

VIOLENCE, GENDER AND WAR 2

Gender Analysis as a Predictor in Conflict Early Warning Systems: Theories from the Ivory Tower

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Abstract:

Conflict early warning systems (CEWS) for predicting state armed conflict have in recent years begun to integrate gender into their construction and implementation processes (OSCE 2009; Schmeidl 2002). This is supported by the logic that both men and women must be equally considered and integrated into the CEWS process in order to ensure that appropriate security measures are taken and that both groups can feel safe in their communities (OSCE 2009: 2). Less explored is the possibility of using gender analysis as a CEWS instrument to re effectively anticipate conflict in a state, as well as assess risk more generally. Drawing on two dominant approaches to gender analysis of conflict and violence, the paper contributes to the growing field of gender research in pre-conflict contexts, and specifically CEWS, by arguing that integration of gender analysis not only ensures equal security for men and women, but it also increases CEWS operational effectiveness generally. The approaches include the quantitative relationship analysis above mentioned, and constructivist international relations (IR) feminism. The strengths of these two approaches to gender analysis are analysed and instrumentalized to develop and propose an appropriate form of gender analysis that can be applied to CEWS in order to ultimately increase CEWS, and other risk analysis system, effectiveness.

Keywords: CEWS, gender, conflict, international relations, feminism, risk analysis system

Introduction: Conflict early warning systems (CEWS)* for predicting state armed conflict have in recent years begun to integrate gender into their construction and implementation

* Conflict early warning systems, in this paper referred to as CEWS, are mechanisms used to anticipate the onset of state armed conflict and to respond before conflicts emerge and/or escalate using preventative strategies. According to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), these are systems of “monitoring, recording, analyzing and communicating information about escalating conflict to encourage responses that prevent or mitigate destructive consequences” (OSCE 2009: 7).

processes (OSCE 2009; Schmeidl 2002). This is supported by the logic that both men and women must be equally considered and integrated into the CEWS process in order to ensure that appropriate security measures are taken and that both groups can feel safe in their communities (OSCE 2009: 2). Less explored is the possibility of using gender analysis as a CEWS instrument to more effectively anticipate conflict in a state. This paper is intended to contribute to the growing field of gender research in pre-conflict contexts, and specifically CEWS, by arguing that integration of gender analysis not only ensures equal security for men and women, but it also increases CEWS operational effectiveness generally.

There is a substantial amount of research being done on how gender relations and identities change during and following conflicts, but little regarding changes leading up to the outbreak of violence.¹ In these studies, gender dynamics are recognized as important elements in how conflict and post-conflict societies are defined. This is in part because of how gendered power structures tend to be exacerbated and transformed during conflicts, but it is also related to feminist theories describing the interrelationship between gender and war. Inspired by such theories on gender and conflict, since 2000 a group of researchers have analyzed the relationship between gender equality and state propensity for violent conflict. Rather than analyzing how conflict shapes gender dynamics during and following an outbreak, these researchers investigate whether gender dynamics can be correlated with outbreaks of conflict and therefore used as mechanisms for prediction and risk assessment. They have done this through the use of quantitative multinomial logistic regression tests. The findings generated by this research reflect a strong inverse relationship between the two variables, where state propensity for violent conflict is greater if the level of gender equality or women's quality of life relative to men's is lower. This implies that gender relations between men and women can reflect a state's propensity for experiencing violent conflict. In light of these findings, it has become necessary to investigate gender dynamics in the period preceding the outbreak of violent conflict, and subsequently to ask how gender dynamics can be integrated into CEWS. In order to do this, an appropriate form of gender analysis must be applied to the quantitative evidence developed.

This paper draws on two approaches to gender analysis of conflict and violence to develop an appropriate framework of gender analysis that can be applied to CEWS. The first approach is based on the quantitative relationship analysis described above, and the second is drawn from constructivist international relations (IR) feminism.² The two are analyzed and compared based on their approach to the relationship between gender and conflict, and specifically gender dynamics in the period leading up to conflict. The purpose of using CEWS, rather than focusing generally on pre-conflict dynamics, is to take these two approaches and instrumentalize them in such a way that they become accessible to

¹ See: Greenberg, M. E. and Zuckerman, E.: *The Gender Dimensions of Post-Conflict Reconstruction: The Challenges in Development Aid Gender Action*, 2009. ; OSCE: *Gender Aspects in Post-Conflict Situations* OSCE, 2001.; Sørensen, B.: *Women and Post-Conflict Resolution: Issues and Sources* UNRISD, 1998.

² Constructivist feminism is a wide body of literature, as is constructivist IR feminism. To narrow the focus, it is here defined by the work of Cynthia Enloe, J. Ann Tickner and Cynthia Cockburn on issues of gender and violent conflict. While there are other approaches to, and uses for constructivist IR feminism, as well as numerous other key authors, for the purposes of this paper, these three authors and their work are the focus and define the term. Mary Caprioli has also used the term "feminist IR theory" to describe this body of work, but she also argues that her own quantitative research approach should be considered in the same category (Caprioli 2004: 253). Thus, the two approaches this paper analyzes are distinguished here by the constructivist approach versus an approach that assumes that quantitative relationship testing can reflect reality.

practitioners working within the field of conflict and security. The grander motive is to recognize and adapt academic research on gender and conflict in a way that is accessible to practitioners working on related issues. CEWS is only one example of a practical space in which the theories and research generated by the two academic approaches described in this paper can be adapted to benefit people who may be otherwise vulnerable to the challenges associated with the outbreak of violent conflict.

To reflect on how these schools of gender research can support the development and integration of gender analysis into CEWS, this paper offers adapted forms of strengths drawn from each. These strengths are then built on to render them strategic and instrumental. The two approaches function in this way to make up the foundational pillars of this paper by contributing both the empirical support for the arguments made throughout, and the framework for defining and integrating gender analysis into pre-conflict prevention efforts.

The body of this paper is divided into two chapters. The first chapter describes the research and theories that inspire this paper and allow for the arguments made herein. It offers detail into the two pillars of research on which this paper stands: constructivist IR feminism and quantitative relationship testing on the relationship between gender and conflict. The two frameworks are described with regard to their distinct approaches to gender analysis generally, and then to the relationship between gender and conflict. The second chapter builds on the foundations set out in chapter one by drawing from these methodological frameworks to propose strategies for instrumentalizing gender-focused research to support CEWS. Here, the frameworks are analyzed and compared to draw out the strengths and weaknesses associated with each. The paper concludes by emphasizing the combined strengths of the two approaches to gender analysis to develop and implement an appropriate form gender analysis in regards to CEWS, and thereby increase CEWS effectiveness.

Part I. – Gender Analyses and Conflict Early Warning Systems (CEWS)

Quantitative-based Relationship Testing

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, certain gender and peace studies researchers began to look more closely at the possibility of incorporating gender-related data into quantitative CEWS programs. In 1999, Donna Ramsey Marshall and Monty G. Marshall published an article entitled, *Gender Empowerment and the Willingness of States to Use Force*, that appealed for empirical gender research and quantitative data collection on gender equality. The authors felt this was necessary in order to persuasively argue what they saw as a causal relationship between women's empowerment and state use of force. Up until then feminists—largely the only academic group seriously studying this correlation—had rejected quantitative methods of analysis as ethically contradictory to feminist ideals. Feminist author and sociology professor at the Cologne University of Applied Sciences, Maria Mies argues that scientific research methods are instruments for structuring and presenting reality in specific ways (Mies 1991: 67). Feminist researchers have generally been hesitant to categorize the experiences of marginal groups using quantitative frameworks because it leads to universalizing and opens up a space for broad generalizations (Tickner 1992: 38). However, the counterargument against this feminist position is that the refusal to integrate such 'hard' scientific tools of analysis prevents integration of feminist theories into the mainstream political sphere and adoption of feminist policy recommendations by large political institutions (Keohane 1989: 249).

In 2000, one year after the Marshalls' article, Mary Caprioli, a political science professor from the U.S., answered their appeal in her research article, *Gendered Conflict*. Caprioli responded to the Marshalls by quantitatively testing the relationship between gender equality and state militarism, using multinomial logistic regression analysis to check for correlations. Her independent variables were intended to reflect a state's level of gender equality and included the percentage of women in parliament, years since women's suffrage, fertility rates, and the percentage of women in the labor force. Her dependent variable, the Militarized Interstate Dispute dataset (MID), was used to gauge a state's level of militarism. She controlled for the effect of state alliances, GDP per capita, polity (i.e. Democratic Peace Theory), and continuity (the number of neighboring countries). She found that, while certain control variables had a significant impact on a state's MID, gender equality was a powerful predictor throughout, confirming both the Marshalls' predictions and feminist peace literature on gender and militarization dating back decades (Ruddick 1983; Cohn 1987). In 2001, Caprioli and a second political science professor from the U.S., Mark A. Boyer, published a new quantitative study. This time they analyzed the relationship between gender equality and the extent to which violence is used by a state in response to an international crisis. Again they found a strongly correlated relationship between the two variables, showing that as domestic gender equality increased, the severity of violence practiced by the state during crisis decreased (Caprioli and Boyer 2001). Caprioli's conclusions are supported not only by her own data, but also overwhelmingly by other quantitative researchers who have, since the publication of her first work, begun to investigate the same relationship between gender and state use of violence in different contexts, or using alternative variables for conflict. Following Caprioli's influential work on the quantitative gender analysis in the late 1990s and early 2000s, this area quickly expanded with research and writings from Erik Melander, Patrick m. Regan, Aida Paskeviute, Valerie M. Hudson, and other related researchers (Melander 2005; Regan and Paskeviciute 2003; Hudson et al. 2008). The natural course for this research on quantitative evidence of the findings would logically be towards a CEWS integration of gender and women's empowerment, using quantitative data to reflect gender relations in a state.

Table 1: Main quantitative variables used by Mary Caprioli and Erik Melander.*

	Independent Variables	Control Variables	Dependent Variables
Significant Variables	- Fertility rate - % of women in labor force - % of women in parliament - Years since women's suffrage	- State alliances - Polity type - GDP per capita	- Militarized Interstate Dispute dataset (MDI)
Non-significant Variables	- Female head of state	- Contiguity	

* Other variables are used by both researchers, mostly in regards to control variables, but these are the variables most often used.

The gender analysis being used here is based on quantifiable material qualifiers that allow gender to be analyzed in a similar manner as other variables used in CEWS, such as ethnic tensions, human rights, polity and GDP per capita (Hagmeyer-Gaverus and Weissman 2003: 6). This does not reflect an advanced form of gender analysis however, and looks more like sex-disaggregated data, which it also is. However, what distinguishes it as gender analysis is that it includes precise variables thought by researchers to be depictive of women's social positions relative to men. These variables are simplistic markers of women's political participation and representation, and their socio-economic conditions on average. As noted above, approaches coming from a feminist awareness dispute the viability of statistical data as providing legitimate representations of reality. For example, the constructivist feminist approach would argue that women's experiences are individual and cannot be universalized into quantitative hierarchies of oppression (Caprioli 2004: 253). The limitation of this approach is that it attempts to prove the relationship between gender equality and state conflict, and offer certain policy solutions to prevent conflict without articulating how gender can be instrumentalized as a predictor in CEWS. Most important though, it fails to provide a developed gender-sensitive explanation of why gender equality correlates to more peaceful states and how changes can be monitored. Without this sort of explanation, researchers have at times relied instead on essentialist gender assumptions that lack credible evidence (Regan and Paskeviciute 2003: 287; Caprioli 2000: 53). For this reason, analysis that is more grounded in constructivist international relations (IR) feminist theory is essential to understand why these relationships might exist and how they can be utilized.

Constructivist International Relations Feminist Approach

The constructivist feminist approach defines gender as a social construct that has been and continues to be shaped within societies. Masculinities and femininities are neither natural, nor universal conditions according to this position, but rather are identities that are constructed within an individual's society and are plural by virtue of their specificity. Simone de Beauvoir is often cited to articulate the gender constructivist concept, writing that one is not born a woman but rather one becomes a woman through ritual acts of performance and social expectations (De Beauvoir 1973: 301). Because gender is recognized as a social construct, it is fluid and can be deconstructed and reconstructed in various ways. Constructivist feminists working in international relations (IR) argue that gender, and in particular constructions of a hegemonic masculinity, are created and perpetuated within an aggressive and militarized narrative, while at the same time militarization relies on these gender power structures to exist. Feminist researcher and scholar, Cynthia Cockburn writes:

The disposition in societies such as those we live in, characterized by a patriarchal gender regime, is towards an association of masculinity with authority, coercion and violence. It's a masculinity (and a complementary femininity) that not only serves militarism very well indeed, but...it seeks and needs militarization and war for its fulfillment. (2008: 11)

Constructivists explain men's higher propensity for violence as a socially constructed condition that is not true for all men in all societies, nor at all times. For example, when a country goes to war increased state efforts are typically necessary to attract military recruits to fight. Because constructivists do not accept the explanation that men are more inclined towards the use of violence solely because of their male condition, they argue that men are

coerced into roles as perpetrators of violence in order to stimulate military recruitment (Tickner 1992: 40). Because the constructivist feminist IR approach to state militarization and the use of violence describes hegemonic gender constructions and militarization as interdependent and mutually perpetuating, a constructivist gender analysis is immediately relevant when discussing CEWS. According to constructivism, gender is constructed in a particular way within a particular context and at a particular time. Thus, constructivism perceives gender as a reflection of societal norms and ideologies, so that if the proper gender analytical tools are applied to 'read' gender, it is possible to recognize early warning signs of state armed conflict.

The challenge in adopting this approach is that gender must be readable and possible to routinely monitor. This provokes two limitations: gender specialists are required in order to decipher social gender relations and recognize patterns of change, and subjectivity by these specialists is unavoidable. Mainstream political scientists such as Robert Keohane, criticize and reject the constructivist IR feminist approach for its lack of 'scientific' methodology thought to be necessary to prove a relationship between social gender relations and state armed conflict (Keohane 1989: 249). However, this type of criticism has resided since the growth of gender mainstreaming policies and UN Security Council Resolution 1325. In these developments are guides for ways in which gender can effectively be monitored and a transformation process to restructure societies in more gender-equal models is imaginable.

Part II – Instrumentalizing Strands of Gender Analysis in CEWS

Quantitative-based Relationship Analysis

By virtue of their methodological approach, researchers using quantitative methods tend to recommend policies that respond to the independent variables they have selected to signify gender equality. As previously noted, these include female labor force participation, political representation, fertility rates and the level of education attained by girls and women. Thus, recommendations to decrease state likelihood of armed conflict include gender quotas in parliament, increased female access to contraceptives, more funding for the education of young girls, and increased female access to the formal labor force (Melander 2005; Reagan and Paskeviviute 2003; Caprioli 2000; Caprioli and Boyer 2001). Caprioli for example, emphasizes support for efforts to empower women through economic independence and lowered fertility rates (Caprioli 2000; 2005). Specifically in her first study on gender and interstate conflict, she recommends support for organizations working to decrease fertility rates and increase women's access to micro-credit for income-generating activities as methods of decreasing the risk of conflict (Caprioli 2000: 66).

These types of quantitative-based policy recommendations for preventing armed conflict are problematic for two main reasons. The first arises from the way in which quantitative researchers misuse their signifiers of women's empowerment in defining causal mechanisms of gender inequality, mistaking the signifiers for the actual causal mechanisms. The second refers to the inherent assumption on which quantitative gender analysis is based: that gender can be quantified and ranked. Regarding the first issue, I will give two examples of misguided policy recommendations that illuminate the possible ensuing problems of this approach. As noted in chapter 1, the state fertility rate is used as an independent variable signifying women's level of equality. In a quantitative study on the correlation between women's increased access to politics and more peaceful states, the researchers found that countries with low birthrates are less likely to be involved in war, and that the lower the

birthrate the less likely a state is to be involved in the most violent militarized disputes (Regan and Paskeviciute 2003). From these results, the researchers concluded that women were unable to participate in politics because the more children a woman had, the less time she could spend outside of the home and in careers in the public sphere. Assuming that more female political representation would decrease state militarization and that women have uncompromised control over their fertility, the researchers recommended providing family planning facilities as a viable strategy for preventing or minimizing the extent of armed conflict (Regan and Paskeviciute 2003: 299). While this policy may enhance women's social conditions, it relies too much on assumptions about women's innate adversity to violence and ability to freely enter the politic sphere if unburdened by child rearing responsibilities. The study misinterprets signifiers of gender equality (the independent variables) for causal mechanisms of gender inequality, leading to a misguided policy recommendation. Fertility rates may be an effective marker of the status of women, but it is less likely that high birthrates are the reason that women suffer discrimination and oppression in a society. It is more plausible that high birthrates are a by-product rather than a producer of gendered power structures that disempower women (Population Reference Bureau).

Another example is the use of the percentage of women in parliaments to reflect women's social status. It seems that if the percentage of women in parliament is believed to have a causal impact on state militarization levels then implementing or increasing gender quotas should decrease militarization. However, if one considers the purpose of this variable as a signifier of women's social status, one recognizes the naivety of applying gender quotas as a solution. The percentage of women in parliament is not selected by these researchers as a variable because it signifies women's political representation by other women. Rather, as Caprioli herself recognizes, it signifies women's position as a group within society that is capable of being elected to public office by their peers (2000: 60). Thus, a gender quota that requires women to be elected regardless of public opinion does not guarantee a change in social gender dynamics. Without this link to social opinion, there is a weaker correlation with state likelihood of armed conflict.

The second limiting factor in quantitative-based conflict-prevention recommendations is that it necessitates the assumption that levels of gender equality and women's empowerment can be quantified and globally ranked. A main problem with this is that universalizing women as a group may marginalize less 'visible' women, rendering their needs unheard. This includes women from the Global South, impoverished women, lesbians, and/or those who are victim to multiple and intersecting oppressions due to any combination of race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, class, religion, etc. Caprioli acknowledges the weaknesses inherent in the simplistic variables used, pointing out that the lack of data on gender equality is a severely limiting factor in this type of research (Caprioli 2000: 58). Nevertheless, she continues with her analysis, thus implying that while the variables are not ideal qualifiers of gender equality, they are sufficient. This kind of quantitative approach also neglects the gendered conditions of men and types of masculinities in a state.

This approach is problematic when applied on its own, but there are benefits of adopting a quantitative methodology as long as it is supported by strong qualitative feminist analysis. This sort of 'hard' scientific approach can function to legitimize and mainstream a marginalized feminist theory within the hegemonic political sphere. And while its methodology may be problematic from a feminist perspective, it does support the constructivist IR feminist theory that gender and violence are inherently interrelated.

Constructivist IR Feminism and CEWS

If gender is a social construct that reflects political institutional hierarchies then it is fluid and can be deconstructed just as it was constructed. However, gender is not only a passive signifier of societal trends, where gender identities influence social institutions and systems (Cockburn 2008; Enloe 2005; Enloe 2007; Tickner 1992). Gender can be approached as a passive reflection of society when used as an indicator to predict armed conflict, but can also be used in early response approaches to influence a state's likelihood to militarize in conflict situations. Proponents of the constructivist approach assert that in order to decrease state use of violence, aggressive, coercive and dominating models of hegemonic masculinity must be challenged and subverted. Constructivist IR feminism emphasizes a redefinition and reconstruction of citizenship, security and gender roles in order to holistically transform a society from a male-dominated militarized state to a peaceful, gender equal and diplomatic global power (Tickner 1992: 53). Increased female political participation and visibility, as recommended in the quantitative regression approach, are only the first steps in this agenda for overturning the male-dominated hegemony of political spaces.

One example from the constructivist IR feminist agenda to prevent state conflict is the call for a redefinition of security that is less militarized and hyper-masculine. A main problem Tickner and fellow feminist IR expert, Cynthia Enloe, identify is that international and state security forces (i.e. military, police, navy) are overwhelming masculine institutions that do not adequately represent the communities they are mandated to protect, specifically in regards to women (Enloe 2007: 40; Tickner 1992: 53). A problem that has been identified by the mainstream political community is the inefficiency of the security sector approach to ensuring civilian security. Within the IR community, there have emerged efforts for security sector reform (SSR)³ to shift emphasis towards human security in the form of economic, environmental and social security for civilians (Aoláin 2009: 1058). This alternative approach to security provisions is related to the concept of security for individuals and their environments, rather than prioritizing security of the state. While SSR did not originate directly from a feminist agenda, its logic parallels the constructivist IR feminist critique of traditional state security institutions (Tickner 1992: 53).

A second recommendation for state conflict prevention would be to break down socially constructed definitions of masculine and feminine identities, and patriarchal gender divisions of labor in the political realm. A mechanism for accomplishing this is gender mainstreaming. This type of holistic, all-level approach to institutional change can have the effect of transforming social power structures. Women not only gain access to decision-making roles, but institutions, whether they have female employees or not, can be made to mainstream gender into their management policies and codes of conduct. This benefits men as well as women by educating them about gender dynamics and the problems inherent in certain masculine identities associated with violence.

The constructivist approach to prevention provides a more educated and in-depth description of conditions, contexts and their historicity than the recommendations from quantitative researchers. This generates more appropriate prevention mechanisms and case-specific procedural guides to ensure that states are less vulnerable to armed conflict. Because it provides flexibility, the approach strategies can be adjusted to different social and cultural

³ According to the OECD, security sector reform is defined as the process of transforming the security sector/system, including all the actors, their roles, responsibilities, and actions, in a manner that is more consistent with democratic norms and sound principles of good governance (OECD 2005).

contexts. This helps to avoid unintended externalities that could lead to failures in a CEWS. At the same time, it benefits from the support of ‘hard’ data reflecting correlations between gender and conflict generated by Caprioli and her colleagues.

Conclusion

A developed feminist gender analysis allows for an understanding of how and why gendered identities are created. It makes it possible to recognize gender conditions that emerge prior to the onset of state armed conflict. There is a substantial amount of research being done on how gender relations and identities change during and following conflicts, but little regarding changes leading up to the outbreak of violence.* In these studies gender dynamics are recognized as important elements in how conflict and post-conflict societies are defined. This is in part because of how gendered power structures tend to be exacerbated and transformed during conflicts. These studies help to raise gender awareness in post-conflict reconstruction efforts and prevent future conflicts. However, monitoring and analyzing gender dynamics before the outbreak of violence is equally crucial in creating more peaceful societies where all members can feel secure. The challenge is creating a method of recording and monitoring that adopts a clear and appropriate gender analysis, and knowing when to begin these procedures in a state. While the question of when to begin is circumstantial and is relevant in most EWS, the first challenge can be addressed through a combination of the two approaches outlined in this paper.

When using “gender analysis” it is best to rely on the constructivist feminist definition that defines gender as socially constructed and always changing. This allows for more flexibility in different social contexts while still providing a clear definition of gender and gender analysis. Concerning CEWS predictors, quantitative methodology provides useful tools that can be applied to a constructivist definition of gender. In this way, gender specialists can transparently record and monitor gender relations and changes, while contributing a more advanced feminist gender analysis to the work of Caprioli and others.

The purpose of instrumentalizing gender in CEWS as a predictor is to better predict the onset of state armed conflict. This is not a feminist goal. While ensuing policies align with those purported by constructivist feminists—redefining patriarchal institutions to be more gender-sensitive—CEWS have a different ultimate goal. This does not imply that CEWS are opposed to feminist agendas. Rather, in the current early stages of integrating gender, these systems have yet to recognize the need to empower women for the sake of provoking greater gender equality. By recognizing gender equality as a risk assessment tool for state conflict however, these systems are gradually moving closer to the realization that by improving women’s empowerment the goal to prevent state conflict may simultaneously be achieved.

* See: Greenberg, M. E. and Zuckerman, E.: *The Gender Dimensions of Post-Conflict Reconstruction: The Challenges in Development Aid Gender Action*, 2009.; OSCE: *Gender Aspects in Post-Conflict Situations* OSCE, 2001.; Sørensen, B.: *Women and Post-Conflict Resolution: Issues and Sources* UNRISD, 1998.

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