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Continuing the Conversation . . . Some Reflections

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The diverse collection of short reflections included in this Critical Perspectives section looks to continue a conversation — a conversation that played out in the pages of this journal (Elias 2015) regarding the relationship between two strands of feminist international relations scholarship: feminist security studies (FSS) and feminist international political economy (IPE). In this forum, the contributors return to some of the same ground, but in doing so, they bring in new concerns and agendas. New empirical sites of thinking through the nexus between security and political economy from a feminist perspective are explored: war, women's lives in postconflict societies, and international security governance institutions and practices.

Likewise, the discussion presented here picks up themes initially raised (by Allison 2015) in the 2015 Critical Perspectives section relating to broader concerns over how we tell "feminist stories" (Hemming 2005) and the tendency to (re)produce boundaries between fields of study. Maria Stern's contribution in particular asks what it is that compels us to tell these kinds of "stories"; specifically, do such exercises actually serve to create unnecessary and unhelpful boundaries between scholars? Would we do better to explore the gaps rather than (the potential) overlaps in scholarship? Or should we be looking beyond existing scholarly frameworks that have emerged in ways that "discipline" our understanding of the world? I would like to hope that as critically minded scholars, we can reflect on these kinds of warnings — recognizing that the telling of disciplinary stories always involves a politics of inclusion and omission and that these narratives exist within a modes of knowledge production that are characterized both by the political economy of the neoliberal academy (which, as Maria Stern warns, compels us to display our credentials as "agenda-setting" scholars) and forms of coloniality that serve to marginalize the work of scholars from, and especially those located in, the Global South.

The stories we tell, however, are not simply matters of academic reflection on how and why we research what we do, but, as Rahel Kunz points out, these debates unfold beyond the academy in ways that have direct impacts for women's everyday lives. Thus, rival (economic) development and security narratives frame international policy

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interventions into the lives of Nepalese women; narratives that are contested through the life stories of women ex-combatants, revealing "the artificiality of the analytical divisions and the boundary drawing and boxing practices we as feminist scholars often use" (see Kunz's contribution to this forum). The broader warning, then, is that feminist international relations (IR) scholars must remain attentive to the problem of reproducing an artificial dichotomy between "politics" and "economics," or between the "state" and the "market."

Conversations about the relationships between FSS and feminist IPE always pose certain risks. Given the current dominance of work associated with FSS within feminist IR at present (Prügl 2011), it is important that the debate should not be characterized as FSS "bringing in" political economy as a means to straightforwardly solve analytical problems. As the essays by many of the scholars in this and the original Critical Perspectives section clearly demonstrate, engaging feminist political economy serves to disrupt how concepts such as security, war, militarization, postconflict reconstruction, and security governance are understood, even by feminist scholars. At the same time, Anna M. Agathangelou's comments in this section serve as a powerful statement about the need to recognise how the very notion of a global political economy is rooted in violent colonial histories of oppression, dispossession, and exclusion. Core concepts engaged by scholars of IPE (the global market, trade, value) emerge out of contexts of colonial conquest, slavery, and the institutionalization — through colonialization — of unequal relations between and within states. Thus, Agathangelou asks "[w]hat notions of violence are imagined and embodied in the market's and the state's authority practices"?

Moreover, both this and the original Critical Perspectives sections provide us with important insights into how political economists might better engage issues of violence, security, and war in their work. As a feminist political economist seeking to engage not just with fellow feminist scholars but also with critical work in IPE more generally, my long-standing research interests have focused on understanding the productive/reproductive bargains often centered on households that underpin global economic shifts. These include understanding where, how, and under what conditions men and women are employed in globalized industries (Elias 2005, as well as the gendered political economies of migration and displacement that have seen our understandings of the very notion of the household go ever more global; Elias and Gunawardana 2013). Feminist political economy has also

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contributed to understandings of gendered patterns of consumption and production that drive the restructuring of global supply chains (LeBaron 2015), provided understandings of debt, economic restructuring and crisis governance as gendered phenomena (Hozic and True 2016; LeBaron and Roberts 2012; Montgomerie and Tepe-Belfrage 2016), and pointed to the gendered assumptions and biases that underpin predominant understandings of economic growth and development (Rai 2002), as well as the gendered constitution and impacts of economic crises (Hozic and True 2016). In common, these writings tend to share the view that the operation of market economies takes shape through logics of gender, race, and also class that are embedded in the very category of the market. The violence of everyday economic life, that comes to be experienced in the very physical and mental "depletion" of human bodies, discussed by Shirin Rai and I in our contribution to the original critical perspective section (Elias and Rai 2015), can only be understood when markets are recognised as operating within such logics.

Other writers point to the multiple contributions of feminist political economy to understandings of security, violence and war. Now deeply influential, Jacqui True's writings have forensically examined the symbiotic relationships between violence against women and economic restructuring (True 2012). But this is not the only way of linking security and political economy together in feminist analysis. In this section, Suzanne Bergeron, Carol Cohn, and Claire Duncanson, for example, look to the practical benefits that engagement with feminist political economy writings on economic alternatives might bring to postconflict reconstruction efforts. Thus, the authors echo Kunz's concern about the material consequences of seeing postconflict societies in a nonholistic manner and suggest the ways through which critical, and potentially emancipatory, feminist political economic ideas might be mobilized in practice.

What emerges out of most of the contributions to this section is a concern to reflect the ways through which interconnections between forms of (in)security, violence, and war, on the one hand, and modes of political economic reordering need to be recognized as not only interlinked but deeply gendered. Thus, Agathangelou (in this section) argues that "the very distinction between economic violence and noneconomic violence is in crisis." Depoliticized ideals of the self-regulating, global market economy that rationally delivers peace and prosperity *because* it operates outside of politics serve to whitewash current discussions of the global political economy. They systematically

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fail to reveal the continuities in the colonial practices that served to violently bring about the global market economy into our present age. Thinking about how these knowledge practices can be resisted by feminist scholars is important — and reading through these excellent contributions to this section certainly moves the discussion along in important ways — not least by pointing to how and why feminist scholars ought to remain committed to research that resists falling into clear disciplinary "camps." This is especially the case when the core categories and assumptions that underpin the construction of these "camps" reflect gendered and racialized biases and obfuscations that may well serve to maintain the myth that these spheres of politics and economics are somehow separate.

Although in the original discussion, I made the claim that feminist IPE and FSS tended toward quite distinct theoretical and methodological underpinnings — this was not to suggest that this is and should always be the case. I certainly would not want this claim to be written into the "story" of feminist IR in ways that further drive a wedge between us. As Griffin (forthcoming) points out, there is a methodological and theoretical eclecticism to feminist thought in IR that often renders it unintelligible to nonfeminist scholars seeking greater levels of theoretical purity in their analysis. For Enloe (2015) and others in this section, it is through enacting our feminist curiosity that we are best able to move beyond and around and thus overcome the boundaries that new modes of knowledge production tend to produce. This is an important sentiment and one that should continue to drive feminist research agendas in IR.

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