# RESEARCH

# Power, knowledge and the politics of gender in the Global South

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Critical feminists have argued that research on women and gender is not sufficiently 'global' in its representation of scholars and perspectives. We draw on these works to argue that the scholarship on women, gender and politics does not sufficiently consider the effects of the global order in the Global South. We propose the adoption of a 'global lens' to address this gap. We further examine the representation of South-based scholars by analysing leading women, gender and politics journals, and find that they are severely under-represented as authors. We propose steps to address this underrepresentation and to decolonise the scholarship.

**Key words** global inequality • gender • journals • publications • Global South • political science

**Key messages**
- Women, gender, and politics scholarship is not sufficiently global.
- Scholars in the Global South are under-represented in top women, gender, and politics journals.
- Exclusion of scholars in Global South shows need to decolonise gender and politics scholarship.
- Women, gender, and politics scholarship needs to adopt a 'global lens'.

## Introduction

Attention to women, gender and politics has grown exponentially among scholars over the last three decades. Central to this sub-field has been research on countries in the Global South, which we define as countries that have been marginalised in

the international political and economic system. Our article evaluates the scholarship on women, gender and politics in the Global South, with a focus on Africa. Critical feminists, including postcolonial feminists, African feminists and South Asian feminists, writing in the 1980s and 1990s argued that approaches to the study of women and gender in the Global South adopted by white Western feminists were steeped in and reinforced unequal global power relations (eg Mohanty, 1984; Okeke, 1996; Narayan, 1997). This Western scholarship was challenged for attributing gender inequalities to factors such as ethnicity and caste while neglecting historical and contemporary global factors such as colonialism and neoliberalism, a critique echoed by critical scholars in the North, including African-American feminists (eg Crenshaw, 1991). They also argued that the works of academics based in the South were less valued by white Western feminists and, thus, less likely to be published in North-based outlets (eg Mama, 2007). These criticisms have been echoed in more recent scholarship (eg Motlafi, 2018). Drawing on this body of work, we interrogate global power dynamics in the study of women, gender and politics in the Global South.

First, we examine whether and how the gender and politics scholarship takes global economic and political ideas, structures and processes into consideration. We argue that the dominant scholarship on women, gender and politics, produced mostly but not exclusively by Western feminists and other scholars in the Global North, needs to examine a broader range of variables that may be independent and interactive causes of gender inequality and discrimination against women. While research in feminist political economy has probed how globalisation and neoliberal policies have contributed to gender inequality in the South (eg Falquet et al, 2010; True, 2010; Ewig, 2011; Rai and Waylen, 2014; Radhakrishnan and Solari, 2015), it is less often the case for research in areas such as political participation and feminist security studies. This lack of engagement with the global results in a truncated analysis of gender, which affects theorising, activism and the resonance of this scholarship for South-based audiences that do not see academic research as reflecting their own lives and priorities.

Second, we ask who publishes research on women, gender and politics. The inclusion (or exclusion) of scholars based in the South in knowledge production is important for equality, knowledge advancement and symbolic representation. We analyse the institutional affiliation of authors published in women, gender and politics journals and find that South-based scholars are missing in the top journals. Scholars at Southern institutions authored less than 3% of 947 articles in four leading European and North American journals between 2008 and 2017. We discuss reasons for the underrepresentation of South-based scholars and recommend steps to address this disparity. The underrepresentation of scholars in the Global South, combined with the truncated approach, demonstrates the hegemony of Western gender politics scholarship and reinforces the power disparity in knowledge production between the North and South.

In the next section, we highlight key insights from the critical feminist literature on power, knowledge and gender in the Global South that motivate our article. We then analyse the representation of scholars in the Global South in gender politics journals and discuss how to decolonise scholarship in this area. Next, we examine two research themes to show how studying women, gender and politics through a global lens is essential for developing more comprehensive explanations of stasis and change.

## The global order, power and knowledge in the Global South

The global order describes the current state system and the interconnected organisations that form the global governance framework. The roots of this order can be traced to the emergence of nation-states and spans colonisation, independence and decolonisation (Risse, 2008). It has been shaped by powerful states, international organisations (such as the Bretton Woods institutions) and the United Nations (UN). Furthermore, it affects all areas of women's lives in the South (Oloka-Onyango and Tamale, 1995; Okeke, 1996; Mohanty, 2003; Ampofo et al, 2004; Sa'ar, 2005; Lugones, 2010; Kapur, 2012; Hudson, 2016). While the hypothesised beneficial effects of this global order on women in the South have been studied in the literature on women, gender and politics, the antithesis has remained under-studied. For example, in the study of gender and security, there is a dearth of scholarship that considers how the global order contributes to issues such as violence against women (True, 2010; Meger, 2014). Indeed, many studies attribute gender inequality and discrimination to social, economic and political factors within the state (eg Inglehart and Norris, 2003; Cherif, 2015). When the global order is introduced into analyses, it is often to consider how the ideas and actions of powerful states and international organisations have advanced gender equality (eg Bush, 2011; Edgell, 2017).

For several decades, critical feminist scholars, including postcolonial, African, Latin American and South Asian feminists, have underscored the failure of most strands of feminisms developed and adopted in the North (sometimes termed 'Western feminisms') to recognise how political and economic ideas, structures and processes initiated and promoted by powerful states and by international organisations have had negative political, social and economic impacts on women in countries in the Global South (Mohanty, 1984; Abu-Lughod, 2002; Ampofo et al, 2004; Sa'ar, 2005; Mama, 2011; Kapur, 2012, Millán, 2016). They have done this while acknowledging the heterogeneity of Western feminisms, the value of the works produced therein and the fact that this truncated analytical approach is not found in all Western feminist scholarship. Nonetheless, they have argued that a significant proportion of this scholarship elides how current and past political, economic and cultural ideas, structures and processes, such as colonialism, neoliberalism and globalisation, interact to affect women's experiences of gendered inequalities and discriminations in the South (Mohanty, 1984, 2003; Darwkah, 2002; Sa'ar, 2005; Razavi and Hassim, 2006; Kapur, 2012; Millán, 2016). Indeed, Charmaine Pereira (2017: 18) notes that the 'particular configuration of inequality that manifests in any given context is conditioned by the specificities of historical, political and economic processes embedded in that context'. The truncated approach can also be found in works produced by scholars in the Global South (eg Medie, 2012).

Critical scholars also recognise that the effects of the global order on women in the South depend on intersecting identities, such as caste, class, ethnicity, race and religion (eg Basu, 1995). Therefore, they emphasise the need to be attentive to how global political and economic ideas, structures and processes intersect with women's lives. In emphasising the global, we do not seek to deny the agency of actors within the South, but rather to produce explanations and theories that capture the complexity of women, gender and politics.

Political scientists are increasingly recognising the need to address the potential contradictory effects of the global order in the study of women, gender and politics.

For example, Jacqui True (2010), in her work on the political economy of violence against women, has argued that both UN discourses and international relations scholarship have failed to connect global financial crises in the Global North and macroeconomic and trade policies with violence against women. Yet, despite this insight, the truncated approach is reflected in much of the literature on women, peace and security (Pratt, 2013). In fact, scholars have expressed concern that an artificial divide has emerged between scholars of feminist security studies and feminist global political economy (Chisholm and Stachowitsch, 2017). This divide prevents feminist international relations scholars from identifying the complexity of factors, including the global order, at the root of issues such as sexual violence in conflict and other forms of insecurity. Anna Agathangelou (2017), therefore, argues for a decolonial, feminist and queer reading of feminist security studies and feminist global political economy. This reading allows scholars to study 'what notions allow for distinctions and tensions between immediate (noneconomic) and mediated (economic) violence that make these notions/practices possible' (Agathangelou, 2017: 745). Relatedly, decolonising the academy involves identifying, critiquing and correcting the inequalities embedded in scholarship and at the foundation of knowledge production. In recent years, students have called for the decolonisation of education, including through the Rhodes Must Fall movement in South Africa.

However, the importance of considering the global order is not limited to understanding violence against women and has been illustrated in other issue areas, such as women's empowerment (eg Alexander et al, 2016; Sundström et al, 2017). Feminist activists and scholars, such as Srilatha Batliwala (1994), Sara Hlupekile Longwe (2000) and Naila Kabeer (2005), argue that empowerment discourses and programmes often fail to address underlying structural imbalances of power, giving cover to existing gender, economic and political inequalities rather than challenging them. Indeed, the limitations to achieving women's empowerment, while present around the world, are manifold in the South due to imbalances in economic and political power that are inextricably tied to historical and contemporary global processes such as colonisation, capitalism and globalisation (Arat, 2015).

Although scholars in the North (and the South) have paid more attention to the effect of the global order since criticisms of the truncated approach emerged, this discussion shows that the perspectives of critical feminists have not been fully incorporated into all areas of the dominant scholarship on women, gender and politics. In the next section, we discuss another area of disparity in knowledge production: whose voices are heard in the scholarship on women, gender and politics?

## The representation of scholars in the Global South in women, gender and politics journals

Given the concerns of critical feminist scholars about the marginalisation of scholars based in the Global South, we examine the role of location in leading women, gender and politics journals. Is publication dominated by scholars based in the Global North? Studies of inclusion and exclusion in political science journals have focused on gender disparities (eg Maliniak et al, 2013; Teele and Thelen, 2017; see also Atchison, this issue). We contend that the representation of scholars at Northern and Southern institutions in academic publishing is a salient distinction that merits the attention of scholars of women, gender and politics for three reasons.

First, examining Global North–South disparities is important on the grounds of equality. Publishing has and continues to reflect structural inequalities between countries in the North and in the South. Scholars based in developing countries are under-represented in development studies (Cummings and Hoebink, 2017), medical research (Sumathipala et al, 2004) and general-interest scientific journals (King, 2004). In research on Africa, Western knowledge production has historically marginalised the intellectual contributions of Africans (Zeleza, 2003). Scholars at African institutions are under-represented in North-based African politics journals (Briggs and Weathers, 2016) and in the humanities (Miller, 1993; Mama, 2007). As Nana Akua Anyidoho (2006: 164) writes: 'the power relations underlying knowledge production about Africa continue to keep African scholarship and African scholars outside of the centre'.

Second, the inclusion of scholars in the Global South is significant for advancing knowledge. Previous studies 'expect that the quality of the literature will increase as the diversity of participating academics increases' (Briggs and Weathers, 2016: 467). To be clear, we do not assume that scholars in the North think one way and that those in the South think another. Rather, a diverse academy is more likely to pose a broader array of research questions, adopt diverse methods and have access to a greater variety of sources. Indeed, the positionality of a researcher has been shown to affect the information gathered during fieldwork (Bouka, 2015). Anyidoho (2006: 163–4) makes the case for research produced by insiders, scholars who identify themselves as members of the groups under study. Such research is rooted in situated knowledge and shared struggle, or what Mkandawire (1997: 35) calls an 'existential interest' in producing knowledge about Africa. While scholars writing about global imbalances in knowledge production recognise the fluidity of the identity and geographic mobility of scholars, existential interest 'frequently correlates with such demographic characteristics' as physical location, according to Anyidoho (2006: 164).

Finally, the representation of scholars in the South in academic publishing is important for its symbolism. Who publishes in leading journals tells students in the Global North and South who counts as an expert, who can produce knowledge and whose ideas matter. As European militaries colonised African polities, European and North American missionaries, anthropologists and administrators represented Africans. Anyidoho (2006: 158) writes that '[t]hose representations were validated by non-African audiences (and even by African readers privy to these works) because they came supposedly from "enlightened" sources speaking on behalf of those incapable of speaking for themselves'. When researchers living in Southern countries publish in leading international journals, it signals to students in the South that they have a central role to play in theory building and pushing the boundaries of knowledge.

## Data and methods

To assess the representation of scholars in the Global South in knowledge production, we examine the institutional affiliation of authors of 1,929 full-length research articles in six peer-reviewed academic journals on women, gender and politics. We selected four leading gender and politics journals in the Global North. They have high impact factors, are published on a regular basis and have a long history. Table 1 presents their founding years and location.

**Table 1:** Women, gender and politics journals in the study

| Journal | Launch year | Affiliation | Years indexed by Web of Science | Number of articles examined |
|---------|-------------|-------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity* | 1987 | University of Natal-Durban, South Africa | 2015–17 | 204 |
| *Feminist Africa* | 2002 | African Gender Institute at the University of Cape Town, South Africa | 2015–16 | 83 |
| *Gender & Society* | 1987 | Sociologists for Women in Society, USA | 1987–17 | 960 |
| *International Feminist Journal of Politics* | 1999 | International Studies Association, Feminist Theory and Gender Studies (FTGS) Section, Canada, UK, USA | 2008–17 | 279 |
| *Journal of Women, Politics, & Policy* | 1980 | USA | 2005–17 | 204 |
| *Politics & Gender* | 2005 | American Political Science Association, Women and Politics Research Section, USA | 2008–17 | 199 |
| Total number of articles examined | | | | 1,929 |

Note: Articles published in *Agenda* from 2008 to 2017 and in *Feminist Africa* from 2003 to 2017 were hand-coded by the authors.

*Gender & Society* is the top journal in gender studies (2.765 impact factor, based on the 2016 Journal Citation Reports). *Politics & Gender* (2.109 impact factor) and *Journal of Women, Politics, & Policy* (0.367 impact factor) are squarely situated in political science. The *International Feminist Journal of Politics* is a leading journal among feminist scholars of international politics (1.246 impact factor). We also include two well-known journals based in Africa that focus on women, gender and politics. *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity* is a highly reputable journal among women's and gender studies scholars, and *Feminist Africa* provides a key intellectual space for feminist research and debate. *Agenda* and *Feminist Africa* do not have an official journal impact factor as they are in the Emerging Sources Citation Index. We examine journals published in English because it is currently the international language of scientific communication.[1]

Our outcome of interest is the percentage of peer-reviewed articles that have one or more co-authors affiliated with an institution in the Global South. Membership in the Group of 77, an intergovernmental organisation of African, Asian, Central and Latin American, and Middle Eastern countries that explicitly seek to promote Southern interests, is used to identify countries in the South (The Group of 77, 2017). We adopted a coding rule that is generous to North-based journals. If an article has multiple co-authors and one is based in the South, we coded that article as coming from a Southern institution.

We do not assume that scholars are citizens of the country. Researchers at institutions in Europe and North America can be nationals of countries in the South, and academics at institutions in the South can be nationals of Northern countries. We also note that scholars in the diaspora – individuals born or raised in the South and now working in the North – are an important category of intellectuals who face a distinct set of opportunities and challenges and deserve further study (Zeleza, 2002: 22–3). Our focus on institutional location follows that of previous works on representation that examine place rather than nationality. As mentioned earlier, place matters particularly on the grounds of equality, knowledge advancement and symbolic representation. Studying national identity would require a survey of academics because journals do not systematically publish such information, and it would be problematic to infer one's citizenship or country of belonging otherwise.

Our primary source of data is the Clarivate Analytics Web of Science (2017, formerly ISI Web of Knowledge). Between 22 November and 1 December 2017, we searched for 'Articles' under Document Type and the journal under Publication Name for all available years. We then used the bibliometrix package in R to code for country affiliation (Aria and Cuccurullo, 2017). The Web of Science, however, indexed significantly fewer years of *Agenda* and *Feminist Africa*. To address this imbalance, we hand-coded articles in *Agenda* and *Feminist Africa* to track the authors' institutional affiliation. For *Agenda*, we used the Taylor & Francis Online archive, focusing on pieces that fall under the category 'Articles'. For *Feminist Africa*, we examined articles labelled as 'Features'. For less than a dozen articles in *Feminist Africa*, the institutional affiliation of the author or authors was not provided; we searched the web to fill in missing information.

## Results

As Figure 1 shows, South-based scholars are under-represented in leading women, gender and politics journals. Between 2008 and 2017, less than 5% of articles published in the *International Feminist Journal of Politics* were authored by a researcher at a Southern institution, and this number is the highest of the four European and Northern American journals. Less than 2% of full-length articles published in *Politics & Gender* in the same time period were by scholars based in the Global South. At the *Journal of Women, Politics, and Policy*, 1% of articles published between 2005 and 2017 were by scholars in Southern countries. This figure is similar for *Gender & Society*, where slightly more than 1% of articles between 1987 and 2017 had one or more co-authors located in the Global South. Of the 947 articles published in four European and North American journals between 2008 and 2017, less than 3% were by scholars at Southern institutions.

Due to the great diversity in structural inequalities across the Global South, we examine which Southern countries have the highest representation. We find significant differences across Southern countries. Among the four gender politics journals based in Europe and North America, South Africa-based scholars appear most often (nine authors), followed by authors at institutions in India (six) and Brazil (two). Chile, China, Congo, Cuba, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ghana, Liberia, Peru, the Philippines and Qatar are each represented once. Countries that one might expect to be represented due to their population size – for example,

**Figure 1:** The percentage of articles with at least one author in the Global South (five-year averages)
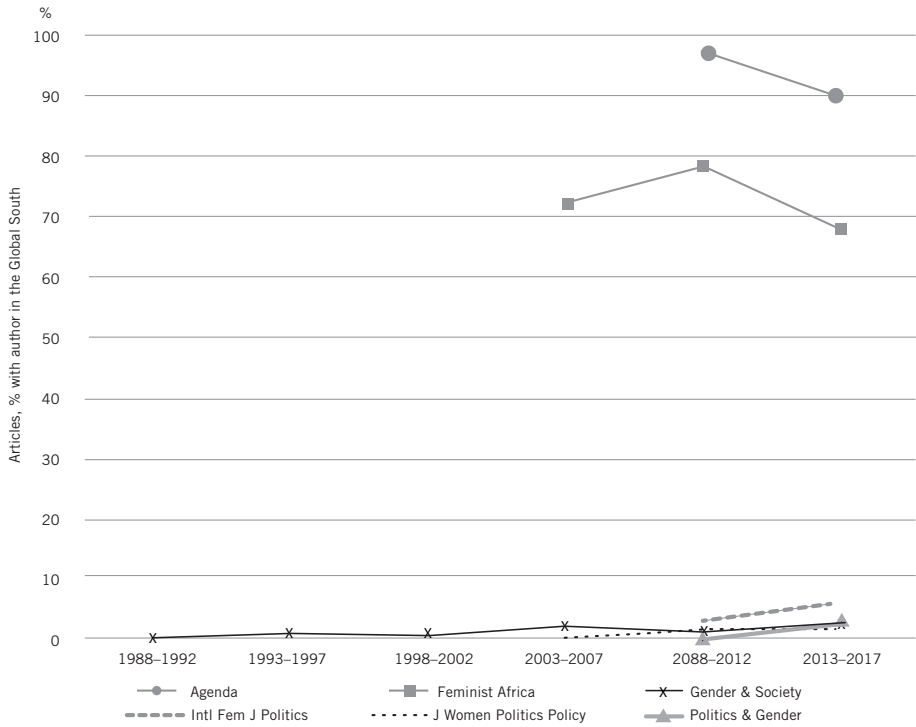


Sources: Web of Science (2017) and authors' coding.

Bangladesh, Indonesia, Nigeria and Pakistan – are not. This points to the need to differentiate among countries in the Global South.

Africa-based gender politics journals are more inclusive than are their Northern counterparts. In *Agenda*, 94% of articles published between 2008 and 2017 were by scholars based in the Global South, and 6% were by scholars based in the North. Of the articles published in *Feminist Africa* between 2003 and 2017, 73% had one or more co-authors at a Southern institution and 27% were solely by scholars based in the North. The two African gender politics journals are more diverse in terms of the location of their authors than are their Northern counterparts.

Scholars have debated why researchers in the Global South are marginalised in journals and presses in the Global North (eg Okeke, 1996; Zeleza, 2003). Similar to many women's experiences in the South, this imbalance cannot be divorced from the global economy. The adoption of structural adjustment policies by African governments in the 1980s led to the hollowing out of many African universities, leading to reduced funding for research and training, poorly stocked libraries, low salaries, and heavy teaching loads, all of which made it difficult for scholars to publish in the most influential international journals and presses (Mama, 2002; Zeleza, 2003). Funding increased over time, but student intake has been high, thus requiring more teaching (see Briggs and Weathers, 2016). However, the dearth of works by scholars based in the South in leading Northern venues cannot be attributed solely to historical or current global economic factors.

Institutional incentives play an important role in where scholars publish. Requirements that scholars publish in internationally ranked journals vary across universities. Junior professors may prefer to submit their work where they know they have a better chance of being published and in outlets that are accessible to scholars in their professional networks. Therefore, South-based scholars may not send their work to Northern journals, but instead publish in country-specific journals, paper series, and books edited by other Southern scholars or published by Southern research institutions such as the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), the Ghana Centre for Democratic Development (CDD) and the Laboratory for the Study of Social Dynamics and Local Development (LASDEL) (on the institutionalisation of women's and gender studies in Africa, see Mama, 2011).

In their study of two African politics journals published in the North (*African Affairs* and the *Journal of Modern African Studies*), Briggs and Weathers (2016) note that colleagues mentioned that much of the work by scholars in Africa is of low quality. Additionally, writing styles differ, and expectations in terms of theory and empirics and the balance between the two can significantly vary. Yet, scholars have also noted a hierarchy in how knowledge is produced, where works from the North are often considered to reflect good scholarship (see the previous section of this article). One way in which this is manifested is in the privileging of certain methodologies over others. For instance, in the US, top political science journals favour quantitative and experimental work over qualitative research. Survey and experimental research is particularly resource-intensive, requiring funds to buy equipment or compensate research assistants and participants.

How can scholars of women, gender and politics address the exclusion of scholars based in the South in leading journals? In the absence of proactive measures, the status quo is likely to continue. We make several recommendations (summarised in Table 2) to help decolonise publishing in academic journals.

Journal editors can consciously decide to invite graduate students and scholars based in the Global South to submit their work given that it is common practice for editors to informally encourage scholars to submit manuscripts. Editors and editorial

**Table 2:** Recommendations for improving the representation of scholars in the Global South

| Individuals or entity | Recommendation |
|---|---|
| Journal editors and editorial boards | Encourage scholars in the Global South to submit manuscripts |
| | Adopt and implement an editorial vision that promotes inclusion |
| | Invite scholars in the Global South to serve as editors and on editorial boards |
| | Track submission rates by location |
| | |
| Professional organisations | Sponsor research by scholars in the Global South |
| | Sponsor writing workshops for scholars in the Global South |
| | Invite scholars in the Global South to participate in general conferences and workshops |
| | |
| Individuals | Pursue cross-regional research collaborations |

boards can explicitly call for the inclusion of Asian, African, Latin American and Middle Eastern researchers in their mission statements. Journals such as the *European Journal of Politics and Gender* and *International Feminist Journal of Politics* already articulate an editorial vision of fostering a globally inclusive sub-discipline. *Feminist Africa*'s editorial policy expresses:

> a profound commitment to transforming gender hierarchies in Africa, and seeks to redress injustice and inequality in its editorial policy, content and design, and by its open-access and by prioritizing the work and interests of feminists based on the African continent. (Feminist Africa, 2015: 1)

To help identify promising work, scholars based in the South can be invited to serve as editors and on editorial boards.[2] Tracking submission, rejection and acceptance rates by location can help the profession monitor change in this area.

Professional organisations can support scholars based in the Global South. The American Council of Learned Societies, CODESRIA, and the American Political Science Association (APSA) (eg through the APSA–Africa workshops) have made steps in this area by sponsoring the research of South-based scholars and by supporting scholars to present their work at conferences within and outside of Africa. They have also organised workshops in which scholars can discuss and further develop their ideas. At the individual level, scholars can make a conscious effort to read, cite and teach works by scholars based in the South and to pursue cross-regional collaborations where colleagues in the South are not used as research assistants, but full co-authors.

In sum, the production of knowledge about women, gender and politics reflects structural inequalities in the global political and economic order. We find severe imbalances in authorship for journals based in the North. To decolonise the profession, scholars need to build a more geographically inclusive community. Furthermore, the global order needs to be more comprehensively incorporated into women, gender and politics scholarship, as argued by critical feminist scholars. In the next section, we propose that this can be done through the adoption of a global lens.

## Studying women, gender and politics through a global lens

The women, gender and politics scholarship needs to consistently interrogate both facets – the advantageous and the disadvantageous – of the effects of the global order on women and gender relations in the Global South. This call is not a new one and has been made by many others, particularly critical feminist scholars. Our contribution is to specify that a more global lens should be used in the study of women, gender and politics, and to illustrate how this can be done.

A global lens requires women, gender and politics scholars to probe how global economic and political ideas, structures and processes interact with national- and sub-national-level factors to affect women and men in the Global South. As explained earlier, this kind of analysis is already common in areas such as feminist political economy, but it is less common in areas such as feminist security studies and in the study of women's political participation and women's representation (eg Kang [2015] does not pay critical attention to the impact of the contemporary global economic order on women's lives in Niger). Thus, we are arguing that the global lens can be used more widely in the study of women, gender and politics. It necessitates a

recognition of the structural level at which global political and economic processes operate as a possible source of direct and interactive influences on gender inequalities and discrimination in the South in both small- and large-n studies. Borrowing from Mohanty (2003), we propose that scholars 'read up' the power structure and consistently search for connections between the observed outcome and global political and economic factors. We provide two examples to illustrate how the global lens can be used.

*Illustration 1: the global politics of large-scale land acquisition and women's livelihoods*

The first is a study of the effect of large-scale land acquisitions on women's lives in Ghana (Darkwah et al, 2017). There has been rapid growth in the number of acquisitions across Africa since 2007. This large-scale land acquisition, mainly for agricultural purposes but also for manufacturing and real estate, has been attributed to globalisation, the liberalisation of land markets and a boom in foreign direct investment (Zoomers, 2010). Darkwah and her colleagues studied large-scale land acquisitions for the production of bananas and pineapples in the Greater Accra and Eastern regions of Ghana for export. The case studies were: Premier Fruits, which is owned by a French company and grows bananas and pineapples on two pieces of land totalling 6,671 acres; and Glomart Farms, which is a joint partnership – a Ghanaian is the majority shareholder while a Swiss national owns 16.5% of the company – and grows mangos and pineapples on 2,700 acres of land for export and local consumption. The authors found that while there were some benefits to both communities studied, such as community projects, they were outweighed by the costs, and women were disproportionately affected.

   The process of reading up the impact of the global order demonstrates that while the effect of the land acquisitions on women can be traced to gender power relations and land tenure systems in the concerned communities, global economic processes also provide insight into the outcome. First, and most importantly, these processes led to the acquisition of the land on terms that led to the displacement of farmers, including migrant women. These processes also contributed to how much firms paid for the land, the conditions under which women worked (to meet fair trade regulations) and the prices at which the fruits were exported, thus influencing how much factory and farm workers were paid. Therefore, global economic factors affected women's lives within the concerned communities in Ghana. These observations only become visible when scholars move beyond examining proximate causes, such as land tenure practices and gender power relations, to considering if and how global processes (directly and by interacting with proximate causes) matter.

*Illustration 2: the global politics of violence against women*

Recent research on violence against women also illustrates the usefulness of a global lens (True, 2010; Meger, 2014). Writing about sexual violence in conflict-affected settings such as the DRC, Sara Meger (2014) employs a feminist political-economy approach that connects sexual violence during conflict to the global economy. She critiques the 'rape as a weapon of war' paradigm for its homogenisation of the determinants of sexual violence in conflict and argues that three interlinked processes – gender norms and socialisation, neoliberal globalisation, and the global political

economy of armed conflict – produce this violence (Meger, 2016). She argues that as globalisation marginalised men, some turned to 'militarized forms of masculinity' to shift their status (Meger, 2016: 43). In this project, Meger traces how individual-level behaviour is affected by global political and economic actors and processes. She astutely shows how the global interacts with individual and national-level variables to affect the occurrence of sexual violence. Thus, attention to the global order illuminates mechanisms that lead to violence but were previously unexplored in this setting and in the research on conflict-related sexual violence.

Indeed, the global lens allows us to study the complexity of women's and men's experiences in the Global South and steers us away from partial and one-sided explanations and theories. It enables scholars to specify new causal relationships in addition to explaining stasis. This lens is also critical for feminist scholars who seek not only to advance scholarship, but also to advance women's rights. Advocacy campaigns and other initiatives based on partial assessments of a problem are unlikely to produce the desired change. For example, in our first illustration earlier, initiatives to increase women's voices in decision-making around issues of land at the community level are unlikely to ensure that they are adequately compensated unless these initiatives are paired with efforts on the part of the government to manage its relationship with investors and thus to protect the interests of men and women in the face of powerful global actors and processes.

It is important to ask if this kind of analysis is feasible. Is it reasonable to ask every researcher to not only study how individual-, community- or national-level factors affect the outcome of interest, but also to trace the influence of global political and economic policies? Would such an approach not disadvantage scholars with limited time and resources to conduct such in-depth tracing and additional data collection? We argue that this work does not necessarily have to be done by one scholar in one study. Indeed, it offers an opportunity for scholars to identify directions for future research and to build on the work of others. Further, we recognise that not every outcome may be similarly affected by global factors. In fact, there might be some explanations that are only located at the individual, community or national levels. Nonetheless, it is important to consider if and how factors beyond these levels have influenced women, gender and politics in the Global South.

A global lens can be applied to research topics such as women's political participation, women's movements and women's representation. What are the legacies of colonialism for women's contemporary mobilisation? How have neoliberal policies (eg trade policies) impacted women's political participation? Thus, scholars could examine how the actions of powerful states and international organisations have advanced but also stymied women's political advancement in the Global South.

The sub-field of women, gender and politics continues to expand to cover new topics and methods of analysis. Scholars are studying a variety of issues in the South, including the impact of gender norms on women's political representation, health, income, physical security and environmental security. Rarely do studies provide one explanation for the observed outcomes; indeed, scholars often point to a variety of factors, often at the individual, community, national and regional levels, to explain stasis and change. In proposing the global lens, our objective is to produce scholarship that more accurately reflects the complexity of women's and men's experiences, particularly in the Global South.

## Conclusion

Our goal has been to offer a productive path forward for conducting research on women, gender and politics in countries in the Global South. We began by synthesising previous criticisms made by critical feminists of the failure of Western feminist literature to analyse the effect of global political and economic factors on women's lives in the South. Western feminisms have to a large extent overlooked the impact of global power dynamics and inequalities. Although there have been changes in Western-produced scholarship, these international inequalities remain largely under-studied, as shown in the recent scholarship on violence against women. We argue that this demonstrates a truncated approach to scholarship. It also reflects global power imbalances in knowledge production as the perspectives of critical feminist scholars have not been fully incorporated into the sub-discipline.

To further understand this imbalance, we analysed the representation of scholars at institutions in the Global South in North-based journals and found that they published less than 5% of articles in the journals analysed. Thus, this sub-discipline, which has sought to end the marginalisation of female scholars and of gender scholarship in the study of politics, concurrently marginalises scholars in the South. Therefore, we recommended steps that editors, organisations and individual scholars can take to address this disparity in knowledge production. To address the truncated approach to scholarship, we proposed a global lens that enables scholars to identify the normatively positive and negative linkages between global power dynamics and local politics. While the focus is on the South, this global lens is relevant to studying women, gender and politics in the North as well.

The study of women, gender and politics in countries in the Global South has made tremendous strides since the 1980s. Scholars know much more about the rise and impact of women's movements, the spread of gender quotas, the adoption of policies to combat violence against women, and the effect of gender on political participation. Taking on a critical and global analysis of gender politics – expanding the search for underlying causes to include powerful private and public actors in the global economy, broadening the range of issue areas, and promoting greater diversity among scholars – is necessary for advancing the study of women, gender and politics in the Global South.

### Conflict of interests

### Acknowledgements

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## Notes

1. We do not include journals based in Latin America or other world regions due to our focus on Africa. Future research may examine publication patterns in such journals.
2. This is, of course, only one of the many reasons why scholars from the Global South should be included in journal editing.

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