

Feminist Perspectives on Peace and Security

Whereas in hegemonic discourses, military intervention remains an option for conflict management, feminist discussions have developed comprehensive positive models for peace. They use the need for security and the experience of violence by individuals – in what only appears to be their private sphere – as a point of departure for their deliberations.

US scholar Judith Ann Tickner, in her book *Gender in International Relations*, argues: “The achievement of peace, social justice, and ecological sustainability is inseparable from overcoming social relations of domination and subordination. Genuine security requires not only the absence of war, but also the elimination of unjust social relations, including unequal gender relations.” She advocates a focus on the human need for community, solidarity and interdependence. Her concept of security assumes an “interrelationship of violence at all levels of society.” It is a dynamic concept in that it strives more for the creation of justice than for the creation of order. This includes gender justice because “replacing warrior-patriots with citizen-defenders provides us with models that are more conducive to women’s equal participation in international politics.”

Linking peace with the absence of every type of structural violence is a longterm goal, one difficult to attain, especially so in conflict regions and conflict situations. Yet it is not enough to perceive of peace as a sequence of initially negative and subsequently positive peace. “Negative peace” here means the absence of war; “positive peace,” by contrast, is a more general concept, one including individual security. Ways to achieve both gender justice and peace must, in any case, have to be taken into account from the very beginning.

“Peace and Security for All” is for us both a normative demand and a vision since, in traditional security policy, the female half of the population has hardly ever been considered. Achieving peace and security for women and men, boys and girls in their varied living conditions, however, is also a highly ambitious task. Feminist concepts of peace strive to meet this challenge: With Judith Ann Tickner’s utopia of a peace based on gender justice in mind, they demand that the norms of women’s rights and international law be strengthened and that the focus be shifted from escalation to prevention. This implies a conceptual reorientation from a narrowly defined security policy to a peace policy. Feminists are consistently calling military institutions and concepts into question. This has also, in feminist discourse, led to controversies over women’s participation in the military.

Feminist concepts of peace are premised on the universal integration of a gender perspective into all spheres, as well as on the equal participation of women and men at all levels and in all processes, but especially in the context of security and peace policies. Since the beginning of the 1990s, with these demands, women activists have found wider public acceptance in the West than ever before. The fact that the transnational women’s movement changed its strategy with respect to the World

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Conferences on Women contributed greatly to this success. The self-perception of many feminist NGOs had evolved from one of oppositional criticism and monitoring to a strategy of lobbying and exercising concrete influence at international UN conferences. Christa Wichterich, for instance, identified the convergence of topics at NGO and UN debates at the 1994 Cairo UN International Conference on Population as a political novelty. Today most feminist NGOs no longer just criticize UN policies, they also try to actively shape them. This, however, was not uncontested within the feminist NGOs themselves.

Ultimately the efforts of many women's NGOs culminated in the adoption of the Beijing Platform of Action at the UN World Conference on Women in 1995. This platform requires institutional mechanisms to promote the equal rights of women. States were called upon to "support mainstreaming of a gender justice perspective in all policy areas and all levels of government."

As a result, the concept of gender mainstreaming was introduced into international policy making; the goal was to bring awareness of gender equality into the work of organizations.