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MAKING SENSE OF

THEORY

edited by

JENNIFER STERLING-FOLKER

8.2

Julie Mertus

Liberal Feminism: Local Narratives in a Gendered Context

Marysia Zalewski (1996) has observed the multiple usages of theory in the field of international relations: as a tool, as a critique, and as everyday experience. One intellectual tradition that exemplifies these three usages, but that has been marginalized in international politics, is liberal feminism. As this book demonstrates, there are many ways to analyze international relations problems. Studies based on liberal feminism uncover the subjectivity of traditional approaches to international relations by "searching for silences" and imagining the addition of "unheard voices." Feminist methods "emphasize conversations and dialogue rather than the production of a single, triumphant truth" (Charlesworth 1999b: 379). This approach has particular resonance as applied to Kosovo, an area where local voices have been eclipsed by international interests and truths remain contested (see Mertus 1999a).

To the field of international relations, liberal feminist critique contributes both a methodology and a deep normative critique. "While the crux of the term feminist is method," Katharine Bartlett explains, "there is a critical aspect of feminist method that is substantive in nature. Feminist method works from a hypothesis which, in its simplest terms, boils down to something like this: the circumstances of women are unjust in significant respects and ought to be improved" (1999: 34). The approach to IR "as it should be" must be responsive to women, reflect their experiences, and seek to transform their lives in a manner that recognizes individual agency and corrects disproportionate power imbalances (Slaughter and Ratner 1999: 416). The liberal feminist does draw on the traditional themes of liberal theory, stressing the importance of individual rights, the rule of law, and other supportive institutional mechanisms. But it is the combination of feminist methodology and normative critique that makes liberal feminism so useful in analysis and problem solving.

This chapter reads like no other in this book because, unlike other chapters, it employs feminist methodology. Feminist methodology includes personal experience as a theoretical starting point, narrative, contextual reasoning, and multiperspectivity (Schneider 1986). The application of feminist methodology distinguishes this chapter in four ways. First, even before I outline the theory, I begin with a note on my own personal experiences in Kosovo and throughout the text I value other narratives. Second, although I

remain interested in the exercise of power at the "top" of the international arena, I understand world events by listening to local narratives and drawing lessons from "below." Thus, instead of focusing on such "big" actors and structures at the top—like NATO, the United States, the Yugoslav army—I look at the "little" actors and structures at the bottom—village women leaders, grassroots anticonscription organizations, and shoe-string humanitarian efforts. Third, unlike other contributors to this book, I am interested not only in applying my assigned theory to the abstract issue of Kosovo, but also in how specific local actors use or resist the theory. Finally, because I am self-reflective and aware of the contested local context, I know that it is not enough to present liberal feminism absent a critique. Accordingly, this chapter also challenges traditional notions of liberal feminism and exposes shortcomings in its application to Kosovo.

■ The Starting Point for Feminist Methodology: Personal Narrative

It was the winter of 1994. With the master plans for genocidal conflict being promulgated just blocks away from our Belgrade flat, and with the gates of the decaying city opening only to admit despair and eject hope, I sat around a kitchen table with a group of women who tried to imagine the dawn of a just world. "There would be no borders!" exclaimed one. "No police checkpoints!" another woman chimed in. It became a free-for-all. "No fighting militaries!" "No militaries at all!" "No, maybe just one military!" "No wars, no militaries!" "No passports!" "No green cards!" "Rights for women!" "Rights for gypsies!" "Rights for all minorities!" "Rights for everyone!" "No need for rights, equality for all!" The women around the kitchen table were of all ages and backgrounds—doctors, lawyers, journalists, psychologists, human rights investigators, and antiwar activists. We shared some common experiences, enough so that we had a familiar language and way of understanding, yet disagreed with each other on just about everything except for the need for more diverse participation in the international and local politics running our lives. The issue of Kosovo was a divisive one, but even the most nationalist among us vowed to work for peace. The electricity flickered off and on, and the grocery shelves were bare, but we were still filled with hope. "If only there were more women running things . . ." more than one activist was heard to say, fully aware of the power of women to inflict harm, but somehow convinced that the addition of our voices could make a difference.

It was the summer of 1998. The war in Bosnia had been over for nearly three years, but the low-intensity conflict that had been going on for a decade in Kosovo was now beginning to roar. Over 75,000 people had been displaced from their homes as Serbian forces flooded Kosovo and battles erupt-

ed between Serbs and Albanians. This time I was sitting around a kitchen table in Pristina, the dusty capital of Kosovo. The heady "can do" feeling of the women's activism that had, as in Belgrade, once infused Pristina, had long since dissipated. The doctor, nurse, journalist, student, and school teacher sitting around the table were as busy as ever, "doing something" to resist what they experienced as Serbian occupation, but their activities had become increasingly defensive—and grim. Instead of providing family planning education for girls and young women, they were counseling war-traumatized children and gathering emergency supplies for families trapped in the front lines. They were angry at their Serbian friends, who had not called or e-mailed—not even the ones who had come to visit when relations between Belgrade and Pristina women's groups thawed after the World Conference on Women in Beijing and the signing of the Dayton peace accord in 1995. "Maybe they are afraid," I suggested. "What do they know about fear?" the journalist snarled and the women erupted in agreement. "They don't care really." "They only care about themselves." "Everyone is first part of their nation and then a woman." With no hope left, the women turned to talking about what they would do when "the war begins." "I will send my sons out, but I will stay," one woman vowed. And that is exactly what she would do, becoming one of many women who was raped in the war of 1999.

As I look back on those and many other kitchen table sessions, I recognize that these groups of women sat far outside state structures, while powerful decisionmakers carried on, oblivious to their existence. Nonetheless, I came to understand that the "kitchen tablers" are central to understanding the larger issue of political and social conflict in Kosovo. By using the modes of governance that are part of transnational civil society, it is the kitchen tablers who try to shape the way people think about social-change issues. Kitchen tablers use the language of human rights treaties and seek the support of liberal state institutions, but in so doing shape the understanding of the words to fit their local lived realities. Thus, not only do kitchen tablers have access to liberal discourse as a tool to advance their claims, but to some extent also they *are* the discourse. The kitchen tablers, inundated with the demands of outsiders pressing a liberal agenda (from yesterday's warmongers to today's peacebuilders), have at their disposal various liberal feminist techniques, and their choice as to how to proceed shapes local and international understandings of liberal feminism. The insight I gained from the kitchen tablers informs the following outline of liberal feminism as well as its application.

■ The Theory and Its Applications

The theory and politics of liberal feminism are shaped by a conception of human nature, individual agency, and rationality identified with liberal

political theory (Donnelly 1999: 81). Also known as bourgeois feminism, the theory "is grounded in the claims of the classical liberal philosophy developed by Locke, Rousseau, Bentham and Mill for equal rights, individualism, liberty and justice" (Andermaier, Lovell, and Wolkowitz 1997: 123). The notion of *progress* is important for liberals; liberals share a faith in the progressive unfolding of humankind's ability to reason and a belief that disputes can and should be resolved by recourse to rational argument. They urge that international relations can and should be regulated through fair application of universal laws. Beyond this, however, liberals disagree with one another on many key issues, including whether human nature is essentially benign and cooperative or sinful and competitive; the proper relationship between state and society; whether and when a state can intervene in another to promote international norms; the proper weighing of the shared values of community against liberal tolerance; and the role of capitalist markets and free trade in securing justice and peace (Smith 1993).

The diversity of liberal thinking has accommodated many feminists with different informing ideologies and agendas, but with a belief that women's equality with men may be promoted through a system of legally enforceable individual rights (Vincent 1986: 152). Here lies the radical potential of liberalism for women advancing their claims under a rights framework. Women are empowered as capable subjects of the law (and not mere objects), and states (and in some cases other duty bearers) are burdened with the duty to recognize and respond appropriately to their demands.

The idea of individual rights necessitates recognition of the agency and identity of the individual that may exist apart from the community (Donnelly 1999: 81). Nonetheless, the liberal recognition of individual worth does not negate the importance of communal life. Individuals are not free-floating entities; they exist and gain meaning through social relationships and communal responsibilities and duties (Brown 1999). Identification and enforcement of the individual rights of women depends greatly on community (Cabill 1980: 284). Thus a liberal feminist agenda may very well incorporate a communal orientation along with recognition of the rights of individuals within communities.

Three feminist approaches to international relations problems that have relevance to the case study at hand can be identified (see table 8.2.1). While the first approach is most commonly identified with liberal feminism, both the second and third approaches have been used by liberal feminists who blend the liberal emphasis on individual rights and institution building with more structural critiques of women's subordination.

Where are the women? That is the question most associated with liberal feminism. This first approach, characteristic of "equality" feminists,

Table 3.2.1 Feminist Approaches to International Relations Problems

Problem	Explanation	Solution	Long-Term Result
Women invisible (unless same as men)	Men run world; men run IR; women's role not valued	Add women	See women; value women
Way of "being in" world distorted (in a manner that obscures gender power); who counts, what counts, how the game is played	"Male lens"	Use of descriptive gender lens/"gender perspective"	Transform ontology; expose constructed nature of difference; expose gender power
Way of "knowing" world distorted (constitutive concepts incomplete); state, sovereignty, security, development, power/authority	Process of acquiring knowledge; political; informed by ideology	Add gender as a tool of analysis; reorient top-down approach; link to other analyses of domination/subordination	Transform epistemology; expose political nature of methodologies; generate demands for change

looks for the ways in which women are "invisible" in international relations analysis, unless, that is, they are "like men" and play male roles (e.g., Margaret Thatcher or Madeleine Albright). The explanation for this problem has been articulated variously as (1) "men run the world," thus there simply are few women in the kinds of positions that matter in international relations; (2) there are women who should be made visible, but men run the field of international relations and they will not or cannot see women; or (3) women have been there in the international relations landscape all along, but their role has been undervalued and thus overlooked. In the case of Kosovo, this would mean not only identifying women occupying positions of power traditionally reserved for men—for example, noting Edita Tahiri's influential role in Ibrahim Rugova's government—but also valuing women wholly apart from men, and recognizing as important actors in international politics the women that others overlook—the village school teacher, the urban female doctor (see, e.g., Entoe 2000).

A liberal feminist examining the landscape of a transitional society like Kosovo would note the absence of women in positions of power and stress the consequences of the failure of local and international actors to take into account women's differing interests, skills, and expectations (see Mertus 2000b). The most simplistic IR policy prescription furthered by liberal fem-

inism has been characterized as "add women and stir," the notion that inclusion of females satisfies feminist demands for equality. In other words, all we need is more women everywhere, but particularly in decisionmaking positions in the space identified as public.

The second feminist approach moves beyond "adding women" and finds that the orienting assumptions of international policy analysts—their very way of being in the world—is distorted in a manner that privileges men. Zalewski has observed that the issues deemed important and relevant in international relations, assumptions about who and what counts and how the game is played, reflect the interests of the powerful (i.e., the masculine) while the less powerful (i.e., the feminine) are pushed to the margins (1995: 350). The explanation for this problem of ontology is the use of a male or masculine lens that accepts differences as natural and overlooks the deeply embedded impact of patriarchy. "That there are these differences [between men and women] is undeniable," Zalewski urges, "but what really matters, in terms of effects on people's lives, is how these differences are interpreted and acted upon" (1995: 344). The use of a gender perspective thus "can be used to challenge dominant assumptions about what is significant or insignificant, or what are central or marginal concerns" in Kosovo (Stearns 1998: 5). For example, a gender-sensitive ontological status would encourage analysis of the impact of state-condoned "public" violence on violence within Kosovar families and, conversely, the influence of identities and values fostered in family life on the existence of "public" violence. Furthermore, attention to women as the leading cultural transmitters within Kosovo would help us to understand how individual and collective identities and sociocultural meaning systems that support violent conflict are (re)produced and resisted (Peterson 2000: 18).

The third feminist approach finds that the dominant approach to understanding international problems is distorted by an epistemological orientation that relies on a set of inadequate claims about the world. The typical top-down analysis focuses on states, sovereignty, security, power, and conflict and overlooks individuals, social movements, cooperation, and human relations. At the same time, the significance of these constructs in relationship to women's subordination is obscured. The explanation for the shortcomings, J. Ann Tickner has asserted, is that "knowledge constructed in terms of binary distinctions such as rational/emotional, objective/subjective, global/local, and public/private, where the first term is often associated with masculinity, the second with femininity, automatically devalue certain types of knowledge" (2001: 133). The mere adoption of a gender perspective will not correct the epistemological bias. The political nature of the construction of knowledge must be interrogated and challenged. The goal of this more radical gender analysis in Kosovo would be to transform epistemological orientations and in so doing uncover and challenge sites of

power (Scott 1991) and domination and expose *and challenge* the apolitical nature of methodological assumptions (Hirschmann 1992). Beyond mere description, a gender analysis for Kosovo would "generate demands for change, for satisfaction of women's needs" (Cockburn 2001: 15).

Each of these three approaches, outlined in Table 8.2.1.1, holds some utility both for our understanding of Kosovo and for Kosovars' self-understanding. How would a liberal feminist begin to apply these approaches? Quite likely he or she would look at specific narratives from the field and, in so doing, ask such questions as: Where are the women? How does conflict impact men and women differently? What are the skills, interests, and expectations that the men and women bring to addressing this conflict?

■ Two Narratives

Flora, June 1998

In one of the walled gardens in Pristina, the provincial capital of Kosovo, Flora sits patiently on a stone bench fiddling with a picture book.⁴ The five-year-old's left leg is propped up with a large pillow; two wooden bars prevent her from moving her knee. A piece of a grenade has been in her knee for over a month. Her doctor cautioned that movement may cause the metal to sever her nerve permanently. Flora, along with some 100,000 ethnic Albanians, was driven out of her home in the spring of 1998 by Serbian forces in Kosovo. The local hospital would not treat her, but a private surgeon offered to do what he could for free. It was not enough. The shrapnel remains. The best he could recommend was another surgeon in Macedonia, but the road to Macedonia is blocked by fighting militia. Her face pale with pain, Flora waits for someone to tell her what will come next.

The girl's thirty-one-year-old mother, Hedije, and fifty-five-year-old grandmother, Hajrije, take care of the other children in a small basement room: the newborn who arrived after the family had fled their home in Decan and who sits in a corner swaddled in borrowed blankets, and the vivacious two-and-a-half-year-old girl who keeps the entire family awake with her nightmares. Hajrije apologizes for the children's old clothes: "We had everything before," she says. "I had bought the baby such beautiful new things and we left them all behind." They had left in the night in their slippers when Serbs began shelling their home. "We had three stores on the main street," the woman sighs, "and now they are completely gone." When asked about the young men in the family, she says they have gone back to look after the livestock, but everyone knows they stayed to fight. No one has heard from them in over two months.

Hedije's eyes are red from tears and exhaustion. She was nine months

pregnant when she fled on foot from Decan to the village of Ismtiq. It was there that five Serbian policemen gave her a ride to the hospital in Peja (Pec) to give birth. While she was in the delivery room, another group of police beat up her husband in the waiting room, accusing him of lying about his wife's pregnancy. Within minutes of giving birth, with the placenta still attached, Hedije was wheeled into the hospital waiting room to prove to the police that she had indeed been pregnant; only then did the police stop beating her husband.

The next day, she returned to the village, and it was there that she heard Flora's piercing scream that "just would not stop." Hedije is apologetic: "I didn't know she was hit. I thought she was only afraid. But then I saw the blood." Hedije made a makeshift tourniquet to stop the bleeding and waited for some neighbors to bring a doctor. Flora had her first surgery on the floor of a house in Ismtiq. Hedije is apologetic again: "We thought it was done. We didn't know why she still had pain. We didn't know there was more inside her knee and that it could move to her nerve." The family used a horse cart to move the children to Pristina, with the women walking alongside it.

Hedije is quick to point out that they are among the lucky ones because they have a safe place to live now, with a nice host family. While many displaced Kosovar Albanians live with relatives, even more, like this family, are dependent on others for shelter. Pristina is the family's third place of refuge in three months. They had to leave the first two places because of Serb shelling; both of those villages, previously 100 percent ethnic Albanian, are now uninhabitable and controlled by Serbs. They had first stayed in Pristina in the apartment of Hedije's sister, a student at the private (and officially illegal) Kosovar Albanian university. But that was a tiny apartment across the street from the police station in the city center and Hedije spent all her time trying to hush the children. She was afraid to open the windows, lest the neighbors hear their cries. When she sought medical care at the Center for the Protection of Women and Children, a Kosovar Albanian nongovernmental humanitarian organization, they suggested a room with a host family. The host family itself depends upon aid from the Kosovar Albanian solidarity fund to get by from month to month, so it could offer little except space and moral support.

Marta, March 1999

Marta stands less than four and a half feet tall and looks more like a child than a woman in her late thirties. She flashes a smile and has a kind word for everyone we meet on the street; everyone greets her with overwhelming respect. It takes us a long time to reach the cafe where Marta can relax and remember:

The first day the NATO planes began to bomb was on the 24th of March, a Wednesday. Our villages were surrounded with military and Serbian police. On Thursday, the houses began to burn in the village Krusha e Vogel. We who were on the other side of the River Drini saw what was happening. There was smoke and flames, rising and spreading.

That same morning a family came down our road on a tractor. They were from that village on fire. They did not have the words to explain how they escaped. All they could say is a policeman came and told them to go across the river and get out of the village. They were shaken and scared. I took them into my family's home and I was scared about what was happening.

On Friday morning, the houses were still burning. From the front door of my mother's house I could see a lot of people leaving the village and heading toward the river. People in my village were scared to do anything. I told my mother that I must go help. She pled with me to stay, but I insisted. My brother got our tractor and went with me.

When we got down to the river, we saw that they were all women and children—some very small children, some babies. They were crying, shouting. At the moment we got closer, everyone began to scream, "please help us, please help us." They told us that for two days and two nights, forces had surrounded their village. During this time, the people didn't have food, didn't have water, and their houses were burning. The police separated the women and children from their men. They threw them out of their homes. The police directed the women to take their children and go down them and themselves in the river.

At that moment I was no longer afraid. I knew what we had to do. The people all wanted to get on the tractor at the same time. So I said, "Do not be afraid, we can take you all." I stayed on the far side of the river bank and helped women and children to get onto my brother's tractor. He drove them to the other side. Eventually, some other people from our village came with tractors and began to help. And, back and forth and back and forth like this . . . we brought over about 500 of them. The river was deep, strong and very cold. We were afraid the whole time that someone would fall in or that the water would rise too high and swallow the tractors.

After about an hour and a half, almost everyone was at the other side. There was one very old woman walking with two younger women and three children. They weren't yet at the river. I went to get them. At that moment, police started to lob grenades over us. I told them to keep moving and somehow we got them over the river.⁵

Marta learned later that Serbian police and paramilitary had attempted to murder all 120 of the men in the village. Some were tied and burned alive in their houses; others were shot execution-style in mass pits. Two men escaped the massacre by feigning death while the other bodies were piled on top of them. After the military left, they crawled from underneath their dead friends and ran to Marta's village. Less than two days later, the entire village fled across the mountains into Albania.

When the NATO bombing ended, the women from Krusha e Vogel returned as soon as they could. They discovered a ghost town. All of their

Serb neighbors had fled. While every Serbian house remained standing, Albanian homes had been razed to the ground. Picking through the scarred landscape, the women found the charred remains of many of their men. In a rage, the women set fire to the Serbian homes, burning them to the ground. The next thing they did was to make makeshift homes for themselves and learn how to perform the farming tasks normally undertaken by men. With the help of a local women's group that was founded during the war and funded by Western European donors, the women learned how to drive and became proficient in running their own farms.

Although a handful of men have returned and a few boys have matured to manhood, the village remains populated largely by women and children. Although life is hard, by all accounts the women are doing extremely well. In contrast to the prewar times, women have enhanced decisionmaking authority in village life. Among their successful business ventures, they grow grapes, which are shipped to Slovenia and bottled under a Slovenian label. They also run a driving school in nearby Prizren, operate a small library, and staff a women's center that, among other purposes, serves—in the words of one teenager—"as a place just to be and to be sad." Although the education level of girls remains low compared with that of boys, more girls are enrolled in school for longer periods of time than prior to the war. Moreover, contact with visiting journalists and humanitarian assistance workers has created greater awareness among women as to the larger legal, social, and political issues affecting their lives.

■ Analysis

Approach 1: Where Are the Women?

The first question the liberal feminist following the traditional framework would ask is: Where are the women in Kosovo narratives? By looking closely at these stories we can see the roles they play as mothers, nurses, victims, saviors, revenge arsonists, and war survivors. For each role we can identify the specific needs, interests, and skills that flow from occupying that position. This helps us to understand the women not as victims, but rather as complex actors with agency to make decisions regarding their own lives.

Identifying where women are in the narratives underscores where they are not. Women are certainly not at the negotiating table. Women were not included in the decision to begin the violence in the first place, nor were they involved in the decisions as to when and how to make peace. Would the addition of women have exerted any significant impact upon the outcome of the negotiations? Opinions vary on whether women negotiate dif-

ferently from men and the consequences of any such differences. There can be no definitive response regarding the impact of including women in decisionmaking on the initiation and cessation of violence. We can see from the above individual narratives that women are not necessarily pure and peace-loving. They are both subjected to violence and, as witnessed in the revenge house burnings in *Marta's* narrative, capable of committing violence.

Liberal feminists, however, would emphasize a question of gender equity and stress its impact on democracy. Strengthening equal participation of women and men is the right thing to do on a moral level, because we value equality. But also, more equal participation is instrumentally desirable, as participation strengthens democracy. Moreover, because women experience conflict differently from men, they bring different skills, interests, and needs to conflict analysis and problem solving; excluding women is not in the interests of anyone. The women of Kosovo, like women in most parts of the world, have primary responsibility for taking care of children and elders and thus they are the best ones to consult on these issues. But also, liberal feminists remind us, it is women who have staffed the majority of human rights and humanitarian nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) (although the chief leader in these NGOs is most often male). The inclusion of women would offer a wider range of expertise and thus would invite deeper analysis of priorities and strategies for reconstruction.

What is the impact of conflict on these women's lives? This traditional liberal feminist approach would look largely at the individual level for evidence of impact. Among the issues this approach would identify from the narratives are personal violence, including rape and other forms of sexual violence; sexual and reproductive health issues and needs, including prenatal and new baby care; trauma from witnessing or participating in violence; and psychosocial impacts such as loss of identity and degrading of self-esteem flowing from changes in roles and relationships within family and community (el-Bushra 2000: 77). The international and domestic nongovernmental and governmental organizations in Kosovo have in fact embarked on a myriad of projects addressing these issues. For each step of the reform process, feminists have wondered where the women are and have pushed for the inclusion of more women in decisionmaking positions in both international and domestic institutions (Kvinna Till Kvinna 2001).

The liberal feminist approach, however, has never been allowed to reach its potential, as implementation has been flawed. Instead of including women on an equal basis with men in the peacebuilding project, the international community has ghettoized Kosovar women into "women's projects," spanning from women's microcredit enterprises, to postagreement trauma counseling, to women's health care projects, to women political leadership training.⁶ An audit of these projects conducted by Rachel

Wareham and Diana Quick (2001) found them severely underfunded and often misdirected. In education, for example, UNMIK has focused on rebuilding damaged schools, but given little priority to girls' attendance. Women and girls have also almost exclusively been offered gender-stereotyped training such as hairdressing and sewing, rather than training in wider skills proposed by themselves or by local women's NGOs, such as women's publishing presses or architecture firms (Abdela 2000). The liberal feminist goal of enhancing women's political participation has also failed to achieve its objectives in Kosovo. Ironically, women have fared better in obtaining representation in purely local institutions than in international or mixed international/local institutions (Kvinna Till Kvinna 2001).

The promise of the liberal approach of "adding women" to positions of authority in the public sector rests in the "spillover effect." This is the idea that the positive inclusion of women in the public sector will impact cultural attitudes and thus influence the treatment of women in the private sphere. With local women virtually excluded from sites of power in the Kosovo reconstruction project, the spillover effect has been largely negative. The lesson the international community provides to the general public is that exclusion of women is an acceptable norm. The one area, however, where the spillover effect seems to be working is in the inclusion of women in the local police force.

As of 2001 roughly 19 percent of the local police were female (Kvinna Till Kvinna, 2001). When I interviewed Kosovar men in the summer of 2000 about the new policy, they responded with such comments as: "Can you believe she pulled me over [for speeding] and I had to stop?" "I used to never respect a police officer, but now look at them, they are so professional!" and "Police used to work with machine guns here, now they use their control and other dangerous situations, Kosovar men believed they could bring 'dignity' and 'professionalism' to policing (Kvinna Till Kvinna 2001). These answers support the theory that adding women (in this case to policing) can prove more radical than first appearances suggest; adding women may influence individual consciousness and eventually bring about cultural change. The problem then may rest in the implementation of liberal feminist ideas, but not in the ideas themselves.

Approach 2: What Are the Roots of Oppression?

This approach goes beyond adding women and tries to rethink the assumptions informing who wins and who loses. Instead of adding women and creating "special" programs for them, this approach demands that international organizations adopt a gender perspective to address the socially constructed roles of men and women and thus expose the very root of exploitation and domination of women and challenge the institutions that perpetuate

inequality (see Mertus 2000b: 15). Instead of just meeting the individual needs of the women in the narratives (such as the need to be free from violence and to have shelter and basic medical care), this approach would require thinking about why those needs exist in the first place. Who wins and who loses as long as those needs continue to arise? How do seemingly neutral norms and behaviors exclude or disadvantage women?

A gender perspective would invite examination of a broader set of issues, as it would recognize that conflict impacts not only women's individual needs, but also hierarchical social relations within the household. In times of violent conflict, women's reproductive role may be expanded, as women are literally expected to replenish the nation, the quality of marital relationships may deteriorate, and forced marriage and prostitution may become more common (el-Bushra 2000: 77). This approach also encourages recognition of the continuities between wartime and peacetime. All violence against women or men—in war or peacetime—can be understood as gendered phenomena within the context of patriarchal social relations (Kelly 2000). And all violence against women or men—in war or peacetime—can be "situated analytically within a 'sexual violence' approach" (Jacobs, Jacobson, and Marchbank 2000: 4). In the case of the narratives, we thus would want to inquire about the existence of violence in both war and peacetime and to try to understand the gender differences that have an impact on power relations within society.

Adopting a gender perspective, feminist activists in Kosovo have pressed for greater attention to violence within the family, to forced prostitution and the trafficking in women (and the role of internationals), and in general to increased consideration for the roles women play within family life (Kvinnu Till Kvinna 2001; Mertus 1999b). These projects have met with some degree of success in attracting donor dollars⁷ and, like the introduction of women into policing, may play a long-term role in transforming social attitudes toward women. However, family and criminal law reforms have been hampered by larger structural problems. In particular, the delay in establishing a functioning legal system has effectively allowed some existing laws to remain in force, or allowed customary law, which treats women very poorly, to take precedence over statutory law (Wareham and Quick 2001).

In practice, while the adoption of a gender perspective has been conducive to a better identification of the issues and description of the problem, it has rarely led to transformative institutional and programmatic change on gender issues in international and domestic institutions. A study of the reconstruction in Kosovo conducted by Chris Corrin in 2000 aptly illustrates the continued failure of humanitarian organizations to address gender concerns fully and consistently and to integrate local and international women in decisionmaking positions in program formation, adoption,

and implementation. The main problem is that processes of gender mainstreaming have not been "two-way (i.e., happening within international and local structures) and transparent" (Corrin 2000). While some organizations have examined their own management practices, most of the changes have been focused on overseas activities. And despite well-honed gender policy statements at headquarters and the pronounced desire for programmatic changes, overseas activities continue to approach gender unevenly and largely without the valuing of local expertise.

Approach 3: How Does the Way We Know the World Limit Us?

To push a more normatively driven gender analysis that values local knowledge and generates demands for change, local and international feminists have also utilized a third feminist approach, challenging epistemological orientations. For example, they ask such questions as: What is violence? What is security? What is war? Who has the authority to define these terms? They criticize reliance on the state as *the* unit of analysis and of the realist notion of power as *control over* others, and suggest the centrality of other transstate and substate actors and invoke the concept of power as *cooperation*. The way in which the women in our narratives worked together for the common good illustrates the cooperative exercise of power.

Kosovo feminists, while welcoming the liberal rights agenda and supporting the creation of international tribunals to prosecute war crimes, have questioned overreliance on rights and the efficacy of the delivery of justice through adversarial proceedings. Instead of these state-focused measures, some feminists have argued for more of a focus below the state: the empowerment of individual women and communities of survivors, the encouragement of cross-communal dialogue, cooperative memory projects, and grassroots truth-finding mechanisms (Mertus 2004). Other feminists have sought to move beyond the state: in networking with other individuals and organizations outside their own state borders, local feminists have influenced human rights fact-finding, advocacy, and negotiation, and impacted delivery of economic assistance.⁸

In moving away from the state, Kosovar feminists have broken from liberal feminism and have joined those who assert that women stand to benefit as state borders break down and sovereignty becomes more fragmented and textured over time. These theorists expose the ways in which the maintenance and expansion of the territorially bounded state relies in large part on the silencing and suppression of women (see Peterson 1992a, 1992b). Iris Marion Young explains this sentiment: "Founded by men, the modern state and its public realm of citizenship paraded as universal values and norms which were derived from specifically masculine experience: militaristic norms of honor and homoerotic camaraderie; respectful competition

and bargaining among independent agents; discourse framed in unemotional tones of dispassionate reason" (1990: 120).

One insight from critics of liberal feminism is that states are patriarchal institutions not only because they exclude women from decisionmaking, but also because they are based on the concentration of power in an elite and the legitimization of a monopoly on the use of force to maintain that control (Charlesworth, Chinkin, and Wright 1991: 622; see also Charlesworth and Chinkin 2000). Even if state institutions do not overtly discriminate against women, they effectively exclude or inhibit women's participation by adopting a male worldview as the standard by which behavior is judged (Tickner 1992: 64). International institutions are viewed as "functional extensions of states" that are similarly based on male norms (Tickner 1992: 64), and thus Kosovar feminists view these institutions with skepticism as well. The movement away from the inviolable state to a more permeable and fluid entity thus opens new opportunities for the dismantling of the institutionalized subordination of women in international law, international institutions, and their processes (Kaop 1993).

By focusing both below and above the state, Kosovar feminists have affected a shift in the loci for formation of rights or duties, decisionmaking, and law enforcement from a space controlled exclusively by the state to one influenced by other entities. This change is not without its drawbacks. The shift in power from the state to transsovereign private and corporate sectors could become another way to exclude women's participation in decisionmaking. V. Spike Peterson and Anne Runyan (1999: 104) worry that women have little influence over the international governmental organizations that control their lives. The increased devaluation of the public sector at the state level greatly reduces the political space for women to gain power and use it to promote equality. The goal, Peterson and Runyan have suggested, should be maintaining and reimagining state boundaries, not dismantling them altogether. Organizing to address the gender issues facing displaced men and women thus entails working with states, not against them, and strengthening state responsibilities and capacities, not weakening them (see, e.g., Romany 1994).

As if taking a page from Peterson and Runyan, feminists in Kosovo have chosen a pragmatic political strategy that draws on their experiences and skills and essentially utilizes all three of the feminist approaches described in this chapter. Even as they have demanded the addition of women into the liberal reform agenda, they have challenged the male lens that dominates the reform landscape and pushed for radical social and cultural transformation to end the subjugation of women. The result is a liberal focus on individual rights and democratic institutions, but with a distinctly critical Kosovar flavor. As Igballa Rugova wrote in a memo on behalf of the Kosova Women's Network to the heads of UNMIK and the OSCE mis-

sion in Kosovo: "We are doing it our way, because we know how to make it happen."⁹

Conclusion

Liberal feminism offers both a method and substance for analyzing international relations problems. As Bartlett has pointed out, if feminism is viewed in terms of method, policy analysts are feminist so long as they ask the right kinds of questions to the right kinds of people. This entails valuing the lived experiences of the little guys. As substance, however, liberal feminism refers to the answers feminists get. "Within this view, analysis of conflict and the proposals that follow are feminist only if they conform to whatever substantive criteria are attached to the term," explains Bartlett (1999: 32). For the liberal feminist, this means advancement of women's rights through rights-protecting institutions and other endeavors to advance women's equitable share of power in relation to men.

Notes

1. A longer version of this story appears in Mertus 2000a.
2. Edita Tahiri was long the most influential woman in the dominant Kosovar political party.
3. Looking at specific narratives from the field is beneficial because it not only provides background for applying the three feminist approaches discussed here, but also provides an example of how to apply a narrative feminist methodology to this and other conflicts: listen to the local narrative. The drawback is that it may be viewed as space consuming, and it might lead a reader to believe that these two cases represent the totality of women's experiences in Kosovo and the limits of liberal feminists' interest in Kosovo. Rather, women's experiences in Kosovo are extremely varied and liberal feminists are interested in all aspects of the Kosovo scenario.
4. This information is based on my field research in Kosovo in May-June 1998, which was funded by the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children. It appeared as an internal report for the commission in July 1988.
5. Author interview with anonymous, Krmsha e Vogel, Kosovo, August 2001. "Marta" is not her real name.
6. See, for example, "Terms of Reference: Office of Gender Affairs, United Nations Interim Administration in Kosovo," November 3, 2000 (on file with author); and STAR Network, <http://www.worldlearning.org/star>.
7. See, for example, OSCE-sponsored programs addressing domestic violence, available online at http://www.osce.org/kosovo/features/in_focus/safe_house.php3.
8. Author e-mail correspondence with Rachel Wareham, October 2001; author interview with Igballa Rugova, Pristina, Kosovo, August 2001; author interview with Serdie Ahmeti, Colby College, Maine, November 2001.
9. Author interview with Igballa Rugova, Pristina, Kosovo, August 2001.