

Analysis of the Impact of International Engagement on Women's Rights

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Abstract: Women's issues began to be discussed more and more concerning international relations after the conclusion of the Cold War, and feminism has grown to be a significant theory in the field. At the same time, the reconstructed international pattern after the Cold War also provides a new perspective for feminist research. Using documentary analysis, this paper seeks to show the reader the positive impact of international engagement on the feminist movement from three perspectives: the United Nations, international feminist NGOs, and women in diplomacy. In general, the rise of feminism has become a significant trend in a global community that is interdependent but divided, rapidly developing but in crisis, and eager to cooperate but still in need of communication. Feminism is a vital force in the governance of the international community. From the programmatic documents adopted by the United Nations to the unifying role played by NGOs and the strong presence of women in diplomacy, it has made a remarkable contribution to building an equal future for humanity.

Keywords: gender rights, United Nations, NGOs, international relations, women's power

1. Introduction

The issue of women has always been more than a gender issue. It is an observatory of the history and reality of a nation or people, a barometer of social civilization, and a symbol of progress[1]. "Reaffirming faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small," is emphasized in the Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights also reaffirm that women should enjoy human rights on an equal footing with men. As stated in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted in 1993, "guaranteeing equal rights for women" should be a priority for all governments and the United Nations. It also calls for the mainstreaming of women's equality and human rights into the United Nations system and activities. At this time feminism emerged as a theory to criticize the status quo at the time. More and more subjects are aware of the importance of women's issues and gender conflict, and there has been a significant awakening in the awareness of gender equality. Women have gradually started to take an active role in the field of international relations, which has seen a decline in the dominance of men in that subject. Feminist scholars have begun to explore women's connections to international relations and the process of globalization from new and diverse perspectives. On this basis, this article attempts to explore the critical influence and unique role of feminism on contemporary international social governance, i.e., by comprehensively sorting out and analyzing the role played by feminism at

the three levels of national domestic, and foreign affairs, international organizations, and global civil society, it attempts to comprehensively show the influence of feminism on contemporary international politics and international community. Looking at international relations through a feminist lens gives the world a different approach to the study, which is highly conducive to the diversification of international relations theory.

2. The Positive Impact of International Exchange on Women's Rights

2.1. The UN's Work for Women

In its nearly seven decades of practice, the UN has done a great deal to advance the cause of women. In chronological order, the history of the UN's work for women can be roughly divided into the following four phases.

The first stage was the early years of work to promote gender equality, from the establishment of the UN to the mid-1970s, from 1945 to 1975. During this period, the UN was mainly committed to seeking legal equality between males and females. Many laws and documents were enacted to protect women's rights and interests in all political, economic, and social aspects. In 1945, the Charter of the United Nations reaffirmed "the belief in the equal rights of men and women"; in 1949, the General Assembly adopted the Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of Forced Prostitution, which guaranteed women's fundamental human rights; in 1951, the International Labor Organization adopted the Convention concerning Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value, which confirmed the principle of equal remuneration for men and women for work of equal value. In 1952, the Convention on the Political Rights of Women was adopted, which for the first time, legally recognized women's political rights, including the right to vote. These international conventions have exerted an extensive influence on the international community. This influence is mainly due to the establishment of basic guidelines for improving women's status at the legal level through its entry into force. At the same time, it has also laid a particular ideological and intellectual foundation for the future work of the United Nations on women[2].

The second phase, from 1976 to 1985, the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development, and Peace, was a period of significant change in the international community's understanding of the role of women, from the initial belief that development improves women's status to the later idea that evolution is impossible without women's participation, recognizing that women are indispensable agents of the entire development process, and acknowledging that the trivialization of women's roles is both a cause and a consequence of backwardness. During this period, with the development of decolonization movements in Asian, African, and Latin American countries, more and more developing countries had the opportunity to enter the UN. The demands of women in the vast majority of developing countries for the right to survival and development received a certain degree of attention from the international community. The issue of establishing a new international political and economic order was put on the agenda for women's development in the world. The efforts of the United Nations during this period were mainly to convene the Second and Third World Conferences on Women. In 1984, the United Nations was reorganized to create the United Nations Development Fund for Women(UNIFEM). This allowed for a relatively equal advancement of women in economic status, education, and health care in all member countries. This has accelerated the process of understanding and cooperation between women in developed and developing countries.

The third phase lasted from 1986 to 1995 when the post-Cold War UN redoubled its efforts to advance women and mainstream women's support into all UN agencies and departments. In September 1995, the Fourth World Conference on Women adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, with "gender" becoming the central concept of the Platform for Action and putting forward essential concepts such as "women's empowerment," indicating that the international

community has shifted from simply caring about women's issues to viewing gender inequality as a social and power relationship constructed by society and culture and emphasizing the need to eliminate gender inequality by reforming the social structure. The fourth phase, from 1996 to the present, has seen the UN empower women and deepen its work on gender mainstreaming, with programs and practices on women and development being refined and implemented and measures for the advancement of women being put into practice promoted.

In the nearly 70 years of women's work, the United Nations has gone through three stages of development: from the legal level of formulating the Convention on gender equality to the ideological level of re-conceptualizing and evaluating the role of women to the practical level of deepening women's empowerment and achieving gender mainstreaming[3]. The UN's significant achievements in women's advancement can be summarized in the following three areas. First, it is reflected in the political status of women. The number of women participating in political and decision-making processes worldwide is increasing, which is the progress made under the impetus of the United Nations. The proportion of women in the "Professional" and higher categories in the United Nations system increased from 33.5 percent in 1999 to 36.9 percent in 2004[4]. Secondly, the economic status of women. Under the auspices of the United Nations, governments have strengthened legislation to guarantee women's economic rights and improve their financial quality. In terms of women's employment alone, by 2004, women accounted for more than 35% of the labor market in most countries and regions of the world, except for a few areas in South Asia, West Asia, and North Africa. At the same time, women's poverty rates in third-world countries are gradually decreasing. For example, the poverty rate for female-headed households in Chile fell from 39.3% in 1990 to 20.8%[5]. Thirdly, the status of women in society. With the help of the United Nations, women's education and health care have improved to varying degrees in all member countries. In Honduras, the female illiteracy rate fell from 34.7% in 1998 to 19.8% in 2001, and the proportion of female university graduates in Qatar was 72% by 2001. By 2004, more than half of the world's countries had women's health programs, and most countries showed a downward trend in maternal mortality.

2.2. International Women's NGOs

International women's NGOs primarily emerged from the international women's movement and gained momentum in response to changes in the international community and the need for global governance. On the long road to solving global women's issues and achieving gender equality, international women's NGOs have played a significant role under their proximity to the grassroots, adaptability, low management costs, and high efficiency[6]. As non-state actors, international women's organizations have shown a trend of diversification and enrichment. They have had an essential impact on the construction of global civil society and global social governance. First, they can participate in and contribute to global governance. International women's NGOs have long been working on various causes related to global governance. They emphasize the vital role of gender factors in global affairs, targeting global issues such as population control, environmental protection, and protection of women's and children's human rights. Second, they can integrate gender awareness and women's rights into decision-making. An essential function of international NGOs is to express the public's interests in a timely manner and provide a reference for government departments' decision-making. International women's NGOs incorporate women's concerns into the discussion of the General Assembly and fully express the aspirations and demands of women in general[4]. During the UN World Conference on Women, a large number of international women's NGOs actively participated in various non-governmental forums held by the Conference, and many issues raised by these women's NGOs were gradually incorporated into the decision-making agenda of the UN and national governments after the Conference[7]. Again, it can increase women's participation in society. Women's participation can be in individuals, groups, or organizations. NGOs are usually one

of the effective ways to achieve women's participation because they have stronger social cohesion and action than scattered individuals or unorganized groups. International women's NGOs can mobilize a wide range of women worldwide to recognize their capacities and situations, pool and apply their resources, and control and determine their destinies[8].

2.3. Female Diplomacy

During the Cold War, The concept of cooperation in international exchanges gradually replaced the sharp contradictions and zero-sum game thinking between the original alliance of states headed by the United States and the Soviet Union. In such a context, it is becoming more and more common for outstanding women to appear in an otherwise male-dominated diplomatic arena. Precisely defined, women's diplomacy refers to women representing the country and participating in the activities and decision-making of intergovernmental organizations[9]. According to their roles, we can roughly divide the female roles in diplomatic activities into two categories: female politicians, professional female diplomats, and wives of state dignitaries, especially the wives of diplomats and the first lady[10]. The participation of women in the diplomatic service has been explicitly stated in United Nations resolutions, for example, in paragraph 79 of the Nairobi Strategy adopted in 1985, which says, among other things, that "Governments should take all appropriate measures to ensure that women have the opportunity to be represented at all levels of government delegations to regional and international meetings on a non-discriminatory basis, on an equal basis with men. More women should be selected to serve as diplomats and take up positions within the United Nations, including in areas related to peace and development activities"[11]. According to some scholars, women diplomats in today's international diplomatic arena can be broadly classified into three types: women diplomats from superpowers, who often display an aggressive and forceful attitude, imposing the diplomatic ideas of the countries they represent on other countries and playing the role of leaders and hegemons in the international arena; women diplomats from second world countries, who tend to be long-sleeved and skilled in using flexible and agile Women diplomats in the Third World countries tend to use their soft and gentle female image to gain the sympathy of the international community, to achieve their country's interests and ideas tactfully and flexibly, and even to play a crucial minority role in certain situations. The increase in the density of female diplomats in the international diplomatic ranks and their increasing global influence are not only the process of internationalization and its significant mid-term results but also a great step forward in the further development of international politics.

It is conducive to improving the status and role of women. The social movement to break gender discrimination and pursue gender equality has lasted nearly two centuries. The global economic, political, and social status of women has been significantly enhanced with the successive waves of international women's movements. The international community gradually recognizes women's wisdom and talents [12]. Women in most countries worldwide have acquired the right to work and the related right to education. Still, they have also gained independence to earn their living and have generally broadened their fields of employment. Of course, in a globalized environment, gender discrimination has not yet disappeared completely, and women are still underrepresented among senior government officials, etc. The growth of female officials in the diplomatic field has a spiritual significance for the advancement of women, showing that women are capable of standing up to the rigors of diplomacy and that progressive women with superior strategic vision and talent are more than capable of representing a country in international diplomatic situations.

3. The Direction of Progress

Since its inception, the most important theoretical feature of feminism has always been its critical nature[13]. Feminism initially emerged as a critical theory in the academic community of international relations. In today's globalized system, feminist research must adhere to its original intention to exist as a critical ism. Feminist researchers must provide unique insights into international order and internationalism research. At the same time, as the global community changes and develops, feminist theory has made new progress in its interaction with related views of the international community. Feminists believe that the emergence of international politics is due to the construction of society, and the development of feminist theory evolves along the path of "discourse construction-social construction-cultural construction"[13]. At the same time, the prosperity of feminism is also attributed to the progress of society, and the social environment in which feminist theory grows gradually shifts from developed countries to those less developed regions, which leads to more significant expansion. We are pleased to see that feminist studies are flourishing more than ever in history and expanding into an international theory.

In the context of globalization and global social governance, the future development of feminist theory lies in deepening its understanding of the new changes and characteristics of international society, strengthening theoretical interaction with international political sociology, and drawing from the latest academic achievements of global social sociology. International political sociology can supplement feminist theory's epistemological and methodological shortcomings[14]. This is the view of international political sociology, which advocates actively promoting legitimate rights for global equality. From this point of view, it can correct the excessive criticism of feminism on power politics and realism. Its research field involves many aspects, such as the interaction between society and politics, the interaction between international politics and domestic culture, and the interaction between domestic society and international politics. The breadth of feminist research has been further expanded. It provides a reference for constructing and developing feminist theory in the future knowledge system.

4. Conclusion

Generally speaking, in the early 1920s, compared to a hundred years ago when international communication was in its infancy, gender equality is being discussed more and more, and gender equality has developed significantly. It is difficult to ignore the role played by international communication in this. Women diplomats, the United Nations, and non-governmental organizations concerned with gender equality are all doing their utmost to lead society to a better future. In international exchanges, feminism has a significant influence and unique contribution to contemporary global social governance, mainly at the three levels of state-international organization-global civil society. It is primarily reflected in the liberation of women's rights through international declarations, the promotion of women's voices by NGOs and the optimistic role female diplomats play in the country's image. It must be admitted that this article is written in a hurry, and it is not easy to show readers the meaning of women in a comprehensive international interaction and its help for women's rights. The next stage of research should be free from bias and critical thinking from diverse perspectives, and feminist researchers should make it possible for their views to absorb others further when they put forward their ideas. To make it vital and social, feminism is best at becoming an essential force in international relations theory.

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