Introduction: Gendering World Politics

The dramatic changes in world politics in the last ten years have fueled a disciplinary ferment in the field of international relations (IR), and new issues have stimulated new ways of understanding them. The end of the Cold War and the consequent decline in the predominance of military-security issues, defined in terms of the nuclear arms race between the United States and the former Soviet Union, have contributed to the decline of national-security studies, the heart of the discipline, at least in the United States, since 1945. With war between the great powers being unlikely in the near future, many IR scholars are focused on states' economic, rather than strategic, relationships. Previously obscured by the East/West rivalry, a variety of new issues are now preoccupying the international relations security agenda. Ethnic conflicts and the clash of civilizations defy traditional statist categories and balance-of-power or interest-based explanations; they demand additional understandings of changing collective identities and the role of culture in defining both identities and interests. Issues related to economic globalization and democratization are also taking center stage. While none of these issues is new, the IR discipline is taking increasing notice of them, and ways to understand and explain them are proliferating.

Many of these new disciplinary areas of focus are ones where women scholars and students of world politics seem to feel more at home than in strategic studies; they are also areas where gender issues, such as the differential rewards of the current manifestations of economic globalization and democratization, seem more obviously relevant.[1] It may not be coincidental,

therefore, that feminist perspectives on world politics entered the discipline at about the same time as the end of the Cold War; over the last ten years, they have been given increasing recognition. Certain introductory IR texts are now including feminist approaches in their overview of the discipline, and edited volumes and some anthologies have begun to include a chapter on feminist approaches.[2]

The title of this introduction, "Gendering World Politics," both reflects some of these changes and conceptualizes a worldview into which feminist approaches fit more comfortably. While international relations has never been just about relations between states, an IR statist focus seems even less justified today than in the past. International politics cannot be restricted to politics between states; politics is involved in relationships between international organizations, social movements and other nonstate actors, transnational corporations and international finance, and human-rights organizations, to name a few. Decrying the narrowness of Cold War IR, Ken Booth has suggested that the subject should be informed by what he calls a "global moral science" that entails systematic enquiry into how humans might live together locally and globally in ways that promote individual and collective emancipation in harmony with nature. He goes on to suggest that the state, the traditional frame for IR, "might be seen as the problem of world politics, not the solution."[3]

Since women have been on the peripheries of power in most states, this broad conception of world politics seems the most fitting disciplinary definition in which to frame feminist approaches. Their investigations of politics from the micro to the global level and from the personal to the international, as well as their analyses as to how macro structures affect local groups and individuals, draw on a broad definition of the political. Using explicitly normative analysis, certain feminists have drawn attention to the injustices of hierarchical social relations and the effects they have on human beings' life chances. Feminists have never been satisfied with the boundary constraints of conventional IR.[4] While women have always been players in international politics, often their voices have not been heard either in policy arenas or in the discipline that analyzes them.

If the agenda of concerns for IR scholars has expanded, so too have the theoretical approaches. The "scientific" rationalistic tradition,[5] associated with both neorealism and neoliberalism, is being challenged by scholars in critical and postpositivist approaches that grow out of humanistic and philosophical traditions of knowledge rather than those based on the natural

sciences. While certain scholars applaud this flowering of a multiplicity of approaches and epistemologies,[6] others see a discipline in disarray with fragmentation and pluralism as its essential characteristics. Kalevi Holsti's claim, in the early 1990s, that there is no longer agreement on what constitutes reliable or useful knowledge and how to create it still holds true today.[7] It is in the context of this intellectual pluralism and disciplinary ferment that feminist approaches have entered the discipline.

In spite of the substantial growth and recognition of feminist scholarship in the last ten years, it still remains quite marginal to the discipline, particularly in the United States, where neorealism and neoliberalism, approaches that share rationalistic methodologies and assumptions about the state and the international system, predominate.[8] Apart from occasional citations, there has been little engagement with feminist writings, particularly by conventional IR scholars.[9] There is genuine puzzlement as to the usefulness of feminist approaches for understanding international relations and global politics. Questions frequently asked of feminist scholars are indications of this puzzlement: What does gender have to do with international politics and the workings of the global economy? How can feminism help us solve real world problems such as Bosnia? Where is your research program?[10] While the new feminist literatures in IR are concerned with understanding war and peace and the dynamics of the global economy, issues at the center of the IR agenda, their methodological and substantive approaches to these questions are sufficiently different for scholars of IR to wonder whether they are part of the same discipline.

It is this lack of connection that motivates many of the issues raised in this book. While I have attempted to site feminist perspectives within the discipline, it will become clear from the topics addressed that IR feminists frequently make different assumptions about the world, ask different questions, and use different methodologies to answer them. Having reflected on reasons for these disconnections, as well as the misunderstandings over the potential usefulness of feminist approaches raised by some of the questions above, I believe that they lie in the fact that feminist IR scholars see different realities and draw on different epistemologies from conventional IR theorists. For example, whereas IR has traditionally analyzed security issues either from a structural perspective or at the level of the state and its decision makers, feminists focus on how world politics can contribute to the insecurity of individuals, particularly marginalized and disempowered populations. They examine whether the valorization of characteristics associated

with a dominant form of masculinity influences the foreign policies of states. They also examine whether the privileging of these same attributes by the realist school in IR may contribute to the reproduction of conflict-prone, power-maximizing behaviors.[11] Whereas IR theorists focus on the causes and termination of wars, feminists are as concerned with what happens during wars as well as with their causes and endings. Rather than seeing military capability as an assurance against outside threats to the state, militaries are seen as frequently antithetical to individual security, particularly to the security of women and other vulnerable groups. Moreover, feminists are concerned that continual stress on the need for defense helps to legitimate a kind of militarized social order that overvalorizes the use of state violence for domestic and international purposes.

Conventional IPE has typically focused on issues such as the economic behavior of the most powerful states, hegemony, and the potential for building international institutions in an anarchic system populated by self-interested actors; within a shared state-centric framework, neorealists and neoliberals debate the possibilities and limitations of cooperation using the notion of absolute versus relative gains.[12] Feminists more often focus on economic inequality, marginalized populations, the growing feminization of poverty and economic justice, particularly in the context of North/South relations. Whereas IR has generally taken a "top-down" approach focused on the great powers, feminist IR often begins its analysis at the local level, with individuals embedded in social structures. While IR has been concerned with explaining the behavior and interaction of states and markets in an anarchic international environment, feminist IR, with its intellectual roots in feminist theory more generally, is seeking to understand the various ways in which unequal gender structures constrain women's, as well as some men's, life chances and to prescribe ways in which these hierarchical social relations might be eliminated.

These different realities and normative agendas lead to different methodological approaches. While IR has relied heavily on rationalistic theories based on the natural sciences and economics, feminist IR is grounded in humanistic accounts of social relations, particularly gender relations. Noting that much of our knowledge about the world has been based on knowledge about men, feminists have been skeptical of methodologies that claim the neutrality of their facts and the universality of their conclusions. This skepticism about empiricist methodologies extends to the possibility of developing causal laws to explain the behavior of states. While feminists do see

structural regularities, such as gender and patriarchy, they define them as socially constructed and variable across time, place, and culture; understanding is preferred over explanation.[13] These differences over epistemologies may well be harder to reconcile than the differences in perceived realities discussed above.

Subsequent chapters of this book serve two purposes. First, they elaborate upon and forge a better understanding of the ontological and epistemological differences between feminists and IR scholars. These differences will become evident as subsequent chapters move further away from traditional IR concerns. Although security (the subject of chapter 2) is central to both conventional IR and feminist perspectives, even though each approaches it from quite different perspectives, democratization (one of the topics in chapter 4) has not been central to IR as conventionally defined.

The second goal is to demonstrate what feminist approaches to IR are contributing and can contribute to our understanding of global politics. While not suggesting that they can tell us everything we need to know about world politics, feminists are challenging us to see the inequality and domination aspects of "common sense" gender differences. For example, uncovering previously hidden gender hierarchies in policy priorities or workplace participation can show how they contribute to conflict and injustice in ways that have detrimental effects on the security of both men and women. Much of feminist analysis draws upon and intersects with that of scholars who would not consider themselves part of the discipline of IR; this suggests that feminists are charting their own voyages of discovery rather than staying within the confines of the discipline. Debates as to how connected feminism should be to the discipline are central to feminist discussions.

Acknowledging these concerns, chapter 1 attempts to situate feminist scholarship within an increasingly fragmented discipline of IR. Subsequent chapters do the same in a variety of issue areas. A sharp division between realism and liberalism, and their neorealist and neoliberal versions, and critical and postpositivist approaches is now evident in IR.[14] While there is no necessary connection between postpositivism and feminism, many IR feminists would identify themselves as postpositivists. Additionally, many would be uncomfortable describing themselves as either liberals or realists. For these reasons, they are closer to other critical approaches than to conventional theory; they are distinctive, however, in that their work is also grounded in contemporary feminist theoretical debates and by the fact that all of them use gender as a central category of analysis.

Chapter 2 deals with war, peace, and security—issues that continue to be central to the discipline. While realists see the contemporary system as only a temporary lull in great-power conflict, others see a change in the character of war, with the predominance of conflicts of state building and state disintegration driven by ethnic and national identities as well as by material interests. Since feminists use gender as a category of analysis, issues of identity are central to their approach; chapter 2 explores the ways in which the gendering of nationalist and ethnic identities can exacerbate conflict. Feminists are also drawing our attention to the increasing impact of these types of military conflicts on civilian populations. Civilians now account for about 90 percent of war casualties, the majority of whom are women and children. Questioning traditional IR boundaries between anarchy and danger on the outside and order and security on the inside, as well as the realist focus on states and their interactions, feminists have pointed to insecurities at all levels of analysis; for example, Katharine Moon has demonstrated how the "unofficial" support of military prostitution served U.S. alliance goals in Korea, thus demonstrating links between interpersonal relations and state policies at the highest level.[15] Feminist analysis of wartime rape has shown how militaries can be a threat even to their own populations;[16] again, feminist scholarship cuts across the conventional focus on interstate politics or the domestic determinants of foreign policy.

Feminists have claimed that the likelihood of conflict will not diminish until unequal gender hierarchies are reduced or eliminated; the privileging of characteristics associated with a stereotypical masculinity in states' foreign policies contributes to the legitimization not only of war but of militarization more generally. Wary of what they see as gendered dichotomies that have pitted realists against idealists and led to overly simplistic assumptions about warlike men and peaceful women,[17] certain feminists are cautioning against the association of women with peace, a position that, they believe, disempowers both women and peace. The growing numbers of women in the military also challenges and complicates these essentialist stereotypes. To this end, and as part of their effort to rethink concepts central to the field, feminists define peace and security, not in idealized ways often associated with women, but in broad, multidimensional terms that include the elimination of social hierarchies such as gender that lead to political and economic injustice.

Chapter 3 focuses on economic globalization. Given an increase in inequality on a global scale, which has accompanied the latest round of eco-

nomic globalization, feminists are questioning the optimistic prognoses of liberal supporters of a Western-led globalizing economy. Focusing on populations at the margins of the world economy, feminists call our attention to the fact that while women's positions vary according to race, class, and geographical location, women are disproportionately situated at the bottom of the socioeconomic scale in all societies; drawing on gender analysis, they point to the devaluation of women's work and the dichotomy between productive and reproductive labor as explanations of the relatively disadvantaged position of women and the growing feminization of poverty.

In an era characterized by the hegemony of neoliberal ideology, structural-adjustment policies have placed further burdens on women as government programs have been scaled back and women have taken on unremunerated welfare and caregiving functions previously assumed by the state. Gender analysis highlights that structural-adjustment programs, along with other economic policies and consequences of economic globalization, are not gender neutral. Local resistances to these adverse effects, which often go unnoticed, are acting as generators of new knowledge upon which feminists are drawing to counter the growing neoliberal consensus.

Globalization involves more than economic forces; it has also led to the spread of Western-centered definitions of human rights and democracy. Feminist scholars are questioning whether these definitions are gender biased: for example, until very recently violence against women was not considered part of the international community's human-rights agenda. Additionally, postcolonial feminists are drawing attention to the ways in which Western feminism may itself be complicit in imposing a Western view of democracy and rights that ignores issues of race and cultural differences. Conversely, it is important to recognize that cultural reassertions against Westernization are often framed in terms that result in the regulation and control of women.

Feminists also claim that, while democratization is being celebrated by Western liberals, new democracies are not always friendly toward women. Feminists have traditionally been suspicious of what they see as the legacy of the Western liberal-democratic tradition that they claim is patriarchal and that, historically, has favored men's over women's interests. Additionally, since women have traditionally had less access to formal political institutions, the focus on state institutions by scholars of democratization may miss ways in which women are participating in politics—outside formal political channels at the grassroots level.

Chapter 4 investigates how different women impact and are impacted by political institutions at all levels and what effect this may have on global politics. It has been suggested that international organizations and global institutions, which are further removed from democratic accountability than are states, may be even less receptive to women's interests and gender issues. If this is the case, it may be time for feminists to reassess their generally critical view of the role of the state. In certain cases, democratization has brought increased participation by women in the formal political process; in others, it has not. Women's participation in nongovernmental activities has had similarly mixed effects. Their involvement in social movements provides points of leverage on state policies that, because of democratic accountability, offer the potential at least for more responsiveness than do international organizations.

In these substantive chapters, I have chosen to focus on security, economic globalization, and democratization because they are the topics that concern much of the recent feminist IR literature; they are also the focus of much of the critical scholarship in IR, scholarship with which feminist IR has more affinity. Most of the feminist scholarship to be discussed in this book has moved outside the traditional confines of the discipline; recent studies demonstrate that feminist IR has moved beyond critique into "second-stage" empirical research. Nevertheless, claims that feminist IR lacks a research program will persist, due in part to the misunderstandings over epistemology and methodology discussed earlier.

Abstracting and generalizing from the literatures discussed in earlier chapters, chapter 5 outlines some feminist methodologies that are being used for understanding world politics. Since, as I have already suggested, feminist IR draws on local knowledge and examines issues not normally considered part of the discipline, its research and methodologies will often seem strange to conventional IR scholars. Practical reasoning, grounded in everyday experience and conversational, interpretive frameworks are not seen as "scientific" by a discipline committed to theories based on the natural sciences and economics. It is hoped that by contributing to a better, more informed understanding of feminist IR, this book can facilitate more fruitful conversations among advocates and students of different persuasions in international relations. Nevertheless, as this introduction demonstrates, these conversations will remain troubled as long as there are such wide divides between IR and feminist ontologies and epistemologies.