

## FEMINISM IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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**Abstract:** *From a theoretical point of view, for many decades the discipline of International Relations was dominated by the triad of realism, which remained the overwhelmingly dominant theoretical approach. It was not until 1980 that other political approaches began to gain some momentum. International relations is one of the last areas to accept feminism. This has contributed greatly to its use in almost all areas of research. Compared to other disciplines, the feminist aspect in international relations appeared much later. Feminism is a series of movements aimed at defending equal opportunities for women in the different areas of politics, social rights and other aspects of society. Feminist approaches to international relations became widespread in the late 20th century, and these approaches called for women's experiences to be ignored from studies of international relations theory. Feminists who study international relations have argued that gender issues apply to international relations. Women succeed through their ambition, diplomacy and oratory to excel in the leadership area, which is the main premise for women to lead fully, dynamically but also in an original way. Throughout history, women have gone through several stages that have finally brought her to the position where the male elite give respect, love and attention to women throughout society. This paper fully demonstrates the vitality and continued viability of feminist projects in a variety of forms and contexts, assesses the challenges facing feminism and strongly advocates its continued relevance to contemporary global politics. The main objective of this paper is to present the importance of feminism today and its role as a paradigm in international relations.*

**Keywords:** *women; feminism; politics; leadership; equal; history; relations.*

### Introduction

Feminism is a theoretical and action doctrine that claims the fight against gender equality, promoting the affirmation of women in society by improving and expanding their role and rights. Feminism is a defensive and offensive reaction to misogyny and sexism, both universally spread in time and space, aiming for female and female experiences to be treated valorily as male and male.

Feminism is a social movement aimed at improving the position of women in society. Feminist theory aims to understand the nature of gender inequality and focuses on gender policy and powerrelations. Feminism also relies on experiences related to gender roles and relationships. Feminist political activism typically runs on issues such as reproductive rights, domestic partnership violence, maternity leave, equal pay and discrimination. Themes explored in feminism include patriarchy, stereotypes, objectification, and oppression.

Feminism research examines the constitution of identifiable elements of conflict and war: engagement in war, resistance, support operations involving the presence or life of women in any way. Feminism attempts to investigate not only the power relations between women and men, but also gender roles, in a broader context of international relations. Post-modern views emphasize the social importance of gender elements. The objective of this investigation is to question and analyze positivist positions that claim that an objective world exists.

Women are the key to sustainable development and quality of life in the family. Even more, it is women who have supported the growth of society and shaped the future of nations. In the emerging complex social scenario, women have a vital role to play in different sectors. They can no longer be considered mere harbingers of peace, but appear as the source of power and the symbol of progress.

Over time, women have expanded their areas of manifestation, being present in literature, politics, education and the philanthropic social part.

This paper highlights the concerns, perspectives and efforts of women to be recognized as integral members of societies.

## **Section 1. Feminism in International Relations**

In the study of International Relations feminism, the role of gender in the theory and practice of international relations, especially in the field of theories and the study of international security, was almost always ignored. Today, however, feminist research is an increasingly important contribution in the context of studies in this field. A series of opinions, expressed several decades ago, analyzed the complexity of the international relations system, the role of women in conflicts and in the system of international peace and security. The opinions expressed in recent years show that feminism has become much more open-minded, that it has developed as a flexible theory and that it has connected to other theoretical views that try to substantiate these theories.

Over time, renowned feminist authors in the field of international relations have shown in their writings that women, as concrete existences, are not just mothers, symbols of home, peace and traditions, charitable heroines and wives. Feminism is a theoretical and action doctrine that claims the fight against gender inequality, which promotes the affirmation of women in society by improving and expanding their role and rights. The representatives of feminist theory propose a complement to realism and a redefinition of the concepts of power and security.

Feminist perspectives within international politics have become increasingly relevant as the visibility of issues, experiences and challenges was advancing and gaining voice.

In this sense, a feminist approach to the international incorporates new and diverse perspectives into its practice, as well as a redefinition of the view about the role that women acquire in the international arena.

Feminism is diverse and different. The basic concerns of all feminist movements are self-determination, freedom and equality for all people, which should be realized both in public and in personal life. Their diversity provides approaches and potential for shaping current profound social change. The term feminism only appeared in the late 19th century. In the international wave of new women's movements since 1968, it has become the guiding concept.

Even though several types of feminism have emerged over time, they share the basic concern of self-determination, freedom and equality for all people, which should be realized both in public and personal life.

### *1.1. International relations from theory to practice*

International relations carry out the process of transization from the normative space of paradigms within the framework of world geopolitics, achieving the transition from theory to practice at the political, economic, diplomatic or military level. Therefore, it can be seen that the theories of paradigms in international relations, for example realism, are present in the current geopolitics in the Eastern Europe area, from the perspective of the war initiated by Vladimir Putin against Ukraine, invoking a historical right over Ukrainian territories. At the same time, it should be noted that the liberalist paradigm is beginning to pass into the practical space due to the development of multicultural diplomacy, but also of the good interstate offices that lead to the reduction of the possibility of a global war.

From the point of view of the theory, the international paradigms will not be able to fully encompass the theoretical and practical space because some paradigms such as

liberalism or constructivism have idealistic features (Emanuel Kant's concept of eternal peace) which will never be possible to apply in the global geopolitical area. The implementation of the theory of international relations leads to better multilateral communication that brings financial and social benefits to the current world order (D. Buş, International Relations 2019).

The academic space of international relations is another instrument of transition to the practical area due to outstanding personalities who have performed political, military, administrative functions that have put into practice the theory of international relations. At the same time, through their writings, the normative framework is in a continuous development, the normative sphere being in a continuous development. Therefore, authors such as Henry Kissinger, Zbigniew Brzezinski or John Mearsheimer transposed normative aspects of international relations through their functions, but also introduced new normative concepts within the normative spectrum of international relations that will be used by the new generations of researchers in the field of international politics. I believe that the key instrument that makes the transition from theory to practice possible is the political instrument, given that it is the main instrument in any state of the world. The decisions taken at the level of the political decision maker in the regional or international sphere with the aim of designing foreign policy vectors are based on a normative expertise of international relations (political and social history of a state) combined with the legal or economic instrument, which produces good offices at bilateral or multilateral level within international organizations, but also bilateral welfare reductions in the context of conflicts on organizational, historical, or political background.

### *1.2. Paradigms of international relations*

Theories of international relations allow us to understand and try to give meaning to the world around us through various lenses, each of which represents a different theoretical perspective. They can help us understand how international systems work, as well as how nations interact with each other and look at the world. Ranging from liberal, equality-centered strategies to simple realistic concepts, international relations theories are often used by diplomats and international relations experts to dictate the direction a government can take regarding an international political issue or concern. By studying the following key international theories, professionals in the field can better discern the motivations and goals that drive global political decisions.

Realism is one of the central paradigms of the field of international relations, structuring the understanding of events, the conception and conduct of foreign policy, the configuration of international conflicts for much of the 20th century. It is fundamentally based on a series of philosophical considerations about human nature: Man is evil, selfish and subject to a natural inclination toward the search for power, domination; as such, he lives in constant insecurity, marked by deep distrust of people and suspicion of others. It follows, therefore, that the societies and institutions created by man will have the same peculiarities as this one. From these assumptions also comes the construction of classical realism. Like idealism, ultimately seeks to investigate those fundamental concepts that we commonly use to explain and express reality: power, reason, interest.

Liberalism emphasizes that broad ties between states that have made it difficult to define the national interest and have reduced the need of military power. It contains a variety of concepts and arguments about how institutions, behaviors, and economic connections contain and mitigate the violent power of countries. Compared to realism, it adds several factors to our field of vision, especially the consideration of citizens and international organizations. Most importantly, liberalism has been the traditional threshold of realism in relationship theory, as it provides a more optimistic view of the world, based on a different reading of history than found in realistic academic literature.

Liberalism is based on the moral argument that guaranteeing a person's right to life, liberty and property is the highest objective of government. Consequently, liberals emphasize the well-being of the individual as a fundamental component of a just political system. A political system characterized by an uncontrolled power, such as a monarchy or dictatorship, cannot protect the life and freedom of its citizens (M. Buş 2016). The main concern of liberalism is to build institutions that protect individual freedom by limiting and controlling political power. Although these are domestic policy issues, the realm of international relations is also important for liberals, as the activities of a state abroad can have a strong influence on freedom in the country. The liberals are particularly concerned with military foreign policies. The main concern is that war requires countries to accumulate military power. This power can be used to fight foreign states, but it can also be used to oppress its own citizens (Bouteiller n.d.).

Neorealism is a reformulation of classical realism and has been a form to help its decline with the establishment and creation of international organizations. It is subdivided into defensive neorealism and offensive neorealism (D. Buş 2012). Neorealism believes that the anarchy of the international system is the only determinate of the behavior of states. Also, neorealism believes that the analysis of international relations should favor relations between states at the expense of domestic political play which has only a slight impact on foreign policy. Neorealism rejects the central idea of classical realism that the anarchy of international society is explained by a deeply egoistic human nature. It states that the anarchy of the international game results from the structure of the international order provided for by any sovereign authority over States. Their analysis is not based on the motives of the actors, but on the structural constraints of the international order.

Used for several years in Europe, "neoliberalism" is a rather vague term, with a pejorative connotation, to suddenly designate an ideology, a worldwide vision, theories that mark a revival and radicalization of liberalism, the current form of capitalism. The term neoliberalism is mainly used by its detractors to denote policies: Margaret Thatcher (United Kingdom) and Ronald Reagan (United States of America) in the 1980, international bodies such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization, the World Bank of the European Union.

Neoliberalism is characterized by a limitation of the role of the state in economic, social and legal matters, opening up new fields of activity to the law of the market, a vision of the individual as "entrepreneur of himself" or "human capital" that he will be able to develop and make fruitful if he knows how to adapt and innovate. Proponents of neoliberalism present it as the object of consensus and as having no alternative. Its consequences must be seen as inevitable phenomena to be accepted. Ideas opposed to neoliberalism are described as archaic (Manfred Steger 2010).

Constructivism is an epistemological theory which states that all knowledge is constructed, that ultimately knowledge is determined by perceptions, conventions, and intersubjective social experiences. Constructivism as a theory of international relations presents the application to the field of international relations of epistemological constructivism.

In the study of International relations, constructivism emerged in the late 1990s, against the background of the end of the Cold War, when the possibility of changing international relations was seen. The assertion of this theory was made in a process of critical evaluation of the two dominant theoretical approaches at the time – neorealism and neoliberalism. The two theoretical views have in common a realistic ontology (states exist in an international anarchic system in which actors are primarily interested in themselves) and an objective epistemology (the world must be observed rationally, objectivity being the key element for discovering how states behave). Beyond these two common points, neorealism and neoliberalism differ fundamentally in the way they conceive issues such as the motivation

of states, the hierarchy of a state's goals, the relative importance given to the intentions and capabilities of the state, or the impact of international institutions.

All states are distinct and have a set of defining economic, political, social, religious or cultural characteristics that influence their foreign policy. States have identities and those identities characterize their behavior in the international system. A complement to international relations in the late 20th century, constructivism brought scientists in international relations back to fundamental questions, including the nature of the state and the concepts of sovereignty, identity and citizenship. In addition, it opened up new substantive fields to investigate, such as the role of gender and ethnicity, which was largely absent from other theories (Teodor Frunzeti 2010).

Marxism is a collective term for various theoretical approaches and political content that go back to the teachings of Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820-1895). Marxism is the ideological basis for the thinking and actions of most left-wing extremists. The central element is the assumption that the entire political, intellectual and cultural life of a society is determined by economic structures and conditions.

Marxist teaching is seen both as a scientific theory and as a practical-political guide. It presupposes that human history and social development - like nature - follow clearly recognized laws. History is seen as a history of class struggle. The ultimate goal of history, according to Marx and Engels, is classless communist society. This ultimate goal, according to Marxism, can only be achieved through a revolution, which inevitably involves violence and struggle.

Marxism's view of man is fundamentally different from that of liberal democracies. The emphasis here is not on the individual in his inviolable dignity, but on the collective - the proletarian class. According to Marxism, man develops only his dignity as a member of this class. Fundamental and human rights, unchanging, before the state, therefore do not exist.

Neomarxism is a current that dates back several centuries. Its history is shorter than any other series of political views. The history of neomarxism dates back to the beginning of the 20th century. After Marx's death in 1883, several divisions emerged within the party. One of them was the social democrats, who believed in capitalism. On the other hand, it was the communists who demanded revolution. These divisions were fundamental to the unfolding of political events that were seen in the early 20th century.

The principles of neomarxism, although they start from marxism, present certain nuances that, being their end, renew a part of marxist ideology. Among the most characteristic features of neo-marxism are a number of principles, of which we must emphasize the following: humanist philosophy, anti-totalitarian philosophy, structural interaction with superstructural emphasis, skepticism about the communist formulation and the version that there are no social classes, reject the communist variant without state and without rights, are against economic determinism. Well, these parties were both inspired by marxism. Among the most important found are the Bolshevik revolution, which was led by Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky.

### *1.3. Shaping the feminist paradigm of international relations and its evolution*

The feminist theory of international relations is perhaps the most critical potential framework to reimagine the world, society, human progress, and to build possible and desirable utopias. It is a subversive theorization, in the literal sense of the term, which is very positive because it is transformative. Feminist movement and theory have penetrated various fields of human knowledge and development, and international relations are no exception. For this reason, it is extremely important to know what this theory is and what it is seeking in this particular discipline. As a first point, it is necessary to mention that international relations were officially born in 1648 with the signing of the Peace Treaty of Westphalia which ended

the 30 years war and made room to the creation of nation states. Since that time, international relations have been conceived as a discipline of understanding the relations between existing countries and/or international actors; however, since its inception, they have been characterized as an extremely homogeneous and androcentric discipline. In view of the above, feminism entered as a theory in international relations in the 1960s with the aim of adding new categories of analysis to traditional study objectives and subjects, because classical theories could not explain the changes internationally until that time. Some of these categories that feminism has added are the gender or gender that feminists in international relations understand as elements that influence the political and social sphere and, therefore, also at the international level.

This made room for academics to be free to conduct research that allowed these new categories of analysis to be added. There are a large number of academics who have focused their research on this area. Feminist theory in international relations is characterized by the fact that it is heterogeneous and by the understanding that there are multiple and different international realities depending on the people living in a given territory and that these views are different if they are disaggregated by sex or gender.

Feminist concepts promote peace and are based on a consistent integration of the gender perspective in all areas, as well as on the equal participation of women and men at all levels and in all processes, but especially in the context of security and peace policy. Since the early 1990s, women political activists in Western countries have found a wider public echo of these demands than before. The fact that the transnational women's movement has changed its strategy toward women's world conferences has made a significant contribution. The self-image of many feminist NGOs had evolved from an opposition body of criticism and control to a strategy of lobbying and exercising concrete influence at UN international conferences. Christa Wichterich, for example, sees the debate of NGOs and the UN as parallel in terms of content as a political novelty for the 1994 World population Conference in Cairo. Today, most feminist NGOs are no longer just trying to criticize UN policy, they are actively trying to help shape it. However, this was not without controversy within feminist NGOs.

The efforts of many women's NGOs led to the adoption of a platform for action at the UN Conference on women in Beijing in 1995, calling for institutional mechanisms to promote equal rights for women. States have been called upon to "commit to include a gender equality perspective in all policy areas and at all levels of government." Thus, the integration of gender perspective has prevailed in international politics, whose purpose is to shape the work of organizations in a gender-oriented manner.

In general, feminist theory in international relations aims at the following elements: achieve greater visibility of women in international relations in all fields, both in academia and in practice, identify sex and gender as study variables, because these elements reveal a more accurate reality of a particular studio object, they identify and make visible the different types of violence and hierarchical and power relations existing in international society to understand how they affect women differently.

As in all areas of knowledge, feminism came into international relations to carry out a much more complete analysis of international reality, as it adds much more elements to its study, to reinterpret concepts that have been defined from the masculine point of view and to make visible the experiences of women and other groups that are not taken into account in classical theories, from the theoretical part of the discipline to the practical part.

#### *1.4. Feminist foreign policy*

At the core of the idea of creating a feminist foreign policy is the notion that we cannot continue with business policy as usual. Traditional foreign policy cannot develop just

and effective solutions to the most urgent global crises of our time, such as the climate crisis, human rights attacks or (nuclear) weapons, because this would perpetuate existing injustices.

Only new approaches, perspectives and a newly balanced power dynamic – in other words, a feminist foreign policy – can create lasting peace and a world where no one is left behind. The basic principles are a comprehensive and inclusive understanding of gender, intersectionality, anti-racism and coherence of internal and external policy.

Feminist foreign policy is transparent, anti-militaristic and focuses on climate justice and cooperation rather than domination over others. Feminist foreign policy wants to separate patriarchal structures from foreign and security policy. Destructive forces such as patriarchy, colonization, heteronormatism, capitalism, racism are exposed imperialism and militarism, and fair alternatives are presented.

If we approach feminist foreign policy today, then all this is possible only because of a historical foundation that courageous women laid over a hundred years ago. Between April 28 and May 1, 1915, 1.200 women, feminists and pacifists, met in the Hague for the first International women's Congress. At that time there was war euphoria in Europe, the first World War broke out nine months earlier. Visionaries and women's rights activists Anita Augspurg, her partner Lida Gustava Heymann and Dutch doctor Aletta Jacobs were invited together to the congress. 47 women traveled from the US. This congress laid the foundations for feminist foreign policy.

The subsequent Congress of Zurich in 1919 led to the establishment of the International League of women for Peace and freedom – the International League of women for Peace and freedom. The feminists in the Hague, with their courage, resistance and intransigence, are the champions of today's feminist foreign policy, this struggle for justice at the crossroads of activism and diplomacy.

The paradigms and cornerstones of diplomacy and foreign policy are being questioned. A key theoretical element of men's foreign policy is the so-called realism, the most influential of the schools of thought in the political science of international relations. In realism - not to be confused with realpolitik as the maximum of political action - the state, the power and interests of the state, national security and the threat or use of violence are central. Realism sees the existence of States side by side as anarchy because there is no supranational government. And to be influential and powerful in this anarchic state, States try to dominate and oppress - preferably with the help of army and weapons.

Feminist politics wants to change this system. It can be practiced in very different ways. Although Sweden introduced realignment in 2014, it was not until 2018 that the government published its feminist foreign policy manual. The focus is on the three R's, namely rights, representation and resources: promoting human rights for all women and girls (rights), fair participation of women and girls in all decision-making positions (representation) and providing sufficient resources to enable equality (resources). It is completed by a fourth R, which represents reality. Because the whole procedure is based on empiricism and facts.

Feminist foreign policy, on the other hand, spends money on overcoming such structural inequalities and changing militarized power relations. It is concerned, therefore, with more than the mere absence of violent conflict; but with investing in peace. In concrete terms, this means promoting human rights, establishing economic and social justice, and preserving the environment and ecosystems. Development cooperation also needs a feminist approach. Economic indicators such as GDP, which are used to express poverty reduction, are of secondary importance from a feminist perspective.

Instead of defining security primarily as state security, feminist foreign policy views people themselves as the starting point for the analysis and decisions of security policy. This is the only way to achieve lasting peace. A feminist foreign policy recognizes that gender structural inequalities exist as an expression of patriarchal values and structures. It is designed

to eliminate them. Decisions are made with the awareness that they can have different consequences for different groups. These consequences depend on factors such as skin color, origin and gender. The interaction of these factors can lead to other forms of discrimination.

This policy strengthens the rights of these marginalized groups and is adapted to their needs. She works to ensure that women and other political minorities have the same opportunities and resources to shape social decision-making processes.

Empirical analyzes show impressively that the oppression of women is directly related to the well-being of nations. The more a society ignores and oppresses women, the more massive the negative consequences for society as a whole: weaker governance, more serious conflicts, less stability, lower economic output, less food security, worse health, worsening demographic problems, less environmental protection and social progress.

A feminist foreign policy seeks to eliminate structural inequalities and unsafe living conditions. This policy therefore promotes peace, security and internal and external well-being.

## Conclusions

The study of international relations is based on the recognition of asymmetric power relations. From this approach, as in realism and neorealism, and through the theories that divided from there, it was allowed to develop perspectives of the study of gender and feminism, where the epistemological principle is the asymmetric relationship between men and women.

The feminist perspective on international relations introduced the concept of gender as an essential tool for the study of the interactions between States and the international scene. However, despite these efforts to build a better theory of international relations, feminist analysis has had little impact on international politics.

Despite its designation, feminism does more than focus on women or what they are considered in certain visions. In highlighting both inequality and power relations, feminism reveals gender power its role in global politics. In international relations, it is necessary to recognize the still undefined relations between the construction of power and the construction of gender.

A feminist vision conditions a more rational, humanitarian, and sometimes even more sensitive viewpoint, which helps to understand how the world works. Thus, a feminist point of view is an important piece in solving the complicated puzzle of international relations.

Through my research, I have illustrated the importance of feminism as a tool to improve the visibility of democratic societies. Through comparison and analysis, I described the essence and purpose of the feminist paradigm followed by its practical application to society and its main functions.

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