

## **Lecture No (6)**

### **Identity Troubles**

Identity is in the realm of what can be, of what is humanly created and constructed; it is about who we are, and what we identify with, what we admire and have affinity to. When I introduced “what” IR is about, I suggested it is about the relations of political units. What I want to introduce here, is how these relations are necessarily identity-laden, which creates the identity troubles of domination, exclusion, and conflict. The problems of gender, race, class are identity troubles about the identity-laden gendered, racialized, and class based relations of political units in world politics. Here we encounter the problems of patriarchy, racism, and class exploitation. Patriarchy is an international problem. It is a relation of domination between genders. Women are systematically excluded from roles of power in world politics. In dominated roles, the freedoms and

liberties of women are denied, the safety and wellbeing of women is abused, and the labour of women is exploited on a global scale. Cynthia Enloe, one of the pioneer scholars of Feminist IR, gave us a simple and helpful question to address these problems: ‘Where are the women?’[11] The major interactions of nations, trade, diplomacy, and war, are all gendered and patriarchy dominated. Women are excluded from roles of power in these activities, but modern trade, war, and diplomacy could not be conducted without women. The war and diplomacy between nations is coded in gendered terms, where aggressive nations are “**masculine**” and peaceable nations are **gendered “feminine”**. In international trade, the “domestic” labour of women is exploited and unaccounted for, but vital for its possibility. Women are everywhere in war, assigned the power-weak role of victims. In war, soldiering is understood as

a masculine activity, and warfare as such cannot be conducted without gender roles. Patriarchy, masculine domination, is a problem with international relations, because all the relations are made possible by gendered identities.

**Racism** is an international problem. White supremacy, the modern source of racism, ordered the hierarchical system of European domination of the globe for hundreds of years. The legacies of racist empire, legacies of economic inequity and dependence, military preponderance and diplomatic position in international organizations, were made possible by racialized relations. Imputed relations of superiority and inferiority still shape the practice of international relations today. Lines across the world political map are not only those of sovereign nation-states, there are also imputed colour lines, constituting global

race relations, connected to legacies of domination, persistent exclusions and inequities, prejudice and conflicts, in every region and between them.

**Class** is an international problem too. The global system of capitalism enables and shapes the system of nationstates itself, raising great powers, and driving others into decline. As an identity trouble, the division of humankind into classes, owners and workers, rich and poor, upper class and lower class, elites and non-elites, creates stratified E-International Relations ISSN 2053-8626 Page 4/12 Student Feature - A Brief Introduction to the Study of International Relations Written by A.C. McKeil relations within, across, and between nations. Labour relations, relations between owners and workers, are international because the ownership and trade of the capital goods and services made

by workers is international. These stratified relations create international problems of exploitation, poverty, and inequality, systematically undermining the health, education, and wellbeing of workers, corrupting the social fabric of societies, leading to class conflict, and contributing to:

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