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(Re)framing the Relationship between Discourse and Materiality in Feminist Security Studies and Feminist IPE

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While feminists usually try to ground the meanings that they study, theorizing the mundane or the everyday may very well represent a detour — or even a dead end — if bread-and-butter issues related to the security and economic well-being of ordinary women and men are ignored. What value does feminist theorizing (even if it draws from women's lived experiences) have in war-affected contexts where meeting immediate needs is paramount? At what point does the theorizing of the body under

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such circumstances become a means to satisfying intellectual fetishes? Theorizing the everyday is messy because it has to contend with the immediate social setting in which popular culture is inseparable from the economic materiality of the conditions of oppression.

In response to this dilemma, my aim is to argue for a productive rather than a reductive relationship between Feminist Security Studies (FSS) and Feminist (International) Political Economy (FPE), achieved through a reframed relationship between discursive subjectivity and a structure-centred materiality. I argue for a more systematic feminist analysis that reunites FPE and cultural FSS critiques. This analytical synthesis is based on an understanding of the co-constituted agency of discourse and materiality underpinned by a postcolonial-feminist attention to the politics of space.

After the Cold War, security became a catch-all concept for critical variants of IR, but instead of working against disciplinary fragmentation, "security has settled into each new camp in particularistic ways" (Sylvester 2013, 618). For FSS the main concern is to underscore the conceptual necessity of gender to understanding security. Although scholars have also emphasized the theoretical and methodological diversity of FSS, I contend that there is an implicit hierarchy of sorts when it comes to which critical tradition matters more theoretically or epistemologically — with a subtle but distinct privileging of the discursive as evidenced by the influential contributions of, among others, Judith Butler (1993), Karin Fierke (2013a), Lene Hansen (2006), and Laura Shepherd (2008). FSS thus tends to focus on the gendered, discursive construction of forms of violence with less attention paid to materialities of economic insecurity. In contrast, FPE tends to avoid the security frame and its discursive implications and concentrates more on gender as a social relation of inequality and the gendered effects of capitalism or economic globalization.

Poststructuralist scholarship in FSS insists that the discursive is not privileged over the material and that objects in the material world and human subjects both take their forms and agencies relationally, as they are embedded within particular locations. Similarly, gendered and embodied security is theorized to be the outcome of relational processes — performed in, by, and through those relations. Theory thus makes practice (Foucault 1972). Yet, thinking about our bodies as cultural constructs, produced as objects in security discourse, has a high level of abstraction. Before we can analyze discourse about bodies, shouldn't we first make the bodies from "other worlds," rooted in everyday struggles of

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human insecurity, feature in IR? How is attention to contextualized discourses of individuals or groups without considering their basic needs different from what liberal feminists are doing, namely treating those whose security is at stake as abstract, silent, rights-bearing individuals with no culture? Moreover, for all this talk about interactions between language and matter (as if they were equal), "language" remains the star of the show, as evidenced in Karin Fierke's claim that "embodied security is … fundamentally bound up in the interaction between humans and their material environment, both of which are constituted in and through language" (Fierke 2013b, 16). Theoretically, materiality should gain agency through the fact that it cannot ontologically be separated from discursive forces but in practice discourses treat material practices (bodies) as effects (objects) rather than causes (subjects), and consequently maintain agency (Wilcox 2012). A subtle hierarchy is therefore imposed. Reversing the starting point of the inquiry may succeed in troubling dualistic thinking but does not transcend it. We may have thrown the baby out with the bathwater when we privileged the effects of cultural constructions of gender difference at the expense of the material effects of bodies, economic justice, and security (see Fraser 2013).

There are clearly limits to discursive analysis, especially when it comes to connecting physical insecurity and the materiality of insecurity linked to structures. We must therefore look to the so-called "new materialisms" on posthumanist agency (Connolly 2013), material feminisms (Hughes 2013), and Feminist IPE. Feminist IPE as a diverse body of scholarship studies structures, social practices, and the meanings of the global political economy (Griffin 2010; Peterson 2007). The emphasis falls on specifically gendered bodies while also foregrounding differences that are based upon material and structural inequalities as well as intersectional relations of disadvantage (e.g., gender, institutionalized racism, or ethnicity). In this regard, FPE may find itself closer than FSS to a radical definition of human security as everyday life experiences embedded in global structures of inclusion and exclusion and can keep FSS honest by guiding it back to a concern with everyday (economic) insecurities.

While FPE reminds us to consider the global picture of inequality, a systematic feminist political economy theory of security/conflict/violence is yet to emerge. That said, revisiting the material conditions that influence the socioeconomic production of gender as a relation of inequality is a potentially agency-inducing factor that could complement

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(together with attention to new materialisms) the discursive analytics of FSS, as will be shown in the discussion that follows on sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

FSS research has highlighted the harmful discursive misrepresentations that characterize international attention on rape as a tool of war in the DRC (e.g., Baaz and Stern 2013). However, feminist poststructuralism on its own is not a suitable lens to understand the hybridity of how women in the DRC adapt SGBV discourses to fit in with local cultural practices and to fulfil particular sociomaterial needs within their specific context. One needs a postcolonial feminism for that. To keep the international community interested and maintain the status that funding brings, women's organizations in the eastern DRC tend to emphasize the brutal and extensive nature of SGBV. The outcome is not straightforward — women's victimhood is reinforced — but at the same time, it could mean that so-called "victims" fight back, negotiating the "global patriarchal bargain" from below, simultaneously engaging with discourse and the material aspects of socioeconomic justice and empowerment (Jean-Bouchard 2013).

This case also underlines the necessity to consider a broad range of materialities (i.e., not only those that are discursively produced, but also "conventional" political economy materialities during and after war). During war, rape as a form of gendered accumulation by dispossession was used in Mozambique and Rwanda to strip women of their productive and reproductive labor power, as well as their possessions and access to land and livestock. Postwar, Baaz and Stern (2013) found that Congolese men rape due to a complex mix of cultural and political economy perceptions about masculinity, women as property, and a sense of entitlement to sex as compensation for their loss of status as providers. Borrowing Claudia Card's (2003) term "social death" to describe the cultural shame as a consequence of rape, I argue that the loss of social vitality is not just a loss of identity and meaning for one's existence, but also a deeply material loss of political, economic, and social relations. Both FSS and Feminist IPE should therefore pay more attention to the political economy of social relations and inequalities of the everyday.

In the context of the political economy of violence and (in)security, gendered bodies interact with posthuman materialities in differential ways. Safe transportation, roads, placement of water points, lighting, communications, and energy supplies have specific gendered implications for women. Privatized security infrastructures (high walls

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and compounds to protect aid workers as well as DRC assets such as mines, airports, and telecommunications companies) shift from being metaphors of separation and inequality to becoming "real" infrastructures of rule with gendered impacts.

Beyond the safe world of critique there is potential for FSS and Feminist IPE to engage more meaningfully around issues of spatial politics. I have argued that the perceived semio-material dualism can be used as a rallying point for such analytical synthesis. Figure 1 is an attempt at such a synthesis. Drawing on a postcolonial-feminist understanding of the connectedness between power, discourse, political institutions (structural violence), and practices within a particular space, I propose the FRA2MES acronym:

It combines three elements: a postcolonial-feminist emphasis on resistance to particular representations (politics of identity/discourse) (FR); an emphasis on materialities (of matter and socioeconomic relations) related to the political economy of violence and peacebuilding (MES); and an A^2 located at the apex to signify the importance of a shared and squared agency, as it seeks to integrate both anatomical/affective (body/emotion) and analytical/attentive (mind/cognitive) dimensions.

I am not suggesting that feminist analyses should include these elements equally, but the acronym does propose a particular sequence. Starting with feminist analyses of position, gendered discourses of representation should encompass the full gamut of human security discourses, globally and locally. Discourses of resistance from below, as in the DRC, bring discursive materialities closer to analyses of condition. The sequencing

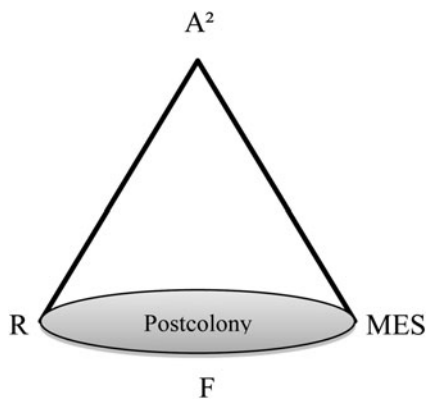


FIGURE 1. FRA^{2}MES for semio-material synthesis.

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of posthumanist, economic, and social materialities (MES) is also deliberate, as it compels a systematic shift from matter (M) to the materiality of economic scarcity (E) and back to the sociomateriality of cultural relations (S), thus completing the circle. The envisaged "end state" is a "thick" agency of body and mind as they interact with structures and objects.

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A Tale of Two Feminisms in International Relations? Feminist Political Economy and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda

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A photo depicting Russian President Vladimir Putin in chivalrous fashion, placing his coat around the shoulders of China's first lady at an Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) dinner made headline news around the world in November 2014 (Allen-Ebrahimian 2014). Surely this is not the serious stuff of international politics, IR colleagues commented in social media forums? But from a feminist perspective that pays attention to the pervasive gendering of IR, the image was not at all surprising or trivial. Indeed, the gender symbolism of the image reveals the patriarchal foundations of international politics. Putin, for his part, personifies the linkages between the figure of the male provider — at the heart of global economic governance and meetings like APEC — and the figure of the male protector of "womenandchildren" (Enloe 1993) — at the heart of the security state system.

Feminist political economy (FPE) analysis reveals the analogy between male heads of households and the masculine state. Both equally control the lives of dependents under the guise that it is in their best interests. Their unequal power is violent, but the violence is masked by virtue and love (Young 2003, 6). Such analysis helps to explain the prevalence of men's violence against women in the private household as well as the male dominance of state-sanctioned war and conflict. Modern forms of patriarchal households themselves were formed through the force of industrialization and regime of accumulation in and for the formation of warring sovereign states (Mies 1986; Peterson 1992). However, the gendered division of labor between economic production in the market and social reproduction in the household has obscured men's violence vis à vis dependents inside households compared with men's violence outside vis à vis other "enemy" groups. Through a feminist political

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