

Abigail J. Stewart
Shelly Grabe
Wang Zheng

Women's Movement Activism in Authoritarian States: Lessons from the Global Feminisms Project

Although structural inequities related to patriarchy have long driven women's movement activists and feminist scholarship throughout the world, transnational feminism is a more recent paradigm that emerged in response to the disproportionate increase in women's rights violations related to the restructuring of the global economy in the 1980s and 1990s (Alexander and Mohanty 1997; Naples and Desai 2002; Basu 2016). In the context of the neoliberal shifts in this time period—free-trade agreements, structural adjustment of social welfare policies, increased international activity by multinational corporations, and the deregulation of markets—women suffered exacerbated risk of human rights violations (Naples and Desai 2002; Moghadam 2005). As a result, the 1990s was a period of political and economic transformation that led to the growth of transnational women's social movements linked through subregional, regional, and international organizations, and by individuals who collaborated to call attention to unequal rights and mechanisms through which female subordination was sustained and reproduced (Kabeer 1994; Keck and Sikkink 1999; Razavi 2003).

Importantly, the mobilization behind transnational feminism is not rooted in the notion that women have universal experiences. Instead, transnational feminism offers a critique of how neoliberal economic policies and governments—despite initially supporting the growth of transnational connections among feminists—create structural conditions that limit women's rights in their respective locations (Moghadam 2005). The term “transnational feminism,” therefore, points to a multiplicity of feminisms across the world as well as a movement to politicize women's issues beyond the state (Rice and

We are grateful to the women's movement activists cited in this study for their candor and courage. We are also grateful to the Global Feminisms Project community of faculty, staff, and students who collectively ensured that these accounts are available for analysis. Finally, we are grateful to the University of Michigan Library's Deep Blue archive program and the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts Technology Services for technical support with the archive and the website.

Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, volume 49, number 2, Winter 2024.

© 2023 The University of Chicago. All rights reserved. Published by The University of Chicago Press.

<https://doi.org/10.1086/726643>

Grabe 2019). In fact, many distinctive women's social movements share an approach that situates feminist action at the intersection of local and global processes (Naples and Desai 2002; Wang and Zhang 2010; Basu 2016). As such, a vital mechanism in this approach is the linking of movement actors and organizations across borders in a manner that increases the transnational flow of ideas and funding in support of local efforts to actualize women's human rights (Sundstrom 2006; Plantan 2020). One manifestation of this is the use of UN discourse surrounding women's rights. In the 1990s, many feminist activists shifted their orientations away from the state, instead making claims based on human rights by appealing to global institutions like the United Nations (Grabe 2016). More specifically, political mobilization within transnational women's movements built on the 1985 and 1995 UN World Conferences on Women in Nairobi and Beijing, which created arenas in which women could take advantage of legislative and policy-making opportunities to advance women's rights (Grabe 2016). This is just one example; feminist scholars have documented how transnational networks and organizations increased knowledge and funding crossing borders in a manner that is critical to influencing policies, pressuring governments, and exchanging information and ideas related to women's rights (Keck and Sikkink 1999; Chhachhi and Abeyssekera 2015).

Three of the countries that had rising women's movements in this transnational context were China, Nicaragua, and Russia. Organized feminist activism in each country rose in the 1990s and appeared to reach a peak in the 2000s. For example, in China feminists organized women's NGOs in collaboration with the official Women's Federation to address violence, legal rights, and media representation in the context of preparing for the Fourth World Conference on Women (Wang and Zhang 2010). In Nicaragua, national feminist conferences started in 1992, and substantive legislation and policy changes surrounding violence and property rights were enacted in the 1990s (Grabe 2016), and in Russia, a range of organizations emerged in the post-Soviet period.¹ Although the rise in feminist action within these three countries paralleled women's social movement mobilization elsewhere, one feature that distinguishes feminist activism in China, Nicaragua, and Russia is that the political context in each country took a demonstrably repressive turn during and after the 2000s, making feminist action dangerous.

Although we are witnessing a general decline in democracy globally, China, Nicaragua, and Russia are noted for antidemocratic extremes (Shapiro and

¹ See Racioppi and See (1997), Sperling (1999), Kay (2000), Sundstrom (2006), and Johnson and Saarinen (2013).

Diamond 2017; Tisdall 2021). In Russia, the 2000s brought the consolidation of a more restrictive regime under Vladimir Putin, president from 2000 to 2008, prime minister from 2008 to 2012, and then president again in 2012 (Johnson and Saarinen 2013). In Nicaragua, the authoritarian influence of Daniel Ortega began in the mid-1990s when he was in the National Assembly and when he was elected president in 2007 (Grabe 2016). Finally, in China, a rapidly deteriorating political environment has become a hallmark of Xi Jinping's reign since he became president in 2013 (Wang 2021). All three of these leaders have used their presidential positions to change or abolish term limits once appointed, to secure their authoritarian rule or dictatorship (Buckley and Bradsher 2018; Trudolyubov 2020; Roth 2021).

Moreover, none of these three leaders rules in isolation. In fact, they have formed a global alliance. During their overlapping time in power, Presidents Xi, Ortega, and Putin have been supported by their alliances with each other (see Plantan 2020 re Xi and Putin). In 2019 Chinese President Xi said of Putin, "In the past six years, we have met nearly 30 times. Russia is the country that I have visited the most times, and President Putin is my best friend and colleague" (*BBC News* 2019). In early February 2022, Presidents Xi and Putin released a sweeping five thousand-word statement that reaffirmed their no-limits relationship (Hale 2022). On May 24, 2022, China and Russia held their first joint military exercise since Russia's invasion of Ukraine (Wong 2022). Similarly, unlike the majority of countries around the world, which have spoken out against Ortega's dictatorship in Nicaragua, the Russian government both recognized Ortega's victory and gave him its support to carry out his agenda (Herrera 2022). Ortega has also publicly expressed total support for Putin's invasion of Ukraine (*Confidential* 2022) and, in 2021, strategically broke diplomatic ties with Taiwan to demonstrate allegiance with China. In return, Chinese President Xi sent a special envoy to attend the inauguration ceremony following Ortega's sham election for a new presidential term in 2021. Delegates in the envoy communicated a willingness to work with Nicaragua to promote practical cooperation and multilateral coordination (*Huaxia* 2022). The alliances between these leaders, and their attempts to crush dissent, have gained international attention (e.g., *BBC News* 2019; Tisdall 2021).

In the three countries under investigation, the leaders' rise to power included not only general autocratic government but gradually increasing repression of women's movement activism over time. Xi, Ortega, and Putin have relied on similar state actions to suppress challenges from social movement activists, including feminists. Thus, feminism in these sites has a particular story to tell. Although the evolution of feminism in each country

can be interpreted within idiosyncratic histories embedded in particular sociocultural histories (e.g., socialist revolution, communism), there are also similarities in the repressive tactics used by these state governments. Women's movement activists have repeatedly adapted to changes in the authoritarian climate in the face of increasing constriction of the space in which they can operate (Gago and Malo 2020; Plantan 2020), often in the context of both backlash and the resurfacing of "traditional" conservative values (O'Brien and Walsh 2020), both culturally and with the direct support of the state. In the same way, state actors have adapted their tactics over time in order to offer a positive image of their country internationally, sometimes seeming to ignore or support women's movement activism when it poses no particular threat to them.² Elizabeth Plantan (2022) has argued that autocratic regimes balance the benefits (such as activists providing services that the state doesn't have to, as in the case of shelters for women facing domestic violence) and risks of movement activism and therefore adopt policies of selective repression, co-optation, encouragement, and neglect at different times and vis-à-vis different movements and organizations. Examining accounts from feminist activists in these countries allows us to analyze activists' dynamic responses to these repressive efforts and their continual redirection of energy as they pursue improved lives for women.

We approach this research topic from a very particular standpoint: the perspective of activists involved in transnational women's movements in three countries currently led by dictators. The choice of these three countries was determined in part by the demonstrated alliance between the dictators but also based on the authors' involvement as transnational scholars. The political mobilization and movement activity behind transnational feminism reflects diverse modes of resistance, operating from different strategic spaces within society—one of which is academia (Montenegro, Capdevila, and Figueroa Sarriera 2011). In the current project, all three authors have worked as transnational feminist scholars within women's movements to use our voices and writing to contribute to the generative flow of ideas across international borders. Although our practice of transnational feminism extends beyond this project and includes decades of scholar activism, the common ground for us is the Global Feminisms Project. The Global Feminisms Project is a transnational feminist scholarship initiative that has conducted, examined, and archived oral history interviews with women involved in feminist activism, social movements, and women's studies departments in ten different

² See Taylor (2015), Tripp (2019), Nugent (2020), Bjarnegård and Zetterberg (2022), and Donno, Fox, and Kaasik (2022).

countries (Lal et al. 2010; Stewart, Lal, and McGuire 2011).³ In keeping with transnational feminism's aim to promote cross-border knowledge, the Global Feminisms Project publicly archives video and transcript forms of the interviews conducted in multiple languages, as well as translations in English, and allows open access to the material for the development of scholar-activism, teaching, and research.

The oral history interviews collected through the Global Feminisms Project provide the material, from the perspective of the activists themselves, that we analyze to understand how state actions have affected feminist activism over time. By analyzing these activists' accounts, we not only identified common patterns in their relations with these three quite different states over time but also show both how the activists adapted and changed their approaches in response to state action and how the existential threat to feminist activism has become increasingly powerful over time. We believe this account of the suppression of feminist activism offers valuable lessons not only as authoritarian regimes increase in the context of globalization but as apparently democratic states take similar actions to those adopted by these autocratic states: for example, encouraging centralized media, outlawing forms of public association and dissent, and limiting the availability of visas enabling cross-national exchanges among scholars and activists. In both contexts, women's movements seek ways to work around or directly oppose these state actions, with varying degrees of success.

Research approach

To understand how these three states evolved from enabling or allowing some level of feminist action to strategic repression a decade later, we draw on oral history interviews with feminist activists in China, Nicaragua, and Russia that were recorded as part of the Global Feminisms Project. Participation in the Global Feminisms Project was a transnational feminist practice itself, as it enabled activists around the world to learn from each others' interviews and allowed individuals to communicate their views to an international audience. The participants were selected by scholar-activists or movement leaders within each country to maximize inclusion of individuals from a range of settings (e.g., organizational, occupational), regions, ethnic

³ The countries under study are Brazil, China, Germany, India, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Perú, Poland, Russia, and the United States (<https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/globalfeminisms/>). The archive is dynamic; additional country sites are added as interviews are completed, transcribed, and translated. Currently interviews from Tanzania, Japan, and Italy are being processed for inclusion.

backgrounds, and generations. Inclusion was not based on interviewees' personal identification with the term "feminist" but on the interviewee's history of work on behalf of women.

Ten interviews were conducted in China in the early 2000s and another five in 2019. Twelve interviews were conducted in Nicaragua in 2011 and ten in Russia in 2016. Across countries, the interviewees were born mostly in the 1950s and 1960s, though in China a couple of the initial interviewees were born in the 1930s; the second set of interviewees in China included women born in the 1980s. The same general interviewing protocol was used in each country, based on a set of core questions arrived at collaboratively by the first four country sites involved in the Global Feminisms Project (China, India, Poland, and the United States): these related to the background of the activists' lives, their work and its relation to feminism and the women's movement, and their connections to international forms of activism. The interviews lasted between one and one and a half hours and were videotaped, transcribed, and translated. All quotations from interviews in the subsequent analysis are drawn from the interviews with named interviewees in the online archive of the Global Feminisms Project.⁴

As authors, we have noted that we write from the perspective of transnational feminist scholars and interdisciplinary academic feminism rather than as area specialists. Moreover, we are all situated in US institutions of higher education. Two of us have been active members of the Women's and Gender Studies Department at the University of Michigan for many years and were participants in the creation of the Global Feminisms Project archive in 2002. Abigail Stewart is a white American with a long history of activism aimed at increasing diversity and inclusion in academia, with a focus on women's movement activism both in the United States and globally. She was one of the founding scholars behind the Global Feminisms Project and is the overall project director. Shelly Grabe is a white American scholar-activist at the University of California who has worked in partnership with transnational women's movements in Nicaragua, Perú, and Tanzania that center the activism of women working on human rights. She was the key liaison for two of the country sites in the Global Feminisms Project: Nicaragua and Perú. Wang Zheng is a Chinese academic feminist activist and has experience straddling three audiences: US-based China scholars, Anglophone feminist scholars, and China-based scholars in the relatively new field of women's studies in China. She has built a transnational network of feminist scholars of China through her work on feminism published in Chinese and

⁴ Interviewees are listed on the website both in alphabetical order by surname and within each country site.

English, her editorial and translation projects, and her gender studies training programs for university faculty and graduate students in China. All three authors remain in contact with our feminist counterparts in other countries—both those under study here and others.

Women's movement activists in each of the three countries

Nicaragua

The Movimiento Autónomo de Mujeres (Women's Autonomous Movement) in Nicaragua was born, in part, of the Sandinista Revolution (1979–90). In that context, many women engaged in a struggle for social justice by joining efforts with the Sandinistas to overthrow the Somoza dictatorship (Kampwirth 2004). Although the Sandinistas mobilized thousands of women in support of the struggle, the male-dominated party imposed a singular focus in defense of the revolution that restricted women's organizing and silenced women's concerns surrounding gender inequality. As a result, a fledgling women's movement was organized, as feminists began to identify the patriarchal culture on the Left as part of their problem and declared the need for a new way of doing politics that would be more inclusive of women. A catalytic event in 1990 created an opportunity the women were seeking (Grabe 2016). In the 1990 presidential election, the leftist party was voted out of office and replaced with an administration that promoted neoliberal policies that further threatened gender justice. Feminist women in Nicaragua seized this moment to establish autonomy from all political parties and mobilize a national meeting (the “we are 52 percent” festival) where they publicly denounced the violation of women's social and economic rights in Nicaragua. This initiative was followed by the first National Feminist Conference in 1992, with the title “Diverse but United,” to declare the autonomy and political independence of the women's organizations that were mobilizing after the election. By 1992, several women's organizations had created a network under the umbrella name Movimiento Autónomo de Mujeres to represent one of the largest, most diverse, and most autonomous feminist movements in Latin America (Kampwirth 1996).

The twelve women interviewed about Nicaragua's women's movement for the Global Feminisms Project in 2011 were former guerilla commanders from the revolution, journalists, grassroots organizers, labor union organizers, and a Nobel Peace Prize nominee. They were interviewed only months before Ortega's second “election” in his current post. During the Sandinista Revolution, Ortega was a guerilla commander and served as the leader of Nicaragua, first through a provisional reconstruction government (1979–85);

then, after using the power of the press, police, and Supreme Electoral Council against a fractured opposition, he became president from 1985–90 (Kinzer 1991). Ortega was voted out of office after one term but continued to hold considerable power through the Sandinista Assembly. He resumed his position as president in 2007, and he continues to hold office through a series of anti-democratic measures ensuring that his opposition cannot unseat him. Among those who have been targeted by Ortega are feminist activists. Many of the women interviewed for the Global Feminisms Project discussed how the relationship between the state and feminist activism evolved in the early 1990s and led first to the development of grassroots women’s movement activism and then the current state of its repression.

Russia

We interviewed ten women, all of them scholars, about Russian women’s movement scholarship and activism for the Global Feminisms Project in 2016. A high level of education has been observed in previous studies of women’s movement activists in Russia, reflecting both the slow development of women’s movement activism in the context of the conservative and essentialist thinking about gender that was pervasive in Russia in the post-Soviet period and a relative failure of outreach to less educated women (see, e.g., Racioppi and See 1997; Kay 2000; Sundstrom 2006). All of the interviewees have been activists in academic feminism, including women’s and gender studies. One of the ten (Liubov Shtyleva) had a significant activist history beyond academia—in Communist youth activism in the early 1990s. All but one (Natal’ia Rimashevskaja, born in 1932) were born after World War II, with only one born after 1960 (Elena Iarskaia-Smirnova, 1963). Many discussed the worsening relationship between the state and feminist ideology, women’s rights, and feminist activism between 1990 and 2016. There is extensive evidence in the interviews of both an early period, in which the transnational flow of ideas and funding supported intense growth in women’s movement activism, as well as a later period, in which the state acted to prevent this flow.

Several of the Russian interviewees commented on the complex impact of Soviet gender ideology both in the broader post-Soviet society and in their own development. Olga Voronina, professor of philosophy at the Russian Academy of Sciences and long-term director of the Moscow Center for Gender Studies, referred to “Soviet official drivel” about women that focused on “the combination of two roles, the production role and the family role.” Another scholar-activist, Liubov Shtyleva, focused on girls’ experience in Russian education and gender equality. Others described the difficulties they had in raising new issues in the late 1980s, emphasizing that this period

actually made the women's situation even worse than it had been earlier. For example, Natal'ia Pushkareva, professor, chief research fellow, head of the Women's and Gender Studies Department at the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology at the Russian Academy of Sciences, and a founder of women's studies in Russia, pointed out the stifling situation for women's advocacy in the Soviet period and through the 1980s. She and many others outlined the new opportunities and possibilities that came during the 1990s. Thus, for example, legal scholar Elena Kochkina provided an overview of the complex features of the 1993 constitution, which guaranteed "equality between men and women" yet decriminalized sexual harassment. Despite these contradictions in gender ideology (see Rivkin-Fish 2013; Fish 2017), the 1990s ushered in a period in which advocacy for women's issues flourished in the context of an increased flow of ideas, information, and—importantly—funding of women's advocacy organizations between Russia and the West, as has been well documented for the early part of this period.⁵

China

Two groups of Chinese feminists were interviewed for the Global Feminism Project at different times. The first group of ten was interviewed between 2002 and 2005, the second group of five in 2019. The gap of over fourteen years offers a perspective on differences in feminist activism over time, in the context of a drastically changed political setting that crucially determined different forms, content, and strategies between the two groups of feminists. The first group consisted of feminists born from the early 1930s to the early 1960s with diverse life experiences but either urban academics or officials with institutional resources, except for the youngest of this group, Ge Youli, who worked for a transnational NGO. At the time, academic institutions were all run by the state, so nine feminists in the first group were situated within the official system. Four of the feminists in the second group were born in the 1980s, and though they were also urban-based educated women, they did not work in state-run institutions at the time of the interview, a fact reflecting China's rapid economic privatization, which produced 250 million citizens working in the private sector by 2015 (Xing 2015). The fifth is a professor at a state-sponsored university and is about ten years older than the others.

These two groups of feminists are defined by the different historical contexts in which their activism developed—specifically, the contexts of state policies enabling and then disabling the formation and flourishing of non-governmental organizations. Because of the intense criticism of the Chinese

⁵ See Racioppi and See (1997), Sperling (1999), Kay (2000), and Sundstrom (2006).

state's brutal response to student protest in 1989, Communist Party leaders looked for a path toward acceptance from other governments and transnational corporations. Hosting the UN-sponsored Fourth World Conference on Women provided China with an opportunity to recast its image. Moreover, the conference itself included an NGO forum, bringing together women's organizations from the broad international community. Feminists in different countries planned for these two programs for decades in collaboration with the United Nations. Chinese feminists were quick to make use of this chance to gain public recognition for their activities both internally and internationally. The official Chinese slogans "connecting the rails with the world" and "connecting the rails with the international women's movement" emphasized China's openness, helping to legitimize feminist activism in the years following the Fourth World Conference on Women.⁶ The first group of ten Chinese interviewees all led women's NGOs in this political context.

The second group of interviewees, however, narrated not only different strategies and forms of activism that utilized the newly available Internet but also their frustrations in a drastically changed political climate when Xi rapidly closed public spaces to NGO activities out of his fear of "the Color Revolution."⁷ The younger cohort of college-educated feminists entered the public arena in 2012, demanding gender equality in a market economy permeated by blatantly sexist practices and gender discrimination. These young feminists were students of the academic feminists in the Fourth World Conference cohort or embraced feminism when exposed to the rising discourse produced by feminist academic activists in the post-World Conference era. Lacking institutional resources but living in the age of the Internet, they utilized social media to amplify their voices. Young feminists adopted performative actions protesting sexual harassment on Shanghai subways in 2012 that instantly went viral via the Internet. This successful strategy was quickly adopted by young feminists in multiple locations who boldly and creatively staged online protests against various violations of women's rights, ranging from domestic violence, to gender discrimination in education and employment, to sexual harassment in schools, colleges, and work sites. China interviewees Wei Tingting and Duan Jiling narrate their experiences in such influential actions.

⁶ This language relies on the metaphorical connecting of train tracks or rails as a crucial step in making connections.

⁷ This term originally referred to protest movements that took place in post-Soviet Eurasia during the early twentieth century, as well as other revolutions, such as those in the Middle East and South America in the period from the late 1980s to the 2020s.

Just as more and more young women were attracted to feminist activism, in 2015 the regime began to suppress feminist NGO activism openly, a move marked by the detention of the “Feminist Five” in the year when the UN commemorated the twentieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women (Wang 2015, 2021). The deteriorating political situation has persisted. As of this writing, several of the interviewees in this group have been repeatedly interrogated by the police, and one was secretly imprisoned without trial for over a year. In most cases, they have been unable to continue feminist activities that were allowed several years earlier, though they constantly explore new forms of feminist engagement in a precarious political environment. The arbitrariness of the authoritarian state, manifested by the Xi regime, has created an environment of shifting peril for feminist activism, as the contrast between the two groups of Chinese interviews demonstrates.

Identifying patterns across three cases

In multiple readings of the interviews, we identified three mechanisms of repression that were consistently described by interviewees across the sites: first, controlling the transnational flow of feminist ideas and women’s movement strategies, as well as international funding; second, centralized control of the media; and finally, criminalization of dissent. We focus our analysis on the first mechanism primarily because transnational feminism itself is defined by the flow of ideas and resources and therefore is essential to the flourishing of women’s movement activism in all three contexts. (We note, of course, that it is also sometimes possible for internal funding and internal demands to lead to progress on issues and to political mobilization; see, e.g., Gago and Sztulwark 2016; Ellsberg, Quintanilla, and Ugarte 2022). We view the remaining two mechanisms, control of the media and criminalization of dissent, as serving the ultimate goal of choking off of opportunities for the flow or exchange of ideas and funding. In other words, these three mechanisms were not discrete but worked in concert to threaten transnational collaboration by restricting communication and information via control of the media and by criminalizing dissent so it became illegal to engage in these actions in the first place.

Controlling the transnational flow of ideas and funding

During the 1990s, women’s movement activists in all three countries outlined the powerful impact of cross-national exchanges of ideas among activists in local, regional, and international settings. They also pointed to the value of international funding for women’s movement activities, even as

they also noted its sometimes divisive and problematic effects. In the later period, activists reported the choking off of international funding, and the concomitant suppression of the international flow of ideas, as having equally powerful effects on the women's movements in all three national contexts.

Nicaragua

Virtually all of the women interviewed in Nicaragua gave examples of the flowering of women's movement activism in the 1990s, both in terms of the flow of ideas across international borders (including at international conferences such as Beijing 1995) and the flow of international funding for feminist projects, from locations in the United States, Sweden, Austria, and elsewhere (see Ellsberg 2021 for a similar account). They relied on these processes because in the 1990s government-sponsored social services were withdrawn, and virtually every sector of society was privatized. Moreover, as services were withdrawn and women's rights were at risk, activists relied on international networks to make local progress. For example, Violeta Delgado discussed how feminist activists in Nicaragua pressured the government to recognize the issues laid out in the Inter-American Convention against Violence against Women in the mid-1990s, which underscored that violence against women was a crime. As a result of these activist efforts, Nicaragua ratified this convention in 1994, and the government was pressured to pass its own law punishing domestic violence in 1996.

Later, in the 2000s, the environment for these exchanges changed, though they did not disappear. Several interviewees outlined attacks on women's movement organizations. For example, lawyer Juanita Jimenez described the government's strategy of accusing activists of "money laundering, or *triangulación de fondos*, and those are crimes that belong to organized crime" based on their receipt of international funding. She also outlined that she "had to confront the process of arbitrary search warrants at the offices of the autonomous movement. I mean, we had a search warrant that was conducted with a—well, a police display, as if they were searching the house of a drug trafficker." Similarly, Sofía Montenegro, a journalist who held an influential position with the official Sandinista newspaper beginning in 1979, reported:

So we have an alliance, a political alliance between the women's movement and journalists to fund the women's agenda . . . this is funds we were offered by international cooperation in which you can apply with a project. And this basket fund, which was from the Europeans—eh, Sweden, whatever, all European countries have this basket fund for promoting the rights of citizens and civilian society. So the women's movement applied to this fund and they won the grant, they got the

grant, but since they have no formal organization, they have to make an alliance with someone who has an account, an administration and everything for the commitment to administer for them the money, so that's what we did. So that, which is perfectly clear and legal in this country, they used that to accuse us, me in particular, of laundering money like if it was *narcos*, drug money. And it was officially from countries that have a relationship, and is part of the legal thing, with the government of Nicaragua.

She concluded, "they tried to invent a case to penalize us and close the center and close the media but at the same time shut down the women's movement." In 2020, several years after the last Global Feminisms Project interview in Nicaragua, the National Assembly passed a new "Law for the Regulation of Foreign Agents." This required any organization receiving foreign funding, such as women's movement NGOs, to register as a foreign agent (*Associated Press* 2020). This law effectively prevents external funding of women's movement activism in Nicaragua.

Russia

Many Russian interviewees described the powerful impact of the flow of international ideas and funding on their own development, and the development of feminist ideas and activism, including the establishment of women's and gender studies in Russia.⁸ For example, economist and demographer Natal'ia Rimashevskaja said, "There was a huge influx of people from the West; and . . . funding came from there. And it did not go to waste! So much has been done. . . . Studies were conducted, discussions, even dissertations. . . . So many women advocacy centers were organized then."

Ol'ga Voronina focused on scholars' ability to travel and participate in conferences, including the Beijing Conference in 1995, while Liubov Shtyleva outlined the impact of support from both the Global Fund for Women and the Soros Foundation. In addition, Shtyleva said, "The Canadian Foundation for . . . Gender Equality also greatly assisted us. . . . With their support we conducted a remarkable educational project . . . to transfer a common understanding of strategies of gender and gender-based approaches to pedagogy. . . . With their help we developed violence prevention and assistance programs for women and children who were victims of sexual trafficking."

⁸ See Sperling, Ferree, and Risman (2001), Hrycak (2002), Hemment (2004), Sundstrom (2006), Johnson and Saarinen (2013), Hemment and Uspenskaya (2020), Rossman (2021), and Sundstrom, Henry, and Sperling (2022).

Other interviewees mentioned German, Swedish, and Norwegian support as crucial, as well as the support of the MacArthur and Ford Foundations. For example, sociology professor Elena Iarskaia-Smirnova recalled,

I remember that Elena Kochkina worked in the Women's Program at the Soros Fund, the Open Society Institute, and she created an inter-regional project "One Hundred Women's Stories" . . . and my colleagues and I have been collecting stories from women with disabilities. . . . The Moscow Center for Gender Studies, MCGS, also invited us to participate in research projects. But, for the most part, we did our own research. We, of course, had the MacArthur Foundation, which supported us tremendously in our research on gender issues in social policy. We always studied social policy at the micro and macro level. And we always included gender in the analyses.

Nearly all of the Russian interviewees outlined the draconian state measures that, according to their accounts, began earlier in the 2000s, worsened in 2008, and took on great force after Putin regained power in 2012. These measures not only removed funding from the West but also changed the environment for the expression of ideas, participation in government, and engagement in feminist activism.⁹ Voronina described how the changes affected the Moscow Center for Gender Studies as a "a public organization," which, in the first half of the '90s, had "no need to register." She flagged 2009 as the year when serious difficulties began, suggesting that a focus on feminist issues was more politically dangerous. The foundations "left Russia" in 2010–11, she said, because new policies assumed that "all organizations that received foreign funding, and were engaged in what they considered to be political activities, were foreign agents [given the alliance between dictators, this was quite possibly the template for both China's 2017 and Nicaragua's 2020 legislation]. For example, social policy work was considered politics." She pointed out that not only did foreign funding stop, but it became very difficult to maintain ties with international colleagues and institutions. She noted, though, that the problem was not so much the funding per se but the broader political environment: "In the West, women's organizations are full participants in civic society and in some places even in the political process. So no one would think to call them foreign spies or agents because they receive foreign funding."

Elena Kochkina suggested that, "By 2008, the political setbacks had started. It was a period when political relationships with the West began to cool down;

⁹ See Johnson and Saarinen (2013), Johnson (2016), Sundstrom, Sperling, and Sayoglu (2019), and Plantan (2020).

and at that time ‘witch hunts’ began. Yes, it started in 2006; and . . . the ‘witch hunts’ possibly started sometime in 2004. Because in 2004 masked men came to Ozerkovskaia Naberezhnaia [the riverbank where the Moscow office for the Open Society Soros Fund was located]. And after that raid at the Soros Fund office, we closed the women’s program.”

Difficulties continued; in 2014 the Moscow Center for Gender Studies was closed as a legal entity, and as of 2016, Kochkina pointed out: “We’re living through a time of political and legal assaults on independent gender centers; many of them are now closed. Two of them are being charged as agents of foreign—I mean first of all the Center for Social and Gender Policy in Saratov, in Petersburg. And Olga Shnyrova’s Ivanovo Center for Gender Research.”

Many described the impact of these state actions on their own feminist organizations. For example, Iarskaia-Smirnova discussed the fact that not only did her Center for Research on Gender suffer, but their journal was “undermined” as a result of the law, and in 2014 they were forced to close their doors and shut down their website because “hav[ing] schools and seminars—to the prosecutor this was politics.”

In short, although individual activists pointed to different precise timing (as the state constraints on funding and surveillance of organizations changed form), all agreed that the net impact by 2016 was that it was difficult for feminist organizations to continue to operate in Russia. It is important to note that during this period (from the mid-2000s to 2016), all of these feminist activists attempted to continue working on these issues and indeed continued to work on behalf of women’s issues in ways that were still possible. However, they were increasingly constrained in what was possible as avenues of action were closed or their danger increased. Prohibitions on external funding sources did not result in new internal sources, and specific actions were taken that appeared to involve, in Kochkina’s words, “political and legal assaults on independent gender centers” in addition to the more general political climate created by an increasingly state-controlled media and increased efforts to criminalize activism.

China

As was true in Nicaragua and Russia, in China an early period of flourishing NGOs was supported and enhanced by the flow of international donors, including the Ford Foundation and Oxfam. This intense period of organized feminist activity outside the government was enabled by transnational feminist program staff who supported programs proposed by Chinese NGOs. Some of these activities were national or regional, creating new networks of feminist activists (e.g., the Anti-Domestic Violence Network, the Gender and Development Network, and the Women’s and Gender Studies Curriculum

Development Network). While NGOs were rapidly growing and gaining influence, it was difficult to imagine how vulnerable their activities would be in a different political moment.

During this period, feminist NGOs and the All-China Women's Federation (ACWF, which is the official organization offering government-sanctioned support to women) collaborated. The ACWF operated much like a branch of the Chinese government, with vast organizational reach into every region in the country, and even neighborhoods. Because of this collaboration, the feminists affiliated with NGOs were able to tap into state resources and political power. For example, Chen Mingxia, one of the early interviewees and a legal scholar operating from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of Law, was a founder of the Anti-Domestic Violence Network. She explained how their collaboration with ACWF worked: "We have made it very clear to the All-China Women's Federation that we are not out to compete with the Women's Federation for work; we want to help the Women's Federation with their work. . . . But we have one point that we are very clear about. We may ask them to be a consultant or ask them for other support, but we still must maintain our principle of independence . . . based on our ideas—feminism or the idea of gender mainstreaming—together we can collaborate in many aspects. Therefore, we have really good relations with the local Women's Federations." These good relations were made possible not only because of the state's leniency toward NGOs but also because that cohort of feminist NGO leaders were mostly academics or officials located in prestigious state-run institutions, as Chen acknowledged.

In her 2002 interview, Ge Youli, the youngest of the first group, gave a sober and astute assessment of the state of the Chinese feminist NGO movement: "The fact that we can still exist exactly proves that we are very weak. Mainstream culture does not even consider us as a threat. If it feels threatened, it could easily eliminate us. I believe that our groups are no rival to the mainstream culture in a confrontation. Feminism here is fragile, small, and weak. But it is very progressive and has a strong vitality." Ge's usage of "mainstream society" and "mainstream culture" are euphemisms for the state, which controls everything "mainstream." Ge's clear-eyed prediction became a reality in the second decade following the Beijing Conference.

Alarmed by the rapid development of NGOs funded by international donors and paranoid about international protest activities known as the "color revolution," in 2005 the Chinese Communist Party began to suppress NGOs. The political trend of the "mainstream culture" shifted from "connecting the rails with international standards" to "warning against overseas hostile forces." One social movement after another was either sabotaged or suppressed on charges of colluding with "foreign hostile forces." International

donors were either strictly regulated and monitored by the state or simply driven out of China.

State control of the media

The second mechanism for which we found ample evidence was the centralized control of the media. As our data illustrate, efforts to control media helped prevent the transnational flow of funding and ideas, underscoring how the mechanisms used to crush dissent were not discrete. We draw on the Nicaraguan interviews for accounts of the specific impact of state control of the media on women's movement activism. Parallel comments were made in interviews in both Russia and China, where state control of the media has been extensively documented, along with its effects on women's movement activism (see, e.g., Pomerantzev 2014; Sundstrom, Sperling, and Sayoglu 2019 for Russia; Franceschini and Loubere 2021 for China). Many of the Nicaraguan interviewees described examples in which Ortega censored access to information through control of the media. Sofia Montenegro was fired for her interest in publishing dissenting views in 1994. She went on to cofound and direct the Center for Communication Research, an NGO that focused on communication, democracy, and public opinion. In her interview she detailed Ortega's dismantling of the newspaper and attempts to shut down the media organization founded to replace it, and foreshadowed the current political repression being experienced in Nicaragua. In detailing the need for a newspaper that could appeal to a postconflict society and a country with an emerging women's movement, Montenegro described a fight with Ortega in the early 1990s in which he "forbade her to talk, to write about women's issues." Moreover, "he took over the paper, he took over the Front, he took over everything."

Violeta Delgado made similar observations related to governmental attempts to control media; she detailed concerns about how Ortega was controlling the votes and media in anticipation of the upcoming "election." She pointed out that Ortega owned four television channels run by his children, which served as propaganda stations. Moreover, she noted it was commonly understood that the stations Ortega did not own censored their material for fear of retaliation. She finished her interview by saying, "This is a family, it's Ortega, his wife and his children, who make the decisions. It's a dynasty."

Criminalization of dissent and activism

The third mechanism that activists discussed with striking consistency across sites was the criminalization of dissent. Again, the data evidence how the

mechanisms used did not operate independently. Specifically, criminalizing dissent made it illegal to engage in the kind of action that generated a flow of ideas and resources, thereby putting a stranglehold on the transnational efforts vital to progress. Here we draw particularly on accounts by the young Chinese activists, though the criminalization of dissent was also an important factor affecting women's movement organizations and activists in Russia and Nicaragua. In fact, the public crackdown on the feminist punk rock and performance band Pussy Riot and the subsequent show trial exemplifies this issue in Russia (Pussy Riot 2013; Gessen 2014; Sundstrom, Sperling, and Sayoglu 2019), as does the creation of the 2012 Russian Law of Foreign Agents criminalizing certain kinds of NGO reliance on international funding, which may have been the basis for similar laws in China and Nicaragua.

We have outlined the bold public actions of women's movement activists in China beginning in 2012. But a strong hostile signal from the state eventually came in 2015 when a group of feminists was detained for the "crime" of trying to post anti-sexual-harassment stickers on public transportation as part of their commemoration of International Women's Day. In her interview Wei Tingting, one of the "Feminist Five," gave a vivid account of her experience in the detention center and how the global feminist community's uproar eventually resulted in their release. The detention of these young feminists revealed that feminist NGO activism was no longer in a safe zone and any action with a national scope looked highly threatening to the national security.

In an official 2017 speech, ACWF leader Song Xiuyan deployed the incriminating language previously used by the national security branch: "Western hostile forces are stepping up their Westernization and dividing strategy against China. They attack the Marxist theory on women and our fundamental state policy of equality between men and women, and actively sell Western 'feminism' and 'feminist supremacy.' Some, under the banner of so-called 'rights protection,' 'poverty alleviation,' and 'charity,' directly intervene in China's women's affairs, attempting to find and create gaps in the women's field" (in Wang 2021). Young feminists who had never experienced good relations with ACWF officials now became suspicious subjects, shunned by them. Worse still, many young activists began to be monitored and interrogated by the police, and many organizations were forced to fold. After describing the state suppression of feminist organizations, Ke Qianting, a professor who was involved in many organized feminist activities in Guangzhou, suggested "we should break up the organization and once again be like guerrillas."

The dispersed and decentered nature of the feminist movement, however, posed challenges to the state suppression. In 2018 young feminists started

another wave of activism with a national reach. In her interview, journalist Huang Xueqin described her role in starting a Chinese #MeToo movement in 2018 that lasted several months on social media before the cyber police took decisive action to delete any anti-sexual-harassment messages. For her active role in writing about and helping victims of sexual harassment, Huang was frequently interrogated by the police. Soon after the interview in 2019, she was detained for several months because of her daring journalistic reports on the protest movement in Hong Kong. In 2021 she won two prestigious international awards, the Human Rights Press Award from Amnesty International and the Excellence in Journalism Award from the Asia Press. But her defiance incensed the authorities. On September 19, 2021, Huang was kidnapped by the police, and her whereabouts were not made known to her family until November 5. They learned that she had been officially arrested with the charge of “instigating the overthrow of the state.” A mafia-style rule is becoming the norm, terrorizing all social activists, including feminist activists.

Common themes across the cases: Lessons for others?

Across these three very different national contexts, there are some commonalities both in activists’ accounts of the conditions that enabled feminist activism to flourish and in the kinds of actions the state took that have made feminist activism both difficult and dangerous. During the 1990s, the interviewees were aware that international and national circumstances combined to encourage grassroots activism and the development of NGOs such as those associated with the women’s movement in the three countries. Activists recognized these NGOs as a critical factor in addressing the absence or withdrawal of state resources for women; thus, they served as a safety net for women in these three countries and elsewhere. Of course, the activists also noted some of the pernicious effects of international financial support for NGOs, including competition for scarce aid resources and a resulting division among organizations.¹⁰

In addition, the activists, like the scholars previously cited, described the robust and valuable exchange of ideas and intervention strategies across national borders, as well as resulting collaborations within and across regions. This flow of ideas during the 1990s and early 2000s was often encountered at regional and international conferences and meetings or at national meetings that international scholars attended. While this kind of exchange has been fully recognized by scholars, the activists’ descriptions make clear how powerfully

¹⁰ See also Racioppi and See (1997), Sperling (1999), Kay (2000), and Sundstrom (2006).

the encounters among feminists across borders catalyzed individual intellectual, political, and activist commitments that endured across a lifetime and indeed engendered the mentoring of younger feminists who emerged in public space, particularly vividly in China in 2012.

After this early flowering, things began to change, although the sequence and timing of particular actions by the state certainly varied. At the present time women's movement activism in all three countries faces overwhelming obstacles. The three governments have all implemented policies that restrict the flow of ideas and funding into the country, which inevitably starved the women's movement organizations of new ideas, resources, and collaborators. These resources were not replaced by internal support in any of these contexts, though activists in all three countries attempted to manage in the absence of this key transnational flow. These three states relied on many tactics to increase the pressure on NGOs generally and to further constrict public expression of dissent. They centralized control of the media (including social media, particularly in China), ensuring control of information about events and the public narrative about their meaning. They also criminalized previously legal activities, overtly suppressing dissent, either through widely publicized arrests and show trials or by making secret arrests without legal procedure, using "sudden disappearance" as a method of deterrence.

As we observe adoption of measures to limit women's rights and activities in many countries around the world, the Global Feminisms Project interviews in these three countries make it clear that women's movement activists and feminist scholars worldwide must be vigilant about recognizing and naming these tactics at the national levels. Particular actions are often resisted but also are viewed as singular; our analysis shows that the state actions took place gradually over time, and the impact accumulated. The threat they posed to women's movement activism was not always easily or quickly recognized internally. In the context of transnational feminism, actions that limit the flow of ideas and other resources are critical, especially when NGO activity is the specific target. It is equally important to monitor actions that centralize control of the media and in any way criminalize or constrain dissent and speech. One consequence of these processes in these three countries was the dissolution of many of the NGOs promoting women's welfare (some were allowed to continue to operate and even flourish—for example, efforts opposed to violence against women; see Sundstrom 2005—but earlier reforms have also been rolled back; see O'Brien and Walsh 2020). Thus, not only is future progress at risk when states take these kinds of actions—already existing gains are also at risk.

We note that the oral histories in the Global Feminisms Project were a rich resource for examining activists' own experience of the kinds of state

actions that affected the women's movement within these countries. Importantly, the knowledge these activists offered in their accounts became less and less visible in their own countries, as conditions for feminist activism worsened. It is therefore critical that transnational feminist scholars and activists outside any particular national context observe and listen to what we learn from each other on social media and through personal relationships. And within our own countries, we must notice and openly discuss changing state-based conditions.

In this article we have drawn on our own international networks and international media coverage of recent legal and other actions in each of the countries we have examined. While it was possible to track down published information, these recent events, as well as what many activists described in their interviews, were not widely covered in the United States or world press. It is up to the feminist community to amplify this information and provide some context for understanding how particular state actions pose a threat to women's movements in particular places. Specific policy changes that limit the flow of resources and opportunities for NGOs, or the flow of people and ideas across national boundaries, should be part of a feminist watch list. It is in this spirit that we offer the analysis in this article.

Departments of Psychology and Women's and Gender Studies
University of Michigan (Stewart)

Department of Psychology
University of California, Santa Cruz (Grabe)

Department of Women's and Gender Studies
University of Michigan (Wang)

References

- Alexander, M. Jacqui, and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, eds. 1997. *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*. New York: Routledge.
- Associated Press. 2020. "Nicaragua Passes Controversial 'Foreign Agent' Law." October 15. <https://apnews.com/article/caribbean-nicaragua-daniel-ortega-396a5abc92e23e5cd1250a5b11d4247d>.
- Basu, Amrita, ed. 2016. *Women's Movements in the Global Era: The Power of Local Feminisms*. Boulder, CO: Westview.
- BBC News. 2019. "China's Xi Praises 'Best Friend' Putin during Russia Visit." June 6. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-48537663>.
- Bjarnegård, Elin, and Pär Zetterberg. 2022. "How Autocrats Weaponize Women's Rights." *Journal of Democracy* 33(2):60–75.

- Buckley, Chris, and Keith Bradsher. 2018. "China Moves to Let Xi Stay in Power by Abolishing Term Limit." *New York Times*, February 25. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/25/world/asia/china-xi-jinping.html>.
- Chhacchi, Amrita, and Sunila Abeyssekara. 2015. "Forging a New Political Imaginary: Transnational Southasian Feminisms." In *The Oxford Handbook of Transnational Feminist Movements*, edited by Rawwida Baksh and Wendy Harcourt, 553–77. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Confidential. 2022. "Daniel Ortega Backs Russia in Ukraine Conflict, Blames the US." February 20. <https://confidential.digital/english/daniel-ortega-backs-russia-in-ukraine-conflict-blames-us/>.
- Donno, Daniela, Sara Fox, and Joshua Kaasik. 2022. "International Incentives for Women's Rights in Dictatorships." *Comparative Political Studies* 55(3):451–92.
- Ellsberg, Mary. 2021. "'I Don't Want Candies in Hell': A 20-Year Look at Violence against Women." *Envio* 478 (May). <https://www.envio.org.ni/articulo/5907>.
- Ellsberg, Mary, Margarita Quintanilla, and William J. Ugarte. 2022. "Pathways to Change: Three Decades of Feminist Research and Activism to End Violence against Women in Nicaragua." *Global Public Health* 17(11):3142–59.
- Fish, M. Steven. 2017. "The Kremlin Emboldened: What Is Putinism?" *Journal of Democracy* 28(4):61–75.
- Franceschini, Ivan, and Nicholas Loubere. 2021. "Forum: Chinese Feminism under (Self-)Censorship." *Made in China* 6(2). <https://madeinchinajournal.com/2021/12/01/chinese-feminism-under-self-censorship-practice-and-knowledge-production/>.
- Gago, Verónica, and Marta Malo. 2020. "Introduction: The New Feminist International." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 119(3):620–28.
- Gago, Verónica, and Diego Sztulwark. 2016. "The Temporality of Social Struggle at the End of the 'Progressive' Cycle in Latin America." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 115(3):606–14.
- Gessen, Masha. 2014. *Words Will Break Cement: The Passion of Pussy Riot*. New York: Riverhead.
- Grabe, Shelly. 2016. *Narrating a Psychology of Resistance: Voices of the Compañeras in Nicaragua*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hale, Erin. 2022. "Personal Ties That Bind: How Xi-Putin Relationship Has Evolved." *Aljazeera*, March 18. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/3/18/personal-ties-that-bind-how-xi-putin-relationship-has-evolved>.
- Hemment, Julie. 2004. "Global Civil Society and the Local Costs of Belonging: Defining Violence against Women in Russia." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 29(3):815–40.
- Hemment, Julie, and Valentina Uspenskaya. 2020. "The 1990s Wasn't Just a Time of Bandits: We Feminists Were Also Making Mischief!" *Aspasia* 14: 20–36.
- Herrera, Manuel. 2022. "Putin Increases Tension by Supporting Ortega in Nicaragua." *Al Día*, January 18. <https://aldianews.com/politics/policy/putin-ally-ortega>.
- Hrycak, Alexandra. 2002. "From Mothers' Rights to Equal Rights: Post-Soviet Grassroots' Women's Associations." In *Women's Activism and Globalization:*

- Linking Local Struggles and Transnational Politics*, edited by Nancy A. Naples and Manisha Desai, 64–82. New York: Routledge.
- Huaxia. 2022. “Xi’s Special Envoy Attends Inauguration Ceremony of Nicaraguan President for New Term.” January 10. <http://english.news.cn/20220111/8d73944690414e339ba384385219e37c/c.html>.
- Johnson, Janet E. 2016. “Fast-Track or Boxed In? Informal Politics, Gender, and Women’s Representation in Putin’s Russia.” *Perspectives on Politics* 14(3):643–59.
- Johnson, Janet E., and Aino Saarinen. 2013. “Twenty-First-Century Feminisms under Repression: Gender Regime Change and the Women’s Crisis Center Movement in Russia.” *Signs* 38(3):543–67.
- Kabeer, Naila. 1994. *Reversed Realities: Gender Hierarchies in Development Thought*. New York: Verso.
- Kampwirth, Karen. 1996. “Confronting Adversity with Experience: The Emergence of Feminism in Nicaragua.” *Social Politics* 3(2–3):136–58.
- . 2004. *Feminism and the Legacy of Revolution: Nicaragua, El Salvador, Chiapas*. Athens: Ohio University Press.
- Kay, Rebecca. 2000. *Russian Women and Their Organizations: Gender, Discrimination, and Grassroots Women’s Organizations, 1991–96*. New York: St. Martin’s.
- Keck, Margaret E., and Kathryn Sikkink. 1999. “Transnational Advocacy Networks in International and Regional Politics.” *International Social Science Journal* 51(159):89–101.
- Kinzer, Stephen. 1991. *Blood of Brothers: Life and War in Nicaragua*. New York: Putnam.
- Lal, Jayati, Kristin M. McGuire, Abigail J. Stewart, Magdalena Zaborowska, and Justine Pas. 2010. “Recasting Global Feminisms: Towards a Comparative Historical Approach to Women’s Activism and Feminist Scholarship.” *Feminist Studies* 36(1):13–39.
- Moghadam, Valentine. 2005. *Globalizing Women: Transnational Feminist Networks*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Montenegro, Marisela, Rose Capdevila, and Heidi Figueroa Sarriera. 2011. “Towards a Transnational Feminism; Dialogues on Feminisms and Psychologies in a Latin American Context.” Editorial introduction. *Feminism and Psychology* 22(2):220–27.
- Naples, Nancy A., and Manisha Desai, eds. 2002. *Women’s Activism and Globalization: Linking Local Struggles and Transnational Politics*. New York: Routledge.
- Nugent, Elizabeth. 2020. *After Repression: How Polarization Derails Democratic Transition*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- O’Brien, Cheryl, and Shannon D. Walsh. 2020. “Women’s Rights and Opposition: Explaining the Stunted Rise and Sudden Reversals of Progressive Violence against Women Policies in Contentious Contexts.” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 52(1):107–31.
- Plantan, Elizabeth. 2020. “A Tale of Two Laws: Managing Foreign Agents and Overseas NGOs in Russia and China.” In *Citizens and the State in Authoritarian*

- Regimes: Comparing Russia and China*, edited by Karrie J. Koesel, Valerie J. Bunce, and Jessica Chen Weiss, 167–90. New York: Oxford University Press.
- . 2022. “Not All NGOs are Treated Equally: Selectivity in Civil Society Management in China and Russia.” *Comparative Politics* 54(3):501–24.
- Pomerantzev, Peter. 2014. *Nothing Is True and Everything Is Possible: The Surreal Heart of the New Russia*. New York: Public Affairs.
- Pussy Riot. 2013. *Pussy Riot! A Punk Prayer for Freedom*. New York: Feminist Press.
- Racioppi, Linda, and Katherine O’Sullivan See. 1997. *Women’s Activism in Contemporary Russia*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Razavi, Shakra. 2003. “Introduction: Agrarian Change, Gender, and Land Rights.” *Journal of Agrarian Change* 3(1–2):2–32.
- Rice, Joy K., and Shelly Grabe. 2019. “Toward an Inclusive, Affirmative Transnational Psychology.” In *Transnational Psychology of Women: Expanding International and Intersectional Approaches*, edited by Lynn H. Collins, Sayaka Machizawa, and Joy K. Rice, 257–89. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Rivkin-Fish, Michele. 2013. “Conceptualizing Feminist Strategies for Russian Reproductive Politics: Abortion, Surrogate Motherhood, and Family Support after Socialism.” *Signs* 38(3):569–93.
- Rossmann, Ella. 2021. “From Socialism to Social Media: Women’s and Gender History in Post-Soviet Russia.” *Berichte zur Wissenschafts-Geschichte/History of Science and Humanities* 44(4):414–32.
- Roth, Andrew. 2021. “Vladimir Putin Passes Law That May Keep Him in Office until 2036.” *The Guardian*, April 5. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/apr/05/vladimir-putin-passes-law-that-may-keep-him-in-office-until-2036>.
- Shapiro, Ari, and Larry Diamond. 2017. “Decline in Democracy Spreads across the Globe as Authoritarian Leaders Rise.” *NPR*, August 3. <https://www.npr.org/2017/08/03/541432445/decline-in-democracy-spreads-across-the-globe-as-authoritarian-leaders-rise?t=1543339813832>.
- Song Xiuyan. 2017. “Putting Politics into the Entire Process of Reform and Work of the Women’s Federation.” *China Women’s Daily*, May 19. https://m.sohu.com/a/141789155_114731/.
- Sperling, Valerie. 1999. *Organizing Women in Contemporary Russia: Engendering Transition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sperling, Valerie, Myra Marx Ferree, and Barbara Risman. 2001. “Constructing Global Feminism: Transnational Advocacy Networks and Russian Women’s Activism.” *Signs* 26(4):1155–86.
- Stewart, Abigail J, Jayati Lal, and Kristin McGuire. 2011. “Expanding the Archives of Global Feminisms: Narratives of Feminism and Activism.” *Signs* 36(4):889–914.
- Sundstrom, Lisa M. 2005. “Foreign Assistance, International Norms, and NGO Development: Lessons from the Russian Campaign.” *International Organization* 59(2):419–49.

- . 2006. *Funding Civil Society: Foreign Assistance and NGO Development in Russia*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Sundstrom, Lisa M., Laura A. Henry, and Valerie Sperling. 2022. "The Evolution of Civic Activism in Contemporary Russia." *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures* 36(4):1377–99.
- Sundstrom, Lisa M., Valerie Sperling, and Melike Sayoglu. 2019. *Courting Gender Justice: Russia, Turkey, and the European Court of Human Rights*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Taylor, Vivienne. 2015. "Human Rights and Human Security: Feminists Contesting the Terrain." In *The Oxford Handbook of Transnational Feminist Movements*, edited by Rawwida Baksh and Wendy Harcourt, 346–66. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Tisdall, Simon. 2021. "From Nicaragua to China, Reckless Autocrats Betray the Promises of Revolution." *The Guardian*, November 14. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/nov/14/from-nicaragua-to-china-reckless-autocrats-betray-the-promises-of-revolution>.
- Tripp, Alli Mari. 2019. *Seeking Legitimacy: Why Arab Autocracies Adopt Women's Rights*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Trudolyubov, Maxim. 2020. "Breaking Presidential Term Limits in Russia and Beyond." *The Russia File*, June 30. <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/breaking-presidential-term-limits-russia-and-beyond>.
- Wang Zheng. 2015. "Detention of the Feminist Five in China." *Feminist Studies* 41(2):476–82.
- . 2021. "Feminist Struggles in a Changing China." In *Feminisms with Chinese Characteristics*, edited by Ping Zhu and Hui Faye Xiao, 117–56. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.
- Wang Zheng and Ying Zhang. 2010. "Global Concepts, Local Practices: Chinese Feminism since the Fourth UN Conference on Women." *Feminist Studies* 36(1):40–70.
- Wong, Edward. 2022. "Russia and China Held Military Exercise in East Asia as Biden Visited." *New York Times*, May 24. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/24/us/politics/russia-china-bombers-biden.html>.
- Xing Zheng 邢郑. 2015. "Geti Siying Jingji Cheng Xina Jiuye 'Xushuichi'" 个体私营经济吸纳就业 "蓄水池" [Private enterprises have become the "reservoir" for absorbing labor]. 人民网 [People], October 28. <http://finance.people.com.cn/n/2015/1028/c1004-27747492.html>.