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**Feminist Methodology in International Relations**  
**An ongoing story**

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**Feminist Methodology in International Relations  
An Ongoing Story**

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## **DEDICATORIA**

A la vida, que después de un camino lleno de bifurcaciones y decisiones que tomar, me llevó a este día.

Y a todas aquellas mujeres en búsqueda de algo más...

## **AGRADECIMIENTOS**

A mi mamá, mi mejor amiga, mi confidente y la mujer más espectacular en mi vida. A mi papá, mi modelo a seguir, mi mayor apoyo y mi inspiración cada día. Nada sería posible sin ustedes, gracias por la guía, por las risas, los abrazos y el amor. Y a mis hermanos, por su dulzura, su paciencia y nuestra complicidad. Les amo infinitamente.

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Gracias, siempre.

## RESUMEN

La metodología feminista en las RI (Relaciones Internacionales), siendo una perspectiva innovadora dentro de la disciplina, se ha enfocado en el cuestionamiento del orden patriarcal y la invisibilidad del sesgo de género que existe. Las teorías y metodologías provenientes de las corrientes principales en RI, desde una visión positivista, tienen un acercamiento ontológico propenso a la acumulación de conocimiento y uno epistemológico que busca una verdad objetiva en cada uno de sus estudios. Sin embargo, es incuestionable que el género penetra cada aspecto de la sociedad y negar esto impide que los académicos puedan entender diversos problemas en la arena internacional. Por lo tanto, este artículo examinará la metodología feminista en RI, analizando las respuestas de los académicos *tradicionales* en la disciplina hacia ella, y estudiará como esta metodología profundiza en ciertos de los temas principales en las RI, como seguridad, política y economía.

**Palabras clave:** Metodología feminista, relaciones internacionales, seguridad, economía política internacional, post-positivismo, feminismo radical.

## ABSTRACT

Feminist methodology in IR (International Relations), as a groundbreaking approach, has focused on the questioning of the patriarchal order and the invisibility of the gender bias within this discipline. Mainstream theories and methodologies in IR, born from positivist views, have an ontological approach prone to the accumulation of knowledge and an epistemological one that seeks for an objective truth. However, it is undeniable that gender permeates every aspect of society and denying this inhibits academics from understanding many relevant issues in the international arena. Therefore, this article will overlook feminist methodology in IR, highlighting the responses that this methodology has had from mainstream academics, and analyzing the way in which *traditional* issues (such as security, politics and economics) are examined through this approach.

**Key words:** Feminist methodology, International Relations, Security, International Political Economy, Post-Positivism, Radical Feminism.

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# Feminist Methodology in International Relations

## An Ongoing Story

### INTRODUCTION

Feminist methodology within international relations (IR)<sup>1</sup> has often been rejected by mainstream academic theorists. This is due to the provocative ideas that arise when considering this so – called “alternative” view of the discipline. IR has been historically approached through a realist – positivist lens (Sjoberg and Tickner 2011, 9), which implies that there has been an ontological approach prone to the accumulation of knowledge, and the assumption that there is an *outside absolute truth*. From a feminist outlook, this ontological perspective in which positivism is based is what is called mainstream or *malestream*<sup>2</sup> comprehension (Youngs 2004). For the most part, within the IR field, situations, dynamics, historical components and responses from actors have been analyzed through a realist standpoint. However, a realist perspective not only entails the traditional precepts of this theory, but the comprehensiveness that states were constructed from a masculine perspective “[M]anly states is a description both of the masculinist nature of states, traditionally central actor in international relations, and of the general condition of manliness” (Youngs 2004, 81). To further understand this concept, it can be said that positivism within IR, considered the mainstream approach, is based on the creation of states, that were conceived by men, through a masculine perspective. Then, how can gender not be the main focus when deepening the analysis of how states work, and the undercurrents that revolve around them? This is what the feminist methodology in IR aims to examine. It seeks to analyze the different dichotomies that have created the understandings of IR, including:

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<sup>1</sup> For the rest of the article the abbreviation IR will replace international relations.

<sup>2</sup> Malestream and mainstream will be synonyms for the rest of the article, due to the comprehension that mainstream ideas are based on a gender biased, in which men have been the main actors within IR.

Sex-gender, masculine-feminine, public-private, powerful-subordinate, among many others (Wibben, 2004). Intending to break through the many layers that cover the interactions among states throughout time, grounded in the sex-gender dichotomy, and how this simple distinction restructures many of the beliefs that are the basis of the entire discipline. Having these ideas in mind, the following paper will focus on what is feminist methodology within IR, on the void that exists within this discipline in spaces where women are rendered invisible, on the responses this methodology has had from the mainstream academics, and on the way in which traditional mainstream issues (such as security, politics and economic issues) are analyzed through this methodological approach.

Gender permeates every single aspect of society, and mainstream IR has taught us that it is “natural”, that it comes from biological differences, when it is constructed. So, if we demystify this “naturalness”, then everything needs to be questioned, which is what feminist methodology within IR seeks to do. This is one of the reasons why this methodological approach is key to understanding the international concert with its various actors, hence, the comprehension that the world we live in is gendered. Therefore, this paper will describe what feminist methodology entails. The first section will explain what feminist methodology consists of and the main authors within this discipline. Authors include Ann Tickner (1997 and 2005) and Cynthia Enloe (1990), who through their ideas about feminism, revolution, and I will go as far as saying created, this methodology within IR. The following section is an overview of the responses that feminist methodology has had within IR from the mainstream academics. For instance, one of the most controversial ideas are those presented by Robert Keohane in his article *International Relations Theory: Contributions of a Feminist Standpoint* (1989). Judging from the title, it could be encouraging, because it talks about the contributions that feminist IR has made. Nevertheless, he mentions during his entire article that feminism should be a portion of knowledge to study, instead of a way to study. This distinction is fundamental. Something

*to* study, is an occurrence in the world that should be seen through a traditional liberal lens, according to him. Whilst, what feminist IR seeks is not to be something to study, but a way *to* study the world. In the third portion of this article there will be an exposition of the importance of feminist methodology within IR with the use of examples of the main fields of interest within mainstream IR: security and war, politics and finally economy. If we have lived in a world that is based on what men have created, then where were the women and where are they today? It should even be instinctive to wonder what half the population was doing, when supposedly “men were creating the world we live in” (Wibben 2004, 98). However, mainstream IR, never wondered, never questioned. Therefore, feminist methodology takes the main precepts in IR, such as states, security, militarism and power, and analyzes them through new lenses, through a perspective that entails a more profound inquiry of their dynamics in the international community. This is what this article aims to do. The importance of questioning, and not settling for an *absolute truth*, but understanding that the world is gendered, so it should be treated as such, as well as the importance of feminist methodology in IR.

## **STATE OF THE ART**

It is important to fully comprehend feminism and its history to understand how it has evolved, until finally feminist methodology in IR was constituted and to take into account the discussions of the different debates arising from feminism in IR. To begin, it is vital to give an overview of the state of feminist methodology in IR, and how it has evolved from different international and multi-disciplinary feminist movements. Feminism is not a movement that was constituted from one day to another, it was a struggle, and a fight that lasts until today. These struggles enabled changes in all disciplines, and most importantly for this paper, changes in IR, therefore, it is vital to understand where this movement came from, and how feminist

methodology in IR was constituted. This is done in order to grasp the dichotomy of sex and gender, where does it come from, and how it is ever- changing and becoming a more fluid concept that it was originally. This methodological approach came from the different waves of feminism that began in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Feminism can be divided into four different historical moments. It can be said, that it began in the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, within social sciences, with the transition from Victorian feminism, to what it was known as *modern* feminism (Orobitg in Tubert 2004, 256). In the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, until 1960, there was the beginning of modern feminism, finishing with the decades of 1970 and 1980, in which political gender movements arose within the most developed countries. Finally, from the 1990's there has been the, well known, *third wave* of feminism: "which arises from the critique within the feminist movement, specially an opposition to the white, heteronormative, middle class feminism, which was dominant during the second wave"<sup>3</sup> (Orobitg in Tubert 2004, 257). This is the feminist movement in a nutshell, nevertheless, the questioning of gender came relatively late within IR, compared to other fields among social sciences.

As it is clear, these questionings and political activism from women began in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, nonetheless, it took several years for this to be an interest within IR's scholars. "Since the late 1980s, feminist scholars have paved the way for serious engagements with gender and theory in a previously gender-blind and theoretical abstract IR field" (Ackerly et al. 2006, 17). From the 1980's there were many academics that began questioning the validity of the ideas that were arising, questioning sex and gender, and how it could be that one was socially constructed, and not derivative from a biological distinction as it was thought of. But what will this represent for this academic field? Mainly a new comprehension of the ways in which main ideas within this campus of knowledge, such as security, war, politics and globalization were understood (Wibben 2004). However, the

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<sup>3</sup> All translations of texts originally in Spanish have been made by the author.

mainstream academics in IR, as it has been said previously, never questioned the construction of societies. There was an objective truth, based on facts, with the state as the main actor, and with women in a subordinate position. As a discipline it “focused on public sphere activities (power politics, foreign policy, war) that are defined as masculine and dominated by men,” (Peterson 2003, 3), and the private sphere, and *women* as part of that, are not relevant for the understanding of IR.

A vital change in the discipline is related to postmodernist and poststructuralist ideas, which developed during this period of time, accompanied with a questioning of everything that was previously established as *objective truth*. Within this questioning comes the distinction between sex and gender, how the world has been constructed through a patriarchal hegemonic order and the place that *is left* for women within this androcentric construction. “But first we must ask: what is woman? (...) It would appear, then, that every female human being is not necessarily a woman; to be so considered she must share in that mysterious and threatened reality known as femininity. Is this attribute something secreted by the ovaries? Or is it a Platonic essence, a product of the philosophic imagination? Is a rustling petticoat enough to bring it down to earth” (de Beauvoir 1950, 15)? The inquiry of *what is women?*, is one that not even Simone de Beauvoir in her many masterpieces has answered, not because they lack brightness, but because, it doesn’t have one, single, answer. To be a woman, is not the opposite of being a man, as it has been described over and over again throughout time. It should not, be defined in opposition, because we are not the “other” we are the “ones” (de Beauvoir 1950). We should not be described as those lacking something, whether it is external genitalia, intelligence, physical strength, or so many other qualities that have been ripped off from women. We should be described as those “having”, and not repeat the process of placing half of the humanity in this position of *otherness*. “We need to consider women and gender in order to examine the fundamental contribution that feminist IR makes to the realms of theory and

practice” (Youngs 2004, 76). Therefore, it can be said that sex should be considered as the biological attributes given by the chromosomic distribution, and gender should be considered the socially constructed distinctions between sexes (Peterson 2003, 2). However, this is once again simplifying a complex dilemma, because the analysis that has been created in the past years is one of breaking this dichotomy. From an anthropological perspective, this breakage comes and is replaced by a world in which dichotomies and Cartesian plane distinctions are eliminated from the social imaginary (Tubert 2004, 271). The idea is that gender and sex are not only two dimensions, and therefore, they are not divided in male or female, or masculine and feminine, but on an endless line that unites them both, making these concepts more fluid. What matters here as a basic idea is the awareness that gender is not determined by sex. Meaning, that women do not have intrinsic personality characteristics or attributes that are generated by XX chromosomic combination. Everything, that is created by a gender construction is arbitrary (Ortner 1979, 112). Here relies the importance of feminist methodology within IR. In the understanding that gender is present in every portion of life and that we can’t escape it and finally demystifying the *naturalness* of a gendered world.

We have been talking about some of the biggest debates among social scientists that follow the *malestream* perspectives. Consequently, it is imperative to expound what feminist methodology in IR is, to fully grasp the academic path this field has taken. It is clear that within academia, feminist IR is still treated as a *second-class* approach to knowledge and understanding, because it questions the ontological directions that are taken by the mainstream theories. To begin, it is important to realize that there is not one single “feminist theory”. It is the categorization of feminism into one single definition that feminist theory seeks to challenge. Mentioning once again Robert Keohane (1989), although, he is giving a certain importance to feminism, is not due to the fact that he acknowledges it as a way of understanding the world, as a methodology, but, as a subject of study. Another, tricky view of feminist IR, is that which

reduces it to the idea that *women are more peaceful*, therefore, if the world was run by women, it would be a more peaceful place (Wibben 2004, 99). As soon as this comparison is put on paper, it is clear the knotty association that it is making. It is assuming that because women are women (without any further explanation), they are more peaceful. For instance, Fukuyama (1998), creates a binary that position men as aggressive and women as peaceful. Returning to the gender and sex dichotomy, it is clear that this is a gender creation that is based on a supposed “sexual” construction. Meaning that, the world has led us to believe that there are certain traits associated with femininity, such as peacefulness and calmness, when this comes from an arbitrary construction. Possibly arising from the false precepts that placed men as hunters, and women as gatherers, which were created in the 18<sup>th</sup> century by the academics of the time, that were men (Slocum 1979). Following this argumentative fallacy, it is clear that the only reason we believe this is because men taught us to. However, even in present times, academics continue to base their studies in this precept that has been demystified since the 1980’s. Resuming these arguments, the mainstream approach of IR is reluctant to take the feminist methodologies as valid (and even necessary), and it is focused on analyzing it through their own personal *truth seeking* traditional perspectives.

Feminist methodology in IR, can therefore be divided into many different fields and interest. However, there are three main fluid concepts, based on Spike Peterson’s (2003) way of dividing this field: Gender bias in IR, the (re) significance that feminist IR does by adding women to the picture, and the sex-gender dichotomy. First, there is the feminist academics that seek to expose the “extent and effects of masculinist bias” (Peterson 2003, 3). As it has been stated previously, throughout IR’s history there is a predominant male perspective. Women have been cut-off of the story, while power positions and discourses have been centered in men and the way they act. “This lead us to ask questions about the roles of masculinity in the conduct of IR and to question the accepted naturalness of the abundance of men in the theory and

practice of IR” (Youngs 2004, 80). Men, continuously, are portrayed as the saviors, the villains, and the only protagonists in the world’s history.

This leads to the second point of analysis: *correcting androcentric bias by adding women and their experiences to existing frameworks* (Peterson 2003, 4). Returning to the hunter- gatherer analogy and combining it with Sherry Ortner’s work *Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?* (1979) this can be thoroughly illustrated. In Ortner’s work (1979), what she finds, is that the role of women has been disregarded because it has been associated to nature. Women give birth, but, according to this view, every animal gives birth. While men, fight for their countries, create, construct and endure the pass of time with their creations, or even give their live in the battle field, so they are pertinent to culture, and their role in society is more important. However, Ortner and Slocum (1979), in the same period of time, argue that this is what the androcentric knowledge that has been imparted lead us to believe. In war, for instance, due to a false assumption of physical strength and power, men are the ones fighting, but, what were women doing? How were they affected by “war, military occupation, militarization, migration, human trafficking, sexual and other forms of slavery and forced prostitution” (Youngs 2004, 83)? Are women not even deserving of analysis, even though they have to endure the abysmal calamities of war? Furthermore, how can IR focus on the achievement of power, while all this is going on in the world? How can this analysis be far-reaching if they miss all these portions of breakdown investigation? In other ways, for instance in economic matters, women and the exploration of gender is essential when trying to grasp the economic panorama. From wage gaps, to power, to poverty, to lack of opportunities, to forced labor, to not being allowed to work, to independence, to single mothers, to so many ways in which women affect international economic relations. But, not only the effect on women, but the effect that the constructions of gender have in the way economics are conceived. Nevertheless, what is more important in this second point of analysis is the fact that “women



cannot simply be added to constructions that are literally designed by being masculine: The public sphere, the military, rationality, political identity, objectivity” (Peterson 2003, 5). The objective of this academic analysis is not to “add” women, is not to deny the entire history of women’s struggle, and is not to *make them men*, but to generate transformation in the social imaginary, leading to the third point: *reconstructing theory* (Peterson 2003).

The third point is based on the mentioned distinction between gender and sex. Since *all social life is gendered*, this is an issue that pertains IR entirely, and that can’t be disregarded as it has been in previous theoretical approaches. “Thus, gender is not simply an empirical category that refers to embodied men and women and their material activities but also a systematically analytical category that refers to construction of (privileged) masculinity and (devalorized) femininity and their ideological effect. In effect, all social life is gendered” (Peterson 2003, 5). Every discourse is gendered, by the way it is said (for instance, in Spanish the masculine termination (o) is the grammatical norm) and by what is not being said, the created silences (Wibben 2004,101). Every structure and institution is gendered by the ways power is managed, by the associations made to women in power, and by the struggles. Economic life is gendered, as it has been explained previously, by the opportunists and privileged that come with having an XY chromosomic pair. Culture is gendered, by what it is said, by the way it is said, by the symbols, by religion, by everything. *All social life is gendered*, and there is no escaping it, not anymore. In the following section there will be a clear explanation of what is feminist methodology in IR and the main academics supporting it.

## **FEMINIST METHODOLOGY WITHIN IR**

When trying to understand feminist methodology within IR there is always apprehension or doubt about how it should be treated or even if it should be considered an actual methodology

or discipline within the discipline. The development of feminist studies and women in the academia with methodological concerns has been rapid in the IR world, nevertheless, “the effect on the mainstream discipline, particularly in the United States, continues to be marginal, and the lack of attention paid to feminist perspectives by other critical approaches has also been disappointing” (Tickner 1997, 611). The conversations by women using feminist methodology began quite a long time ago, but the response from the academia has been tenuous, and when it has existed, it was to try to silence these voices once again. Feminist methodology within IR is not the same as studying feminism from a realist methodological compass. The ontological and epistemological differences are crucial between the two, rendering it an absolutely necessary standpoint. This section will explore what feminist methodology within IR is, the main exponents of this avant-garde<sup>4</sup> methodology, and the conversations they have had with *traditional* or *malestream* academics regarding this matter.

### ***What is feminist methodology within International relations?***

As stated previously, since the 1980s “feminist scholars have paved the way for serious engagements with gender and theory in a previously gender-blind and theoretically abstract IR field” (Ackerly et al. 2006, 1). IR is a discipline that is filled with *traditional* methodologies with positivist epistemologies. Feminist methodology, while studying the traditional issues that are present in this discipline, such as states, conflict or security, seeks to understand these matters from a different position. The dilemmas that arise from this academic way of achieving knowledge focus on “power relations between the researcher and the research subjects and the power inequalities among the research subjects themselves” (Ackerly et al. 2006, 5). The

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<sup>4</sup> *Avant- Garde*: (adj.) Unorthodox or daring, radical / An intelligentsia that develops new or experimental concepts in the arts or in society (Merriam- Webster Dictionary). Feminist methodology in IR can be described by this definition because of the revolution it has created and opposition to mainstream classical IR.

investigator is not an outsider observing an issue, but a participant within this methodology, looking into their own experience as crucial for studying any particular matter. The eye of the observer becomes fundamental when trying to understand the perspective of the people who are studied. The academics who use feminist methodology are conscious of the position from which they come from, and how this can influence the way in which one grasps a situation elsewhere. This is why research methods within this methodology include mostly qualitative approaches, such as: “[Q]ualitative interview, ethnography, participant observation, oral history, ethnographic life stories, and discourse analysis” (Ackerly et. al 2006, 10).

Furthermore, feminist methodology comprehends that the world is gendered. IR, which is the discipline by excellence that focuses on worldly matters, cannot be studied if this idea isn’t thoroughly understood. It is not enough to say that gender has an influence, or to try to hypothesize on what will the world be if women *had the power*. It is mandatory that the academia understands that every day, actions and decisions are guided by gender. Moreover, that they comprehend that economic life is gendered, with the wage gap, or with the lack of opportunities women have; as well as political life, with such a low percentage of women in positions of power and laws that continue to enable this; or in security matters, with the role of women in war. Men shouldn’t be the only actors deserving of analysis, or at least, not anymore.

*You just don’t understand* is the title of Ann Tickner’s (1992) academic piece on the importance of feminist methodology within IR. *Malestream* academics focus on how useless it is to have a new methodology because, *they just don’t understand*. They don’t understand there are a million reasons that justify the necessity to study the world through new lenses. That there should be an awareness of the complications that arise from having a fixed way (always heteronormative, androcentric, white, western) of viewing the world. The million reasons are these women, whose voices have been shut down in every academic discipline and specially in IR. If they believe that there is no necessity for this new approach after centuries of abuses

towards women and the role that *we*<sup>5</sup> have played in every historic aspect, then *you just don't understand*. This is feminist methodology within IR. A methodology which gives voice to the people that have been silenced for centuries, that understands the world through new lenses and that doesn't deny the importance of traditional ideas but is aware that there is a huge void in IR academia. During the remaining of this article there will be an analysis of how some of the most important authors in IR use feminist methodology and the responses they have received from mainstream academia.

### ***Malestream standpoint and responses***

The *malestream*, a term used by Youngs (2004), is the idea that the mainstream academia within IR has espoused male viewpoints and women's perspective has been disregarded. Even in the history that is studied in the international community the protagonists and main actors have been men. Gender inequality can't be seen as something that happens sporadically, but as a construction "deeply ingrained in the structure of societies" (Lorber 1994, 8). This is clear in IR; therefore, it is valuable to see the positions that mainstream academics have regarding this methodological approach.

As stated previously, some of the main exponents of IR such as Mearsheimer (1994), Waltz (1959) or Keohane (1989 and 1998) have continuously contested and criticized the validity of a feminist methodology within IR. They argue that there is no necessity for this approach to exist. It is not that Keohane, for instance, disregards the importance of feminist methodology in IR, but he maintains that *his* ideas are fundamental and are the sole basis of IR. In his text, he divides the feminist voices into three categories: Feminist empiricism, feminist standpoint and feminist postmodernism (Keohane 1989). With this separation, Keohane

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<sup>5</sup> *We* – this part is written in first person because it refers to all the women, including the author, furthermore, feminist methodology includes the speaker within the text.

attempts to address feminist methodology through separation. He doesn't grasp the complexity of postmodernism and diminishes it to a "[d]ifficult term to define" (Keohane 1989, 245). In his analysis, he recognizes the importance of feminist methodology in IR, but always under a mainstream school that can guide it.

Another classical mainstream piece is Morgenthau's *Politics among Nations: The Struggles for Power and Peace* (1978). Within this analysis he describes the *six principles of political realism* and argues that, "realism, believing as it does in the objectivity of the laws of politics, must also believe in the possibility of developing a rational theory that reflects these objective laws" (Morgenthau 1978). Tickner, in one of her responses to this text, argued that the way in which realism sees the world through objectivity is a way of rendering invisible the role of women in society, because "women are socialized into a mode of thinking that is contextual and narrative, rather than formal and abstract" (Tickner 2014, 11). In Morgenthau's (1978) piece, he explains realism through precepts about power, competition, factual information, and objectivity that are all constructed with an enormous gender bias and in complete opposition to the feminist struggles. There are thousands of analyses made by mainstream IR, but all with these epistemological origins of searching for an absolute truth. A truth, that leaves out of the equation the role of women in society. Therefore, the responses that mainstream IR has had can be sorted out into two groups. First, those scholars that not even respond to any post-modernist school and continue to produce articles with a huge gender bias (Morgenthau 1978). And second, those who ignore the methodological responses that have existed and analyze feminism as an occurrence in the world (Keohane 1989). Feminist methodology calls this *male paranoia*, which refers to "the fearful response of patriarchy to the loss of boundaries endemic to the condition of subjectivity in contemporary, so-called postmodern American life" (Weber 1994, 337). Furthermore, neither of them can fully grasp the importance that a gender analysis has for IR, and how feminist scholars don't seek to nullify

their findings, but to fill in the voids. In the following section, there will be a detailed explanation of the main schools around feminist methodology in IR: Radical Theory and Post-Positivism.

## **MAIN FEMINIST METHODOLOGIES**

Feminist methodologies can never be summed up in a single paper because there are several ways to approach them. Many authors have continuously argued the complexity of feminist IR, such as: “Peterson (1992), Sylvester (1994), Marchand (1998), Caprioli (2003) Krook and Squires (2006) and Steans (2006)” (Heeg 2010, 4). The fact is that even feminism can’t be grouped into one simple definition, which is a mistake made by many western, white, upper class feminists (D’Costa 2006). The feminist fights contain as much complexity as the feminist methodologies within IR, this is why so many authors within this school of thought constantly repeat that it can’t be defined in a single term. Furthermore, trying to define it in a concrete way will defy the purpose of this methodology. Since this is an article that expands on these topics, and that, additionally, uses feminist methodology for its writing, there will not be a concrete definition, but an exposition of two of the main branches within feminist methodology: Radical and post-positivist.

### ***Radical Feminist methodological theory***

The way radical feminist theory can be approached through is by questioning if women that are on power are really in power because of their achievements, or because they have “[l]earned to think like men” (Enloe 1990, 204). Therefore, its objective is to understand the ways in which women are living, and how this has been disregarded by mainstream IR

(Griffiths 1999). Cynthia Enloe changed the perspective of feminist methodology in IR, with her masterpiece *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*, by asking one main question “Where are the women” (Enloe 1990)? Just asking this question poses a new sense of what should be studied within IR, and the role that women have in history. This leads to another question: What would happen if the analysis made in this academic field throughout time would have centered on women’s experience (Enloe 1990)? When answering this question Enloe focuses on “tourism, nationalism, military bases, diplomacy and the female international labor force in agriculture, textiles and domestic service” (Beckwith 1991, 290). The way in which she does this is through understanding the dynamics and the spaces pertinent to women’s experience that have been silenced in IR studies. Enloe (1990) understands how a patriarchal order is imbedded in almost every aspect of politics (Sylvester 1994, 1038). For instance, the sex tourism industry, the way in which women travel, and the economic implications that women have had throughout history (Beckwith 1991). Within the military community, for example, women’s role staying in their countries and how this enabled that they could develop political, social and economic changes. In military matters, “Enloe explicates the contribution of women to creating unobtrusive military communities in foreign countries and to stabilizing the lives of military personnel stationed abroad” (Beckwith 1991, 290).

There is also the place of sex workers and how they have developed an industry, in economic matters, but also, a social transformation, making them a matter of analysis. However, they are disregarded from history and from most academic studies (Enloe 1990). Enloe (1990) also talks about the ways in which women who are married to diplomats have changed their lives to support them, but at the same time live a life with certain advantages and in a political atmosphere (Enloe 1990). Exemplifying how women’s experiences, whether they are privileged or not, should be matter of inquiry. These are the types of invisibilities that happen in IR. When one sees the important aspects of political relations, they see treaties,

letters, wars, political changes, that have, in the most part, been made by men, but they don't see the roles that women have in all of these instances. The *malestream* academia focusses on the different sides of the world, and disregards the story, and the lives of half of the humanity. Women's lives also have political and social changes that have influenced societies. When men went to war, there were women who stayed and continued to develop the society, and there were women in the places they went to who attend to them, as well as the industry of the military sexual workers, or a plethora of examples in which women's lives should be studied.

The way in which this is explained from an epistemological view, is to "take into account the consequences of cultural differences, gender differences and power relationships" (Weldon 2006, 64). When this is truly understood the lenses through which the world is approached change and they don't try to hide these human experiences, but, instead, they emphasize them, and understand their importance in the way the world has developed. This is what radical feminists within IR focus on, asking what Enloe (1990) asked: *Where are the women?* It is not possible that the only women who are visible are those in *manly* jobs (at the time), or that have chosen to act as the gender paradigms of manliness guides them to. When there is a time in history when most women have stayed at home, then this is also political, this is also social, this is also worthwhile to study. Women should be visible for being women, or even more, for being human, and this is what the radical approach entails.

### ***Post-positivist feminist methodologies***

Having understood the radical approach, the second theory that will be explained is post-positivist feminist IR. Ann Tickner, one of the most important exponents in this methodology, explores the importance of having a dialogical approach. Furthermore, she emphasizes the use of different methods that are not present in a positivist mid-set. Within the positivist spectrum of knowledge, there is "no account of the origin and importance of research questions" (Ackerly



et. al 2006, 9). What really makes the feminist works stand out is the fact that they use different methods, which “challenges the often unseen androcentric or masculine biases in the way that knowledge has traditionally been constructed in all the disciplines” (Tickner 2005, 20). Feminist methodology, according to post-positivist theories, is participant, it has to deal with issues that are happening in current times, and with ideas that have been disregarded by *malestream* methodologies. It allows the investigator to listen to everyone’s stories and to “try to understand what they are saying, reflect more closely on their lives as they lead them, and theorize from that” (Dominelli 2002, 13). As Sandra Harding (1986), continuously points out, what traditional schools have done is let men ask the questions and focus only on answering what men wanted to know. If only men are asking the questions, then how can there not be a gap in this academic field? How can *malestream* schools continue to argue that there is no need for a feminist methodology, or even a post-positive one of any sort, to exist? It is clear that this post-positivist view of IR is not used only by feminists within this academic field, “these views are shared by constructivist, postcolonial theorist, critical theorist and postmodernist more broadly” (Heeg 2010, 8). This is why the methods that should be used, if there is inquiry and questioning of a supposed absolute truth, are mainly qualitative (Heeg 2008). Nevertheless, it is also important to note that within the post-positivist view of this school, there is also room for quantitative methods. However, feminists are aware that the data that has been presented in previous findings and in the IR academia in general are mainly composed of “biases, gendered ways, using data that do not adequately reflect the reality of women’s lives and the unequal structures of power within which they are situated” (Tickner 2005, 24).

Post-positivism focusses on the researcher’s view and the importance that this bears in the study of the world. Within positivist schools there is a tendency to try to find the *absolute truth*, consequently academic texts and studies try to emphasize on facts and particular ideas that cannot be questioned. This is exemplified by the work of “post-colonial feminists [such

as]: Spivak (1988); Mohanty (1991); hooks (1989); Minh-ha (1989); Suleri (1992)” (D’Costa 2006, 137). In post-positivist feminist methodology, the final goal is not to have the answer, but to deeply understand the lives of people that are being studied. The objective is not the accumulation of knowledge, but a different perspective, which can solve various problems that can’t be understood from a western positivist viewpoint. This is what feminist methodology does with every issue that might seem traditional, it gives it a new point of view. For instance, “Tickner would argue that security, should not be only understood as defending the state from attack, but should also consider that security for women might be different because women are more likely to be attacked by men they know, rather than strangers from other states” (Ruiz 2011, 2). Security is one of the clearest examples that surrounds the gender bias that exists in academia. Feminists argue that positivism believes that the only actor worthy of a security analysis is the state. They don’t grasp the complexity that exists within it, the different dynamics that flourish and the portions of history that are silenced (Ruiz 2011, 6).

On the other hand, a different view within the post positivist perspective, is the genealogical approach. This proposal focusses mainly in the deconstruction of feminist methodological advances in IR. If there are several matters that can be studied through different perspectives, then this is the only way of giving the IR field the complexity it so desperately seeks (Ackerly et. al. 2006). The genealogical approach, it being epistemologically similar to the previously explained, focusses on questioning *objective* ideas (Zalewski 2006). Therefore, Marysia Zalewski (2006) deconstructs the criticisms that have existed around feminist IR and challenges them. While, at the same time, criticizing those spaces in which this academic field is lacking complexity, focusing on the question of “how to study social reality” (Zalewski 2006, 45). Or, more clearly how *should* we study social reality. It is an investigation on how to understand the world’s complexity. The genealogical approach embraces questions such as “How have feminist contributed to the discipline? What difference has feminism made? and,

why is feminist approach necessary” (Zalewski 2006, 49)? The post-positivist school within feminist methodology in IR, is one of the most important, and is the one that questions the most the malestream understanding of the world. Having understood the main ways in which feminist methodology within IR has developed, it is crucial to comprehend the different academic fields in which this discipline has excelled.

## **TRADITIONAL IR TOPICS SEEN THROUGH FEMINIST METHODOLOGY**

Security, war, economy and politics are some of the main issues that are pertinent to IR. However, when understanding this through the lenses of feminist methodology, the main focus is not the state, as it is in malestream schools, but the complexity of the construction of society, that renders it possible for state actors to act the way they do. “Each of these four concerns- security, stability, crisis and development- are routinely imagined to be divorced form (unaffected by) women’s unpaid and underpaid labor, women’s rights within marriage, the denial of girls’ education, women’s reproductive health and sexualized and other form of male violence again women, as well as the masculinities of militaries, police forces and political parties” (Enloe 1990, 16). Therefore, this section will discuss the importance of feminist methodology when addressing some of the main topics that are present in mainstream IR, particularly security and political economy. Focusing on the deconstruction of the state as main actor and analyzing the complexity that exists within each nation that renders it impossible for women to be protected by current international policies.

### ***Security and war***

Security and war are two of the main focusses in malestream IR, however, feminist methodology oversees these topics in a different way. National security and war are completely

man-oriented, and have focused on the actions, ideas and decisions of men in the higher ranks of politics. Nevertheless, national security issues and state matters that rely on these ideas, should be guided by the aim to protect the people, to work within political arenas and to really understand the complexity of international security. Therefore, it is completely pertinent to question what feminists all around the world have asked: “[W]ho is being secured by security policies?” (Blanchard 2003, 1290). If men are making the laws, if men are the only focus of discussion, if there is not an inclusion, moreover, if there is an invisibility of the insecure panorama women are experiencing, then this are not really security policies, they are *manly* security policies (Sylvester 1994). Feminist IR tries to demonstrate that positivist ideas which focus on international security are made by men, and not only by men, but by privileged, white, western people who render it impossible for *other's*<sup>6</sup> to be included within their discourses (Blanchard 2003). Therefore, what feminist methodology in IR does is look at the world, at the security issues, and at all matters pertinent to the state and the development of war from another perspective, an inclusive and critical one, in which the complexity that is needed to understand these issues is presented to the public. Enloe (1990) and Tickner (1992) have both asked groundbreaking questions when trying to study security in IR (Youngs 2004). These questions revolve around the premise that states can't be the only actors when discussing security matters, but what happens within each country should be worthy of discussion. Ontologically, according to them, it is impossible to understand the world, if there is not a change in mindset, in a range that varies from what should be studied to who are the subjects of these studies, and why (Youngs 2004). Understand that there is an absence of information, of access, and that women are suffering every day because of this. If half of the population is suffering for the lack of security measures, then there is a problem. The studies made by the different scholars around

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<sup>6</sup> Importance of the *otherness* created by male dominant figures, in which they are always seen as superior, while the “other” is always in a disadvantaged position.

security, some of which will be mentioned in the following paragraphs, use different methods, which are pertinent to feminist methodology, such as interviews, participant observations, and other qualitative ways of trying to grasp the intricacy of the world regarding security matters.

Men as the main actors in the international panorama and specifically in security issues is an idea that sums-up the way mainstream academics have approached these topics. This concept is so embedded in academic's minds that questioning *already acquired knowledge* through a feminist viewpoint is frightening. The attitudes that men have and the decisions that they are making are based on a gendered idea of security, in which men *should* and *would* act a certain way. This pursuit of power, for instance, is a characteristic born from the competitiveness men have experienced historically between them (Blanchard 2003). This means that women, are not even included in security analysis made by the most prominent academics in the field as if security had nothing to do with *us*. This is why, in response, feminists have approached security in "[b]roadly multi-dimensional and multilevel terms as the diminution of all forms of violence, including physical, structural and ecological" (Tickner 1997, 625). Security is one of the issues that has been present in many of the writings of feminist methodological scholars including: Carol Cohn with her masterpiece *Motives and methods: Using multi-sited ethnography to study US national security discourses* (2006); Soumita Basu with her article *Security as emancipation: A feminist Perspective* (2011); or, the aforementioned Ann Tickner, particularly in her paper, *Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspectives on Achieving Global Security* (1992), among many others.

Feminist methodology in IR concerning security matters is gaining more importance every day in the international arena; for instance, in "the increase in female suicide bombers, growing evidence of the use of sexual violence as a tool for war in conflict, women's participation as soldiers in armed conflicts around the globe, and women's activism and protests against conflicts" (Sjoberg 2010, 2). Feminist input in the analysis of global security has

provided a global vision of matters, not focused only on the military or on policy making activities. Positivism takes the state as the sole actor in international security and disregards the complexity of the security dilemmas within each state (Aydin 2016). Violence and insecurity occur within the realms of each state, not limited to wars among different countries, but include internal conflicts, violations of human rights and power abuses. Security is a matter that has undergone through a clear gender bias when analyzed through mainstream methodologies. Therefore, what feminist methodology in IR has sought to do is a deconstruction of the state as only actor of international security, and, consequently, analyze the conflicts women go through within each state, through a broader and more inclusive perspective. In the following section there will be an analysis of how this methodological approach has seen economic and political issues in the world.

### ***International political economy***

The economic and political panorama has been a clear focus of analysis of mainstream IR. Feminist methodology in IR, however, sees the lack of information that has existed and the bias in the articles that have analyzed these issues. One of the most important changes that have been made by feminist scholars is rendering the private life a matter of political analysis (Tickner 1992). “The roles traditionally ascribed to women – in reproduction, in households and even in the economy- are generally considered irrelevant to the traditional construction of the field” (Tickner 1992, 3). Consequently, feminist scholars have sought to make those roles that were precedingly rendered invisible, a matter of politics. The public is conceived as *men* territory, while the private remains women’s arena. While men were consolidating the state, the place that women had in society was that of second hand citizens (Aydin 2016). Analyzing policy making and economic differences in every single country in the world it is clear that there is a gender bias. Women have less access to *productive resources* of any kind, less policies

that protects them, less political options, and in general, less opportunities and rights of any kind. Feminist methodology in IR seeks to make visible these injustices, to fill the silences that exist in the academic and to project their result into the lives of hundreds of women.

The main way in which politics, including policy-making activities, have been analyzed has been through a manly perspective. Policy-making, foreign affairs and military endeavors are always seen from a biased standpoint, due to the misguided idea that “toughness, courage, power, independence and even physical strength, have, throughout been the most valued in the conduct of politics, particularly international politics” (Tickner 1992, 4). Traits that have been historically associated with men, are precisely those that have been connected, as well, with politics and economics in the international arena. The way in which IR is seen and the basis of positivism being “the anarchical international system” (Aydin 2016, 63), disregards gender completely. This traces back to the aforementioned idea of the state as main actor of IR. States are male dominated because of how they were conformed. Feminist IR argues that this analysis leaves the construction of states in the background, not taking into account “women’s and men’s experiences of states and citizenship” (Aydin 2016, 67). Furthermore, it doesn’t take into account that these experiences differ in every aspect.

More specifically in the economic sense, women have suffered from violence in repeated occasions. There is a clear “[r]elationship between women’s poor access to productive resources such as land, property, income, employment, technology, credit and education, and their like hood of experiencing gender-based violence and abuses” (True 2014, 39). The relationship that exists between violence and economy in a gendered world is clear as water. This is, once again, connected to politics. Laws, policies and even opportunities are targeted to a particular group of people, men (particularly white, upper class, western men). This is due to the fact public live has been constructed from a male perspective, and these men are the one’s doing the laws and policies. It is important to take into account that “[n]owhere in the world do

women share equal social and economic rights with men or the same access as men to these productive resources” (True 2014, 39). Therefore, how can economy and politics not be analyzed through a gender bias? This point is made by: Aydin (2016), Ackerly (2006), Enloe (1990), Peterson (2003), Tickner (1992), True (2014), and basically all major feminists within IR. As Elshtain (1981), points out “[m]en fear the sexual and reproductive power of women” (Elshtain in Aydin 2016, 64). Consequently, a feminist analysis in economic matters is crucial. Current conversations about economic issues regarding women include: “African American women and Latinas in the United States were overrepresented as targets of subprime lending; the repossession crisis that will have a disproportionate impact on women dealing with relationship breakdown; the shifts in consumption patterns that are likely being funded by women working harder inside and outside home,” (Bedford and Rai 2013, 1), among many others. All these issues are essential when trying to understand the current panorama of international political economy, and this is why it is crucial for feminist methodology in IR, to address this topic. Feminist political economy and methodology in IR presents an unprecedented way of understanding connections between institutions, economy, and the dilemmas within states and in the international community, characterized by a “critical, theoretically rich and methodologically radical grounded research and theorization” (Bedford and Rai 2013, 2), that renders it possible to fully grasp the IPE panorama.

## **CONCLUSION**

Mainstream theories and methodologies in IR have focused on an ontological approach prone to the accumulation of knowledge and an epistemological one that seeks for an objective truth in every study. In contrast, feminist methodology in IR, has focused on questioning the patriarchal order and the invisibility of the gender bias within this discipline. Gender is infiltrated in every aspect of human life from politics, to security, to economics, to everyday



life and social atmospheres. Therefore, how can a discipline whose main purpose is to understand international dynamics among states and their actors disregard gender as a main focus of analysis? This is due precisely to the academics that have flooded IR mainstream, who have taught everyone that gender distinctions and biases are *natural*. If they are conceived as natural, then they are not worthy of analysis. However, as it has been explained throughout this article, gender distinctions and stereotypes are constructed by society. Then, what feminist methodology in IR has sought to do is: First, break these biases and create an approach that questions all knowledge that has been established as the absolute truth; second, make women experiences and roles in the international community visible and worthy of analysis; and, finally, emphasize the distinction between sex and gender, as a vital piece to comprehend that we live in a gendered world.

Feminist IR is a methodology that gives voice to all the women that have been rendered invisible throughout time. Their experiences matter, their voices should be heard and the roles that they have in society should be studied. Men can't be the only focus of analysis, and this is what mainstream IR has done for many years. They created the distinction between public life and private, and equated public to politic life. This dichotomy was enough for them to exclude women from every IR analysis. Their roles in war, policy makings, military activities, legal endeavors or economic matters became inexistent, and the only analysis that was worthwhile, was that *from men* and *of men*. Even though, they were the ones in positions of power, this doesn't mean that women weren't fighting, weren't working or weren't supporting the whole political, economic and social structure behind that figure-head position men hold. Moreover, mainstream academics continue to disregard the importance of a feminist methodology and repeatedly reproduce analysis with a clear gender bias.

Feminist methodology in IR has changed completely and challenge the way in which the world was studied. It has given social constructions within states the complexity they were

craving for. However, there is still a long way to go. Women every day suffer from injustices created by androcentric ideas, and IR should be the first to address these matters. There is no place in the world in which women aren't lacking opportunities when compared to men, and this can't happen anymore. Academics within IR can't neglect their responsibility with society. What is the point of accumulating knowledge if half of the human race is nonexistent in these analyses? Is it possible that future ventures between feminist and mainstream methodologies seek to fill the void that exists in the IR field? Only time will tell, but what is indisputable is that feminist methodology in IR is an ongoing story that still has a lot to give and is not going anywhere.

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