Gender in International Conflict:
Women Representation in Security Discourse

Fitriani

Rajaratnam School for International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore
E-mail: isfitriani@ntu.edu.sg

Abstract : Security discourse that was long considered as scientific, objective and gender neutral is one subject that had received numerous feminist critics. It is not only that feminist observed security discourse as minority–including women and victims–blind; it is also masculine and pro-status quo. This article reviews the building of security discourse from feminist perspective that detects, since the theoretical building to the practical level, women are given weak position to justified the strong state. At maximum the rhetoric of women empowerment is used by the state to validate its coercive action.

Keywords : international security, genderization, gender studies, feminism

Abstrak : Keamanan wacana yang sudah lama dianggap sebagai ilmiah, obyektif dan netral gender adalah salah satu topik yang telah menerima kritik feminis banyak. Hal ini tidak hanya itu feminis keamanan wacana diamati sebagai minoritas-termasuk perempuan dan korban-buta, melainkan juga maskulin dan pro-status quo. Artikel ini meninjau pembangunan wacana keamanan dari perspektif feminis yang mendeteksi, karena bangunan teoritis ke tingkat praktis, perempuan diberikan posisi lemah untuk dibenarkan negara yang kuat. Maksimum retorika pemberdayaan perempuan yang digunakan oleh negara untuk memvalidasi tindakan koersif nya.

Kata Kunci: keamanan internasional, proses gender, sudut pandang gender, feminisme

The general security discourse had been neglecting gender as a variable of power. Gender relations, gender subordination and gender stereotypes are not considered as part of security, or as a creator of insecurity. Gender sterile is taken as neutrality in the concept of power, choice of actors, and definition of conflict. This 'neutrality' is found in International Relations reading materials such as Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Prince*, Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan*, Hans Morgenthau's *Politics Among Nations*, and Kenneth Waltz's *Men, the State and War*. The neutrality is in fact is not neutral, it silences the others. Feminist perspective, in the other hand, offers alternative argument to incorporate gender as part of the analysis, not only as add-on but also a causal analysis and constitutive elements, such as offered by Jean Bethke Elshtain's *Women and War* (1987), Ann Tickner's *Gender in International Relations:*

Feminist perspectives on achieving global security (1992) and Annick Wibben's in *Feminist Security Studies: A Narrative Approach* (2011). By having gender-inclusive security studies it is expected that the studies will be able to acquire further empirical validity and explanatory power by acknowledging experiences of those whom frequently forgotten and silenced from the mainstream discourse: women.

Feminism provides alternative way of seeing phenomena, study subjects, discourse narratives, and histories. This perspective also includes alternative on how conflict and war can be analysed not only by "adding women and stir" but incorporating women in meaningful participation.[134] There are critic annotated to feminist perspective due to

---

[134] The approach of "add-women-and-stir" is a policy of placing women in places where women are not, or minimally, present. This policy can be

conjecture that feminism is only fighting the cause for women as biological entity but not on the subordination process; its root causes; and the resulted marginalisation. The critic continues by assuming that feminism is against men. This view has misunderstood that the act of subordination is done by society as whole, including men and women it composed of, using patriarchal and misogynist approach as their base of oppression. Another critic given to feminism is that the perspective places all women as if they are in the same position and having the same demands, despite inherent differences in their background, culture, religion and socio-economic level. There are true and false in these views. It is *true* that feminism in general is concerned with gender subordination and marginalisation which can be imposed on person from any sex, by person from any sex, which impacted differently on each of the person according to her/his resilience to the acts.[135] The main reason that feminism come across as supporting women more than it supports men is that women are often in the position of (or positioned as) the weak, despite not all the time. Having said that, feminist essentially stands for victims of gender subordination and marginalisation, both men and women. Meanwhile, it is not true that feminism generalised women to have the same experiences and wants. As there are many

versions of democracy and repressions, there are also various streams of feminism focusing differently on the causes and context of the subjugation ; the subject to be defended ; and how to achieve empowerment and improvement.[136]

Feminist perspective used in this writing is the belief that all human beings, both men and women, have social and humanity values shaped by the society where power structure comes to play. Biological difference and social options undertaken, in ideal, should not be the base of discrimination.[137] Using this notion, the feminist approach exercised in this writing is the priority to protect victimised people from discrimination or violent act on the bases of biological and/or social difference, whereas in conflict situation women are more often being the victims compared otherwise. The author underlines that there are no rigid real roles of women and men due to fact that these roles are different depends on who, where, when and why the perceiver perceived them. Every society imposes different roles to their women and men. The next section explains why line cannot be drawn to impose rigid roles of women and men, both in the situation of war and peace.

Difference of Gender and Sex

It is very often the term ' gender' is used interchangeably with the word 'women', and it is also too often gender perspective connotes only to women empowerment, yet the meaning is wider and inclusive to all parts of

---

done by tokenism approach, positioning several 'great' women as banner, or placing women in insignificant position. In the words of NATO Gender Avisor, Sahana Dharmapuri, the inclusion of women should integrate gender perspective and women themselves in all strategic, analytic and implementation level. See Sahana Dharmapuri, "Just Add Women and Stir", *Parameters – The US Army War College Quarterly*, June 2011, pp. 5670, especially pp. 58 -60.

[135] Sjoberg, Laura, 2006, *Gender, Justice and the Wars in Iraq: A Feminist Reformulation of Just War Theory*, New York: Lexington, p. 45.

[136] For brief introduction to feminism Tong, Rosemarie Putnam, 1998, *Feminist Thought: A More Comprehensive Introduction*, Boulder: Westview Press and continue with Butler, Judith, 1990, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, New York: Routledge.

[137] Reardon, Betty, 1995, *Sexism and the War System*, New York: Teacher College Press, p. 20.

the society. Hence, before continuing further, it is necessary to explain the difference of sex and gender. Sex is reproductive organs' biological difference, which is commonly perceived by binary dichotomy of female and male, women and men.[138] Therefore, women and men are sex classifications.

In the other hand, gender is social attribute and opportunity attached to the perceived sex. The term gender refers to different needs, experiences, and status of men and women, boys and girls based on a socio-cultural context.[139] This means gender is bound to certain place and period that changes over time.[140] What makes gender important in security discourse is its ability to see what is expected, allowed and marked as important from women and men in a particular time and place, in relation to security and securing actions. In other words, gender portrays power relations that exist in the society. Consequently, choosing a particular sex entails gender attribution given by the society. This attribution is imposed even before the human being is born. One example is sex-selective abortion in China's families due to the country's one-child policy. In the custom of Chinese traditional society, having family name passed-over only by men, women foetus received their gender-roles before going out of the womb, and modern day medical technology provides ways in ending their lives for another more 'respectable' sex. To make it closer, example can be seen on the ability and the acceptance of house-keeping. Traditionally, women are expected to be able to take care of the house including cleaning and cooking. Yet women and men are not biologically different to perform these tasks. This expectation is created by social perception because in the era of hunting and gathering, men went out of the cave to hunt wild animal while women stayed at home. In modern day, many men are able to clean and cook

Gender gives impact in daily social interaction, equally in the time of peace and war. Women experience war differently because conflict is unavoidably a power-game, as well as gender. International Relations professor from University of Maryland, Joshua Goldstein, stated " masculinity often depends on an ' other' constructed as feminine" and therefore " male soldiers use gender to represent domination ... they assume a masculine and dominant position relative to a feminine and subordinate enemy".[141] The description put forward by Goldstein is not wrong, despite after the terrorist-after-math the media highlighted how Abu Ghraib prisoners were also tortured by woman.[142] This

---

[138] There are two sexes that are commonly recognised by world countries, female and male. There are some societies that acknowledge more than two sexes. India and Nepal recognise three sexes in formal state papers, such as in public election, while in Thailand there exists 16 variety of sexes, despite this they are not acknowledge by state papers.

[139] United Nations, Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, *Gender Mainstreaming: Strategy for Promoting Gender Equality*, (New York: United Nations, 2000), p. 1. For concise introduction reading of gender, please see Kangas, Ann, Huma Haider and Erika Fraser, 2012, *The Topic on Gender*, Birmingham: Governance and Social Development Resource Centre, University of Birmingham and it can be downloaded via http://www.gsdrc.org/docs/open/gender.pdf

[140] United Nation Department of Peace Keeping Operation (UN DPKO), 2006, *DPKO Policy Directive: Gender Equality in UN Peacekeeping Operations*, New York: UN DPKO, p. 8.

[141] Goldstein, Joshua, 2001, *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War and Vice Versa*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 251 and 356.

[142] "Women Soldier Admit Iraq Abuse", BBC, 2 May 2005, from http :/ /news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/ 4504833.stm retrieved on 31 March 2012.

phenomenon is only depicting the fact that it is not only male soldier that is able to feminize the enemy. Beside Goldstein, there are growing body of research work on female soldiers; for example, see chapter in Cynthia Enloe's *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women"s Lives* (2000) that undertook study on how women recruited to become military personnel,[143] Lesley Gill's research on female military in Bolivia,[144] Peter Bracken's work on women in the Armed Forces in the UK,[145] and Mady Segal's historical tracking of women roles in the military.[146]

One prominent campaigner on international relations feminist perspective is Ann Tickner from University of Southern California. In Gender in International Relations she analysed that gender roles and women's experiences are often perceived as unimportant in academic discourses, impacting the lack of gender issues brought about in public debates and policy makings. International Relations (IR), in particular, was unable to incorporate gender narratives in their realist, liberalist and globalist grand debates.[147] Tickner particularly addressed IR point of view of political man (Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations,* 1973: Chapter 1), masculine concept of state (Machiavelli, *The Prince and the Discourses*, 1940) and state system that wages war of everyman against everyman (Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 1651 reprinted 2009: Part 1, Chapter 3). She portrayed that distinct insecurity of women is not catered by security studies since IR approach of peace is the absence of war *per se*, while repression and violence, especially those directed toward certain sex, are not addressed. In that realisation, she pointed that women experiences and problems should be included as part of IR's reality, theory and analysis to avoid the claim that the study is 'neutral' when it was actually ignoring certain sex due to its invisible roles in the global public politics.[148]

The majority of women experience war in their position as civilians due to the general states' policy discriminatory positioning men and women in their armed forces. The act can be seen in military conscript obligation mostly imposed towards men, while women's main obligation for the state is not to protect it but to reproduce. This unconscious role-play is created by repeating the propaganda of women 'normality' as being mothers every time the doubt has been raised.[149] The subtle implication then, the more people agree with this 'normality', means that giving birth is not only an option for women to use their biological organs, but becomes a *pro-patria* obligation. Therefore women must bear baby for the state being able to continue its

---

[143] Enloe, Cynthia, 2000, *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women"s Lives*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

[144] Gill, Lesley, 1997, " Creating Citizens, Making Men; The Military and Masculinity in Bolivia", *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 12, No. 4, pp. 581-586.

[145] Bracken, Peter, 2000, "Women in the Army", in Hew Strachan (Ed.) , *The British Army: Manpower and Society into the Twenty-First Century*, London: Frank Cass.

[146] Segal, Mady W., 1995, "Women's Military Roles Cross-Nationality: Past, Present and Future," *Gender & Society*, Vol. 9, No. 6, pp. 757-775.

[147] Tickner, Ann, 1999, *Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspective in Achieving Global Security*, New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 22-28.

[148] *Ibid.*, pp. 58-62, 88-96.

[149] The same thing goes to " the loaded adjective 'natural' – general being male, garment worker being female" stated by Enloe, Cynthia, 2004, *The Curious Feminist: Searching for Women in a New Age of Empire*, Berkeley: University of California Press, p.1. Feminists understand that what is normal and natural are self-consciously created.

life. This mindset subsequently produces another unconscious snowballing effect to women's life that is decided by the government: how the women can have their baby and whether they are able to access abortion. In this stage, what personal is political, and subsequently what personal is international.[150] In the situation of war, the enemy with similar way of thinking will target the women as subject of rape for the same reason, to bear the enemy's children, or at least to make the women unable to reproduce so that the state cannot continue its life. With this approach then can explain why almost 80 percent of internally displaced persons and refugees are women and children.[151] Even after the conflict ended, the continual threat of sexual violence still hampers their return to the communities.

Genderization of Conflict

Security dicourse, part of international Relations studies, have been over a decade familiar with the concept of 'securitisation' put forward by Ole waever where " *it is by*

labelling something a security issue that it becomes one"[152] However his concept overlooked the process of genderization, a term that he author coined to analyse how in the times of conflict women and men, girls and boys are affected differently because of their perceived gender differences. Derived from the concept of securitisation process, genderisation is the assigning of certain issues, actions and treatments toward an individual and/or group of people on the bases of their sexes. The practice of giving men roles of state-defence and women of state-reproduce is an example of conflict genderisation perpetuated by the state and society. International relation in general, and security studies in particular, have missed to see genderisation process as part of their analysis and therefore they are unable to assess issues such as the utilisation of rape as weapon of war; embedded feminism as justification of waging war; selective military conscription and selective abortion. The unbalance power owned by women and men, girls and boys in time of peace, will perpetuate further in times of war. the binary stereotype of weak-women and strong-men in the time of peace induced women as victims (or as the burden or captive) and men as heroes (or the soldier or wager) in the time of war.

Even though there are many roles women can play in conflict and war ' such as soldiers, insurgents, terrorists, military doctors, nurses and spies' most women are acting as civilians. The reason is that, in peace-time, not many women hold military and government policymaker positions. This made women to

---

[150] "What personal is political" is second wave feminist wake (1970-80s) slogan in the US. International relations feminist Cynthia Enloe leveled the term to "what personal is international and what international is personal" by pointing that the international condition and policies give impact to individual way of life. See Enloe, Cynthia, 1990, *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*, University of California Press, p. 196.

[151] United Nations, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2011, *Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons Questions and Answers About IDPs*, http : // www2. ohchr. org/ English/issues/idp/issues.htm,and United Nations, Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, 2011,*Post-Conflict and Humanitarian Planning fact sheet*, http://www.unifem.org/gende der issues/women war peace?post conflict humani tarian planning.php.

[152] Wæver, Ole, 1995, " Securitization and Desecuritization" in Ronnie D. Lipschutz, *On Security*, New York: Columbia University Press and Wæver, Ole, 2004 , " Aberystwyth, Paris, Copenhagen New Schools in Security Theory and the Origins between Core and Periphery", paper presented at the ISA Concerence, March.

lag behind, and sometimes not included, in the decision-making process on when and how the war is conducted. Actors inside the state's public spheres are the ones that come out with the decision and they are mostly men who plan, define, execute, conclude and report war. Until the end of 2011, there are only 19.3 percent of women in world's parliament and numbered only 3 to 14 percent in the military.[153] Whenever women would like to participate, they will join the armed forces that valued men and masculinity, rather than women and femininity.[154] Women that are unwilling to raise arms will also experience war in manners of refugees, victims of sexual abuse, war logistic providers, prostitute, and all sorts while still burdened by house-hold obligation.

Due to women's symbolic - and real-roles as state reproducer, they become more fragile to the act of rape in conflict situation, and therefore the waging actors utilised this as weapon of war.[155] Children born from women victims of rape become the embodiment of the enemy penetration. If the women victims are not pregnant due to the violent act, they are still living proofs of the inability of men

institution (either the armed forces or guerrilla fighters) that supposed to protect them. This existing mindset creates symbolism of women victims of rape in conflict as area infiltrated by the enemy.[156] The implication is many of these women victims and the babies born out of the situation are not accepted by the society. There are even groups of society that prefer to kill rape victims due to keeping-honour ideology that is practiced in countries such as Jordan, Palestine and Libya. The states that have similar mindset omit the act by not installing proper law. That had been said, as long as women positioned as 'the weak', 'the protected' and 'the reproducer', rape and sexual violence against women in conflict- and in peace-time will still exist.

War Legitimacy for Men and Women

Feminists Laura Sjoberg, Jean Elshtain and Lucinda Peach argued that war is an activity that depends on gendered portrayal of soldiers and civilians.[157] These portrayal strongly depicted as "just hero" that generally represented by strong man holding weapon, wise, fair, with good altruistic arguments, defending rights of self-determination, and stating his love to his nation and family that

---

[153] Inter - Parliamentary Union, 2011, "Women in Parliament: World Average", http ://www.ipu. org / wmn - e / world. htm and Ratcliffe, Rebecah, "Women in the Military: Around the World", http: //www.guardian.co.uk / uk / 2011 / dec / 08/ women-in-military-around-world accessed on 21 December 2011, 15.00 GMT+8.

[154] Both sex and social attributes (feminine and masculine) are stated to illustrate that woman is not always feminine. She can be masculine or what not. However, the institution that valued biological men and masculinity, masculine women is not regarded equal as masculine men. This is illustrated well in Enloe, Cynthia, 2000, *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women Live"s*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

[155] Card, Claudia, 1996, "Rape as Weapon of War", *Hypatia*, Vol. 11, No. 4, Fall pp. 5-18.

[156] Feminists analyse language as part of gendered power struggle, one example is the word "penetration" that is deemed gender-bias because the act of inserting penis can only be done by men, see Cameron, Deborah, 1998, *The Feminist Critique of Language: A Reader*, London: Routledge, p. 165. This was of course before the era of strap on and artificial penis surgery.

[157] Sjoberg, Laura, 2006a, "The Gendered Realities of the Immunity Principle: Why Gender Analysis Needs Feminism", *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 50, No. 4, pp. 889-910; Elshtain, Jean, 1992, *Just War Theory*, New York: New York University Press; Peach, Lucinda, 1994, "An Alternative to Pacifism? Feminism and Just-War Theory", *Hypatia*, Vol. 9, No. 2, pp. 152-171.

forced him to risk his life and shed blood for something that is worthy to be protected. Meanwhile, the protected side is represented by women and children with innocent, pure soul, needing to be defended. Feminists observe the creation of these binary images through security discourse.

The security discourse becomes 'safety net' where women are promised to be protected by men that obtain benefit, or at least agreement, in war legitimacy.[158] When the war propaganda is portraying men and women in conflict situation, the security discourse is forming war legitimacy narratives, stating the 'masculine' protects the 'feminine' with the general attribution of 'the strong' protects 'the weak'. Generally, in a country where there is strong state that exists as the masculine force there is weak civilian as the feminine counter-part. While the protection is not guaranteed to exist, this security discourse of strong-men/weak-women binary is perpetuated by the state, or the power-holder, to gain justification on waging war and sufficient reasons to raise tax and to allocate greater defence budget allocation.[159]

The argument proposed in this writing is that the discourse built by the state to obtain greater justification in conducting war is generated from the portrayal on the strong defending the weak, masculine shielding feminine, and men protecting women. This becomes legitimising narratives, or automated acceptances, that it is 'natural' for the armed forces and government officials being dominated by men despite justification of these protection narratives have not been proven, both in peace and conflict settings. Justifying women need protection is not only re-produce gender subordination, but also legitimising war, giving it *reason d''etre* for conflict. Unfortunately, this weak-women/strong-men binary logic has not been consciously reflected by many people taken part in discoursing security. Rape against women is an ongoing phenomenon, in military institution women almost always become the victim of sexual harassment, ranging from dirty jokes to rape. In the case study done within the US military service in 2005, as many as 60 percent women soldiers had experienced sexual violence done by their colleagues.[160] However the armed forces wage war with foreign country, but not with themselves that is actually creating insecurity by raping and sexually harassing women military personnel. Other country's men are considered more dangerous than men from the same country, therefore armed forces are still needed to stand by and guard. The symbolic logic that create the condition for

---

[158] Sjoberg, 2006a, *Op. Cit.*

[159] The US President George W. Bush did not raise the tax while delivering the country to war against terrorism. He infact decreased tax twice in 2001 and 2003 to raise election popularity. Nevertheless he is still using the gender portrayal to mobilize the war by linking terrorism limits women's freedom, where he regards *burqa* (head to toe veiling) as restraining women's rights without acknowledging that there were probably women that use the dress by her own option due to personal preference. See Viner, Katharine, 2002, "Feminism as Imperialism", *The Guardian*, 21 September and Lemmon, Gayle Tzemach,

2011, " Forgetting Afghanistan's Women", *Foreign Policy*, 9 September.

[160] Tyson, Ann Scott, 2005, "Sexual Abuse is Called Rife in Guard and Reserves", *The Washington Post*, 30 September. It is difficult to seek reliable data on rape and sexual-based violence, especially in hyper masculine institution such as the military. In this institution the report system is more complicated because there are only very few women that have high rank to provide support and protection on the victims that are mostly women having lower rank. See Nelson, Terri, 2002, *For Love of Country: Confronting Rape and Sexual Harassment in the US Military*, New York:

women not to be responsible for protecting themselves manifested to the limitation for women. Not all positions of the armed forces are accessible for women. This can be found in barrier for women to enter combat related roles, such as infantry, cavalry and special forces.

Taking example of the US, this war-active country in the time of World War II (1939-1945) did not allow women to go to the battle field unless they were nurses. In the time of Vietnam War (1955-1975) women were not allowed to enter land and air battalion, warships and submarines. With the support of second wave feminist movement (1970-80s) rising consciousness of gender, culture and role inequality, the Pentagon flexed its boundaries to allow women to support all lines of war, with exception for the combat forces of the US military. In the first Gulf War 1990, as many as 41,000 women mobilised into the battle, where 15 of them had died and for the first time women had been held captive.[161] In the year 1993, after President Bill Clinton congratulated women participation in war, the US Armed Forces was pushed to open more positions for women, including the roles of fighter pilots and peacekeepers. Since then, the US women peacekeepers had been deployed to Haiti, Bosnia and Somalia. Until the year 2009, there were 14 percent active women personnel in the US Armed Forces, in which 11 percent of them were mobilised to the Middle East conflict area with limitation of going to the front lines.[162] However, the existence of this gender-based limitation is not

realised by the country that provided its attack to Afghanistan with justification to release Afghan women from Taliban oppression in addition to war on terrorism.

> *"Fighting brutality against women and children is not the expression of a specific culture; it is the acceptance of our common humanity – a commitment shared by people of good will on every continent … The fight against terrorism is also a fight for the rights and dignity of women."* (Laura Bush, 2001)[163]

Even after Laura Bush delivered her speech, the US Armed Forces still kept their policy in restraining access for women in direct combat position as for 20 percent of the Pentagon service, or amounted to 250,000 military positions. The bar only slightly lifted 11 years after when in 2012 the new government opened 14,000 restricted positions for women, bringing them closer to the front line.[164] This utilisation of women's rights as a propaganda to support "war on terror" is seen as a troublesome embedded feminism The term is coined by scholar from University Toronto Krista Hunt using an analogy of embedded media that is commonly used by the conflicting parties to "shape public perception about the war".[165] Defending women's rights

---

Haworth Maltreatment and Trauma Press.

[161] Benedict, Helen, 2009, *The Lonely Soldier: The Private War of Women Serving in Iraq*, Boston: Beacon Press, p. 4.

[162] *Ibid,* pp. 4-5.

[163] Stabile, Carol A. and Deepa Kumar, 2005, "Unveiling Imperialism: Media, Gender and the War of Afghanistan", *Media, Culture and Society*, Vol. 27, No. 5, p. 765.

[164] Fitriani and Ron Matthews, "Women in Combat Roles in US Military: Still a small step to equality", *RSIS Commentary*, No. 046, 2012, 15 March 2012.

[165] Hunt, Krista, 2006, "'Embedded Feminism' and the War on Terror", in Krista Hunt and Kim Rygel (Eds.), *(En)gendering the War on Terror: War Stories and Camouflage Politics*, Hampshire: Ashgate, p.52.

become a tool of mobilising support as one of the " war on terror" goals without conducting root-cause analysis and employing gender-sensitive means, for example more balanced involvement of women security expert in decision-making process, creation of gender-sensitive security policy and even more gender balance armed forces that is not discriminative on men and women but rather based on their capacity.

Seeing this embedded feminism discourse constructed by the government to liberate women through idealist orations but in reality the narratives are not delivered, or proven otherwise, has shaped scepticism in seeing state policy reluctantly supporting women empowerment. When the argument of women rights is put forward by the state, there is doubt that the narrative is only being used to legitimise state action. However sincere the narratives provided by the authority to share its power, it is still difficult for them to change their mindset and sphere of influence. This applies to state as it is the only entity holds sovereignty of its people, because if the people can holds their own sovereignty the state will lose its basic usefulness. Therefore what repeatedly occurred is that the state officials, head of government and its ministers, built discourse of how all people's participation is significantly necessary for common progress but in the end only parts of the society are accounted. Particularly in the context of building security discourse, women are always left behind, not only in number but also in knowledge.

Political Discourse and Gender Equality in Security Sector

It is important to examine the building of discourse in politics to see how power

shapes the discussion. Especially for analysts with gender sensitivity, the discourse takes significant place in building the arguments that support – or undermine – gender equality. Political discourse denotes the involvement of policymakers in conceptual disputes, both intentionally or unintentionally, that resulted to shape meaningful terminology of concept employed in specific context.[166] In the context of security, one example is the discourse that state is guarded by its people, primary by its military, that is generally dominated by men hence whenever women try to enter significant position in the institution, such as special force, worried remarks automatically generate in terms of combat effectiveness to keep women at the periphery.

In relation of how power maintains its *status quo* influence, French socio-political philosopher Michel Foucault uttered a famous line "the exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge and, conversely knowledge constantly induces effects of power".[167] He further explained that power is playing a significant role in the making of dominant discourse in producing the limit of 'truth' that exists in the face of public. His statement amplify that the chance for alternative truth, other that the public belief, will be unlikely to subsist unless it challenges and able to replaces the dominant discourse. Power operates through the discourse of dominant policies by limiting the dissident voice or opinion therefore change is difficult to take place.

---

[166] Lombardo, Emanuela, Petra Meier and MiekeVerloo (eds.), 2009, *The Discursive Politics of Gender Equality: Stretching, Bending and Policymaking*, Oxon: Routledge, p. 10.

[167] See Foucault, Michel, 1980, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, Sussex: Harvester Press, translate to English by Colin Gordon, p.52.

Scholar Myra Marx Ferree from University of Wisconsin called this process *framing*, the creation of frame to see particular issue. This creation of framework is analysed through (re)construction of political, social and security actors' reality using symbolic tools.[168] This process allows certain parts of the issue to be captured in the frame and some other parts are not, both intentional and unintentionally. The tangible result of political discourse is the institutionalising of a policy, which in the words of Ferree, is referred as *authoritative texts* which taken the forms of constitution, law, treaties and administrative regulations.[169] These authoritative texts, similar like science, are seen as objective, impartial, and aggregating the whole truth. The truth always depends on who is seeing, how does the actor see and the situation of the object. Due to the framing process the whole truth provided is always partial.

The unintentional factor in discourse and policy making was further studied by Anthony Giddens that came up with the concept of "conscious discourse".[170] According to Giddens, consciousness can be measured by how far the actors or policymakers can explain the arguments they utilise in the policymaking process, why are those reasons being considered and why not others, why emphasise or minimise certain issue, and what do they mean by those reasons. Specifically on the security discourse, women are often being left out from the issue by using the utilisation of 'normality', ' nature', ' appropriateness', often also ' God's will' and similar limiting words that prevent women taking more position, including bearing arms to protect her state (and herself) to again enforced the weak-women/strong-men binary. This arguments built the ' practical consciousness' trough regulations (the authoritative texts) and routines. The practical consciousness is often utilised in decision making process because the existing dominant discourse is easier to adopt compared to building newer arguments. This pattern makes the dominant discourse in security goes unchallenged.

In security, feminists criticised the discourse that minimised gender, and effects of gendered power relations, from the study of international security.[171] This action does not automatically make security studies become gender-neutral or solved its problem by ignoring the other side of the story, those from the women and subordinated people, such as the victims and minorities. Feminists present with their inquiries, "Why one of the sexes is not relevant in this studies?" "How far does the state provide security for the women and minorities in the time of peace and war?" Feminists also criticised the common association of women with peace therefore placing them in the second best when it comes to conflict and seen as deviant when women ask for equal participation in the military. Many had forgotten that women also able to lead society and state to war, to mention some there were Cleopatra II from Egypt, Jeanne d'Arc from France, Margaret Thatcher from the UK, Golda Meir from Israel and Cut Nyak

---

[168]Adaptation from the definition of *frame analysis* coined by Ferree, Myra, " Inequality, Intersectionality and the Politics of Discourse: Framing Feminist Alliances", in Lombardo, *et. al.* 2009, *Op. Cit.*, p. 89.

[169] Ferree, 2009, *Op. Cit.*, p. 89.

[170] Giddens, Anthony, 1984, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

[171]See for example Blanchard, Eric, 2003, "Gender, International Relations, and Development of Feminist Security Theory", *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, Vol. 28, No. 4, Summer, pp. 1.289-1.313.

Dien from Indonesia.[172] These names often being put aside as the writers of history tends to highlight manliness heroism. However, feminism assured that gender-sensitive security studies will not only benefited women, but also those who are commonly unheard, minorities and victims, including legally unrecognised sexes, non-hetero-normative groups and those who experienced layered discrimination such as ethnic, religious, social economic, and so forth.

In the discourse of nationalism, as part of the big security discourse that provides the reason and justification of state defence, women are often positioned as the symbol of purity, moral and courage to go to war. Using the words of George Mosse, history professor at the University of Winconsin, at the time of war and revolution "woman was idealized, she was at the same time put firmly into her place".[173] Mosse analysed how in the heat of revolution the French was using painting of lady 'Marriane' going to the battle as symbol of liberty but after peace achieved and Republic established she was seen as contradicting feminine values and was domesticated and dethroned.[174] In the newly proclaimed Second Republic, the French in 1848 created a competition of how Marriane should represent allegorically. It was decided

that she should represents stability, respectability and moral values, thus remaking her surrounded by male protectors and dressed in fully clothes in any of her art pieces made thereafter.

Marriane *Liberty Leading the People* in painting by Eugène Delacroix (1830) as symbol of revolution in painting by Gustav Dore (1870) in fully clothes

Meanwhile the image of strong-men in revolution is portrayed to protect three hopelessly weak entities – motherland, women and children– from outside invasion, this is again a perpetuation of the gender roles binary difference. The foreign invasion is significant because rape and other gender-based violence done by foreigners rise the urges of waging war, while the rape perpetrated by fellow

---

[172] Fukuyama, Francis, 1998, " Women and the Evolution of World Politics", *Foreign Affairs*, September/October. Fukuyama stated that with more women in the world's parliament therefore the world will be more peaceful was argued erroneous by many feminists, one of them was Tickner, Ann, 1999a, " Why Women Can't Run the World: International Politics According to Francis Fukuyama", *International Studies Review*, Vol. 1, No. 3, Autumn

[173] Mosse, George L, 1997, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe*, (New York: Howard Fertig), p. 90.

[174] *Ibid.*, pp. 90-91.

citizen will not make the perpetrator an enemy of the state. For example, when several Indonesian female domestic workers were heavily assaulted by their Malaysian employers in 2010, security discourse in Indonesian public inclined toward attacking Malaysia by coercive force.[175] Another example is when in 1995 three American soldiers raped young girl in Okinawa resulted Japanese people demanding the closing down of US military base.[176] This gendered national conception implied to the existence of security concept linked with gender, that the state identification is dependent on the state's gender identification, all of these had passed the process of genderisation.

The practice of gender identity transformed as state identity exists in most of the countries in the world. The biological, social and sexual roles importance is often goes so far in putting states into agony every time women and minorities are trying to reach positions commonly reserved by men and majority. The importance of men in policymaking and up keeping state sovereignty is greatly illustrated in Waltz's *Man, the State and War*, a book that is widely accepted as one of the canon of International Relations and Security Studies readings. Seeing – and experiencing – this, it is no wonder that feminists scholar working in the field of conflict and war such as Cynthia Enloe

remarked international system as patriarchal.[177] Enloe saw the system giving special privilege to masculinity and its units (i.e. the states and actors within the states, international organisations and corporations) by the same way Waltz depicted anarchy privileges those men having and maintaining the power.

Hegemonic discourse in security studies eliminates gender from the global politics in its arguments, which in turn minimises the existence of women and minorities in its policy outcomes. In the defence platform acquisition for instance, the procurement of submarine and jet fighter is usually said to accommodate the troops as whole, however the policy of utilisation in most countries explicitly seclude women from utilising those platforms. This slowly changed after 1985 Norway being the first country in the world allowed women military personnel to serve in submarines which brought other countries' government to review its policy. The last change of policy allowing female personnel to serve in submarines is done by the US in late 2011, while Britain will only start in 2013. Gender equality still needs to go a long way in practice, since until mid 2012 only ten countries, out of hundred and ten countries in the world, imposed equal participation in military conscription. The condition unlikely change if the grand narratives of security discourse are still gender-blind.

Conclusion

From the arguments, conclusion that can be withdrawn is that it is important to analyse the argument utilised by hegemonic

---

[175] "Indonesians Vent Anger over Maid Abuse in Malaysia", *Channel News Asia*, 22 September 2010, http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/asia pacific/view/1082737/1/.htm accessed on 31 March 2012.

[176] Due to big men diplomacy, President Clinton and Prime Minister Hashimoto, the US military based was not shut but only reduced in size. For analysis on the issue see Minakagi, Yumiko, 2004, "Okinawa: Women, Bases and US-Japan Relations", *International Relations of the Asia Pacific*, Vol. 4, No. 1, p. 97-111.

[177] Enloe, Cynthia, 1990, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 4-6 and Elshtain, Jean, 2009, "Women, the State and War", *International Relations*, Vol. 23, No. 2, p. 289-300.

security discourse that has taken place as it is not as neutral as it may seems. The limit of consciousness of existing discourse needs to be put to question, including its inclusiveness towards all parts of the society, such as whether women and minorities voices are taken to account. Further, question should be raised whether security discourse exists due to its relevant necessities of naturalness, i.e. the long-time dominant gender-blind discourse, and whether the concept of security is referred to the security of power-holders or security for all.

When gender is said to be included in the building of discourse, it is important to revisit how the logics of gender is utilised in the narratives of security and conflict, whether it is essentially being considered or only embedded. This is to avoid gender perspective employed in simplified manner of men/women masculine/feminine and hero/victim differences and utilised this as justification for waging war. Simplification will only bring binary conception weak-women/strong-men and parallel to that weak people/strong-military, which then preserved by the state as a 'natural' equilibrium to justify giving more power to the state and more budget to defence. As the existing dominant discourse sees this binary conception as 'natural' it will goes hardly unchallenged, whereas without the portrayals of inferior weak women, femininity and the people there will be no images of superior men, masculinity and the state. The proposal here is to empower the inferior, to strengthen women, raise the value of femininity and to support the people so that equality can be achieved.

References

Benedict, Helen. 2009. *The Lonely Soldier: The Private War of Women Serving in Iraq*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Blanchard, Eric. 2003. "Gender, International Relations, and Development of Feminist Security Theory". *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*. Vol. 28. No. 4. Summer. pp 1.289-1.313.

Butler, Judith. 1990. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.

Cameron, Deborah. 1998. *The Feminist Critique of Language: A Reader*, London: Routledge.

Card, Claudia. 1996. "Rape as Weapon of War". *Hypatia*. Vol. 11. No. 4. Fall. pp. 5-18.

Elshtain, Jean. 1987. *Women and War*. Brighton: Harvester.

Elshtain, Jean. 1992. *Just War Theory*, New York: New York University Press.

Elshtain, Jean. 2009. "Women, the State and War". *International Relations*. Vol. 23. No. 2. pp. 289-300.

Enloe, Cynthia. 1990. *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*. University of California Press.

Enloe, Cynthia, 2000, *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women"s Lives*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Enloe, Cynthia. 2004. *The Curious Feminist: Searching for Women in a New Age of Empire*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Fitriani and Ron Matthews. 2012. "Women in Combat Roles in US Military: Still a small step to equality". *RSIS Commentary*. No. 046. 2012. 15 March.

Foucault, Michel. 1980.*Power/Knowledge:*

Selected Interviews and Other Writings,1972-1977.

Sussex: Harvester Press, translate to English by Colin Gordon.

Fukuyama, Francis. 1998. "Women and the Evolution of World Politics". *Foreign Affairs*. September/October.

Giddens, Anthony. 1984. *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. Cambridge: Polity Press

Goldstein, Joshua. 2001. *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War and Vice Versa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hunt, Krista and Kim Rygel (Eds.). 2006. *(En)gendering the War on Terror: War Stories and Camouflage Politics*. Hampshire: Ashgate.

Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2011, "Women in Parliament : World Average",http : // www . ipu .org/ wmn- e / world. htm accessed on 21December 2011, 15.00 GMT+8.

Kangas, Ann, Huma Haider and Erika Fraser, 2012, *The Topic on Gender*, Birmingham: Governance and Social Development Resource Centre, University of Birmingham e - book download:http://www.gsdrc.org/docs /open/gender.pdf

Lombardo, Emanuela, Petra Meier and MiekeVerloo (eds.). 2009. *The Discursive Politics of Gender Equality : Stretching , Bending and Policy making*. Oxon:Routledge.

Minakagi, Yumiko. 2004. "Okinawa: Women, Bases and US-Japan Relations". *International Relations of the Asia Pacific*. Vol. 4. No. 1. pp. 97-111.

Nelson, Terri. 2002. *For Love of Country: Confronting Rape and Sexual Harassment in the US Military*. New York: Haworth Maltreatment and Trauma Press.

Peach, Lucinda. 1994. " An Alternative to Pacifism? Feminism and Just-War Theory". *Hypatia*, Vol. 9. No. 2. pp. 152-171.

Reardon, Betty. 1995. *Sexism and the War System*. New York: Teacher College Press.

Ratcliffe, Rebecah, "Women in the Military: Around the World",http://www.guardian .co.uk/uk/2011/dec/08/women-in-military -around-world accessed on 21 December 2011, 15.00 GMT+8.

Sjoberg, Laura. 2006. *Gender, Justice and the Wars in Iraq: A Feminist Reformulation of Just War Theory*. New York: Lexington.

Sjoberg, Laura. 2006a. " The Gendered Realities of the Immunity Principle: Why Gender Analysis Needs Feminism". *International Studies Quarterly*. Vol. 50. No. 4. pp. 889-910. download: http://www.gsdrc.org/docs/ open/gender.pdf