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Gender and Security

Caroline Kennedy and Sophia Dingli

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Reader's Guide

This chapter examines issues of gender and security. It begins with an explanation of what we mean by gender and explains why issues of gender are central to understanding security. International Relations specialists have over the last three decades explored and interpreted the ways in which men and women have responded to the national and international policies which have governed conflict, terrorism, and war. The chapter demonstrates that through understanding and placing notions of gender at the centre of any debate on security we can unleash a series of interlocking understandings of the way men and women relate to insecurity, violence, and war.

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Introduction

Gender and **security** are both concepts that invite endless categorization and clarification. Security has been conceived in many different ways (Krause and Williams 1997b; Buzan et al. 1998). Much of this difference can be understood and illuminated in terms of gender. But gender too has multiple meanings and applica-

tions, as its different deployments within contemporary scholarship and politics indicate.

This chapter outlines the significance of considering gender and security together by examining two angles of vision. We distinguish between ‘practical’ and ‘discursive’ aspects of the relationship between gender and security. Practical aspects are exemplified by the concrete role of women in militaries, or as victims, bystanders, or helpers of military conflict or of militarization in general. Discursive aspects are exemplified by the traditional connections made between **militarism** and **masculinity** and between nurturing, peace, and **femininity**.

This distinction is wedded to two further developments that reinforce the central relationship between gender and security. The first involves the acceptance of a broader concept of security than was traditional. A number of terms have been used to describe this process, ‘**human security**’ (see Chapter 10) or ‘**soft security**’ being the most common. Up until the events of 9/11, this involved a relative downgrading of the traditional focus on military matters within security, with implications both from and for the practical and the representative aspects of the gender–security relationship. A second process was one that allegedly meant that from the 1990s, technological innovation allowed for a remote control of ‘virtual’ war, such as in Kosovo, removing the need for ‘men’ (or rather, men drawn from Western states) in battle. Arguably war and battle had been rendered gender neutral. Technology meant military intervention could ‘save strangers’ in danger without human cost. It was not quite that simple. Kosovo may have been just such a specific example of risk free warfare but the ferocious fighting experienced in Iraq and Afghanistan meant a return to visceral and costly warfare. Indeed, recent American drone strikes—surely a clear example of technological superiority—demonstrate that some traditional gendered roles remain intact for those on the receiving end of intervention. Men may be killed in fighting or in targeted assassinations by drones but the women then occupy roles as widows, mothers, and as bread winners in traditional societies. Sometimes women are simply ‘collateral damage’ as they go about their business. Interest in this gender/security nexus deepened after the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and the wars that came after. Specifically the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the chronic instability in Pakistan caused in part, but not wholly, by the struggle with the Taliban and Al-Qaeda highlighted how issues of gender affect security locally, nationally, and globally. The advent of female suicide bombers in the Middle East, in Afghanistan and now in Africa as well as the activities of terrorist

groups such as The Black Widows in Russia have combined to sustain an academic and public curiosity in women and violent political activity (Bloom 2007, Sjoberg 2007). The scholarship and public commentaries examining the place of women continues to expose the complexity of the nexus between men, women and war and peace.

Representations

An important feature of international relations theory in the 1990s was the recognition of the role of what we might loosely call ‘ideas’ or, perhaps more accurately, discursive contexts in international political life (Walker 1993; Rengger 1999). The most popular image of the international system—that states perceive themselves as inhabiting a zero-sum and therefore dangerous international environment of self-help—was taken as evidence of that; in Alexander Wendt’s (1992) famous phrase ‘anarchy is what states make of it’. The discursive construction of gender was and remains a prime example of how systems of knowledge (discourses) possess power which influences every facet of social life and determines the limits of the possible for a variety of actors. This section therefore focuses on the effect of gender on the constructions of security and insecurity for different actors.

Gender, at its simplest, refers to an identification of masculinity with characteristics of strength and militarism and of femininity with vulnerability, nurturing and peace. We should bear in mind that sex and gender are not necessarily one and the same. Identifying men with masculinity, militarism, and a propensity for violence and women with femininity, vulnerability, and victimhood, only reproduces the gender dichotomies feminist theorists have sought to undo. Doing so also obscures the fact that one may identify or be identified with masculinity or femininity irrespective of actual sex and may also divert us from investigating the important links between race, class, sexuality, and gender. It may also ignore the gender-specific vulnerabilities men suffer. We may think of the men in the 9/11 Wars, identified as ‘insurgents’, then incarcerated, tortured and sometimes ‘disappeared’ on the basis of gender and ethnicity. Latterly the targets of drone strikes are nearly always men identified as ‘militants’. One exception was the so-called ‘White Widow’ Sally Jones killed by a US drone strike in Syria. Jones dubbed the poster girl of ISIS was accused of recruiting female Jihadis to join Islamic State. (Mortimer 2017)

In disentangling the web of gendered discourses and their effect on security, we start with the discourses of patriarchy. Cynthia Enloe (2004) defined this term as ‘the structural and ideological system that perpetuates the privileging of masculinity’. It is difficult to argue that the world of international politics is not one which privileges certain notions of masculinity. What Enloe (1989) pointed out in her seminal book *Bananas, Beaches and Bases* is that this world is neither a natural nor a neutral one. It is one created and sustained through the use of a certain type of power. Enloe has invariably urged that to understand these power structures it is necessary to unpack what patriarchy means and she highlighted that it is precisely the labour of women, domestic or public, which is the necessary ingredient which permits men at both the highest level (politicians) and the lowest (say the ordinary conscript) to go about their business, waging wars, forging alliances, or conducting state business.

Women have typically been excluded from the public practice of these endeavours. So taking part in combat, at least officially was closed to the female. The construction of war as a domain of the masculine had wider implications. Jean Elshtain (1987) explains how in her book *Women and War*. She claims that a distinction between ‘beautiful souls’ (women) and ‘just warriors’ (men) has been at the core of much theorizing about the respective role of women and men in war and society. These narratives of war, she argued, played a crucial role in reinforcing traditional gender roles within a domestic/social context. This is because of a connection between war, maleness, and the state. The modern state was born and consolidated through war: as Charles Tilly (1990) famously phrased it, ‘war made the state and the state made war’. In many cultures, masculine attributes have traditionally been rewarded with social or political advancement.

Elshtain’s argument is supported by much of the historical archive which illustrates the relations between patriarchy, war, and the state and specifically how militaries serve and are constructed to reinforce certain norms. War and combat have represented the highest aspirations of the male members of political, social, and cultural elites. In ancient Greece, some form of military training was regarded as a prerequisite to manhood. The idea of combat as serving a purpose of maleness resonates from Shakespeare’s ‘Band of Brothers’ to that of Stephen Ambrose’s more contemporary and like-named TV series. So, military service for one’s state has long been regarded as a badge of honour.

Combat is associated with masculine values such as physical strength and courage. In certain societies,

those men who would not or could not fight might be classified as ‘women’: vilified as lacking male attributes. Military training was always (and is still is) designed to reinforce certain notions of masculinity. Indeed, as Anthony King (2016) noted recently, masculinity remains hegemonic in Western militaries, where since the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq a new gender code has emerged in relation to female soldiers: the ‘honorary man’. This demonstrates that the female soldiers who are ‘accepted’ and perhaps acknowledged by their male counterparts as equals were those who adapted an overt masculinity, choosing to suppress the feminine characteristics which remain undervalued - perhaps even vilified in a military context. Some feminine characteristics can be a source of acute insecurity in militaries where female soldiers are routinely subjected to violent assaults.

This is unsurprising when we consider that a degree of violence, and bullying associated with basic training are designed to cultivate certain notions of what it is to be a ‘man’ (Steans 1998) and as a result reinforces what it is to be a ‘woman’—man’s lesser other. **Misogyny** can be a useful component: males can be goaded into grinding down whatever might be regarded as feminine and thus an attribute unfit for a soldier. To sacrifice one’s life for one’s country in war has been regarded as the highest form of patriotism, but a failure to fight is the act of a coward or evidence of sexual deviance that renders the male less than he should be. Hence, homosexuality in the British Army could have led to punishment by death. The film based on the autobiography by Vera Brittain entitled *Testament of Youth* highlighted the shame and the punishment meted out to those soldiers found ‘guilty’ of homosexuality. Any idealised interpretation though of what it is to be a soldier is also at odds with accounts of the sexual abuse of both female and male soldiers. Narratives of sexual abuse have received exposure in *The Invisible War*, a documentary by Kirby Dick, which illustrates the violent culture of the American military: it appears that sexual assault is seen as a ‘normal’ part of what it means to be a soldier. Reports show, that though sexual violence is not solely directed against women, a higher proportion of women are assaulted. In the Air Force one in five women are assaulted as opposed to one in fifteen men in the same service. These numbers are based on reported cases, although the accurate numbers are likely to be much higher (Ellison 2011). Nevertheless, the disproportionate scale of female soldiers’ victimization is likely the result of military culture, with its deification of the male facilitated through the institutionalization of misogyny.

In many narratives of war, women have inhabited only the private sphere tasked with the defence of that ubiquitous feature of national life—the home front, implying that women, even in war, never really left the home (Sherry 1995). This polarization between the sexes has been described thus: ‘Women are excluded from war talk and men excluded from baby talk’ (Elstain 1987: 222). This discursive distinction between the roles of women and men, along with the particular ideal categories of ‘just warriors’ and ‘beautiful souls’ animates Elshtain’s analysis. Yet there is something else here. Elshtain demonstrates that rather than being opposites of each other, the ideals of the ‘just warrior’ and ‘beautiful soul’ share characteristics. Both the good soldier and good mother aim to do their duty, while constantly experiencing guilt and examining whether they have performed as well as possible. Both are concerned with bodily harm and both feel constrained by the roles that at one time they may have viewed as a pathway to a liberated adulthood. As Christine Sylvester (1994: 329) notes, Elshtain ‘uncovers mutuality in difference’ thus challenging the suggestion that sex and gender are solidly uniform, like a monolith. One may claim that Elshtain’s work (perhaps unintentionally) queered (See Case Study 11.1) existing discourses, by demonstrating ‘the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone’s gender, of anyone’s sexuality aren’t made (or *can’t be* made) to signify monolithically’ (Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick 1993: 8 quoted in Weber 2014: 596).

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CASE STUDY 11.1 Queer theory and state strategies of in/security: Russia, USA and Israel

Queer theory in International Relations has investigated the ways in which heteronormative discourses of gender and sexuality - discourses that propagate a clear dichotomy of men/masculinity and women/femininity and present heterosexuality as the norm- are depended on constructing queerness as the ultimate other. They also consider their practical effects. For example, queer theorists demonstrate that to be considered powerful, historically, the state had to project a strong heteronormative masculine identity. This conception of the state excused the abuse of homosexual men in the military and their silencing by policies like ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell’ in the United States. Nowadays, it is manifested in the policies of persecution of lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) people as a matter of policy in some states, like Russia

where state power is strongly connected with conceptions of the heteronormative family. For the Russian state difference in the form of queerness is considered a sign of weakness. Thus the refusal to grant LGBT citizens equal rights may be constructed discursively as a manifestation of masculine strength. This in contrast to the United States, which since the Obama administration has legalised same sex marriage and abolished 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell'. Gender discourses that construct queerness as deviant, therefore, are a source of insecurity for LGBT people in Russia and even more so in Uganda and Chechnya where such groups and individuals may be at constant risk of death at the hands of their families or persecution by the state.

Queer theorists also warn that we must not assume that these discourses are monolithic and never-changing. For example, Jasbir Puar (2013: 336) has noted that nowadays the acceptance and tolerance of LGBT people has become 'a barometer by which the right to and capacity for national sovereignty is evaluated.' This was particularly the case during the Obama administration, which used the slogan 'gay rights are human rights' to chastise foreign governments in a manner reminiscent of the Bush administration's use of 'women's rights'. Similar constructions of 'homonationalism' allow the Israel state to present itself as a beacon of freedom in the Middle East, by virtue of Tel Aviv's lively gay scene, which includes a spectacular yearly Pride parade, while at the same time subjecting millions of Palestinians to the constant violences of the occupation. (Puar 2013; Weber 2014)

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Frequently women have been represented as the 'spoils of war'. This perception of 'spoils of war' was consistent historically with the legal status of women: they were regarded as the property of the male. **Rape** was perceived as an injury to the male estate, and not to the woman. The rape of women during and after war is well documented, as are examples when rape appears to have been used as a 'tactic' of war to humiliate or demoralize the enemy. We now know of the routine use of rape by soldiers of the Red Army as it advanced on and occupied German cities in the spring of 1945. Members of the NKVD encouraged the use of rape, not just as a tool of revenge but as a way of dispiriting the male population left in the city. Scholars have also examined the use of rape as a tactic of war by Serbian and Croatian soldiers in the 1990s Balkan Wars.

Research in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) reveals that rape is not simply utilized in war. In

the DRC, rape cases seem to have increased since the 2003 peace agreement between the government and rebel groups. This increase prompted Maria Eriksson Baaz and Maria Stern (2009) to conduct interviews with former soldiers in the DRC. Their conclusions are provocative. In this case, rape seems inexorably connected with what they label hegemonic masculinity (Baaz and Stern 2009: 514). Baaz and Stern (2009: 496) reject a common explanation that the acts of rape committed in the DRC are actually a result 'of the supposed animal-like bestiality of the rapist'. The standard line of argument has obvious racial connotations and is rooted in colonial discourses which presented the masculinity, and in extent the femininity, of colonial subjects as pathological (Said 1978). Instead they argue that in the DRC, rape is connected to ideal hyper-masculine identities. Men who joined the army with the promise that as soldiers they would be respected by their communities and exalted, found themselves after the war unable to find work or support their communities and thus were disrespected by women. As a result, 'the soldiers locate the impetus for their resorting to violence in the mismatch between their embodied experiences and their aspirations to inhabit these impossible subject positions' (Baaz and Stern 2009: 514). In other words, rape serves to reaffirm hegemonic masculinity and identities as men and soldiers.

The idea of hegemonic masculinity derives from scholarship originally carried out by, amongst others, the sociologist, R. W. Connell. His research was concerned with the practices that promote the dominant social position of men and the subordinate social position of women. His work, which investigated the dominant role of white middle-class men, asked why this group maintained dominant social roles over women and other gender groups. His findings were that hegemonic masculinity represented a culturally idealized form of manhood that was brutal, pseudo natural, and tough. It was characterized by violence, aggression, and stoicism. These characteristics were valued above those of so-called feminine values. Transferring his findings away from the behaviour of white heterosexual males, it seems that that idea may go some way to explain not just the attitudes of certain men in the Congo but groups within the US military. It is worth highlighting that quite often the operation of hegemonic masculinities includes the subordination not just of women but of homosexual men or certain ethnic groups (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Note though that Connell has issued a series of warnings as to the complexity of gender hierarchies, emphasizing the importance of the geography of masculinity and the importance of the agency of women in any setting.

As Baaz and Stern argue, the discourse of gender is linked in complex ways with the discourse of class and race in many places, not just in the DRC. The results of such interlinkages are both discursive and practices. Furthermore, they are deeply political. For example, Megan Mackenzie and Alana Foster (2017) examine the case of Palestine where the realities of the occupation affect the ability of men and women to live up to gender norms. This, they show, creates a nostalgia for an idealised past where the father served as a breadwinner or landowner without being frustrated in the performance of these roles. This ‘masculinity nostalgia’ leads to security becoming associated with a return to the good old patriarchal days. In other words, in the context of the occupation, peace and stability become inexorably associated with patriarchy. This is a deeply political outcome rooted in discursive constructs. Opposition is usually unseen. Hence, Maysaloun Hamoud film *In Between* focuses on the experiences and aspirations of three different Palestinian women who live in Tel Aviv. Their lives challenge the simplistic patriarchal discourses that dominate the plight of Palestinians. Her film interrogates the unifying representation of the lives of Palestinians and refuses to conform to its gendered logic, thus rejecting the notion that peace must mean a return to patriarchy. The exploration of its protagonists’ lives -one of whom is raped by her fiancé for becoming too independent - self illustrates that resisting patriarchy usually engenders insecurity, vulnerability and constraint.

Gendered representations/ discourses were central to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. These were constructed as campaigns which would allow good Western men (and actually women) to save the victimized Afghan and Iraqi women from the patriarchal structures which enslaved them. This narration has been embraced not only by British and American politicians but also by liberal feminists. Both wars were supposed to deliver Iraqi and Afghan women to a form of Western ‘emancipation’.

The importance of women, both Afghan and non-Afghan, to all aspects of that war was striking. Not only was the woman issue highlighted by politicians but gender affected the very conduct of the Counter-Insurgency. Laleh Khalili (2011: 1471) argues that the gendered character of the counter-insurgencies (COIN) in Iraq and Afghanistan was especially obvious when soldiers actually came into contact with the local population. In these interactions, women were typically coded as civilians while men—all men over the age of 14—were coded as combatants. As a result, men were targeted as the enemy by combat units and by drones. This may seem rather obvious—men fight and women are passive victims of an ongoing conflict;

but it was never quite that simple. During the 1966 Algerian conflict, insurgents wise to the gendered beliefs of the French army would dress in Burqas and easily cross through checkpoints which were closed to men but open to women (Evangelista 2011: 39–57).

So during the 9/11 wars, racially motivated gender stereotypes informed border policy and COIN in general. In Iraq, US forces had initially largely ignored the female population, in part because of the sensitivities of engaging with women in a traditional society. Insurgents in turn took advantage of these cultural sensitivities by disguising themselves in the all-enveloping female clothing to avoid detection whilst perhaps plotting or perpetrating attacks. This in turn forced Western forces to deploy women soldiers at checkpoints precisely to be able to search females without causing offence. In Afghanistan by 2011, female soldiers were perceived as central with female units utilized precisely to make contact with the local women. These engagements also provided intelligence-gathering opportunities (Katt 2014). Despite some controversy over this intelligence role, the embedding of all female cultural teams alongside special operations forces was regarded as successful in enabling access to the 50 per cent of the population usually sidelined in the business of war.

Another part of the story of Afghanistan is that while Western women were quite literally on the frontline, the emergence of an Afghan National Army has also seen indigenous women co-opted into the armed services. The Afghan theatre is fascinating precisely because in all aspects women are fulfilling functions associated with men but also associated with contemporary Western practices.

We may applaud these developments, but we should always remember how stereotypes inform our understandings and practices in Afghanistan and beyond. As Hirschkind and Mahmood (2002) have highlighted, the twin figures of the Islamic fundamentalist and female rape victims have helped consolidate and popularize the view that hardship and sacrifice were in the end for Afghanistan's own good. The argument is that the ends of emancipation justify the means. In other words, invasion, bombing, war, and occupation should be endured to secure a greater good. Sadly the evidence, as produced by public bodies and journalists, is that conditions for women remain pretty grim in Afghanistan and they are subject to rape, beatings, and kidnappings and at the prey of the warlords (*The Guardian* 2014). The experiences of women in the conflict have been represented in the oral tradition of Landays, traditional short verses which reflect the impact of drones

strikes, military occupation, and war experiences. These verses might speak of the glory of war but also provide telling accounts of what it means to be female. Violent images abound, hence one such rhyme:

Embrace me in a Suicide Vest

but don't say I won't give you a kiss

(Poetry Foundation 2013)

In this complex theatre women are, unusually for this traditional society, also resorting to violence. Nowhere is this perhaps more controversial than in the phenomenon of suicide bombers.

In Afghanistan there was, at least initially, a prohibition against the use of female 'martyrs'. However, for a multiplicity of reasons, we have witnessed an increase in female suicide bombers since 2009. This followed an open letter issued by Umayama al-Zawahiri (the wife of Al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri) urging her sisters to assist the terrorist groups through suicide missions. The use of females created the conditions for surprise attacks but had the added 'bonus' of creating an additional pool of resources. Martin Van Crevald, a military historian, has argued that women are only ever used in battle/conflict when men are not available, or reluctant to take part (Van Crevald 2001). It appears that his thesis may also be applicable in terms of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) borne by women. A greater use of the suicide IED requires more recruits, whether they are women or children. Or it may be that the female IED has an especially shocking resonance in societies where women have traditionally inhabited a 'private', not 'public', role.

This is challenging because gender cannot be reduced to any simple equation of men with masculinity and women with femininity. There are a number of reasons why this is the case: first, because of the self-identification of actors, and second, because to do so would cast men as the perpetrators of violence and women only as perennial victims. Insecurity in the era of the so-called war on terror still depends on gendered discourses but does not necessarily follow the logic of men and violence and women and peace. Increasing numbers of women suicide bombers and soldiers and prison guards, like the infamous Lynndie England, perpetuate violence. So we need to further interrogate the traditional links made between men and violence and women and peace. The 'War on Terror' underpinned a series of activities including extraordinary rendition and the widespread use of torture at detention facilities in both Iraq and the Guantanamo Bay Detention Centre in Cuba. These wars rendered permissible a range of activities which were technically

prohibited but certainly in Latin America had been part and parcel of covert American activities for many decades (Stokes 2005; Kennedy-Pipe & Waldman 2017). But what concerned some scholars was what appeared to be an institutionalization of the practices of ‘torture’. As Nancy Sherman has argued, torture is rarely solo work. She defines it as a systematic practice, institutionalized by nations and states, supported hierarchically, and requiring the participation of professionals of many stripes (Sherman 2010: 147). This includes women. In Abu Ghraib, female interrogators were used to humiliate and intimidate the prisoners. Imprisoned men were forced to endure a variety of physical and emotional humiliations perpetrated by female soldiers/guards.

Finally, we need to re-examine the practical implications of gendered discourses on security practices and on the construction of gender-specific insecurities.

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KEY POINTS

- Patriarchy has historically defined the roles of women and men in international politics.
- War and military service have been crucial for the construction of the state.
- Gendered discourses produce gender-specific insecurities not only for women but also for men.
- Queerness denotes the refusal and/or inability to perform gender monolithically as male or female in the ways these categories specify.
- We need to look at the intersection of racial and gender discourses to understand security.

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Practical context I: war

According to some female scholars, experience in combat can still be a way of earning high office (Stears 1998). Just as ancient and medieval civilizations gave special respect to citizens who had proved themselves in war; it can still be a special mark of respect to be a war **veteran**. This was an honour that historically is denied to women. Yet, any positive view of the way in which men have been treated after serving their country in war must be contested. Veterans of the Vietnam conflict, especially those drawn from the African American community in the United States, might find it difficult to recognize their treatment as that of heroes or to find that their combat experiences advanced them socially (Sherry 1995). The recent controversies

over the level of compensation for those killed and maimed in conflicts such as the First and Second Gulf Wars also do not point to a glorious post-war life for those who have served, particularly those who are not drawn from the officer class. Recent reports from both wars in Iraq have demonstrated that war, or rather occupation duty after war in a hostile environment, is proving extremely stressful for soldiers and has long-term psychological implications. There is a recent and worrying rise in the incidence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), for example, within the UK armed forces.

Despite the increasing evidence of the toll that soldiering exerts on the individual, to die in combat for one's country was at least in certain narratives of war regarded as an honour and was one that was revered within many cultures. The construction, though, of a male security state is not accidental. As Cynthia Enloe (1993: 253) points out, militarism has not been 'kept going by merely drawing on a type of civilian masculinity ... rather it requires drill sergeants ... and men's willingness to earn their manhood credentials by soldiering: it also requires women to accept particular assumptions about mothering, marriage and unskilled work [as well as policies, written and unwritten] to ensure certain sorts of sexual relations'. Enloe's formulation is important because arguably it helps explain why, even though women are increasingly integrated into many state institutions, certainly in Western societies, the highest level of the security apparatus remain predominantly the preserve of men.

It is not just at the highest levels, that of the presidents and the generals, that scholars claim that there is a linkage between man, war, and the state. The relationship between the bearing of arms and citizenship has a long history in Western thought. Judith Hicks Stiehm argues that we in the West have traditionally held militarized conceptions of citizenship and that different categories of citizenship arise from the classes of those excluded from military service. The very young, the old, the disabled, in some societies the homosexual, are barred from combat (Hicks Stiehm 1983, 1989).

Women have been excluded along with the infirm from battle. In the United States and within other NATO countries, as the women's movement grew, demands escalated from the inclusion of women into the military to an insistence on the right to participate in combat.

Those who campaigned for the placement of women in combat have argued that, apart from the issue of political rights, those males who serve in the US military enjoy a range of economic benefits, such as free medical care and cheap loans, which are denied to women. Yet there was much that was culturally and socially sensitive here. In the words of one American official, ‘a woman POW is the ultimate nightmare’. The sagas of Melissa Rathbun-Nathy, captured by the Iraqis during the Gulf War (Nantais and Lee 1999) and Jessica Lynch, taken prisoner by the Iraqis in the second Gulf War (both eventually rescued), clearly illustrate the headache that the capture of female soldiers created in the upper echelons of Western military apparatuses.

Despite this, the decades following the end of the Cold War saw an increase in women’s recruitment. Further, the restrictions on women’s ability to take part in combat operations, especially in the case of counter-insurgency operations where women have been sent to the frontline in places like Afghanistan as part of cultural teams, have ended. The increasing integration of women is not only indicative of changes in the combat environment but also, as Saskia Stachowitsch (2012) shows, demonstrative of the link between gendered foreign policy discourses and their effects on security practices. Stachowitsch (2012: 317–18) illustrates how during President Clinton’s first term domestic and foreign policy conditions favoured integration and equality. However, when the administration’s foreign policy choices of cooperation and compromise were accused of ‘feminizing’ the army, the drive for equality and integration was abandoned. During George W. Bush’s presidency, the goal of saving the Afghan and Iraqi women led to the recruitment of more women. Following Obama’s election, the focus shifted. The drive for equality in the armed forces was of paramount importance. This was coupled with new peace-building approaches which eventually led to the revaluation of the role of female service members in war zones (Stachowitsch 2012: 318) and active deployment on the front line in the post 9/11 operations described above.

However, these improvements for women’s inclusion in the armed forces which have a knock-on effect on their civil rights and status as equal citizens, are undercut by new developments in security practices. Security has become increasingly privatized. This privatization and deregulation of the armed forces has been steadily excluding women from jobs in the security sector partly because the main labour markets that Private Military Companies (PMCs) use for recruitment are the army and police—sectors where women are

underrepresented. As a result the women who work for PMCs are usually employed as secretaries and personal assistants. Where the state has been increasingly involved in a push for gender integration and equality in the military, with the combat exclusion zone lifted in most democratic states and women literally on the frontline, the state has been unable to enforce those policies in the private sector. As a result, the security sector is arguably being re-masculinized while it is also being de-democratized (Stachowitsch 2013).

Although we have seen the equation of women with peace is not one based on fact but on powerful discourses, it would be difficult to ignore the role women played in movements such as that at **Greenham Common** during the 1980s and in Washington more recently to protest against the torture of detainees in Guantanamo. Female voices often lead those protests that are against the stationing of foreign troops or missiles in local areas. As Elshtain's (1987) discussion of 'beautiful souls' reminds us, the tradition that seemingly demonstrates that women and peace are interconnected is based on the assumption that females as the bearers of children are necessarily more anti-war than men. These anti-war and now anti-torture movements have habitually treated the military apparatus of the state, as an expression of male aggression. While the 'peace' women of the 1980s can justifiably claim that they did in fact influence the military debate through their actions of 'chaining themselves to fences outside nuclear bases, dancing on missile silos and jumping into convoy jeeps as they pass by', the problem was, as Christine Sylvester points out, that all these activities can be discounted by those in power. In her words, 'peace camps do not lead us to the edge of war. They do not stockpile weapons and hurtle us into arms races. . . . They do not matter' (Sylvester 1996). Those linkages between men and war and women and peace are important, even if, as we have seen, often they are ill-founded. They imply, as the American academic bell hooks (1995) has argued, that women by virtue of simply being women have played little or no role in supporting and upholding the militarism of the state. Women have in this one-dimensional version of historical events been merely observers/ objects in war.

Women have, however, always been engaged in the business of war. For some scholars this is important, because it means that the history of war and indeed histories generally have been told in such a way that it is just that: 'his story'. Women and their stories or narratives are therefore absent from a number of textbooks or what are regarded as the important studies of war. More recently, academics have concentrated in growing numbers on the telling of female histories, and we do now have a number of works that tell some of the

stories of women as victims of war—for example, monographs and scholarly works that tell the gendered effects of war (Stiglmayer 1994).

The woman as ‘victim’ is, as we saw earlier, an important thread in the stories of war. Indeed, in 1990 an estimated 90 per cent of war casualties were civilians, the vast majority women and children, but contemporary scholarship has uncovered numerous examples where women have supported the role of men in war and participated in civil war and war itself. The tales of these women shed fascinating light on the work of the female in war, revealing female experiences as soldiers, special agents, nurses, surgeons, laundry women, cooks, and prostitutes (Isaksson 1988). They do not suggest that men and women are different in some absolute way. It may also be that such formulations ignore the contribution that many men have made to peace movements and to pacifism. Individual men have often sought to avoid combat and most conscript armies have been dogged by desertion and so-called cowardice brought about by the trauma of war. It is difficult to see how long we should sustain the idea of war as either simply heroic or a secure place for a human being regardless of gender.

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KEY POINTS

- The importance of gender as a topic in international security studies is now accepted.
- Feminist scholars introduced and answered the question of ‘where are the women in security?’
- The traditional literature on security has, when it has engaged with issues of gender, treated women as upholders of peace.
- Western militaries now utilize women on the frontline of combat and the utility of women is widely accepted in Counter Insurgency Operations. The US Marine Corps, for example, created Female Engagement Teams for work in COIN.

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Practical context II: civilian life

For some, women are seen (as they have always been seen) as the ‘weaker’—sometimes termed the ‘fairer’—sex, and so will continue to be second-class citizens dependent on men for protection in the international environment, both in a domestic context and also ironically within the armed services themselves. In

many contemporary societies the state has conscripted its young men for service in the armed forces, but women have usually been excluded. The overall effect is therefore to ‘arm’ men and ‘disarm’ women. There are, to the minds of some feminist scholars, important consequences of the exclusion of the female from the bearing of arms: one is to render women dependent on men for their protection. To walk a woman ‘home’ in the dark is a metaphor for how the female must need a protector to survive outside the alleged security of home and hearth. This is why feminists who recognize the threat posed to women (and indeed men) by violence in the street talk of the need to ‘take back the night’ rather than to look for a ‘hero’ to walk you home. Both culturally and in institutional terms this function of protection has been linked to masculinity.

There are, of course, some pragmatic reasons for this. After all, the slaughter of women on the battlefield along with men would prejudice future generations. The phrase ‘women and children’ is one commonly used to symbolize the place of the female within the community—note a subordinate one, linking women with ‘dependants’. It is an important place though, because of biology and the continual demands of the state on its female and child-bearing constituencies. Women have been used by virtue of their biology to promote certain security goals. Not the least of these has been the demand to breed for empire or in the national interest. Although this may seem a rather crude formulation, it is central to understanding how states and societies after war reproduce their populations and survive. Not for nothing did Stalin demand an increase in the birth rate after the Second World War (see Case Study 11.2). In the Russian population, women were encouraged to have a high number of children as the Soviet state sought to recover from the ravaging of its population in the years of war (Kennedy-Pipe 2004). In certain states, women were denied access to birth control or abortion to promote and achieve a certain rate of reproduction (Buckley 1989). Arguably the most intimate of human activities for women were less important than the demands of male political and religious elites that women provide a functional and biological service to the state. This role of women as ‘breeders’ remains imperative for the health of many wealthy industrialized societies. In other places around the globe, the control of population and resources rests precisely on the control of population growth. President Obama much to the delight of feminist lobbies, revoked former President Bush’s ban on contraceptive supplies to the world’s largest family-planning organization, Marie Stopes International. Bush’s legislation had prejudiced the health care of women in a number of countries, including Malawi, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Tanzania,

Uganda, and Zimbabwe. The very essence of a state or a community rests upon the ability to produce the next generation safely and the ability of women to look after their health and have access to contraception, and when necessary adequate maternity care.

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CASE STUDY 11.2 Breeding for the state? The Russian malaise and a shortage of women in contemporary India.

In 1944, as victory against Germany became apparent, the Soviet authorities turned their attention to increasing the birth rate. This was an acute pressure because of wartime losses. Some twenty-four million Soviet people had died during the war. By 1946 women outnumbered men by almost twenty-six million. Because relatively few men were available to marry, the Soviet authorities encouraged women to have illegitimate children. Small allowances were made by the state to single mothers or these women could place their children in state homes without cost. Effectively, as Mary Buckley (Buckley, 1989) has shown, the state took over the financial role of the father. This was designed to prevent single women who had children by married men from disrupting his existing family and to encourage them to return to work after giving birth. The state also promoted the idea of very large families, with the introduction of decorations for motherhood. Motherhood Glory went to mothers of seven, eight, and nine children. After bearing ten children, women became 'Heroine Mother'.

The so-called women question (the emancipation of women), which had been highlighted after the Revolution by both Trotsky and Lenin, was therefore subordinated to the demands of a state recovering from war. The women 'problem' has not gone away. After the fall of Communism from 1991 onwards, the population fell by 4 per cent. By 2011 the then Prime Minister, Vladimir Putin, revealed plans to boost the Russian birth rate by at least 25–30 per cent compared to the 2006 rate. By the end of 2012, his programme of financial incentives appeared to have had some success and for the first time in the post-Cold War world, births had narrowly overtaken deaths and the population had grown by 200,000. The dip in births though during the 1990s means that there are now fewer mothers available now to give birth. The effects of Western sanctions imposed on Russia after its annexation of Crimea in 2014 also appear to have reversed the positive growth of 2012. In 2017, 10-15% fewer births were recorded in Russia than in the 12 months before. Con-

cern over the future has led to fewer children being born (Schrad 2017).

The woman problem is also now acute in India. The ratio of women to men has sunk to its lowest point since India gained independence in 1947. One reason for this has been the adoption of sex-selective abortions because culturally, socially and economically boys were more prized than girls. The shortage of brides for young men has had a number of effects. It is driving an increase in human trafficking with India's National Crime Bureau records showing that nearly 25,000 girls and women were kidnapped and sold in to marriage across the country in 2013. Ironically though the shortage of women appears to have improved the position of some socially advantaged women who can now 'pick and choose' husbands even without provision of a dowry (Raghavan 2015).

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The importance for the reproduction and survival of the state has not meant that women have necessarily been protected from physical, psychological, and emotional violence. On the contrary, patriarchy, which equates women to dependants and allows the state to 'protect' and control them, is also a crucial source of vulnerability. According to the World Health Organization, 35 per cent of women experience violence at the hands of an intimate partner (WHO 2013). In her work, Jacqui True (2012) argues that the gendered global (and domestic) political economy heightens women's vulnerability to violence. For example, the globalization of the sex and domestic labour industries has left women vulnerable around the world, while their labour is exploited not only by criminal gangs but also by their own states. True (2012) argues that in order to understand women's vulnerability to violence, we need to take into consideration the gendered political economy by clearly showing how women's economic inequality, which is produced through gendered discourses, constrains women's choice, leaving them vulnerable to violence.

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KEY POINTS

- Examining women in contemporary and historical conflicts helped bring about recognition that there are specific female issues relating to state control of biology and reproduction.
- Women are intimately affected by state policy on contraception, abortion, and marriage. Female biology is central to states' existence.

- Patriarchy has been a crucial ingredient in the construction of the global political economy.

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Practical context III: the post-conflict environment

Moving away from the peace/war dichotomy allows us to examine the gender-specific insecurities women face in the grey area of post-conflict reconstruction and peace building. Work examining the Balkan Wars in the early 1990s and the first Gulf War has revealed a degree of violence perpetrated against women by soldiers returning home from the trauma of conflict. Indeed, violence against women in general is on the increase in times of post-conflict reconstruction and when men return from war (True 2012). A claim might be made that violence against women is more prevalent both in militarized societies and within military families and that the idea that women and children are, as a matter of course, protected by male soldiers should be re-examined (Human Rights Watch 1999).

The same may be said of the post-revolutionary environment. This has become an issue of increasing importance for feminist security studies scholars in connection with the Arab Spring. As we saw, the place of women in any given social order is crucial for the security of the state and the regime. This is usually accompanied by patriarchal discourse which determines who or what the idealized 'woman' and 'man' may be. The regimes that were eventually swept up by pro-democracy demonstrators were key examples of this. At the start of the revolutions, women of these regimes (in the main educated, professional, and Westernized) took to the streets to protest against the regimes, despite the fact that these regimes had made much of the positive and protected treatment of women within their society (Johansson-Noguès 2013). In response, the regimes resorted to violence of a gendered kind. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the end of the revolutions did not bring about an increase in female political rights. Instead, the post-revolutionary order brought additional restrictions on the rights of women and a concomitant rise in violence. Elisabeth Johansson-Noguès (2013) argues that the levels of violence we are currently witnessing in states like Egypt may be interpreted as a symptom of the hyper-masculine militarized mode which the new regimes are in. This is a mode characteristic of violent circumstances like war and revolution and their aftermath. The gendered violence in the aftermath of the Arab Spring is related to forceful attempts to remake the categories of ideal woman and man. Now the ideal woman is not professional and empowered but confined in the home. What remains

constant in this account is the fact that militarism outlives war and in militarized societies women remain vulnerable to violence.

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KEY POINTS

- Theorists have usually discussed gender and security by referring to war and peace. However we need to pay attention to the post-war/conflict environment in which conditions of war and peace are increasingly blurred.
- In post-conflict militarized environments women are often the victims of what has been increasingly accepted as hyper-militarized masculine violence.

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Multiple perceptions, same realities?

We in the West have had the luxury of being able to acknowledge the problems of humankind and war at something of a distance. Since the revolution in military affairs (RMA) there has been a gradual erosion of the state's military demands on its citizens. In many democracies, the notion of the soldier as citizen has died. Even if we do not yet live in a post-heroic culture, as Edward Luttwak (1995) has claimed, war as trial by national survival is over. Western citizens live in a world where war is at a distance, our own casualties are minimized, and, as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan proved, controversial. This has changed the way in which modern militaries fight. During the Kosovo War, liberal states were able to wage a successful air war against Serbia without having to suffer a single conflict fatality. The increased use of drone strikes seems to merely follow this trend. This use of 'virtual war', to misuse Ignatieff's term, solved the problem of men, women, and war (Ignatieff 2001).

So as the nature of war has changed from one of war conducted by mass armies through defence by nuclear deterrence to 'virtual war', the role of both men and women in relation has been transformed. The West can engage in mass killing through technology with few apparent costs. This might, except at the margins, mean that debates over the relative fitness of men and women for war are irrelevant, although the decade-long war in Afghanistan has surely brought home to Western audiences the costs of counter-insurgencies. Yet there is a problem here, and it is one that is raised in much of the security literature on

women and war and development and security. The problem is, to put it bluntly, that, while gender and war in the West may have been about the 'right to fight' or the right to object to state policies fought in the name of national politics, in most of the rest of the world, men and women have fewer choices. In many parts of the globe, campaigns for women to be allowed to fight and die in national armies would seem bizarre. While war may be sanitized for those of us living in the West, women (and indeed men and children) in war zones such as Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Iraq, or Latin America are victims of, are witnesses of, may participate in, but almost certainly seek to remove themselves from, war and violence. This may even take the form of suicide. Self-immolation by women has been a feature of Afghan life since 2001. Conflict in these cases is rarely about the historical contract between the individual and the central authorities but a battle for individual, familial, or communal survival in a local patch. Add into this the complexities of what are now known as soft security issues, **AIDS**, illegal trading of people, and economic hardship, and our understanding of gender as a divide between men and women must be elaborated upon to provide a more complex picture of what it means to a man or a woman in a specific time and place.

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KEY POINTS

- The wars and conflicts which have occurred in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen and Syria have once again reminded us of the complexity of what happens to men and women once fighting begins.
- We have become keenly aware of the challenges of ensuring human rights for men and for women in post-conflict situations.

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Conclusion

The traditional literature on security largely ignored the issue of gender. It was implicit in most of the literature on war and security that gender produced different roles for men and women. In short, boys would have 'toys' (weapons) and girls would have 'dolls'. Women as a category were ignored and on the whole were regarded either as unfit for service in war or as unsuited for leadership or in some cases even citizenship. While men were warriors, women were depicted as passive in terms of security issues. Women did, however, serve the purposes of nationalist causes, with nationalism often presented in highly gendered and female

terms. Female symbols of statehood were and remain a characteristic of many modern states.

Feminist and critical security investigations into the state, war, and security allowed us in the 1980s and 1990s to go beyond the rather simple categories of men/warrior/protector and women/mother/protected. What the feminist literature did was to alert us to a series of consequences that state security policies had for women. More recent writings on the subject have also alerted us to the effect of gendered and racial discourses for the security of both men and women in the war zones of Iraq and Afghanistan and the other combats zone of the war on terror, from Abu Ghraib to Waziristan.

Looking beyond the insecurities of war and combat and focusing on 'peace' we can also see that patriarchy allowed states to control the biology of women to construct certain state policies. Women might be coerced or persuaded to produce children for the state. They might, for example, not be allowed access to abortion or contraception depending on the whim or needs of the central authorities. The feminist and gender literature allowed us to rethink notions of security that have dominated the realist understandings of international relations. It allowed us to ask key questions that include the questioning of core certainties of international relations such as the notion of state power. What does power actually mean for men and women, both within the state and outside? What might citizenship mean for men and women? What might war mean? Crucially, how do men and women relate to issues of security? Do they in fact define and interpret security differently? In a more positive fashion, we also learnt that women might organize themselves to protest against state policy and certain facets of nationalism. However, there are still areas of huge contestation. One needs only think about the issue of religion. Many states have 'liberated' women from what may be deemed traditional religious values such as the wearing of the veil. Yet, what may be radical shifts in the daily lives of women inevitably complicate their identities in various social situations and does not necessarily lead to women having a choice in either their public or private lives (see Corcoran-Nantes 2005).

Perhaps, the most telling and pertinent feature of recent literature is that 'gender' is a way of unlocking security concerns, allowing us to see that gender as a category is a social construction. That is, the way men and women act or react may be a product of sexual difference but may be a product of gender, while at the same time it is also a product of circumstance. We should ask, therefore, how both men and women in different contexts relate to local, regional, and international security apparatus. Is it the case that security poli-

cies, as some feminists have claimed, always privilege men and always discriminate against women? Or is it that we need to understand that men are not always or simply leaders, warriors, or the oppressors of women and women are not always the victims of security apparatus?

‘ Gender—in all its forms and with all its complexities—affects many things other than security, and security—in its turn, and however it is understood—is dependent on many things other than gender. But, as we hope to have shown, trying to understand either without an appreciation of the role of the other results in an impoverished understanding of both. Understanding, of course, does not necessarily lead to any change in practice, but it is an assumption that governs any reasoned (and reasonable) politics that it must be a first step.

QUESTIONS

1. What does gender mean?
2. What difference does it make to ask ‘where are the women?’
3. Why have Liberal states admitted women to the Front Line?
4. Why does rape occur in every conflict zone?
5. Does a warrior have to be male??
6. How have the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan highlighted the complexities of the gender question in international relations?
7. What can be done to ensure the safety of the vulnerable in post-conflict situations?
8. What role can and should international organizations play in ensuring the physical and mental health of women in places of conflict?
9. Do armed drone strikes make women safer than traditional modes of warfare?
10. How should we think about female terrorists?

FURTHER READING

- Enloe, Cynthia (1989), *Bananas, Bases and Beaches: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*, London: Pinter. This is in many ways one of the original and still most important readings

of feminist international relations. Enloe was amongst the first to pose and answer the question ‘Where are the women in international politics?’ Enloe alerted us to the fact that women occupy multiple roles in security, diplomacy, trade, and local and regional politics.

- Rachel Woodward and Claire Duncanson, *The Palgrave International Handbook of Gender and the Military* London:Palgrave Macmillan, 2017. This is a comprehensive collection of essays which examine the various dimensions of men, women and the military in the world of 2017 and beyond. Examining issues such as gender and COIN and gendered representations of military death this edited book updates scholarly thinking on gender and conflict.

WEBSITES

- www.unwomen.org Follow the work of the UN in promoting equality and the empowerment of women globally. Follow at UN Women (@un_women) twitter

[www://hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org). For an up to date analysis of women and armed conflict see the work and analysis of Human Rights Watch.

www.icrc.org. See the International Committee of the Red Cross on issues of women in zones of conflict.

<Insert ORC Icon>**Visit the Online Resource Centre that accompanies this book for lots of interesting additional material: www.oxfordtextbooks.co.uk/orc/collins4e/**

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