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War is gendered. To those who have thought about the matter even just briefly, it is obvious. War uses men and women differently; it relies on women to act like women and on men to act like men. It proliferates gendered symbolism and performances, and it has profoundly different gender-specific impacts. And yet, the suggestion that gender can help explain or provide an understanding of war has remained marginal in the field of international relations. The relationship between war and gender is palpable; but judging from the meager attention to the topic, it seems to explain little.

In this ambitious book, Laura Sjoberg sets out to correct this view. She starts from "mainstream studies of war," including structural realism, dyadic-level theories of war, and domestic-level and decision-making theories, in addition to writings on strategy, tactics, and logistics. She confronts each of these approaches or topics with their gender blindness, brings them into conversation with feminist literatures, points out blind spots, and highlights the value added from looking at the topic through a gender lens. Following Hayward Alker, she calls her method dialogical; that is, it stages a conversation between gender-blind war literatures and diverse contributions from feminist IR. This method, she suggests, treats the difference between approaches as the substance of theorizing; thus, the "feminist theory of war" promised in the subtitle of the book lies in the process of dialogic engagement.

Not surprisingly, given this approach, the outstanding value of *Gendering Global Conflict* lies in its impressive coverage of diverse theories of war and of the varied contributions of feminist security studies. Sjoberg is well versed in both the mainstream (read: nonfeminist) and the feminist literature, and she effectively plays them off against each other in a highly structured manner. A 138-page apparatus of footnotes testifies to the comprehensiveness of her treatment. But Sjoberg wants the book to be more than an encyclopedia, and indeed it goes beyond the valorization of differences as theoretical substance. It drives an agenda, arguing that adding feminist insights to existing war theorizing increases definitional clarity and explanatory power while also providing knowledge on how to deal with wars practically and normatively (p. 12).

I am sympathetic to Sjoberg's agenda. Like her, I believe that there is no credible way for feminist IR to develop knowledge on war without engaging nonfeminist literatures on the topic. We may want to disavow the mainstream, but it does not allow itself to be ignored and invariably pops up in our topics, framings, and contestations. Because there is no pure feminist location outside previously existing knowledge, the long-standing debate among IR feminists over whether one should engage with the mainstream or not is beside the point. The question should be instead: What are the *terms* of engagement and who gets the home field advantage? And on this point I become uneasy with Sjoberg's method; her dialogical approach does not sufficiently recognize the power relations that underlie her engagement with war studies.

The author gives the home field advantage to the other team: She seeks an engagement on a playing field mapped by levels of analysis and structuralism, in a game following the rules of positivism and rationalism. But she is ambivalent about this. In the course of her dialogue, she sometimes plays by the rules but more often than not seeks to change them—a dialogue with feminism cannot be confined to positivism and rationalism. Not an easy way to win! Her decision to proceed from mainstream rather than feminist literature compounds the problem. Both the mainstream ("studies of war") and the margin ("feminisms") are introduced as diverse. Yet whereas the former is invited to play with well-coordinated teams and mature theories (structural realism, decision-making theories, dyadic theories, domestic politics approaches), the latter is presented as an assortment of seemingly disjointed ideas that are deployed on individual missions to rattle the mainstream. Feminisms do not seem to be amenable to team formation; feminisms apparently are good only for critique.

Sjoberg is in good company with this approach: Poststructuralist feminists in IR are similarly wary of categorizing thought. But the approach systematically prevents a serious engagement between existing bodies of feminist war theorizing, hiding the complexity of feminist contributions to an understanding of war. For example, Betty Reardon, Valerie Hudson and her co-authors, Cynthia Cockburn, Dubravka Zarkov, and many others have put forward significantly different theories on war and gender that could be discussed against one another. Sjoberg cites them all, but does not start from this literature. She forgoes an opportunity to valorize it by weighing its merits and developing it, including with tools eclectically drawn from war studies. Instead, she recreates the role of the feminist underdog barking bits of critique at the mainstream and admonishing it that it should be doing better.

Alternatively, it seems to me, there are spaces between the mainstream and the margins that could have been more hospitable points of departure. They pop up in the book in the persons of women who do not fit: Lene Hansen, presumably a member of the Copenhagen School but also its feminist critic; Mary Caprioli, identified as a liberal peace theorist but also its feminist critic. By playing on more than one team, do these scholars, and their work, not offer an engagement on a more equal playing field? And

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could not have critical security studies, constructivism, and poststructuralism provided a setting for dialogue in which rules of engagement are more welcoming to feminist ideas? Indeed, feminists have contributed to these approaches. The book unfortunately dispenses with them in a few short pages.

One of the dangers of unmooring feminism from itself and from other critical approaches is that its insights become molded so as to be all things to all approaches. In the process, its core propositions get flattened so they can adjust to other theoretical axioms. This is the case here with regard to gender, arguably feminism's core analytical concept. Sjoberg develops a "realist feminism," proposing that gender hierarchy is a structural feature of the international system and a permissive cause of war, in addition to or substituting for anarchy (p. 98). In this approach, gender becomes "genders" (pp. 76 ff), that is, the categories women and men, and gender hierarchy an organizational attribute of states. What is lost is gender as a relational concept and as an analytical category, the usages preferred by many feminists. Casting aside feminist debates about the sense and nonsense of structuralist theories of patriarchy, Sjoberg resurrects them under the mantle of gendering neorealism. In her dialogue between unequals, gender yields to the theoretical axioms of the mainstream.

Another casualty of this dialogue between unequals is the explanatory status of masculinity, which has become somewhat contested in feminist IR. In Sjoberg's hands, hegemonic masculinity freezes into a predictive variable. She hypothesizes that "the more competitive a state's hegemonic masculinity, the more likely that state is to make war. . . . States with elements of hypermasculinity in the nationalist discourse would be expected to be more aggressive" (p. 100). We are left to guess why masculinities always seem to be (more or less) competitive, what hypermasculinity consists of, and how its characteristics can be known in advance. Despite the feminist truism that gender (and thus masculinity) is a social construct, professed also by Sjoberg, she seems to imply that too much masculinity somehow brings about war. That is, masculinities always seem to be already tainted with militarism and aggression, suggesting some masculine core that no amount of social construction can overcome. Perhaps it is overdrawn to assign responsibility for this confusion to a dialogue between unequals in which gender is reformulated to fit positivist epistemologies; however, a targeted engagement with feminist literatures on militarist masculinities might have prevented this mistake.

Indeed, *Gendering Global Conflict is* most satisfying when the author leaves the mainstream behind, as she does in the next to last chapter, on gendered experiences of war. Here, she brings to life one of the most important contributions of feminist writings on war, that is, recalling what war feels like to those who participate in it, its economics, its deprivations, its sensual impressions, and its violences. This is the starting point I would love to have seen Sjoberg take in this book, using her encyclopedic knowledge of the field, together with her analytic prowess, not just to argue but to demonstrate the unique contributions of feminist security studies.

Despite these criticisms, and although it could have benefited from another round of proofreading—there are spelling and grammar mistakes, endnotes with wrong counterparts, and odd citation practices that are distracting—this is a smart book that juggles multiple bodies of literature, makes a sophisticated argument, is remarkably comprehensive, and is likely to generate a broad range of reactions in the field.

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