

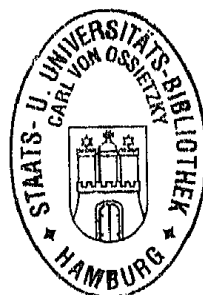


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The Global Resistance Reader

**Edited by
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19 The politics of resistance

Women as nonstate, antistate, and transstate actors

V. Spike Peterson and Anne Sisson Runyan

Source: V. Spike Peterson and Anne Sisson Runyan (1993), *Global Gender Issues*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, pp. 113–148

The gendered division of power and its subsets, the gendered divisions of violence, labor, and resources, severely restrict the effects that women can have on world politics. The few women who have made it into the corridors of power as state actors have done little to dispel prevailing gender ideologies and divisions. Typically, they have adopted masculine leadership styles for themselves without disrupting feminine stereotypes more generally. These “steel magnolias” simply combine and, thus, reinforce the gender divisions of masculine and feminine. They do not challenge them.

At the same time, there are other female political actors who *do* challenge gender dichotomies. Because they typically organize outside of state structures, these actors tend to be invisible through the conventional state-centric lens on world politics. Such women are found in women’s, peace, socialist-revolutionary, economic welfare, and ecology movements. Their activities are concentrated below the level of the state and are often geared toward agitating against oppressive state structures and policies. Women also tend to be involved in issues and movements that cut across state boundaries, for example, global-environmental groups and feminist networks. This chapter focuses on women in their roles as nonstate, anti-state, and transstate actors who, to varying degrees, do challenge the gendered divisions of power, violence, labor, and resources. We focus on the multiple political roles that women play as well as on the systemic effects of their political activities to shift attention away from “fitting women into” traditional IR frameworks and toward an understanding that accommodates and empowers women’s struggles against the hierarchical consequences of practicing “world politics as usual.” Yet as we document the liberating dimensions of these struggles, we are reminded that they can perpetuate at the same time that they challenge gender dichotomies.

Women’s movements

No woman is born, and not all women become, feminist, but some women *and* men do. How one becomes a feminist varies with each individual, but the impetus for developing a feminist consciousness often arises when a person experiences a contradiction between who that person thinks she or he is and what society wants her or him to be. It may arise out of a contradiction in the opportunities a society says it offers to an individual and what that individual actually experiences. In advanced (post)industrial societies, women are typically told that, under the law, they have equal opportunities (in the liberal democratic sense) to compete for political and economic power. However, in fact, indirect or structural barriers

to full political and economic participation reduce most women's rights and choices. In more-traditional societies, particularly those that experienced some kind of colonial or neocolonial rule, colonially imposed laws and certain cultural and religious traditions combine to deny equal opportunities to women, even under the law. The gendered division of power in both cases circumscribes women's choices to be and do things deemed outside of their assigned gender roles.

Throughout history women – individually, collectively, and sometimes with men – have struggled against direct and indirect barriers to their self-development and their full social, political, and economic participation. In the modern era, they have often done so through organizing women's movements that have addressed many issues and, thus, taken many forms. People associate women's movements with campaigns to gain equal rights for women under the law. But women have often sought more-transformative changes in social, political, and economic systems because prevailing masculinist systems undermine women's struggles for gender equality despite formal equal rights. As a result, it is sometimes difficult to separate women's movements from other political movements agitating for social, political, and economic transformation. In this text, we regard as feminist those political movements in which participants self-consciously and deliberately link gender inequality with other forms of social, political, economic, and/or ecological injustice.

[...]

Antiwar and peace movements

The discipline of international relations, which essentially began after World War I – the war that was supposed to end all wars – has been preoccupied with the question of how to prevent or stop war. With the rise of peace studies during the Vietnam era, IR has also begun to ask what peace is because surely it must be more than simply the time between wars. Women have long been involved in analyzing how to stop war and how to create peace, though they have received no attention for these activities in past and most contemporary international relations literature. Instead, their peace efforts have been ignored or trivialized – largely by men who stereotype women as soft-headed, irrational pacifists. This characterization is political because it excludes women's perspectives from the study of war and peace. Instead, that subject is reserved for and addressed by “realists”: ostensibly hard-headed, rational men, especially those with military experience.

In addition, the gendered division of violence positions women as life-givers, expected to mourn the toll of war quietly, pick up the pieces when it is over, and not undermine the war effort by asking, for whom? and for what? Women who do ask questions are seen as ungrateful for the protection courageously delivered by men and states through their military might and actions. In spite of this gendered state of affairs, women have protested loudly and often against war and for a more just and peaceful world.

Examples extend from the fifth century B. C. Athenian play *Lysistrata*, in which women refused to sleep with men who went to war, to the International Women's Gulf Peace Initiative in 1991 against hostilities in the Persian Gulf. However, it was not until the rise of the first wave of feminism, during the latter part of the nineteenth century, that the political linkage between peace and women's emancipation was made. This pre-World War I period is considered the golden age of peace movements in the West. Predominantly white, middle-class women formed a variety of peace societies (such as the Union Internationale des Femmes, the Ligue des Femmes pour Desarmement, the

Alliance des Femmes pour la Paix, and the Société d'Éducation Pacifique in France), which were used as models for women's peace societies elsewhere in Western Europe, the United States, and even Japan.¹ Liberal feminist peace activists made their presence known at major international peace conferences, including the first and second Hague conferences in 1899 and 1907.² Socialist feminists organized their own international conferences, such as the First and the Second International Conference of Socialist Women, held in 1907 and 1910 respectively, at which they endorsed resolutions against the militarism of imperialist powers.³

In 1915, predominantly white, middle-class feminists in the United States under the leadership of Jane Addams formed the U.S. Woman's Peace party (WPP). The WPP tapped both practical and strategic gender interests by calling for women's suffrage (the right to vote) and arguing that women's role as mothers gave them a special moral responsibility to oppose war. Not all suffragists supported a platform of peace, especially after World War I had broken out. But in 1915, 1,136 delegates from twelve countries made a dangerous wartime journey to The Hague to attend the International Congress of Women to protest against the war. The congress passed twenty resolutions on the destruction of humanity, the use of sons for cannon fodder, and the victimization of mothers/women that war inflicted.⁴ The congress also founded the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, which continues to exist, with headquarters in Geneva and thousands of chapters all over the world.

During the interwar years, white, middle-class women in large numbers joined organizations such as the British Peace Pledge Union and within these organizations formed their own women's committees and peace campaigns.⁵ As World War II loomed, such organizations collapsed when both women and men were drawn into the war effort by their governments. Governments appealed to women's practical and strategic gender interests. They encouraged women to support their "boys" by mothering the nation through rationing, buying war bonds, and doing volunteer work for the duration. They also offered women jobs in wartime industries that had previously been closed to them.⁶ Yet this combination was not in fact liberating. Even though women went out to work in large numbers, they were still expected to fulfill the maternal role for servicemen and the nation.⁷

As a result, when men came home from war, most women were laid off from higher-paying jobs in wartime industries and were expected to go back to being full-time homemakers. However, this was a "luxury" affordable only to white, upper-middle-class women: Actually, 84 percent of all U.S. women working during 1944–1945 were doing so out of economic necessity,⁸ and only 600,000 women had left the paid work force by 1946.⁹ Nevertheless, 58 percent of U.S. women in 1943 felt that they could "best help the war effort by staying at home."¹⁰ The onerous task of combining work with family led many married women to leave their jobs readily, albeit under pressure from husbands, unions, and bosses who were hostile to their presence in the work force when the war ended. In this sense, the disruptions of World War II did not really challenge or undermine gender roles and dichotomies, which were ultimately deepened and reinforced.

At the same time, the fact that women – especially white, middle-class women – were encouraged to take their role as wives and mothers seriously during the 1950s led some of them into antimilitary movements from the 1960s through the 1980s. For example, the 1960s saw the rise of Women Strike for Peace in the United States and the Voice of Women in Canada, which organized to "End the Arms Race, Not the Human Race."¹¹ Women Strike for Peace organized a one-day strike on November 1, 1961, in which 50,000 women left their homes and workplaces to protest the arms race. So threatening was this action to cold war orthodoxy that in 1962 the House Committee on Un-American Activities accused leaders of this grass-roots women's movement of being Communists.¹²

During the 1980s, a host of women's antinuclear groups emerged in response to the post-detente resurgence of the arms race and the U.S. testing and deployment of cruise missiles. These groups ranged from the Oxford Mothers for Nuclear Disarmament (UK), Women Opposed to Nuclear Technology (UK), and the Women's Pentagon Action (U.S.), to women's peace camps set up outside nuclear installations throughout Europe and North America. These women's peace encampments, including Greenham Common and "Molesworth in England, Comiso in Italy, Hunsruck in West Germany, Seneca and Puget Sound in the United States, Nanoose in Canada, Soesterburg in Holland, Pine Gap in Australia, and others"¹³ attracted many thousands of women who insisted that life on the nuclear precipice was intolerable to them, their children, and their grandchildren. This perspective encouraged many women to demand an end to East-West hostilities by staging "peace walks" from Stockholm to Moscow and organizing international women's peace conferences like the one called "The Urgency for True Security: Women's Alternatives for Negotiating Peace" held in Halifax, Nova Scotia (Canada), in 1985 and the subsequent Women's "Peace Tent" experiment at the Non-Governmental Forum for the end of the UN Decade for Women Conference in Nairobi, also in 1985.¹⁴

At the same time, groups like the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina and Mothers of El Salvador organized to bear witness to brutal regimes that had made their children "disappear." Women in Northern Ireland, like Mairead Corrigan and Betty Williams, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1977, rallied to stop the bloodshed between Protestants and Catholics. The Mothers of the Heroes and Martyrs in Nicaragua cried out against the U.S.-sponsored contra war against the Sandinista government and its people; the Shibokusa women of Mount Fuji in Japan protested the expropriation of land by the U.S. and Japanese militaries; the Sri Lankan Voice of Women for Peace was calling for the end of the civil war between Sinhalese and Tamils; women of Fiji appealed to the French government to stop nuclear testing in the South Pacific; and black South African women continued their struggles against the violence of apartheid.¹⁵

The motivation of much of this past and contemporary peace organizing by women has been their identification with and assigned responsibility for mothering. Many of these women have been interested in protecting their children and future generations from the ravages of war and war preparation, whether nuclear or conventional. But they also have been calling attention to the fact that their reproductive work in terms of providing food and shelter for their families is being made much more difficult and even impossible by war machines that eat up people and resources. Thus, women's political action on behalf of peace often arises from "practical" gender interests that enhance women's assigned roles in the so-called private sphere.

On the face of it, these women's struggles for peace do little to disrupt gender dichotomies because they leave in place the image of men as aggressive and bellicose life-takers/killers in contrast to women as pacifist life-givers/reproducers/mothers. However, these struggles do call into question certain other aspects of gender hierarchy produced by the gendered division of violence. For example, by the very act of "leaving home" and taking on so-called public-sphere institutions and issues – often at the risk of death and imprisonment or, at the very least, censure by governments and mainstream societies – these women challenge the idea that women are weak, passive victims who can only mourn their fate on the home front. At the same time, such actions belie the idea that it is only men who die from the ravages of war and war preparation and that these deaths only occur on the battlefield. In fact, women's protests against war and all other kinds of state violence reveal generally hidden and unfamiliar costs of modern total warfare.

Moreover, the horrors that women identify completely undermine the notion that men are protectors and that women are protected. Because the male-dominated state security apparatus is the cause of their suffering and that of their children, many of these female peace activists ask, Who is going to protect us, or how are we going to protect ourselves, from the protectors? It is in the struggle to answer this question that many women have become "soldiers for peace," a contradiction itself that forces us to rethink gender categories, identities, and practices.

Within these movements as well are women struggling on behalf their strategic gender interests. Peace activists who identify themselves as feminists are less likely than those who do not so identify themselves to promote or celebrate motherhood as the basis for women's peace activism.¹⁶ Feminists are aware that women's responsibility for mothering has often brought them into the struggle for peace, yet they warn us that until reproductive labor is no longer the sole or major responsibility of women, there will be no real change in the priorities of states, international organizations, and the mostly elite men who run them. Moreover, as long as women remain tied to the currently devalued "private sphere," their protests will be marginalized by those in power, who will continue to expect the women to "pick up the pieces" in the wake of continual destruction. Indeed, feminists ask whether there can be any peace worth having in the absence of gender, race, and class justice.

Finally, feminist peace activists argue that neither women nor mothers are innately peaceful (here they agree with postmodern feminists) or necessarily life-givers. On the contrary, women, like men, have always served militaries and supported wars – as spouses, workers, soldiers, government officials, and parents. When we dispel the notion that the struggle for peace is not some innate feminine attribute that is "soft" and available only to women, the way will be opened up for many more to join the struggle for peace *and* justice that will make world politics enhance, rather than undermine, the survival and equality of all.

Revolutionary movements

The fact that women take up arms in national liberation struggles contradicts the stereotype that women are naturally peaceful. Throughout recorded history we find stories of women fomenting and engaging in populist violence as leaders and followers. For every female revolutionary leader such as Joan of Arc, Olympe de Gouge, Rosa Luxemburg, Alexandra Kollantai, Dora Maria Tellez, and Winnie Mandela, there have been millions of women who have participated in countless uprisings, guerrilla movements, and revolutions – ranging from the French, American, Russian, and Chinese revolutions to more recent revolutionary struggles throughout Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, and the Middle East.¹⁷ Not all these women have taken up arms. More typically they have worked in underground movements to hide and heal guerrilla fighters, pass information and weapons, and organize communities in support of the revolution. Still, most revolutionary women have supported armed struggle as a necessary, although not the only, facet of revolutionary action.

Although often motivated by the same concerns as men – a desire to overthrow corrupt regimes, to fight colonialism and imperialism, and to build nationalism and a national economy not controlled and impoverished by foreign elites – women also join or are encouraged to join revolutionary struggles on behalf of their practical and strategic gender interests. In the testimonial literature that chronicles women's experiences in revolutionary struggles, we find examples of women revolutionaries who were drawn into the struggle both as mothers responsible for providing for their families and as women seeking greater equality with men, first on the battlefield and then in the government of the new state-to-be. Like the pattern

with peace movements, women tend to become involved in revolutions initially because of their practical gender interests and then work for their strategic gender interests when they run up against sexism in revolutionary movements.

An example is the role of women and women's associations in the revolutionary struggle against the Somoza regime in Nicaragua. Gloria Carrion was active in the Association of Nicaraguan Women Confronting the Nation's Problems (AMPRONAC) and became the general coordinator of the Luisa Amanda Espinosa Nicaraguan Women's Association (AMNLAE) after the victory of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN). Lea Guido was also an organizer with AMPRONAC and later, the minister of public health in the National Reconstruction government. In interviews, both Carrion and Guido reported that women were drawn into the struggle on the basis of their family and maternal roles.

Carrion described women as "the centres of their families – emotionally, ideologically and economically" who do not see themselves "‘simply’ as housewives" subordinated to husbands.¹⁸ Guido told of a women's campaign around the slogan "Our Children Are Hungry, Bring Down the Cost of Living." She argued that the parties of the traditional Left had failed to mobilize women because they did not address women's practical gender interests. The women's campaign was successful "because we learned how to involve women in the national struggle while at the same time organizing around problems specific to women."¹⁹

AMPRONAC and, later, AMNLAE brought many women into nonviolent aspects of revolutionary struggle on the basis of their practical gender interests. Engaging in revolutionary violence generated particular problems for women. By becoming guerrilla fighters, women transgressed their traditional gender roles and were often seen as threatening to revolutionary men. Confronting the sexism of their comrades, many women were awakened to strategic gender interests. Monica Baltonado, a guerrilla commander of the Nicaraguan Revolution, pointed out that the extent of sexism among men of the FMLN varied:

Some comrades were open to dealing with sexism while others remained closed. Some said women were no good in the mountains, that they were only good "for screwing," that they created conflicts -- sexual conflicts. But there were also men with very good positions. Carlos Fonseca, for example, was a solid comrade on this issue. It's been a long struggle! We won those battles through discussions and by women comrades demonstrating their ability and their resistance.²⁰

Women, who constituted over 30 percent of guerrilla combatants, did prove their mettle in the insurrections against Somoza's regime.²¹ However, after the triumph, they made up only 6 percent of military officers in the Sandinista People's Army (EPS), which discouraged women's participation on the basis that women's first obligation is to motherhood.²² After protests from AMNLAE, three women's *reserve* battalions were set up. The majority of women who wanted to defend the revolution were active in two organizations: the Sandinista Popular Militias (MPS), designed to defend farms and factories against sabotage by U.S.-supported contra forces, and the Sandinista Defense Committees (CDS), which organized neighborhoods to create better living conditions. The MPS and the CDS were viewed – by male leaders and often by women themselves – as more consistent with women's mothering roles and family responsibilities. Indeed, although AMNLAE's symbol was a picture of a young woman with a rifle on her back and a baby in her arms, in actuality most Nicaraguan women were encouraged to put down the gun and pick up their baby after the triumph.

That mothering was incompatible with violent revolutionary action was recognized by women fighting for the independence of Zimbabwe in the 1970s. One young female guerrilla

reported that women were able to convince their male comrades to accept the use of contraceptives by arguing that "to be sent back to Mozambique for five months to have a baby was a setback to the war."²³ The women who made this "practical" argument, however, had undergone deeper transformations that tapped their strategic gender interests, especially in regard to reproductive rights: "Our attitudes to contraception and abortion changed during the years of struggle. The girls really adopted a new way of living after what they've seen in the bush, the contacts they've had with other people from European countries, from the books they've read."²⁴

Revolutionary struggles, indeed, create "new women" who transgress proscribed gender roles, but these women remain disadvantaged in terms of the gendered division of power and resources when the revolution is over. A spokesperson for the Omani Women's Organization, which was active in the People's Front for the Liberation of Oman in the mid-1970s, put it this way: "Many men had received education and political experience...before they joined the Front, while women had their first education and political experience when as young girls they joined the Revolution."²⁵ Because women had less formal training than men before the revolution, they were again left out of the picture when military demobilization proceeded. In sum, women are more easily demobilized and sent back home, whereas men assume positions of power in new regimes when revolutions are successful.²⁶

A "successful" revolution is, conventionally, one in which a dictator or ruling regime is toppled and a new regime is put in its place. Rarely is a positive change in the condition and status of women viewed as a key measure of a revolution's "success." Nevertheless, there have been instances where conditions that intersect with women's practical gender interests have improved. Not infrequently, successful revolutions bring improvements in meeting basic human needs. For example, delivery of improved health care reduces rates of infant mortality, the provision of education expands work opportunities, and better nutrition supports a generally healthier population. Such gains particularly benefit the large numbers of poor women who are finally provided some assistance in meeting their assigned responsibility for sustaining the family.

In the area of women's strategic gender interests, some revolutionary movements and later governments have instituted reforms intended to break down sexual stereotypes and inequalities. For instance, Cuba's revolutionary government wrote a new Family Code that afforded women equal rights in marriage and divorce and called for equal responsibilities in the household, including shared housework.²⁷ Nicaragua's Sandinista government passed similar legislation in 1981. Even prior to this measure, the Sandinistas responded to demands made by AMPRONAC by legislating a ban on the sexist use of women in advertising and by outlawing prostitution – in the hopes of integrating women into alternative employment.²⁸

Unfortunately, these and other such measures, although progressive in comparison to measures in many other countries, were not motivated solely or primarily by feminist concerns. More typically, the governments wanted to get more women into the productive labor force to increase the country's gross domestic product (GDP), combat Western cultural imperialism in the form of pornography and sensationalist press, and inculcate revolutionary "morals," particularly in Catholic countries. Indeed, abortion remained illegal in Nicaragua throughout the revolutionary period despite the fact that thousands of women died or were maimed there by back-alley abortions every year and despite AMNLAE's demands, beginning in the mid-1980s, for legalized abortions.²⁹ Moreover, the shared-domestic-responsibility clauses in both the Cuban and Nicaraguan family

codes were rarely enforced, and men in these societies for the most part fail to participate equally in household decision-making and continue to do little reproductive labor. These responsibilities still fall heavily on women's shoulders. Finally, the gains women made as a result of socialist revolutions – either of the practical or strategic variety – have been seriously eroded. This is a consequence of both internal and external dynamics: the economic, political, and social turmoil created by foreign military intervention and economic embargoes, civil wars, and the overthrow of socialist regimes in Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and Latin America.

The failure of socialist regimes and their “democratizing” successors to place women’s strategic gender interests at the center of their concerns is related to what feminist analysts call gendered nationalism. On this view, nationalist struggles have been gendered because they involve the manipulation of gender identities and symbols and gendered divisions of power, labor, and resources.

Nationalist fervor has served as the driving and unifying force behind liberal, socialist, and, most recently, anti-Communist revolutions. Struggles for economic and political justice have typically been framed within the context of national self-determination and autonomy – concepts that have a decidedly masculinist cast and, up to the present period, have for the most part translated into self-determination and autonomy for men and, especially, male leaders. As we have seen, this lauded self-determination and autonomy has been made possible largely through women’s undervalued and unheralded reproductive labor, which “frees” men for the seemingly greater heroics that shape *the* national identity. As Enloe observed, “The notion of what ‘the nation’ was at its finest hour – when it was most unified, most altruistic – will be a community in which women sacrificed their desires for the sake of the male-led collective.”³⁰

Under this construction of the nation, women’s feminist aspirations are forced into conflict with their national allegiance, and revolutionary male-run governments are able to ignore and even vilify feminist demands. An extreme example of gendered nationalism infused the 1978 Iranian Revolution, in which large numbers of women contributed to the downfall of the shah only to become the primary targets of sexual “purification” campaigns to limit their autonomy under the right-wing Islamist regime of the Ayatollah Khomeini.³¹ But the pattern of gendered nationalism is in fact widespread. Virtually without exception, women have been used – as symbols of national morality, as behind-the-scenes support workers, as guerrilla fighters – to win nationalist struggles. But with victory, the practical and strategic interests of women are subordinated to masculinist priorities.

Thus, women’s struggles on behalf of revolutionary movements, whether as combatants or as less-violent resistance workers and populist protesters, have not brought them “liberation” from gender oppression. To the degree that revolutions improve general conditions for meeting basic human needs, women’s practical gender interests have been served. However, despite the personal transformations experienced by female revolutionaries who stepped outside their traditional roles, structural or systemic transformations in line with women’s strategic gender interests have not been a consequence of male-led revolutions.

One reason for this lies in the failure of revolutionary women’s struggles to undermine fundamental gender dichotomies. No matter what women do in combat, they are still expected, after and even during revolutions, to give life. Their primary roles as reproducers and mothers remain unquestioned. Men are not expected to perform this dual role during revolutions or to cease being the protectors when it is over. Nowhere is there a poster with

a revolutionary man shouldering a gun while holding a baby. And nowhere has he picked up the baby when the gun is no longer necessary.

Jean Bethke Elshtain pointed out a second reason that women revolutionaries fail to undermine gender dichotomies. Under the gendered division of violence, "female violence is what happens when politics breaks down into riots, revolutions, or anarchy: when things are out of control," whereas the violent revolutionary male "can restore order, including the order he violated."³² In other words, women's violence is exceptional, but men's violence is an accepted component of men's role as consolidators and sustainers of the political order. Robin Morgan conveyed this point in her discussion of terrorism. She argued that the stateless male terrorists of today are simply the statesmen of tomorrow, who will – as statesmen – purvey state terrorism, as history has amply shown us. In contrast, female terrorists – especially the bomb-planting and bomb-throwing variety who are not portrayed safely with babies in their arms – continue to be unnerving figures that represent the worst kind of disorder. They symbolize what lies outside and even threatens the conventional image of the transfer of power from terrorist men of the state-that-is to their heirs apparent, terrorist men of the state-that-would-be.³³

We cannot, however, undermine the gendered division of violence simply by becoming more comfortable with the image and reality of the female "terrorist." That image in fact perpetuates the gendered division of violence because women's revolutionary action undertaken in the context of the struggle between men of the state-that-is and men of the state-that-would-be reinforces that which produced this contest.

Contemporary revolutionary movements tend to take the state system for granted, their leaders typically seeking to form a new state or seize power in an existing state. As a consequence, women's activities in these struggles also remain state focused.³⁴ Women are crucial both to mobilizing mass support for revolutionary struggle and to achieving victory through homefront and battlefield activities. Yet to women the benefits of successful revolutions are always tempered by the retention of masculinist principles.

After revolutionary movements achieve the status of "new states," no one denies their international significance because states are central actors. To understand how the gender dynamics of revolutionary movements affects world politics, we need to appreciate the linkages between the personal (gender-differentiated experiences in revolutionary struggle), the political (gender-differentiated costs and benefits), and the global (gendered interstate and transstate institutions and movements).

What begins to emerge when we look at these events through a gender-sensitive lens? One point is that women are essential to the success of revolutionary struggles. To the extent that these struggles shape international relations, the presence of women and the power of gender should be analyzed as significant determinants of world politics. Another, and broader, point is that women (and men) who engage in revolutionary activities are, by definition, challenging the status quo. Put into question are gender stereotypes as well as oppressive conditions, corrupt regimes, and economic exploitation. In the process of struggle, participants presumably develop a clearer understanding of how societies function and how structural change can be promoted and/or resisted. As our examples illustrate, women consistently find their interests subordinated to or denied by masculinist nation-states. This raises – often explicitly – the following questions: What should the priorities of a society be? How do societies sustain themselves? Are state orders capable of instituting justice and equity? How are the costs and benefits of struggle divided? Who wins as long as the gendered division of violence remains intact? These questions increasingly appear on the agenda of nonstate, antistate, and transstate movements, and the debates and actions they fuel are increasingly a dimension of world politics.

Economic movements

Women's protests in regard to economic conditions are perhaps the most durable and pervasive example of their being political actors. As we have seen, women are at a disadvantage owing to the gendered division of labor within the home and family (the unpaid labor force), the gendered division of labor in the workplace (the paid labor force), and the gendered international division of labor (the global economy). These processes have relegated large numbers of women, especially those with children, to poverty and have given most women few options for earning a living wage or for moving up the economic ladder. The struggle to provide for themselves and their families on a day-to-day basis limits women's time and energy for political activism. But it has also served as a motivating force for even the poorest of women to leave their homes to protest the unfair economic straits in which they find themselves. These economic protests take many forms and sometimes bring women into related struggles, such as women's, peace, revolutionary, and ecological movements. Like their participation in other movements, women's participation in economic movements often emerges from practical gender interests.

The gendered division of labor within the home holds women primarily responsible for the well-being of the family. As a result, women are usually quick to challenge authorities when the mainstays of life are threatened. It is the gender stereotype of women as life giving and life sustaining that positions women as primary caretakers and makes them the first to protest when economic conditions keep them from providing that care.

There are many examples of women taking to the streets collectively – in “bread riots,” seizures of grain or foods, protests against the sale of overpriced goods, and/or demands for a just price for market products.³⁵ For instance, in the Flour War of 1775 that precipitated the French Revolution, women “took positive and often violent action to rectify intolerable conditions – conditions threatening to family and community stability.”³⁶ In 1929, women in Nigeria responded in force against colonial taxation and marketplace policies: “Tens of thousands of Igbo women marched, dressed in symbolic war attire, danced, chanted, sang, ‘sat on’ offending men, destroyed courts and prisons, freed prisoners, cut telegraph wires, set up their own courts and offices, closed down markets, collected money to sustain their actions, and set up or revived organizations for mutual support.”³⁷

Such actions are especially common in nonindustrialized contexts where the marketplace is dominated by women as producers, exchangers, and consumers of basic goods. There, traditional gender assignments make the provision of basic goods women's domain and serve to legitimize women's acting on behalf of family and community to protest against basic goods shortages. Also in these contexts traditional gender assumptions that women are vulnerable and in need of protection serve, to some degree, to inhibit violent reprisals directed by authorities against their unauthorized demonstrations. However, women's participation is no guarantee that officials will not act swiftly and violently against economic protests, as the killing of fifty women in the Igbo “women's war” makes clear.³⁸

In industrialized contexts, where most poor, urban women cannot produce basic goods and are made dependent on state welfare systems, women's protests against the impoverishment of their families often take the form of welfare rights movements. For example, from 1966 to 1970, the Brooklyn Welfare Action Council (B-WAC) organized thousands of welfare recipients to fight for minimum welfare standards that would guarantee the right of every family to have the essentials for survival and modern life. B-WAC members staged a number of visible and theatrical protests outside welfare offices and inside shopping complexes. They demanded supplemental payments and department store credit for welfare

recipients who could not live from check to check. For a brief period of time, B-WAC succeeded in getting more funds to welfare recipients to pay for such modern essentials as "costs of laundry; graduation; layettes; confirmation, camp, gym, and spring clothes; and washing machines."³⁹

These cases and many more like them suggest that women's struggles against the consequences of the gendered division of labor in the home – women's practical gender interests – are primarily local and short-term engagements. Because women are acting in their traditional roles as family caretakers, they are focused upon their most immediate economic needs and usually seek only relief, not social transformation. As a result, their gains are typically temporary. The basis of their struggles does not challenge – but rather reinforces – their gender roles, leaving them still responsible for reproductive labor, even under the worst economic conditions. The point is that as long as reproductive labor is viewed as a private matter to which women are assigned, neither men as individuals nor the agencies of the state are under any obligation to do more than provide temporary – and usually insufficient – relief in response to women's economic protests.

In the face of meager and grudging assistance to women responsible for "unpaid" reproductive tasks, some women are challenging the notion that women's reproductive labor is just a private matter that does not even constitute "work." Some women's economic movements emphasize the fact that reproductive labor is the precondition of all other human activities: We cannot exist without the work women do in food production and preparation, emotional and physical caretaking, and maintaining the material and psychological dimensions of what we think of as home. Domestic work is essential, yet we deny its value to ourselves as individuals whose emotional and material "basic needs" must be met and to our societies, which would perish without this unpaid labor. Just how extensive and valuable is this labor? The United Nations estimated that "if unpaid housework were valued at the cost of purchasing comparable goods and services... the measured value of GDP in countries would increase by 25–30 percent."⁴⁰

Denying the centrality and value of domestic labor has various consequences for women's and men's lives. The most basic reality is that women, who spend more time working than men, are accorded less status for what they do, and men increasingly accumulate control over cash resources. "Tilting first under rules that say women must do all domestic work, the scales are tipped further by men's greater opportunities to earn wages. Advantage builds on advantage until today they are tilted so steeply that almost all of the world's wealth is on man's side, while most of the world's work is on woman."⁴¹

Women have protested the devaluation of domestic work and men's increasing economic control in diverse ways. The risk of divorce, loss of economic support, and the threat of violence (against themselves and/or their children), makes going on strike in the home a risky option for women. But women do resist by following strategies of "refusing to cooperate." For example, men grow maize (corn) and women grow groundnut (peanuts) in Zambia. When maize profits soared, women did not shift production in their fields to the more lucrative maize "because they – and not their husbands – kept the money from sales of groundnut."⁴² Women also challenge the devaluation of their domestic work by insisting that they be paid for it. In the past several decades, "wages for housework" campaigns have been a feature of feminist debate and political action, especially in Europe and North America.

In a parallel vein, feminists have recently challenged national and international (UN, World Bank, IMF) accounting methods that keep women's domestic work invisible by according it no value in estimating national productivity. Women's groups in Canada, Trinidad, Australia, New Zealand, Norway, and India are promoting national studies to

assess women's economic contributions to national income.⁴³ As Carol Lees pointed out, the effects of national accounting are not gender neutral: "As a result of the exclusion of women's labor from information gathering we are denied proper access to programs and policy at every level of government in every country."⁴⁴

These actions, because their goals are not only better conditions for women to perform reproductive labor but also equity in the cash resources available to women and men, extend beyond women's practical gender interests. By redefining women's reproductive labor as work on which the public sphere depends and by demanding payment for this work, women are attacking the ideological and structural barriers that impoverish them relative to men. However, revaluing domestic work does not necessarily challenge the stereotype that only women should do it, nor does it disrupt the idea that men are better suited for more highly paid jobs in the public sphere.

The gendered division of labor in the work force has stirred many women to join trade union movements in the hope of improving general working conditions and wages as well as receiving pay equity relative to men in the same or comparable jobs. Berenice Carroll reminded us that it was women who initiated the earliest industrial labor strikes during the first half of the nineteenth century and a strike by women was the first of the rebellious actions that culminated in the Russian Revolution.⁴⁵ From the 1912 Lawrence, Massachusetts, textile workers strike that inspired the formation of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union to the Women Workers Movement founded in 1984 in the Philippines to protest labor conditions for women in export-processing zones, women have been active organizers and their efforts have had international implications. However, as these examples suggest, women often have created their own trade unions because they were marginalized or silenced by male-dominated unions concentrated in heavy industries, where women workers are in the minority.

Because of most women's locations within the wage labor market -- in low-wage, light-industry and service jobs as well as in the so-called informal labor force of street vendors and subsistence agricultural producers -- their labor organizing is more difficult, but also more varied, than the typical workplace-centered organizing that goes on in male-dominated industries. For example, in India, women street vendors formed the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) to demand better wages from commodity suppliers. Traditional trade unions do not organize such workers, but SEWA developed an imaginative strategy. Women street vendors organized other women street vendors by visiting them on the street and in their homes and providing literacy training so that they could participate more fully and equally in decision-making. The Honduran Federation of Peasant Women, another group that was overlooked by industry-based union movements, did not seek better wages from their employers (multinational, or transnational, corporations paying them the equivalent of U.S. \$2.00 a day) but rather alternative income-generating opportunities that would release them from having to work for MNCs.⁴⁶

These examples show women's labor organizing to be oriented toward increasing women's autonomy as workers. Women's preference for more-flexible, self-directed, and home-based work reflects their practical gender interests in having more time and energy to perform their reproductive labor. However, the strategies employed to achieve these ends often lead women to challenge a host of institutions and policies that traditional labor organizing fails to confront. For example, in order to promote safer worker conditions for women in the Philippines, the feminist organization Gabriela has supported women's demands for health care and immigration policies offering some protection from the effects of the presence of U.S. military bases and foreign servicemen.⁴⁷ Gabriela also promotes income-generating activities, community development, vocational-training and educational programs, and

opportunities for feminist research. In this way, women's strategic gender interests are awakened and mobilized in the process of fighting for working conditions that better meet their practical gender interests.

These national and local women's struggles in the waged labor force are linked through transnational women's economic movements that challenge the international gendered division of labor that shores up the current capitalist global economy. Formed in 1974, the Women's International Information and Communication Service (ISIS/WICCE), at different times based in Switzerland, Uganda, Italy, Philippines, and Chile, has connected more than 10,000 women's groups in 130 countries. Among the many issues and strategies ISIS/WICCE deals with are the organizing of women's groups against economic development policies that marginalize and exploit women workers.⁴⁸ Since 1978, the American Friends Service Committee, through its Women and Global Corporations Project, has linked workers, activists, and researchers worldwide who are promoting legislation to stop TNC practices that are reducing jobs and wages for women workers in the North and exploiting women's cheap labor in the South.⁴⁹

The debt crises and structural adjustment programs imposed by international lending institutions have had particularly negative consequences for women. Therefore, a variety of global and regional women's and development organizations have focused on combatting these gender-differentiated effects. These groups include DAWN (Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era), founded by Third World and First World women researchers and activists, which produced its first analysis of development strategies and their gendered consequences for the Nairobi meeting that concluded the UN Decade for Women.⁵⁰ More recently, DAWN's Latin American Region Research Group has connected Latin American women's groups developing alternative economic strategies with poor women and their local organizations. This networking includes "the Centro de Estudios de la Mujer in Chile and in Argentina; La Morada, also in Chile; Flora Tristan in Peru; CIPAF in the Dominican Republic; IDAC in Rio de Janeiro; the Rede Mulher in São Paulo, CEAAL throughout Latin America; the SOS Corpo in Recife and innumerable other groups."⁵¹ DAWN is also working with WAND (Women and Development Unit) in the Caribbean, and AAWORD (African Association of Women for Research and Development) in West Africa "to evaluate standard macro- and micro-economic analyses, document their negative impact on women, and develop alternative frameworks."⁵²

Women in many countries are engaging in an unprecedented global and regional organizing effort to confront a host of economic exploiters – from development agencies to multinational corporations to sex tourism operators. Women's nongovernmental organizations are committed to grass-roots organizing by poor and working-class women, whose struggles are backed up by research by, but not led by, more privileged academic women. Although the immediate goal of these struggles is to meet the practical gender interests articulated by poor and working-class women, the analysis that informs these struggles goes to the heart of every woman's strategic gender interests. That analysis exposes the gendered division of labor in all its forms and shows that this division keeps most women from having an equitable share of local, national, and global wealth, despite the fact that they are now the primary breadwinners the world over.

Ecology movements

Perhaps the newest form of women's political action is in the area of saving the environment. From the tree-hugging Chipko Movement in India to the tree-planting Greenbelt Movement in Kenya and the nature-worshipping ecofeminist movement in North America,

women are on the move to stop the rape of Mother Earth. For Third World rural women, saving the environment is crucial to their economic survival. As the primary food, fuel, and water gatherers, these women have particularly strong interests in reversing deforestation, desertification, and water pollution. When these processes threaten women's abilities to draw upon natural resources for themselves and their families, the women act in the only way available to them – putting their bodies on the line:

In 1974, village women of the Reni forests of the Chamoli district in Uttar Pradesh decided to act against a commercial enterprise about to fell some 2,500 trees. The women were alone; the menfolk had left home in search of work. When the contractors arrived, the women went into the forest, joined hands and encircled the trees ("Chipko" means to hug). The women told the cutters that to cut the trees, they would first have to cut off their heads. The contractors withdrew and the forest was saved.⁵³

Like women's struggles against immediate economic threats posed by the gendered division of labor, creative responses to the gendered division of resources may be effective in the short term, but they fail to address long-term systemic issues. In the Chipko case, the responses did not undermine forces of global capitalism that are among the major causes of deforestation, nor did they challenge the idea that only women need be the stewards of the environment because they are closer to nature than men. These spontaneous strategies also fail to redistribute in favor of women the resources necessary for more effective long-term organizing.

The Greenbelt Movement in Kenya, formed by Wangari Maathai, of the National Council of Women, has begun a resource-generating process through which women can become more effective stewards of the environment. After instituting an effective national tree-planting campaign, the movement established a tree nursery. "Women are involved in rearing the seedlings, planting and marketing; in addition to becoming expert foresters, they also earn a cash income. The Greenbelt Movement is not only restoring the environment, but also enables women to benefit from environmental education, and to practice professional forestry techniques, while at the same time they are developing their status."⁵⁴ This kind of organizing not only meets women's practical gender interests but also creates conditions under which women can fight for their strategic gender interests.

This holistic strategy is also evident in such movements as the Calcutta Social Project, started by middle-class Indian women in the 1960s. The Calcutta Social Project was designed to change the lives of the poor who were forced to live on and around the city's massive waste dumps. "They began with literacy and recreational classes for young garbage pickers in an abandoned shed. Then vocational training in carpentry, masonry, and sewing were added. A primary health care clinic now flourishes."⁵⁵ Such projects not only reduce the misery experienced by people living in extreme poverty but also gives them the tools to change their landscape and their work. Once again, however, such projects do not directly counteract the economic, political, and social forces that construct and perpetuate a "throwaway" society.

For Western ecofeminists, the key to confronting systemic forces that despoil the environment is questioning the treatment of both women and nature as resources to be used and abused by men and industries. This orientation gained momentum following the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant accident in Pennsylvania. Shortly afterward, 600 women gathered for a weekend meeting on "Women and Life on Earth: A Conference on Eco-Feminism in the Eighties." Ecofeminist, Ynestra King, opened this conference, proclaiming: "We're here

to say the word **ECOLOGY** and announce that for us as feminists it's a political word – that it stands against the economics of the destroyers and the pathology of racist hatred. It's a way of being, which understands that there are connections between all living things and that indeed women are the fact and flesh of connectedness."⁵⁶

In 1980 this U.S. movement spawned a similar one in the UK, which became known as Women for Life on Earth. Ecofeminist activists on both sides of the Atlantic were prominent in the 1980 and 1981 Women's Pentagon Actions and the December 12, 1980, encirclement of the Greenham Common nuclear base. These actions were based on the premise that "we see the devastation of the earth and her beings by the corporate warriors and the threat of nuclear annihilation by the military warriors as feminist concerns."⁵⁷

From this ecofeminist perspective, if patriarchy, capitalism, racism, industrial development, and militarism are the sources of environmental degradation, women are the solution to it. Rather than questioning the gender stereotypes that associate women with nature and stewardship, most ecofeminists insist that women are closer to nature because of the reproductive and productive work they do and, thus, are in the best position to care for the environment. Ecofeminists use this argument in an attempt to counter other gender stereotypes about women and nature as objectified and passive resources, which powerful men may manipulate for their own purposes.

This perspective predominated at the October 1990 four-day meeting of fifty leading environmentalist women from Latin America, Africa, Asia, Europe, and North America. Assembled at the UN Church Center, participants drafted an international plan of action for the next decade with the following major goals:

- Full participation by women in environment policy at all levels
- Freedom of choice in family planning
- Redefinition of development on the principle that investment must not destroy the environment
- Increased education and information on the environment and development
- Protection of natural resources
- Development of a code of earth ethics⁵⁸

The plan of action was created and signed by women from all over the world: Vandana Shiva of India; Wangari Maathai of the Greenbelt Movement in Kenya; Canadian radiation and health specialist Rosalie Bertell; Bella Abzug of the U.S. Women's Foreign Policy Council; Chodchoy Sophonpanich, president of the Thai Environmental and Community Development Association; Maria Eugenia de Gotter, director of the Arias Foundation of Costa Rica; Tamar Eschel, former member of the Israeli parliament; Rosina Wiltshire of the Caribbean Conservation Association; Gertrude Mongella, a member of the Central Committee of Tanzania's governing party; and Bernadette Vallely of the Women's Environmentalist Network in Britain. It was brought forward to the International Women's Congress on the Environment in Miami in November 1991 and to the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992.

Although this international plan of action is consistent with the positions of most environmentalist groups, particularly in the North, it is distinguished by its insistence that women can no longer be shut out of environmental policy-making. Rather, it argues that women bear the brunt of environmental degradation and are therefore most likely to seek solutions to it. In addition, the drafters of this document held accountable not just the North but also all the male-dominated power structures – local, national, and international – for the state

of the Earth. Nevertheless, the plan of action falls short of more-radical ecofeminist and nonfeminist "deep ecology" positions that draw from Native American traditions and claim that nature, or the Earth, has intrinsic value. In this view, human beings should cease imposing their own values on the Earth and encroach upon natural processes as little as possible.

This "Earth as inviolate" position is problematic to the degree that it celebrates "the primitive" in a way that denies development not only to the South generally but also to women, who have the least access to land, technologies, and resources worldwide. The ecofeminist strategy that maintains the connection of women to nature in order to argue that women and nature should be equally inviolate – safe from rape, abuse, and use as cheap resources – is flawed. It makes women so coterminous with nature that it provides a rationale for continuing to keep them out of decision-making about the use of nature by humans. Here, women's strategic gender interests, which lead to calls for low-technology strategies to protect women and nature, conflict with their practical gender interests in gaining access to the resources necessary for meeting the basic needs of their families. Radical ecofeminist definitions of strategic gender interests also conflict with other strategic gender interests in participating as equals in modern, high-technology, presently male-dominated institutions that control or "manage" resources.

Finally, what is still unchallenged by all types of women's ecology movements is that women are the most "natural" stewards of the environment. Certainly not all women are environmentalists. Middle- and upper-class women in the North and South, by being major consumers, are particularly profligate destroyers of natural resources. Moreover, poor and working-class women often lack the tools and skills necessary to be effective stewards. These contradictions within women's ecology movements once again remind us that there is no simple formula for righting gender wrongs. Ending the gendered division of resources is contingent on ending the assumption that masculinism equals resource ownership and exploitation. It is dependent too on feminism's relinquishing the principle that stewardship is the property and responsibility of women only.

Conclusion

The pursuit of practical gender interests often leads activists to discover strategic gender interests, which, in turn, drive the participation of women (and men) in anti- and transstate social movements. The issues raised and actions undertaken have important implications for both how we understand world politics and how we choose to shape our future.

That women's political movements of all types are complicit, to a greater or lesser degree, in gendering processes leads us to some ruminations in our final chapter on what it will take to "ungender" world politics. There, we hope to integrate our findings and our arguments and leave the reader with some sense of the enormity, but also the necessity, of the transformational project to ungender world politics.

Notes

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- 2 Ibid., pp. 63–65.
- 3 Ursula Herrmann, "Social Democratic Women in Germany and the Struggle for Peace Before and During the First World War," in *Women and Peace*, ed. Pierson, pp. 91–92.

- 4 See Lela B. Costin, "Feminism, Pacifism, Internationalism and the 1915 International Congress of Women," in *Women and Men's Wars*, ed. Judith Stiehm (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1983), pp. 301-316.
- 5 See Yvonne Aleksandra Bennett, "Vera Brittain and the Peace Pledge Union: Women and Peace," in *Women and Peace*, ed. Pierson (London: Croom Helm), pp. 192-213.
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- 8 Karen Beck Skold, "The Job He Left Behind: American Women in the Shipyards During World War II," in *Women, War and Revolution*, ed. Carol R. Berkin and Clara M. Lovett (New York: Holmes and Meier Pub., 1980), p. 69.
- 9 James J. Kenneally, "Women in the United States and Trade Unionism," in *The World of Women's Trade Unionism*, ed. Norbert C. Soldon (Westport, CO: Greenwood Press, 1985), p. 80.
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- 13 Berenice Carroll, "Women Take Action! Women's Direct Action and Social Change," *Women's Studies International Forum* 12, 1 (1989): 17.
- 14 See Anne Sisson Runyan, "Feminism, Peace, and International Politics: An Examination of Women Organizing Internationally for Peace and Security," (Ph.D. Dissertation, American University, Washington, DC, 1988).
- 15 See *ibid.*
- 16 See, for example, Lynne Segal, *Is the Future Female?* (New York: Peter Bedwick Books, 1987); Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Women and War* (New York: Basic Books, 1987); Christine Sylvester, "Some Dangers in Merging Feminist and Peace Projects," *Alternatives* 12 (October 1987): 493-510.
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- 19 Ibid., p. 16.
- 20 Ibid., p. 66.
- 21 Jane Deighton, Rossana Horsley, Sarah Stewart, and Cathy Cain, *Sweet Ramparts: Women in Revolutionary Nicaragua* (London: War on Want and the Nicaraguan Solidarity Campaign, 1983), p. 50.
- 22 Ibid., p. 55.
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- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Ibid., p. 119.
- 26 Ibid.
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- 29 Ibid., p. 154.
- 30 Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990), p. 63.
- 31 See, for example, Minoll Reeves, *Female Warriors of Allah: Women and the Islamic Revolution* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1989).
- 32 Elshtain, *Women and War*, p. 170.
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- 44 Quoted in *ibid.* [no citation for original Lees remarks included in Waring article].
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