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Introduction by Douglas M. Gibler

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Contents

Introduction by Douglas M. Gibler, University of Alabama	2
Review by Heidi Hudson, University of the Free State, South Africa.....	4
Review by Jessica Trisko Darden, American University	10
Review by Lauren Wilcox, University of Cambridge	12
Author's Response by Laura Sjoberg, University of Florida.....	15

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Introduction by Douglas M. Gibler, University of Alabama

Laura Sjoberg's important book, *Gendering Global Conflict*, engages a wealth of both traditional and contemporary 'war studies' (as Sjoberg phrases them) to lay bare the theoretical gaps caused by omitting gender from our explanations of why individuals and collectivities fight. As Sjoberg convincingly argues, scholars cannot understand the causes and consequences of conflict and violence without also understanding how both are gendered.

A major contribution of the book is its broad sweep. Sjoberg engages multiple feminisms *and* multiple theoretical treatments of conflict. Few scholars have the tools or intellect to engage the multiverse of conflict scholarship while also resting critique comfortably among multiple feminisms. However, this book does so with ease. That is the conclusion of the several excellent reviews contained in this roundtable.

As Heidi Hudson asks: "Is this the great feminist book on war?" It may be. Hudson calls for empirics on how to apply Sjoberg's conceptual framework—which, to me, is a turn that implies a battle already won. Jessica Trisko Darden argues similarly, suggesting that controversy over what constitutes feminist International Relations scholarship may be as damaging to the field as hostility to gendered analysis. For Trisko Darden, the next step after Sjoberg's synthesis and critique rests in the empirics that link a "potentially groundbreaking path" with the traditional war studies that have always omitted gendered analysis. Finally, Lauren Wilcox suggests that *Gendering* moves war studies beyond facile treatments that simply add a new independent variable and properly situates the role of gender and gendering as part of a disciplinary dialogue. As Wilcox implies, Sjoberg is right that this dialogical treatment is necessary to perform war studies well.

My own experience of this book may be similar to others who have not properly engaged gendering critiques or understood their importance. For example, I still remember a graduate-school course I took twenty years ago that presented Carol Cohn's 1987 article, "Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals."¹ We engaged the text as best we could at the time, situated within a course of bullets, bombs, and counting. The discussion was fantastic; but while we as students recognized the importance of the insights, we also had trouble connecting those arguments with the traditional and behavioral literatures that were our focus. The pioneering work just sat there, ignored, because no framework was available to integrate its argument with the 'mainstream' scholarship we were reading. Thankfully, as the reviewers in this roundtable all concur, Sjoberg has now given us such a framework.

Participants:

Laura Sjoberg is Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Florida. She holds a BA from the University of Chicago, a JD from Boston College, and PhD in International Relations from the University of Southern California. Dr. Sjoberg's work has been published in more than three dozen journals in Political Science, Law, International Relations, Gender Studies, and Geography. She is author or editor of ten books, including, most recently, *Gender, War, and Conflict* (Polity, 2014) and *Beyond Mothers, Monsters, Whores* (with Caron Gentry, Zed Books, 2015). Her current projects include an edited volume on quantitative methods in critical and constructivist IR, *Interpretive Quantification* (with J. Samuel Barkin, forthcoming,

¹ Carol Cohn, "Sex and death in the rational world of defense intellectuals" *Signs* 12.4 (1987): 687-718.

University of Michigan Press), and a book on women's perpetration of conflict sexual violence, *Impossible Women, Impossible Crimes*.

Douglas M. Gibler is Professor of Political Science at the University of Alabama. He is the author of *The Territorial Peace: Borders, State Development, and International Conflict* (Cambridge University Press, 2012) as well as dozens of articles on international relations and comparative politics. His research has been supported by a fellowship from the HF Guggenheim Foundation and numerous grants from the National Science Foundation.

Heidi Hudson is Professor of International Relations and Director of the Centre for Africa Studies at the University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa. Her current research interests concentrate on discursive and material gender deficits of liberal peacebuilding in the postcolony. She is a Global Fellow of the Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO) and co-editor of *Post-conflict Reconstruction and Development in Africa: Concepts, role-players, policy and practice* (University of Cape Town Press, 2013), with Theo Neethling. She has published articles in *Security Studies*, *Security Dialogue*, *International Peacekeeping* and *Politics & Gender*, among others. Heidi Hudson is co-editor of *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, serves on numerous editorial boards and is a member of the Feminist Theory and Gender Studies executive of ISA. She holds a doctorate in Strategic Studies from the University of the Free State.

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Lauren Wilcox is University Lecturer in Gender Studies and Deputy Director of the Centre for Gender Studies at the University of Cambridge. Her book *Bodies of Violence: Theorizing Embodied Subjects in International Relations* was published by Oxford University Press in 2015.

Review by Heidi Hudson, University of the Free State, South Africa

Is this the great feminist book on war? Laura Sjoberg's book project is either incredibly brave or incredibly foolish. Taking on the International Relations (IR) gods, in particular mainstream war studies, could be asking for trouble given the outsider status of Feminist IR and Feminist Security Studies. Yet the time is ripe – after several years of Feminist IR scholarship maturing – for scholars to now not only consolidate the pioneering insights of feminists such as J. Ann Tickner, Cynthia Enloe, V. Spike Peterson and Christine Sylvester¹ into a coherent feminist theory, but also to engage the mainstream in a systematic way.

Sjoberg's treatment of 'gendering' (as reflected in the title) as a verb/logic and not just a noun (gender) to describe an identity category is very apt. It is the glue that keeps everything together. 'Doing' gender recognizes "gender itself as a power relation,"² enabling us to understand that the whole of global politics (as well as war) is gendered because it relies on the logics of gender. The way in which we assign gendered characteristics to objects as well as the associations we make between objects and subjects determine the extent to which we see our social realities as gendered. Conceptualized as such, gendering is the tool by means of which we are given a passage into the theory of war and can also begin to see the impacts of this gendering (6).

Throughout, but mainly in Chapter 2 (54ff) and the conclusion, Sjoberg argues that her dialogical approach or 'third way' has transformative potential. She consistently makes the point that she is in dialogue with multiple feminisms as well as mainstream war studies. Dialogue as a means for accepting difference [see "values difference as the substance of theorizing" (45)] is set in motion by her decision not to privilege a particular feminist position. And while I agree that a dialogical approach does indeed help to rewrite complex relations between theory and reality and defines concepts in a consensual, temporal, and gradual manner,³ her feminist approach is not entirely hidden from view – hers is a postmodern multiplicitous approach that problematizes the gendered world of war itself, not just the exclusion of women (liberal approach) or the existence of a male norm (radical approach). Thus 'gendering' together with a dialogical approach becomes a vehicle for the transformation of all established norms and standards of what is/should be female and male, because critique is offset by engagement.

¹ J Ann Tickner, *Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspectives on Achieving Global Security* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992); Cynthia Enloe, *Does Khaki Become You? The Militarization of Women's Lives* (London: Pandora, 1983); *Bananas, Beaches and Bases* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); *The Morning After: Sexual Politics at the End of the Cold War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); V. Spike Peterson (ed.), *Gendered States: Feminist (Re)Visions of International Relations Theory* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1992); and Christine Sylvester, *Feminist Theory and International Relations in a Postmodern Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

² Laura J. Shepherd, "Feminist security studies," in *Critical Approaches to Security. An introduction to theories and methods*, ed. Laura J. Shepherd (London & New York: Routledge, 2013), 12.

³ Lúdia Puigvert, "Dialogic Feminism: 'Other Women's' Contributions to the Social Transformation of Gender Relations," in *Women & Social Transformation*, eds. Elizabeth Beck-Gernsheim, Judith Butler and Lúdia Puigvert (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), 36.

Clearly there is much to like in this book. At once sophisticated and accessible, comprehensive but with attention to detail, this text is a must read for scholars from feminist as well as mainstream IR persuasions. Each chapter carefully and gradually extends the argument, which in a project of such scope is a major feat in itself. The extensive references will also be a valuable resource for graduate students and scholars alike.

There is something for everyone in this book. Chapter 5 highlights the contested debate among feminists regarding the correlation between levels of domestic gender equality and the likelihood of going to war (134-140). The value of this discussion more broadly is that it situates liberal-feminist and more radical feminist perspectives regarding gender equality into a broader framework of war and state behavior at the national level, reminding the reader that gendered state identities are complex mixes of gendered militarisms, gendered nationalisms, and strategic culture. Until now, strategic culture (i.e. hegemonic masculinity) and its gendered dimensions have not received scholarly attention (146). The chapter on 'People, Choices, and War(s)' (pitched at the individual level), for instance, reinforces the familiar feminist contention that the personal is international, but illustrates this point by putting the delicate balance between constraint and agency of individual leaders into perspective. In Chapter 9 Sjoberg builds on the work of Christine Sylvester to argue that wars are sensed, gendered experiences. Although the notion of the everyday is not new to Feminist International Political Economy scholars, it is gaining traction in IR in general. In this regard Sjoberg offers relevant empirical examples to drive home how militarization and everyday political economy realities, among others, trickle down "into the smallest details of women's daily lives" (258).

I was particularly keen to read the chapter on 'Gendered Strategy,' a timely addition after Strategic Studies had to undergo major revision at the end of the Cold War and especially since strategy is generally neglected by feminists. She skillfully uses strategies of intentional civilian victimization [including the 'protection racket' (198, 201)] and the use of private military and security companies to demonstrate the gendered nature of strategic choice. Her chapter on 'Gendered Tactics' frames wartime rape and feminization in a way that juxtaposes the weaponization of women in war (as soldiers or terrorists) and feminization as a tactic – through the rape of men or having men tortured at the hands of women (238-243). Sjoberg's conclusion that tactics are not only gendered, but that "gendering itself can be seen as tactical when deployed as a weapon against enemies" (246) confirms the originality of the contribution in these two chapters. Not only is her discussion of gendered logistics a first of its kind, but she also considers political economy tactics of the everyday. Defying stale binaries, she offers a more complicated picture of strategy and tactics as simultaneously distinct yet related aspects of the gendering of war.

On this last point of strategy and tactics being separate yet related I do wonder though, to what extent this is reflective of feminist thinking on the relationship between means and ends (or war and peace) in general. There is a tendency among policy makers to conflate strategy and tactics at the conceptual level, for example in the way that defence reviews are called strategic. Can they be anything but strategic? Sjoberg's analysis is much more nuanced and does not fall into that trap. However, if we distinguish between positive and negative peace (à la Galtung⁴) then the line between means and ends becomes blurred. In the words of Mahatma Gandhi, father of the notion of non-violent resistance (*Satyagraha*) during India's struggle for

⁴ Johan Galtung, *Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization* (London: Sage, 1996).

independence, “[t]here is no way to peace. Peace is the way”.⁵ This suggests that peace is no longer viewed as the end, but rather as the means. In feminist scholarship, processes and methods often take precedence over goals, and if the personal is also political it becomes difficult to disentangle social justice from its dual purpose as both means and ends. And I cannot help but ask whether a feminist analysis less interested in engaging the mainstream would look different, and possibly reflect a much more integrated analysis of strategy and tactics.

References to peace are not in short supply; they are always in the background, e.g. in discussions of the democratic peace (Chapters 1 and 2), trade and peace (22-25), liberal peace (109), capitalist peace (112), hegemonic peace (112), sex equality peace (112, 137-138), and contestations around women’s peacefulness (233) and women’s peace movements (61, 62, 249, 263). However, in terms of theorizing, Sjoberg’s treatise on the gendered causes of war-making could have benefited from a more distilled ‘position’ on the gendered causes of peace. One of the first text books that I read as a student of Strategic Studies in the early 1980s was Geoffrey Blainey’s *The Causes of War*. He opens as follows:

For every thousand pages published on the causes of wars there is less than one page directly on the causes of peace. And yet the causes of war and peace, logically, should dovetail into one another. A weak explanation of why Europe was at peace will lead to a weak explanation of why Europe was at war. A valid diagnosis of war will be reflected in a valid diagnoses of peace.⁶

If Blainey is correct, namely that the “[o]ne obstacle to studying international peace is perhaps the widespread assumption that it is the normal state of affairs”,⁷ then it becomes so much more important to recognize the conceptual and empirical contribution of feminist peace studies scholars (and activists) who have pointed out the dangers of a negative peace built on male norms disguised as gender-neutrality. As Sjoberg unpacks the causes across the system, dyadic, state, and individual levels we therefore need to see more clearly how a multiplicity of (feminist) peace perspectives can inform a plurality of (feminist) war perspectives, especially because she states that “feminist theory provides ground to question when *war* ends and *peace* begins” (271-272).

And between war and peace lies a whole continuum of violence, and for this reason I find the conflation of conflict and war in the title of the book rather curious. War is traditionally viewed as narrowly referring to organized (interstate) violence and conflict as a looser term that covers the broader spectrum of state and non-state conflict. From the contents of the book it does seem as if war (as depicted in the subtitle) and not conflict is the focus. The book blurb on the website of Columbia University Press further confirms this: “Through the lens of gender, she examines the meaning, causes, practices, and experiences of war, building a more inclusive approach to the analysis of violent conflict *between states*” (my emphasis).⁸ Claudia Aradau’s

⁵ Betty A. Reardon, *Women and Peace: Feminist Visions of Global Security* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1993), 21, 38; Betty A. Reardon, “Toward a Paradigm of Peace,” in *A Peace Reader*, eds. J. J. Fahey & R. Armstrong (Mahwah, New Jersey: Panlist Press, 1992), 392.

⁶ Geoffrey Blainey, *The Causes of War* (Melbourne: Sun Books, 1973), 3.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ <http://cup.columbia.edu/book/gendering-global-conflict/9780231148603> (accessed 24 April 2015).

critique of Tarak Barkawi's framing of critical *war* studies could therefore also be applicable here, namely that 'war' may narrow or homogenize rather than open up analyses to better understand "a continuum of violence that includes insurrections, revolts, revolutions, insurgencies, rebellions, seditions, disobediences, riots and uprisings."⁹ Sjoberg does acknowledge in most of the chapter headings (among other places) that we are dealing with 'war(s)' and in the endnotes war is recognized as being not the exclusive domain of states. Unfortunately, as far as I could tell, references to key works on 'new wars' are buried in the notes [310, note 65; 313, note 36 (actually not note 35)]. It has the unintended consequence of the work having more of a Northern feel to it. Thus a stronger focus on both organized (purposive) and not so organized types of violence in contexts where states no longer own the monopoly over violence may have had the effect of drawing more attention to the impact of gendered structures on the global South. Numerous examples from the global South are cited, e.g. India, Zimbabwe, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Iraq, and Afghanistan. However, possible conversations with non-Western IR (a less than satisfactory label) are largely obscured.

That said, as the analysis progresses downwards across the levels, it seems to become less state-centric. The choice of structuring the book according to levels of analysis is therefore a double-edge sword. It makes for a logical flow, based on traditional understandings of how international relations works. And it probably was a strategic decision in order to facilitate dialogue with the mainstream. However, I am not entirely convinced that it makes sense according to gender logics.¹⁰ Sjoberg qualifies her choice by listing other options of disaggregation (313), but these similarly reflect conventional typologies, not feminist ones. Of course, all such choices have normative as well as conceptual implications – normative, because feminists see the world in a much more intersected way¹¹ which leads to a kind of theorizing that is also much more intertwined. The levels of analysis approach runs the risk of creating the impression of discrete levels that are all equal. Conceptually, such an approach implies a theory of war that is layered, cumulative and the result of a compound process. It is a pity that the book compromised.

But to return to the opening question – how much does Sjoberg offer us with regard to a feminist theory or theories of war? The use of 'towards' in the subtitle qualifies the ambitions of the book, and on the publisher's website the book is described as "developing the beginnings of a feminist theory of war."¹² But still our expectations are raised – maybe not to encounter 'the' definitive feminist theory but at least something that comes close. In his assessment of the contribution of Karl von Clausewitz (widely acknowledged to be the first modern strategist), Colin Gray remarks that Sun Tzu (ancient Chinese military strategist and philosopher) might be the only possible competitor, but his *Art of War* resembles "cook-book guidance for statecraft" compared to Clausewitz's comprehensive theory of war.¹³ Ironically placing Sjoberg's book between those of

⁹ Claudia Aradau, "Security, War, Violence – The Politics of Critique: A Reply to Barkawi," *Millennium – Journal of International Studies* 41: 1 (2012): 112.

¹⁰ Sjoberg acknowledges feminist critique against the level of analysis approach (302).

¹¹ Nira Yuval-Davis, "Intersectionality and Feminist Politics," *European Journal of Women's Studies* 13: 3 (2006): 193-209.

¹² <http://cup.columbia.edu/book/gendering-global-conflict/9780231148603> (accessed 24 April 2015).

¹³ Colin S. Gray, *Modern Strategy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 84.

two men allows us to reflect on how it fares. The answer lies somewhere in the middle. By no means an instrumentalist recipe for what causes war, Chapter 3, “Anarchy, Structure, Gender, and Wars,” perhaps best illustrates both the theoretical flaws and theoretical potential of this work.

The argument is made that gender is an international structure, with gender hierarchy influencing unit/state function, the distribution of capabilities among units, and the political processes governing unit interaction. Gender content may change, but gender as structure does not (78). This is provocative, because, while most feminist scholars would agree on intuitive, conceptual and normative grounds, it takes hard work to convince the mainstream. Realizing this, Sjoberg ventures into a deep and sophisticated analysis, actually making the structural argument and not just assuming it. That said, for a new theory on international structure to emerge that can rival realist and liberal paradigms, “with causal and constitutive elements” (3) more work is needed to show clearly how the units stand in relation to one another. First, how can feminist scholars convince the mainstream that this is not just a theory of omission or substitution for anarchy, and secondly, how can they capture the ‘essence’ of gender hierarchy without compromising on diversity. The first question asks what would happen if we replaced gender with class, or ideology, or ethnicity? Would the theory look different? Surely leaving out any of these will also lead to a partial account of war? Sjoberg contends that it is not about omission of gender for its own sake (14), and that a gender lens offers a fuller explanation because “[gender hierarchy] functions differently than anarchy as a permissive cause of war” (99). She seeks to preempt mainstream critique by saying that gender hierarchy is not prior to other hierarchies; other hierarchies can also be gendered. She does not, however, fully answer her own question – so why talk about gender as a “system-structural cause of war when it could be hierarchy more generally” (102). With regard to the second question, maybe more deliberation is needed to explain the non-hegemonic state behavior of countries such as Sweden (and other so-called good international citizens) and a country like South Africa that dismantled its nuclear arsenal? How does this fit with the analysis of a world ‘ruled’ by masculinist dominance or power-over (94, 98)? Is patriarchal dominance always the goal or is it perhaps an overstatement? Which then brings me to the observation that with the use of gender hierarchy Sjoberg seems to stray from her original engagement with Waltzian anarchy that prioritized security, survival, and self-interest to side more with John Mearsheimer’s offensive realism (91). Yet even Mearsheimer acknowledged that global hegemony is not feasible.¹⁴ If this reading is correct, it should have implications for the feasibility of a dialogical feminist power-with approach.

So while the book contains a lot of feminist theorizing, in order for war theory through a gender lens to become feminist war theory/ies we need to know more about the relationship between the various elements of the system, without curtailing the agency of the various elements in a deterministic way. For Clausewitz the theory of war is about a balance between the trinity of passion, chance and rationality “like an object suspended between three magnets”.¹⁵ What would Sjoberg’s conceptual pillars be and how do these relate to one another and to gender hierarchy? Sjoberg does an excellent job in showing the many facets of the gendered nature of the elements, but ultimately it will serve her theorizing well to systematically explore (in the next book project) the empirical implications – not because it will satisfy the critics but because in-depth case studies and opening the black box of the state may just ‘prove’ her right.

¹⁴ John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001), 2.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 92.

Let me conclude with the wish that Laura Sjoberg's monumental work may embolden other feminists to also build on existing war theories, clarifying further through empirical and theoretical work whether gender hierarchy is indeed a structural feature of global politics and what it means for the fighting of wars (104). While some would not necessarily be convinced as to the centrality of gender, I am certain that ignoring the rich insights of this book will be to the detriment of IR as a whole.

Review by Jessica Trisko Darden, American University

Is a feminist theory of war possible and if so, what would it entail? This is not a question that the vast majority of political scientists – myself included – have found themselves discussing in classrooms or around conference tables. Yet, it may be one of the great unanswered questions of the sub-disciplines of international relations (IR) and security studies. In posing this question, Laura Sjoberg makes a unique and valuable contribution to our understanding of the engagement of feminist scholarship with questions of war and peace. Perhaps even more significant though, is Sjoberg’s painstaking demonstration of how feminist scholarship intersects with the security studies research agenda of what she terms “mainstream” political science, achieved through a dialogical approach. *Gendering Global Conflict: Toward a Feminist Theory of War* therefore serves as a primer not only on feminist security studies but also on how the discipline of security studies has come to be organized and bounded over time (predominantly by white, male academics) and how to begin to break down some of those boundaries.

Mainstream and feminist analyses are not fundamentally inimical, argues Sjoberg. Chapter by chapter, the author lays out often hardhitting feminist critiques of dominant approaches. Yet, she devotes even more attention to how these critiques expand our understanding of key concepts and phenomena that sit at the very core of how security studies scholars of various inclinations conceptualize war. For example, viewing women not only as *victims* of war but also as *agents* capable of soldiering, terrorizing, and emasculating male combatants fundamentally alters our view of warfare and women’s roles therein. While Sjoberg cites much of the prominent work in this vein, more recent studies have continued to influence our understanding of women’s roles in conflict.

Jakana Thomas and Kanisha Bond, publishing in the discipline’s most prominent and mainstream journal – *American Political Science Review* – analyzed data on women’s participation since 1950 in over 100 violent political organizations in Africa.¹ They find that women are more likely to be active in large organizations, in groups that employ terrorist tactics, and in groups that have a platform featuring women’s rights. Examining 70 armed rebel groups active in the post-Cold War period, Alexis Henshaw finds that women participate in the majority of such groups with about one-third of groups utilizing women in combat roles and approximately one-quarter featuring women in leadership positions.² With Ora Szekeley, I recently highlighted women’s participation in the ongoing conflicts in Syria and Ukraine, arguing that female participation can have both symbolic and strategic value across conflicts.³ Coming from both feminist and non-feminist perspectives, this growing body of work on female combatants demonstrates the ability of the critiques

¹ Jakana Thomas and Kanisha Bond, “Women’s Participation in Violent Political Organizations,” *American Political Science Review* 109, no. 3 (2015): 488-506.

² Alexis Leanna Henshaw, “Where Women Rebel: Patterns of Women’s Participation in Armed Rebel Groups 1990-2008,” *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, Forthcoming.

³ Jessica Trisko Darden and Ora Szekeley, “Warfare Isn’t Just a Man’s Game Anymore,” *The Washington Post*, February 9, 2015. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2015/02/09/warfare-isnt-just-a-mans-game-anymore/>.

underscored by the author to influence future scholarship and forge links between mainstream and critical approaches.

The strength of *Gendering Global Conflict* lies in its rendering the array of feminisms and gender-based approaches both palatable and comprehensible to readers who may have had little prior exposure to and/or interest in this literature. Invaluable to the graduate student and the intellectually curious, Sjoberg's work synthesizes significant and sizeable bodies of literature in 300 pages of text. At the same time, forcing a wide variety of feminist theories to fit the mold of mainstream IR (as is done in chapters three through six) seems to do feminist scholarship somewhat of a disservice or, alternatively, to favor using dominant ways of conceptualizing boundaries within security studies. This is a pivotal issue, as the success of Sjoberg's bridge-building project lies in its ability to "mainstream" feminist IR. Yet, in making feminist analysis more relatable for the masses Sjoberg also strips it of its (perceived) aura of unique insight, opening feminist critiques to critical analysis by mainstream scholars. All of this is probably healthy and long overdue, but it leads me to question whether traditional political science approaches are really in a privileged position vis-à-vis feminist scholarship or whether feminist security studies was privileged in some way by the inability or unwillingness of mainstream security studies to engage with it.

Having learned of these points of intersection, I now turn to the question of whether a feminist theory of war is possible. Sjoberg argues early on that, "the meaning, causes, and consequences of war cannot be understood without reference to gender" (3). She goes on to state that, "[g]ender is conceptually necessary for defining security and war, important in analyzing causes and predicting outcomes, and essential to solutions to violent conflict in global politics" (7). While I am agnostic on the first point and in firm agreement with the latter, arguing that gender is fundamental to our understanding of war does not amount to a cohesive theory of how gender affects the outbreak, conduct, duration, cessation, and aftermath of war. This would clearly be too much to ask of any theory. That Sjoberg struggled with this issue is perhaps reflected in the book's subtitle of *Toward a Feminist Theory of War*. Yet, by denying the possibility of "a single feminist theory of war(s)" in her conclusion, Sjoberg cuts short a fruitful discussion of what the most important/valuable/significant intellectual contributions of feminist war theorizing are. If mainstream scholars are to do better and to do more in acknowledging the influence of gender on the issues that they study, as this book urges us to do, then some clear guidance on how to better integrate gender analysis into existing theories or approaches to war would be a useful place to start.

Ultimately, it seems that the development of a feminist theory or theories of war or wars is not possible but for reasons that differ from those that I would have initially expected. *Gendering Global Conflict* demonstrates that feminist scholarship has contributed to all of the traditional areas of security studies and that the many insights that Sjoberg elucidates ought to be seriously considered by those working in the mainstream. Rather, an ongoing debate about what constitutes a feminist research agenda is as much at play in limiting the development of feminist war theorizing as is political science scholarship's traditional hostility to gendered analysis. While Sjoberg makes considerable progress in identifying the middle ground between feminist and mainstream approaches, future scholarship must pave her potentially groundbreaking path with new research that successfully bridges these fields of scholarship. In this case, asking the question proves far more important than providing all the answers.

Review by Lauren Wilcox, University of Cambridge

Laura Sjoberg's *Gendering Global Conflict* is an ambitious engagement with the field of Security Studies in International Relations, or what she terms 'war studies.' Its aim is no less than to provide a comprehensive and systematic critique of the omission of gender in the "mainstream" of the discipline and the "explanatory, predictive, prescriptive, and normative perils" (8) of this omission. In its ambition and engagement with diverse literatures it is best compared to Joshua Goldstein's *War and Gender*.¹ Unlike Goldstein's work, which is an extensive examination of several hypotheses aimed at explaining the prevalence of men in the planning and execution of wars, Sjoberg's work is an explicitly disciplinary engagement with the ways in which war is theorized and studied in International Relations. *Gendering Global Conflict* attempts a comprehensive "feminist theory of war" based on a dialogue with diverse feminisms, which is then put into dialogue with a great variety of approaches to the study of war and armed conflict in International Relations.

Sjoberg's thesis itself, that war is constituted by and constitutes gender, and that processes of gendering are a key *cause* of war as well as a key *impact* of war is a core insight driving much feminist work in IR and security and/or war studies specifically and as such will not be particularly surprising to those working in the field. What is more significant about this work is the breadth and depth of engagement Sjoberg provides to demonstrate this thesis as she synthesizes a vast amount of feminist work to demonstrate its significance to established research paradigms. Beginning from as classic an approach as Kenneth Waltz's structural analysis and proceeding to other 'levels of analysis' from the dyadic to the individual, then to the practices, experiences and meanings of war, Sjoberg argues "it is impossible to think about war *well* without gender analysis" (42). This is because "the meanings, causes, and consequences of war cannot be understood without reference to gender" (279).

Another unique feature of *Gendering Global Conflict* is her approach to gender and to feminist analysis. Sjoberg insists that there is no single feminist approach to the study of global conflict: rather, feminists can approach the field of IR from realist, liberal, constructivist, post-structural and postcolonial perspectives (4). Sjoberg's approach to the study of gender is purposefully diverse and multi-vocal. She defends a feminist understanding of gender in which attention to 'sex' as differences between men and women without an appreciation of socially constructed gender hierarchies is not only normatively problematic but also empirically inaccurate. At the same time, her approach considers 'feminisms' a plural group, not only acknowledging differences and disagreements between liberal, postcolonial, post-structural, and other feminisms but seeing these conflicts as "*the substance of feminisms* rather than a substantive problem for feminisms" as each are committed to gender as an analytical lens as well as to gender emancipation (53). This dialogical approach to the multiplicity of feminisms allows Sjoberg to propose multiple different types of feminist contributions across a wide range of different research questions: from the causes of war, to the constitutive conditions of war, to the impacts and experiences of war. While the variety of different ways to which gender lenses are put to use may frustrate readers seeking parsimonious arguments, Sjoberg's approach of dialogue and multiplicity across feminist and disciplinary divides in the service of demonstrating the importance of a gender analysis at every level of war and security analysis not only promotes building bridges

¹ Joshua Goldstein, *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

across epistemological, ontological and methodological divides, but performativity demonstrates that such projects are possible.

However, Sjoberg is not satisfied with a vision of Security Studies (or ‘war studies’ in her use) that incorporates a gender analysis into existing research frameworks. *Gendering Global Conflict* is explicitly aimed at *transforming* the study of war and armed conflict. Here, we might explicitly contrast her approach to Dan Reiter’s recent review article of ‘positivist’ approaches to gender and conflict.² Reiter defends ‘positivist’ studies of gender (as distinct from the ‘non-positivist’ approaches to gender as supposedly dominant before the year 2000) as a promising research area to recommend to IR students wishing to further their careers. Sjoberg’s aim is to ‘triangulate’ between an approach similar to the one Reiter advocates which she (among others)³ has described as the ‘gender as variable’ approach in which gender might be a useful addition to theorizing about war, but that can be ignored if necessary and that need not compel a fundamental change in how war is theorized or studied. Many feminists are critical of this kind of approach to incorporating gender analysis into security studies; Sjoberg contrasts it with Annick Wibben’s⁴ denunciation of attempts to establish feminist security studies as a subfield of security studies, because of the belief that security studies as a field is inadequate for the depth, breadth and creativity of feminist scholarship, particularly in terms of feminist epistemological and methodological commitments (281-282). Sjoberg positions her work as taking a dialogical approach to find a third way, one that seeks to maintain the commitments of multiple feminisms while engaging with—and provocatively—“occupying” the mainstream of the discipline (283). While it might appear as if, in her rigorous engagement with established research programs in Security Studies, she is siding with those who advocate the addition of gender to existing research paradigms, what Sjoberg is after appears to be more subtle and powerful. *Gendering Global Conflict* does not take aim at several decades of questioning the value of or dismissing gender and feminist research by more conventional approaches by means of a devastating feminist critique aimed at undermining the foundations of decades of scholarship. Rather, Sjoberg aims to made gender and feminism central to the discipline by putting an impressive range of feminist work in conversation with work that is not explicitly about gender to show the potential contributions of a feminist research agenda within existing topics, such as strategy and tactics of war or the levels of analysis debate.

While most of *Gendering Global Conflict* addresses war as it has overwhelmingly been defined in the field of IR, Sjoberg’s project of transforming the field of war and security studies is developed most strongly in the later chapters that take seriously the experience(s) of war for both men and women living in and through wars. Sjoberg makes the case that for feminists dedicated to theorizing from the experiences of those who occupied subordinated positions of power, the violence of war is not an exceptional and discrete event, but rather feminist understandings of security entail the diminishment of a wide variety of forms of violence, including physical violence but also structural and ecological forms of violence, human rights abuses,

² Dan Reiter, “The Positivist Study of Gender and International Relations,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59 no. 7 (Oct 2015): 1301-1326.

³ Charlotte Hooper, “Masculinities, IR and the ‘Gender Variable’: A Cost-Benefit Analysis for (Sympathetic) Gender Skeptics,” *International Studies*, 25 (1999): 475-491; Terrell Carver, Molly Cochran and Judith Squires, “Gendering Jones: Feminisms, IRs, Masculinities,” *Review of International Studies*, 24 no. 2 (1998): 283-297.

⁴ Annick Wibben, *Feminist Security Studies: A Narrative Approach* (London: Routledge, 2011).

militarism, and mal-development (270-271). War is not only a continuum of violence(s), but a *gendered* continuum. Taking war seriously as it is lived and experienced is more than an alternate perspective to the study of conflict and security; it is fundamentally transformative of the way in which war is theorized and studied in IR. The study of war and conflict could also be transformed by taking Sjoberg at her word that feminism is not best approached as a separate ‘camp’ in IR but as a set of discussions around the use of gender as an analytical lens with relevance to realism, liberalism, constructivism, critical, Marxist, postcolonial approaches and so forth.

As an extensive intervention into disciplinary ways of conceptualizing and investigating war and security, a key contribution that this work makes beyond its substantive contribution is to provide a starting place for graduate students and more experienced scholars well-versed in the International Relations literatures on war and security studies as they are conventionally taught and studied in the United States,⁵ aided by Sjoberg’s considerable breadth and abundance of citations and examples to spawn further reading and exploration. *Gendering Global Conflict* can be read as a book-length argument against the idea that conventional and feminist approaches to studying war and conflict are incommensurate, as well as a hopeful intervention in forging a war studies that is not only better at its tasks of causal analysis and constitutive analysis, but that works by re-conceptualizing itself as a field.

⁵ The engagement with more critical approaches to war and security is much more limited, and such literatures as the Copenhagen school are discussed relatively briefly in terms of what they share with feminist approaches, with little discussion of the ways in which critical approaches have also tended to neglect gender analysis. See for example, Christine Sylvester, “Anatomy of a Footnote,” *Security Dialogue* 38 no. 4 (2007): 547–558.

Author's Response by Laura Sjoberg, University of Florida

I appreciate, and am humbled by, the reviewers' engagement with my book. To me, the most surprising part of writing *Gendering Global Conflict* was how little of my original plan fit into the book, despite my taking liberties with the length of the text. As I initially envisioned the book, each theoretical chapter was meant to be paired with an empirical one, with original substantive research exploring each theoretical argument. My initial plan also included separate analyses of war theory, security studies, and peace studies, while the final product focused on war theorizing. That is to say – as Heidi Hudson correctly argues – the book is about war, not about peace; it privileges interstate war over other forms of conflict. While parts of it maintain the ambition of the initial plan, the end product is the result of a number of choices which had a narrowing effect.

Every project has its orientations. Some are political and strategic choices, others are oversights and shortcuts. Some of the orientations in *Gendering Global Conflict* are political and strategic choices, as was, for example, as all three reviewers point out, the orientation towards the mainstream of Security Studies/War Studies. That choice is, among these reviews and in general, a key focus of both positive and negative attention towards the book. Lauren Wilcox suggests that it “can be read as a book-length argument against the idea that conventional and feminist approaches are incommensurate.” That is my primary aim in the book.

It is also, though, a book-length argument that the commensurability of conventional and feminist approaches is not in liberal, quantitative analyses of sex as gender. Jessica Trisko Darden suggests that “the success of Sjoberg's bridge-building project lies in its ability to ‘mainstream’ feminist IR.” If possible, I'd like to own part of that, and to stake out space to reject part of it as well. The success of the project of *Gendering Global Conflict* does rely on showing the relevance of feminist approaches to mainstream approaches. But it does not rely on showing the relevance of mainstream approaches to feminist work, or judging feminisms by their relevance to the mainstream.

In other words, I want to make an argument that feminisms have value for the mainstream, not to argue that all IR feminisms should account for and/or cater to the mainstream of the field. In fact, what I hope is that work like *Gendering Global Conflict* can serve the function of creating disciplinary space for work that refuses to face the mainstream and/or critically rejects the premises of engagement. My particular presentation of feminisms is mainstream-facing without (I hope) losing a sense of what makes feminisms feminist. But when I emphasize diversity and dialogue, I actually mean that I think that there is as much value in an approach that takes the opposite approach. I think there is both a political cost (as Hudson notes) and a political benefit (my argument in the book) to organizing feminist war theorizing along lines that are relatable to mainstream theory (and therefore, as Hudson notes, collapsing some dimensionality). I think there are also political costs (in terms of reach) to ignoring the disciplinary mainstream as well as political benefits (in terms of dimensionality). I think the intellectual and political world is more complete with books that take both approaches co-existing in a broader world of theorizing. I wrote one. My book was not intended to be written with prejudice towards those that take the opposite approach.

That is not to say that I do not recognize the power dynamics in choices about disciplinary positioning. Indeed, *Gendering Global Conflict* is a statement that I find engaging sites of disciplinary power important despite (though looking to minimize) the political risks that such an orientation entails. The discipline-facing tone of *Gendering Global Conflict* has, I think, a sort of power in the discipline that feminist war theorizing otherwise written might not. I do not think that *Gendering Global Conflict* musters the sort of disciplinary

power that claims to quantify gender, or catch-all arguments about sexism, can bring – but I do not think the power implications of the approach that I took are negligible either. And I think recognizing privilege is important.

That is why, of all the reviewers' comments, I am most perplexed by Trisko Darden's discussion of privilege. She suggests that *Gendering Global Conflict* leads her "to question where traditional political science approaches are really in a privileged position vis-à-vis feminist scholarship or whether feminist security studies was privileged in some way by the inability or unwillingness of mainstream security studies to engage with it." While many feminists in International Relations (IR)/Security Studies have suggested that feminisms have something unique that they lose by framing their claims in mainstream terms,¹ that is different than holding a privileged position. Privileged positions in the discipline can be identified in many ways – by hiring, the prestige of academic positions, salary, job terms, conference foci, publication outlets, citations, student placement, and a number of other metrics. On none of those metrics can one find feminist work relatively privileged to mainstream work.

That does not make it less important to pay attention to relative privilege within feminisms (especially on the lines of class, nationality, race, and religion). But it does suggest that paying attention to power dynamics, wherever they are, is important. That's why, as Trisko Darden notes, it is important to me to deny the possibility of a single feminist theory of war in the conclusion of the book. It is not that I find a single feminist theory of war intellectually or politically desirable, and see barriers that make that desirable end impossible. It is, instead, that understanding feminisms' diversity, and their attention to the diversity of everyday experience, has given me an appreciation for the importance of theoretical diversity and the silencing effect of universalization and singularity. By declaring the impossibility of a single feminist theory of war, I look to encourage growth and multiplicity rather than encouraging agreement and homogenization.

This is a point on which Hudson and I agree – that homogenization is a problem where recognition of heterogeneity would be better. Hudson is right, I think, that one of the orientations of the book is towards a traditional understanding of war, at the expense of new wars, or other points on continuums of violence. She suggests that *Gendering Global Conflict* "could have benefited from a more distilled 'position' on the gendered causes of peace." Citing Geoffrey Blainey's *The Causes of War* Hudson suggests that the relative neglect of peace in *Gendering Global Conflict* might come from an assumption that it is the normal state of affairs.² Quite the opposite, actually – the error (and I think Hudson is right, it is an error) comes from a cynical place of not imagining peace as being particularly relevant in a world constituted of and by violence, but still needing to discuss it as war theorists frequently do. War theorizing – mine or others', feminist or not – does need to take the causes and meaning of peace more seriously.

That is, though, for the next book – mine or others', or both. Rather than (as Trisko Darden suggests) "an ongoing debate what constitutes feminist research" or (as Hudson suggests) seeing focus and limitation as

¹ Sarah Brown, "Feminism, international theory, and international relations of gender inequality", *Millennium-Journal of International Studies* 17.3 (1988): 461-475; TR Annick Wibben, *Feminist Security Studies: A Narrative Approach*. London: Routledge, 2010); Carol Cohn, "'Feminist Security Studies': Toward a Reflexive Practice," *Politics & Gender* 7.04 (2011): 581-586.

² Geoffrey Blainey, *The Causes of War* (Melbourne: Sun Books, 1973).

“compromise,” in *Gendering Global Conflict* and across my research, I think different approaches have different things to offer. As all three reviewers suggest, *Gendering Global Conflict* provides a clearer roadmap for some feminist war theorizing than others, and is more focused on providing a framework than an instruction manual. Different areas of my work – from research on women’s violence in global politics to queer theorizing to the study of intentional civilian victimization – try to do different parts of feminist security studies and feminist war theorizing in different ways.³ In this sense, *Gendering Global Conflict* was aspirational, intellectually and politically. I was excited to see these reviewers get caught up in that sense of hope and ambition, and I look forward to continuing these conversations.

³ Caron Gentry and Laura Sjoberg, *Beyond Mothers, Monsters, Whores: Women’s Violence in Global Politics* (London: Zed Books, 2015); Laura Sjoberg, *Impossible Women, Impossible Crimes* (New York: New York University Press, forthcoming 2016); Sjoberg, “Towards Transgendering International Relations?,” *International Political Sociology*, 6(4) (2012): 337-354; Sjoberg and Cynthia Weber, eds., “Queer International Relations,” forum in *International Studies Review* 16(4) (2014): 596-622; Sjoberg and Jessica Peet, “A(nother) Dark Side of the Protection Racket: Targeting Women in Wars,” *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 13 (2) (2011), 162-181.