

Feminism in International Politics: A Theoretical Perspective

Kranti Singh

Assistant Professor (Political Science) H.K.M.V., Jind, Haryana

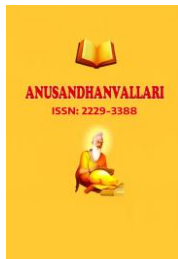
krantisinh935@gmail.com

Abstract: Since the end of the Cold War and the start of a new era of globalisation, new difficulties have arisen in the world of international politics. The Cold War was a time when the US and the Soviet Union were at odds with one another. This had a huge impact on world politics and international relations. While there were territorial conflicts, wars, geo-expansion, and strategic agreements occurring, world politics was also undergoing these changes. The agenda has been changed a little, and there is now more emphasis on some non-state issues, such as human rights, economic cooperation, social and economic issues, sustainable development, terrorism, world peace, hunger, and poverty. Since the feminist approach has changed the way international politics works, this article tries to explain the role of women in international politics, the main idea behind feminism in international feminist ideas, and why feminist theories are important in international politics. The first part of this paper will give a historical background on feminist ideologies that are employed around the world. The second portion of the study gives an overall picture of where women stand in international politics. The last part also talks about the main ideas and words that go along with feminist political theories and gives an analytical and critical look at modern feminist views of international relations.

Keywords: Feminism, international relations, feminist theories, global politics, gender.

Introduction

Feminist ideas of international relations were the first to say that women should be included in the study of international politics. Adding a new subject to the field would not only be good, but it would also encourage people to think more critically and analytically about the area as it is now. We need to define feminism before we can go on to the main idea that feminist international theory is based on. It is a reasonable point of contention to say that feminism is based on how women are treated in different parts of the world, including physically, emotionally, socially, politically, and economically, and that its main goal is to end these differences. Feminism is a movement that fights for women's and girls' rights to be treated equally, fairly, and freely so that they can feel like they belong in society and have chances in life. Helen M. Kinsella said that feminism has led to new ways of learning and doing research. Feminists had to look at and rewrite histories that either left women out completely or made them seem unimportant in order to show the different experiences, roles, and statuses that women have had throughout history. They also have to change the meanings of basic ideas to include the gendered meanings of those ideas.¹ It is important to define gender as well, following the idea of feminism. People often use the word "gender" while talking about women. But "woman" does not mean "female." Feminist researchers mostly see gender as the social construction of biological differences between men and women. Judith Lorber says that gender is more than just a structure; it's also a process, a part of a system of stratification, and a structure. Gender is the difference between "woman" and "man" in society. Gender is one part of the stratification system that puts men above people of the same race and class. Gender divisions act as a framework in both the home and the production of goods and services.² The term gender, thus, recognized by feminists a pack of 'social as well as cultural specialties' which is hugely inspired and associated by with masculinity.



The goal of this essay is to look into the roles and position of women in international politics. At the start of the study project, there are a lot of queries, such as "Where are the women?" "Why have they only been noticeable by their absence in diplomatic language?" and "Why are there so few readings or works in this field of international relations?" And "what part do they play in making decisions about foreign policy?" Many feminists are unhappy with how they are involved in foreign politics. Depending on the situation, ambassadors and politicians hire them as spouses, maids, or nannies. There are some women in charge in their countries, such as ambassadors or lawmakers, but there aren't many of them. The issue is worse in undeveloped countries, especially those in the South. There have been big disputes in Asia, Africa, and South-Central America over women's and girls' access to resources and their ability to make their own decisions.

Historical Background of feminism in International Politics

Feminism started as a social movement in international politics with the goal of making men and women equal. In the 19th century, modern feminism began as a social movement in Europe, the United States, and Japan. It was a response to the vast differences between the roles of men and women. It's not true that most feminist movements and feminism come from the West, though. Countries in South America, Africa, and Asia have a long history of struggle movements. There are four main waves in the history of feminism. The idea came from an Irish activist named Frances Power Cobbe. He said in 1884 that the motions "remember the tides of the ocean, where each wave obeys one more uniform, impetus and carries the waters onwards along the shore."³ When looking at feminism through the lens of a wave, it's important to remember that the idea of waves that are uniform and monolithic is often too simple and doesn't take into account the many movements that happen within and between different racial, ethnic, and social groups at the same time. Because of this, it didn't take into consideration how bold women were all across the world before the ninth century.⁴

The first wave refers to the feminist movement of the nineteenth through twentieth century's in United Kingdom and the United State of America, which deal with the suffrage movement. It was fought for the equality of woman and man. The wave focused on social rights like right to cast the vote, right to talk-walk freely, having share in property, to keep their own property or earned money etc. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Matinda Joslyn Gage were the foremother of this liberal feminism. This wave gave a chance of economic and social independence to the woman and gave a path to gain autonomy in largely male-dominating society. Thus this stage is known as foundation movement in the field of feminism.

Some individuals think that the publication of Simon De Beauvoir's book "The Second Sex" in 1950 started the second wave of the feminist movement. On the other hand, a lot of people thought this wave was linked to the start of the 1960s. The most important thing about this wave is that it frees women sexually, but it also talks about a lot of other important things. This new wave of action is going after prostitution, the trafficking of women, pornography, sexual assault, and other types of sexual violence. People say that the movement was about a lot of different things, from personal matters like marital equality and sexual freedom to more overtly political goals like getting more women elected to public office. Some of the things the movement worked on were equal pay and credit for everyone, equal marriage rights, and sexual freedom.⁵ Starting in 1960s and 70s, this wave generated an explosion in research and readings on woman issues, which is now rippen up in diverse disciplines on woman studies.

The third wave started in the middle of the 1990s. It was a big change in both political theory and political practice. This feminist ideology is closely tied to the effects of globalisation and the intricate redistribution of power, both of which are problems for feminist theory and practice. It also shows the numerous various interests and points of view that women have, as well as the breaking down of the main stories of oppression and relief. For example, the third wave of postcolonial feminism is focused on creating a new critical global viewpoint and bringing together black, despotic, and subaltern feminisms. Queer theories and politics, on the other hand, give rise to what

are now separate lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender movements. Feminists who are queer and transgender attack heteronormativity, which they think is the main problem.⁶ They want queer people, such as drag queens, drag kings, transsexuals, masculine women, and feminine men, to be identified as queer people, along with gay men and women.

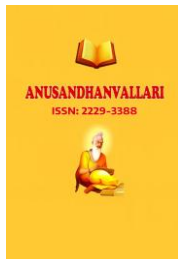
"Fourth Wave Feminist Movement" is another name for the current feminist movement. P. Chamberlaine's book *The Feminist Fourth Wave* says that this wave is made up of a lot of diverse effects, some of which don't seem to work well together. There is a link between slut walking and the low frequency of sexual assault convictions, the culture of rape, and the shaming of women who have sex. Because of this link, people start to feel angry, rebellious, and resistant to guilt. On the other hand, it makes people feel disgusted and disbelieving: even though there are laws against rape, the idea that women can still be held responsible for their attack in any way is both demoralising and alarming.⁷ Also, this wave is concerned with consciousness of oppression along with racism, ageism, classism, and sexual orientation through the social networking.

Woman and Global Politics

In today's world of international politics, two important themes of conversation are the empowerment of women and the advancement of gender equality. Because of this, many international agencies and institutions are officially working to improve this area. The international community is focussing on women's issues through treaties, world conferences, international agreements, and UN resolutions. The first World Conference on Women was organised in Mexico City in 1975 by the United Nations. The many aspects of gender exclusion were looked at, with a focus on the differences in job prospects and women's financial independence. At the summit, a United Nations Development Fund (UNIFEM) just for women was set up. The second and third world conferences took place in 1980 and 1985, respectively, in Copenhagen and Nairobi. In 1980, both of these conferences took place. These conferences expand the range of activities that feminists do because many non-governmental organisations are involved. There was also global cooperation amongst the many feminist groups throughout the meeting.

In 1995, the Beijing Platform for Action, sometimes called the Beijing World Conference, took place in Beijing. It is a list of demands for women's rights that is still used as a measure of progress today. The Beijing Platform for Action was changed in 2000 and became known as "Beijing+5." That same year, the United Nations Security Council enacted "Resolution 1325," which is seen as a turning point for the women's movement. This is because it finally brought a number of issues to the forefront of state politics, such as including a gender perspective in peacekeeping and humanitarian settings, stopping violence against women and girls, and having a say in decision making and conflict resolution. The "Women, Peace and Security" (WPS) agenda⁸ was started after Resolution 1325 was successfully ratified⁸. However it should be noted that the ability of WPS to raise the status of woman globally depends on the ability of a range of actors to work within or beyond the limitations of politics.

Based on what has been seen, it seems that there are very few women in parliaments around the world. The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) said in 2021 that only 25.5% of women are represented in parliaments around the world. The International Political Union revealed new data in January 2021 showing that women are heads of state or government in 22 countries. Women make up 5.9% (9 out of 152) of the elected state presidents and 6.7% (13 out of 193) of the overall number of heads of government. The International Political Union (IPU) reported last year that nine countries did not have any female ministers. This year, that number has grown to twelve. Even if there have been overall advances in all areas, this is still the case. Yemen, Kuwait, and many more countries are instances of places where women can't vote in parliamentary democracy. India is even twenty places below than the bottom when it comes to the number of women in parliament. The Nordic countries have a good ratio percentage, but there is still a long-term need to make politics equitable (all of the data comes from the IPU report, which came out on January 1, 2021)⁹. In a review of the 1985 Beijing Conference, the UN Division for Women said, "The fundamental transformation that occurred at Beijing was an acknowledgement of the necessity



to shift the spotlight from woman to the idea of gender, understanding that the entire structure of society, as well as all interactions between man and woman within it, had to be reevaluated." Rebuilding society and its institutions from the ground up is the only way to give women the authority they need to be equal partners with men in all areas of life. This change showed that women's rights were being taken severely and that everyone cared about men and women being equal, which would be good for everyone.¹⁰

Feminist theories in International Relations

Feminist theories that are now employed in the field of international relations came about in the late 1980s because many were unhappy with the traditional dominating beliefs. The classic theories follow the masculine asymmetry. As Hobbes put it, Leviathan the King, Machiavelli's "the Prince," or a sovereign "male" first came up with the idea of a state-nation. It has been gendered in the past when nations or governments were formed. males were told to be kings or warriors, and women were told to be "beautiful souls" who comforted the house and would be protected by the males in their community. But around the end of the 1980s, a woman said that instrumental rationality, which is based on the idea of rational choice, is a paradigm that comes from how western males act in the marketplace, which is very individualistic and profitable. International theorists have used this model to talk about how states act. Feminists in diplomatic studies have looked into the defining traits and identities of gender-specific states, as well as how these traits and identities affect the lives of both women and men¹¹, instead of just taking the state as an instance of study.¹¹ There are different types of feminist theories; here the study includes liberal, socialist Marxist, radical, postmodern, empiricist, standpoint, post-structural, post colonial etc.

Liberal Feminism

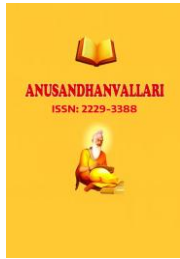
International relations scholars who believe in liberal feminism want to give all women the same rights and representation that men have always had. Liberal feminists want to change institutions so that men and women are treated more equally. They want to see more women in positions of authority in the most important institutions that control both national and international affairs. Second, they think that gender disparity is a major barrier to human progress and that it leads to more violence and war.¹² Conventional liberal approach emphasizes on free trade, education and international institutions to protect and promote the economic interests of 'individual'. Feminist challenges liberalism as they think that most of international monitorial institutions, which promote concept of 'laissez fair', are mainly construct on the base of patriarchal approach. Also the capitalist structure of these institutions effectively demoralize the contribution of woman in the economy, since much of their work considered as unpaid domestic settings that are not the part of economic assessments in international market.

Postcolonial Feminism

Postcolonial feminism links everyday life to local gender-based contexts and ideologies by linking the larger, global political and economic systems and ideas of capitalism. Feminism analysing has a strong tendency to generalise, but we can fight this by focussing on the individual situations, experiences, and histories that make colonialism happen in certain ways. Postcolonial feminists battle against the imposition of women's rights because it is often seen as paternalistic protection and healthy salivation, rather than as women exercising their own agency and sovereignty.¹³ Postcolonial feminists also emphasise that even if colonialism and imperialism may have been officially abolished, the repercussions of these ideologies are still present. This phenomenon is referred to by Norma Alarcon as the "cultural and psychic dismemberment..... linked to imperialist racist and sexist behaviours that are not part of the past"¹⁴.

Poststructuralist Feminism

In the subject of international affairs, poststructuralist feminism is primarily seen as a "feminist perspective that breaks down the woman based on universal thoughts or presumptions of culture." Because this is something that



is usually linked to international politics, it isn't possible to include the meaning of ideas and assumptions in the scope of this circumstance. Judith Butler maintains that what we do, not what we are, determines our gender. The idea of gender as "a social category imposed on sexed body" is founded on the idea that the sexed body does not have power on its own. Gender is not based on or caused by sex. It's not just a choice to be a certain gender; it's also the way people act in very controlled conditions, as when they are in a traditional heterosexual relationship.¹⁵ The "adaptation" of positive psychological theory into international relations (IR) methodology constitutes one of the newest theoretical developments in poststructuralist-feminist theories of international relations. This is done so that we can learn more about how people can do well even when things are really hard. Post-structuralism gives a short description of gender by using language like "social structures of sex" and "sex is created by gender."¹⁶

Standpoint Feminism

A Look Feminism is a political philosophy that looks at how women, who are seen as a separate social class according to gender instead of their economic status, developed a unique take on international politics as a result of being subordinate. Another interpretation of this feminism said that the ideas, terms, and facts used in international affairs are based on how men act and feel; this is an example of a gender-specific worldview. Perspective feminism says that seeing the world from a woman's point of view can change how you think about the world in a big way.¹⁷

Epistemologies Feminism

This theory looks into the nature and circumstances of knowledge. Feminist epistemologists want to look at the nature and status of knowers, along with the politics of understanding. Feminists have said that "realism utilises a distinctly masculine way of recognising the universe, and then that the sovereign man grows the subject of knowledge" because traditional ways of knowing in the discipline of international relations don't accept the idea that women might be knowers or drivers of knowledge.¹⁸ The underlying goal of almost all feminist concepts has been to try to pinpoint and explain the causes of gender inequality and, consequently, women's oppression, as well as to look for solutions to stop these problems. Marxist and Socialist Theories.

Socialist-Marxist Feminism

Marxist feminism shows that capitalism is the only place where women's inequality comes from. It is also the only place where women's oppression happens. The workforce is another place where women's inequality happens because of prejudice based on gender and differences between public employment (which is paid) and private work (which is unpaid). The capitalist system is basically unfair since it pays and gives more respect to public sector jobs than it does to unpaid work at home. In order to attain equality, we must therefore get rid of capitalism. Socialist feminists say that women's capitalism, which ultimately determines women's place in society, is shaped not only by constructions in the economy but additionally by male-dominated structures in society that have been around since before the capitalist system was created. One method to reach the aim of giving women equal rights is to do rid of these kinds of societal structures.¹⁸

Radical Feminism

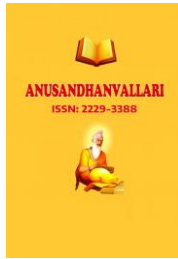
This sort of feminism is based on the idea that society is built on patriarchal values, which is why women are once more pushed to the edges and treated unfairly. This theory is called "conflict theory" because it is based on the idea that society is made up of groups that are at odds with each other and that men's dominance over women is what keeps those groups together. It also assumes that the best way to understand a culture and the different relationships that exist within it is to look at these relationships and how men and women feel about them²⁰. This is why radical feminism is quite similar to Marxist feminism, which is widely thought to be the most important conflict theory.

Conclusion

Feminism in political discourse is based on the idea that women are equal to men. However, discussions that focus on the connection between men and women might make it seem that women are less capable than men. They must speak out for women to be seen as people and demand to be regarded that way. One problem with this branch is that it solely criticises present or traditional notions about the world. In other words, all feminist ideas attack how men run the world. Getting a full picture of how other genders view feminism would help close the gap between the ideas that feminism is a movement for women and that it is a movement for equality. This would be a good move. But it's also true that these theories gave us a view of international politics that wasn't biased by gender. They are attempting to spread the idea that women are not better or worse than males, but equal in every way. Feminist ideas and techniques in international relations make it simpler to get a clear picture and fill in the gaps that aren't taken into account while developing international policy and decisions. It would help you comprehend how the world really works and give you a more caring and sympathetic point of view. In the end, the feminist point of view is just one piece that can help solve the difficult puzzle of international relations.

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