global hierarchy, then, is how the picture it projects focuses on men (only) and privileges only what they do and how they think. In this picture, women, and also 'private sphere' activities upon which men's lives depend, are rendered invisible.

Attempts to rectify the systematic exclusion of women constitute a second project: correcting androcentric falsehoods by *adding women* and their experiences to existing frameworks. To focus on women's lives and private sphere activities involves new sources and topics (for example, diaries, domestic activities) and prompts a re-evaluation of old ones. But adding women to existing paradigms also reveals how deeply the conceptual structures themselves presuppose male experience and viewpoint. That is, 'adding women' reveals the extent to which excluding women/femininity is a fundamental structuring principle of conventional thought. Indeed, women cannot simply be 'added' to constructions that are literally defined by being masculine: the public sphere, the military, rationality, political identity, objectivity. Either women as feminine cannot be added (that is, women must become like men) or the constructions themselves are transformed (that is, adding women as feminine alters their masculine premise and changes their meaning).

Probably the most familiar feminist IR work corresponds to the second project and asks 'where are the women?' and/or 'adds women' to conventional IR topics. For instance, Rebecca Grant (1991) recasts the stag hunt analogy by asking where the women are and how each man's relationship to family needs affects his decision making. By ignoring these aspects, the stag hunt is a misleading analogy for the behaviour of states, which also depend on domestic arrangements. Other feminists recast security by asking how women are affected by war and whether the pursuit of guns over butter is in *their* interest. Cynthia Enloe's pioneering work (1990) examines the unconventional topics of tourism, foreign military bases and domestic servants to illuminate a gendered global hierarchy operating in everyday lives and global dynamics. And adding women to models of economic development exposed, for example, how assuming Western divisions of labour paralleled those in Africa resulted in failed projects. Programs that directed agricultural training and credit to men denied women's traditional role as farmers and actually decreased their well-being and that of their children (Elson (ed.), 1991).

More recent literature adds women and some exploration of gender to international political economy (IPE), where women's work significantly

shapes national productivity and resources.⁵ Women are key, as ever, to the reproduction of future citizens and workers. They determine consumption patterns. They 'take up the slack' when states cut back on public provision of welfare. As cheap and flexible sources of labour, women are preferred workers in today's global assembly line economy. In short, feminists insist that acknowledging the work that women do is essential to economic analyses. Other research that takes women's lives and experiences seriously includes: women's rights as a dimension of international human rights discourse (Cook (ed.), 1994; Peters and Wolper (eds), 1995; Peterson and Parisi, 1998); the history and contemporary relevance of women's peace and ecological activism (for example, Reardon, 1985; Runyan, 1988; Shiva, 1988; Mies and Shiva, 1993; Sharoni, 1995; Whitworth, forthcoming); women's state, non-state, trans-state and international political activities (Randall, 1987; Stienstra, 1994; Whitworth, 1994; Tetreault, 1994; D'Amico and Beckman (eds), 1995; Peterson and Runyan, 1999); and women in militaries, nationalist struggles, foreign policy, and security broadly construed (Enloe, 1983 and 1993; Stiehm (ed.), 1983; Elshtain, 1987; Cohn, 1987; Elshtain and Tobias, 1990; McGlen and Sarkees (eds), 1993; Lorentzin and Turpin 1998).

Making women empirically visible in world politics is a valuable project. It exposes the androcentric assumptions of conventional accounts, inserts actual (embodies) women in our picture of 'reality', and reveals women as agents and activists, as well as victims of violence and the poorest of the poor (Peterson and Runyan, 1999). But it also forces a rethinking of foundational categories. For example, it suggests that the androcentric definition of 'human' conceals how women systematically suffer 'human' rights abuses. And it is a masculinist construction of 'work' that conceals women's labour and its relevance to IPE. In short, adding women also reveals how categories and frameworks themselves are biased toward male bodies, experience, and knowledge claims. Rethinking foundational categories entails the third project that is prompted by feminist perspectives: reconstructing theory.

It is here that the distinction between sex and gender is crucial.⁶ In contrast to positivist notions of sex as a biologically 'natural' dichotomy of male–female, gender is a systematic *social construction* that dichotomizes identities, behaviours, and expectations as masculine–feminine. As a social construct, gender is not 'given' but learned and therefore mutable. Most significantly, gender is not simply a trait of individuals but a historically institutionalized, structural feature of social life. On the one hand, gender is a socially imposed and internalized 'lens' through which individuals perceive themselves and the world. On the other hand, the pervasiveness of gendered meanings shapes concepts, practices, identities and institutions in patterned ways. In short, gender is not simply an empirical category referring to substantive men and women but an analytical one, such that 'all of social life is gendered' (Nelson, 1989, p. 4). In Sandra Harding's words

Once we begin to theorize gender – to define gender as an analytic category within which humans think about and organize their social activity rather than a natural consequence of sex difference, or even merely as a social variable assigned to individual people in different ways from culture to culture – we can begin to appreciate the extent to which gender meanings have suffused our belief systems, institutions, and even such apparently gender-free phenomena as our architecture and urban planning. (Harding, 1986, p. 17)

As a *structural* feature of social life, gender pervades language, which shapes how we think and communicate. It structures divisions of power and authority, which determine whose voices and experiences dominate culturally and coercively. It also structures divisions of labour, which determine who does what kind of work and how compensation for work is distributed. In short, a gendered global hierarchy operates at a deep structural level.

In the third project, reconstructing theory, feminists join other critics of positivism who challenge essentialist categories and dichotomies. Gender as an analytic category enabled feminists to criticize not only the exclusion and/or denigration of females (as a sex category), but also the masculinist constructs that underpin philosophy (reason, abstraction), political theory (atomistic individualism, sovereignty), economic models (waged labour, rational choice), and science (objectivity, dichotomies). Indeed, feminists go beyond other critics of positivism to argue that 'the fundamental dichotomies ... between subject/object, rational/irrational, culture/nature, and reason/emotion are all a product of the basic male/female hierarchy that is central to patriarchal thought and society' (Hekman, 1987, p. 68). For example, Ann Tickner (1992) genders the state by arguing that IR theorists simply project the assumption of masculine characteristics onto states, which they then define as unitary, rational, competitive, and the primary actors in IR. Historically, individuals are linked to states through citizenship that is constituted by (male-only) military and property-owning qualifications, and states act as warriors in the anarchic realm of international politics.

The third variant of feminist IR focuses less on sex as an empirical variable and more on exploring the interdependence of masculine-feminine, the centrality of gendered identities, and the significance of gender in how we *think* as well as how we act. Conventional categories and dichotomies are not taken for granted but problematized. Here we find more references to symbols and language, and more efforts to rethink foundational constructs, such as power, sovereignty, security, identity, development, violence, peace. Consistent with this, there is typically more evidence of theoretical discussion and debate, and more self-consciousness about analytical assumptions and how they frame the questions we ask and the methods we adopt.

For instance, Spike Peterson and Anne Sisson Runyan emphasize the *interaction* of empirical and analytical gender by reference to two mutually

constructed dimensions: 'women's position in world politics' (how women and men differently act within and are affected by international processes) and the 'power of gender' (how gendered lenses shape our concepts, expectations and knowledge claims). Their book illustrates how gendered dichotomies – such as public-private, soldier-protectee, production-reproduction and culture-nature – underpin IR thinking about politics, security, economics and ecology (Peterson and Runyan, 1999). Jan Jindy Pettman takes the imagery of gendered global hierarchies to new sites by exploring the gendered politics of identities not only within states but also in relation to colonization, racism, nationalism, migration and postcolonial issues (Pettman, 1996). These remain neglected areas in IR but are increasingly the focus of feminist interventions (for example, Yuval-Davis, 1997; Alexander and Mohanty (eds), 1997; Agathangelou and Ling, 1997; Han and Ling, 1998; Ranchod-Nilson and Tetreault (eds), 2000; Eisenstein, 1996). This is due in part to the significance of gender in relation to identity politics more generally, and also to feminist concern with a broader range of oppressive politics than typically animates IR inquiry.

As we move through feminist projects and along the continuum, gender refers less to taken-for-granted categories of male-female, which simply reproduce the terms as a dichotomy, and more to the dynamic, multidimensional relationship between masculine-feminine. Here, gender is not a synonym for woman (Carver, 1996). Rather, gender as analytical construct means that claims about femininity are necessarily also claims about masculinity. Because they are interdependent constructs, the study of men and masculine activities *requires* the study of women and the feminine. In this sense, feminist IR does not just tell us something about women but necessarily transforms our understanding of men. As a corollary, on this 'side' of the continuum we find in works such as Marysia Zalewski and Jane Parpart's edited volume *The 'Man' Question in International Relations* (1998) not only more attention to men, masculinities and heterosexism (Zalewski and Parpart (eds), 1998; Weber, 1999; Peterson and Parisi, 1998; Peterson, 1999) but a destabilization of 'identities' more generally.

Postmodernists question whether we can refer unproblematically to collective social identities – such as 'the working-class perspective'. If all social identities are constructed through complex and intersecting histories, experiences, and structures, then there is no such thing as a purely 'working-class' identity. Rather, people have socially constructed identities other than, and in addition to, class, such as gender, race, national, and familial identities, that can conflict with or mediate their class identities. Therefore, there is no way to identify a single working-class perspective that can speak for all working-class people. Rather, we must recognize that, while generalizations about groups are useful, they are also always suspect insofar as they hide the differences 'within' the group being described.

Even as postmodernism problematizes universalizing claims, its critical orientation can serve feminist projects. Jill Steans identifies feminist postmodernism as 'affirmative' and able to contribute to critical projects of emancipation. Any fixed or universalizing construction of 'women' is rejected, but the possibilities of feminist resistance are not. For Steans (1998, pp. 182–3), feminist IR is perhaps better seen not 'as an attempt to 'reconstruct' the discipline, but rather as opening up spaces for critical engagement and dialogue'. (1998:182–3) Christine Sylvester (1994) develops a different theoretical point in regard to feminism and postmodernism. The latter's emphasis on the constitutiveness of masculinist language inclines it toward the deconstruction of authority and destabilization of places from which to speak/act, and hence, away from political commitment and action. In contrast then to feminist postmodernism, Sylvester argues for postmodern feminism, which inclines toward a negotiation between standpoint feminism – with its 'real' women and practical/moral implications – and postmodernism's scepticisms. So understood, postmodern feminism permits us to have meaningful identities even as we relentlessly question their political implications. Sylvester's postmodern feminism asks us to recognize, but not categorically resolve, our need for boundaries and identities. Rather, to transform gendered global hierarchies requires a shift to more fluid and relational orientations.

There is, then, no single feminist IR perspective but a continuum of overlapping perspectives/projects and even epistemologies. Hence, there is no single interpretation of how 'a gendered global hierarchy' is constituted or might be reformed, but the continuum outlined above illuminates key forms of hierarchy that other perspectives on world politics neglect.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Feminist IR

Given its diversity and range, feminist IR makes a number of contributions to our understanding of world politics and multiple interpretations of a gendered global hierarchy. These can be examined by reference to empirical, analytical and critical/political contributions.

From the vantage point of empirical contributions, feminists improve our understanding of world politics by including more of the world. As approximately one-half of the population, 'adding women' is not a trivial consideration. For example, the work that women do is consistently neglected in conventional accounts. Yet the reproduction of all social groups and all public sphere activities *depends* on activities in the 'private sphere' that are delegated to women. Moreover, today's global economy, which is inextricable

from today's world politics, involves consumer identities, worker expectations and skills, divisions of labour, and financial arrangements that are all profoundly gendered. Hence, we simply do not adequately understand the world of economics – and politics – unless we take seriously how those worlds are gendered. We begin to perceive a gendered global hierarchy when we ask, where are the women?

The diversity among the world's women – differences of class, ethnicity/race, nationality, sexuality, and so on – poses urgent problems for feminists who implicitly or explicitly make universalizing claims about 'women'. Among feminists, the significance of differences and, especially, hierarchies among women is a challenging and politically crucial dilemma. At issue is how to bring an awareness of and respect for differences among women into productive relation with commitments to and action in support of 'women's' political agency and efficacy, insofar as the latter presupposes commonalities of experience, interest and strategic objective. Although all social movements confront this tension, feminists have gone further than most to acknowledge and address their complicity in reproducing hierarchies. However one interprets their record on this score, it is certainly the case that women's movements are a worldwide phenomenon and inputs to feminist IR reflect a diversity that corresponds more accurately to the world than inputs typical of mainstream IR.

Of course, including women in world politics also informs and should transform policy making. This extends from basic welfare provision to health care and family law and on to trade policies, citizenship laws, war crimes and human rights. In short, women and men differently affect, and are differently affected by, the practices, processes and institutions of world politics. Adequate analysis requires recognizing and coming to terms with these differences.

From the vantage point of analytical contributions, feminists join other critics of positivism in rejecting either-or dichotomies and simplistic notions of objectivity, rationality, and the neutrality of methods. Postmodern feminists extend anti-foundational critiques by identifying objectivity, rationalism, and even science itself as specifically masculine ways of knowing as shaped by patriarchal social relations. Locating masculinism at the foundation of Western thought and early state-making, they argue that the *hierarchical* dichotomies that typify Western culture and structures are both produced by and are a product of the gender hierarchy 'that is central to patriarchal thought and society' (Hekman, 1987; also Peterson, 1997b). It is in this sense that gender hierarchy underpins other structural hierarchies (see below). That is, the taken-for-granted, ostensibly 'natural' dichotomy of male–female is generalized to naturalize, hence depoliticize, the dichotomy of masculine–feminine and its historical *privileging* of that which is associated with masculinity over that which is associated with femininity. This naturalized hierarchy provides powerful legitimacy to

discriminatory languages, practices and institutions that are linked by their denigration of the feminine.

Thus, feminists make a distinctive contribution to current debates. First, to the extent that masculinity remains privileged and positivism is identified with masculinity, critics of positivism meet resistance not only to their argumentation *per se* but to the 'demasculinization' of science their argument entails. Second, to the extent that Western thought constitutes, and is constituted by, the colonizing dualism of masculine-feminine as these feminists claim, moving beyond positivism requires moving beyond taken-for-granted gender dichotomies as well (Peterson, 1992). In short, effective critiques of positivism must involve effective critiques of masculinism, and vice versa.

From the vantage point of critique and political practice, feminist contributions are uniquely transformative. Their key contribution in this case is historical-empirical in providing analytical evidence of gender hierarchy as fundamental to domination in its many guises. First, females suffer disproportionately under systems of domination insofar as females constitute at least one half of most subordinated groups and are systematically rendered more vulnerable to sexual and other violence, inadequate health care, political subordination, and economic impoverishment. Second, the naturalization of women's oppression – taking gender hierarchy as 'given' rather than historically, politically constructed – serves as the model for depoliticizing exploitation more generally, whether of groups or of nature.

That is, feminists argue that domination of women, nature, and all who are constructed as (feminized) 'other' is not a matter of 'essential', atemporal qualities but of socially constructed, historically contingent practices. Eliminating the justification of oppression (as natural) does not eliminate oppression, nor preclude other justifications of it. But the ideology that treats hierarchies as 'natural' serves powerfully to legitimate and reproduce domination: through the internalization of oppression, the silencing of protest, and the depoliticization of exploitative rule and global hierarchies. By exposing how the denigration of the feminine legitimizes multiple oppressions – not just that of women – feminist critiques offer rich resources for re-envisioning, resisting, and transforming hierarchical social relations.

This is emphatically not to posit a feminist 'conflict-free' utopia, nor to argue that feminist critiques necessarily take precedence over other emancipatory discourses, nor to claim that gender hierarchy is always the most salient dimension of oppressive dynamics. It is to argue that feminist voices offer alternative visions; that gender domination is not reducible to some other form and, therefore, that 'progressive' movements must also be feminist movements; and that, while not always the most salient, gender is always a dimension of oppressive relations and 'taking it seriously' improves our critical understanding and possibilities for change. In sum, insofar as denigration of the feminine serves to naturalize (depoliticize) all

manner of oppressive relations, we cannot eliminate oppression until we eliminate the hierarchical gender dichotomy that sustains it.

The weaknesses of feminist IR are clearest when we consider the context of its development: a discipline dominated by masculinist and positivist commitments. This shapes both what feminists themselves have produced and how mainstream IR responds. The most familiar feminist work 'adds women' to existing frameworks. In the face of continued oppression of women as women, this is and remains a vital – even life-saving – contribution. Feminism, however, that goes no further than the 'adding women' project fails to advance feminisms' full critical and transformative implications. Much feminist work remains thus constrained in part because positivist commitments only recognize gender as an empirical (add women) but not an analytical category. This limitation then reproduces rather than complicates the dichotomy of male-female, and hence, other dichotomies, and leaves existing analytical frameworks in place. As one consequence, feminism can appear to be limited to advancing only 'women' (and, too often, elite women) into existing positions of power. This is a weakness insofar as the larger project, for many of us, is not simply to empower women but to transform oppressive structures in order to end the naturalized subordination of not only woman but also nature and 'others' denigrated as feminine.

Similarly, the marginalized status of feminists means that they cannot assume familiarity with their argumentation. A criticism of feminist IR is that it has not forged ahead with a research agenda. But this is due, in part, to the demands of writing for uninformed and resistant audiences. At this point in time, feminists cannot avoid the need, whenever engaging an IR audience, to devote inordinate attention to reviewing feminist arguments rather than getting on with new work and charting new directions. All critical interventions confront this dilemma, but it seems particularly acute in IR, where ignorance of, and resistance to, feminist scholarship is considerable. In sum, while there are no doubt weaknesses in the scholarship and vast improvements to be made, it is important to recognize the power of ideological, political and personal resistance to feminisms and how this affects what feminists themselves – given few numbers, marginalized locations, and scant resources – are structurally able to produce. One example is the recent development of a backlash against feminist IR. This not only misrepresents feminist contributions and fuels the tendency to ignore or dismiss feminist work. It also necessitates a response from feminists, who are again diverted from getting on with more 'serious' work.

Within this context, we can also specify problems with the work that has been produced. Here, as elsewhere, the strengths of feminist IR are also its weaknesses. Perhaps most glaring is the undeniable diversity and complexity of feminist IR. This poses a number of problems that feminists do and must continue to address. First, this diversity and complexity better corresponds to reality, but does not lend itself to easy comprehension and/or

application. Feminists must be continually alert to the need for clear and accessible accounts. This is essential for increasing familiarity with feminist perspectives and securing support among a wider audience. At the same time, feminists must beware of simplifications that compromise the complexity that transdisciplinary, critical and postmodern analyses *must* engage. When speaking or writing to the mainstream, at this point there seems little choice but to strive for a balance between accessible review of unfamiliar arguments and stretching beyond that repetition to explore new terrain.

Second, clarity and coherence are especially important insofar as the development of gender-sensitive *policies* necessarily requires generalizations born of simplifications. To be relevant to policy debates and implementation, feminists must render their work contextually appropriate, and clarify relationships among feminist analyses and policy choices. As in IR more generally, the salience of these issues will vary according to particular authors' intentions and agendas. But the stakes for women – and all of us – are high, and feminist IR has a role to play in facilitating more effective and equitable policies.

Third, depending on the particular variation one is assessing, feminist IR can appear too radical and/or utopian – or in the IR context, too Idealist. The enormity of changes required to eliminate gendered hierarchies is all too likely to elicit a response of dismissal or paralysis. But this is a dilemma inherent to systemically transformative approaches, and cannot be 'resolved' in any simple sense. Rather, advocates of radical transformation must situate specific claims in terms of context and intention: Is the immediate objective to pose a previously unasked question? To justify a particular policy change by reference to a more encompassing feminist project? To explore horizons that can only come into focus once we go in search of them?

Conclusion

The growth of feminist IR marks a turning point in IR more generally. This turning point 'reflects' the interaction of empirical and analytical developments. The former include: the growth of women's movements worldwide and the effects of women's activism; the systemic feminization of poverty and its devastating effects on women, children and social reproduction; the shift to service economies and women as preferred workers; and systemic harms to women as effects of direct and structural violence through economic inequalities, environmental degradation, and armed conflicts. Analytical developments include: effects of the 'third debate' and dissenting voices within the discipline; challenges to conventional social theory and

positivism across all disciplines; critical voices and alternative vantage points from diverse global locations; and feminist, postcolonial and post-modern critiques of reigning modes of thought and inquiry.

As the chapters of this book reveal, these interactive developments constitute a turning point in IR that evokes diverse images. As I have argued in this chapter, the image of 'a gendered global hierarchy' has no single author or simple meaning. It *can* be read as an empirical reference to the male-dominated activities that constitute IR theory and practice. Indeed, there is much to be learned – and unlearned! – from exploring even this (deceptively) simple observation. I have argued, however, that this would neglect what makes feminist IR singularly important and systemically transformative. It is rather the *interaction* of empirical and analytical insights, informed by a critique of foundational dichotomies as gendered, that renders feminist IR a powerful conceptual lens through which *all* of IR looks different. And seeing differently is not a luxury but a necessity for comprehending today's world politics.