

Feminist Assumptions and False Promises of Peace: A case study of India and Pakistan

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Abstract: Current paper elucidates about War and peace the two basic elements of international politics. Starting with the debates among scholars of the subject, the paper argue critically the shortcomings of feminist school of thought over their assumption of peace and prevention of war through gendered politics. The theme of the paper is that, the gender either femininity in particular or masculinity in general have no impact on politics, both the domestic and international one. The international politics is driven by the national interest and regulatory force is beyond gender's control. This argument is applied and testified in two south Asian states of India and Pakistan. As the feminist advocates the notion of cooperative women in power results in the harbinger of peace. Though, both India and Pakistan had experienced women as head of government but the idealized assumption of peace could not be nurtured and pattern of politics remained unchanged.

Keywords: Femininity, Gender, International Politics National Interest, War and Peace

Introduction

From the beginning of modern history of nation state system, efforts have been made to find out the best possible means for the promotion of global peace by tracing out, causes and remedies of war, violence and coercion. While the underlying assumption is to understand and then take necessary measures to stop practice of illegitimate war, violence and coercion in order to provide stable grounds to humanity for enduring peace, lasting prosperity and sustainable progress. Interestingly the discipline of International Relations too; born and developed as an experience of war, that understands war in social and political terms resulting from social conflict and connected to construction of political identities and pursuit of national interest (Steans, 2006).

Several approaches to peace and war came in the debates of international relations scholars. The realist paradigm significantly leads the discipline of international relations. Mainly they initiate with the assumptions: the conflictual nature of the international system is in a state of anarchy, state's overall national interest is its security and survival, and thus, pursuit for material power

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is at the core of every state's objective. While classical realist's starting point is human individuals who are inherently selfish and conflictual (Morgenthau, 1978), its variants such as neorealism or structural realism start off with states as the main actors in the international system (Grieco, 1988). This power competition among states has led to the balance of power theory. According to its original proponent, Kenneth Waltz, balance of power occurs against a rising power (Waltz, 1979). This was refined by Stephen Walt through his balance of threat theory (Walt, 1985). Hence main stream scholars of realism talk about anarchical nature of the world where peace is always in fragile condition and war is inevitable.

While liberals' emphasis to establish peace via diplomacy and international cooperation. Starting from idealist paradigm in post-World War I, the leading proponent of liberalism was Woodrow Wilson pointed towards the undemocratic nature of the world politics and balancing behavior of the states including secret diplomacy were the central to break out war. He further pointed out the replacement of these ideas with national self-determination and open diplomacy with collective security could check the war and violence in the international system (Dunne, 2001). Having limitations to answer the outbreak of the World War II, resulted several version of liberalism. Emphasizing on low politics such as interdependence, economic integration, trade liberalization and many more ideas for peace.

However both of these leading schools of international relations neglected role of gender in global politics that has provoked feminist school of thought that criticizes discipline of International Relations on ignoring the role of gender in two basic conditions of world politics i.e. war and peace. Emphasize over gendered nature of politics instated a new discourse in International Relations and gradually got significant position in forth debate of International Relations. Moreover to them theory and practice of International Relations has implications for gender and international political as well as economic institutions contain effects and are affected by gender (Whitworth, 1989).

Feminist school of thought emphasizes on attainment of peace through endorsement of women on key positions to negate war in the world. Having the affirm belief that women are more peaceful and men wage war, pointing towards the fact of cooperative women and conflictual men. In more clear words a significant amount of scholarship has shown, for instance, that women are more peaceful than men and less likely to support the use of international violence (Caprioli & Boyer, 2001). Other studies suggest that women are more likely to use a collective or consensual approach to problem solving and conflict resolution than an approach that focuses on the unilateral imposition of solutions (Rosenthal, 1998). Ample work also exists within the feminist literature to provide expectations that women will behave differently than men regarding the sanctioning of a state's use of violence as a means of conflict resolution (Caprioli & Boyer, 2001).

Quite opposing to gendered nature remedy to international violence and war, the core of the paper is "despite the popular belief about peace orientation of women and concept of cooperative women, historically, whenever a woman got

power and hold the office of central position in state affairs she behaved according to ground realities of power politics and implemented strategies made by state official without a concern for war or peace but according to supreme national interest.” In other words gender makes merely any sense to influence the decision making in international relations. International politics is somewhat different, to be attached or influenced by issues of gender and characteristics of international system, are not based or determined by gendered politics, even gender cannot be considered as major or significant factor of international political system. This notion is further tested in two core states of the South Asia; India and Pakistan, and outcomes testify the axiom made above.

Women in power made hardly any difference in political sphere and patterns of politics remained same with fewer impacts by gender as regulatory force. The paper focuses on this point and a genesis is made that deals from the Cold War to contemporary international system in general and India and Pakistan from the South Asia in particular. Furthermore it is discussed how despite woman rule in India and Pakistan, domestic politics in general and international politics in particular, remained same i.e. pre-dominant by high politics concept of power, security, survival, coercive diplomacy and even war.

Gender and Politics: A Global Overview

Society divides human being on the basis of gender as “...socially learned behaviors which discriminate, distinguish and differentiate between masculinity and femininity whereas masculinity refers to males and femininity to females...” (Jackson, Jackson, & Sørensen, 2012). Another definition is explain gender as “gender is an outcome of a social process of sub-ordination that is only ascriptively tied to body and doesn’t lose its particularity of meaning when it shifts embodied form, Femininity is a lowering that is imposed: it can be done to anybody and still be what feminine means. It is just women to whom it is considered natural...” (Whitworth, 1989). It appears gender is somewhat by choice from the society. In every society of the world there are characters attached to particular gender and psychologically assumed behaviors to be observed by them. Historically this division of masculinity and femininity has been an unequal relationship based neither on social traits nor on biological attributes and division of sex.

Women’s inequality can be traced out in the world in terms of rights, resources, powers to influence and entitlements for them this pattern is from the early history to prevalent international system and unbalanced relationship of both genders is one of the basic concerns of feminist as well liberal scholars of international relations. Either by law of the land or by customs of the society, women in many countries still lack rights to nourish their personality and treated as second order citizens of society or subhuman treatment is practiced against them. This prejudice against women and unnatural patterns provoke sense of inferiority and complexes in them usually in third world and they themselves under psychologically constructed consciousness surrender their rights in

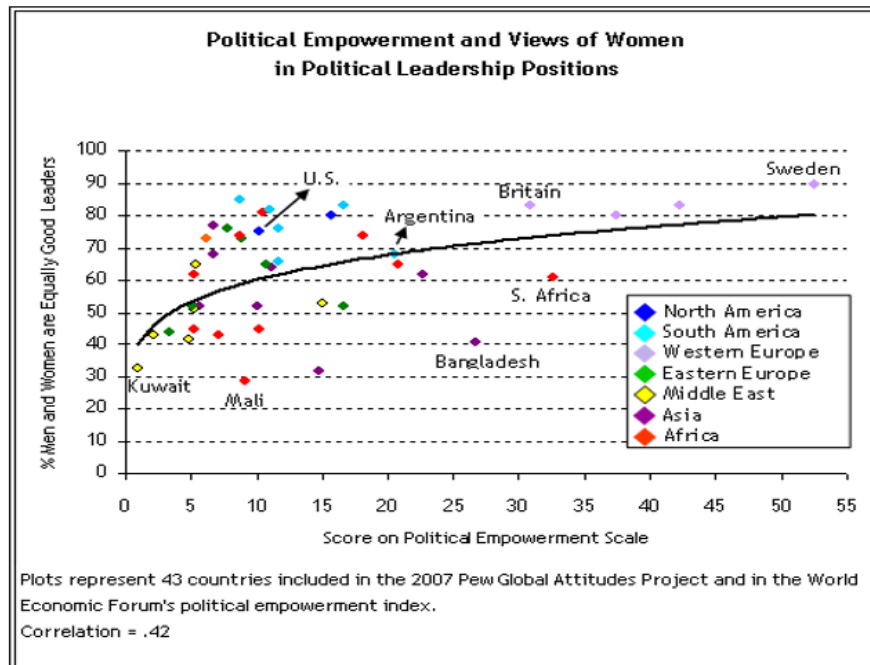
favour of dominant gender i.e. men.

- Women own 1 percent of the world's property.
- Women's share as head of states and cabinet ministers is only 5 percent.
- Along with their children they constitute 80 percent of all refugees ([Jackson et al., 2012](#))

As women own only one percent of the world's property it means roughly all stake holders of world wealth and property are men and verily if gender matters in politics masculine gender must be more concern and influential towards peace and to stop any breach of peace.

On global level the world sees the politics almost independent from gender and inequality of women meets equality when it comes to the political leadership, though not in practice but in principle. In a survey about 46 states and Palestinian Territories, came up with the view of equality towards gender, negating the popular belief of feminist scholars that women are better leaders. The survey bring about equal result in most of the states. Only few states of the African continent and Islamic world came up with opposing results. However the differences were slight and can be seen in the fig 1.

Figure 1: How the World Rates Women as Leaders



Source: Pew Research Institute

Gender and Conflict: From the Cold War to Contemporary International System

Despite feminist belief that women are pro-peace gender, instinct of sharing historical evidence is opposite to it i.e. whenever a woman took charge of central position, affairs of state remained subject to international political environment and higher politics issues dominated in the process of decision making. In other words despite female president, prime minister, foreign minister and defense minister patterns of politics got lesser implications by gender issue. Here it must be noted that when we talk about such policies other factors should remain constant and examining variable will be gendered politics. Moreover in every such situation country's history and past should be considered along with geo strategic position of that particular state in international politics.

For better understanding it can be said that if a state in Caribbean sea like Haiti or tiny island state of Malta with no immediate enemy with a female (or male, as both have lesser implications for politics) premier can constitute changing configurations for more peaceful orientation but a state like India, Pakistan, Turkey and Greece cannot uphold such arrangements as changes in domestic politics will have less consequences with the changes in neighboring states. Hence ultimately a premier will be forced to carrying on policies under foreign threats and high politics remain on priority while articulation of the strategy. In addition to it if we suppose that males are more inclined towards violence and waging war then one must not ignore the majority of males in parliament and their influence in decision making and it enforces the argument that women despite being head will have to follow the majority and couldn't serve the purpose of peace and aspirations expected from them.

A glimpse into the history from cold war to prevalent international system reveals that there have been very few states where women took power and reigned/served on leading posts. Among such examples India, Israel, United Kingdom and Pakistan are the states which are pre occupied with security dilemma and power politics. Although United Kingdom at present a member of the European Union but during the time of Margaret Thatcher was one of the closest allies and partner with the United States against the Soviet Union during Cold War. All these four states were concerned to utmost security and survival owing to several factors including their geo strategic positions and ideologies.

Golda Meir from Israel, who engaged in full scale wars with Arab states for two times, and minor conflicts of serious levels for many times. Firstly she fought war of attrition in 1969 and Yom Kippur war in October 1973. Unable to stop escalation, as Israel from the early phase remained subject to security dilemma and, a woman in decision making was helpless to be regulated by international factors of security (Caprioli & Boyer, 2001). Her political career enforced the argument that a state like Israel pre-occupied in security crisis could not be able to utilize soft gender to sustain peace as assumed by feminist, rather it exposed that gendered politics has less implication to international peace and crisis.

Another character strengthening our argument is Margaret Thatcher; the only Prime Minister of the United Kingdom who was elected three times, was coined as “Iron Lady” by the Soviets was a hard liner to communism and the Soviets. She criticized Ronald Reagan for his soft policies towards the Soviets, also engaged the Royal Armies in military security conflict with Argentina over Falkland Islands in 1982 and supported the United States military action in Iraq during first Gulf War. During her times Irish Republic Army (IRA) was given tough hand even she escaped death against planted bomb by IRA ([Thatcher, 1979](#)). It is indeed out of question to attach the idea of cooperative women both with these premiers, they did not adopt diplomacy over war and peaceful measures to a conflict.

Opposite to feminist claims, fact is that few women felt pride to attach their affiliations and identities with realist or neo realist school of thought such as former secretary of state of the US Miss Condoleezza Rice. One of the determined advocates of war in Afghanistan, Iraq and extremely upheld coercive diplomacy with use of force against Iran ([Haris, 2005](#)). Recently Hillary Clinton left office of foreign secretary; her time into office was more likely to be remembered as drone attacks, sanctions and coercive diplomacy with legacy of war in Afghanistan that continued but withdrawal from Iraq. Among all these women none of them qualify concepts originated by feminist writers, and in case they might be accordingly peace oriented but state policies and international system did not allow them to move independently as mentioned above women hold about five percent positions in legislature, hence being minority they can't influence under assumed characteristics from them.

Gender and Politics in South Asia: An analysis of India and Pakistan

As in other parts of the world issue of gender is equally critical in South Asia and women of this region face same imbalanced behaviors as in rest of the world. Society's cultures and religions of South Asia constitute an environment unfriendly and biased towards women and sometimes cruel in causing discriminatory rituals against women of this region. Religion has been used as a tool in South Asia for suppression of women and they have been treated as sub human. Devastating situation of poor literacy and medical care for women in South Asia is also one of miseries created and neglected by the corrupt regimes. Focusing more on political empowerment it is evident that women remained head of states in most of the countries of the South Asia, such as Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Despite they remained popular figure in the masses, an ordinary woman remains subject to violence and discrimination with fewer opportunities to flourish and survive with dignity.

Fig. 1 “Women Percentage in Legislature” below shows comparative participation of South Asian women in politics with less than 10 percent women in legislature in the region as a whole and Pakistan as leading state with more

women in legislature. Table indicates how utmost 1/5th of the total legislative body are women only in one country of South Asia and 2% in Bangladesh with less than 10% in the largest claimed democracy of the world. Though this lesser representation of women in the national parliaments strengthens the feminist argument of gender biased, by meeting all bitter realities and pitfalls for women, this region has done nothing better rather it remained in bottom half of the list, but when it comes to power politics, the women in power, particularly in India and Pakistan left no scope for advocates of cooperative nature of women.

Table 1: Women Percentage in Legislature in South Asia

Country	Percentage	Description
Bangladesh	2%	There were only 6 women elected to the parliament of 300 in 2001 elections as compared to 30 women in the previous parliament, after the expiry of women reserved seats
Bhutan	2%	
India	8.8%	
Nepal	5.8%	
Maldives	6.3%	Women are free to contest elections of the parliament but they cannot be elected as the president of Maldives.
Sri Lanka	4.4%	Less than 5% women were elected in the elections of parliament held in 2004.
Pakistan	20%	Pakistan has reserved 17% seats for women in the Parliament since 2002.

Source: (Mahmood, 2009)

Coming to the focal point, Pakistan and India are two major states of south Asia having rivalry against each other and had fought three wars within 24 years of their existence. Over all environment in these rival states remained as it was in Europe of late 18th century that was extreme nationalism even at the cost of others. In such political and divisionary foreign policy oriented strategies women in power couldn't serve the assumed purpose and pre-occupied political situation prevailed that resulted war and continuity of international crisis on border. This highlights that as in other parts of the world the South Asian politics too exposed in terms of gendered politics. Despite fragile peace and less optimism in setting up good relations in two neighbors, women in power did nothing but to follow suit of the existing patterns and dismayed feminist peace scholars.

Came into office of prime minister in 1966, Indira Gandhi not only applied violence and use of force on international front but also quite often in domestic issues. Daring, decisive and bold, she never hesitated to apply means of force to achieve desired objectives. Creation of Bangladesh in 1971, brought climax of her political career and she rode on the crest of popularity during that time (Bhattacharjee, 2012). Maneuvered successfully to dismember Pakistan and detonation of atom bomb in 1974, both are the practical examples to challenge

the notion of cooperative woman rather conflictual one.

India on its way to stable democracy faced the national emergency, a form of constitutional crisis in aftermaths of High Court decision against the Prime Minister in office, alleged her of electoral malpractice in 1971 elections thereby declaring 1971 parliamentary elections in Rae Bareilly null and void. The masses came out in the streets and demanded for her resignation but brutally dealt by the government, press was under strict censorship and constitutional rights were abrogated ([Gandhi, 1985](#)). She had the option to go for peaceful means to mitigate this crisis by appealing the supreme court and wait for the final verdict rather, she again opted alternative means. Some 145000 people were in prison under this emergency and democratic rights were denied by the government ([Ali, 1991](#)).

In June, 1984 Operation “Blue Star”, was an outcome of her order to put an assault on the “Golden Temple” the holiest place of the Sikhs. This was heinous practice of state violence against civilians, though there were few anti-state forces present in the temple but collateral damage was highest, left more than 1000 people dead. From the military perspective Gen. SK Sinha, clearly rejected military operation as a last resort in his words,

The Army Action was not the ‘last resort’ as Prime Minister Indira Gandhi would have us to believe... It had been in her mind for more than 18 months... Shortly after the Akali agitation of 1982, the Army began rehearsals of a commando raid near Chakrata Contonment in the Doon Valley, where a complete replica of the Golden Temple complex had been built... Another training involving Aviation Research Centre Commandos was given in the Sarsawa area and Yamuna bed in helicopters converted into gunships. ([Operation-Blue-Star, 2013](#)).

Choices made by Mrs. Gandhi were purely at her own will and she deliberately opted for violence and potential use of military operation against the Sikhs. As in her own words,

I don’t give a damn if the Golden Temple and whole of Amritsar are destroyed, I want Bhindranwale dead. ([Operation-Blue-Star, 2013](#))

Additionally Mizoram, Nagaland and Kashmir were dealt with iron hand and conflict resolving approach was never peaceful and application of negotiation and dialogue was outlawed.

In office of Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto made merely any difference to change or modify the impression of security state about Pakistan. Although her liberal rhetoric and democratic perceptions were popular in the west, she continued nuclear program of Pakistan. Two visits to North Korea were made in 1990 & 1996 and was alleged to be the carrier of information sharing for missile technology with Pyongyang ([Frantz & Collins, 2007](#)). As premier in both terms, the movement for self-determination in Kashmir was at zenith, this movement was supported politically, diplomatically and morally by the

government of Pakistan. It was same time when the office of Prime Minister authorized Interior Minister to install Taliban Government in the war-ridden Afghanistan mainly to seek strategic depth for defense and to control situation there (Chitkara, 1996). This was entirely opposite to the democratic believes and installment of fundamental regime in a state like Afghanistan proved lethal in coming future.

In domestic political issue, only in Karachi the commercial capital of Pakistan more than 1000 people were killed in violence and same number of people were killed by security forces and law enforcement agencies in 1995, whereas political solution of the situation was quite possible (Gayer, 2014) Exclusively on the basis of political divergence with the leading parity in Karachi i.e. Muttahida Qomi Movement civil death were allowed and violence was practiced under the protection of state legitimacy. Both terms in office were infame with respect to charges about corruption and in 1995 Pakistan was in the both end of the list of most corrupt sates. Popular slogan of Pakistan People's Party "*Roti, Kapra aur Makan*" mean food, clothing and shelter were never materialized instead, and hunger, unemployment and bad governance were the hallmark of that government.

Conclusion

Politics, whether international or domestic, is independent of gender. The fewer examples in international history reflect that promises made by the feminists are nothing more than myths. Peace and war, the two basic conditions of the world politics are free from the sphere of influence of gender. Masculine or feminine both are dependent variable of international politics. Even on domestic fronts the prominent and glorified believes of cooperative women are abstract in nature and in ground realities prime interest is to secure the position held by them and to enhance the dividends. Interestingly in recent times women are recruited in national armies of the states and participating in conflict ridden areas. Another paradox that lies within feminist agenda is in contrast to the renowned concept of equality. These assumptions provide bases for dominance of a typical gender i.e. the feminine over the masculine in principle and advocate to implement it in practice also.

In South Asia, particularly in India and Pakistan politics, divergent results can be drawn that are quite opposite to feminist assumptions, instead of peace, orientation towards low politics issues focus on non-violence measure, the region sustained war and start of nuclear age. Both the sates of India and Pakistan made no difference with respect to gender politics. Rather in India, about a decade long tenure as Prime Minister Mrs. Gandhi proved to be fatal for Pakistan on international front and for the Sikhs on domestic font. Her excessive use of violent means reflects as if her *modus operandi* was force and violence. Poverty, hunger, transparency and development remained absent from state's goals, whereas unemployment and corruption were the visible phenomena during here times. Benazir Bhutto in Pakistan did the same, dimensions of politics

assumed the existing patterns and nothing could change. Civil governments did not hesitate to engage in violence in any manner. Political and economic conditions of the state were neglected blatantly. Corruption and lawlessness rose to its highest form and ideal aspirations for peace, prosperity and rule of law demised. However with enhanced participation of women in political affairs especially in diplomacy and conflict management, balance of gender representation would be achieved and after a prolong time it would be easier to redraw results once more.

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