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International Studies

**THE COLOR OF FEMINISM IN INTERNATIONAL
RELATIONS: AN ANALYSIS OF THE ANDROCENTRIC
AND WHITE PERSPECTIVE ON THE MAIN THEORIES
OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS. CASE STUDY
FEMINISM IN SOUTH KOREAN SOCIETY**

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DEDICATED TO:

To us, women, who have struggled, endured, and
confronted the patriarchy in many ways, from many
different places.

May our desires to change the world never cease.

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The Most Beautiful Moments are Yet To Come.

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The color of Feminism in International Relations: an analysis of the androcentric and white perspective on the main theories of International Relations. Case study Feminism in South Korean society

Abstract

Feminism in academia and specifically in International Relations has historically been overshadowed by the presence of mainstream IR (realism and liberalism) whose main focus has revolved around the state and the constant stance of war as inevitable. This view of the international realm has led women's struggles, critiques, and participation to be unseen in world politics. Usual

ly, traditional theoretical approaches of IR have assumed that women have not had a significant or symbolic impact on international affairs, this has continuously diminished the opportunity to introduce feminist theories as "dominant" or "standard" to analyze international affairs such as different Women's Movements and feminist dynamics that occur around world politics. This work explores three key elements to understand feminism from other ways of envisioning and articulating life: the androcentric nuances within malestream IR theories, the critiques and struggles of feminist theory towards the conventional stream of thought in IR, and the feminist dynamics in South Korean society. These elements will lead to the ultimate goal to prove how inaccurate and biased mainstream IR is when approaching and trying to asses dynamics unparallel to a Western stream of thought. Leading us to explore from a more accurate perspective the true colors of feminism in South Korean society.

Keywords

- Feminism, malestream IR, women, gender, decoloniality.



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“Man is defined as a human being, and a woman as a female. Whenever she behaves as a human being, she is said to imitate the male”

Simone de Beauvoir

1. Introduction

The feminist theoretical basis within International Relations (IR)¹ has historically been marginalized, and women’s presence from day-to-day decision-making, especially on the political field, has been near invisible. Usually, traditional theoretical approaches of IR have assumed that women have not had a significant or symbolic impact on international affairs, this has continuously diminished the opportunity to introduce feminist theories as “dominant” or “standard” to analyze international affairs. When we are trying to dissect the field of International Relations, we usually come across concepts that delineate its functioning and understanding. Concepts such as “nation-state”, “war”, “peace”, “security”, “anarchy”, are often referred as “natural” and “given”; however, these ideas have shown to nuance and segregate certain matters within the field and society itself. It is important to understand that the means and words we use to define the International realm shapes its course of action, its entanglement with different aspects of everyday life, and consequently, the way academia and knowledge is constructed to understand the ever-changing world. Mainstream IR has had such a huge impact within the field of IR, not only building the blueprint from which the doctrine was created, but to the extent that actors (mainly states) see world politics. The comprehension that mainstream IR ideas are gender-based, and possess an abysmal bias towards a masculinized and white perspective is vital to dissect the question surrounding feminist IR as quoted by *Cynthia Enloe*: Where are the women?² Feminist theories have often been rejected within the mainstream IR field, since it criticized the normative and “natural” state of IR. Usually these “*alternative approaches*” posed a reduction to the credibility of dominant approaches within the field: realism, liberalism. Feminist impact is undeniably important, since it challenges the gendered framework in which IR has strived in.

It is important to note that “color” as referring to the title “color of feminism” is not related to segregational approaches or race related terms, but rather, to bring attention to the different nuances feminism and feminist IR can and should be perceived from as more than just as a movement, and more than just as an alternative theory. We refer to “color” with the purpose to bring attention to the different tonalities inside a world that has been constructed as black and white. The purpose of this work is to expose the intrinsic androcentric and white perspective that has shaped the field of International Relations and how this happens to be associated with the strong limitations women experience inside the political realm globally and specifically in South Korea. This analysis seeks not only to question the masculine ideas that take place inside a field that dictates how the world works or how we “should” accept it, but seeks to challenge said set of ideas world politics still revolves around. Following this vein of events, this study will be divided into three sections that aim to further explain the overall theme: the first section will dwell inside the Realist and Liberal perspectives of IR, with the purpose of getting a grasp on its core ideas and behaviours that are intrinsically androcentric such as the concepts of the state, war, national security and other hegemonic masculine values linked to the development of IR as a field; the second

¹ From this point, IR will be used to refer to International Relations as a discipline

² Cynthia Enloe “Where are the women?” “*Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*” is a common reference for feminist theorist to question and problematize the invisibility of women’s struggles and concerns from malestream IR.

section will discuss some of the main issues and struggles feminist IR faces when being introduced to the field, such as biased approaches of this so-called “alternative” approach, as well as the problem of the “non-white” denomination when addressing IR feminist methodologies and ontologies; the last section will analyze core elements that limit women in South Korea; through interviews with knowledgeable professors and students, we seek to understand a close perspective regarding feminism in South Korea. The last section will determine how malestream IR heavily limits the understanding of feminism in other areas of the world such as South Korea; this will lead to the discussion in which we will focus on non-mainstream approaches such as decolonial approaches that would help us understand feminist dynamics on the Global South and its contrast with malestream approaches.

1.1 Objectives

This work will be divided into three sections that will further analyze the main themes and topics related to International Relations’ nuances regarding feminism. Firstly, we will analyze the main theories of International Relations (realism and liberalism) and their entanglements with androcentric nuances at their roots; additionally, we will analyze the main issues feminist theorists face in the introduction to IR regarding the notion of “national security”, the non-white denomination and the later feminist approach to security theory (FST); finally, we will understand the impact of the biased IR nuances when approaching South Korea’s feminist movement that will introduce us to new frameworks and perspectives from which we can understand women’s movements.

1.2 Theoretical framework

Within this context, we approach this work from the understanding that the academic field of modern International Relations (IR) as the discipline formed in 1919 with the purpose to make the world a better place after the atrocities of World War I (Smith et al., 2020). There are various discussions and critiques of the true origins of the discipline, such as the problematization of the roots of IR as being set in 1648 or 1919. Carvalho (2011) problematized the foundational “myth” of the discipline and possesses a critique towards the true motivation on setting the beginning of the discipline on those set dates, since not only entails a lack of concern for other global events that arises before 1648 and in between 1648-1919, but also since this uncriticized idea can be “highly detrimental to the discipline and its ability to make sense of the subject matter that it purports to have unique expertise in”. Carvahlo also argues that setting 1648 and 1919 as the set date of the beginning of the discipline allows for major authorities to pose major interest and focus on the inner “sovereign nation-state” characteristic, something to be problematized later by feminist theorists.

Additionally, we follow the Realist interpretation from Tim Dunne : “Each state actor is explaining the dynamics of the inter-state system, it is responsible for ensuring their own well-being and is in even deeper water in providing a persuasive survival” (2020). We highlight three core realist elements (statism, survival, and self-help). We will also separate the understanding of the economic theory of liberalism from the IR theoretical approach to liberalism, which is described by Tim Dunne as the understanding of “the need for collective action, and the importance to attach to the coordinating role of international organizations” (Smith et al., 2020). Some core elements of the theory are based on the need to take into account other actors that do not necessarily correlate to the state-normative such as International Organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations, etc.

To further understand the strong limitations of mainstream IR, we will focus our attention on the active and tenacious interest to approach national and international concerns from a realist-positivist perspective as stated by (Tickner & Sjoberg, 2011). The term “mainstream” within the subject field of IR has been usually linked to the study of theoretical perspectives that reflect and identify with the West, specifically with the rising Anglo-American world. This also encouraged the production of non-western knowledge that would be excluded from the discussion. Within this context, we will use ‘malestream’ (a term periodically used in feminist critiques) as a way to refer to normative and traditional IR (Young, 2004).

As noted by (Smith et al., 2020), feminism can be defined as fundamentally rooted in an analysis of the global subordination of women, which can occur economically, politically, physically, and

socially. The author notes that feminism encourages parity and justice for all women, but it is also an analysis of power dynamics and their effects on women's experiences. Feminist methodologies were introduced within the field of IR to show the absence and women's marginalization from the dynamics of International Relations, the assumptions that shape the global realm, and the gender-blind approach from traditional mainstream IR theories (Scheinflug et al., 2017).

Feminist theory has sought to question and pose a critique towards basic assumptions inside IR, such as the conception of a given state, power, and international security; this has had indeed a huge impact on the experiences of social behaviors of women. (Jones, 1996). Internationally, the critiques towards gender in International Relations have denounced that the "feminist" critiques towards IR and its blinded spectrum as inherently masculine are not valid, however, denying the "male-dominant" aspect of some of the vital IR theories such as realists or liberalists, and restricting us to show the patriarchal norms of competition, exploitation and self-aggrandizement work on the daily basis of IR (Jones, 1996). Defining feminism however might be ambiguous since it comprehends diverse historical and social contexts, however, as explained by Ferree and Martin (1995) feminism can be understood as a movement that does not stick to a single strategic path, because it is multilayered that comprehends various forms over time, in various socioeconomic and political contexts, between women of diverse racial, ethnic, class and age.

Anne Tickner asserted back in 1992 that "international politics is a man's world and that few women pursue the discipline of International Relations" (1). This is strongly correlated to what Ticker analyzes as the mainstream (realist) figure within traditional IR theory, Hans Morgenthau, and his approach to global politics. Ticker's aim was definitely disclose the masculinized character of political realism and its core principles (1992). She also argues that feminist IR focuses on a divergent methodological frameworks that continuously challenge the androcentric nuances inside the discipline" (Tickner, 2005). These theoretical debates allow us to dive deeper into the main theme of this text.

Within international politics, it is necessary to understand how feminist theory seriously impacts the inclusion of women in global politics, especially when we try to approach other cultures and dynamics. The women's movement in South Korea presents different perspectives and dynamics that are usually disregarded and overshadowed by western practices and stream of thought. The constant towards critique feminist ideology, followed by a belief that the term is synonymous with radicalism and misandry, is central to anti-feminist discourses (Hines et al., 2021). This not only has serious implications for the participation and involvement of women in Korea but also the inequities presented within Korean society have led to double dynamics perceived as "preferential treatment" towards women when "society's efforts to combat gender inequality are interpreted as creating a punitive environment for young men. This predicates, (...) the perception of men that they are "victims of feminism" (Hines et al., 2021). South Korean context and practiced ideologies will help us better understand these elements.

2. State of the art

2.1 Androcentric nuances within traditional International Relation theories:

It is widely discussed that the core roots of International Relations had been set in 1648 with the Treaty of Westphalia, when the ideas of `sovereign nation-states` and the so-called anarchical system³ was established as dominant in understanding global politics (Carhvallo, 2011). The year of 1919 is also known as the beginning of IR as a discipline, when itself was "exploded into existence with IR scholars becoming for the very first time enthused with theorizing about the international" (Carvahlo, 2011, 736). When approaching International Relations, realism is referred to as a predominant theory that has established a set of intrinsic and innate ideas when analyzing world politics. They have focused on "what is" rather than on "what should be". The foundations of the theory itself are found in the older tradition of realist thought with figures such as Thucydides (c. 460-406 bc), Niccoló Machiavelli (1469 - 1527), Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), these remarkable traditionalists recognize that "International politics is a continuous struggle for power" (Smith et al., 2020). Realists see war and

³ In International Relations, anarchy is referred to as the lack of a higher authority on the socially constructed international scheme.

conflict as the only logical response to any international affair in order to maintain a balance of power provided by states. Political realism is often understood to be the oldest theory and therefore, the dominant theory of IR. Realist traditions are set to understanding that any status of international politics is parallel and related to a state in war in which actors' main concern is their own security (Smith et al., 2020). They bring special attention to the ever-present possibility of war, thus political actors need to be observant and qualified (even if this means to opt for lethal force) to ensure their own survival (Smith et al., 2020). This approach to the international realm is also understood within realist theory as *raison d'état*,⁴ and according to Friedrich Meinecke, it "tells the statesman what he must do to preserve the health and strength of the state" (Meinecke, 1957, 1). Realists define the state as principal and key actor of international politics, and thus, its survival can never be guaranteed since the use of force is justifiable in the state of anarchy. Machiavelli in *The Prince* (Machiavelli, 1532), argues that what defines "human nature" later associated with the Realist perspective, is that men are "ungrateful, fickle, simulators and deceivers, avoiders of danger, greedy for gain" he then also asseverated that it is better to be feared than loved; a prince should act like both a lion and a fox (649).

Another prominent character from the Realist wave is Rousseau, he placed his realist tradition in the need of forming a social contract which would represent the general will and sovereignty of the people. He deliberates that this is the only option for which authority and power could be deemed legitimate. In fact, Rousseau's approaches are important when analyzing neorealists perspectives when they emphasize the state of anarchy and the lack of central authority being the rules of the international realm rather than the state of nature (Smith et al., 2020). Thucydides insights are also important since they place important insight on root ideas of realism. It is then argued that it is the "defined" human nature, motivations of fear, honor and self-interest that further explain why international politics is necessarily an approach from power (Smith et al., 2020).

The Hobbesian engagement with the global realm also plays a crucial role in defining modern IR. In one of his most emblematic works "The Leviathan" (1651) introduces the idea that man's natural condition was "warre of every man against every man" all united and in fear of a stronger power: the "leviathan", all with the conclusion that the ultimate goal of man's struggle was the "common power to feare". From this, we further understand three elements intrinsic to realist theorists and to the field of IR itself: self-help, survival and state-centric. Self-help understood as the responsibility of each state to ensure their well-being, survival and security from the anarchical system. Survival refers to the dubious state of the international realm in which the endurance of the state cannot be guaranteed so it is in the interests of each to perpetuate their own existence. State-centric or statism indicates the given idea that the state is the only legitimate representation of the collective will of the people. As defined by Max Weber (1918), "State is the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory" (45).

In 1948, after the Second World War, important introspection towards a new "classical" realism began with Hans Morgenthau. He approaches realism by defining international politics as the constant struggle for power (Morgenthau, 1948, 25). For Morgenthau, humans are in constant need to increase their own power, and this comprehends the ultimate goal of every statesman. He defines this as humankind's lust for power, in which the constant need to keep the status quo, increase power (imperialism), and demonstrate power (prestige) are the ultimate goals. The constant need to define the international realm as the anarchical system in which states only seek power and survival did take upon the new wave of realism: neorealism and structural realism in 1979 as well as neoclassical realism (1998).

Robert Keohane, an illustrious neoliberalist also contributes to the feminist perspective with his work "International Relations Theory: Contributions of a Feminists Standpoint" in 1989. His viewpoint holds that grasping feminist theories and methodologies into IR should find scholarly affinities with the institutionalist perspective on IR since it stresses power as the capacity to act in show, diffuse as well as unambiguous correspondence, and the job of organizations as well as orders" (Keohane, 1989). He assesses feminism as a "key" element for IR, however, it needs to be guided and directed towards a more malestream conceptualization of IR parallel to liberalism.

⁴ *Raison d'état*: reason of state, a diplomatic or political reason. Translated from french

Within the traditional field of IR, the question and the interest in security issues have always revolved around matters of war, and peace that whirl around a system of sovereign and self-interested nation-states. This focus has been intrinsically directed towards concerns of military strategy and securing the boundaries of a 'given' state. Core elements found at the root of realism are important to understanding the perpetual need to see security and the state as the main interests of world affairs. When understanding security, realists depict world affairs as "the realm where self-help is the primary motivation; states must provide security for themselves because no other agency or actor can be counted on to do so" (Walt, 2010). Following these sets of ideas, there is an intrinsic provision that security is entrusted to the state itself. According to (Walt, 2010) security puts "particular emphasis on the preservation of the state's territorial integrity and the physical safety of its inhabitants". Modern takes on realism had also placed special attention on these elements "the presence of multiple states in anarchy renders the security of each of them problematic and encourages them to compete with each other for power and/or security" (Walt, 2)

In contrast, according to Tim Dunne in (Smith et al., 2020, 118), liberalism emphasizes the identity of the state and how this further determines its outward orientation. Liberals attribute the causes of war to the failure of the balance of power, and ought to seek collective security. Liberals seek to project many different values of order, liberty, justice, and peace into International Relations, and they stress the importance of institutions to protect and nurture liberal values. Liberals advocate for interventionist foreign policies and non-intervention. They also emphasize the principle of self-determination, however, "What would happen to newly created minorities who felt no allegiance to the self-determination state? Could a democratic process adequately deal with questions of identity? Who has to decide what community should be self-determining?" (Smith et al., 2020, 121). The intrinsic liberal aspect of some western institutions "perpetuates structural inequality and generates new patterns of dominance and dependence. Locke's notions of the social contract remain crucial and the most enduring characteristics of liberal thought.

Feminist IR and mains critiques towards malestream IR

Feminist strategies within the field of political sciences had faced constant struggles to introduce a new perspective to the study of global politics. These views seek to analyze the different "given" and "natural" aspects that have shaped International Relations as a discipline. Feminist outlooks do not only entail a portion to study IR but a "way to study" *IR*, since the discipline itself was born within the endless efforts to bring awareness to the struggle of women in a masculine world. These frames of reference have shaped approaches to International Relations from feminist perspectives, such as the constantly questionable elements of global politics: power and security.

As it has been stated before, there is vast discussion over the influence and the perspective of feminist approaches regarding mainstream IR. Feminist IR was born and raised within the context of subverting ideas of gender, masculinity, and femininity and emphasizing the intrinsic gendered power relations within practice and research of IR (Sjoberg, 2010). When analyzing these new outlooks that have been recognized in the academic field, scholars recognize that "gender need not overlap with biological sex; actors become gendered whenever masculine or feminine characteristics are ascribed to them" (Remkus, 2012, 1). This results in the masculinization of roles within politics in IR, or the feminization of social oppression (Remkus, 2012). According to Sjoberg, Feminist theorists do collide on the idea that gender is not something that affects just marginalized individuals or groups, feminist visibilized that a genderless study of affairs can finalize detrimental results for actors involved (2011). The author also highlights that gender can be present in institutions, organizations, and states, and that feminist theory seeks to study the gendered distribution of power. In fact, one can argue over the strong presence of Eleanor Roosevelt during the making of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in which figures discuss the importance of a female perspective during the process, however, this "female" presence is usually referred to as a sign of peace, reconciliation, unity, truce. Once again, as discussed by feminist IR, this demonstrated the secluded image and role women should have in the political realm.

Feminist critiques reveal the contradictions and distortions that are deeply rooted within the patriarchal realist practice. As mentioned by Spike Peterson and Anne Runyan in 1981, "the radical future of realism lies in the articulation of alternative accounts of reality, which realism – as it is presently constituted – is unable to see and which lead to a narrowness and impoverishment of its own

concepts and practices” (67) Feminist approaches are seen to provide more complex, richer, and open-ended alternatives to analyzing and understanding the social, economic, and political field of IR (Runyan & Peterson, 1981, 67). Phyllis Chesler as cited by (Runyan & Peterson, 1991, 68) describes how realism postulates a conception of “nature” and “reality” that seeks to establish itself as “natural” and “real”. He argues that:

Nothing, indeed, is less neutral than this apparent neutrality; nothing is less “natural” than this frontier which is supposed to separate “the real” from “the unreal” and which in fact delimits only the inside and the outside of an ideological circle: an inside which is “inclusive” of “reason and men, ie., “reality” and “nature”; and an outside which is “exclusive” of madness and women, ie., the “supernatural” and the “unreal” (1991, 67).

Indeed, realist postulations are directed toward a double dynamic in which seeks for an “ordered and reasonable domestic society against a disordered, unreasonable (mad or MAD), anarchical international society” (Runyan & Peterson, 1991, 68). The author argues as well how women have no place within the narrative of anarchical interstate relations, since “women” as an object to study, “is feminine, domesticated, and inconsequential to the matters of the reality of the public sphere and world of men and states” (Runyan & Peterson, 1991, 69). The authors argue as well that “The patriarchal construction of “women” as the site of disorder, which must be treated and tamed to conform to the dictates of “femininity” as a controlled identity, haunts the realist formulation of man/state vs mad/states (1991). Under the paradigm of realism, the outsider, the madness, and *women* are conceived as the enemy, and it needs to be controlled by the man/state (69). Realist dualist assumptions such as peace-war, rich-poor, men-women are patriarchal in character, since according to theorists, they reveal the “true colors”, the “reality” of the world. Realist discourse contains only a partial element of reality, it “represents” only those and that of a reality that privileges the already-established status quo. Said dynamics are also enhanced since the academic field of IR is populated by white privileged Western men, which renders the impossibility of them to create text and practice or discourse that could actually represent “woman” (70).

The Man Question has been present within feminist critiques with important contributions from Zalewski and Parpart’s works in 2020, as they determine that “the global political landscape was very much a man’s world - one seemingly overwhelmingly populated by men and dominated by masculine aspirations (Zalewski & Parpart, 2020). Cynthia Enloe (1989) argues that political figures, authorities and governments, for the most part of history and even before the official kickoff of feminist IR, resembled “men’s clubs”, and Zalewski notes that theories and practices of IR seemed to be unsettled and un-moved by “alternative” insights about gender and the international (Zalewski & Parpart, 2020). Cohn, a feminist theorist who approached first-hand the collective mainly discourse of “nuclear weapons” on the year of 1987, when the Cold War was at its peak, discusses how authorities within these decision-making tables usually refer to nuclear weapons and American military dependence on them as “irresistible because you get more bang for the buck” (8), she mentions how masculinity shapes nuclear strategic thinking, and how this reflects on the US nuclear weapons policy.

Feminist IR perspectives denominate these dynamics as *androcentric*, which, as mentioned by (Runyan & Peterson, 1981) sets the academic discipline and its practice as dominated by the perspective of men, specifically white and western. This has had the outcome of creating a biased understanding of the international realm, in which masculinity and masculinized practices become natural and usually approached as “objective” (Zalewski & Parpart, 2020). “Feminists critique IR’s masculinist biases by demonstrating how it renders women (and others) silent and makes hegemonic forms of masculinity invisible” (Remkus, 2012, 2). For feminist IR, it is vital and fundamental for the discipline to encompass women in the study of international affairs. This assessment is not only crucial because it could help to better understand international politics, but also because it indicates that questioning how the conduct of international concerns has constantly revolved around men controlling women’s lives (Enloe, 1989, 4).

(Keller, 1987) suggests that feminists, in general, are doubtful over the probability of seeking a universal and objective groundwork for knowledge as usually stated by malestream observations; thus, since knowledge is socially constructed and is imparted by language, one should constantly question its objectivity of it. She then proceeds to explain how objectivity, usually tailored in modern Western

culture, is then associated with masculinity. All of these processes take place in a system that values and associates objectivity with masculinity as defined within the traditional scientific framework. Scientific approaches, according to Keller, seek the need to separate the subject from the object, all of this “based on the need for control; hence objectivity becomes associated with power and domination” (Keller, 1987). In the field of modern realism, control is an important element that, as the author mentions, is intrinsically present in Morgenthau’s work on Political Realism. Indeed, he reaches the theme based on what he calls, the political man “a beast completely lacking in moral restraints” (1948, 60). The man, just like the state, is set to behave according to morals and values, however, he does mention that any state who “behaves morally in international politics are doomed to failure because of the immoral actions of others” (60). This then leaves explicit the opportunity for the state to behave immorally to an acceptable extent. According to realists, this depicts the elemental character of a state: to ensure its survival by maximizing its power and always being willing to fight. Tickner highlights the Hobbesian approach to global politics, human nature, and the need to remark on the lacking presence of women inside these viewpoints.

(Kronsell, 2006) on a contemporary analysis of the current theme, argues that the manner to uncover the dominant and hegemonic masculine lenses is not from male voices/approaches but rather, by focusing on women’s experiences themselves. This, in the exclusive intent of making visible what's beyond the malestream path and as for women, what has been missing from the study. Hilary Charlesworth argues as well that:

Feminist perspectives have been remarkably slow to influence theories of both international relations and international law. In the last twenty years, many areas of inquiry have been scrutinized by scholars insisting that issues of gender must be taken seriously. These scholars have described the masculine cast of the "objectivity" claimed by various disciplines and encouraged a rethinking of accepted canons. The disciplines of political science and law generally have sustained strong feminist challenges, but their international wings have maintained a lengthy immunity to the debate (1993, 440)

Charlesworth also attributes this absence to debate since it is as related to the near minimal presence of women practitioners in the area of political science at the time, and the irrelevance of gender in the study of state-centrism and sovereignty.

When analyzing the traditional notion of the state, Hilary makes an important insight on the role of the state, sovereignty, and security usually deemed as natural and logical within political sciences. The author then argues that “while the sovereign state system is complicit in structural violence against women, states also offer important forms of protection for women” (1993, 441). These dynamics offer a new vision of the portrayal of the power relations of the state. She also has insights on the perspective of Rebecca Grant (1992) and the role of women in the military: Female soldiers become a classification challenging to decipher in women's activist grant. There is a sample of force and maybe a string of illumination in the possibility of ladies acting external their mingled ladylike personality. The feminist premise, in any case, that values like consideration and affectivity have a particular spot as far as ladies can tell.

One key element to take into account when analyzing feminist IR is the different critiques towards National Security discourses proclaimed and recorded by malestream IR. Some of their visions consist on creating a FST (Feminist Security Theory), and they propose new observations and notions regarding the forgotten elements of National Security discourses. These theories have turned into four theoretical moves, that not only question the supposedly non-existence and irrelevance of women in international security politics, but also questions the extent to which women are secured by the state, and how women themselves are linked with peace (Blanchard, 2003). Blanchard’s proposal aims to problematize the naturalness of the approach to security from a realist lense, by understanding how the inevitability of war in the state of anarchy and the constant need to seek security are elements intrinsically connected to the dominant elite, white, male and patriarchal discourse of realist IR. This, according to the author, has undoubtedly shaped IR and the overarching events on the international dimension.

Blanchard (2003) explains how feminist scholarship argue the exclusion of women from foreign policy decision making and from international politics with the argument that “women’s voices are

inauthentic” as argued back by Ann Tickner (1992). IR traditional scholarship is concerned centrally on the study of Man, State and War as approached by Waltz in 1959. Ann Tickner’s contributions delve on a gender-sensitive perspective that takes into account the dysfunctionalities of IR security concepts. She explains in 1992 how “realism stresses rationality, strength, power, autonomy, and independence, qualities as associated with foreign policy and military affairs as they are with masculinity”, she also suggests “how ostensibly objective realist national security studies attempt to explain the causes of war through a discourse that privileges a view based on hegemonic masculinity” (1291).

Ann Tickner (1988) also claims that the discipline of IR is based upon a masculine world view and she proposes an examination on six nuclear elements of Hans Morgenthau's principles of Political Realism, and establishes a Feminist Reformulation that can help to better understand world politics from a feminist perspective. This outlook, according to the author, allows for a more accessible IR to women. Some of these principles as argued by Tickner (1988) are:

1. Politics, like society in general, is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature which is unchanging; therefore, it is possible to develop a rational theory that reflects these objective laws (1988).
2. The main signpost of political realism is the concept of interests defined in terms of power which infuses rational order into the subject matter of politics, and thus makes the theoretical understanding of politics possible. Political realism stresses the rational, objective and unemotional (1988).
3. Realism assumes that interest defined as power is an objective category which is universally valid but not with a meaning that is fixed once and for all. Power is the control of man over man (1988).⁵

Tickner argues that this overlook of the international system is based upon biased assumptions about human nature that end up privileging masculinity. She defines masculinity and femininity as categories that have been socially tailored and vary from place to place (1988). She states that set characteristics aligned with masculinity and femininity are stereotypical.

Linda Zerilli shows a different perspective regarding critiques towards mainstream IR and liberalism. She asserts that “even a cursory look at the history of liberalism shows that it has often enough been an obstacle to the very thing that its fundamental commitment to equal liberty would seem to promote” (Zerilli, 2015, 355). The constant exclusion of women from the so-called “social contract” acclaimed by liberals deepens inequalities and includes women holding traditional gender roles, and the dominance of the male over women (Zerilli, 2015, 356). This author also critiques John Stuart Mill's approach to Political Economy:

Indeed, so captivated have classical liberal thinkers been by the “natural” social and cultural logic of binary gender differences that even John Stuart Mill – whose fierce contestation of male power led him to advocate state intervention into “the domestic life of domestic tyrants” – did not begin to question domestic life organized around the gendered division of labor (355).

The author emphasized how liberal theory and liberals remain curiously blind, indifferent to the gendered structures of the international realm, of the structure of the family.

The vastly disproportionate share of women's labor in the creation of those subjects is largely ignored by contemporary liberal theorists of all stripes, despite the fact that it has a significant impact on women's chances of becoming independent human beings capable of exercising liberalism's *raison d'être*, namely, liberty as asserted by Linda Zerilli in 2015. She questions how in the international realm, even though proclaimed as standard, Liberalism shows itself as a theoretical and political dead end for certain feminists because it cannot call into question the private/public dichotomy through which the hidden gendered division of labor lives (Zerilli, 2015). When discussing John Locke's argument over the state of nature, she points out “a state of perfect freedom to order their actions, and dispose of their possessions and persons, (...) within the bounds of the law of nature, without asking

⁵ *Morgenthau's six principles of Political Realism as cited by Ann Tickner on “Hans Morgenthau's Principles of Political Realism: A Feminist Reformulation” (1988).*

leave, or depending upon the will of any other man” (Locke, 1689). Feminist IR usually refers to this statement as being limited, since it regards the free possession of persons to fulfill a man’s purpose, without any interference.

International Relations, Feminist activism, and a historical approach to South Korean women’s movement:

The discipline of International Relations is still largely absent from the dynamics in the Asia Pacific, especially feminist theorists and feminist approaches to gender, power dynamics, and power relations. Some particular ways of thinking and approaching events have been constantly rejected since the very intrinsic practices that have shaped the realm of politics in Asia have been “dominated by masculine, state-centric and neorealist analyses” (Singh, 2017, 149). This allows us to discuss how South Korean feminism has strategically opened up new critiques, new practices, and new academia that serves immensely in this study. Why is it vital to analyze the intrinsic androcentric gaze on malestream IR? It is important because every experience shapes feminism. Mikki Kendall mentions this on *Hood feminism: notes from the women that a movement forgot*: “My feminism doesn’t center on those who are comfortable with the status quo because ultimately that road can never lead to equity for girls like me” (2020, 9). Zalewski mentions this as well when she links realist theory and the “expected” male gaze towards global politics when she mentions how realist principles, as asserted by Morgenthau, conceive the world from a privileged and masculinized lens that focuses primarily on objectivity, rationality, and the unemotional of the international realm (Zalewski, 2019). In this section, we stress how taking into account every perspective matters in the construction of a feminist understanding of world affairs.

As Cynthia Enloe mentioned in 1989, everyday politics such as women's experiences within different contexts are usually diminished and neglected from their understanding within much larger contexts. Lived experiences, labor, and identities are shaped through a gendered lens all around the world, especially in places such as South Korea. Analyzing these dynamics allows us to dissect diverse nuances and differences that are wrongly explained through malestream IR and that offer just a portion to study. This also sets a place to learn and understand the struggle of being a woman in the international realm, but also, to distinguish the different experiences of women all around the world and how this shapes International Relations and feminism per se in countries such as in South Korea. As mentioned before, many of the illustrious Feminist IR theorists have analyzed and dissected diverse elements that limit IR as a field of study, especially the realist and liberalist theorization of the international sphere. The epistemological challenges posed by thinkers such as Tickner and her problematization of security and state-centric dynamics, as well as Enloe’s critique to the restricted and masculinized perspective of security and high politics, or the gendered language in international relations as discussed by Cohn (Singh, 2017, 152). Even though the prominence and wide range of study in the field, women are still secluded from different narratives within the milieu of Asia Pacific. Malestream IR not only limits the understanding of feminism in the global north, but it also secludes the experiences and different ontological approaches to gender dynamics in the global south, especially since it disregards the impact of the historical context.

Feminism in South Korea is known best for being the origin of the women’s rights movement. Historically, Korean society contains deep entanglements with hierarchical division and a patriarchal structure of family and society. Another element that further explains the different dynamics of Korean society is Confucianism ideology, derived from the Japanese colonial tradition which is largely based on the obedience of women towards men. As (Palley & Gelb, 1994) asserted, Confucian ideas were deeply engrained within Korean society in which gender discrimination and subordination were not only justified by men but also recognized by women (1990). After the colonial rule and with the new industrialization and economic growth that was taking place in Korean society, new challenges were met. Even though new perspectives and economic changes were happening indoors, gender discrepancy was still latent. Women were no longer prohibited from doing economic activity, however conditions usually were met with poor working conditions as well as a noticeable wage gap and sex, these sexual harassment within the workspace discouraged women from working (Hwa Soon, 1987). Sexual violence is a significant element when understanding the feminist movement and different feminist academic approaches. South Korean contemporary feminists are largely the result of the struggle and battles of women from the nineteenth century and beyond. As Kyungja Jung (2014) argues, women's movements outside the industrialized

countries have “surfaced and advanced contrary to what Western countries usually claim as being the decline of it”.

Many are the challenges faced by Korean society during and after the colonial rule of Japan that have strongly shaped women and the study of gender in South Korea. In the nineteenth century “The Korean women's movement began to take place as part of the national liberation movement under Japanese colonial rule” (Jung, 2014). During the Japanese colonial period, Korean intellectuals who privileged by the male elite stretched the importance of women's liberation and education, however, this position was strongly attached to nationalist ideas that placed women as mothers only. In the 1920s, Women's movements began taking place with the National Liberation Movement which was later opted by the colonial government. Within this context and with a sole focus on the Korean War between 1950 and 1953 and the partition of the Korean peninsula, women's struggles and needs have been outweighed by the rapid state-centric industrialization, political balance, and economic prosperity (Jung, 2014). The historical context during this decade defined the lead that the Korean Women's movement would take in order to fight for women's rights. Indeed, during this period of time, The women's movement fought for “national liberation and the modernization, re-unification, and democratization of Korean Society” (Cho Soon-Kyung, 1994 as Cited by Kyungja Jung, 2014). During the early periods of the women's movement, the focus was rather on the democratization than on the advancement of women's rights, it was not until the 90s when the gender perspective began to take place as well within these approaches (Jung, 2014, 15). The colonial rule has a legacy on many aspects of people's lives in South Korea, the society was composed primarily of multiple layers of Japanese colonialism and US neo-imperial domination which left the crumbs of strict systems and political infrastructures. Following this vein of events, history also attributes the role of the US military machinery to the lack of opportunities for South Koreans “to decolonize in the true sense of the world” (Kim & Choi, 1998, 3). These events were also enhanced by the traditional neo-confucian philosophy that helped explain South Korea's androcentric nationalism. Feminists' practice in South Korea has established symbolic challenges to the social-political contexts.

Within International Relations, women's fights and struggles have been broadly overshadowed by malestream approaches even within Western societies. Feminist practice largely structures academia and IR since it defines the distinctive concerns of women, this is mostly appreciated with the emergence of diverse non-governmental organizations, institutions, and principles that strive to have a significant impact on feminist politics and to accomplish symbolic social, and political and cultural change. The women's movement impact has had a strong history of prosperity in Korea, this has allowed for more activism and influence within Korean society and politics. Sexual violence has been central to the analysis and creation of the Sexual Assault Center and the Korean Sexual Violence Relief Center, the latter established by feminist scholars back in 1991 with the challenge of creating gender equality and preventing sexual violence in many different spheres of action (Jung, 2014). Up until the late 1980s, sexual violence and the study of gendered violence were considered minor issues within politics in Korea, since the main struggle was focused on nationalist ideals rather than gender-specific elements related to sexuality or the female body (Jung, 2014). This context also shaped the way in which even women's activists sought to solve women's problems within the sphere of the Korean social movement, which comprehended three key elements as cited by Kyungja Jung (2014): *minjok* (nationalism), *minju* (democracy), and *minjung* (the people or the masses). With the emergence of the Anti-sexual Violence Movement, feminist scholars and activists allowed for the collision of feminist activists from very different backgrounds and political alignments such as conservative and progressive (Palley 1994: 291, cited by Jung, 2014) Within this context, however, the conservative and authoritarian nature of the Korean military regime (1980-1986) and the centrality of class in the distribution of power accounted in part for the women's movement's orientation to the belief that general struggles needed to be waged prior to specific struggles for women's liberation” (Jung, 2014, 23).

Korean feminism differs and diverged from western feminism especially during the 1980s according to Jung (2014). Western feminism sought to criticize the androcentric aspect of the dynamics and create a gender-specific movement; however, the Korean women's movement was rather actively involved with democracy and nationalism. Following the alignment with democratization ideals, and following Kim Young-sam's election for the presidency in 1993, feminist activism and the women's movement began to gain independence from the democracy movement in order to address gender issues such as maternity leave, family planning, equal pay for equal work, and domestic and sexual violence (Jung, 2014, 29). Around this time, the relationship between socialists and Marxist activists was strained due to the contrasting ideals that directed their cause. Marxist feminists, according to (Cho Soon-Kyung:

1994, as cited by Jung, 2014) led their efforts to stabilize and solve issues regarding class rather than the patriarchal system, in contrast, socialist feminists conceived the patriarchal and capitalist system as being the cause for women's oppression. Both groups united however for one cause that affected women no matter the affiliation they preferred: sexual violence dynamics such as sex trafficking, sexual assault kidnapping, rape, robbery, etc (Jung, 2014, 17).

Feminist practice plays also an important factor when talking about feminism in South Korea, it shapes the establishment of new institutions that seek to analyze diverse dynamics that limit equality as well as women's rights. Feminist practice also allows for academia to develop and analyze different dynamics. According to Kyungja Jung (2014), men also did have an important role at the KSVRC (Korean Sexual Violence Relief Center), indeed, female and male counselors at the center were trained equally to assist emergencies of sexual assault violence. Back in 1994, "this was the first time in Korea that a women's movement organization had accepted male students as workers or volunteers" (Jung, 2014, 24). Culture also plays an essential role when dissecting women's struggles within society. From an extract translated from Korean by Kyungja Jung from the KSVRC Newsletter in 2000, we encounter how these matters also shape feminist activism, which calls not only for an approach from social and cultural lenses but also aims to raise attention to how sexual violence continues to happen due to the unprivileged social and economic status of woman in relation to men, raising attention as well as to the need to challenge cultural values to achieve human rights (2014).

The impact here of discursive politics and the challenges posed to Confucian ideas are very intrinsic and have wholly transformed Korean society. Within this framework, Confucian ideology not only structured the organization of Korea as a society, but also tailored social action and behaviors such as the subordination of women and separation from men (Jung, 2014, 44). Confucian ideals are deeply embedded and enforced in Korean society, in fact, the emphasis on women's sexual fidelity to her husband, obedience, giving birth to children (sons), taking care of their homes, etc, profoundly segregated women from the early ages of seven (44). Even though there have been significant transformations regarding gender and the female body, Confucian ideas still prevail influential when dissecting and regulating the female body and sexuality in South Korea, and they are still dominant when assessing and justifying women's inferior position in Korea today (Jung, 2014). Most of the inherent androcentric aspects we might encounter in South Korean society are also related to the FMI crisis during the 80s and the dynamics of normative gender separation in labor. During the financial shock of 1997, the devaluation of the Korean won and the depletion of SK foreign exchange reserves personified the hegemonic gender norms. As Jong Bum Kwon mentions in *Gender and Labour in Korea and Japan*, "Korea's modern organization and practice of hegemonic gender norms were configured according to spatial and ideological divisions that rendered men as providers, acting in the public sphere, and women as consumers and caregivers, acting within the private sphere" (Barraclough & Faison, 2009, 110). Within the public sphere, men were conceived as being in the legal position of household heads.

In contemporary analysis, there has been a call for the need for feminist practice, since it has been overshadowed by the constant power relations that overshadow women's interests. With the recent Democratic wave, there has been substantial advances and more political opportunities brought with feminist organizations and different resources that allow substantial change in policy-making and women participation, however, as asserted by Jung (2014): "it is apparent that the state engagement that characterized the women-friendly administrations of 1997 to 2007 has institutionalized and entrapped the women's movement in Korea, undermined its political autonomy, and weakened its transformative potential". The constant "mistrust" of women's rights usually conceived from the masculinized state, the banning of abortion, wage-gap, sexual violence and other dynamics are still latent and disrupts women's agency. We can see these parallels on Jong Bum Kwon in (Barraclough & Faison, 2009):

The complicated structure of women's agency suggests the intricate entanglements between class and gender identities at the juncture of Korea's neoliberal turn. The financial crisis exposed the socio-cultural vulnerability of Korean men, the intimate connection between patriarchal and economic structures and their deep dependence upon those structures to sustain normative masculine identities (122).

This background information will be necessary when analyzing and discussing the current state of affairs found from this work.

3. Methodology

An Integrative Literature Review, as defined by The University of Southern California and Mary Kennedy (2007) was used with the purpose to answer the qualitative first two questions from this work. This type of methodology helped to describe what related research has already been conducted, how it informs the thesis, and how the thesis fits into the research in the field (Kennedy, 2007). The University of Southern California defines an Integrative Literature Review as a form of research that considers reviews, critiques, and synthesis from works on the topic. This work was done through different databases such as (Scopus, Scholar Google, Millennium-Journal of International Studies, SAGE journals, and JSTOR) to define criteria for this article. An Integrative Literature Review will answer the three questions of this article by identifying the main themes within these topics such as International Relations theories (liberalism and realism), its approaches, core ideas, actors, forms that they operate, intrinsic biases, possible positive and negative outcomes, the South Korean women's movement, etc. It also determined the main feminist perspectives and theorists regarding security, feminist definitions within IR, positions, biases, and critiques towards mainstream IR.

For the last section, an Integrative Literature Review was also used in the analysis of approaches to feminism in South Korea, with the purpose to dissect the historical context of the main objective of our thesis. Additionally, open-ended interviews were used with four participants, one professor who belonged to the academic part of International Relations, feminism, and gender in South Korea, and three students who were born and raised in South Korea. These open-ended questions were aimed to analyze three important aspects of the everyday life and experiences of the participants: experiences, contexts, and meanings. These interviews following Seidman's in-depth three-step interview model (1998) took place to consolidate the last section of this article. The interview's original design was divided into three interviews which aim to dissect and establish as much as possible the context and the contestant's experience regarding the theme; however, due to the current circumstances and for practical issues, we adapted this structure into a single interview that will consolidate the last section. Open-ended questions allow for the interviewees to reconstruct their experiences according to their own sense of importance. By asking one professional in the area of feminism in South Korea, we aim to solidify and connect previous integrative reviews with the current state of the art as it is happening in South Korea.

4. Results

For the purpose of this work, we have designed two models of interviews aimed at different groups since they seek to analyze important aspects of everyday life of Koreans. One of the models was directed at professionals within the area of International Relations and feminism whose background provides a close and personal expertise on the theme. The second model was directed to students whose experiences and opinions matter significantly for the research since the discussion of gender and feminism is latent in the area of research.

We contacted 45 professors in advance in the areas of International Relations, feminism, national security, gender studies, women's studies in South Korea, or that have any related background. We received answers from 8 professors of which 7 did not have availability and 1 had. We then contacted 4 students to which we ended up interviewing 3 students and locals. Each of the interviewees was contacted in advance and they were interviewed through online streaming services such as zoom and through email as well. We designed two models of interviews that would allow us to dissect.

Model 1: interview with professionals

1. What are the implications of perceiving women as "peacemakers" and "casualties" during wartime? How has this shaped the perception of women in South Korea in the contemporary world?
2. What was the impact of The Korean Anti-sexual violence movement in South Korea? Did this have any impact on the inclusion of women in politics/academia etc?

3. Is there a significant impact of Feminist theory/theorists in South Korea? If not, what can Koreans and non/Koreans do to maximize interest in gender approaches in South Korea?
4. Can you explain to us the “mandatory military service” and how this might contribute to an androcentric and limiting perspective of women in South Korea?
5. Has mainstream/western Feminism had an impact on South Korean Feminist movements? What is the main contrast between western Feminism with South Korean feminism?
6. How have the androcentric and biased values from mainstream/malestream International Relations theories (usually conceived as unique) diminished and limited the understanding of Feminism in Asia, especially in South Korea?
7. How do culture, media, and entertainment shape Feminist movements in South Korea?

Model 2: interview with students

1. As a woman/man living in South Korea, have you ever noticed the lack of women being represented in politics (governors, political figures, authorities, etc)? If you have, what do you think is the reason?
2. As a woman/man, do you think feminism has an impact in South Korea? If not, why?
3. As a woman/man, have you been involved in feminist movements or do you associate your morals and ideas with feminist ones?
4. What do you think is the impact of culture, media, and entertainment on the way women are portrayed in politics in South Korea?
5. Have you noticed the intrinsic androcentric perspective (male perspective) in academia? How do you think this lack of women in academia shapes the way South Koreans perceive women?
6. What do you think of the feminist movement in South Korea? Do you think it has an impact on shaping new ways of viewing gender and sexuality?

INTERVIEWS TRANSCRIPT

Interviewed #1 - Student

Jongchan

Philosophy Graduate - worked at 신등용문학원

Masculine

34 years old

Interviewer: *As a man living in South Korea, have you ever noticed the lack of women being represented in politics (governors, political figures, authorities etc)? If you have, can you attribute this to the inherent patriarchal culture in South Korea? What else can you think of as the reason this happens?*

Interviewed: 한국의 국회의원 여성 당선자 비율은 19%에 불과하다. 이는 분명 OECD 평균에 비해 한참 낮은 수치이다. 그러나 중요한 점은 매년 이 비율은 늘어나는 추세에 있다는 점이다. 한국은 급격히 성장한 나라로서 여성인권 역시 그와 함께 아주 빠르게 성장한 나라이다. 과거 가부장적이던 문화에서 여성이 적극적으로 사회활동에 참여하는 문화로 사회변화가 생긴지는 불과 10~20년에 지나지 않는다. 특히 이러한 흐름은 젊은 세대로부터 출발했고, 그러기에 당연히 50~60대가 중심인 국회의원, 시장 등 정치영역에서의 여성의 활약이 아직은 적을 수 밖에 없다. 하지만 시간의 흐름에 따라 여성의 정치영역에서 비중은 늘어날 것으로 예상된다.

Translation: *The proportion of female lawmakers-elect in Korea is only 19 percent. This is clearly much lower than the OECD average. However, the important point is that the rate has been on the rise each year. Korea is a country that has grown rapidly, and women's rights have also grown very fast. It has been only 10 to 20 years since social changes occurred from a patriarchal culture to one in which women actively participate in social activities. In particular, this trend started from the younger generation, and naturally, women's activities in political areas such as lawmakers or local administrators, are still small, because they are centered on those in their 50s and 60s. However, the proportion of women in the political sphere is expected to keep increasing.*

Interviewer: *As a man, do you think feminism has an impact in South Korea? If not, why?*

Interviewed: 페미니즘은 지난 10~20년간 한국사회에 크나큰 영향을 미쳤는데 그 대표적인 케이스가 바로 전세계 유례없는 여성가족부라는 정부조직의 탄생이다. 그러나 2022년 당선된 윤석열 대통령과 국민의힘당은 반페미니즘을 표방하는 단체라는 것에 주목할 필요가 있다. 특히 윤석열 대통령의 대표공약 중 하나가 여성가족부 폐지인 것은 현재 한국에서 페미니즘이 어떤 위치에 있다는 것을 극명하게 보여준다. 이처럼 현재 대한민국의 페미니즘은 여성인권의 성장이라는 긍정적인 측면보다 젠더갈등을 부추기고 한국남성을 비방하는 부작용이 더 크게 나타나고 있고, 그에 따라 그 존재가치를 적어도 한국사회 내에서는 점차 잃어가고 있다.

Translation: *Feminism has had a huge impact on Korean society over the past 10 to 20 years. For example, Korean government made this organization called the Ministry of Women and Family, which is unprecedented all over the world. In English, it says "Ministry of Gender Equality" instead of "Ministry of Women", but in Korean it is still "Ministry of Women". However, it is worth noting that President Yoon Seok-yeol and the People's Power Party, who were elected in 2022, are anti-feminist groups. In particular, the abolition of the Ministry of Women and Family, one of President Yoon Seok-yeol's election pledges, clearly shows that Koreans' view of feminism is changing. Recently, feminism in Korea has had more side effects of provoking gender conflict and slandering Korean men than focused on the growth of women's rights, and accordingly, its meaning is gradually decreasing within Korean society.*

Interviewer: *As a man, have you been involved in feminist movements or do you associate your morals and ideas to feminists ones?*

Interviewed: 대학교에서 양성평등센터라는 교내 단체에서 2년간 근무했었다. 그러나 이 센터는 페미니즘운동 단체가 아니라 교내에서 일어나는 성추행 등의 피해를 입은 여성을 지원하고 돕는 학생지원단체였다. 개인적으로 사회적 약자를 돕고, 정의를 실현하고, 평등을 추구하는 도덕적 신념을 지니고 있지만 결과적 평등을 강조하는 페미니즘에는 다소 부정적인 시각을 가지고 있다.

Translation: *I worked for an on-campus Gender Equality organization for 2 years at the university. However, the center was not for feminist movements, but for supporting and helping women who suffered sexual harassment on campus. Personally, I have a moral belief in helping the socially disadvantaged, realizing social justice, and pursuing equality, but I have a somewhat negative view of feminism that emphasizes consequential equality.*

Interviewer: *What do you think is the impact of culture, media and entertainment in the way women are portrayed in politics in South Korea*

Interviewed: 과거 신데렐라 스토리를 표방하는 한국의 드라마와는 달리 이제는 오로지 여성만을 주인공들로 내세운 드라마도 나올만큼 한국드라마속 여성의 역할은 완전히 달라졌다. 사회변화 함께 생겨나는 자연스러운 현상이라고 생각하고 이는 당연히 여성의 주도적인 삶을 유도하고 나아가 적극적인 정치참여를 유도하는 긍정적인 효과가 있을 것이라고 생각한다.

Translation: *Unlike many Korean dramas in the past which were literally nothing more than Cinderella stories, the role of women in K-dramas has completely changed. Nowadays, there are even dramas featuring only women as the main characters. I think it is a natural phenomenon occurring with social changes. And, of course, I presume it will have a positive effect on inducing women's leading lives and active political participation.*

Interviewer: *Have you noticed the intrinsic androcentric perspective (male perspective) in academia? How do you think this lack of women in academia shapes the way South Koreans perceive women?*

Interviewed: 잘 모르는 분야다. 다만 한국에 여성교수 숫자가 절대적으로 부족한 것은 사실이다. 하지만 공학, 수학, 물리학, 경영학 등 엄격한 객관성을 유지해야하는 학계 특성상 연구자 주체의 성별이 연구결과에 영향을 미치지 않을 것 같고, 그래서 안된다고 생각한다.

Translation: *I don't know much about this subject. However, it is true that the number of female professors is absolutely insufficient in Korea. However, Because the nature of academia such as engineering, mathematics, physics, and business administration, etc, requires strict objectivity, I think the*

gender of the researcher is unlikely to affect the research itself and also it shouldn't affect the outcome of research.

Interviewer: *What do you think of the feminist movement in South Korea? Do you think it has an impact on shaping new ways of viewing gender and sexuality?*

Interviewed: *지난 10~20년간 분명 페미니즘은 한국사회 내에서 고유의 역할을 지녔었다. 특히 여자는 집에서 아이를 돌보는 역할을 해야할 것을 강요했던 한국의 가부장적인 틀을 깨는데 나름의 역할을 했다고 생각한다. 그러나 한국의 여성들이 적극적으로 사회로 나와 자신의 역할을 하게 된 데에는 페미니즘 운동보다는 훨씬 더 다양하고 복합적인 이유가 있었을 것이라고 생각한다. 개인적으로는 지금 사회에서 성공한 많은 여성들이 페미니즘에 고무받아 그 자리에 있다고는 생각하지 않는다. 그것에는 모두 개인의 자아실현을 위한 끊임없는 노력, 여성에게 주어지는 사회적 편견을 깨기 위한 처절한 투쟁이 있기에 가능했을 것이라고 생각한다.*

Translation: *For the past 10 to 20 years, feminism had its own role in Korean society. Particularly, it worked partly in breaking the patriarchal culture, clearly having limited women's role in society. However, I think there must have been much more diverse and complex reasons for Korean women to actively come out into society and play their role. I don't think successful women have been actually motivated by feminism. I believe it could have all been possible because of their constant efforts for self-realization and the desperate struggle to break the social prejudice given to women.*

Interviewed #2 - Student

Hyeonju

Graduate School of Education of Kookmin University

Feminine

24 years old

Interviewer: *As a woman living in South Korea, have you ever noticed the lack of women being represented in politics (governors, political figures, authorities etc)? If you have, can you attribute this to the inherent patriarchal culture in South Korea? What else can you think of the reason this happens?*

Interviewed: *Only recently, a policy has been implemented to make the number of public officials, including police, and the number of women selected by companies more than a few percent. I think it is a society where there are many restrictions on women's expansion of certain political forces. I think the reason is that the prejudice that women are weaker than men and the situation in which they have to take parental leave due to pregnancy and childbirth have difficulties in continuing their work.*

Interviewer: *As a woman, do you think feminism has an impact in South Korea? If not, why?*

Interviewed: *Feminism is in vogue in Korea recently. In particular, the "Me, too" movement began a few years ago, when women who suffered damage such as sexual slavery and sexual exploitation began to reveal without hiding. I think the influence of feminism in Korea has increased due to the Me Too movement.*

Interviewer: *As a woman, have you been involved in feminist movements or do you associate your morals and ideas to Feminists ones?*

Interviewed: *I think that the inequality experienced by having a certain gender, both women and men, should disappear. In Korea, I think women are still suffering a little more than men. However, not only is it limited to women, but there are also difficulties that men must suffer because they are men. The recent feminist movement has been so overheated that I think there is a tendency to pursue more than men beyond regaining women's human rights... I have never participated in a feminist movement.*

Interviewer: *What do you think is the impact of culture, media, and entertainment on the way women are portrayed in politics in South Korea*

Interviewed: *From a cultural perspective, many of those prejudices have now been broken, but there is still a perception that women should be protected from men. I personally think that this is a prejudice created by women rather than by men.*

Second, in terms of media, there are attempts to commercialize women's femininity by making women in dramas, movies, and broadcast programs wear short clothes or appear naked. Also, I think it has some influence to promote the product with a pretty and slim woman regardless of the product in the advertisement.

Third, in terms of entertainment, there are too many games made by unnecessarily revealing and commercializing women's femininity.

Interviewer: Have you noticed the intrinsic androcentric perspective (male perspective) in academia? How do you think this lack of women in academia shapes the way South Koreans perceive women?

Interviewed: In addition to the political aspect, there seems to be still a little awareness in academia that women's status is low and men are more recognized. However, it doesn't seem to be a big problem because there are many female presidents and many professors these days (...).

Interviewer: What do you think of the feminist movement in South Korea? Do you think it has an impact on shaping new ways of viewing gender and sexuality?

Interviewed: I would like to replace the answer to this question with the answer to the third one. I think the wrong and discriminatory perception of sex should be improved, and this movement will certainly have an impact. But I don't think the exercise should be too overheated to create another discrimination.

Interviewed #3 - Student

박지영 - Chi Yeong

27 years

Graduate student from Minnesota State University, Mankato

As a woman living in South Korea, have you ever noticed the lack of women being represented in politics (governors, political figures, authorities etc)? If you have, what do you think is the reason?

Interviewed: I feel like the Korean government still lacks women political figures, because Korea was conservative, and still is in the political field i think. It's because Korea was confucian country during the Chosun dynasty.

As a woman, do you think feminism has an impact in South korea? If not, why?

Interviewed:It does have a huge impact. Feminism is about equality, but some of people take that wrong way - like offensive way. So the gender gap between men and women has grown. And it's just my opinion, but the government is using that gender conflict to get their vote.

What do you think is the impact of culture, media, and entertainment in the way women are portrayed in politics in South Korea?

Interviewed: Well, I barely watch tv so have no thought of it but I think women got more power compared to the past, and it's not weird to see Women politicians.

Have you noticed the intrinsic androcentric perspective (male perspective) in academia? How do you think this lack of women in academia shapes the way South Koreans perceive women?

Interviewed: Well, I studied in the US so got much information of it, but I guess it's getting better but still lots of challenges left. It's true that women get more challenges than men, and women have to prove that men don't even have to prove it. Because of the movement, academia also has been changed I think.

What do you think of the feminist movement in South Korea? Do you think it has an impact on shaping new ways of viewing gender and sexuality?

Interviewed: I think it was natural to occur the feminist movement. Lifecycle has been changed, culture has been changed a lot as well so the thought of each person has been changed. Lots of people are aiming for their goals and trying to have a better life. I think feminist movement is part of that.

Interviewed #4 - Professor

Kyunja Jung

Associate Professor of Social and Political Science - UTS

Author of "Practicing Feminism in South Korea: The women's movement against sexual violence"

What are the implications of perceiving women as "peacemakers" and "casualties" during war time? How has this shaped the perception of women in South Korea in the contemporary world?

Interviewed: (...) Actually the other way around, there was a perception about the women and then that affected the International Relations area like a world international affairs, so because of the perception about women not only in South Korea... South Korea in the 90s-80s during the Korean War more conservative view on women definitely... So women must be submissive and definitely that affected the framing of women is more casualties, and after a war is more nurses and carers (...) I think this is a typical example of how even war itself is framed in binary gender way and based on the perception about women, women as a carer that is a peacemaker; and also is victims... So even contemporary gender-balanced discloses women is more framed as victims and survivors rather than offenders, but of course that is the reflection of the reality, in reality most of victims are women, and most of perpetrators are male but on the other hand also reflects the gendered nature of academia and brutal society.

What was the impact of The Korean Anti-sexual violence movement in South Korea? Did this have any impact on the inclusion of women in politics/academia etc?

Interviewed: First, (...) Sexual violence was not a crime but through this movement and some legislation and acting people realized that in Korean women that this is a crime, I think that is really significant of this movement, and secondly, there wasn't any protection or policies or programs so women...had no where to go if they are sexually violated or domestic victims, but after these campaigns the women's movement pushed the government towards more legislation and protection measures and shelters so women now have a place to go and was able to seek some help from others including 24hours counselling services and shelters and some legislation done and that is second, and third in general in Korea there was a strong victim blaming but through this series of campaigns people realized that this is not your fault women's fault, because there is a modern case we won't be victims, but only sexual violence cases victim is affected to the blaming, like why you go out late at night, why you are wearing the short skirt, and why you are working in the sex industry (...) So of course this balance movement indirectly contributed to the perception of women and also, women's movement improved empowerment of women, in that way it indirectly impacted that (...) Sexual violence issues are not an academic topic at all but through the movement and through young scholars works on sexual violence in the late 80s and 90s sexual violence became a public topic and academic theme (...)

Is there a significant impact of Feminist theory/theorists in South Korea? If not, what can Koreans and non/Koreans do to maximize interest in gender approaches in South Korea?

Interviewed: (...) Women's movement and feminist theory academia I think goes together, so even if there was no women's movement the feminist theory wouldn't have been effective (...) I talk about this in my book as well about what is the impact of women's studies, so first of all South Korean gender studies established quite early and then that really generated feminist leaders and educators so I couldn't handpick that this theory has affected this, but in general gender studies and feminism and feminist studies they gave a chance for the women, the academics, the students to open the eyes to women's issues and then they researched sexual violence issues, labor issues, politics issues so they informed the women's movement, because without identifying what women's issues we are facing how women's movement that act on certain issues. Here I really want to point out that women's movement and the feminist academic cooperate to achieve gender equality or gender related gains, so yeah there is some impact. (...) Think about yourself and how you are interested in gender issues if that is relevant to you, my claim is, you know either academics like myself or feminists activist, if they can pay attention to what's

going on, and that issue is relevant to ordinary women and people are interested in... why people are interested in Me Too campaigns? Because many women experience gender violence, that is so affected our everyday lives, so I say relevance but open in academia they do not know what is going on in reality and then people turn away from the interests. So like my students, (she asks) Are you interested in feminism? they say no, so because Australia gender equality is to a certain extent achieved, but I am talking about body image, because many women they still suffer from the slim body, certain body image.. and then they pay attention to what I am saying, so all activist and academia we all have to listen to what women now experience or what they are suffering from, in terms of that, I wanted to give you this because your thesis area is really unique, because your background from South American, and then you are looking at International Relations from feminists perspective and also from so-called outside the sphere you are looking at South Korea. So you create really unique knowledge about this. Don't forget what you've got.

Can you explain to us the “mandatory military service” and how this might contribute to an androcentric and limiting perspective of women in South Korea?

Interviewed: (...) military service is mandatory for only male and military service is a really critical issue and if you've heard about gender divide in South Korea and always this mandate military service issue because men thought “this is unfair” “why only male serve the military service and women don't” (...) young man especially conservative young man say “you don't do your duties as a citizen” but why you ask us to do our duty as a young male in military service. So this is always a critical issue and a foundation for gender debate and agenda and conflict on gender divide. (...) Because of that men military services previously men benefited from this because for example if you and another young male accepted like a Samsung or Hyundai company, but you are a beginner at that company, but your salary is different. Based on that, the company counted the male military service as experience. So that is a difference. So military service is on the other hand served as a discriminating factor to women, so you know there was gender gap in term of wage in South Korea of 6% 8%? (...) and also as you know that military service because every single healthy male finished or completed this military service, that means that they learned military culture, that means very hierarchical and also very conservative and open to violence. Have you watched D.P in Netflix the Korean drama? (she asks) (...) you can sense that military service is.

Has mainstream/western Feminism had an impact on South Korean Feminist movements? What is the main contrast between western Feminism with South Korean feminism?

Interviewed: Yes, definitely but as mentioned South Korea even myself, I did my gender studies degree first in South Korea and I learned a lot about liberal feminism and social feminism and radical feminism (...) because Korean situation in the 80s South Korea was under dictatorship, so democratization was a more primary concern even for women, and also as you know that Korea is only country still divided in North and South and so unification is very important, so we learn and imported certain ideas from the so-called western feminism, but because South Korea has unique issues: unification issues, dictatorship, and also in the 60s 80s South Korea is a developing country like a third world and there are a lot of issues: working women's issues. So rather than uncritically apply the western feminism ideas to the Korean context, but Korean women selectively applied the certain understanding of western feminism and to meet Korean women situation.

How have the androcentric and biased values from mainstream/malestream International Relations theories (usually conceived as unique) diminished and limited the understanding of Feminism in Asia, especially in South Korea?

Interviewed: (...) I think there are too many contrasting approaches I totally agree, so in international relations like war or other international affairs like the international players like the UN neglect women's issues, women are just framed as a human being but they are not necessarily interested in women's issues, And secondly, sometimes International Relations settings like for example war against Afghanistan, so politicians hijacked feminist agenda, they just divide the invasion as a rescue of the Afghan women, not men, so there are two different approaches, so like the US, UN, European Union say “we need to rescue these Afghan women under a Taliban regime and so on”, so you have to keep in mind that there are two contrasting approaches maybe more approaches. In South Korea's case we have a new president and there are not many female politicians and even when journalists asks the president why there are a few female politicians in the ministry. So like recently the Korean president appointed a couple of female ministers, I think it is a tokenistic gesture though, as I will say that I think in Korea's history,

the ministry of foreign affairs has been all the time mostly male figures only one time I am not sure.. from my time only one female minister of foreign affairs. So is that really clear indicator how international issues was perceived as a man's area and mans field, so If you can pick in gathering like Asia-pacific gathering and OCD and G7, sometimes the leaders take photos and you can see that almost all leaders are male, like previously we had the German minister chancellor, other than them most of all political leaders are man (...). I think your fundamentally starts from how the International Relations area is gendered biased area and then man's field, I think South Korea is not an exception.

How do culture, media, and entertainment shape Feminist movements in South Korea?

Interviewed: This is also really important but I think there are mutual interactions, when feminist movement was strong, and then, culture affected feminist movement, they are relaly reinforcing and affecting each other, if there is a culture of misogyny in South Korea, and as you can see in South Korea there is a secretive filming, when conservative man use filming devices and filming females bodies or they girlfriends, in female toilet, univerty campues, that is part of korean culture then women's movement have to adapt that to agenda and how to erradicate that one. So there is a huge street demonstration, campaigns against secret filming and there was a really messy protest I think that is a really good example how culture affected the feminist movement and also in terms of online feminist, so before in my generation startted feminist movement offline, but this there is a lot of online feminist movement. So the advancement of technology in younger generations, the medium of their culture is online, like facebook and instagram and online chatting, so women's movement have to adapt to new strategies, in term of how to mobilize people there and how to work together with the people, so without adapting to women's movement changes, women's movement cannot be supported.

5. Discussion

Into a decolonial feminist politics: understanding feminism from other forms of articulating, envisioning, and practicing life

It has been mentioned before that the foundations of the main theories of International Relations are intrinsically androcentric and are limited by Western perspectives that do not allow a complete determination of reality. We mention how the realists and the roots of the branch of study pay interesting attention to issues of the State, its security, and to preserve its survival within the international field. Determined that the main interests of International Relations do not place emphasis or interest in the study of new perspectives that refer to feminist thought, or the problems faced by women in academia and in general. We have further determined that the *raison d'être* of the State and from this realist perspective, always seek their own security and attempts to always preserve their power. Thanks to the analyzes presented from the International Relations academy from a feminist perspective, we determined that women are usually referred to as symbols of peace in the midst of armed conflicts, and continually suffer lateral consequences within these dynamics. In addition, we understand that the continuous realistic incentives to create a dichotomous world have had repercussions in the creation of a binary gender perception and determined gender roles. This has influenced how women are perceived in their different predetermined roles. In addition, given that there have been various interests in approaching feminist perspectives, however, it is always studied as an object of study, but not as a way of understanding the world. We understand that the interests of IR feminists are to enter more primarily within the field of academia, however, there are always constant limitations against these perspectives. Regarding liberal perspectives, our study shows that reference is always made to a need to adhere to liberal ideals and to create institutions within the confines of liberal structures.

Within the theme of feminism in South Korea, we determine that the historical and ideological elements are necessary to understand in order to approach this context. Both the role of Japan as a colony, Confucianism and the traditional patriarchal perspective of South Korean society are elements that have defined the trajectory of the feminist struggle in South Korea. Determining this, we observe how mainstream RI does not show us a complete image of femism and women's movements in this region of

the planet, since their interests are delimited by elements that do not converge with gender issues, colonialism issues, historical issues. and alien to a Western reality.

Cultural aspects of society are deeply enmeshed with politics, both are co-constitutive and both reflect different aspects and conditions that are the result of dynamics within a system. One of the main struggles one can encounter when trying to disrupt a certain system, is the collision between values and tradition that create and produce meaning inside a society. To disrupt existing systems with mainstream and dominant stream of thought requires to acknowledge and endorse through different lenses all rationalizations to finally have a significant impact. Following this vein of logic, to understanding the struggle of feminist movements all around the world and the different implications we have encounter as women in a world built for men, we have required also facing consequences that have built upon the contemporary world. As mentioned by Trinh Minh-ha in “When the Moon Waxes Red” in 1991:

To disrupt the existing systems of dominant values and to challenge the very foundation of a social and cultural order is not merely to destroy a few prejudices or to reverse power relations within the terms of an economy of the same. Rather, it is to see through the revolving door of all rationalizations and to meet head on the truth of that struggle *between fictions*.

The struggle of being a feminist scholar within mainstream IR has permitted to strive for the production of knowledge from within the core issue. This has allowed not only to the creation of different institutions and organizations or movements that have helped women gain important support from within an uncritical system, but also, to shaping politics, challenging prejudices, power relations and allowing an understanding of feminism and women’s struggles from a perspective that does not seek to mansplain, but rather, meet a substantial truth. This can rather be met by grasping decolonial theory such as Walter Mignolo’s or Catherine Walsh’s decolonial approaches, both who define these perspectives as a rejection to legacies and on-going dynamics of power relations and oppression instituted by colonial rule, which fixates its purpose on undoing hierarchical frameworks of gender, race, class, sexuality pluralized by a Western stream of thought. Decoloniality seeks to explore different perspectives and positionalities that evict Western ontologies as being exclusive (Walsh & Mignolo, 2018)

Exploring how dichotomies such as peace-war, man-woman are defining in world politics, they play an immense role in transforming the world as we have conceived it. These elements are characteristic of realist approaches and they are proportionally derived from colonial relations. In this analysis, we encounter how these separations usually lead to biased understandings of world affairs, since we place humans in-between two possible scenarios whether it is black or white. However, reality is much more complex and rich and “colorful” in meanings and experiences. As proposed by María Lugones in 2011: “A decolonial feminism is proposed, with a strong emphasis on an incarnate, historicized intersubjectivity, posing criticism of the racialized, colonial, capitalist, heterosexualist gender oppression, as a lived transformation of the social” (2).

Following this line of events, we provide a revision on how decolonial insights, as argued by María Lugones and Walter Mignolo, would help us detach ourselves from the coloniality of gender and mainstream IR, and introduce a much more complex understanding of South Korean feminism. A decolonial approach to South Korean feminist movement would provide a more complete scene since it collides with matters of intersectionality, historical elements, capitalism and coloniality that mainstream fails to attend. Lugones (2011) decolonial insights provides a modern analysis on gender and race. Lugones defines coloniality:

“Not just a classification of people in terms of the coloniality of power and gender, but also the process of active reduction of people, the dehumanization that fits them for the classification, the process of subjectification, the attempt to turn the colonized into less than human beings” (p.745).

From this standpoint, Lugones argues that the colonized becomes non-human, and the colonized woman becomes an “inhabited” category, a mere element. Gender and coloniality renders no women as colonized and no colonized as women since females were judged “from the normative understanding of women, the human inversion of men” (Lugones, 2011, p.746). Women were never understood as lacking of something since they were not conceived as “men-like”. Colonial theoryzation also suggests that gender cannot be detached from colonial structure, gender strives and navigates within the colonial matrix. To gain substantial

change, one must shift towards decolonial feminism that not only facilitates divorcing from radicalized and historical gender oppression, but also to overcome it. Japanese colonial rule brought ontological and epistemological disturbances, because coloniality affects the status of the colonized. Coloniality may also be experienced and presented in modern institutions and organizations. The #MeToo movement emphasizes the logic of colonization, since it derives to conform to western standards of communication: Whose voices matter? Why is silence irrelevant? What language should I use to be heard? Here, conforming to “voice”, as mentioned by Juwon Jun (2021), “means to conform to the epistemic model of the modern/colonial order”. However, movements such as the #MeToo are still important regardless, since it strives for participation and re-structuring political dynamics within Korean society as mentioned by the interviewees. As asserted by Mignolo, us humans are “all today in the colonial matrix of power. There is no outside of it, and there is no privileged location (ethnic or sexual) from which to confront coloniality (...) to end coloniality it is necessary to end the fictions of modernity” (Walsh & Mignolo, 2018, p.109).

To understand the South Korean feminist movement, we must pose critical analysis to modern and malestream approaches to gender and the struggle of encountering modern politics and colonial structures and ideologies. Decolonial approaches to international affairs would further explain concepts such as the “give”, the “natural”, how “nation-state” and “war-peace” conceptualizations not only have come from colonial rule but also, they have tailored world politics. Core roots of International Relations are a clear example of these events, since they have structured current foreign affairs as well as war, peace, IR itself. The use of lethal force and the justification of it coming from scholars provides a clear depiction of world politics through the eyes of Realists, but does not permit a clear vision towards decolonial approaches to gender or sex. In fact, world politics is not defined by the state of anarchy, and states are not only seeking to preserve their own means of existence; rather, people are shaping international affairs when confronting these elements. Mainstream approaches to gender do not bring a total or complete focus on all ontologies and epistemologies, and equally important, malestream IR and academia does not look into women's issues since it does not fully recognize the importance of women as a human being per sé. Malestream nourishes itself from the lack of criticality derived from colonial rule, and as mentioned by Mignolo, it feeds itself from the fictions of modernity. As for Liberalists, coming from a stream of knowledge that privileges institutions and representation, also performs a continuity to coloniality and colonial rule. Trihn Mihna illustrates this “To challenge the regimes of representation that govern a society is to conceive of how a politics can transform reality rather than merely ideologize it” (1991, 2). Gender structures are inherent inside institutions that influence world affairs, such as the United Nations, which was clearly explained by Kyoungja's intervention when she mentioned that most of these institutions have male figures as representatives. Indeed, as world politics have been strongly defined by malestream approaches and figures, as well as practices. Additionally, the so-called “security problem” within institutions calls for speculation towards what is considered important within the state.

National security and human security as claimed by Amartya Sen (2002), includes elements such as a clear focus on individual human lives, the role of society, and the downside risks of human lives. He equally mentions how basic education is parallel to human security, since it derives opportunities to be a part of the system. However, how can illiterate people have access to a world of meanings when they can not communicate within Western frameworks of knowledge?, and Does associating to this dynamics can still be considered a menace to the colonized since it detaches them from their own history and experience? Human rights become distant and insignificant when the affected are “deprived” from understanding its importance. This is also translated to national settings, when human rights are constantly “suppressed” by the state, by war conflicts, by the dynamics of world affairs. The state is no longer capable of “protecting” its citizens, since national security matters are translated to territorial, physical means. Women are no longer protected by the state, since they are translated as only casualties, survivors, victims. As mentioned by Kyoungja Jung (2014) practice shapes academia, so the practices mentioned above also are a reflection of how mainstream IR has been shaped. Feminist IR seeks to transform women's dignity by introducing gender approaches, by confronting the standard.

When one analyses feminism, mainstream scholars play a huge role in categorizing and tailoring different approaches. We face with prominent Western feminist theorist such as Anne Tickner, Zalewski,

Enloe, Grant, Charlesworth etc, that rightfully challenge and critique malestream IR. By bringing commentary towards the lack of women and gender approaches, the constant masculinity and the association with objectivity, the “irrelevance” of “gender” in the study of state-centrism and sovereignty. Western feminism have largely framed feminist theory, by bringing up critiques towards the constant exclusion of women from the international realm, by bringing women’s struggles and gender approaches to the table of world politics, and not just as a portion of it. Nonetheless, and as indicated by South Korean feminists, Western feminism fail short to cover Korean feminism. Decoloniality plays a huge role within Korean scholars into trying to detach from Western stream of thought, since Korean history, cultural background, politics and philosophy is particular and peculiar to their context. Indeed, colonial rule brought many challenges and dynamics that Korean women had to face to be integrated into the political realm, to be treated as humans and not as mere objects. To re-articulate gendered practices and traditions within Korean society such as sexual violence and gendered institutions it was necessary a deep, perpetual and steady union opposing and contrasting the patriarchal system that is familiar to South Korean society. This goes beyond Western thought, western feminism and feminist practice. Nonetheless, both are equally as powerful and important, since they allow the world to see us women, beyond casualties and victims of the International Realm. South Korean women's history is marked by colonial practice, in which oppression and bad conditions within the working realm was constant towards women during the industrialization of Korea. Manual labor was clearly gendered, and rights were consistently repressed. Feminist scholars approach these issues by delivering women’s obstacles to the discussion, and by understanding gendered practices and challenging them. Women's movements have achieved remarkable success in South Korean Society, since it has allowed for the demolition of gendered systems, and the transformation of Korean Politics. Mainstream fails to recognize these achievements, mainstream fails to recognize how the status of “women ” has disrupted politics and has come to stay.

The interviews clearly reflect this, since women struggles and fights toward the patriarchal system are visible to the eyes of citizens, and it is felt by their everyday practice. We encounter this when Jongchan mentions that there is a clear yearly rising rate of female lawmakers in South Korea. He mentions that even though there is a tradition in policy making that comes from the older generations, there are still advancements and expectations to increase the participation of women in the political realm. Prejudices towards feminist approaches are still latent in South Korea, and this is interpreted by tradition and the patriarchal system itself, as well as the way in which academia and knowledge surrounding women have been constructed and spread. The interviewees also mentioned how culture as spread and illustrated by Korean dramas also depict the transition from the “damsel in danger and waiting to be rescued” into a more empowering illustration of women. Interviewees say that this has had a positive effect on inducing and leading women's lives into more political participation as mentioned by Jekhchan . Hyeonju tackles this as well when she mentioned that more women are selected by companies, public officials, even though restrictions and prejudices are still latent. She mentioned as well how feminist approaches, as well as women’s movements are in vogue nowadays, advancing, influencing and re-shaping world politics. Interviewees also mention how the gendered inequality should disappear, and pursue a tendency beyond women and men. Interviewed people also mention that new perceptions should be included, and discriminatory perception of sex should be improved, however, this does not call for creating another forms of discrimination.

Park Chi Yeong considers that feminism has not had a huge impact in South Korea, since feminism is about equality, but people take that the wrong way, and governments are justifying campaigns with feminist ideals to obtain support. Kyungja Jung’s intervention also brings a lot of insight regarding the binary structure of war and women, the importance of feminist practice and academia, and the constant need to critique standard structures.

6. Conclusions:

Through this work we were able to discuss diverse elements peculiar to the nature of the field of International Relations. We have discussed how the roots of mainstream/malestream IR are deeply engaged

with androcentric and white elements that even though they are approached as standard, they provide an incomplete perspective of our complex human relations. We have encountered the countless limitations feminists have face when trying to deliberate and introduce issues regarding gender inside the political field. We have demonstrated through exhaustive research that the roots of standard IR approaches are deeply flawed since they disregard important issues that are innate in the discussion of gender, intersectionality, women's movements, and women's struggles. We have done this through the analysis of western feminist critique towards realism and liberalism. We then have introduced a new perspective on feminism and women's movements that derives from a different understanding of world politics: South Korean feminism. With this, we have placed the reader inside the context of South Korean women's movement with the purpose to discover new ways of practicing feminism. We have done a small but significant research to understand the historical context of feminism in South Korea so then we were able to do interviews to experts and people closer to this reality. With this, we were capable to perceive how feminism is conceived in contemporary South Korea.

It is important to note that, the advances in academia are usually promoted by the social act of union for certain matters, that to say, the feminist movement and the needs and struggles expressed by women in a world of men largely explain the lacking system that does not support them. For instance, feminist academia and theory incorporates a deeper reflection and perspective on the struggle being faced at the present moment, but also a way to explain different dynamics that come from the past. Some of these dynamics are also explained through the eyes of malestream IR. From a western perspective, one can say that the feminist movement is lacking scope and importance, especially in place such as South Korea. Realists, for instance, would never approach sexual violence, sexual assault or gendered norms as problematic since these dynamics do not hold an "impact" within their scope of study. When talking about gendered norms during wartime, Realists would approach women as casualties, survivors, and a group to be protected since usually the state of affairs are happening within countries and groups predominantly male entities, and women's affairs and needs will be constantly overshadowed by this.

As we have discussed, the feminist movement and women's struggles have had a huge impact in South Korea, and these challenges have shaped and re-shaped politics and the state of affairs since it challenges familiar notions and ideologies. Even though within academia, the feminist movement was decaying in the west around the 80s - 90s, for Asian countries such as South Korea, the feminist movement took an important leap into introducing new perspectives to academia from those years and on. It is important to note how the institutions created during this time period have helped advance the support towards victims who have experiences sexual violence, this institutions have been structured so that both male and female are prepared to assist any instant and any victim they might encounter. This holds an essential impact on the way institutions themselves are perceived, since with this dynamics, one can argue the importance of understanding the struggles of gendered violence within institutions themselves and how this can limit assisting victims. By acknowledging the historical elements from this study, such as the colonial rule of Japan and the Korean War, we dive deeper into the dynamics that have shaped the perception of culture and women in South Korea. For instance, we also understand how different tendencies and structures were deeply gender-engaged thanks to colonialism. Since the colonial imposition of gender dynamics and roles became prominent, so did the practices and experiences lived by people. We do not talk here just about women's experiences but also about the heteronormative sexuality that has shaped different tendencies in politics, culture, labor etc.

This work provides a profound discussion on how the South Korean feminist movement has strived and resisted the coloniality of gender, how it has arisen from within male power relations to show a much more concrete vision. From this perspective, we are able to dissect said structures and bring new ontological understanding to different events, and to break from these standard dichotomies and perceptions of the human being. This work allows us to acknowledge the complexity of the human being, the complexity of being a woman in a world of man, and the complexity to resist hierarchical and patriarchal frameworks that overshadow women's struggles. The success of the women's movement in South Korea is largely due to the importance of organizations and campaigns created during the 1980s and so on. The history and story

experienced by South Korean women has granted the opportunity to form institutions and organizations whose main focus was to raise awareness towards women's issues, and allow the road towards political change regardless of the continuous limitations they present.

Indeed, the intervention of Professor Kyunja Jung, formerly an activist and now an academic and author of South Korean feminist literature, expresses a much broader and closer perspective of the feminist movement in South Korea. Her contribution not only allows us to delve into these new ways of perceiving the different realities, but also allows us, as spectators from a perspective alien to this reality, to understand that feminism and the fight for an egalitarian system feel sensations but act in differently depending on the context. Kyunja mentions to us how feminism has allowed a significant transformation when it comes to the representation of the female body despite the fact that there are still such strict standards to be met. She also mentions the importance of listening and understanding what is happening to women in order to understand their positions and be able to generate changes both within the academy and within activism. In fact, we can hear how the malestream IR fails to understand different actors outside of Statecentrism, such actors as feminist activists generate significant changes in the balance of power, in power roles, and even in gender roles. These actors and groups "irrelevant" in the eyes of the most acclaimed international institutions have generated a significant change in the status quo in relation to issues of women's rights, gender and presentation, which means that understanding these dynamics outside the conventional, are in fact more precise and concrete.

We conclude that International Relations is still lacking from perspectives and scopes that could help to a better understanding of the feminist movement, since it is intrinsically delimited by western stream of thought and mainstream/malestream perspectives. Even though there have been great advances within feminist academia and theory in International Relations, different perspectives regarding feminism and how this came to be in place such as South Korea are still hard to explain from western perspectives. The main goal with this thesis was to connect the missing pieces found in academia, so that people from all around the world and especially coming from a Latinamerican background, can allow themselves a better understanding of feminism in Asian countries such as South Korea. Even though we hold familiar bias that are usually hard to let go, this work represents a new step into cultures, ideologies and approaches that are usually overlooked and diminished through the standard western educational system, since the very predominant state-centric and male-centric approaches do not take a closer look into women's movements and advances.

We also conclude that decolonial approaches to gender and feminism are closer to discussing women's movements and different struggles from the South. We also have encountered a very interesting proposal in which South Korean citizens and professionals also recognize the advances and success of feminism in South Korea; nevertheless, they still attribute the latent misogyny, discrimination and constant rejection towards women to the very intrinsic patriarchal aspect of their culture. With this text we aim to raise attention to the importance of acknowledging different viewpoints that may not be close to the western stream of thought.

This work calls for understanding that all experiences matter, all voices matter, and that with each struggle we go through we give structure to an equitable feminism. This is not just for us, but for those who could not enjoy a world that shows more and more shades and colors different from a binary one, and where an understanding of feminism from other parts of the world brings us closer to a understanding of our own nature.

7. References

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