

The Possibility of Nationalist Feminism

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Most Third World feminists consider nationalism as detrimental to feminism. Against this general trend, I argue that “polycentric” nationalism has potentials for advocating feminist causes in the Third World. “Polycentric” nationalism, whose proper goal is the attainment and maintenance of national self-determination, is still relevant in this neocolonial age of capitalist globalization and may serve feminist purposes of promoting the well-being of the majority of Third World women who suffer disproportionately under this system.

I. Introduction

In many Third World¹ contexts, nationalism² is intricately connected to

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NOTES

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¹ Following Chandra Mohanty, I am using “Third World” as a reappropriated term by Third World people to represent their political oppositionality and resistance against any form of exploitation by the “First World” (Mohanty 1991, ix-x). The term “First World,” on the other hand, is rather awkward after the collapse of the “Second World”; however, I am constrained to use it to refer to both the West and Japan for the lack of a better term.

Geographically speaking, although my usage of “Third World” is roughly coextensive with Chandra Mohanty’s (1991, 5), I include the so called Four Tiger nations (Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan) excluded by Mohanty because all of them have colonial legacies and precariously struggle through the neo-colonial present (see Hoogvelt 1997, chapter 10).

² Not only are feminisms in the Third World diverse and variegated, but also Third World nationalisms, understood basically as political struggles to (re)gain national

feminism, not only in the sense that nationalist movements often assisted in the birth of feminism, but also in that nationalists and feminists frequently collaborated in their pursuit of a common goal—national independence from a colonial power (Jayawardena 1986). In this collaboration, however, Third World male nationalists always considered feminist agendas secondary, deferring their implementation until after the success of the nationalist struggle. In the process, Third World nationalists consistently exploited Third World feminists, and feminist agendas were abandoned in the end. Thus most contemporary Third World feminists are skeptical of nationalism, and some even seek to eliminate nationalism from feminist discourse altogether (Alarcon, Kaplan and Moallem 1999; Grewal and Kaplan 1994).

Yet, as their deep entanglement at the incipient stage suggests, the relationship between Third World feminisms and nationalisms cannot be severed once and for all. This is attested by the effort of some other Third World feminists/activists trying to retain their ties, however precarious, to nationalism (Gluck 1997; Kwiatkowski and West 1997); some even opt for nationalism at the expense of feminism (Trask 1993 and 1997; Jaimes with Halsey 1997). If nationalism is useless, and even deleterious, to the feminist cause, as most Third World feminists allege, how are we to understand this lingering attraction these other Third World feminists/activists feel toward nationalism? Are they self-deceptively trying to hold onto an anachronistic movement which is certain to betray them in the end? My answer is in the negative, as I shall try to show.

In this essay, I attempt to demonstrate the potential of nationalism for promoting Third World feminist causes and the potential of Third World feminists for charting new courses of nationalist discourses. This is not to turn a blind eye to the contradictions and complications that nationalisms have historically presented to Third World feminists. On the contrary, Third World feminists should beware of the dangers of nationalism and try to avoid falling into the traps of patriarchal nationalists. Therefore, I shall first examine in section II how Third World nationalisms, traditionally construed, have harmed the

independence, are by no means uniform. Therefore even when I use “nationalism” in the singular form for stylistic reasons, it is to be understood as implying multiplicity (see Mohanty 1991; Jayawardena 1989).

advancement of Third World feminisms. However, despite full recognition of such troubles, I shall present in section III two ways in which nationalism justifiably maintains its enduring allure for Third World feminists. Next, I shall provide a possible reconceptualization of nationalism in section IV so that it can actively protect and promote Third World feminisms. In section V, I conclude by suggesting how Third World feminists, as legitimate participants in ongoing nationalist discourses, could play a major role in transforming their national culture.

II. The Dilemma: Nationalism vs. Feminism

The majority of Third World feminists who address the issue of nationalism tend to be critical. The reasons they offer for their skepticism differ according to the specific situation they discuss, but for the sake of convenience, it is possible to categorize the complaints into two broad camps.

One strand of criticism focuses on the conflict between nationalists and feminists within national contexts. This conflict manifests in a variety of ways: First, one significant factor that generates this tension is the postulation by nationalists of an “august and immemorial” national essence (McClintock 1995, 352)³ which often takes on familial characteristics. This family analogy, which is adopted to bolster the impression that the nation is as “natural” as the biological family, also “naturalizes” the social hierarchy based on the subordination of women and children (1995, 357-58). The subjugated status of Third World women, in turn, is often the most fought-for battleground between colonialists and nationalists: while it is one of the proofs of the Third World culture’s “backwardness” for colonialists (see Enloe 1989, 48-51), it becomes the symbol of “authentic” national identity for nationalists which therefore must be maintained or restored (see Jayawardena 1986, 257; Narayan 1997, 17-19; McClintock 1995, 365). Second, women’s bodies frequently acquire the symbolic significance of the

³. This is mainly the result of nationalists’ efforts to develop a sense of national pride by “inverting the colonialist contempt for ‘indigenous cultures’ into a contempt for the ‘culture’ of their colonizers” (Narayan 1997, 15; Jayawardena 1986, 255).

nation and set its boundary; this boundary is vulnerable to foreign incursions, and hence requires not only the protection of but also tight control by men in the same manner that national territory is vigilantly guarded (Mostove 2000, 90, 102). Women's sexuality is the possession of the nation rather than the individual. Hence the rape of women by invading soldiers becomes the symbol of national defilement by foreign forces, thereby acquiring a greater significance than the violation of individual rights (Liu 1994, 44; see also Yang 1998).⁴ Third, nationalism is invariably conceived in androcentric terms, as an effort to revive the injured dignity of an "emasculated" nation which has been degraded by the "penetration, occupation, and cultural domination" of a foreign aggressor (Kondo 1999, 314; see also Enloe 1989, 44). As such, aggressive military operations, for which women are seen to be unfit, are valorized.⁵ In rare cases in which women participate equally in the "masculine" nationalist struggles, women are required to emulate "masculine" heroes and to step aside as soon as their biological limitations, such as pregnancy, prevent them from full participation (Chinchilla 1997, 211-14). Fourth, even when national independence is achieved, the tension between nationalism and feminism continues. Although male nationalists have encouraged the participation of feminists in nationalist struggles by promising that feminist issues will be addressed once these struggles succeed, feminists have often been betrayed in the end (Heng 1997, 36; Jayawardena 1986; Chinchilla 1997, 208; Enloe 1989, 60).⁶ Women's role in the rebuilding of the nation is

⁴. In the same vein, not only is the devastation suffered by women themselves effectively bypassed, it is only the rape of "our" women that matters while "their" women often become the object of conquest or aggression; sometimes rape effectively becomes "a weapon of war" (Benderly 1997, 65).

⁵. Tamar Mayer's account of how Jewish nationalism endorsed "Muscle Jew" as an antithesis to the presumably timorous and effeminate image of "Diaspora Jew" is a case in point (2000, 286-9).

⁶. Perhaps this betrayal occurs because, as Anne McClintock argues, male nationalists, even one as progressive as Frantz Fanon, think of women's agency as "designated agency," effective only when "invited" by male nationalists to join in the nationalist struggle. As props or instruments of male nationalists, "women do not commit themselves" except at the behest of the former. When the nationalist goal, the sole basis for women's political agency, is attained, there is no more rationale for women to be politically active (McClintock 1995, 366-68). As soon as nationalist struggles end, according to this way of thinking, women should go back home and assume their

seen primarily in terms of reproduction (Yuval-Davis 1997, chapter 2; see also Gluck 1997, 106; Mostove 2000, 91, 98-99; Heng 1997, 38), and women are regarded as “gendered subjects,” discriminated against in laws regulating inheritance or the custody of children after divorce (S. Moon 1998, 52-56; Heng 1997, 37, n.15 and 16). In this conflict between Third World nationalists and feminists, feminist objections to such totalizing nationalisms are looked upon as disruptive annoyances bordering on betrayal of the nation, and feminists are vilified as being “Western” and “inauthentic” (Chinchilla 1997, 211; Enloe 1989, 60-1; Heng 1997, 33; Narayan 1997, 29; McClintock 1995, 384; K. Kim 1996, 72).

Another strand of Third World feminist criticism of nationalism focuses on how nationalism affects feminists and feminist issues at the international level. With regard to certain international gender issues, nationalists tend to focus more on the external factors of sexual exploitation and bypass the inner patriarchal oppression. For example, the issue of Korean military “comfort women” during the Japanese colonial era,⁷ when it finally surfaced in the early 1990s, was promptly “misplaced as the material or ground for ‘men’s talk’” between Korean and Japanese patriarchal governments (Yang 1998, 130), the Korean government accusing the Imperial Japanese government of perpetrating unspeakable crime against young Korean women and trying to conceal it. However, Korean patriarchy is partly responsible for perpetuating the misery of former “comfort women” after national independence; the topic of “comfort women” did not emerge within Korea for almost half a century because these women were effectively silenced due to the pervasive Korean patriarchal ideology that promotes chastity as the prime virtue of women, the loss of which brings irredeemable shame (Yang 1998, 132).⁸ Also,

“natural” and subordinate role as wives and mothers.

⁷. Between 80,000 and 200,000 Korean women were forcibly drafted to serve as sex slaves for the Japanese military between the late 1930s and 1945 (Yang 1998, n.1).

⁸. The tendency to frame international gender issues as the object of masculine contest has been replicated even by some feminists who adopt nationalism. Hyun Sook Kim reports that some Korean “nationalist feminists” were preoccupied with presenting the exploitation of Korean prostitutes serving the U.S. military as primarily due to the presence of an external neo-imperialistic power, when in fact the Korean government actively participated in facilitating prostitution for the U.S. military (H. S. Kim 1998,

nationalism tends to divide feminists with conflicting nationalist aspirations, thereby weakening their collaborative move toward common goals, be they the attainment of peace or gender equality. It can also foster, even among feminists, exclusionary practices and racism toward those who belong to the opposing national group(s). The eruption of nationalist sentiments in former Yugoslavia has given rise to antagonisms among feminists of different “nationalities,” who had a relatively congenial relation with one another before the war. While there are still those who adamantly strive toward the common goal of peaceful co-existence, there are feminists, especially those of invaded nations of Bosnia and Croatia, who decidedly side with nationalists in accusing Serbs and their non-nationalist feminist sisters (Benderly 1997, 67-68).⁹

Given such a problematic relation between nationalisms and feminisms, it might seem imperative to discard nationalism from feminist discourses altogether. Indeed, there are some Third World feminists who argue for just that: Not only do nationalisms create difficulties for women, but they are also becoming increasingly anachronistic in the face of the socio-politico-economic conditions of “postmodernity” (Grewal and Kaplan 1994, 4), characterized by the “rise of postmodernist cultural forms, the emergence of more flexible modes of capital accumulation, and a new round of ‘time-space compression’ in the organization of capitalism” (Harvey 1990, quoted in Grewal and Kaplan 1994, 4). These feminists contend that power is no longer centered in the metropolitan West but scattered around the globe, as capital is dispersed following the movements of multinational corporations. Hence, the center/margin and global/local dichotomies no longer apply, and the notion of “nation” as a discrete and homogeneous entity is no longer useful as a category (Alarcon, Kaplan and Moallem 1999, 12). In such a situation, these feminists continue, feminist movements have to become “transnational,” in order to focus on “the lines cutting across [such dichotomies]” (1999, 13) and their effects on women in diverse locations. The ultimate aim of Third World feminisms is for women from

192; see also K. Moon 1997).

⁹. Daiva Stasiulis (1999) provides another example: francophone feminists of Quebec, being preoccupied with the “sovereignist” movement, have been slow to recognize the concerns of feminists of color and of First Nations in Canada.

different communities working to dismantle various forms of patriarchal practices to create “coalitions,” “affiliations,” or “transnational solidarities” (1999, 18, 19, 26). In forming such coalitions, the determining factor is the participation in resistant praxis, *not* the identity of the participants (1999, 18).

I do not dispute that such transnational feminist networks and alliances are called for with regard to certain issues, and do not doubt that some of these networks are making some tangible progress (see Keck and Sikkink 1998, chapter 5; Shaheed 1994). However, to speak of the obsolescence of nationalism for Third World feminists seems rather premature. In the next two sections I shall provide reasons for thinking so.

III. Why Nationalism?

That nationalism is Janus-faced is a well-recognized fact. One face reveals a frightening countenance: exclusion, xenophobia, fanaticism, expansionism, aggression, ethnic cleansing, endless bloodshed. The other face reveals a relatively positive side of nationalism: community, national sovereignty, independence, self-determination, pluralism. Although in reality these two faces sometimes overlap, I think it is important to distinguish between justifiable and unjustifiable nationalisms by adopting Anthony Smith’s distinction between “ethnocentric” nationalism and “polycentric” nationalism. The central thesis of the first is that “power” and “value” dwell *exclusively* in one’s nation¹⁰; the examples of this ideal-type are the expansionist nationalisms of Germany and Japan during the Second World War. The central thesis of the second is that one’s nation has a right to “join the ‘family of nations,’ the international drama of status of equals” (Smith 1983, 158-59); most nationalist movements of colonized nations are

¹⁰. A commonly made distinction of “nation” is between (1) the “statist” model, which defines nation as a territorial-political unit, and (2) the “ethnicist” model, which defines nation in terms of a common descent and culture (Smith 1983, 176-80). As Anthony Smith aptly mentions, however, not only do all nations, even “statist” ones, have ethnic roots, but also must build on such ethnic cores in order to maintain their unique identity (1986, 207-208). In this sense, modern nations “extend, deepen, and streamline” ethnic ways of life (1986, 215).

examples of this second ideal-type. That the first kind of nationalism cannot be morally justified is rather obvious, but I believe the second kind of nationalism *can* be, for reasons to be given later.¹¹ In what follows, my discussion is confined to “polycentric” nationalism, which has the *potential* to be morally justifiable.

However, as is evident from the feminist objections raised against nationalisms, even this relatively positive subcategory is not unequivocally positive—especially, but not exclusively, for women. Under the banner of nationalism, whether before or after national independence, women, lower class people, dissidents, and minority groups were consistently exploited and abused. Indeed, nationalism was often promoted as a means to distract from such social divisions. Why, then, should Third World feminists value nationalism, and join ongoing nationalist discourses? The answer can be given at two levels: First, at the psycho-social level, and second, at the politico-economic level. In what follows, I shall elaborate on these two points in turn.

1) Psycho-Social Level

In recent years, communitarians have aptly demonstrated that our identity is formed only in “webs of interlocution” (Taylor 1989, 36). The language that we use in various “interlocutions” with others is the language of a specific, historically embedded community, the members of which share a common culture¹² that encompasses all meaningful aspects of human life. As such, the language itself is not neutral or transparent, but reflects cultural values and preferences presupposed and adhered to by members of the community.¹³ Hence, by using the language which already incorporates

¹¹. The leading theorists of nationalism seem to share this view when they accept the widely accepted definition of nationalism as “a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent” (Gellner 1983, 1; see also Hobsbawm 1990, 9). Also, Smith considers Nazism or Fascism as distant ideological offshoots of nationalism rather than “just further developments” of nationalism (Smith 1983, 4-5, Appendix B).

¹². Avishai Margalit and Joseph Raz call this culture “pervasive” culture (1990, 444), and Will Kymlicka calls it “societal” culture (1995, 76).

¹³. Michael Walzer’s argument about the different conceptualizations of social goods in

cultural norms in the formation of identity, some unchosen goals and values inherent in our culture become constitutive of our identity; therefore, at least in formative years, some ends are indeed prior to the self (Sandel 1982, 58). Even in adulthood, one's choices are determined not by one's sheer will power but are limited by the parameters set by one's culture, which is the main reservoir of available options; for most people, their culture determines which goals are worthwhile and which means of attaining them are acceptable. "Familiarity with a culture determines the boundaries of the imaginable. Sharing in a culture, being part of it, determines the limits of the feasible" (Margalit and Raz 1990, 449).

Numerous kinds of often overlapping communities, such as family, neighborhood, tribe, village, city, nation, contribute to the formation of one's identity. Indeed, at least some of the time, one can even identify with a somewhat distant and abstract collectivity such as humanity. However, given historical developments in the modern era, such as the spreading of "high culture" to the entire population through the institutionalization of standardized general education (Gellner 1983) and print capitalism (Anderson 1991), nations have come to occupy a central place in the modern identity. Indeed, in many instances, nation, as the primary sponsor of standardized general education, which in turn is the main transmitter of "pervasive" culture in the modern era, has come to coincide with the boundary of the culture itself; nation not only determines the overall configuration of culture, but also protects and preserves it through various social institutions. As such, nation has come to play a significant role in the formation and maintenance of one's identity (see Gellner 1983, 111), and *a fortiori* national sentiments have come to be deeply ingrained in the modern psyche.¹⁴

Members of a nation, however, need not be conscious of the "national" dimension of their identity. Someone who resides only in her nation her entire life,

different societies is a good example in this respect (1983, 6-10).

¹⁴. This is not to deny that factors other than nationality, such as gender, race, and class, can significantly contribute to identity formation. Also, I fully acknowledge that immigration and media globalization can complicate one's "national" identity (see, for example, Rattansi 1995; Hall 1992). All I am trying to establish here is that nation, along with other factors, has a significant role to play in the formation of modern identity.

without coming into contact with anyone who is a non-member, may not even be aware of her national culture. As people become conscious of the air they breathe only through its absence, people become consciously nationalistic only when faced with the “Other.” National identity, like other aspects of identity in general, is not “the sign of an identical, naturally-constituted unity,” but emerges only via contrast and exclusion (Hall 1996, 4). There are innumerable diverse contexts in which one may confront the Other. But for the purpose of this essay, which is to concentrate on “polycentric” nationalism, the most relevant cases are those in which the Other, through specific actions meant to ignore and degrade a people of a certain nationality, instills a sense of inferiority in and poses a threat to the integrity of one’s national identity.

When this happens, one’s self-respect can be deeply affected (see Margalit and Raz 1990, 449; Kymlicka 1995, 89; Taylor 1992, 36). While it is by no means the case that national identity represents the whole of one’s identity, the person with “wounded pride” (Berlin 1991, 252) will tend to focus only on the depreciated aspect of her identity; “[w]hen my parochialism is threatened, then I am wholly, radically parochial” (Walzer 1994, 82). In such a case, there are generally two possible responses on the part of the degraded; one is to concur with and internalize the negative evaluation of the Other and to try to assimilate with the Other as much as is humanly possible; the other is to react to it by inverting the other’s negative projection and redeeming the despised qualities as virtues. While the first is a real possibility which has historically been chosen by many, it is not always practicable; for those who exhibit “entropy-resistant” traits such as distinct “racial” features and wear their difference on their faces, so to speak, assimilation with the discriminatory Other is not an option (Gellner 1983, 64). Such individuals, however they may have desired assimilation initially, are forced to turn to the second option in the face of pervasive and systemic discrimination. It is precisely at this second juncture, when members of a misrecognized nation suffering from “wounded pride” turn to resistance to the Other’s devaluation and to the valorization of the despised traits shared by co-members, that “polycentric” nationalism awakens (Gellner 1983, 58-62, 69; Berlin 1991, 245-47; Taylor 1997, 44-46).

2) Politico-economic Level

The point that nationalism is often about “wounded pride” ties in with the other level. In Third World nations still struggling for independence, or at least some form of national self-determination, nationalism is the preferred mode of resistance. Some “female” theorists/activists—I hesitate to use the term “feminist” here due to their adamant rejection of Western feminism—in such nations unequivocally opt for nationalism at the expense of feminism (Trask 1993 and 1997; Jaimes with Halsey 1997; Awatere 1984). They point out that the Eurocentrism of Western feminism, which tends to see all women, regardless of race or ethnicity, as the victims of a common enemy, patriarchy, blinds white feminists to the fact that colonized women suffer from qualitatively different oppressions of colonialism and racism; for them, women’s liberation, understood in a most inclusive sense, is possible only when the sovereignty of their nation is achieved.¹⁵

For many other Third World feminists who fight for national independence, however, the allegiance to nationalism is fraught with more self-doubt and tentativeness.¹⁶ Sherna Gluck aptly illustrates the dilemma facing Palestinian feminists in their collaboration with male nationalists in the struggle for national independence: On the one hand, feminists share the goal of national independence with male nationalists who have the tendency to postpone feminist issues until after the attainment of the common goal; while feminists are encouraged to join nationalist movements, they are expected to accept the traditional division of labor (Gluck 1997, 106). On the other hand, if feminists attempt to raise feminist issues and to develop programs meant to bring structural change in gender relations, they are faced with the solemn admonition that “now is not the time” and the accusation, both by men and women, that they generate division and disunity in the nationalist struggle (1997, 115-6, see also 110, 114, 120;

¹⁵. The unequivocal championing of nationalism in some cases is backed by the belief that their precolonial culture had already attained gender equality, or something quite close to it (Jaimes with Halsey 1997, 301-309).

¹⁶. Similar ambiguity concerning nationalism is also expressed by some minority

Chinchilla 1997, 211; Enloe 1989, 62; Kwiatkowski and West 1997, 150).

Despite this dilemma, Third World feminists in colonized nations seem to concur that national independence is one of their most urgent goals. Faced with the threat of systemic oppression, exploitation, and, in extreme cases, genocide, Third World feminists are justified in joining the nationalist effort to thwart the colonizers and aggressors. The main problem facing Third World feminists is not whether to join in the nationalist struggle, but how to address the patriarchal assumptions of male colleagues while pursuing the common goal of nationalism. Given the history of deception and betrayal by patriarchal nationalists, Third World feminists must demand that feminist and nationalist goals be pursued simultaneously; they should be persistent and patient in continuing a dialogue with their male colleagues and bringing the feminist issues to the fore. There is urgency in this task, for “[if] nationalism is not transformed by an analysis of gender power, the nation-state will remain a repository of male hopes, male aspirations and male privilege” (McClintock 1995, 385-86; see also Chinchilla 1997, 216) .

If, however, national independence has been achieved, does nationalism still have any value for Third World feminists in spite of the complications it generates for them? An answer to this question depends on whether nationalism has any potential for promoting the well-being of Third World women even after national independence. I think the answer to this second question is a qualified “Yes.” The answer is in the affirmative because, as I shall try to show in the rest of this section, endorsing nationalism could benefit Third World women even in this “post-colonial” world. It is qualified, however, because the concept of nationalism must first undergo rigorous reconceptualization to be rendered compatible with Third World feminisms. This task shall be undertaken in section IV.

First, let us examine how Third World nationalisms might serve Third World feminisms in putatively “sovereign” Third World nations. According to David Miller, the sovereignty of a state encompasses two aspects: a state is *internally* sovereign when it is “recognized as the final authority on all matters that arise within [its] boundaries; it is

feminists in the U.S. (see Garcia 1997; Lowe 1991; Lugones 1990).

externally sovereign in so far as [its] decisions cannot be overridden by any other body, whether another state or an international institution” (1995, 99). This does not mean that any decision made by a sovereign state goes: Miller intimates that sovereign states must be inwardly democratic (1995, 100) and outwardly non-aggressive (1995, 104) in order for their sovereignty to be respected. The question for our present discussion, then, is, are “sovereign” Third World nations, even those outwardly non-aggressive and inwardly working toward democracy, sovereign in the above sense? The answer is that they often do not exercise “final” authority on all matters within their boundaries, nor are their decisions immune from interventions by external influences. Still affected by the legacy of colonization, most “sovereign” Third World nations are situated in a “neocolonial” bind even in this allegedly postcolonial era. Despite the formal acknowledgment of political independence and sovereignty, these former colonies are far from having achieved political and economic parity with their former colonizers, and still suffer from “an indirect and subtle form of domination by political, economic, social, military and technical forces” (O’Connor 1970, 117). Given this, Third World nationalisms may still serve the purpose of advancing the welfare of and promoting justice for not only Third World people in general but also Third World women.

I shall illustrate this point by examining two examples. First, in South Korea, where the U.S. military has been stationed since the end of the Second World War, over 39,542 crimes by U.S. military servicemen were committed between 1967 and 1987, which means that U.S. soldiers committed two crimes a day on average (East Asia-U.S. Women’s Network Against Militarism 1998, 35; Adler 2000, chapter 2). These crimes include “murders, brutal rapes, sexual abuse, arson, theft, smuggling, fraud, drug trafficking, traffic offenses, an outflow of PX merchandise and a black market in U.S. goods” (East Asia-U.S. Women’s Network Against Militarism 1998, 35-6). However, due to an unequal agreement between the U.S. and South Korea, titled the R.O.K. (Republic of Korea)-U.S. Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), enacted in 1967 (Adler 2000, chapter 2), U.S. military authorities retain jurisdiction in most criminal cases involving American military personnel, and the Korean government exercises jurisdiction in less than 2 percent of these cases. Suspects handed over to the jurisdiction of U.S.

military authorities are punished disproportionately lightly, if at all, in relation to the crimes committed and in comparison to Korean nationals who commit the same kind of crimes. The process for Korean nationals to receive compensation for wrongs done to them by U.S. soldiers is so cumbersome and slow, and the compensation itself so paltry, that most Korean victims forego their rights to receive compensation (East Asia-U.S. Women's Network Against Militarism 1998, 36). All of this attests to a "double standard" in favor of U.S. military personnel on the part of U.S. military authorities (1998, 36).

Under these circumstances, the Korean government is effectively prevented from exercising sovereignty and protecting its citizens even within its own territory, and any Korean, whether a man or a woman, who becomes the victim of crimes committed by U.S. soldiers is not adequately protected by law and suffers from the lack of proper redress even in his or her own nation. But Korean women, mostly prostitutes in the U.S. camptowns, bear the brunt of this injustice because a large percentage of these crimes are sex offenses against them (Adler 2000, chapter 2). Many of these sex offenses go unpunished because the crimes are frequently concealed or unreported due to the victim's fear of retaliation or further social stigma (East Asia-U.S. Women's Network Against Militarism 1998, 36). In light of these women's plights, Korean feminist Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), such as "My Sister's Place," "Sae Woom Tuh," and "Tabitha's Community," have been working for the welfare of prostitutes in various US camptowns in Korea since the late 1980s (Adler 2000, chapter 3). However, a perception that the mistreatment these prostitutes receive from U.S. soldiers is a symptom of larger issues, such as U.S. domination and hegemony as "occupiers" in South Korea (K. Moon 1997, 47) and the disrespectful and racist attitude of U.S. soldiers toward Koreans (1997, 33-34), has been growing among the Korean public.¹⁷ Finally, in the aftermath of

¹⁷. Other issues heighten such a perception. U.S. bases in general take up a vast amount of land, and the bases in the capital, Seoul, are located on some of the choicest pieces of land, complicating the development of the city and creating inconveniences for Seoulites. The U.S. military refuses to relocate unless all relocation costs are paid by the Korean government. Also, evidence has been mounting that the U.S. military contaminates the environment around its bases, but under the SOFA, the U.S. military is not responsible

the much-sensationalized gruesome murder of a prostitute, Yoon Geum Yi, by a U.S. soldier in 1992, the National Campaign for the Eradication of Crimes by U.S. Troops in Korea (hereafter to be abbreviated as “National Campaign”) has been created to protest against such injustices (K. Moon 1997, 31; Adler 2000, chapter 3).

This Campaign is first and foremost nationalistic,¹⁸ in that it aims to revise the unequal SOFA agreement, to promote the “autonomy of the nation as a whole,” and to protect the civil rights of Korean nationals against the crimes committed by the U.S. military personnel (Jeong 1996, 11-12, quoted in Adler 2000, chapter 3). However, this Campaign has formed alliances with some of the aforementioned feminist NGOs, and, in the process, has promoted feminist issues concerning the prostitutes. Here we witness a coalition between nationalism and feminism working together to promote nationalist interests and feminist interests that converge at various junctures. Moreover, both the feminist NGOs and the National Campaign are actively participating in the transnational network opposing militarism and its ill-effects on women and children (East Asia-U.S. Women’s Network Against Militarism 1998).

Another area in which nationalist interests might converge with Third World feminist interests may be found in the struggle against “globalization.” Globalization is multifaceted, referring to the expansion of media, communication, industrialism, technology, and capitalist economy throughout the globe.¹⁹ Here I shall focus on the economic aspect of globalization and the workings of the International Financial

for environmental clean-up and the Korean government is prohibited from releasing information on such contamination unless the U.S. military agrees (East Asia-U.S. Women’s Network Against Militarism 1998, 33-34; see also K. Moon 1997, 31).

¹⁸. It must be borne in mind that this nationalistic movement is to be distinguished from the state-sponsored, top-down nationalism of the Korean government which has consistently exploited these women. According to Katharine Moon, not only did the Korean government support and actively regulate prostitution (1997, 42-47), it also used nationalistic rhetoric to urge prostitutes to earn U.S. dollars and to help the government preserve “national security” (1997, 43, 92, 102-103). Unlike this state-sponsored nationalism, the National Campaign has been initiated by ordinary citizens of South Korea. This point will be taken up later in this section.

¹⁹. Anthony Giddens (1990) cites capitalism, inter-state system, militarism and industrialism as four major dimensions of globalization.

Institutions (IFIs)—such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank—and the World Trade Organization (WTO) (Mohan et al. 2000, 14).²⁰ Under the banner of “neoliberalism” and “free trade,” the aforementioned international financial and trade organizations are putting pressure on “sovereign” Third World nations to open up their markets to multinational corporations and transnational capital. With respect to the IFIs, this process involves imposing “Structural Adjustments Policies (SAPs)” on Third World nations as a condition for receiving loans (Jaggar 2000; Mohan et al 2000, chapter 2; Sparr 1994, 1). Based on the presuppositions of neoclassical economics, the SAPs are meant to “promote long-run growth and economic efficiency” of debtor nations (Sparr 1994, 7). In reality, however, not only does the neoclassical model presuppose unrealistic assumptions,²¹ but the implementation of the SAPs actually undermines the growth of most debtor nations and contributes to the deterioration of the quality of life for the local population (Jaggar 2000, 3; Hoogvelt 1997, 170-72). Among the SAPs are cutting government expenditures on social welfare programs, eliminating public subsidies, cutting wages or jobs of public employees, and making natural resources available for commercial exploitation (Jaggar 2000, 2; Sparr 1994, 7), all of which unequivocally worsen the living standards of the majority of the locals. While such policies harm the general populace, especially the poor, they benefit a minority of Third World elites who can now enjoy higher interest rates for their investments, thereby increasing the already worrisome discrepancy between the poor and the rich within the Third World to a staggering proportion. But the unquestionable winners in this situation are the transnational corporations of First World origin whose profit margins increase from reduced wages and weakened labor unions (George 1992, xvii).

In this situation, Third World women, who generally occupy the bottom rung of

²⁰. Here I focus on the effects of economic globalization on Third World nationals who reside *in* their nation, although I believe the situation of Third World nationals who inhabit the First World as “guest workers” is also relevant.

²¹. According to Bob Milward, the assumptions of “consumer sovereignty,” “equal power between producers and workers,” “the perfect knowledge of buyers and sellers,” “the absence of barriers to entry,” “full employment of all factors of production,” and “economies hav[ing] equal influence in their trade with each other” are unrealistic

the ladder, are affected most profoundly.²² First, women suffer from *indirect* effects of the SAPs: As public services are cut back, sisters, wives and mothers are expected to fill in the gap, resulting in the deterioration of women's quality of life (Elson 1992, 34; Watkins 1994, 126). Often, in order to "stretch their limited funds," women's domestic chores dramatically increase as they grow their own vegetables, prepare food from scratch while doing away with processed foods, spend more time shopping for cheaper items, and take care of the sick and children without the help of public services²³; girls' educational prospects are curtailed as they are expected to help out in the domestic sphere and scarce funds are concentrated on boys' education; women's and girls' health declines as they defer scarce food to men and boys; women are subject to increased domestic violence in a harsher socio-economic climate (Sparr 1994, chapter 2). Women are also *directly* affected: The first jobs to be cut when the SAPs are implemented are women's jobs (Fifty Years Is Enough 1999; Son 1998; H. Lee 1998; J. Lee 1998; Louie 1995, 428; see also Mies 1993, 63); cheap agricultural products from the First World are imported at a cost with which Third World local farmers cannot compete, so that these local farmers, disproportionately women, are not only displaced but also driven into famine (Shiva 1993, 236); women laborers who are concentrated in the low-paid jobs are negatively affected by the disregard of these international agencies for labor rights (Jaggar 2000, 11).

Given inordinate disadvantages suffered by Third World women in this increasingly global world, Third World feminists should by all means form transnational coalitions in their struggle against the ill-effects of economic globalization. I believe, however, that nationalism may have a positive role to play in this struggle²⁴; if Third

(Mohan et al. 2000, 35-36).

²². Alison Jaggar soberly reminds us that women of color in the First World are also disproportionately disadvantaged by "free trade" (Jaggar 2000, 9).

²³. For example, in the Philippines, under heavy debt to the IMF and the World Bank, the government spent over one-third of its 1992 national budget on debt payment and only 3.6 percent for health (Kwiatkowski and West 1997, 163), leaving women responsible for the care of the sick at the expense of themselves.

²⁴. With respect to this second example, I know of no actual alliance formed between nationalism and feminism. However, with respect to the Asian financial crisis in 1997 that severely hit Korea and other Asian nations, the imposition of the SAPs by the IMF

World governments, backed up by their people, were to effectively resist economic incursions of world-wide “neoliberalism,”²⁵ then perhaps hardships suffered by Third World women due to economic globalization could be alleviated, if not prevented. By this, I do not imply that Third World nations would be flawless in promoting the welfare of and justice among their citizens. As history has proven too frequently, many Third World governments failed to advance the welfare of their people, and nationalism worked as a ploy to subjugate disadvantaged groups. But such contingent failures of nationalism do not prove nationalism’s inherent deficiency; all they establish is that the promotion of democracy is of paramount importance for nationalism as in other social and political movements.

Contrary to a prevalent perception, the potential for democratic Third World nationalisms is not just an idle dream. While state-sponsored, top-down nationalisms of various Third World governments have consistently been undemocratic and deleterious for feminism, rightly incurring Third World feminists’ criticisms (section II), another kind of nationalism that commands popular support also operates in some parts of the Third World. The Korean case is illuminating in this regard. Despite the fact that democracy in Korea is in a fledgling state, showing signs of immaturity and crudeness, Korea has achieved democracy through its uneven and often tumultuous inner dialectic of social movements and reforms. The most prominent among such movements is the

and the resultant suffering of ordinary Korean citizens stirred strong nationalistic sentiments. Alongside the militant resistance by the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) whose focus was on all workers’ rights not to be fired arbitrarily (Crotty and Dymski 1998), feminist labor groups organized resistance against disproportionate layoffs and dismissals of women workers (H. Lee 1998; S. Choi 1998). Although these two efforts do not seem to be conjoined for the moment, I believe the potential for alliance is strong, as people make the connection between the arbitrariness of the imposition of the SAPs on the Korean situation (Sachs 1997; Stiglitz 2000; Chossudovsky 1997) and the inordinate suffering of Koreans in general, and Korean women workers in particular, caused by it.

²⁵. “Nationalist” struggles should not preclude forming “transnational” ties among diverse Third World nations, because a single nation’s resistance against formidable international monetary and trade organizations will only invite economic and/or political retaliation from those nations whose interest is served by the spread of “neo-liberalism” (Shiva 1993, 237).

nationalistic student movement, also called “minjung” nationalism, that brought about the demise of military dictatorship and the subsequent democratic presidential election in 1987 without bloodshed. “Minjung” nationalism evolved independently and diametrically opposed to the state-sponsored nationalism of the military dictatorship. This movement was initiated by intellectuals and college students, but gradually spread to the “minjung (masses),” which consists of “proletariat” and “petite bourgeoisie,” to use the Marxist terms favored by the movement’s advocates.

The movement’s goal has been precisely to combine democracy and nationalism: Although the movement’s ultimate goal is to promote equality and democracy within the nation (Kang 1995, 36-37; see also Louie 1995, 428), it is also nationalistic because its proponents believe that such an ideal can be achieved only by overcoming cultural, political, economic, and military dominance of the First World, specifically the United States. Reunification between North and South Korea is believed to be the key in bringing about the genuine self-determination of the nation, and has therefore been pursued as the most urgent goal (Wells 1995, 5-8; C. Choi 1995, 105-108). In pursuit of its dual goal of democracy and nationalism, this movement has aligned with various other movements such as the labor union movement, religious movements, and feminist movements (Loui 1995; Yoon 2001; Nam 2000); the aforementioned coalition between the National Campaign and feminist NGOs in Korea working to improve living conditions of prostitutes in the U.S. camptowns is a more recent offshoot of such an endeavor.

Such grassroots, bottom-up nationalisms in the Third World may have genuine potential for promoting democracy and feminist causes (see C. Choi 1995, 106). Democracy and nationalism, then, are not mutually exclusive, but on the contrary must come together if the liberatory potential of “polycentric” nationalisms is to be actualized.²⁶ The process of democratization, however, is primarily the task of insiders.²⁷

²⁶. Although I endorse Third World nationalisms and cooperation among Third World nations in this context I do not hereby repudiate universalist efforts, such as those of socialists and “Rawlsian” liberals, to bring about “global justice” (see for example, Drydyk and Penz 1997). I advocate nationalism mainly for its *strategic* value to engender

Outside intervention of the “right” sort may prod the process,²⁸ but stable democracy ultimately comes about through an inner dialectic of reforms. “Wrong” sorts of external intervention by international trade and financial organizations are likely to thwart the consistent efforts of Third World governments and people to negotiate and carry out such reforms (Stiglitz 2000; see also *Fifty Years Is Enough* 1999).²⁹

IV. “Non-essentialist” Nationalism?

Even if Third World feminists have legitimate reasons to feel attracted to nationalism, they cannot blithely plunge into nationalist discourses as they are presently constituted. As we have seen, most nationalist discourses tend to presuppose monolithic and patriarchal conceptions of “nation” which rely upon the subjugation of women (Alarcon, Kaplan and Moallem 1999, 7).³⁰ However, such essentialist and reifying assumptions of “nation” are anachronistic. It is widely acknowledged among theorists of nationalism that the concept of nation is only a social construction of the modern era. “Nations as a natural, God-given way of classifying men, as an inherent though long-delayed political destiny, are a *myth*” (Gellner 1983, 48-49, italics added). A nation, as a vessel of “pervasive” culture, is subject to change not only in its content as different cultures meet every day, but the national makeup itself is in the process of constant

equality and well-being of Third World peoples.

²⁷. I do not hereby deny that we are all simultaneously “insider-outsiders” to the groups to which we putatively belong. In fact, as David Crocker aptly points out, we have to assume an outsider’s perspective to be able to criticize our own community. Also outsiders can legitimately participate in this process, *if* they are sufficiently inside to “immerse” themselves in a different culture (Crocker 1991).

²⁸. International organizations such as Amnesty International or Human Rights Watch may play a positive role in bringing about democratic reforms in Third World nations.

²⁹. Here again, the Korean case can be illustrative. The Asian financial crisis of 1997, which hit Korea very hard, and the subsequent imposition of the SAPS by the IMF is jeopardizing whatever gains made by feminism and the labor union movement up to that point (see Son 1998).

³⁰. Even the nationalism advocated by the South Korean student movement of 1980s displayed remnants of patriarchal rigidity (K. Kim 1996, 72).

reconfiguration as large numbers of people migrate³¹; as a result, “hybridization” of national culture is inevitable and once idealized “preordained” social hierarchy is bound to be disrupted.

Still, it is premature to try to do away with the notion of “nation” as long as we continue to imagine ourselves as belonging to distinct nations. Nationalism may also have relevance for us if we feel that our nation or national identity is under attack or that our quality of life is threatened due to external interventions. Ample evidence exists that Third World nationals suffer from the present-day neo-colonial world hierarchy and bear the excessively negative effects of economic globalization, as I have argued in section III. Given this, the nationalistic sentiments of Third World citizens are bound to be stirred, and “nation” can still be effective for political mobilization despite its status as a constructed fiction of human imagination (Hall 1995, 66). Indeed, “[c]onstructed communities are the only communities there are, and so they cannot be less real or less authentic than some other kind” (Walzer 1994, 68). Nationalism, then, even if no longer based on national “essence,” takes on a *strategic* significance (Hall 1996, 3; Winant 1994, 95) as an effective means to restore our human dignity or to maintain, if not improve, our standard of living. Nationalism may not be the goal in itself, but it may play an important instrumental role in advancing us toward that goal.

Therefore, my proposal for Third World feminists is not to hastily indict nationalism as being useless for feminist purposes, for such a stance is tantamount to giving in to the mistaken and politically dangerous essentialism of traditional nationalists. Different conceptualizations of nationalism are possible, and if nationalism can be reconceptualized in a nonessentialist way, it may have strategic value for Third World feminisms. Such a reconceptualization involves a series of reformulations of key concepts. First, “nation” should be understood as a large community whose members differentiate themselves from others through their possession of a common “pervasive” or “societal” culture. Such a community is undoubtedly “imagined,” because the community is not

³¹. As Edward Said aptly states, all cultures are “involved in one another; none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated, and unmonolithic” (Said 1993, xxv).

based on actual face-to-face acquaintance amongst the members; “yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (Anderson 1991, 6; see also Gellner 1983, 7). This definition can escape backward-looking essentialism, since it does not presuppose some preestablished and reified essence of the nation, nor some preordained hierarchical order amongst its members that must be retrieved; rather, it is based on the notion of a common culture, which increasingly coincides with national boundaries, that is undergoing continuous change. Such a fluid national culture gazes forward and is capable of accommodating foreign ideas and people to create its unique and “hybrid” culture. While it may not have been egalitarian in the past, it certainly can be reimagined as involving “deep, horizontal comradeship” (Anderson 1991, 7; see also Taylor 1997, 36).

Second, “nationalism” needs to be reconceptualized: Nationalism has often been defined mainly in relation to the outside world. “Polycentric” nationalism, in particular, was understood mainly as a political movement for “the attainment and maintenance of self-government and independence” of the nation (Smith 1983, 171). I shall call this the “external” goal of nationalism, and it retains its relevance even today due to “neo-colonialism” and “globalization,” as discussed above. However, the internal dynamic of a nation is also relevant for nationalism.³² If this inner dimension is ignored, the external goal, widely understood as the “only” goal, of nationalism can become self-defeating. Let me illustrate: Although members of a Third World nation are “homogeneous” to the extent that they share a common national culture and consciously recognize each other as belonging to the same nation (Gellner 1983, 7; Smith 1983, 175; see also Taylor 1997, 33), they, as members of any group, are divided along the lines of class and gender, and may disagree about how the political and economic resources should be redistributed. Historically, many Third World leaders, when confronted with such disagreements, have usurped the highly essentialized “nationalist” banner to repress, exclude, and punish the dissenters in the hope of promoting unconditional support for their often self-serving

³². Among “logical corollaries” of “polycentric” nationalism, Smith includes “securing fraternity and equality among co-nationals or citizens, by integrating them into a homogeneous unit” and “renewing the cultural and social fabric of the nation through sweeping institutional changes, to maintain international parity” (1983, 171).

projects. Ironically, however, this has fostered further dissension and polarity within the nation, which in turn has weakened the nation's international standing, often inviting economic, political, and even military external intervention.

If this account is plausible, nationalism must be conceived as involving dual goals: first, externally, it is to attain veritable self-determination of the nation, and the recognition and respect for the nation as an equal partner among nations in the international arena; and second, internally, it is to secure an inner environment in which the members of the nation can enjoy equality amongst themselves and work with one another to promote collective prosperity. I shall call this second goal the "internal" goal of nationalism. These two goals are not separate, but intimately connected: In order for a nation to gain substantial, and not merely formal, respect and recognition, it is imperative to pursue the second goal as well as the first; not only is it the most promising road toward gaining unattenuated loyalty of its members but also the respect and recognition of other nations which have already achieved relatively strong democracy of their own. Nationalism, understood in this way, involves dynamic negotiations among divergent members of the nation working toward substantial democracy. Disagreements among the co-members are normal and healthy elements of national life, and sincere efforts to democratize the political process are indispensable prerequisites for attaining the twin goals of nationalism. Therefore, contrary to a widespread misunderstanding of nationalism, totalizing essentialism, which perpetuates dominance and subordination, is *not* a necessary component of nationalism, and is in fact outright incompatible with nationalism, understood correctly.

Nationalism, however, even when reconceptualized in this way, may not overcome the charge that it may promote "balkanization" by emphasizing group differentiation and preventing the formation of alliances among opposing national groups. With regard to this, perhaps nationalism is guilty as charged. But even here, what is of paramount importance is the context in which the opposition arises. In every conflict two (or more) parties are involved, and although in some cases it may be difficult to decide who's the "transgressor" and who's the "transgressed," there may be clearer cases, as in the contest between the colonizer versus the colonized. Admittedly, even in such a clear-

cut case, both parties may justify their political movement under the banner of nationalism. However, the “ethnocentric” nationalism of colonizers, pursuing the subjugation of weaker nations, cannot be morally justified. On the other hand, people within the oppressed nation(s), faced with the bleak future of systemic oppression and exploitation, may legitimately opt for resistant movements rather than more “peaceful” alternatives, such as signing an unequal treaty with the aggressor to become its protectorate or colony or annexed territory. I believe Third World feminists should join such movements, while leaving open the possibility of cooperating with feminists in the colonizing nation who sympathize with the cause of the colonized nation’s independence.³³

One might object, however, that this hands-off approach to national confrontations might raise the specter of tribalism—a primitive, irrational, and even fanatic allegiance to one’s tribe—that will lead to hopeless fragmentation and conflict within and among nations. But if understood as “the commitment of individuals and groups to their own history, culture, and identity,” tribalism is “a permanent feature of human social life” (Walzer 1994, 81). As such, it will not just go away, especially if the “tribe” in question is under attack. What needs to be recognized is that all tribes deserve equal respect, and efforts must be made to prevent stronger nations from infringing on the sovereignty of weaker nations, the event most likely to provoke an uncontrollable escalation of “tribal” confrontations. But short of this ideal, the best way to deal with “polycentric” nationalisms would be to be supportive of the demand of oppressed people for national self-government wherever this demand occurs, provided that this is what the majority of the oppressed population wants.

³³. A related example might be the alliance formed between Korean feminists and Japanese feminists in the international coalition concerning the “comfort women” issue. Although it has been over fifty years since Korea gained its national independence from Japan, this issue had never been properly dealt with by the two governments. The Japanese government, in particular, tried to cover it up by destroying most of original documents pertaining to the issue, and, even when finally forced to acknowledge its involvement, the Japanese government has been adamant in its refusal to offer apologies or pay just compensation to the victims (see Totsuka 1993; International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism 2001a; 2001b; 2001c).

Although the ideal situation would be for the nation in question to have its own state, this may not always be possible. Almost all of the surface of the earth is already taken, and in almost all nations there are members of minority groups (Miller 1993, 12; Tamir 1993, 158). Therefore, forms of national self-determination other than secession—such as “border revision, federation, regional or functional autonomy, cultural pluralism”—should be given serious consideration in specific contexts (Walzer 1994, 80); and whatever form national self-determination takes, provisions must be made to respect the rights of minority members who find themselves trapped in its midst (Margalit and Raz 1990, 459). If these conditions are met, then I agree with Michael Walzer that we should

Let the people go who want to go. Many of them won't go all that far. And if there turn out to be political or economic disadvantages in their departure, they will find a way to re-establish connections. Indeed, if some new union—federation or confederation—is our goal, the best way to reach it is to abandon coercion and allow the tribes first to separate and then to negotiate their own voluntary and gradual, even if only partial, incorporation in a community of interest. (1994, 78)

V. The Possibility of Nationalist Feminism

If my preceding arguments are plausible, Third World feminists should not so readily discard nationalism on the basis of its historical and contingent failures but must actively engage in an ongoing dialogue with patriarchal nationalists in order to effect a change in the course of their nationalist discourse. In an age when cultural encounters have become everyday phenomena, national cultures are by no means static but are in a constant process of change. Behind these changes in a culture are agents who make the changes possible. We might call these agents “social critics” (Walzer 1987). Although they are in part the products of their culture, these agents are at the same time active participants in the transformation of their culture. Most of them do not profess to offer a radically new vision to the people; instead they offer “insider” critiques of varying

degrees of causticity, meant to ameliorate the given society. They are firmly entrenched in their own culture and have a certain affection and affinity with it, and are better suited to criticize their culture because of this very affinity (see Walzer 1987, 36).

Third World feminists are prime examples of “social critics.” Third World feminists are firmly ensconced in their own culture, not only in the banal sense that their identities are intricately tied to their culture, but also in the sense that their particular feminist agenda makes sense only within their own particular culture. They become aware of the necessity for feminist movement because they witness or experience particular sexist and misogynist practices and their detrimental effects on women; as far as these practices determine the feminist agenda, feminists navigate within the parameters set by their culture.

As “social critics,” Third World feminists must engage in a constant dialogue with androcentric nationalists, taking an active part in the transformation of their own national culture, collaborating with them when national dignity is at stake, but at the same time resisting patriarchal constructions of nationalist discourses.³⁴ The process of engaging in a dialogue with androcentric nationalists is going to be precarious, if not outright dangerous. But the attempt must be made, however frustrating. For Third World feminists to leave nationalist discourses solely in the hands of patriarchal nationalists is to abandon an important legacy that is rightfully theirs. Further, Third World feminists have an extremely high stake in how the national culture turns out; by letting the national culture be dominated by patriarchal nationalists, they risk losing whatever gains they’ve made with respect to gender equality and leaving an intolerably misogynist legacy for the next generation.

³⁴. This is where maintaining transnational ties with feminists of other nations, both Third World and First World, becomes important.

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Abstract

Despite historically intimate collaborations between Third World feminists and nationalists in their pursuit of national independence, many contemporary Third World feminists express skepticism with respect to nationalism; and rightly so since they have been consistently exploited by patriarchal nationalists. However, the appeal of nationalism lingers for Third World citizens even in this allegedly post-colonial era due to its deep roots in human psychology. Further, the phenomena of “globalization” gave rise to a state of inequality in which Third World citizens continue to be disproportionately disadvantaged both politically and economically; Third World women, usually occupying the bottom rung of the social ladder, suffer more in such a state. In this paper, I provide a philosophical reconceptualization of nationalism so that it can promote not only substantive equality between the citizens of advanced nations and the Third World, but also the Third World feminist goal of advancing the status of Third World women.

Abstract (less than 75 words)

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