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Feminist Theory

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Abstract

Women had an important status in the Islamic religion, but their rights were not the same in other societies. Throughout human history, women have suffered from the oppression practiced against them. As a result, feminist movements emerged in Western societies demanding their rights. So, feminism is the theory that advocates for the political, economic, and social equality between sexes, and as a political movement, it seeks to achieve women's rights and interests, and to eliminate the sexism that women suffer from.

Three main trends in feminist theory can be distinguished:

First- The Individualist Liberal Feminist Movement: It calls for the liberation of women based on the principle of identical equality between men and women, and the principle of absolute freedom for women, granting them all their rights, most importantly the right to vote, education, and economic independence.

Second- The Marxist Feminist Movement: It views society as being built from the relationships that people form during their work. It focused on class contradictions and it believed that the ideal solution lies in the success of socialist revolutions and the elimination of the class system.

Third- The Radical Feminist Movement: Radicalism emphasizes the patriarchal roots of inequality between men and women. It views patriarchy primarily as rights, privileges, and power separated by sex. It tends to question political action within the current system, focusing instead on cultural change that undermines patriarchal authority.

Feminist theory also has contributions to international relations. When feminism emerged in Western democratic systems, it was a political movement inspired by the belief in equality between men and women. However, while it focused in its early stages on recognizing gender equality, it later transformed into a cognitive model for understanding the field of international politics from a gender perspective.

The philosophy of gender is based on the idea that the divisions and roles assigned to men and women, as well as the differences between them, and even the perceptions and ideas related to how the male views himself and the female, and how the female views herself and the male, etc... All are made by society and its culture. That is, all of it is artificial and therefore can be changed. Feminists used gender analysis to uncover the bias in core concepts of international relations, such as power and security, and argued that this bias not only shaped its theoretical applications but also had specific consequences on the practice of international relations.

The goal of feminist theory is to integrate women into politics by removing the exploitation they face from patriarchal authority, whether it is the authority of the father or the husband, establishing a place for them as both theorists or even decision-makers, and providing an alternative to international politics, which has been gendered in favour of men. From an epistemological standpoint, it has brought alternatives by reformulating new hypotheses for international relations, particularly through its critique of classical realist theory, viewing it as a gendered, unclear theory that relies on power, in contrast to feminist theory, which relies on a peaceful view of international relations based on cooperation.

Keywords: Feminism; Liberal Feminism; Socialist Feminism; Radical Feminism; International Relations.

Introduction

God Almighty says: "O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you" (Quran, 49:13).

The woman is one-half of society, while the man makes up the other half. The Islamic religion has honoured

women as God Almighty dedicated an entire chapter in the Holy Quran to them, namely Surah An-Nisa. It begins by establishing a crucial fundamental principle: both men and women were created from a single soul, this refutes the claims of those who argue that the innate nature of women differs from that of men, as both are created from the same source and are equally predisposed to accept good, evil, desire, and misguidance (Zaki, 2026). This is confirmed by the Almighty's saying: "And [by] the soul and He who proportioned it, and inspired it [with discernment of] its wickedness and its righteousness, He has succeeded who purifies it, and he has failed who instills it [with corruption]" (Quran, 91:7-10).

This equality in religious obligation and reward is unequivocally affirmed in the Almighty's saying: "And their Lord responded to them, 'Never will I allow to be lost the work of [any] worker among you, whether male or female; you are of one another. So those who emigrated or were evicted from their homes or were harmed in My cause or fought or were killed - I will surely remove from them their misdeeds, and I will surely admit them to gardens beneath which rivers flow as reward from Allah, and Allah has with Him the best reward'" (Quran, 3:195).

Furthermore, the relationship between spouses is not based on coercion, domination, or superiority, but rather on affection and mercy (Zaki, 2026). This is emphasized in the verse: "And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquillity in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy. Indeed, in that are signs for a people who give thought" (Quran, 30:21).

This significant status given to women in Islamic society was not the same in other historical contexts. Throughout human history, women have suffered the scourges of oppression, tyranny, and various forms of discrimination, humiliation, coercion, and violence directed against them solely due to their female gender. For instance, Arabs in the pre-Islamic (Ignorance) era viewed the birth of a female child as a disgrace that had to be eliminated through infanticide. In some societies, the status of women was no different from that of animals, and the condition of women in Western societies was similarly dire. Consequently, feminist movements emerged, rebelling against their conditions and demanding their rights as human beings across various spheres of life, which ultimately led to the advent of feminism (Zaki, 2026).

The term "feminist movement" or "feminism" is utilized as an Arabicisation of the French word "*féminisme*" or the English "*feminism*". Terminologically, it denotes any theoretical, cognitive, or practical effort aimed at reviewing, questioning, critiquing, or amending the prevailing social structure that centralises man as the default human being, while relegating women to a secondary, inferior status. This prevailing system imposes limits and restrictions on women, depriving them of opportunities for growth and contribution simply because they are a female, and repressing their experiences and traits merely for being feminine (Sassi, 2017).

The Oxford Dictionary defines feminism as "the recognition that women have rights and opportunities equal to those of men". Meanwhile, Webster's Dictionary defines it as "the theory of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes, and organized activity on behalf of women's rights and interests to eliminate gender discrimination" (Bahri, 2014).

The term is characterized by ambiguity and generality on both practical and academic levels. This is primarily due to its multifaceted usage, swaying between narrow and broad interpretations. In its broader sense, it encompasses all governmental and non-governmental women's organizations, whether charitable or developmental, working in the field of women's fields of interest. That includes activities framed within social welfare seeking to meet the practical needs of women. Conversely, when the concept is narrowed, in Arab culture it is used as a translation for the term *féminisme* or the theory of gender equality. In French dictionaries, it is cited as the doctrine that advocates for improving and expanding the role and rights of women in society, while English dictionaries describe it as the belief in and advocacy of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes (Tallawy, 2005).

Based on these definitions, the term "feminist movements" directly points to the waves of global women's struggle for citizenship and equality, which initially were brought into life during the Enlightenment period, continuing throughout the nineteenth century to reach their peak in the 1960s with the vigorous protests led by women, accompanied by an escalation of advocacy and political action in Europe and America. While the debate remains unsettled regarding the historical accuracy of applying the label "feminism" to the efforts of pioneering women in 19th-century Europe, it can be argued that the foundational elements of the women's movement established in the early 20th century endow the term with clear significance and greater legitimacy. It also allows for a distinction between "women's" and "feminist" movements, indicating feminist movements' association with structured strategies serving well-defined ideological goals (Tallawy, 2005).

Accordingly, feminism possesses specific characteristics that differ significantly from its broader humanitarian interpretations. As Hisham Sharabi states, the feminist movement is "that movement which makes women and the transformation of their conditions in society its objective. Ideologically, it assumes the existence of a specific feminist thought which considers that the male-dominated or paternalistic system is the historical cause of women's oppression". Hence, some researchers argue that the concept of feminism is not limited to demanding complete equality between men and women, rather it extends to encompass a collective consciousness centered on addressing major issues that concerned society through the strategic interests of women, and it denotes the choice to change society via intellectual production and organized action to achieve complete gender equality (Tallawy, 2005).

The primary issue that feminist theory concerns itself with is the inequality of women in relation to men, their subordination, or male dominance over them. The core of this issue is the matter of gender asymmetry (treating women and matters associated with them as different, inferior, and of lesser value compared to men and matters associated with them). Feminist theories study and attempt to explain the circumstances under which men hold more power, and why

men's production and ideas are perceived as holding greater value. For many feminist theories, this involves examining and explaining all systems of domination, whether based on sex, race, class, age, sexuality, nationality, or other differences (Kolmar et al, 2010).

Three fundamental trends of feminist theory can be distinguished:

1. Liberal/Individual Feminism

Members of this movement referred to themselves as the women's liberation movement. This trend emerged around the 19th century, based in two exclusive principles: first, the principle of symmetrical equality between men and women; and second, the absolute freedom of women in their daily practices. The movement's proponents view these two principles as an integrated whole; one cannot be separated from the other, nor can the first exist without the second, and vice versa (Ramadani, 2012).

It is considered one of the earliest currents of the feminist movement, it entails that achieving gender equality requires enacting radical reforms in society through the use of the law, granting women the same rights enjoyed by men, based on the belief in women as independent individuals capable of enacting change. This trend also emerged to dismantle the notion that women are innately less competent than men, a belief used to justify their subordination. Pioneers of this current argue that women's subjugation stems from a flaw in societal structure that must be rectified legally. Furthermore, because both men and women inherently hold the same value, they must be equal before the law, ensuring women receive all their rights, most notably the right to vote, education, and economic independence. Prominent feminists of this trend include the British thinkers Mary Wollstonecraft and Helen Taylor (Abu Zamar, 2021).

A Vindication of the Rights of Woman was the first significant work in the history of feminist theory, written by Mary Wollstonecraft in 1792. Prior to that, in 1791, during the early stages of the French Revolution, Mary Wollstonecraft published a pamphlet titled *Olympe de Gouges Les Droits de la femme* concerning gender equality. Eighteenth-century feminists were enthusiastic about the Enlightenment and rationalism, as natural rights were the cornerstone of the American Declaration of Independence and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man. Feminists began arguing that they too possessed the natural rights enjoyed by men (Qassam, 2021).

Liberal Enlightenment thinkers focused on maintaining a world order philosophically isolated from various scientific discoveries. Newton's model of the physical universe operating according to simple, rational rules defined the era's theoretical landscape. Meanwhile, political philosophers developed the concept of natural rights, comprehensible only through reason, claiming that all brains function mechanically in the same way. They asserted that every person would arrive at the same conclusion through reason, yet claimed women could not reach these conclusions. They proposed that the rational world is superior to the irrational world and must control it. Rational beings (men) were deemed the masters, holding the right to make allowances for irrational beings (women), and women were not considered citizens because they were deemed unwise (Qassam, 2021).

Feminist theorists who transcended these conventions regarding natural rights argued that women as citizens, possess the same fundamental rights as men. The first attempt at addressing this was the *Declaration of Sentiments*, drafted by Elizabeth Cady Stanton in 1848 in Seneca Falls, New York. This declaration stated that women have the right to vote, serve in government, and receive proper education. The fundamental ideas of liberal feminists during the Enlightenment can be summarized as follows: belief in reason, the existential equality of men and women, the importance of education for social transformation and critical thinking, the assertion that men and women share the same moral, intellectual, and rational essence, the necessity for both to receive the same education, and the argument that women should not be confined to the private sphere but must enter public life (Qassam, 2021).

Sarah Grimké's *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes* (1838) offered the most compelling claims within liberal culture. She addressed essential biblical chapters used to legitimize the oppression of women, clarifying that women must confront flawed written opinions and entrenched traditions to express their truth. Grimké was the first to adopt the principles of American natural rights for women, raising the issue that equal taxpayers performing equal work should receive equal pay (Qassam, 2021).

The liberal feminist doctrine is anchored in Enlightenment beliefs that advocate faith in rationality, the conviction that men and women possess the same rational faculties, the belief in education as a tool to change and transform society, and adherence to the principle of natural rights. Therefore, as long as men and women are ontologically identical, men's rights should be extended to include women (Awad, 2010).

Liberal feminism is considered a broad umbrella term, encompassing a wide range of views that are not always entirely compatible. Generally, however, liberal feminists strive for society that is based on equality and respects the right of every individual to utilize their potential and energies. A careful reading of the individual or liberal feminist trend reveals it to be the oldest historically, providing significant space to seriously discuss women's issues, whether in connection with the family or in complete liberation from it (Kamal, 2013).

Liberal principles became a vital weapon in demanding female suffrage. The primary goal of liberal feminism is to advocate for women's civil and political rights within societies that grant males all rights while depriving females of many of them (Kamal, 2013).

There were certain flaws within Enlightenment feminist theory: liberal analysis left the private sphere largely unexamined, failing to consider that women (as a class) began the race at a disadvantage due to assigned duties. Furthermore, alternative institutional ideas to traditional marriage and motherhood were not developed. Liberals study whether existential differences truly exist between men and women; thus, the liberal feminist viewpoint requires a more holistic perspective to address these gaps (Qassam, 2021).

Critics also argue that this trend does not guarantee full gender justice because the law alone is incapable of

dismantling patriarchal authority in informal contexts. Achieving complete gender justice necessitates social and cultural reforms alongside legal ones (Abu Zamar, 2021).

2. Socialist/Marxist Feminism

Marxist theory argues that society is fundamentally constructed by the relationships people form while working and producing the things they need for human survival. Labour is the social process that shapes and transforms both material and social worlds, creating social beings out of people in the midst of their value creation. Labour is the activity through which people become themselves; classes are the structure in which this activity is positioned, production is its goal, capital is its coagulated material, and control is its problem (MacKinnon, 2019).

Socialist feminist theory did not contradict liberal theory but objected to its concepts of value and status, focusing instead on the broader framework within which men and women coexist. It assumed that corruption stems from the societal system as a whole, which operates under bourgeois conflicts and contradictions. Within the system of bourgeois marriage in this society, women represented the oppressed class, while patriarchal authority represented the class of owners and employers. Under this system, both men and women are oppressed. Therefore, how could feminist theory demand equality with men when they are also an oppressed group? This theory focused primarily on class contradictions, conceding that the optimal solution lies in the success of socialist revolutions and the eradication of the class system, aligning feminist theory with socialist revolutions and the socialist system in society (Aoun, 2022).

Marx and Freud both developed their theories under patriarchal conditions, making the legitimacy of these concepts subject to fundamental questioning, even if applied to women. Nonetheless, these theories managed to contribute to the development of feminist theory. Marx believed that the dominant ideology in society is determined by the economic interests of the ruling class. The relevance of these ideas to feminist theory is evident, as socialist feminists generally recognize a parallel between women and the proletariat. The concept of alienation is central to Marx's theory; alienation means experiencing separation from others and a loss of meaning, where the object produced through labour becomes independent of the producer (Qassam, 2021).

Marx argued that the division of labour has its roots in what is called the natural division of labour within the family. The natural division of labour arises due to physiological differences in sex and age. Consequently, the subjugation of the wife and children by the husband was seen as the primary form of private property. Marx envisioned a communist world devoid of alienation, where people establish a more profound relationship with the products of their labour and are no longer divided against each other (a classless society) due to their class relationships to the modes of production (Qassam, 2021).

Inessa Armand, the first director of the Women's Bureau after the Russian Revolution in 1917, observed: "If women's liberation is inconceivable without communism, then communism is inconceivable without women's liberation". This statement perfectly summarizes the relationship between the struggle for both socialism and women's liberation; one cannot be achieved without the other. From its inception, through the writings of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, the Marxist tradition advocated for women's emancipation. Early on, with the publication of the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels argued that the ruling class oppresses women, reducing them to second-class citizens in society and within the family: "The bourgeois sees his wife a mere instrument of production... He has not even a suspicion that the real point aimed at [by communists] is to do away with the status of women as mere instruments of production" (Smith, 2014).

Another aspect of Marx's philosophy relevant to feminist theory involves theories of economic value: use value, exchange value, and surplus value. The concept of use value generally refers to the value of items manufactured by group members, such as cooking, knitting, and weaving (traditionally women's work). Exchange value refers to items produced for exchange. Producing an item for exchange destroys its sacred ownership and transforms it into a common commodity. Marx developed a labour theory of value to explain surplus value. The worker's labour power is commodified in the market for sale. Surplus value is the difference between the value of the labour products and the cost of producing the labour power, in other words, the worker's source of income. Contemporary feminist theory has attempted to demonstrate the applicability of domestic labour to this theory (Qassam, 2021).

Engels's theory is shifting more toward analysing the family and women's roles within it, reflecting his views on prehistoric matriarchy. His analysis of women's oppression relies entirely on economic theories, linking the transition from matriarchy to patriarchy to economic developments. Even though there was a gendered division of labour in the communist family, both held equal authority within their respective domains; everyone was a master in their space, and women were perhaps even slightly more equal. His materialist argument is based on tribes where women ruled. With the domestication of animals, more food and animal products were acquired, yielding materials for exchange and barter; the ability to produce a surplus beyond what was required for survival revealed the existence of surplus value. The demand for cheap labour led to the use of slaves (Qassam, 2021).

Simultaneously, women also acquired an exchange value; domestic work became negligible compared to the wealth accumulated by men. Having acquired property to bequeath, men became more concerned with ensuring paternity. The first class struggle in history coincided with the development of the antagonism between man and woman in monogamous marriage; the man represented the bourgeoisie, and the wife represented the proletariat. Engels's solution was to encourage women's participation in the workforce and to promote the abolition of the monogamous family as the economic unit of society. All of this was to occur under communism. A critique of this approach is that the sphere of industrial production where Engels sought female participation is a deeply flawed world of work; in other words, it would not constitute an emancipatory step for women at all (Qassam, 2021).

Another issue considered by socialist feminists is the question of which class women belong to. While radical feminists argue that women constitute a class of their own, socialist feminists consistently emphasize the existence of

class differences among women. The final area of socialist feminist analysis is the family and the role of the mother. There is a harmony between patriarchal behaviour and capitalist values, as ideological socialization occurs at home, conducted by women. Women's work at home and the maternal role are undervalued because they fall outside the realm of monetary exchange and cannot be measured in cash. Love and affection are viewed merely as a domain of weakness and powerlessness, even if appreciated (Qassam, 2021).

The fundamental idea of socialist feminism lies in the premise that bourgeois marriage reproduces the conflicts and contradictions of the broader bourgeois society. Wives represent the oppressed class or even slaves, while patriarchal authority within this class assumes the role of employers or owners. This analysis points to men as the enemies of women, suggesting their struggle is a reflection of a larger struggle as women operate within the context of capitalism. In this sense, under this exploitative system, men are also oppressed. Thus, the equality with men demanded by liberals holds no meaning for socialists, as it merely means achieving equality with a group that is already oppressed within a corrupt social system (Kamal, 2013).

3. Radical Feminism

Radical feminism is a philosophy emphasizing the patriarchal roots of inequality between men and women, specifically, the social domination of women by men. The radical feminist movement views patriarchy primarily as a system of rights, privileges, and power segregated by sex, resulting in the oppression of women and the privileging of men. Radical feminism generally opposes the existing political and social organization because it is inherently linked to patriarchal authority. Consequently, radical feminists tend to be sceptical of political action within the current system, opting instead to focus on cultural change that undermines patriarchal authority and its associated hierarchical structures (Johnson, n.d.).

This theory is described as radical because it views women's subjugation as one of the most fundamental forms of societal oppression, which does not merely stop at women but intersects with racial, cultural boundaries, and economic classes. Thus, this theory broadens its scope of women's oppression to include all social subjects such as race, colour, culture, and class. The main goal of this theory is to transform the society in which women exist to dismantle the structure of exploitation they face; however, it does not aim to provoke this change entirely and completely. Radical feminism exposes the sexual exploitation of women, which perpetuates male patriarchal dominance over women. According to Lorber, this approach expands the concept of patriarchy by defining it as a universal system based on the subordination of women to men through violence and sexual exploitation (Soliman, 2014).

From the perspective of radical feminists, women reside under injustice. The use of the word "injustice" is a borrowing from Marxism, which divided society into two groups: the oppressor (capitalist) and the oppressed (worker). Radical feminists believed that the primary social division was not into working and capitalist classes, but rather a division based on sex (Roudgar, 2019).

Radical feminist theory was developed in New York and Boston by a group of former female activists in the late 1960s and early 1970s. These women had participated in civil rights political activities and anti-war campaigns in the 1960s. They reached their consciousness through their reaction to the demeaning behaviour of radical men toward the New Left, having been treated as second-class citizens. They were determined to implant the idea that their personal, subjective issues carried the same importance and legitimacy as issues of social justice and peace. They believed that the foundation of true revolutionary change was feminism, that political, patriarchal, or male dominance was the root of women's oppression, that women should consider themselves an oppressed class, and that men and women should direct their energies into a movement fighting against the men who oppress them (Qassam, 2021).

Radical administrative groups in New York, formed in 1967 and 1968, developed the main body of radical feminist theory. The primary hypothesis that emerged was that the politically oppressive system of male and female roles is the first and original model for all types of oppression. Feminists also called for the abolition of marriage and the family, the dismantling of heteronormativity, and the development of extra-uterine means of reproduction. The radical feminist thesis is the first statement to argue that women's oppression is primarily due to psychological rather than economic factors, and that the relationship between them is political. They use the term "sexual politics" to emphasize that politics pervades the personal sphere of sexual intimacy (Qassam, 2021).

Millett argues that the family is the primary source of ideological indoctrination, where the young are raised within a patriarchal framework, thereby ensuring the reproduction of the patriarchal system. The use of rape as a political tool to terrorize women is a thesis developed by other radical feminists. Rape is not an arbitrary act of violence, but an act of political oppression carried out by members of a powerful class against members of a weak class (Qassam, 2021).

Describing rape as a male ideology, Brownmiller states: "Rape has actually served some prominent males to be epic soldiers, terrorists during the longest war the world has ever witnessed". Brownmiller points out how pornography and prostitution contribute to rape, as they promote an ideology that degrades and uses the female body, stating: "The idea that a strong male impulse must be immediately satisfied by a cooperative category is an integral part of the collective psychology of rape. Indeed, until the day prostitution disappears entirely, the misconception that access to sexual activity is an extension of male power and privilege will continue to feed the rapist mentality" (Qassam, 2021).

Ti-Grace Atkinson's most radical and interesting discussions revolve around the idea of love as a pathology rooted in the distorted and incomplete identities of men and women. She states: "The phenomenon of love is the psychological pivot in the persecution of women. Women cultivate love as a psychological means to cope with hopeless oppression. Love is the desperate effort women make to rise to the level of human." Atkinson asks: "If we were free, would we need love?" According to Firestone: "Love is a veil that conceals the fundamental sexual interest of man," and the ideology of love is the opiate of women (Qassam, 2021).

Murray discusses the difference between the economic and social statuses of black and white women. Black women have more children, receive less education, and earn less. While these women fight alongside black men against racism, they also fight black men regarding sexism. Lesbian feminism has developed several theories since the late 1970s. Lesbians argued that the foundation of women's oppression is the institutionalization of heterosexuality. Like women of colour, lesbians were victims of a double danger; they had to combat homophobia within the feminist movement and male chauvinism in society. Attempts were made to rescue the term "lesbian" from being merely a sexual identity and to reject defining it in men's terms; lesbianism is not just a sexual contact issue, it is a way of life (Qassam, 2021).

The Role of Feminist Theory in International Relations

Before the term "Feminist Policy" became widely used in political literature, "Feminism" emerged in Western democracies as a political movement inspired by the belief in fundamental equality between men and women. However, this feminism, which in its early developmental stages focused on recognizing gender equality to enable women to secure fair employment opportunities and wages comparable to men, while considering the nature of gender in viewing social and political issues transformed into an epistemological paradigm for understanding and analysing the field of international politics from a gendered perspective (Muayed, 2022).

The concept of gender traces back to one of the foundational texts of the feminist movement: Simone de Beauvoir's book *The Second Sex*. Although she did not use the term directly, it was built upon her famous assertion that "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman". This exact conceptualisation was used by Ann Oakley to define gender, meaning the traits and functions that society assigns to a person of a specific sex, whereas "sex" refers to the biological characteristics with which a human is born. In other words, the two are parallel to each other: sex is considered natural at least by most feminists, while gender is considered cultural (Al-Saghir, 2026).

The philosophy of gender is based on the idea that the divisions and roles assigned to men and women, the differences between them, and even the perceptions and ideas related to a male's view of himself and females, and a female's view of herself and males... etc, are all made up by society, its culture, and its prevailing ideas. That is, all of this is artificial and can consequently be completely altered or abolished. Traditionally, men were viewed as strong, violent, and rational, while women were viewed as passive, affectionate, and emotional. However, feminists object to this categorization and the attachment of traits as natural givens, viewing masculinity and femininity instead as social constructs. Feminists utilized gender analysis to expose the bias present in fundamental International Relations concepts such as power and security, arguing that this bias not only limited its theoretical applications but also had specific consequences on the practice of international relations (Adila, 2015).

The primary intent and fundamental demand of feminist theory is to introduce women into the political arena by lifting the injustice and exploitation they suffer at the hands of patriarchal authority, whether that be the authority of the father or the husband. Women sought to establish a place for themselves in various branches, especially International Relations, whether as theorists or decision-makers, providing an alternative to international politics that was gendered in favour of men. Its ontological contribution lay in introducing a new actor into international relations, namely women, whom various classical theories in international relations had marginalized (Jandali & Zallaghi, 2007).

Epistemologically, it provided alternatives by reformulating new hypotheses for international relations, particularly through its critique of classical realism. It considered realism to be a gendered, ambiguous theory overly reliant on power, contrasting this with feminist theory, which adopts a peaceful view of international relations, substituting a conflictual formula with a cooperative one, and focusing on the realm of women's rights, and consequently, human rights as a whole (Jandali & Zallaghi, 2007).

During the six decades preceding the collapse of the socialist system, realist and liberal schools dominated the explanation of state behaviour and concepts revolving around anarchy, violence, power, cooperation, and security. Although realism remained the overwhelmingly dominant theoretical approach, other theoretical frameworks did not begin to gain momentum until the 1980s. The dawn of the post-Cold War era appeared to be a convenient political and intellectual moment that could allow a new theory like feminism to present its analytical hypotheses and centre its methodology on the gender perspective (Muayed, 2022).

Martin Griffiths states that until the 1980s, despite the achievements of concepts of femininity in other social sciences, the role of gender in international relations theory and its applications remained completely ignored. The initial momentum of criticism directed by feminists at the field of international relations, which they deemed to be suffering from gender blindness, was aimed at challenging fundamental distortions in the subject matter of relations and shedding light on the ways women were excluded from analyses of the state, international political economy, and global security (Adila, 2015).

The feminist school began to impact the academic field, particularly after realism faced a challenge manifesting in its theoretical failure to predict the collapse of the Soviet Union. The rapid pace of changes in the 1990s led many to challenge the academic understanding of international politics, focusing attention on the limitations of international relations frameworks (Muayed, 2022).

It appears that the theoretical weakness of international relations, coupled with developments in the global system, paved the way for theoretical and empirical intervention by a group of scholars who initiated an era of academic destabilisation at the end of the 1980s. This placed feminism at the centre stage through conferences and workshops directed at international relations audience in Western capitals. This led to the birth of the Feminist Theory and Gender Studies Section at the International Studies Association (ISA) in the United States, and the Gender and International Relations Working Group in the British International Studies Association (BISA). Consequently, academic programs dedicated to the study of women, gender, and feminism began appearing in global universities, and the teaching of

international relations started shifting towards including feminist and gender curricula, at least within the Anglo-American educational landscape (Muayed, 2022).

Cynthia Enloe's 1989 book *Bananas, Beaches and Bases* was a milestone in the analytical method of international politics, using women as a starting point to present a different vision. This book had a profound impact on reframing international relations from a gendered perspective, focusing on the potential role women could play in reducing international conflicts and wars and establishing peace. It argued that failing to give adequate consideration to the feminist role, whether in policymaking or by not including them as policy targets, could produce violent manifestations in international politics. Feminism, in this changing sense, was no longer merely a concern focusing on the social and political rights of women in their local societies; rather, it became a growing international perspective promoting the idea that equality and increasing women's inclusion in political and economic life positively reflects on global economic growth and civil peace (Muayed, 2022).

Conclusion

Feminist movements emerged long ago as a reaction to the enslavement of women and the deprivation of their rights in Western societies. Feminism has attempted to theorize for women's freedom and empowerment, arguing that the root of political instability, societal violence, and even conflicts and wars is the oppression of women. It posits that global peace and economic prosperity will be achieved if women participate alongside men and are treated equally in rights and duties.

Feminism advocates for the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes. As a political movement, it seeks the empowerment of women's rights and interests, and the eradication of the gender discrimination that women suffer.

Feminist theories study the reasons why men hold more power and why men's production and ideas are perceived as having greater value and higher status than those of women. For many feminist theories, this involves studying and explaining all systems of domination, whether based on sex, race, class, age, sexuality, nationality, or other differences.

After a long struggle, women in some Western societies managed to attain some of their rights, particularly political ones. This enabled them to hold senior political positions; for example, Ursula von der Leyen as President of the European Commission, Giorgia Meloni elected as Prime Minister of Italy, Liz Truss chosen as Prime Minister of Britain, Élisabeth Borne as Prime Minister of France, and many others.

In the Arab world, however, women have not been able to exert significant political influence, as Arab regimes remain closed off to change and prevent the rotation of power, let alone the true political empowerment of women. Despite some structural attempts through the implementation of the quota system, this has not yet systematically led them to foundational decision-making positions within the political landscape.

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