

Redifining Gender Role During Wartime: Power Relations, Disparities and Impacts

Made Fitri Maya Padmi
Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Jakarta
Fitrimayapadmi02@gmail.com

Abstrak

Karya tulis ini mencoba untuk membuat suatu hubungan antara manusia dan peperangan, dan menganalisa peran dari suatu gender dalam masa perang. Perspektif gender memiliki peran yang signifikan, tidak hanya dalam membentuk dan menjalankan perang, tetapi juga terhadap dampak dari perang. Di berbagai budaya, masyarakat menentukan perannya berdasarkan perbedaan gender, termasuk di dalamnya peran masyarakat pada masa perang. Perang dan militerisasi dipandang sebagai produk maskulin, dan juga bagaimana “memaskulinikan” masyarakat. Sedangkan, Feminisme membawa perspektif yang berbeda untuk memahami peperangan. Pasifis atau karakter damai dari perempuan digunakan untuk menganalisa perdamaian pasca perang. Sebagai hasil, tulisan ini berpendapat bahwa suatu hal yang penting untuk memberikan pemahaman yang lebih baik bahwa peperangan bukanlah fenomena yang bebas dari atribut gender. Peperangan juga berperan besar dalam mengkonstruksi hubungan antar gender.

Kata kunci: Gender, Feminisme, Maskulinitas, Perang, Militerisasi.

Abstract

This paper tries to make correlation between war and people, and to analyse the role of gender perspectives during wartime. Gender perspective plays a significant role not only in shaping and executing warfare, but also in giving the specific impact of war. In many cultures in the world, people determine social roles based on gender disparities, including roles during wartime. War and militarisation are products of the masculine and, at the same time, means of masculinizing people. However, Feminism bring different levels of perspectives on how to understand the war. Pacific or peace characteristics of women are often used to analyse the peace prospect after war. As result, this paper argues that, it is a significant attempt to create better understanding that war is not gender neutral. War plays a massive role in gender construction and impacts greatly on gender relations.

Keywords: Gender, Feminism, Masculinity, War, Militarisation

Introduction

War and conflict have been the main features of international relations study. History is full of heroic stories of men fighting for their nations' security and dignity. In Ancient Greek mythology, for example, Homer through his poems told of the Trojan War, which was triggered by the abduction of Helen from Greece by the Trojan prince Paris. Helen's enraged husband Agamemnon, King of Sparta, commanded the greatest warriors in Greece to wage war against Troy in the name of the nation's pride. Thus, almost immediately, the aims of the war expanded

well beyond Helen's return. Its justifications became about restoring the honour of a nation and illustrating the bravery of his soldiers and his military power.

Realism and neorealism approaches have dominated international security studies for decades. The core assumption of these approaches is states' relations in anarchic realm. As a critique to these perspectives feminism has emerged to question the realist/neorealist concepts of power, rationality, and patriotism which are used often in security studies. Thus, both state and international systems are inclined to the characteristics of masculinity. Feminists have criticised the approach taken by Realist and Neo-Realist about state and international system which they consider gender-biased or tending to privilege one particular gender only. Feminists have tried to provide wider perspective in international security studies by adding gender characteristics into security phenomena, including war. This approach is not only about advocating women or adding women into a male-construction, but giving multiple gender-based perspectives to international security studies.

Understanding gender is not simply based on the biological sex attached to every single human being. Gender is a socially constructed symbol given to describe the social characteristics of 'male' or 'female'. While masculinity emphasises rationality, bravery, toughness, aggressiveness, and independence, femininity is associated with being irrational, interdependent, emotional, nurturing, vulnerable, and gentle. Elsthain (1987) described this polarisation between the sexes in the following terms: 'Women are excluded from war talk and men excluded from baby talk'.

Many approaches are used to explain the cause, conduct, and consequence of war; one of them is a gender approach. Considering again the Trojan War, a gender perspective allows for wider analysis of how masculinity and femininity play significant roles in the war. The abduction of a wife could be seen as a disgrace to the values of manhood. Using military capability to show the power of nation is the identical notion to prove masculinity which is thought to be tough, aggressive and confrontational. Meanwhile Helen, the woman caught in this war, was left and is seen as either the cause of war or the victim of war.

Across time and culture, war and military attributes have been associated with masculinity. In social and political life, men are in the top position of the social hierarchy, and their position grants them the authority to become political decision makers. As stated by

Dawson (1996, cited in Kennedy, 2007, p.119) in ancient Greece, some form of military training was regarded as a prerequisite to manhood. In the other words, if a man did not attend or even failed in military training, he would be classified as a ‘woman’ to highlight his weakness. Regarding the assumption of women’s weaknesses and vulnerability, women are usually made the victims of war; even when there is involvement of women soldiers, their participation remains invisible. Throughout history during wartime, women often experience sexual violence in the forms of rape, prostitution, and forced marriage.

This paper argues that war is not a ‘gender-neutral’ phenomenon. Gender perspective plays a significant role not only in shaping and executing warfare, but also in giving the specific impact of war. Whitworth (2008) argued that ‘gender-neutral’ analyses of armed conflict regularly do not focus on people at all—conflict is conducted between states or armed groups, the specific impact on people’s lives is a marginal concern and instead the focus of analysis is on territory and resource gained (or lost) and the outcome (in terms of winners and losers) of battles and war. Through gender lenses, this paper tries to make correlation between war and people and endeavours to analyse the role of gender perspectives during wartime. The first part of paper describes how masculinity shapes state behaviour regarding the use of violence and war, as well as masculinity’s role in militarisation. Second, it describes the evolution of women’s involvement in conflicts, such as women as victims of war, as combatants, and peace-makers. Third, this paper discusses the use of gender categorisation in international humanitarian law which attempts to give more protection to women during times of conflict.

Masculinity, Militarism and War

In many cultures in the world, people determine social roles based on gender disparities. In social constructions, gender is used to differentiate roles, responsibilities, rights, abilities and limitations between men and women. Patriarchal systems can be seen as sets of social rules or norms based on maleness, where man is placed at the head of the family and is a property owner, protector, and decision maker. As Lauren Wilcox (2007, cited in Sjoberg. 2010, p.3) explains, ‘Gender symbolism describes the way in which masculine/feminine are assigned to various dichotomies that organize Western thought’ where ‘both men and women tend to place a higher value on the term which is associated with masculinity’. This vertical power relation creates a social hierarchy based on masculine and feminine characteristics, and many feminists refer to this as Hegemonic Masculinity. Women are portrayed as caring, nurturing, emotional,

interdependent, and vulnerable; therefore, they are assigned to roles in domestic labour, nurturing children, and are considered objects of protection. On the other hand, men are seen as and expected to be rational, independent, tough, physically strong, and aggressive figures. The assumed roles of men are those of leaders, decision makers, and protectors of families and society.

In the traditional perspective of international relations, especially the realist one, human behaviour is seen as a reflection of the state's behaviour. To cope with the anarchic world where competition is the main characteristic, the state has to act rationally and aggressively, and possess great economic and military power in order to survive. While the realists argue that the state is free from gender attributes, feminists challenge this idea by arguing if the state was a human, gender attributes are attached to it. In the realist view of the state's behaviour, the state represents the value of masculinity. Hobbes's description in *Leviathan* emphasises conflict: 'so that in the nature of man, we find three principal causes of quarrel. First, Competition; Secondly Diffidence; Thirdly, Glory' (Tuck, 1996 cited in Nabulsi, 1999, p.85).

In the realist view, the state possesses threats to other state, and to overcome the threats, the state should act rationally in taking action or use aggression if necessary. The state seems to be playing the role of the man in a patriarchal culture by taking up a position as protector from foreign dangers. The state's performance can be a reflection of the masculine model. Stiehm (1982 cited in Wadley, 2010, p.51) argues that 'An exposition of the gendered logic of masculine role of protector in relation to women and children illuminates the meaning and effective appeal of a security state that wages war abroad and expects obedience and loyalty at home. In this patriarchal logic, the role of the masculine protector puts those protected, paradigmatically women and children, in a subordinate position of dependence and obedience'. Using militarisation as a means to protect state survival, the state comes up with a rational, defence-offence strategy, one in which war is a legitimate instrument of this strategy.

Feminists argue that war and militarisation are products of the masculine and, at the same time, means of masculinizing people. In her book, J. Ann Tickner (2001, cited in Wadley, 2010, p.44) stated that through war, "power is valorised and identified with heroic kind of masculinity". Aggressive character attached to men made them more involve in war, and through their position in politics and military to declare war (Wilcox, 2010). During wartime, men carry the moral responsibilities of nationalism and protection of the country, both of which are

portrayals of masculine traits. In the name of protection, using offensive action is often justifiable to be conducted.

During World War I and World War II, states were reacting to dangers that were often coming from outside sources. Sjoberg (2006, cited in Wilcox, 2010, p.74) argued that chivalric masculinity is not solely about men; the just narrative involves ‘good guys’ or ‘just warriors’ who fight against ‘bad guys’ for just and valorous reasons. Elshtain (1995, cited in Wilcox, 2010, p.74) added that in order to produce the chivalric masculinity of the ‘just warriors’, a ‘beautiful soul’ and a malevolent other are needed. During World War I the British military engaged in offensive strategies and the cult of offensive to defend civilisation or impose civilising values on the barbarity of Germany (Wilcox, 2010).

The notion of protection has become a moral obligation to provide security in domestic environment and international communities. Globalisation has introduced human security as a new agenda for international security. Protecting human rights is a responsibility shared by international communities. When states are unable or unwilling to protect their own citizens, the responsibilities will be shifted to the broader international community. In September 2005, all United Nations member states agreed to accept the concept of ‘Responsibility to Protect’. In some cases the responsibility to protect has triggered new wars called humanitarian wars. Feminists view this as an attempt to expand the scope of masculine protection. Anne Orford (1999, cited in Wilcox, 2010, p.76) stated that the various humanitarian wars of the 1990s can be read as a narrative in which NATO and other actors re-invent themselves as masculine, heroic rescuers of weak and passive victims.

After the tragedy of September 11, 2001, a series of United States invasions in Afghanistan and Iraq had more of an agenda than simply being a ‘War on Terror’. Invasion also served the image of United States as ‘liberator’ for the weak. The mission of ‘liberating’ Afghan women was used to stoke public opinions to support the invasion of Afghanistan, and served also to reduce feminist protest against the war (Wilcox, 2010; Eisenstein, 2002; Charlesworth and Chinki, 2002). Highlighting the Taliban discrimination of women in Afghanistan has become the justification of the invasion. The mission of ‘liberating’ people also showed up in United States invasion of Iraq. The story of rescuing a defenceless Iraqi people from the evil tyranny and oppression of Saddam Hussein underpinned the heroic quest for protection.

Identity, boundaries, ideology, and nationalism are all reasons for men to go for war. For a long time, serving one's country was seen as a chivalric way to gain honour. Society has an important role in shaping what a man should be and must do. By joining the army and fighting on the battlefield, a man has been understood to be defending his honour and his home. Wilcox (2010) said that the military serves as an important site for the creation and maintenance of gender identity in society. Military training emphasises physical exercise to build up strength, offensive and aggressive techniques, and an ability to cope under stressful conditions on the battlefield. During wartime, the state becomes a citizen-warrior that endorses the value of the warrior's masculinity. Military training has the aim to create or build the individual characteristics of men. And indeed the military is an institution in which masculine characteristics are the basic requirements, and individuals who want to enter this institution must adjust to its prerequisites. Barry Posen (1984, cited in Wilcox, 2010, p.70) described the attractiveness of offensive doctrines to militaries as resulting from the military as an organisation driven to increase its own autonomy and self-image. Similarly, David Englander (1997, cited in Wilcox, 2010, p.70) argued that the offensive spirit in the British military leading up to World War I expressed the military's position as the vanguard of a virile, manly nation.

Military power has been examined as gender symbolic to show the manliness of a state or decision-makers. A military parade, usually performed during a state's Independence Day, is an opportunity to exhibit the masculinity of the state. In wartime the construction of a hyper-masculine of state is a necessity to undermine the enemy and characterise them as effeminate objects. As Cohn, Hill and Ruddick (2005) wrote, the using of masculine propaganda, such as 'We had to prove that we are not eunuchs' and 'Made with Viagra', are frequently used when India exploded five nuclear devices in May 1998. Maruska (2010) stated that the U.S.-led 'war on terror' after the 9/11 bombing, was a desire to establish a hyper-masculine image of George H. Bush and the United States.

Women's Experiences in War

Hegemonic masculinity, an idealised image of masculinity in relation to which images of femininity and other masculinities are marginalised and subordinated, has played massive role in gender hierarchy during wartime (Barret, 2001, cited in Hutchings, 2007, p.392). Men's duty is at the front, while women's are in domestic domain. However, history has told us that

women also have significant roles in warfare, either as combatants, supporters, victims, nurses, or mothers of the warriors. Although both men and women have equal probability to be combatants and victims of war, they experience violence in a very different way. Most of the men will die on a battlefield, while women will suffer from sexual abuse, rape and prostitution.

As many scholars have argued, rapes are most likely happen during war. Catherine MacKinnon (1994, cited in Hale, 2010, p.109) stated that mass rape is a tool, a tactic, a policy, a plan, a strategy and a practice. A strategy used by state or conflicting party to humiliate or feminize the enemy. Women are seen as the symbol of a nation, often captured in phrases like ‘Mothers of the Nation’ or ‘Motherland’. Rape, then, becomes a metaphor for national humiliation to prove superiority of one’s national group (Wilcox, 2010).

In Sudan, rape is used as a tool to destroy the characteristics of certain ethnic groups. Women become rape victims because of their biological ability to give birth, as children who were born because of rape will have an unclear ethnic identity. Sandra Hale (2010) explained that in Nuba Mountain and Darfur, people have been the targets of gender-specific violence. She stated that rape served functions as a kind of ethnic cleansing, a form of humiliation and demoralisation of enemy combatants and their society, thereby producing a different kind of ethnicity, one which did not exist before.

Even though in most conflicts women are seen as victims of the war, many women also actively serve during the conflict as combatants. Women entering the military must adjust to the ‘man’s environment’. The military training was specially made to enhance the masculine aspect of men, such as physical strength, aggressiveness and use of the offensive tactics of war. Not only as combatants, women also give important contributions during times of conflict by supporting militias in the forms of providing logistics (or weapons), taking care of the wounded, and giving moral support. Another role of women in the patriarchal system is that they are expected to bear and raise young men who will fight on behalf of their nation (Wilcox, 2010).

In 1948, the Israeli government has excluded women from military duty and for this reason, the struggle for the right to fight (or women in combat) was raised, becoming an important dimension of gender equality in Israel (Jacoby, 2010). The struggle succeeded when a small number of Israeli women were involved in the military. Jacoby added since summer

2001, Israeli female soldiers have become integrated in the anti-chemical warfare. In contrast to Israeli women, Palestinian women have developed their involvement in the Israel-Palestine conflict by serving as the mothers of martyrs. Susane Evans (2007) argued that the program of Umm Jihad or ‘Mother of Jihad’ was created to maintain the spiritual connections of the families with the revolution. It is an honour to raise young men or generations who will continue the fight of their ancestors for the freedom of their own country.

Women bring different levels of perspectives on how to understand the war. Pacific or peace characteristics of women are often used to analyse the peace prospect after war. The Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) expressed its belief that women had the obligation to active political participation and a special interest in questions of peace (Confortini, 2010). WILPF also has strong position on disarmament programs as a crucial step for peace establishment in post-war conditions. Since women were marginalised during war, it is a necessity to take into account gender and women’s issues. By using gender perspective, peace-keeping and peace-building missions will be comprehensively implemented in post-conflict terms. As defined by the United Nations, the success of gender mainstreaming depends on achieving gender balance not just by including equal numbers of women but through including women’s perspectives, encouraging gender awareness, promoting cultural sensitivity, and emphasising local knowledge (Lennie, 1999).

Gender Disparity in International Law

The involvement of gender perspective in conflict areas cannot be separated from the social construction within the state or society. This social construction was created on the basis of physical and biological sexes attached to humans. The gender hierarchy produces subordination of women in social life, in line with the interpretation of masculine value. However, women are playing multidimensional roles during conflict, such as when women join military training or participate as combatants either by their own accord or not, experience sexual abuse from other combatants, or as prisoner of war. It is important to examine how international regulations will address these matters.

Generally, international law and other international regulations, such as conventions or resolutions, provide protection for the human rights to conflicting parties. The protections are given not only for the victims, but also for the combatants involved in a conflict. The ICRC

(International Committee of Red Cross), an organisation with a humanitarian mission, stated that International Humanitarian Law (IHL) emerged as an attempt to regulate the conduct of war or conflict, and to prevent further casualties of the civilians. Gardam and Jarvis (2001) argued that by examining the Humanitarian Law through gender analysis, the law was created and reinforced certain type of gender disparities. IHL attached gender symbol to some of its articles to give differentiation between men and women.

Regarding the significant involvements of women in warfare, Chikin (1997, cited in Gardam and Jarvis, 2001) argued that the challenge to protect women from harm during war become higher for the ICRC and IHL. IHL was created to provide equal legal protection for both men and women during conflict time, but at the same time it also recognised the limitation of women. Thus they created special supervision for women. This context can be seen from Article 12 of the Second Geneva Convention, ‘...persons shall be treated humanely and cared for by the Parties to the conflict in whose power they may be, without any adverse distinction founded on sex, race, nationality, religion, political opinions, or any other similar criteria’ (Gardam and Jarvis, 2001). The promotion of values of equality are intended to treat women as favourably as men. However, the IHL misleadingly assumes that there is equal need and condition between men and women in society. As Fernando Teson (1993, cited in Gardam and Jarvis, 2001, p.93) asserted, in a world where they are not the equals of men, and armed conflict impacts them in a very different ways, a general category of rules that is not inclusive of the reality for women cannot respond to their situation, and the equality which is promoted is not gender neutral as it was intended at the time.

The special supervision for women is enshrined in Article 3 of the 1929 Geneva Convention, ‘Women shall be treated with all consideration due to their sex’. This supervision has been described as encompassing factors such as physical weaknesses, women’s honour regarding sexual abuse, pregnancy and childbirth (Pictet et al. eds., 1992 cited in Gardam and Jarvis, 2001, p.95). The critique arose because IHL is constituted to give protection for women on the basis of their biological sex. The Fourth Geneva Convention stipulates that women must be ‘especially protected against any attack of (sic) their honor, in particular against rape, enforced prostitution, or any form of indecent assault’ (Gardam and Jarvis, 2001). The concept of ‘honour’ in IHL has been criticised by Ignatieff (1998, cited in Gardam and Jarvis, 2001, p.109), as women’s honour is derived from the socially determined sexual and reproductive

identity of women. It can be assumed that the honour of women is related to their sex, and it can be destroyed by sexual abuse toward them. This may create a terrible precedent for women because by defining women as vulnerable and needing to be protected, IHL strengthens the social construction of gender subordination.

Putting women in the constitution of the IHL is seen as put women as additional attribute to manmade regulation. The world tried to use gender perspective regarding peace and conflict resolution as written in the United Nation Security Council Resolution 1325. Although the UN recognised the vulnerability of women and children in armed conflict and prioritised giving them protection, the resolution also stated the important role of women in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and peace building (UNSC, 2000). There are four general goals of gender perspective in this resolution. First, enhance the protection of women and girls in war, and take into account their special needs during and after armed conflict. Second, increase the participation and representation of women at the decision-making level in conflict resolution. Third, increase the use of gender perspective, involvement of women and special training for women in humanitarian missions. Fourth, urge the participation of states and/or all actors involved in armed conflicts to appreciate and protect the rights of women and girls, especially as civilians, as stated in international law.

Conclusion

This paper attempted to analyse the interconnection of war and militarism on people (both men and women), and the impact of war for both gender. Power relations in society have created a significant hierarchy of gender where masculine value is placed higher than feminine value. The idea of masculine protection became the legitimation of the state to go for war. Honour of a man is measured by the decision to go for war to protect his nation and accomplishment of military training where masculine characters are built.

The criticism of the notion of protection during war is that the result of war is not a form of protection but, in contrast, massive civilian casualties, especially among women and children. Women experience multidimensional parts in war and armed conflict. They fight as warriors; they give support for their men and sons on the battlefield; they also protest against wars; but they suffer as a consequence of war. Women are victims because social constructions

defined their gender as weak and vulnerable. As soldiers, women have to make painful compromises to be accepted into the masculine ranks of militarism (Cockburn, 2013).

All the involvements of women in war have drawn the attention of the international community. IHL has been criticised by many feminist scholars because of its use of men's perspective to deal with women's matters in war and armed conflict, namely by portraying women as weak victims in need of extra protection. Progress has been made by the UN by producing a peace and conflict resolution from women's perspective. UN Resolution 1325 emphasised the importance of women's participation and gender perspective in conflict resolution and the peace process. It is a significant attempt to create better understanding that war is not gender neutral. War plays a massive role in gender construction and impacts greatly on gender relations.

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