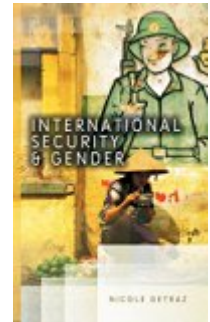


**Nicole Detraz.** *International Security and Gender*. Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2012. 224 pp. \$64.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-7456-5116-3.



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The relationship between international security and gender is a subject that I have always found crucially important to understanding both what *gender* is and what *international security* is. It is a research growth area, but up until this point there has been a dearth of accessible textbooks explaining some of the knowledge that research has gained. Accordingly, I was thrilled to find out that Nicole Detraz's *International Security and Gender* was commissioned and published by Polity Press. The book not only provides a succinct and comprehensible introduction to the subject matter, but does so in a way that utilizes the author's research strengths to round out the existing literature and suggest potential contributions to the ways that feminist security studies think about the issues that it regularly analyzes.

*International Security and Gender* begins with an understandable yet not overly simple discussion of how the concepts of "gender" and "international security" are deployed both in the book and more generally. Detraz defines gender as "a set of socially constructed expectations

about what men and women ought to be" (p. 5). She distinguishes it from biological sex and suggests the theoretical tool of "gender lenses" (following V. Spike Peterson and Anne Sisson Runyan) in order to effectively ask questions about how gender is related to, and constitutive of, security theory and practice.[1] Describing theoretical lenses like the many lenses of a camera, Detraz suggests that gender lenses inspire asking questions about the ways in which gender can be seen as crucial to how we characterize and practice security.

It is then that Detraz turns to defining the concept of security for the purpose of analyzing it through gender lenses. Rejecting definitions of security that confine it to the purview of the state, Detraz associates security with safety, protection, and freedom from danger (p. 6, citing James Der Derian).[2] Detraz suggests that understanding security broadly is consonant with the concerns revealed by gender lenses, which take note of both social construction and the importance of understanding politics from the margins. Having settled

on a broad definition of security drawing from human security, Copenhagen school, feminist, and critical work, Detraz provides the book's second unifying theoretical tool: emancipation. In addition to revealing the ways in which the theory and practice of security are gendered, Detraz looks to "show that this broadened sphere of analysis offers a more holistic understanding of security that reflects reflexive scholarship and benefits the process of policymaking." *International Security and Gender* seeks this end by working to "reflect on the emancipatory potential that gender lenses offer" (p. 17). The working understanding of emancipation used in the book comes from Ken Booth's Welsh-school *Theory of World Security* (2007), which suggests that "security and emancipation are two sides of the same coin" (quoted, p. 17). With this as a starting point, Detraz looks to explore various realms of the security arena, asking how seeing them through gender lenses contributes to enhancing security through emancipation.

The book then undertakes a discussion of the gendered elements of five different parts of security practice often analyzed in security theorizing: militarization, peacekeeping and peacebuilding, terrorism, human security, and the environment. Separated into individual chapters, these analyses describe some of the ways in which gender can and should be read into the security sector when addressing its traditional concerns. Overall the book provides a lot of information in a readable way. It will be particularly useful to students and others who have little exposure to issues of gender and international security, as its explanations are detailed but not condescending, and the information it presents is sophisticated but not inaccessible.

There are things to nitpick both about the structure of the book and how Detraz separated ideas into chapters which created the impression that they are separable areas, when indeed they overlap theoretically and sometimes even in the

book. Additionally, the book's construction, particularly in terms of its overreliance on secondary citations, and its content, as some of the most pressing areas of gender and international security analysis are left undercovered, can be read as weaknesses.

The book's discussion of militaries and militarization draws on decades of feminist work on war, security, and militaries in a concise way. Building on Laura Shepherd's definition in *Gender Matters in Global Politics* (2010) of militarization as "the process by which beings or things become associated with the military or take on military characteristics," Detraz explains the ways that gender lenses reveal the ties between statehood and militarization as manifested in *martial citizenship*—the shaping of citizenship around militarization (quoted, p. 29). She then discusses the development of militarized masculinities, where dominant masculinities in particular states take on traits associated with militarism, and militarism relies on those idealized masculinities to perpetuate itself. *International Security and Gender* then introduces readers to a number of the gendered consequences of masculinized militarization, including wartime rape, military prostitution, sexual misconduct, and domestic abuse, providing jarring statistics both about prevalence and severity of these abuses. Detraz suggests that research which recognizes the gender bias in militarization is more likely to succeed in achieving emancipation than work that ignores that bias and therefore the gender oppression that it breeds. The coverage of these issues in the book is fairly rehearsed in the existing literature, but presented well here for an unfamiliar audience.

The discussion of gender, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding is more original than the previous chapters and builds on more recent research. It discusses the comparisons and contrasts between military masculinities and peacekeeper masculinities in a way that raises important questions about gender tropes and peacekeeping, but, in my

opinion, also entrenches “peacekeeping” as outside of “militarism” when gender lenses would suggest that the two have more in common than not. The remainder of the discussion brings up many of the important gender issues around peacebuilding and peacekeeping, including the problem of sexual abuse by peacekeepers, the threats and benefits of “peacekeeping economies,” the challenges of gender mainstreaming, and the problematic gender stereotypes that hinder the effective involvement of women in peacebuilding processes. It is the treatment of the last two subjects (which are currently timely issues in feminist security studies) that are the strength of the book’s treatment. Detraz recounts that gender mainstreaming policies like United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 are at once progressive because they suggest that attention to women is important to solving crises of international security and problematic because they frequently falsely suggest that women are more peaceful than men and useful because of their peacefulness. Using several examples from the recent literature, the book suggests that gender mainstreaming processes have been handicapped at times by perceptions that women’s real contribution to peacebuilding is fundamentally different than men’s. As a result, “one major obstacle to effective gender mainstreaming in peacekeeping is ... that women are depicted as victims, mothers, or inherently peaceful” (p. 79). These stereotypes affect both the type of women included in peacekeeping processes and the ability of those women to impact policy outcomes. Detraz suggests that a critical feminist look at peace could enhance the emancipatory potential of peace analysis.

*International Security and Gender* then turns to gender and terrorism, dealing with the complexities involved in defining terrorism, the puzzle of women’s involvement in terrorism, the gendered nature of the representation of women terrorists, and the role of feminization in the United States’ prosecution of the “war on terror.” It explains to the reader that women terrorists exist,

and that coverage of them in both the scholarly literature and in the media is often more interested in their sex than their politics. It then suggests that relationships between terrorist actors and their state opponents are fundamentally gendered, where anti-terror states feminize and objectify (perceived) terrorist organizations, which attack the masculinities of their targets. Detraz suggests that critical feminist analysis could help free actors from these violent cycles.

This discussion carries over into a discussion of who and what count as the subjects and objects of international security as Detraz analyzes the concept and practice of human security through gender lenses. After discussing the lineage and contours of the concept of human security, Detraz outlines a potential feminist perspective on human security. She endorses the importance and emancipatory potential of making people the focus of security, but also acknowledges many key feminist concerns with the concept, including but not limited to the vagueness of its tenets and its tendency to be used in service of justifications for military intervention on the basis of the establishment or preservation of women’s security (when often the result is the opposite). The discussion of gender and human security concludes with the identification of a number of human security issues highlighted through gender lenses. Primary among those issues are women’s health security (and the sex-differential provision of health care in most places in the world) and human trafficking. Detraz suggests a feminist human security approach can go a long way towards addressing these problems, and in so doing contribute to women’s and human emancipation.

The last substantive discussion in the book, of gender and environmental security, is perhaps the book’s most compelling. It is so compelling in part because this book’s author is the voice bringing an interest in the environment to feminist work in security studies, and in part because that innovation is both intellectually and politically a

positive one. Detraz suggests that gender lenses help scholars see different facets of environmental conflict, environmental security, and ecological security, and discusses the implications of each in turn. She suggests that ecofeminism is just one of many ways to understand the relationship between gender, the environment, and security. She also discusses some other fruitful directions, including using gender lenses to see the sources of environmental insecurity as well as people's experiences of that insecurity. She details the ways in which climate change can be seen as both a gender issue and a security issue, and concludes that environmental security is an important part of the study of international security and gender.

The conclusion to the book suggests that the complexities of gender analysis and the complexities of security analysis are best considered together, where gender is crucial to understanding security and security is crucial to understanding gender. On this point I could not agree more. There are certainly parts of this book that I would argue with or question substantively. For example, is the major insight of feminist theorizing about terrorism that women are involved? Is it redundant to have a chapter on militarization and then one on terrorism, as if they are fundamentally different, and fundamentally differently gendered? Why are women terrorists interesting when women soldiers are less so? Where do the lines fall between state militarism, non-state group militarism (both mentioned in chapter 2, on militarism) and terrorist militancy (the subject of chapter 5)? How does one balance the argument that the feminist critique of human security makes "gendered human security practice" insidious with the need to come up with a practice of security that pays attention to women? However organizationally useful the concept of emancipation is for the discussion of international security and gender, does its employment in this book produce a partial representation of the contributions of gender theorizing to security, limited by a liberal progressivist imaginary? What (if anything) be-

comes different about the analysis when, as in this book, it is not explicitly labeled as feminist? How (if at all) is it possible to talk about representation on the basis of sex and treatment on the basis of gender *together* in the policy world?

Some of these questions, of course, are more of a critique of the research program in feminist security studies (of which I am a part) than they are of this book, and others are specific to the theoretical and empirical choices made in the construction of the book. None of those engagements, though, take away the contribution that this book makes to explaining and providing examples of the importance of, and contributions of, gender analysis in security. As Detraz concludes, work in this field "reveals that security studies without gender analysis can offer only partial understandings of security issues and incomplete frameworks for policymaking" (p. 211). Because that is a crucially important insight and this book communicates the warrants behind it well, it is an invaluable contribution to the literature.

#### Notes

[1]. V. Spike Peterson and Anne Sisson Runyan, *Global Gender Issues* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992).

[2]. James Der Derian, "The Value of Security: Hobbes, Marx, Nietzsche, and Baudrillard," in *On Security*, ed. Ronnie D. Lipschutz (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 24-45.

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