



J. Ann Tickner. *Gendering World Politics: Issues and Approaches in the Post-Cold War Era.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2001. xii + 200 pp. \$45.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-231-11367-0.



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The Personal Is International

Gender analysis of international relations can no longer be considered new. In both history and political science, scholars of women or gender and foreign relations have carved out what are now robust sub-fields. In fact it has been ten years since J. Ann Tickner[1] wrote *Gender in International Relations*[2], long enough to warrant a substantially reworked and updated version.

In *Gendering World Politics*, Tickner's first chapter explores the encounter between feminism and the international relations sub-field of political science ("IR"). She first lays out the debates within each. Feminism has undergone a debate between liberal feminism and its challengers, while IR has seen three: realism vs. idealism, realism vs. social science, and positivism vs. "postpositivism" (a grab-bag of "critical approaches"). It is in the context of this poli-sci "Third Debate" that Tickner understands the meeting of feminism and IR. More specifically, she sees feminism expanding the IR agenda on several fronts, including normative theory, historical sociology, critical theory, and postmodernism.

Against this backdrop, Tickner investigates "Gendered dimensions of War, Peace, and Security" in Chapter Two. In the 1990s, feminists began to challenge "realist" perspectives on security, which have mostly taken a top-

down, state-centered, structural approach. Feminists, by contrast, mostly come from the bottom up, beginning at the microlevel.[3] Thus, for example, feminists attack the premise that wars are often fought to protect women and children; in fact, they argue, to the extent that wars tend to generate refugee crises, mass rape, and rampant prostitution, they have disproportionately savage effects on women (pp. 47-51).

In Chapter Three, Tickner moves on to the global economy. Here, feminists have joined the debate over globalization, mostly questioning the boosterism often seen in the industrialized West. For example, they use gender (and class) analysis to reveal the unpleasant realities of home-based labor in the developing world. What multinational corporate managers would call "flexibility" and "cost containment," the overwhelmingly-female workers would see as lower-paying, less-stable, and less-regulated labor (see esp. pp. 81-89; here Tickner might have drawn a contrast to the developed world, where telecommuters often benefit from home-based work).

Gendered perspectives on democratization, the state, and the global order are the focus of Chapter Four. In contrast to conventional IR, which ignored democratization, and to more recent "democratic peace" theories, IR feminism again examines the microlevel, where democratic transitions may exclude women or even leave

them materially worse off (see pp. 104-110). Tickner then looks at women and international organizations (both the United Nations and non-governmental organizations) and norms (such as human rights).

In the fifth and final chapter, Tickner suggests "Some Pathways for IR Feminist Futures." Clearing these trails involves "different knowledge traditions" that, for example, challenge prevailing, gender-loaded dichotomies such as rational/emotional, public/private, and global/local. It also involves methodologies new to IR, such as ethnography and discourse analysis. In the end, Tickner urges IR feminists to remain connected to the broader discipline even as they question its basic assumptions (p. 147).

This book has many strengths, beginning with its brevity. At a time when not even the whole of Lyndon Johnson's Senate career somehow justifies 1,200 pages, it is nice to see someone cover a great deal of ground on a major subject in fewer than one-hundred fifty. Second, Tickner usefully synthesizes a vast array of recent literature and thus affords us a solid understanding of the field. Hers is not the only introduction to feminist IR [4], but it is a very good one. Her text, notes, and bibliography combine to provide starting points for investigations in dozens of different directions. Third, this is a modest work. Tickner is careful not to claim too much for feminist IR or to dismiss other approaches. Similarly, she takes little for granted, subjecting such basic terms as "globalization" and even "gender" itself to scrutiny (pp. 73, 91). And finally, this is a nuanced work. Tickner accounts for and fairly presents disagreements among feminists, as well as their geographic and methodological diversity. Similarly, she captures the dilemmas that IR feminists face. For instance, should feminists work within existing state structures (even liberal-democratic ones), or confront them from without? Should they rely on the state for progress, or on the market?[5]

If the book has a weakness, it is one of style. Physically the book is fine (although why publishers still refuse to include the running "Notes to pages." headers that render the endnotes usable is beyond me). The writing, moreover, is better and more accessible than in many other political science texts (or histories for that matter). Nevertheless, I often found the prose tough going. Partly this is a matter of style; Tickner's writing mostly lacks color or verve, interesting anecdote or vivid illustration. And partly it is a matter of the political scientist's usage. "This language is understood by those on the inside," as Tickner herself notes in another context, "but it can seem

quite mystifying, and sometimes even alienating, to those on the outside, making transdisciplinary communication quite difficult" (p. 130). "Amen," I noted in the margin. Again, her language is typical of the field and could be much worse, but the repeated appearance of such terms as "epistemological," "postpositivist," "problematize," and "privilege" (as verb) tends to thicken the sentences and make the book seem longer than it is.

In the end, however, that is a minor weakness, and should definitely not be allowed to deter non-specialists. For quite apart from the book's contribution to feminist IR itself, this is one of its great virtues: it brings relevant trends in political science to historians studying women or gender and foreign relations. For many historians are discovering that, in Cynthia Enloe's fine phrase, "the personal is international".[6] This discovery is eased and enriched as Tickner helps us cross the disciplinary divide.

Notes

[1]. Professor of International Relations and Director of the Center for International Studies at the University of Southern California. For a discussion of Tickner's work, in the context of other leading feminist IR scholars, see Christine Sylvester, *Feminist International Relations: An Unfinished Journey* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), Chapter Two.

[2]. J. Ann Tickner, *Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspectives on Achieving Global Security* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992).

[3]. This movement away from the state, incidentally, explains the difference between Tickner's two book titles; see p. 125.

[4]. See, for example, Jan Jindy Pettman, *Worlding Women: A Feminist International Politics* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996) and Jill Steans, *Gender and International Relations: An Introduction* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1998).

[5]. For analyses of these and similar issues at the national and international levels, see Bonnie G. Smith, ed., *Global Feminisms Since 1945* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000).

[6]. Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1990), Chapter Nine.

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