J. Ann Tickner, Gender in International Relations

This final chapter will draw together some of the ways in which the integration of these gendered perspectives on international security can contribute to reformulating the discipline of international relations. However, the ultimate goal of such a reformulation must not be to replace the masculinist perspective on international relations that presently obtains with a feminist perspective. The integration of feminist perspectives into the discipline is but a necessary first step toward transcending gender as a category of analysis. The possibility of moving beyond these gendered perspectives would depend on redefining the discipline of international relations in such a way that women's experiences were included in its subject matter on an equal basis with men's. Such a transcendence can come about, however, only when oppressive gender hierarchies are eliminated.

What Do Gendered Perspectives on Global Security Tell Us About the Discipline of International Relations?

The gendered perspectives on security I have presented point to the conclusion that the discipline of international relations, as it is presently constructed, is defined in terms of everything that is not female. While classical realism has constructed its analysis out of the behavior and experiences of men, neorealism's commitment to a positivist methodology that attempts to impose standards of scientific inquiry used in the natural sciences, has resulted in an extreme depersonalization of the field that only serves to hide its masculinist underpinnings. My analyses of "political" and "economic" man, and the state as an international political and economic actor, all suggest that, beneath its claim to objectivity, realism has constructed an approach that builds on assumptions and explanations based on behaviors associated with masculinity. While many forms of masculinity and femininity exist that vary across class, race, culture, and history, international relations theories, and the world they analyze, privilege values associated with a socially constructed hegemonic masculinity. This hegemonic masculinity consists of a set of characteristics that, while they are drawn from certain behaviors of Western males, do not necessarily fit the behavior of all men, Western men included.

Political and economic man, abstractions crucial to the assumptions upon which both realist international relations and liberal political economy have been built, have been constructed out of masculine characteristics—such as autonomy, power, independence, and an instrumental notion of rationality—highly valued in the world of international politics. Realist and economic nationalist explanations of the political and economic behavior of states, as well as prescriptions for their success in the international system, are presented in similar terms. State of nature myths, at the heart of realist assumptions about the international system, which emphasize the dangers of and need to control wild and dangerous spaces, parallel Enlightenment science's attitude toward nature. This view of nature has been an important aspect of the ideological underpinnings of an expansionary Eurocentric state system and a capitalist world economy, as well as of Western projects of political and economic development.

The individual, the state, and the international system, the levels of analysis favored by realists for explaining international conflict, are not merely discrete levels of analysis around which artificial boundaries can be drawn; they are mutually reinforcing constructs, each based on behaviors associated with hegemonic masculinity. While various approaches to international relations critical of realist thinking have questioned the adequacy of these assumptions and explanations of contemporary realities, they have not done
so on the basis of gender. Marxist analyses of the world economy are also constructed out of the historical experiences of men in the public world of production. Revealing the masculinist underpinnings of both these types of discourse suggests that realism, as well as the approaches of many of its critics, has constructed worldviews based on the behavior of only half of humanity.

Bringing to light this association between an idealized manhood and international relations reveals the possibility of constructing alternative perspectives divorced from historical associations with masculinity. However, if the worlds of international statecraft and strategic and foreign policy-making are worlds whose key protagonists are mostly men, one could claim that the discipline that describes them is a representation of reality at least with respect to its gender biases. The privileging of concepts such as power and autonomy and the emphasis on war and conflict do conform to patterns of behavior of many states in the international system. However, the feminist perspectives on national security, international political economy, and ecology that I have presented, which are based on different assumptions, demonstrate that there are equally plausible alternative ways of conceptualizing security and prescribing for its realization. They also draw our attention to examining the world from perspectives not of elite decision-makers but of those who are outside positions of power yet can present an equally plausible representation of reality.

While the traditional national security approach is based on the assumption that security demands autonomy and separation, in the highly interdependent world facing the multidimensional threats that I have described, autonomy may no longer be possible or desirable. Feminist approaches offer us new tools with which to question this exclusionary way of thinking. Drawing on experiences more typical of women, feminist theories start with the assumption that striving for attachment and community is as much a part of human nature as is the desire for independence. Conven-
down boundaries between protectors and protected. Interventionist practices of great powers in the conflicts of weaker states, as well as ethnic strife caused by the lack of coincidence between state boundaries and the various nationalities living within these internationally sanctioned borders, blur distinctions between domestic and international violence. If this feminist analysis has suggested that true security can be achieved only with the elimination of rigid hierarchical gender distinctions, the same conclusion could apply to the hierarchical distinctions through which we have been socialized into thinking about the international system.

Models of economic development and prescriptions for maximizing world welfare have not taken into account women’s particular needs or the roles that women play in the world economy. Since women have not been at the center of political and economic decision making, approaches that draw on women’s experiences can give us perspectives on security based on standpoints of those outside traditional structures of power. For example, feminist critiques of Marxism emphasize the need to recognize the contribution that women make to production and reproduction in their household roles and in the subsistence economy. They also point to the fact that the exploitation of women’s unpaid or underpaid labor has been crucial for the expansion of the capitalist world economy.

Since women are disproportionately located on the peripheries of the international system and at the bottom of the economic scale, feminist perspectives on security prioritize issues associated with the achievement of justice, issues that are frequently ignored in conventional theories of international politics, which have been preoccupied with questions relating to order. While one of the most important goals of feminism is to overcome women’s marginalization from institutions of power, women’s prominent role in social movements and in new forms of economic production provides examples of new ways of thinking about democratic decentralization, a restructuring of society that offers important alternative models for the achievement of a more comprehensive form of security.

Because women have been peripheral to the institutions of the state and transnational capital, feminist perspectives on international relations must take a critical stance with respect to these institutions, questioning whether they are able to cope with global security problems such as militarism, poverty, and the natural environment. Building a model of political economy that starts at the bottom and takes into account individuals and the local satisfaction of their basic needs envisages a state that is more self-reliant with respect to the international system and more able to live within its own resource limits; such a state would be less militaristic and could therefore give priority to social issues rather than military considerations. Such a model would depend on an extended definition of security that goes beyond a nationalist, militarist focus and begins to speak to the economic and ecological security needs of individuals and states alike.

Concern for the natural environment is an issue that has made a relatively new appearance on the agenda of international politics; yet the rate at which new threats to ecological security are appearing suggests that it is an issue that will demand increasing attention from scholars of international relations in the future. As efforts to manage problems of environmental degradation fail to keep pace with newly discovered threats, ecologists point to more fundamental problems of humans’ exploitative attitude toward nature. Ecofeminists have taken an important additional step by making explicit the interrelationship between the historical foundations of modern science’s exploitative attitude toward nature, the birth of the modern state and the capitalist world economy, and the separation of gender roles that resulted in the delegitimation of the feminine in public life. Beginning in seventeenth-century Europe, the dichotomization of gender roles has served as an important part of the foundation upon which modern theories of international politics and economics, as well as modern attitudes toward nature, have
been constructed. Linking these changing worldviews to the international behavior of modern states and the expansion of the global economy offers us important new ways to think about the interrelationship of political, economic, and ecological insecurities. It also allows us to explain the international behavior of states, not as realists have portrayed it in terms of timeless practices that can be expected to repeat themselves indefinitely into the future, but as behavior constructed out of the value system of the modern West. This historical construction allows us to envisage possibilities for transcending the present system in ways that could offer more secure futures.

Is a Better Future Female?

If characteristics associated with hegemonic masculinity are not serving to increase security in our contemporary world, do more secure futures depend on the substitution of values or characteristics more typically associated with femininity? Certain contemporary feminists have celebrated gender difference and hypothesized a special female world superior to and separate from the world of men. In her book entitled *Is The Future Female?*, Lynne Segal claims that this type of thinking is dangerous and divisive and unlikely to achieve the major goal of feminism, which should be to work for the equality of women. Segal argues that women, whose many gendered identities are constructed in terms of race, class, culture, and historical circumstances, cannot be characterized in these essentialist categories. Contemporary characterizations of women in terms similar to the Victorian ideal of the "good woman" serve only to make men more powerful. The celebration of female virtues supports the view of males as protectors and reinforces the separation between public and private spheres, relegating women to the latter. It also diverts attention from the agenda of working toward women’s political, economic, and social equality, an agenda necessary for the achievement of genuine security.

Characteristics that have typically been associated with femininity must therefore be seen not in essentialist terms but as characteristics that women have developed in response to their socialization and their historical roles in society. The association of women with moral virtues such as caring comes not from women’s innate moral superiority but from women’s activities in the private sphere where these values are accepted in theory, if not always in practice. Since they are linked to women and the private sphere, however, these feminine characteristics have been devalued in the public realm, particularly in the world of international politics. The question then becomes how to revalue them in public life in ways that can contribute to the creation of a more just and secure world. Taking care not to elevate these feminine characteristics to a position of superiority, we can regard them as an inspiration that can contribute to our thinking about ways to build better futures. Even if the better future is not female, a human future that rejects the rigid separation of public and private sphere values and the social distinctions between women and men requires that the good qualities of both are equally honored and made available to all.

In the modern West, women’s activities have typically been associated with a devalued world of reproduction and maintenance, while men’s have been tied to what have been considered the more elevated tasks of creating history and meaning. Yet all these activities are equally important for human well-being. History and the construction of meaning help us to achieve the kind of security that comes from an understanding of who we are as individuals and as citizens, while reproduction and maintenance are necessary for our survival.

In the discourse of international politics, however, our national identities as citizens have been tied to the heroic deeds of warrior-patriots and our various states’ successful participation in international wars. This militarized version of national identity has also depended on a devaluation of the identities of those outside the boundaries of the state.
Additionally, it has all but eliminated the experiences of women from our collective national memories. A less militarized version of national identity, which would serve us better in the contemporary world where advances in technology are making wars as dangerous for winners as for losers, must be constructed out of the equally valued experiences of both women and men. To foster a more peaceful world, this identity must also rest on a better understanding and appreciation of the histories of other cultures and societies.

The multidimensional nature of contemporary insecurities also highlights the importance of placing greater public value on reproduction and maintenance. In a world where nuclear war could destroy the earth and most of its inhabitants, we can no longer afford to celebrate the potential death of hundreds of thousands of our enemies; the preservation of life, not its destruction, must be valued. The elimination of structural violence demands a restructuring of the global economy so that individuals' basic material needs take priority over the desire for profit. An endangered natural environment points to the need to think in terms of the reproduction rather than the exploitation of nature. This ethic of caring for the planet and its inhabitants has been devalued by linking it to the private realm associated with the activities of women; yet caring and responsibility are necessary aspects of all dimensions of life, public and private. They will be valued in the public realm only when men participate equally in the private realm in tasks associated with maintenance and responsibility for child rearing. If we are to move toward a more secure future, what we value in the public realm, including the realm of international politics, should not be so rigidly separated from the values we espouse in the home.

Rewards for men and women for behaviors associated with caring for life in both the public and private spheres should be an important aspect of any redefinition of the meaning of patriotism. Replacing warrior-patriots with citizen-defenders provides us with models that are more conducive to women's equal participation in international politics. Such a reorientation of patriotism involves what Jean Elstain calls undermining the strategic voice, the language of national security experts. Elstain claims that this discourse is the preserve of trained experts and is not available to most citizens, male or female, for the ordinary tasks of everyday life. Yet it is a language that we are taught to respect in matters of international politics and one that has widespread support; to question its authority is considered unpatriotic.

Looking toward possible alternative futures, R. W. Connell believes that the hegemony of authoritative masculinity is being disrupted in Western societies. He claims that this disruption allows us to envisage alternative models of human behavior that are not constructed out of characteristics that depend on gender inequality. Since the behavior of states is partly constituted out of the behaviors of their citizens, we might also begin to consider alternative models of state behavior not constructed out of characteristics associated with hegemonic masculinity. Such models could provide us with a less militarized version of national identity as well as with a greater appreciation of the identity of others outside our own state.

In international politics, one model of human behavior that denies gender inequality could be built around the idea of mediator rather than warrior. Hypothesizing new models of masculinity, Mark Gerzon portrays "the Mediator," whom he describes as one no longer enamored with violence. Gerzon constructs the mediator out of an interview with William Ury of the Harvard Negotiation Project. Mediators need patience, empathy, and sensitivity, qualities that Ury recognized as those usually described as feminine. Another such model is used by social psychologist Herbert Kelman in his problem-solving workshops that bring together parties in conflict for purposes of mediation. The goal of these workshops is for each side to try to understand, and see as legitimate, the other's perspective—in other words, to attempt to break down barriers that rigidly separate parties in interna-
tional conflicts. An important part of this process is building trust. Striving to understand the other’s point of view and building trust are not processes that have been valued in the traditional practices of statecraft; they are, however, processes that depend on breaking down political and social hierarchies, including gender hierarchies.  

While states’ behavior in the international system can often be described in terms similar to characteristics associated with hegemonic masculinity, states do vary across time and space, with respect both to their attitude toward security enhancement and to their attitude toward women, yet rarely have these attitudes been examined together. In an unusual cross-cultural study, which examines the role of values in the choices that states make in selecting development paths, Geert Hofstede uses gender as one of his categories of analysis. In all the societies examined in the study, women were perceived as caring for people and the quality of life. In societies that Hofstede labeled masculine, men tended to see their roles as maximally different from those of women. In societies labeled as feminine, considerable overlap in gender roles was evident; men were less assertive and more oriented toward caring. Hofstede’s findings suggest that Scandinavian countries scored high on characteristics he labeled as feminine. In policy terms this has translated into sympathy for the weak at home and support for foreign aid programs abroad. According to Hofstede, both national and international disputes tend to get solved peacefully in such societies.  

Although the Scandinavian countries are not widely perceived as significant actors in the international system, their policymakers have often taken leading roles in working for peace and the natural environment, and their foreign aid programs rank among the highest in terms of per capita contributions. These countries also rank high in terms of public policies that serve the interests of women. In an interview with the New York Times (May 22, 1991), Gro Brundtland, the prime minister of Norway and the leading author of the Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, claimed that in Norway, where women hold half the cabinet positions, a much stronger emphasis has been placed on child care, education, and family life than in other states. According to Hofstede, the Scandinavian example suggests that states with less militaristic foreign policies and a greater commitment to economic and ecological security may also rely on less gendered models of national identity.

What Is to Be Done? Beyond a Gendered Perspective on International Relations

In most of the contemporary world men do not need to give up their gender identity in order to practice foreign policy; however, the same cannot be said for women. Until we reach a point where values associated with femininity are more universally valued in public life, women will continue to try to give up being feminine when they enter the world of international politics, for those who are the most successful are those who can best deny their femininity.

Given the generally masculine nature of international politics, how could such a change in values be effected? Under scoring the masculinist orientation in the discipline of international relations does nothing to change the masculinist underpinnings of states’ behavior in the international system. In the world of statecraft, no fundamental change in the hierarchy of the sexes is likely to take place until women occupy half, or nearly half, the positions at all levels of foreign and military policy-making. No change in the hierarchy of gender will occur until mediators and care givers are as valued as presidents as citizen-warriors currently are. This will not come about until we have a new vision of international relations and until we live in a world in which gender hierarchies no longer contribute to women’s oppression. To the very limited extent they have been visible in the world of international politics, women have generally been
perceived as victims or problems; only when women's problems or victimization are seen as being the result of unequal, unjust, or exploitative gender relations can women participate equally with men as agents in the provision of global security.

When women have been politically effective, it has generally been at the local level. Increasingly, women around the world are taking leadership roles in small-scale development projects such as cooperative production and projects designed to save the natural environment. Women are also playing important roles in social movements associated with peace and the environment. While these decentralized democratic projects are vital for women to achieve a sense of empowerment and are important building blocks for a more secure future, they will remain marginal as long as they are seen as women's projects and occur far from centers of power. Hence it is vitally important that women be equally represented, not just in social movements and in local politics but at all levels of policy-making. If foreign policy-making within states has been a difficult area for women to enter, leadership positions in international organizations have been equally inaccessible.

While women must have access to what have traditionally been seen as centers of power where men predominate, it is equally important for women and men to work together at the local level. Victories in local struggles are important for the achievement of the kind of multidimensional, multilevel security I have proposed. The feminist perspectives presented in this book suggest that issues of global security are interconnected with, and partly constituted by, local issues; therefore the achievement of comprehensive security depends on action by women and men at all levels of society. Such action is only possible when rigid gender hierarchies are challenged.

To begin to construct this more secure world requires fundamental changes in the discipline that describes and analyzes world politics. The focus of this book has been on how the discipline of international relations would be changed by the introduction of gender as a category of analysis. To begin to think about how gender might be introduced into the discipline and to recapitulate and extend the arguments made in this book, I shall conclude by drawing on the work of feminist scholar Peggy McIntosh, who outlines five phases of curriculum change necessary for introducing gender into scholarly disciplines. While she uses history as an example, her analysis could equally well apply to the discipline of international relations.

The first phase is what McIntosh describes as a womanless world: this type of analysis describes only the activities of those holding high positions of power, usually in dominant states. It is a mode of analysis that has the effect of reinforcing the existing system. My analysis of traditional approaches to the discipline suggests that this is where most of our conventional teaching about international relations has been situated. Phase two, which also has the effect of reinforcing the existing system, notes the absence of women and adds a famous few to the curriculum. While these additions provide role models for women, they do nothing to change the discipline in ways that acknowledge that anything can be learned from women's experiences; rather, they suggest that women can be recognized by the discipline only if they become like men in the public world. In phase three, the absence of women is seen as a problem as we begin to understand the politics implicit in a curriculum constructed without the inclusion of women's experiences; in this phase, women are typically seen as victims. Moving to phase four involves seeing women as valid human beings whose various life experiences have shaped the world in which we live, even though their contributions involve tasks that are often unacknowledged. The final phase of McIntosh's curriculum development brings us to the point where the subject matter of the discipline genuinely includes the experiences of all individuals regardless of race, culture, class, and gender.