**Gender AC**

I affirm and begin with the words of Nawal[[1]](#endnote-1), an Iraqi woman who experienced first-hand the repressive nature of sanctions. “The embargo is ‘evil’. It took everything from us. It has battered our lives mercilessly.”

**Observation 1 is the problem** – **economic sanctions reinforce hierarchal social structures that perpetuate female subordination in all areas of life.**

Sanctions embrace gendered logic – they demonstrate coercive, masculine policy that hurts marginalized groups. Tickner and Sjoberg[[2]](#endnote-2) write,

The second insight **feminists** have is a **critique** of **the gendered logic of sanctions** as a policy choice. **Sanctions are enacted by stronger actors** in an attempt **to force the weaker actor to submit to their will. They are coercive in nature – comply, or** you **starve.** Feminists criticize **the adversarial nature of international politics** because it **valorizes masculine values, such as pride, victory, and force, over feminine ones, such as compromise, compassion, and coexistence** – values that are often seen as signs of weakness by most states and many of their citizens, women and men alike. **This results in confrontational policies**, policies **that often hurt those at the margins** of international political life **the most. Sanctions demonstrate coercive, masculine policy logic.** Postcolonial feminists would add a criticism of the assumption that the UN Security Council members somehow knew *better than Iraq* what was good for Iraqis. It is often the case that **powerful people, many of whom are men, claim to know what is best for subordinate people (**and often **for women).** IR feminists critique the gendered logic and gendered impacts of sanctions.

And, sanctions greatly reduce welfare services, which deteriorates female empowerment. Drury and Peksen[[3]](#endnote-3) write,

**Economic sanctions** also **reduce the** target **government’s ability to provide welfare services, including** state-supported **education, health care, childcare, maternity leaves, and** other social policies such as family/child cash and **tax benefits. Such policies** offered by the welfare state are often recognized as “women-friendly” because they **help women gain access to education, create opportunities to work** and participate in labor force, **enjoy healthy life**, and lessen some of the economic burden of child bearing and household responsibilities (Hernes 1987; Lewis 1998; Sainsbury 1999; Pearson 2003). Economic sanctions indirectly hurt women’s access to welfare services by reducing the government’s ability to sponsor social policies as revenues from international trade and financial exchanges decline and private economic actors fail to pay enough taxes due to the economic downturn. Scholars also suggest that economic sanctions indirectly contribute to the decline of welfare services because political elites—who control the supply and redistribution of public resources—often cut social spending, including welfare service expenses, to redirect the state’s resources in their favor to survive foreign economic pressures (Weiss et al 1997; Gibbons 1999; Cortright et al 2001; Cortright and Lopez 2000). **Because women** are among the groups who **benefit most from the welfare state, any decline in welfare** policy **provision caused by** the **sanctions will contribute to the deterioration of female empowerment.**

This structural violence can be traced in numerous examples of the application of sanctions

A. Iraq - Iraqi sanctions intensified patriarchal control and violence against women. Rosenblum[[4]](#endnote-4) et al write,

**Patriarchal control** also **intensified under** the **sanctions, resulting in increased violence** across the board. **The rise in domestic violence was a result of** the **economic uncertainty and left women more vulnerable than ever before. Since responsibility for divorced women reverted back to already-struggling relatives, there was** additional family **pressure to remain in abusive relationships.** Many **families were unable to support** their more **vulnerable members, and structural violence increased as women were forced into prostitution and begging for survival.** Street violence, including abductions and gang activity, also became more common. This state of fear and violence affected women’s psychological well-being and many women began to veil themselves or wear shapeless garments as protection against being harassed or attacked. The lack of basic essentials causes high levels of stress “resulting from the inability of people to act upon their circumstances to remove or mitigate the source of such tensions” (121)

And, sanctions ruin women’s rights laws. Sjoberg[[5]](#endnote-5) adds,

Before the economic sanctions, many sanctioned nations were relatively prosperous economically. Now, the economic turmoil brought about by sanctions is destroying social networks. **The area of wymyn’s rights is** one **where the disintegration of Iraq’s social structures is obvious.** Human Rights Watch reports that **wymyn’s rights laws** exist in Iraq, and **were enforced before the embargo, however,** “reports indicate that **the application of these laws has declined as Iraq’s economic and political crisis persists.”**66 In Iraq, **the severe economic crisis caused by sanctions hurts the creation and enforcement of** social programs, like **wymyn’s rights laws.** In addition to the legal recognition of their rights suffering, **the quality of wymyn’s lives** in Iraq **has decreased as a result of sanctions. A lack of vitamins and supplies makes it impossible to get adequate prenatal care** for wymyn. After their children are born, wymyn have trouble finding ways to provide for their families. As food shortages plague families, Simons reports “**wymyn** typically **go hungry to provide for their children and elderly relatives**.

Sanctions against Iraq can be conceived as rape. Sjoberg[[6]](#endnote-6) continues,

What follows is a generative attempt at a politicized and gendered metaphor in critique of the ways that dominant discourses delineate states of war as clean and separate events from other coercive violence. I do not contend that this metaphorical understanding is “true,” instead, that it is communicatively rational and holds political value. This “test” example should not be the determinant for the worth of feminist metaphor-critique; it is simply an exposition of what I see as a new direction for feminist discourse-methodology. **What follows is a** short **exploration of the metaphor *economic sanctions on Iraq are rape*, relying on the economic sanctions regime on Iraq as a specific performance of coercive diplomacy.** Rape metaphors have frequently been used in politics for Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait; this reconstruction dovetails with those characterizations to voice concern for Iraqis as well.

**Coercive diplomacy, like rape, rests on the threat that “if you don’t, I will destroy you…” or some similar unpleasantness that is even less desirable than what is being requested of/forced on the person making the (loosely defined and generally non-existent) “choice”.** Is a rape metaphor useful? The assertion (above) that the process if analogous argues that **both rape and coercive diplomacy employ coercive force (physical or otherwise) for desired ends, causing real harm both in the process and in the ends.** In the international arena, the threatened force is less often (though sometimes) as “fatal” or “completely unacceptable” as the threatened force in the act of rape. The process analogy, then, can be seen as loosely fitting if exaggerated. The process may be similar, but it is also necessary to compare the ends of the force.

**The *goal* of coercion in rape is to (forcibly) get sex;**

**The *goal* of coercion in diplomacy is to (forcibly) get concessions;**

**The *goal* of coercion towards Iraq was to (forcibly) get disarmament and repayment.**

B. Iran - Iranian sanctions have only strengthened the government while inflicting great economic and personal harm upon women – many have been forced into the sex industry with no hope of escape. Khanlarzadeh[[7]](#endnote-7) writes,

**An**other **obstacle to the Iranian women's rights movement is economic sanctions.** This issue has been less prominent for two primary reasons. The first is that the government is not willing to make clear how sanctions affect the lives of Iranians, since the government does not wish to admit its susceptibility to foreign powers. The second reason is that those who oppose the government of Iran are not willing to portray the latter as the victim of the story. Of course, the real victims of the sanctions are the people of Iran. "The impact of U.S. economic sanctions has been significant in reducing Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), in raising Iran's cost of capital, and in delaying the exploitation of Caspian Sea oil and gas" (Hossein Askari, Foreign Policy Forum Archives: "The Iranian Paradox: Economic Failure, Regional Resurgence, and an Opportunity for Dialogue"). The **oil profits, the major income of the country, are distributed by the government. Sanctions,** through a reduction of the FDI, **actually strengthen the government, which decides on the diminished wealth distribution.** Sanctions also result in increased unemployment for working class women and men. "Ordinary businesses have been hard hit, too, according to Western officials and Iranians. Big **companies** and small bazaaris—as traditional merchants are called in Iran—**are increasingly forced to pay for imports in advance**, in cash. **Exporters are losing clients; raw materials for non-oil industries are harder to pay for**" (New York Times, October 31, 2008). **Women, more vulnerable to economic crises, often are the first to lose their jobs.** In this climate with decreased job opportunities, **poor women, lacking other avenues of support, may turn to prostitution in order to survive.** In fact, **the number of Iranian women who work in prostitution is increasing and their average age is decreasing.** During my visit in Iran I often heard stories about **women** who **offered grocery store owners sex in exchange for food.**

C. Burma - Sanctions on Burma caused women to lose their jobs and turn to prostitution, harming women’s autonomy. Drury and Peksen[[8]](#endnote-8) 2 write,

Seekins (2005), for instance, reports that the U.S. **sanctions against Burma** that sought to punish the Burmese military regime for its repression of the democratic opposition **caused significant economic hardship among the female population.** One component of the sanctions banned all U.S. imports from Burma; **the import ban had an especially substantial cost on the textile industries. Following the shutdown of several textile factories, over 180,000 jobs—mostly occupied by young women—were lost. Some** of the **unemployed female workers were forced to work at the illegal sex** and entertainment **businesses to provide income for their impoverished families** (Seekins 2005, 442). Hence, economic **sanctions significantly reduced the rate of female labor participation and women’s economic conditions, both essential** components **to** maintaining **economic independence and personal autonomy.**

This is not only empirically proven in application but is also statistically verified. Sanctioned countries are 98% more likely to score on the bottom half of the scale measuring women’s economic status. Using time-series cross-sectional data from 1971 to 2000, encompassing 142 countries, Drury and Peksen[[9]](#endnote-9) 3 found that,

**The results lend strong and robust support to** both hypotheses. Beginning with **the** first **hypothesis**—**that sanctions will be detrimental to women’s economic status**—the results, appearing in Table 1 below, show that **the presence of economic sanctions tends to reduce both women’s economic conditions** (as measured by CIRI) **and the percentage of women in the total labor force.** In the first column, **the model estimates that** the probability of a country scoring a 2 or 3—denoting high levels of economic status for women—is 51% when no sanctions are in place. However, once sanctions are imposed, the probability falls to only 1%. Thus, **when a country is sanctioned, its respect for women’s economic rights is 98% likely to fall into the bottom half of the scale.**

And, patriarchy is the root cause of violence and oppression. Lerner[[10]](#endnote-10) writes,

And why feminism? Well, first of all, because **the system of patriarchy** that was built in the Bronze Age, in approximately the first millennium B.C. in Western civilization, arose out of a combination of militarism and the agricultural revolution. It **created a system of hierarchical governments dominated by militarism, in which men hold the resources and distribute them to women** who are either members of their family of birth or linked to them through a sexual relationship; they also share resources with subordinate men. **As long as patriarchy exists, despite other changes we make in society- for example, efforts to fight racism, militarism, hatred of** various **minority groups – patriarchy will always reconstitute itself and create other hierarchical systems. The emancipation of women is essential to ending these hierarchical systems.** That’s one reason. The second one is that because women are half the population and are represented in every group of the population, in every class, in every region, they cannot be put down like other groups have been. Other groups that have asked or transformational change of for revolutionary change have been defeated and wiped out. You cannot defeat half the human race. Therefore, women are the main instrument for making change.

Further, patriarchy is the root cause of war. Reardon[[11]](#endnote-11) writes, (ellipsis in original)

In an article entitled “Naming the Cultural Forces That Push Us toward War” (1983), Charlene Spretnak focused on some of the fundamental cultural factors that deeply influence ways of thinking about security. She argues that **patriarchy encourages militarist tendencies.** Since a major war now could easily bring on massive annihilation of almost unthinkable proportions, why are discussions in our national forums addressing the madness of the nuclear arms race limited to matters of hardware and statistics? A more comprehensive analysis is badly needed . . . **A clearly visible element in the escalating tensions among militarized nations is the** macho posturing and the **patriarchal ideal of dominance**, not parity, **which motivates** defense ministers and government **leaders to “strut their stuff” as we watch with increasing horror.** Most men in our patriarchal culture are still acting out old patterns that are radically inappropriate for the nuclear age. **To prove dominance and control, to distance one’s character from that of women**, to survive the toughest violent initiation, **to shed the sacred blood of the hero**, to collaborate with death in order to hold it at bay**—all of these patriarchal pressures** on men **have traditionally reached resolution** in ritual fashion **on the battlefield.** But there is no longer any battlefield. Does anyone seriously believe that if a nuclear power were losing a crucial, large-scale conventional war it would refrain from using its multiple-warhead nuclear missiles because of some diplomatic agreement? The military theater of a nuclear exchange today would extend, instantly or eventually, to all living things, all the air, all the soil, all the water. **If we believe that war is a “necessary evil,” that patriarchal assumptions are simply “human nature,” then we are locked into a lie, paralyzed. The ultimate result of unchecked terminal patriarchy will be nuclear holocaust. The causes of recurrent warfare** are not biological. Neither are they solely economic. They **are** also **a result of patriarchal ways of thinking, which** historically have generated considerable pressure for standing armies to be used. (Spretnak 1983) These cultural tendencies **have produced our current crisis of a highly militarized, violent world that** in spite of the decline of the cold war and the slowing of the military race between the superpowers **is still staring into the abyss of nuclear disaster**, as described by a leading feminist in an address to the Community Aid Abroad State Convention, Melbourne, Australia.

**Observation 2 is the SOLUTION – a gendered reconceptualization of sanctions and international politics is necessary to expose sanctions as structural violence.**

We can never truly understand sanctions by focusing on the aggregate – analysis of the groups who bear the burden of their violence is critical. Drury and Peksen[[12]](#endnote-12) 4 write,

Why pay attention to the gender-specific effects of economic coercion? First, **a better way of understanding the damage inflicted by sanctions** on target countries **is to go beyond an aggregate level of analysis and analyze directly the groups who bear the burden of economic shocks due their vulnerable** socio-economic and political **status. Women are among the most vulnerable groups** across countries **owing to their relative lack of adequate access to education, economic power, and voice over economic and political decision-making** mechanisms. The **underrepresentation of women in the key spheres of life** thereby **inhibits female political and socio-economic empowerment, which allows the persistence of hierarchical social structures** (Norris and Inglehart 2000; Coleman 2004; Caprioli 2004a), **making them more likely pay a high price as sanctions disrupt** the **economic and political stability** of target countries.

Because focusing on the aggregate to determine the legitimacy of sanctions obscures analysis of their effect on those who bear the burden of these policies, **the standard is resisting gender oppression.** We must put an end to the state centric focus of economic sanctions – only by using the lens of gender can we truly understand the impact of sanctions. Drury and Peksen[[13]](#endnote-13) 5 write,

**The** second **value of paying particular attention to the impact sanctions have on women is that the study brings a gender-based approach to the study of economic statecraft. Existing works on economic sanctions tend to be state-centric and largely neglect the insight from gender specific theoretical and empirical perspectives**. Similarly, the literature on the international dimensions of women’s rights addressed the role of several international factors, such as economic globalization (Gray et al 2007; Neumayer and De Soysa 2007; Richards and Gelleny 2007) and the use of force (Meintjes et al. 2001; Moser and Clarke 2001; Enloe 2000; Tickner 2001; Caprioli and Douglass 2008). Yet, this literature neglects the gendered consequences of non-violent policy tools including economic sanctions. **Because advancing women’s status is crucial to promoting more economic prosperity and good governance** (Boserup 1970; Seguino 2000; Inglehart et al. 2002; Coleman 2004), **it is important that we fully understand the impact foreign policy tools have on women’s status.** Hence, a gender-based analysis highlights the importance of global social phenomenon—women’s status and female empowerment—and offers insight as to how coercive diplomacy in the form of economic sanctions is detrimental to women.

We must critique the dominant gendered discourse of the “coercive diplomacy” metaphor as “constructive state-craft” through a feminist linguistic reconstruction of sanctions. Sjoberg[[14]](#endnote-14) 2 writes,

**The deployment of new, counter-hegemonic political metaphors is a**nother **path for feminist reconstructive activism** in the area of justice and the Gulf Wars. Metaphors are more than barely-sensible literary devices that we learn in high school English class and then forget. While traditional metaphor theory characterized metaphor as a matter of words that expressed preexisting similarities in deviant terms, “metaphorical language is a reflection of metaphorical thought. Metaphorical thought in the form of cross-domain mappings is primary, metaphorical language is secondary” (Lakoff and Johnson 1999, 199, 123). At a very basic level, metaphors are a part of the cognitive and discursive processes of our daily lives. As such, metaphors are key political tools and feminists’ reconstructions of metaphors can make a difference in global politics.

**Seeing Saddam Hussein as “evil” hides other roles and forecloses other choices. Characterizing** Saddam **Hussein as “Hitler” means that negotiation was to be considered appeasement, and** that **war needed to be a first resort since appeasing Hitler did not work**, so appeasing Hussein would not work either.The representation of bombs as “clean” and “surgical” hides extensive human damage. **Insidious metaphors, especially gendered ones, plague understandings of** the nature of **political actors and conflicts** between them. ***How we understand conflict* constructs the nature of conflict and dictates what happens in the conflict; metaphors for understanding conflict are thus important.**

**New metaphors** can then **contribute to the formation of** what Searle discusses as institutional facts, or commonly held **understandings of the world** (1969, 51). **The utterance of a new metaphor is a speech act, which engages language as complex and rule-governed behavior** (Searle 1969, 12). These speech acts matter as discursive and political interaction, and enter the realm of argumentative truth discussed above. It is my contention that **feminist metaphor-reformulation is worth considering, both as discursive and political strategy** (Zehfuss 2002). **Its intervention in dominant discourses offers political alternative, creates space for emancipatory advocacy, and provokes consideration of commonly help interpretations.**

**A** potential **feminist reformulation of** the **sanctions** regime **on Iraq involves creating a new metaphor for “coercive diplomacy”** (the action of one international political body forcing another to alter behavior through threats). **Without a constructive metaphor, coercive diplomacy is often seen as neutral or even peaceful in international politics; an understanding which only tells part of the story, if that. With a new metaphor, feminists can add some of the insidious impacts of coercive diplomacy to its meanings.**

Finally, only by eliminating sanctions will we be able to end the structural violence against women. Drury and Peksen[[15]](#endnote-15) 6 write,

**Economic globalization** also **promotes greater respect for women’s** economic and political **rights by spreading the ideas and norms of gender equality via transnational economic exchanges, communication, and participation in international movements and organizations** in the global economy (Gray et al 2007; Neumayer and De Soysa 2007). **As societies become more engaged in the global community, they are more likely to recognize the disparities in their domestic laws and institutions and to take steps to harmonize them with the prevailing norms and institutions including**—in particular, **creating greater respect for women’s economic and political rights** (Risse-Kappen 1994; Sachs and Warner 1995; Simmons and Elkins 2004). **Openness to transnational influences also allows international and local women rights groups to share ideas and resources, as well as raise awareness concerning women’s rights across countries.** Similarly, international organizations such as the World Bank and particularly the UN have a long history of promoting women’s rights. These **transnational networks and activists consequently create more public support and exert pressure on governments to take women’s human rights into account** (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Gray et al 2007; Neumayer and De Soysa 2007).

Thus, I affirm.

1. First-person testimony recorded on page 48 of following source: Yasmin Husein Al-Jawaheri [Writer, holds a doctorate in Middle Eastern Studies and a masters in International Law]. “Women In Iraq: The Gender Impact of International Sanctions.” Boulder, Lynne Rienner Publishers. 2008. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. J. Anne Tickner and Laura Sjoberg [Tickner is Professor at the School of International Relations at the University of Southern California; President of the International Studies Association (ISA), serving from 2006-2007. Sjoberg is Assistant Professor of Political Science and affiliate faculty in Women's Studies at the University of Florida; holds a research fellowship with the Women and Public Policy Program at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University]. “Feminism.” Chapter 10 in *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity* edited by Timothy Dunne, Milja Kurki, and Steve Smith. Oxford University Press, 2007. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. A. Cooper Drury and Dursun Peksen [Drury is a Professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Missouri. Peksen is a Professor in the Department of Political Science at East Carolina University]. “WOMEN AND ECONOMIC STATECRAFT: A GENDER-SPECIFIC APPROACH TO THE UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF ECONOMIC SANCTIONS.” Version of paper presented at the annual meeting of the ISA's 50th ANNUAL CONVENTION “EXPLORING THE PAST, ANTICIPATING THE FUTURE”, NEW YORK CITY, NY, USA, Feb 15, 2009. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Esther Rosenblum, Amber Guthrie, Christina Arrington, and Kesser Mohammad [Guthrie, Arrington, and Mohammad are graduate students in the Women’s Studies Department at San Diego State University, and Dr. Esther Rothblum is a Professor of Women’s Studies at the same institution]. Review of “Women In Iraq: The Gender Impact of International Sanctions” by Yasmin Husein Al-Jawaheri. Journal of International Women’s Studies Vol. 10 #4. May, 2009. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Laura Sjoberg [Assistant Professor of Political Science and affiliate faculty in Women's Studies at the University of Florida; holds a research fellowship with the Women and Public Policy Program at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University]. “Towards a Feminist Theory of Sanctions.” Thesis – University of Chicago. p/ http://www.laurasjoberg.com/BA.pdf //bcm. 2000. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Laura Sjoberg [Assistant Professor of Political Science and affiliate faculty in Women's Studies at the University of Florida; holds a research fellowship with the Women and Public Policy Program at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University]. *Gender, justice, and the wars in Iraq: a feminist reformulation of just war theory*. Lexington Books, 2006. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Mina Khanlarzadeh [Teacher at Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology in Boston. Frequent free-lance journalist on Iranian women’s issues]. “Iranian Women and Economic Sanctions.” Published in Z Magazine. February 1st, 2009. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Ibid 3 [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Ibid 3 [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Gerda Lerner [Professor emerita of history at the University of Wisconsin–Madison and a visiting scholar at Duke University]. *Living With History/Making Social Change*. Chapter Eleven: Transformational Feminism (An Interview). University of North Carolina Press, 2009. Pg. 182. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Betty A. Reardon [Director of the Peace Education Program at Teacher’s College Columbia University] “Women and Peace: Feminist Visions of Global Security.” SUNY Press, 1993. Pgs. 30-32. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Ibid 3 [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Ibid 3 [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Ibid 6 [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Ibid 3 [↑](#endnote-ref-15)