

CHAPTER 3

Citizenship and Gender

Ria Rai

M A Political Science, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi

Abstract

The role that gender has played in times of violence, and the way that the state itself views and mobilizes its citizens shows how the citizen is not the abstract individual that liberalism claims, but is inevitably gendered. Carole Pateman's ideas regarding the sexual contract show an aspect of this gendered citizenship, and conflicts and war bring forth the gendered expectations of the state and the inherent masculinity of war.

Keywords: Gender, Violence, Citizenship, Sexual Contract, Masculinity

Citizenship and Gender

INTRODUCTION

A nation state has been described as an imagined communityⁱ, and any such entity needs a source of legitimacy. Many political theorists believe that this legitimacy is derived through the social contract wherein the citizens of the state relinquish some of their liberties to the sovereign authority of the state on the condition that their lives would be safeguarded by the sovereign. Such an absolute authority in the hands of the sovereign was justified on the basis that the individual citizens 'consent' to it, and they would be protected from the state of nature, which is a state of warⁱⁱ, under the state constituted by the social contract. This conception of the state implies that the state is a peace-making agency by virtue of its monopolization of violence which is a paradox in itself made explicit by Clausewitz's definition of war as politics by other means.ⁱⁱⁱ

Volume II Issue I July- December 2022

Thus, the very institution of the state is inseparable from war and the sovereignty that it exercises within its border is the pre-condition required for seeking war outside it. It can also be argued that the internal order preserved in a state can be dependent on the state seeking predation beyond its borders. The logic of masculinist protection^{iv} which Iris Marion Young talks about, wherein the security state provides protection to its citizens against a threat in exchange for their obedience and gratitude, while putting them in the subordinate position similar to the one woman occupy under patriarchy is a relevant idea here. The construction of 'the other' (immigrant, minorities, a rival nation) serves as a unifying force especially in times of socio-economic decline.

This paper uses the idea of the sexual contract^v by Carole Pateman to demonstrate how the citizen is seen as sexed, which the violence inflicted during the partition exhibits most clearly. Carole Pateman's idea that the social contract is sexual becomes most apparent during times of conflict. The paper uses various instances of inter-state and intra-state violence to show how the state sees its citizens as sexed. Besides making the argument that war is inherent in the structure of the state and it maintains and protects its sovereignty, the subsequent paragraphs will also explore how gender-based violence is not just a weapon of war, but also that war itself is a form of gender-based violence. This argument will be substantiated through various examples that highlight how violence and responses to it become inevitably gendered, like the riots in Dharavi, the partition of India, the second gulf war etc.

THE SEXUAL CONTRACT

In order to understand the gendered nature of war, one first needs to look at the gendered nature of citizenship. The idea of the social contract has been discussed above. This idea has been challenged by Carole Pateman who writes that women have been seen as less rational than men, and hence not worthy of being party to the social contract that constitutes the state. Pateman emphasizes how women are not even considered individuals, and hence excluded from the liberating promises of the mainstream political theories. Relegated to the private sphere, women's issues are deemed politically irrelevant and their autonomy is diminished. The way the sexual contract is meant to establish 'orderly access to women's bodies'^{vi}, political right over women, and the civil patriarchal right is most evident in the case of the partition of India, a point taken up in the next

Volume II Issue I July- December 2022

section. Times of violence and conflict have a way of making sexual difference become more apparent than ever. Hence, the citizen is sexed^{vii} from the very origin of the state and women thus have an unequal position despite the rhetoric of equality.

Mary Laura Severance has a similar stance, and states that “the members of each individual family ‘consent’ not to the sovereign’s but to the father’s absolute rule; they are not parties to the ‘contract’ that brings the commonwealth into existence.” Besides this, she also argues that the conception of the state of nature as every man being at war with every other man, should be modified to say that its every father (as the head of the household) at war with other father. Thus, the woman is subjected to the authority of the head of the household which also implies that the authority of the sovereign is dependent upon the authority of the father.^{viii} However, Pateman does not believe patriarchy to be paternal, but fraternal instead.

This argument can be extended to mean that women and men have different roles and obligations as citizens. A woman’s duty to the state is compounded with her duty to her husband and her role as a citizen is to give birth to legitimate children since the state as a population is dependent upon population. A man’s duty to the state is to give his life for the sovereign, which is evident in the conscriptions that only apply to men. In Britain and France during World War one, the reproductive role of women was especially emphasized to produce a new generation to replace men lost on the battlefield, while preserving the ‘purity’ of the nation, so when there were instances of German soldiers forcefully impregnating French women, there were demands to de criminalize abortion to get rid of the ‘bad blood’.

These instances of rapes became images of propaganda to motivate citizens to assume the traditional role of the man defending the woman and the woman as a supporter during these times of war. Besides this, elements in the war were ascribed gendered meanings. While the competition between the great powers was considered a masculine endeavor, the nation itself was depicted as feminine, as it was something to be protected. Rape was used as a metaphor for invasion like the ‘rape of Belgium.’ Nations were feminized and the reproductive ability of such nations were accentuated. Attacks on women were more than attacks on unfortunate individuals; they were assaults on the nation’s reproductive future. The paradigm of considering ‘woman as the nation’, led to the use of rape as a tool not only

Volume II Issue I July- December 2022

to convince men to protect women, it in a way also asked questions of women who were not fulfilling their duty of giving birth to British soldiers.

The sexual contract also becomes evident during the partition of India in 1947. Women were abducted by men of the other community and in the eyes of the state, Women being under control of the 'right kinds of men' (meaning men from their own religion) was considered imperative, and the women had no say in this matter when they were being recovered back to their families of origin.^{ix} The way the women were expected to give up any decision making-autonomy in exchange for 'protection' from 'bad men' through male protection lines up with Youngs theorization of the logic of masculinist protection, which the security state utilizes by subordination of its citizens to the role of the protected regardless of gender, since young writes about how the role of protector and protected does not necessarily correspond to that of men and women, even though these positions do carry a gendered meanings and an appeal to a patriarchal notion of protection. Here however, the sex of the citizens certainly does play a role. Das writes about the emphasis that was laid on recovering women of reproductive age, and their reinstatement to the 'right kinds of men'. Das mentions that the sentiment of the women was 'disciplined' according to the needs of the state in accordance with the sexual contract shows how the duty of the woman to her family is collapsed with the duty to the state,^x which is also seen in the example of World War one in the preceding paragraphs. The fact that even during instances where women did not want to go back, or were labelled as abducted through a mistake, they were still coerced to go back shows that women's autonomy is greatly curtailed as a result of the sexual contract, and this becomes especially apparent during times of war and conflict. Besides, the two states of Pakistan and India saw eye to eye regarding the urgency and importance of restoring the women exhibits the idea of fraternal patriarchy^{xi} put forth by Pateman.

ALL VIOLENCE IS GENDERED

Forms of violence can be seen as expressions of traditional notions of masculinity or an attack on femininity. A narrow understanding of gender-based violence which only considers the violence inflicted upon women on account of their gender overlooks how violence in general and wars in particular can be an expression of gender. This is apparent

Volume II Issue I July- December 2022

in many instances wherein expectations from and assertion of masculinity characterize violence.

Deepak Mehta addresses this issue while writing about communal riots in Dharavi. Here, we see how violence enacted on the body becomes gendered. The violence in these riots represents an assertion of Hindu nationalism that seeks to overcome emasculation by creating a national strength. Such an idea of nationalism leads to an exclusionary idea of citizenship in the minds of some, and a situation wherein the citizens of the same nation inflict violence upon each other in the nation's name. Mehta shows how for Hindu men, the location of Islam is in the genitalia of Muslim men, which is emasculated due to circumcision. Consequently, the violence is focused on the same, through thrashing of Muslim men's genitals. On the other hand, for women the *danga* entails the constant threat of rape. There is an instance where Hindu men shout 'we are stealing your Pakistan away' while snatching Muslim women, which is a manifestation of appropriating the body of the woman as territory.^{xii}

Violence has often been described as inherently masculine. Men are expected to prove their masculinity by participating in violence. Muslim women questioned the masculinity of their male counterparts when they could not defend the women of their community. This requirement to prove masculinity also becomes apparent in Britain during World War one when The Order of The White Feather was constituted by admiral Fitzgerald in 1914. This organization consisted of mainly women who handed white feathers to men who were not in military uniform with the aim of shaming them into enlisting, and it was often successful. Men are entrusted with the duty to die for the nation if the need arises which can be seen as a form of gender-based violence in wars as argued by R. Charli Carpenter.^{xiii}

THE MYTH OF PROTECTION

War is often justified on the grounds that it is necessary for state security, to protect citizens from and anarchic international system. However, most wars since 1945 have been fought within states and not across national boundaries. As stated previously, men are also expected to fight in wars to protect the 'vulnerable women and children' and state sovereignty. This justification also falls flat once we see how due to its monopoly on legitimate force, the state is more willing to let the weak suffer during war and conflict as a 'necessary sacrifice' while diverting resources to the military, the exact opposite of what the



Volume II Issue I July- December 2022

'myth of protection' would have suggested. Besides this, modern wars have also become increasingly prone to high levels of collateral damage, and civilians, especially women and children are targeted during war time. Some figures estimate that 80% of war victims are women and children. This has led many feminists to question the justifications given for war, and scholars like Bonnie Man have gone so far as to say that sovereignty in the US is no longer just about state security, instead it's a form of national masculinity and "war becomes an occasion for its performative constitution, a self-making rather than self-defending."^{xiv} She goes on to say that in supporting the 'war on terror', American sovereignty is strengthened and so is the citizen's own masculinity. Their sense of security also increases through the emasculation of Saddam Hussein and other 'brown men' which plays into a racialized national idea of masculinity. Young writes about how despite the United States' claims regarding the need for protecting the US through preemptive attacks against terrorist threats, the belligerent approach it has adopted has not only put its own citizens at greater risk of harm, but other states as well. She writes about the inevitable trade-off between freedom and protection and comes to the conclusion that the subordination that such a trade-off entail is not compatible with a genuine democracy. ^{xv}

Based on this belief that war is an expression of gender, feminist theorists have argued that the fact that characteristics traditionally associated with masculinity, such as rational, strong, dominant, militarized, and public are more valued in most societies, as opposed to traditionally feminine characteristics like emotional, weak, subordinate, peaceful, and private means that the bias towards masculine traits lead to a natural disposition towards war and conflict. This implies that a society which values the feminine might have a dual impact in hindering the ability of groups to mobilize the masses in support of insurrection through the use of gendered language and stereotypes, and in reducing societal tolerance for violence.

CONCLUSION

This paper has tried to explore the role gender plays in citizenship, and how these roles become accentuated during times of conflict and violence, while arguing that war is an expression of gender and therefore a form of gender-based violence. However, this is not to imply that men have an inherent proclivity to war or that women have a propensity for peace. However, feminine traits are linked to peace and therefore, how states feel about the

Volume II Issue I July- December 2022

feminine determines how much they value the traits of peace and cooperation as opposed to power and domination, traditionally linked with masculinity. War is also seen as inherently masculine due to the fact that as citizens, men have the duty to fight and die for the sovereign, while women bear the responsibility of reproduction of 'legitimate children.' This gendered citizenship is shown in the examples of Britain and France in world war one, and the partition of India in 1947. Describing war itself as a form of gender-based violence inevitably challenges the narrow conception of gender-based violence as being limited physical violations against women on account of their gender. Viewing war through a gendered lens not only leads to a better understanding, but also leads us to think of alternative feminized methods of conflict resolution. To show how a gendered language is used by states during wars, examples have been taken from World War one and the second gulf war. In these instances, the state invokes gender to justify war, by calling on men to prove their masculinity by protecting their nation's sovereignty and their women. Even invasion of a state's sovereignty is sometimes described as rape, as in the case of Belgium in World War one and the 9/11 attacks as both destroy pre-conceived notions of sovereignty. The inevitable gendered nature of violence itself has also been explored through the example of the dirty protest and the communal riots in Dharavi. In conclusion we can say that manifestations of certain aspects of the sexual contract can be seen in instances of violence, and gender plays a big role in how states perceive their citizens, and wars themselves are a masculinized endeavor and are ostensibly justified on the basis of protection of state sovereignty.

ⁱ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections On the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (verso, 1991)

ⁱⁱ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Baltimore :Penguin Books, 1968)

ⁱⁱⁱ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (Princeton University Press. 1984)

^{iv} Iris Marion Young, *The Logic of Masculinist Protection: Reflections on the Current Security State*. (The University of Chicago Press, 2003)

^v Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*. (Calif: Stanford University Press 1988)

^{vi} Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*. (Calif: Stanford University Press 1988)

^{vii} ^{viii} Veena Das, *Life and Words: Violence and the descent into the ordinary*. (Berkeley: University of California Press 2007)

^{viii} Mary Laura Severance, *Sex and the Social Contract*. (Project MUSE, 2000)

^{ix} Veena Das, *Life and Words: Violence and the descent into the ordinary*. (Berkeley: University of California Press 2007)

^x Ibid

^{xi} Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*. (Calif: Stanford University Press 1988)

- ^{xii} Roma Chatterji and Deepak Mehta, *Living with violence: an anthropology of events and everyday life*. (London: Routledge. 2010)
- ^{xiii} R. Charli Carpenter, "Recognizing Gender-Based Violence Against Civilian Men and Boys in Conflict Situations." *Security Dialogue* 37, no. 1 (2006)
- ^{xiv} Bonnie Man, *How America Justifies Its War: A Modern/Postmodern Aesthetics of Masculinity and Sovereignty*. (Hypatia 2006)
- ^{xv} Iris Marion Young, *The Logic of Masculinist Protection: Reflections on the Current Security State*. (The University of Chicago Press, 2003)

References

-
- Das, Veena. 2007. *Life and words: violence and the descent into the ordinary*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
 - Pateman, Carole. 1988. *The sexual contract*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press.
 - Chatterji, Roma, and Deepak Mehta. 2010. *Living with violence: an anthropology of events and everyday life*. London: Routledge.
 - Young, Iris Marion. "The Logic of Masculinist Protection: Reflections on the Current Security State." *Signs* 29, no. 1 (2003): 1-25.