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**[ IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS “W” STANDS FOR  
WOMEN IN “WHY” AND “(NO)WHERE” ]**

*Feminists have argued that the epistemological foundations of Western knowledge are gendered. When we use terms such as rationality, objectivity and public, they are paired with terms such as emotional, subjective and private, terms that are seen as carrying less weight. By privileging the first of these terms when we construct knowledge we are valuing knowledge that we typically associate with masculinity and the public sphere, historically associated with men. Rationality and objectivity are not terms that are overtly gendered, but, when asked, women and men alike associate them with masculinity. - J. Ann Tickner*

*The number of men rigorously practicing the hegemonic pattern in its entirety may be quite small. Yet the majority of men gain from its hegemony, since they benefit from the patriarchal dividend, the advantage men in general gain from the overall subordination of women – Connell, R. W.*

*Fortune is a woman, and it is necessary if you wish to master her, to conquer her by force –Machiavelli*

**Forward, by Professor. Kimberly R. Carter:** This important paper is a reminder of the “troubled engagement” ignited in the widely-read *International Studies Quarterly* (1997-98) conversation between J. Ann Tickner and Robert Keohane. In many ways, the last fifteen or so years have seen realists and feminists engage in their own scholarly Cold War - you go your way, and I’ll go mine as we “just don’t understand” one another’s worldview. To continue with this analogy, Al-Kassimi’s paper is an effort at *rapprochement*. Not only do we understand one another, but feminists are keen to dive off the sidelines of IR scholarship and swim into the mainstream; at times, the best way is to frame important gendered security issues in ways that are appealing to those audiences who remain at the disciplinary centre. As our world continues to change at rapid pace, I, for one, look forward to a new chapter in IR driven less by theoretical dogma and more by young scholars making important connections *between* theories in order to help us explain and understand the most relevant security threats of the twenty-first century.

## Abstract

As the title proposes the aim of this paper is to understand the position of women in International Relations (IR) by utilizing feminism as an approach and the individual as the referent object of security. The essay is divided in 3 sections consecutively. The first section deals with the “why” and “where”; *why* women are marginalized in IR, this section touches upon epistemology and western philosophy that in turn allows us to locate the position of women in IR. The second section demands that rape is recognized as a weapon of war because it represents a threat to national security even by assessing it using a realist approach to IR with the state as a security referent object. Lastly, the third section discusses how realism took centre-stage as an approach after the catalyst event of 9/11 which resulted in some optimism and pessimism by feminists because the administration adopted its own *kind* of feminist rhetoric.

**Key terms:** *Referent object, Hegemonic masculinity, Rape, Feminism, Individual, State, Meta-Event/catalyst event, 9/11*

The aim of this article is to shed light on reasons as to why women are marginalized in the field of International Relations, which subsequently answers the question as to where are women in international relations. To answer such question, I will approach International relations from its sub-approach, that is, International Security Studies (ISS) or more specifically Feminist Security Studies. The reason for such selection of approach is because feminists or *women* in general face gender-specific security problems which are overlooked because of the nature of IR which is a *men* dominated, hyper-masculine field and precisely because IR and its traditionalist realist approach hold the state as the main referent object of security. The first section will discuss that because the post-cold war era lacked a catalyst event or a Meta-event this allowed the widening and deepening of the term *security*, this in turn presented Feminist scholars an opportunity and space to solidify and present their own approach of international relations to rectify and give answers to gender based problems. It will also discuss the birth of feminist security studies which had its core the objective of exposing the *hegemonic masculinity* of IR.

The second section will discuss the topic rape as a weapon of war, and that it is rarely discussed and neglected by mainstream international relation scholars. Lastly, the last section will discuss how the meta-event 9/11 repositioned the state as the referent object by using a gender-based narrative.

## **The widening and deepening of security and the (re)inception of Feminist security studies**

The cold war era of security studies was defined by using a traditional realist approach that had the state as its main referent object which subsequently only allowed realist-Hobbesian IR scholars to answer questions in relation to War and Peace. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, bipolarity collapsed, and the State no longer had the Soviet Union as its arch enemy which explained and demanded a referent object centered on the state and everything explained in terms of *national security*. Furthermore, there was not a catalyst event or meta-event after the cold war which enforced that a traditionalist approach to security studies or IR should take center stage<sup>1</sup>. Feminists, along poststructuralist and human security scholars were proponents of widening and deepening the term security and that a change in the referent object is necessary to bring forward different approaches and explanations to security studies and international relations. Feminists agree that it is necessary that the referent object be the *Individual*, in other words, include women and non-military actors. Feminists according to Tickner adopt “a multidimensional, multilevel approach committed to emancipatory visions of security that seeks to understand how the security of individuals and groups is compromised by violence, both

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<sup>1</sup> Barry Buzan and Lene Hansen, *The evolution of international security studies*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) 187.

physical and structural at all levels”<sup>2</sup>, thus using a traditionalist approach to IR, national security takes precedent over the social security of the individual. Consequently, feminists want to modify the epistemology that directs IR because women’s experience is only valuable and considered worth mentioning when it is comparative to the experience of men. Thus, by widening and deepening the term security and its referent object to include individual, and intra-state/domestic conflict, feminist security studies brings forth subjects which have been marginalized because a state centric referent object and a traditional realist approach to IR has dominated the field which in turn marginalized such subjects.

Up until now I have only discussed how feminists seized the opportunity after the cold war to put forth their theory and episteme of IR because the post-cold war era lacked a military event or a great power confrontation which demanded a realist approach to IR. However, it is the objective of the following section to allude to structural gender inequalities which primed feminists to demand and reconfigure the realist episteme that rapt IR and ISS for over seven decades.

The birth of feminist security studies did not emerge after the cold war, however, during the cold war period, gender as a subject and women’s contributions to security studies and IR was overlooked. In 1989, it is estimated that in the first twenty five years of JPR (Journal Peace Research) only 8% of the articles were written by women<sup>3</sup>. Such statistic shows that it is a trait of the field of international relations as a whole to disregard gender issues and discount women contribution. Elise Boulding, a prominent feminist scholar in 1984 stated that women to a greater extent are more pacifist than men; they are more likely to oppose military spending,

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<sup>2</sup> Anne J. Tickner, *Gendering World Politics: Issues and Approaches in the Post-Cold War Era*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001) 48.

<sup>3</sup> Buzan 138.

intervention, environmental exploitation and are in more favour of aiding the poor domestically and internationally<sup>4</sup>. Such differences in values between feminists and realists determine a crucial difference between both approaches, which is that women are more cooperative and are less war-oriented than men. It is for such reason that Tickner states that international security is “a man’s world, a world of power and conflict in which war face is a privileged activity and from which women traditionally have been excluded”<sup>5</sup>.

By 1989, a period known as First stage feminists pioneered by Sarah Ruddick, began presenting the characteristics of Feminist security studies. The stage wanted to affirm that gender is not a fixed biological identity, but produced through practices of socialisation, in other words “a boy is born, but rather becomes a soldier”<sup>6</sup>. This realization results in discerning that Gender with its emphases on the separate sphere builds our perception and episteme which places women in the private sphere and men in the public sphere. The cultural and gender traits of men are to be the protectors of the nuclear patriarchal family, and in the realm of politics, as self-sacrificing, patriotic, brave, aggressive and heroic. Whereas women on the other hand are “beautiful souls, who offer emotional support and bestow romantic validation to the bravery of their just warrior men”<sup>7</sup>. To fathom gender politics is firstly to understand that western political academia glamorizes experiences produced by men and holds a patriarchal liberal view. Western political philosophy endorses binaries which set specific gender traits to male and female alike. The attributes mentioned earlier creates two separate spheres, and they are distinct because women do not possess the masculine-western traits which are necessary to conduct realpolitik. The role that women are assigned in the western world - domestic work or

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 139

<sup>5</sup> Sandra Whitworth, “Theory and Exclusion: Gender, Masculinity, and International Political Economy,” (*Political Economy and The Changing Global Order* 2000) 93.

<sup>6</sup> Buzan 145.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 139

reproduction is considered irrelevant to the construction of the field of IR and SS<sup>8</sup>. It should be noted that even the features that traditionally characterize men and allow them to enter the world of politics such as, being a warrior, and being powerful are questionable male characteristics. These traditional masculine gender traits are known as *hegemonic masculinity* according to R.W Connell. Hegemonic masculinity is a society which has a dominant masculine cultural ideal, however, the actual traits do not represent the majority of men, but are seen vital to sustain a patriarchal authority and legitimize a patriarchal political and social order.<sup>9</sup>

Famous Realist philosophers which define the field of IR have also fuelled such gender binary and hegemony. Morgenthau, for instance, in his *Politics Among Nations* reinforces the Hobbesian state of nature which states that individuals are constantly engaged in the struggle for power. However, his *political men* who struggle for power must adhere to traits of hegemonic masculinity that devalues femininity to maintain such power- devaluing women because they are is not powerful , they are is weak. This political-men is projected onto every sphere of society.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, the father of realism, Nicolo Machievelli also reasserts the notion that the struggle for power can only be attained through the citizen-warrior. The citizen-warrior, a men, needs to be strong, brave, and independent in contrast to the characteristics that he proclaims women have which are weak, fearful and dependant.<sup>11</sup> Wendy Brown has pointed out that Machiavelli social structure is hierarchical in essence and is highly gendered<sup>12</sup>. Tickner approves by stating:

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<sup>8</sup> Anne J. Tickner , "Gender in international relations: feminist perspectives on achieving global security," (New York: Columbia University Press 1992). Chap 1, 2

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. 4

<sup>10</sup> J. Ann Tickner, "Gender in international relations: feminist perspectives on achieving global security," (New York: Columbia University Press 1992) Chap 2, 6.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. 8

<sup>12</sup> Wendy Brown, *Manhood and politics: a feminist reading in political theory*, (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1988) 82.

*To be a soldier is to be a man, not a woman; more than any other social institution, the military separates men from women. Soldiering is a role into which boys are socialized in school and on the playing fields. A soldier must be a protector; he must show courage, strength, and responsibility and repress feelings of fear, vulnerability, and compassion. Such feelings are womanly traits, which are liabilities in time of war*<sup>13</sup>

Contemporary events prove how the political elite which are male dominated segregate and push constructed gender traits to further marginalize women in politics. In 1987, congress woman Patricia Schroeder had her political creditability damaged and was seen as not competent or “man-enough” to run for presidency because she showed women dominant features on national television. Patricia was seen crying on her spouse’s shoulder which then made the administration reluctant to have a *weak and emotional* women be responsible for nuclear weapons<sup>14</sup>.

Even though society constructs gender traits which characterize women as weak and vulnerable and dependant on men, an event known as the Greenham Common’s Women Peace Camp challenges this realist trait. Women entered the military base in England non-violently in protest of the placement of nuclear weapons at the Greenham base. In the eyes of Realists, the protesters had entered a *male zone* and that nuclear weapons are vital for the balance of power which women are not competent or biologically wired to apprehend. However, in the eyes of Feminists, nuclear weapons do not make the *individual* feel safer. Women were cutting fences and dancing on silos, undermining the crux of the traditional realist approach to security studies and IR which is that the state knows best and that war is necessary. “[..]The Greenham women

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<sup>13</sup>Tickner. Chap 2, 8.

<sup>14</sup>Tickner. Chap 1, 2.



managed to transform the very meaning of a base and of public security. A military base easily penetrated by a group of non-violent women was no longer a military base”<sup>15</sup>.

Thus, structural inequalities based on gender are central contributors to the insecurity of individuals and are integrated with the notion of the modern state and the international system. The modern state system is patriarchal and holds masculine hegemony as its most powerful representative. IR is interested in what happens outside states; however feminists are interested in what happens inside the state. By using a state centric- realist approach to IR and ISS anything happening *inside* the state is marginalized and is irrelevant to IR, however it is this contradiction which feminist believe creates gender related insecurities and dilemmas<sup>16</sup>. The succeeding section will discuss marginalized subjects in IR such as rape, which can be regarded as a national security problem even with a traditionalist approach to IR and ISS however are overlooked because they as *inside* problems and gendered.

## **Overlooked Gender-Security issues**

As mentioned in the first section, realist who adhere to the traditionalist approach to IR define security in terms of the state, however feminist scholars during the cold war and after, redefined the term security to include the individual thus disregarded subjects by realists such as War time rape can be integrated and advanced as a national security problem. Feminist argue that

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<sup>15</sup> Cynthia Enloe, “*Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*,” (London and Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000) 79.

<sup>16</sup> Whitworth 93.

focussing on the security of the state allows other insecurities to arise in a society where women are already categorized as defenceless<sup>17</sup>.

The first case study is regarding wartime atrocities such as rape that are deemed not fit to be elucidated as security threats because the dominant approach for IR and ISS is a traditional-realist approach. Furthermore, feminists argue that the reason such topics are deemed insignificant to be treated as national security issues is precisely because politics is a man's world and because it threatens gender binaries which are produced by western philosophers which deem realism as the philosophy du jour. For instance, the term citizen which is the foundation of the social contract under Hobbesian philosophy did not include women; rather they were subordinated under a patriarchal male oriented system with no legal rights of their own<sup>18</sup>. Thus, if they were not *citizens* in the eye of the state then their social security was automatically challenged. It is this reality of *which* gender is a *citizen* that feminists argue is naturalized in international relations which consequently allow relevant gender security topics such as rape to be avoided. Tickner states that unequal gender relations are important for sustaining military activities of the state, making what occurs during wars irrelevant to their causes and outcomes<sup>19</sup>. Since western political cannons as mentioned earlier such as Machiavelli and Morgenthau, characterize men as the protector of women and children in times of war, feminist challenge such trait by stating that most civilian casualties during times of war are women and children. Judith Stiehm states that if women are portrayed as needing protection, it is precisely the protectors

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<sup>17</sup> <http://www.e-ir.info/2013/03/12/gender-security-as-a-category-of-international-politics/>

<sup>18</sup> J. Ann Tickner, "You just don't understand: troubled engagements between feminists and IR theorists," (*International Studies Quarterly*, 1997) 627.

during the times of war which are endangering women and causing gender *security* problems<sup>20</sup>. Furthermore, by making women feel like they are dependent on men during war, this decreases women's moral and responsibility, and in turn it provokes men in being misogynist because they witness dependable, defenceless abled bodies<sup>21</sup>. Another prominent feminist exposes how sexual assaults are prominent during U.N missions and are conducted by so called *peacekeepers*<sup>22</sup> but is dismissed as a "natural outcome" of the right of young soldier to enjoy themselves. It is for this reason that rape is not an incident of war but a systemic military strategy which is permitted to occur because of gendered social structures which degrade women over men.<sup>23</sup>

If rape is a military strategy, how can then women advance the concern as a threat to national security? Especially when it was not until recently that wartime rape constituted an "expectable by-product of conquering soldiers"<sup>24</sup>. Firstly, we need to perceive rape as a weapon of war<sup>25</sup>, which then makes it subject to ISS in relation to arms-control and thus directly relevant to IR. Subsequently, two core reasons permit us to integrate rape as a weapon to IR. Firstly, rape as a weapon fits with the disciplinary core of traditional-realist theories and assumptions because it undermines state security, and operates in a power-over definition of authority<sup>26</sup>. Secondly, even though rape is categorized as a women issue, Men have also been victims of rape during conflict which then falsifies such categorization.

Even though in 2008 the United Nations Security Council passed resolution 1820 which declared rape as a war tactic and noted the extent in which such tactic continues to occur with great levels

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<sup>20</sup> Judith H. Stiehm, "The protected, the protector, the defender," (*Women's studies international forum*, 1982) 367.

<sup>21</sup> Tickner 620.

<sup>22</sup> Anne Orford, "The politics of collective security" (*Michigan journal of international law*, 1996) 373

<sup>23</sup> Tickner 626.

<sup>24</sup> Buzan 140.

<sup>25</sup> Kimberly R. Carter, "Should International Relations Consider Rape A Weapon Of War?." (*Politics & Gender*, 2010), 344

<sup>26</sup> Carter 343.

of brutality in armed conflicts<sup>27</sup>, systematic rape remains a peripheral subject to be discussed in security studies. It is precisely by conceptualizing rape as a weapon of war that we can then integrate it in the study of IR scholarship and ISS alike.

Weber, in *politics as a vocation*, defines the state as the only actor who can possess a monopoly over the use of force<sup>28</sup>. Rape on the other hand undermines such conception which holds the state as being the primary user of force through its armed forces because rape is available to all persons, it does not require labor or a cost, and is available repetitively<sup>29</sup>. So, rape is not your conventional weapon, it is borderless, inter-continental, and escapes any form of sanctions. A point in case is the conflict in Rwanda which exercised rape as a weapon and has been transferred to neighboring Congo<sup>30</sup>. Thus, rape as a weapon directly results in destabilizing nation-states and sovereignty and poses a threat to national security. In addition, rape as a weapon of war is consistent with the Waltzian conception of power as one actor exercising power over another actor because it adheres to the power-over concept which results in the perpetrator being positioned in a relatively higher position of power than his victim. This results in “war rape being the clearest example of an asymmetric strategy”<sup>31</sup>. It should be noted, because males are characterized as the protectors, and the women as the protected, in realpolitik, it is usually women who are powerless in the situation where rape is being engaged with as a weapon of war. It is for this reason that systematic rape is conducted overwhelmingly by men and in some cases provides a form of male bonding which exacerbate the use of such weapon<sup>32</sup>.

However, even though such gender binaries are embedded in the International system, it should

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<sup>28</sup> <http://anthropos-lab.net/wp/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Weber-Politics-as-a-Vocation.pdf>

<sup>29</sup> Carter 348.

<sup>30</sup> Nowrojee Binaifer, “Shattered Lives: Sexual Violence During the Rwandan Genocide and Its Aftermath,” 9 Nov.2014  
<<http://www.hrw.org/reports/1996/Rwanda.htm>>

<sup>31</sup> Carter 350.

<sup>32</sup> Card, Claudia. 1996. “Rape as a Weapon of War.” *Hypatia* 11 (4): ,7 , 11

be noted that men are also placed in the position of powerlessness when they witness their wives being raped. “The point is to show the husband, the family, and the village that they’re all powerless”<sup>33</sup>.

Rape is then justly a threat to security using a traditional state centric referent object, especially when IR has within it an embedded theoretical notion of a *rational actor*- the state. Consequently, with rape being easy to procure and highly destructive, a rational actor who seeks to maximize power will pursue and deploy rape as a weapon of war. Even though men and women have their gendered roles, in a situation where a woman is the victim and the husband the witness, such roles become destroyed and irrelevant and result in rape as being truly a weapon of mass destruction<sup>34</sup>

*“In these situations, gender intersects with other aspects of a woman’s identity such as ethnicity, religion, social class or political affiliation. The humiliation, pain and terror inflicted by the rapist is meant to degrade not just the individual woman, but also to strip the humanity from the larger group of which she is a part. The rape of one person is translated into an assault upon the community through the emphasis placed in every culture on women’s sexual virtue: the shame of the rape humiliates the family and all those associated with the survivor.”<sup>35</sup>*

As the following discussion reveals, rape as a weapon is gender-less and should not be dismissed by IR and SS as simply a women issue. Carter states that if rape is truly just a women issue then what are we to say about the victimization of men and children during such conflict which affects overtime communities, states, and global security?<sup>36</sup> According to several nongovernment organizations, the conflict of Rwanda-Congo has inflicted several cases where men were victims

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<sup>33</sup> Carter 351.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. 353

<sup>35</sup> Binaifer 1.

<sup>36</sup> Carter 355-356.

of rape, and that it was harder for men to recover from such atrocity than women. However, cases where men were victims of rape do not gather enough attention because of the hegemonic masculinity which characterizes the international system. Men regard rape as an erasure of their masculinity which is culturally structured and tied to power and control or the warrior and the protector<sup>37</sup>.

To conclude this section, feminists are by far the most interested scholars in including rape as a subject of security studies; however, it is vital to acknowledge that realism is a reliable framework which could be used to integrate rape as a weapon which threatens national security. Firstly, rape as a weapon tends to destroy the gender binaries which realists hold dearly; protector-protected. Secondly, by using realist theoretical assumption such as power being defined as the power-over because rape as a weapon is easily accessible and borderless, and because of the notion of rational actors which seek to maximize their power by acquiring any weapon, it seems rational to include rape in the scholarship of International relations and security studies regardless of the approach a political scientist adopts. The following section will discuss the repositioning of feminist security studies after 9/11 and the adoption of a gendered narrative to advance national interests.

### **9/11 and the employment of a gendered narrative**

As discussed in earlier sections, directly after the cold war, the lack of a catalyst event allowed several approaches of IR, i.e. feminism, to take center stage and widen and deepen the notion of security and its referent object. However, with the advent of the terrorist attacks which took place on September 11, 2001, we witness the strident traditional-realist approach of IR and ISS claiming the stage. The objective of this section is to allude firstly to the adopted rhetoric

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid. 359

(respect and democracy) of the Bush administration which utilized a gender based narrative which reinforced hegemonic masculinity norms to advance its national interests. Secondly, I will discuss the gains feminist acquired because of such gender based narrative.

On 9/11, national security was jeopardized; the United States was attacked at home, the solution? Wage war and attack the terrorists. However, as we have already pointed out, War, is an endeavor that is strictly appointed to the Warrior, the men. Thus, women did not partake in the solution and were invisible because of socially engineered gender norms. Tickner poses the question, “What can a feminist analysis add to our understanding of 9/11 and its aftermath?”<sup>38</sup>. As discussed in previous sections, feminist do have important things to add to the field of IR and ISS especially regarding the influence gender identity has on violence, war, and peace. Nevertheless, women were sidelined, and made invisible in the after-math of 9/11; Pettman declares “Men- hijackers, rescuers, national security officers, and media commentators –filled our screens and newspapers”<sup>39</sup>. Another striking fact is the Guardian survey, which estimated that six weeks after the attacks of 9/11, only two Op-ed pieces were written by women.<sup>40</sup> Thus, we deduce from such alienation that the gender binary norm was being employed, Men (Protector) are *hegemons*, and they are the ones that can save lives and fight for the protection of women and children and it is men who possess the understanding and knowledge about war and peace to write about it. Afghanistan is a point in case where the myth of protection by men, specifically U.S soldiers, was employed to protect Afghani women and endow them with democratic thought. Feminists, during 9/11 were critical of how the U.S administration used gender dichotomies to deploy a military solution, while deploying *women* in the war story as a

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<sup>38</sup> J. Ann Tickner, ‘Feminist perspectives on 9-11,’ (*International Studies Perspectives*, 2002), 335.

<sup>39</sup> Jan Pettman, ‘Feminist International Relations after 9-11’ (*Brown Journal Of world Affairs*, 2004) 88.

<sup>40</sup> Tickner 335.

method of legitimization<sup>41</sup>. Such rhetoric undermines the female position as an agent of knowledge that can provide alternative solutions rather than war. Furthermore, the Bush administration adopted feminist rhetoric by modifying it and adding a chivalrous respect rhetoric, combined with a democratic peace rhetoric in its policies directed at Afghanistan<sup>42</sup>.

Since 9/11 is a day that will live in infamy, it was used as a justification to restore the rights of women in Afghanistan and ensure them a democratic life, however some feminists are skeptical of such rhetoric for the reason that it was used to increase support for the administration foreign policy and appeal to women voters resulting in George W. Bush getting re-elected another term. In addition, such rhetoric was so common post 9/11 that it was also adopted when the invasion of Iraq occurred.<sup>43</sup> It is important to note that one of the individuals who voiced the rhetoric of respect for women was not as you might have assumed Condoleezza rice, the national security advisor to George W. Bush, rather, First Lady Laura Bush. Ferguson suggests that the choice is strategic; Rice is a single, childless career woman, meaning she represents the opposite of what the traditional feminine gender role requires a woman to be. However, First Lady Bush is a mother who relinquished her career to raise her children and has no career aspirations. The latter fits perfectly with the traditional realist social constructed norms of gender.<sup>44</sup> The problem with such rhetoric as feminists have pointed out is that it assumes that equal rights and respect has been achieved in the United States, Laura Bush states “Our respect for women at home should motivate us to care about the status of women abroad”<sup>45</sup>. Thus by framing women’s rights as a requirement to being a democratic state, which is something that Afghanistan did not

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<sup>41</sup> Pettman 91.

<sup>42</sup> “W” stand , p.9

<sup>43</sup> Ibid p 18

<sup>44</sup> Michael Ferguson, ““W” Stands for Women: Feminism and Security Rhetoric in the Post-9/11 Bush Administration,” (Politics & Gender 2005) 19

<sup>45</sup> Ferguson 21.



possess, we can see how such rhetoric could be used to advance national state policies, she continues “The fight against terrorism is also a fight for the rights and dignity of women”<sup>46</sup>. So, the first lady is using a respect rhetoric which is something that feminist should be content with, yet she is essentially reinforcing gender binaries. The first Lady is implicitly defending hegemonic masculinity traits of the male being the protector, she wants us to visualize “the chivalrous masculine protectors defeating the misogynist enemy and show Afghani women the respect that the Taliban refuses them, women are victims , vulnerable , in need of masculinist protection, here embodied in the figure of the united states”<sup>47</sup>

By altering the natural feminist rhetoric and adding their realist touch to it, the Bush administration advances the perception that men must fight wars in to order to protect women and the illusion that equality for women in all social spheres of the U.S have been equal to men. The repercussions of the former and the latter results in relaxing the demand and activism that woman are actually not equal to men. Tickner is of the position that wars reinforce gender stereotypes, and that gender is a powerful legitimator which rises in demand as rhetoric justifying war.<sup>48</sup>

Others feminist agree with Tickner but also are optimistic and point to the gains made by the administration adopting a feminist rhetoric. As mentioned earlier, feminist after the cold war were pushing to have their approach absorbed by IR and ISS, and it seems logical to assume that because the administration adopted such rhetoric, feminist approach to IR has affected the field. Ferguson states that if the leading superpower in the world realized that the adoption of a feminist rhetoric will attract women voters, that is a conviction that would have been unthinkable

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<sup>46</sup> <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=44432>

<sup>47</sup> Ferguson 23

<sup>48</sup> Tickner 340.

twenty or thirty year ago<sup>49</sup>. Furthermore, because the administration framed women rights as a national security issue to advance their realist interests, feminist should take advantage of such rhetoric to expand their audience and demand changes in the social lives of women<sup>50</sup>. Feminist should pressure the administration in implementing women rights at home just as it does with women abroad.

To conclude, this section explains how feminism was repositioned after the meta-event of 9/11. It alludes to how other means of solving the national security issue were overlooked because they were preached by women. It also discussed how 9/11 reinforced gender stereotypes while adopting a modified, coerced version of feminism that disrupted the advancements that feminist theorist were trying to make since the 1980's. Lastly, it discusses the leverage feminist can use on the government to demand changes and equality.

## **Conclusion**

This article had an objective of providing answers to questions raised by scholars concerning women's location or lack thereof in international relations. The reason why we cannot find them is precisely because of the structure of the field of International relations and International security studies which is gender based and favors hegemonic masculinity traits in deciding war and peace. To try to locate women in IR is to start conceptualizing things seen as a natural outcome as deliberate outcomes. Rape should be conceived as a weapon of war and a threat to national security using any approach to IR; however as it currently stands, the state

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<sup>49</sup> Ferguson 12.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. 34

being the referent object marginalizes gendered security issues. It is also vital for feminists to take advantage of the feminist rhetoric adopted since 9/11 to advance their approach of IR and rectify the uneven feminist rhetoric adopted by the Bush Administration. In 1985, the Boston globe reported President Ronald Reagan saying women are "not... going to understand [missile] throw-weights or what is happening in Afghanistan or what is happening in human rights. ... Some women will, but most women... would rather read the human interest stuff of what happened." It is precisely nomenclatures and statements like this that provide answers as to *why* women are *nowhere* to be found in IR. The men in position adhere to socially constructed male traits, hegemonic masculinity, which undermines women's capability to rule. Depending on the 2016 presidential campaign results in the United States, if Hillary Clinton is successful in claiming presidency, it will be interesting to witness if her role as president will be capable to advance the real feminist approach of IR or if she will advance the Laura Bush rhetoric to solidify the notion that women cannot be in positions of power.

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