



The Construction of Masculinity in International Relations

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ABSTRACT. International politics is characterized by a lack of women. The few women holding high political positions are more likely to be criticized and judged based upon, what the author calls, 'the construction of masculinity in international relations'. Tracing the origin and logic of this construction, the article critiques the dominant theories of international relations (namely, realism and liberalism) and argues for the aptness of a radical feminist social constructivist approach to the study of international politics. The article also illuminates the strong focus on men and men's perspectives of these influential mainstream theories on their conception and interpretation of war. An examination of the concept of war reveals how masculinity and femininity are portrayed on matters of war and national security and what side effects this has on women in politics, particularly women with political positions.

Introduction

Three waves of feminist movements have left their marks. Unlike their foremothers, today's women enjoy equal rights and opportunities in many parts of the world. Especially in the most developed countries, women are more independent and better educated than ever before in history. But there still is a significant gap between the felt and the actual gender equality. The mission of gender equality cannot be regarded accomplished.

According to the Global Gender Gap Report, women earn less than men in every country in the world, even in the same job position (Hausmann et al. 2010: 10).¹ Female employment is generally lower than men's, even in Scandinavia where the differences between women's and men's employment rates of 4.8 percentage points are the lowest in the whole of Europe. In other parts of Europe, these figures are much higher, with a difference of 17.7 in Germany and up to 28.5 percentage points in Italy, which is the European country with the biggest difference in employment rates (Pfarr 2002: 32). Emancipation of women might not have come as far as the broad-based and long-term view on gender equality as supported by the mainstream.

This fact is very apparent, especially in the political sphere. The Global Gender Gap Report 2010 also notes that gender equality in areas of political empowerment and representation is particularly low, as compared with other spheres like health or education, even in countries with the highest overall score. Iceland, for example, being rated the most equal country with an overall score of 0.8496 (of possible 1.0 indicating total equality), only reaches a score of 0.6748 in the sphere of political empowerment. This seems quite low compared to the scores in other spheres like education (1.0), health and survival (0.9696) and even economic partici-

pation and opportunity (0.7540). Considering that Iceland's score is by far the highest of all countries it seems solid to conclude that reaching gender equality is particularly challenging in the political sphere. Furthermore, this paper is based on the impression that particularly when it comes to hard politics in the media, to matters of war and peace, almost exclusively a male domain appears. To investigate whether this impression can be backed up by empirical evidence, the focus is set on political positions in which decisions about war and peace and national security are chiefly made—specifically, Heads of State such as Presidents or Heads of Government such as Prime Ministers.² The Ministers of Foreign, Military or Defence departments are also taken into account.³

Taking a closer look at the Heads of State and Heads of Government, the dominance of men is striking. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (2010) there are only nine female Heads of State out of 151 in total. Female Heads of Government are only 11 out of 192. The fact that only 6% of female Heads of State and 5.7% of Heads of Government are opposed by 94% and 94.3%, respectively, of men in leading political positions is a very clear indication of male domination in high politics. Similarly, small are the numbers of female Foreign and Defence Ministers. The government departments that are most frequently represented by female ministers are those concerned with social affairs, family, children, elderly, women's affairs, education, and culture. In the department of Foreign Affairs, the number of women-led ministries is much lower. Only 40 of 188 countries taken into consideration have women as Foreign Ministers, amounting to less than 21%. When it comes to the departments directly related to the military sphere, the ones dealing with Defence or Veteran Affairs, the underrepresentation of women is even more striking. Women lead only 11 of the 188 countries' Defence departments, amounting to less than 6%. Apparently, not much has changed since the 1990s when J. Ann Tickner (1992), a leading scholar in the field of women in international relations, noted:

In 1987, women constituted less than 5 percent of the senior foreign ranks, and ... less than 4 percent of the executive positions in the Department of Defence were held by women.

Over thirty years later there are still not more female leaders and women in positions to decide upon war and peace. But the 'occasional head of state' (Tickner 1992: 1) that we run across every so often is not enough to make women visible in international politics and it is certainly not enough to make sure male and female perspectives are considered in processes of international decision-making.

The impression of a specific lack of women in high political positions related to international relations has been proven right. On top of that, women are not only underrepresented, but the few who hold high political positions also face particular problems and are frequently confronted with doubts on their competence. Regardless of sheer quantity, which would be almost impossible to measure, the critique on women in high political positions concerning national security is of different quality. An assumed lack of competence would be linked to the gender of the female politician in question, more often than their male counterparts. Again, a comparison between today and thirty years ago shows that not much has changed. In 1985, Donald Regan, Chief of Staff in the Ronald Reagan administration, told the Washington Post that women in general would not be able to understand the issues discussed on the upcoming Superpower Summit in Geneva. Regan argued that women were 'not going to understand [missile] throw-weights or what is happening in Afghanistan or what is happening in human rights' (cf. Tickner 1992: 2).

Over thirty years later, many of the doubts and criticisms that female politicians encounter would still be linked to their gender—as the cases of the likes of Angela Merkel and Hillary Clinton show. For instance, during the first years of Merkel's political career, her qualification was questioned merely on the basis of her gender. In the years to follow, critics were not

concerned with her political performance itself but solely with the fact of her being a woman. As Rita Süßmuth (2005), former President of the German Bundestag, put it:

Take the media coverage on Angela Merkel. There ... was more discussion on her haircut, her outward appearance, facial expression, ... etc. than on her actual political work. And how many times did the question emerge: Is the girl⁴ actually able to do it? Is she qualified? These are questions that would never have been asked regarding a man. In so far we are still experiencing unequal evaluation criteria very often. (Süßmuth 2005; cf. Koch 2007: 146)

All in all, it is much harder for women both to reach and be accepted in high political positions particularly where decisions of national security are made and matters of war and peace are discussed. Compared to other spheres of social life such as in the sectors of education and health, the sphere of high politics has been proven to be one of men-domination to an even higher degree.

Why is Female Leadership so Difficult When it Comes to National Security?

From a feminist perspective, the lack of women in leading political positions cannot be traced back to gender specific attributes or female inability of any kind. The alleged biological and deterministic voices about the nature of men and women are rejected. Sociobiologists never tire to emphasize that the source of typical male or female behaviour goes back to the old, simple question of 'who went hunting in the Stone Age'; and they conclude that men as hunters turned out strong and aggressive while women as gatherers turned out nice and chatty. Assuming that the human brain might have developed quite a bit since then, one can still imagine various other reasons.

An important factor could be that women of the generation(s) that have benefited the most from the feminist movements in the 1970s have not yet come of age to hold high political positions. Thus, it seems that the lack of women in these critical political positions would vanish in the upcoming decades. But while this prognosis sounds inviting, it is still not very likely to come true. As mentioned earlier, the involvement of women in other spheres of social life is higher and, according to the Global Gender Gap Report, has also been rising significantly faster than in the political sphere.

Furthermore, the supposition that culture is an influential factor is not empirically supported. The nine female Heads of State and the 11 Heads of Government mentioned before can be found in any part of the world, even in countries that are believed to be shaped by a rather patriarchal culture or religion.⁵

Having discounted the biological, generational, and cultural factors that have been identified by many observers as reasons obstructing women leadership in national security portfolio, we are here left with one pertinent question: Why are women least represented and least accepted in foreign and military policy decision-making?

The Construction of Masculinity in International Relations

I take as point of departure the assumption that the distinctive lack of women in the sphere of international politics in general and the below average representation in the associated political positions (such as Presidents, Prime Ministers, Foreign and Defence Ministers) in particular are due to the way the field of international relations is constructed by theories and consequently perceived by public opinion. Theory and reality interact. Theories are not only describing and explaining reality; they are also influencing and even forming it. This thought, generally known as the concept of reflexivity, has occupied many scholars, the first being the

American sociologist William Isaac Thomas (1928: 572) who was credited this quote: 'If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences'.

The idea that what is once defined as true becomes true was supplemented to the assumption of a 'self-fulfilling prophecy' by sociologist Robert King Merton, who coined this expression in 1948, and continued among others by Karl Popper, who called it the 'Oedipus effect'. On this basis, I argue that the reason for women having an especially tough time reaching and being accepted in the field of foreign and military policy-making is due to the construction and perception of the field itself. The whole sphere of international politics theory (mainly, realism and liberalism) and practice (broadly speaking, war and peace and diplomacy, deterrence and nuclear threats, national bargain and hard politics) are characterized by a high degree of gender-blindness, if not an exclusive concentration and focus on men's perspectives. The construction of and focus on masculinity in international relations is the reason why femininity is hardly wanted nor found in it.

The expectations on the few women in positions of international political affairs are associated with manhood and masculinity, and not with femininity. The constructed masculinity against which female politicians are measured is a hyper-masculinity that most men themselves would not be able to meet if they were evaluated according to it to the same extent as women in their position. In other words, hyper-masculinity is something that is unattainable. This concept is well captured in what the sociologist R.W. Connell (2005) terms *hegemonic masculinity*, which is 'not ... normal in the statistical sense; only a minority of men might enact it. But it was certainly normative. It embodied the currently most honored way of being a man' (Connell 2005: 832). Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity thus describes the dominant and most socially accepted and wanted form of masculinity. Similar to my understanding as some kind of hyper masculinity, hegemonic masculinity is 'correlated with what might be called macho masculinity and exemplified by fictional characters in films such as Rambo, Rocky and the Terminator' (Wetherell and Edley 1999: 340)—thus, associated with attributes like authority, dominance, physical strength, and toughness. These attributes do not correspond with the personality of most men. But other than women, whose deviation from the norm is obviously physical in form of their biological sex, men are less likely to be judged upon their conformity. On the contrary, women are much more prone to be measured as to whether they meet the requirements; hence, they are more often confronted with doubts about their competence in the field of international politics that is highly characterized by masculinity.

The next sections examine the hypothesis of a constructed and dominant masculinity in international relations and how this has become evident. The following discussions do not deal with solutions for this dilemma or ideas on how the lack of women in both the academic and practical sphere of international politics can be eliminated or overcome since many feminist scholars in international relations have already done thorough studies on these issue areas (see, for example, Elshain 1995; Enloe 1983; Tickner 1992).

Theoretical Approach

To start with the investigation, the most traditional and influential theories of international relations, namely realism and liberalism, is introduced to show which thoughts have shaped the construction and perception of the field. This is followed with an outline of how these two theories, being of both rationalist and positivist nature, differ from the constructivist approach in international relations. Against this background, social constructivism opens up a variety of new perspectives (including feminism) and promotes new ideas (such as the possibility of a social construction of reality) as part of this article's hypothesis.

The classical theories of international relations dealt with in this section are realism and liberalism, even though I am aware of the fact that there are more theories and sub-theories within the academic discipline. The focus, however, is on the more classical theories, to show what kind of thought has shaped the field of international relations the most and what ideas have led to the de facto exclusion of women. Hence, the intention of the following discussion is to reveal the faults, and not to present solutions or strategies that many rather new approaches to international relations like post-colonialism or Marxism would provide.

Even within the broad schools of realism and liberalism there can be diversity of opinions. They are not in fact as homogenous as they might appear in my short description. But the disagreements and discussions within these broad schools of thought are not exactly of importance to the purpose of this paper. Therefore, the focus is on the very core assumptions of each presented theory.

Realism, with its ancient philosophical heritage and long tradition going back to early modern scholars like Niccolò Machiavelli and Thomas Hobbes, is 'widely regarded as the most influential theoretical tradition in international relations, even by its harshest critics' (Burchill 2001: 70).⁶ After the Second World War and during the Cold War, realism became the dominant theory of international relations, influencing both political practice and the perception on international relations as an academic discipline. Regardless of the differences between classical realism of Hans Morgenthau and the neo-realism of Kenneth Waltz (1979), they share some core assumptions. Both assume the world of international politics to be of conflictual nature and characterized by anarchy, thus a world in which no superior power exists that could impose sanctions and guard international law of any kind. The main actors are sovereign nation states acting in their own interest with no higher power to restrict them, which leads to a situation that Waltz (1979: 102) describes as follows: 'Because some states may at any time use force, all states must be prepared to do so.... Among states, the state of nature is a state of war.' The constant need for power accumulation and military strength, which every state assumes as essential for its survival in an anarchic world, can again be a cause of conflict by producing a power-security dilemma that can end in arms race (Buzan 1991).

A different picture is produced by theories that belong to a rather liberal thinking—notably, classical liberalism, liberal intergovernmentalism of Andrew Moravcsik, regime theory of Stephen Krasner, and complex interdependence theory of Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye. These various strands of liberalism suggest that despite anarchy there are opportunities for cooperation, interaction, and even trust between states. Economic interdependence, collaboration, and 'highly institutionalized' international regimes can facilitate cooperation, trust and a neutralization of the security dilemma when they 'specify strict patterns of behavior and insure that no one cheats' (Stein 1983: 129). Liberalism, unlike realism, does not see states as unitary actors, but sets apart different kinds of states, all driven by different interests. Liberal theories also emphasize the importance of including non-state actors into the picture.

Apparently, gender has not been the focus of attention in international relations theories, be it realism and neo-realism or the different schools of liberalism. The titles of the most influential publications of realism and liberalism⁷ are telling of the core elements of international relations, namely: state, power, struggle, war, fear, peace, power politics, and man.⁸ Even though I know that 'man' is an equivalent for mankind (as in humankind) it still indicates that when it comes to war and power, experiences of men are erroneously assumed to be the ones of humankind, the ones that count, or as Simone de Beauvoir (1974: 134) puts it:

Representation of the world, like the world itself, is the work of men; they describe it from their own point of view, which they confuse with absolute truth.

Classical theories of international relations are characterized by a focus on war and reflect men's experiences only. Their orientation is heavily criticized by feminist scholars as being

‘one of the most gender-blind, indeed crudely patriarchal of all the institutionalized forms of contemporary social and political analysis’ (Walker 1992: 179).

An evaluation of the effects of the long dominance of these war- and man-fixated theories can be effectively done through the application of constructivist theories, whose difference from traditional theories lies in their core assumptions.

Realism and liberalism are both based on the assumption of purely interest-driven behaviour on the part of the involved actors. Realism, in particular, regards nation-states as the sole political actors that act on rational and self-interest, in which interests are assumed to be of pre-social origin. In rationalist theories, like realism, social interaction is not considered an important determinant of interest formation, as it is already formed as well as universal to all states. This point is criticized by constructivist scholars: ‘Like neorealists, neoliberals treat state interests as exogenous to interstate interaction, and see no need for a theory of interest formation’ (Reus-Smit 2001: 213).

These assumptions of rational-choice and *homo oeconomicus* are opposed to a norm-oriented *homo sociologicus* on which constructivist theories are based. *Homo sociologicus* is a sociological term emphasizing that humans are social beings with their actions, behaviour and decisions being formed by social discourse and interaction. From a constructivist point of view, actor’s preferences do not follow the *logic of consequentiality*, but the *logic of appropriateness*. These post-rational assumptions, originated in sociological theories, create the basis for constructivism. The hypothesis of a masculine construction of international politics (i.e., the general assumption that the field like any spheres of human interaction is in some ways socially constructed and not pre-socially given) is only possible on a post-rational basis.

Another basic assumption dividing realism and liberalism from constructivism is the one of *positivism*.⁹ The concept of positivism, as it was first formulated by French philosopher August Comte in the middle of the 19th century, states that ‘valid [i.e., for science] should only be what is positively demonstrable and what can be empirically measured’ (cf. Schülein and Reitze 2005: 108). Anything else, according to Comte, would be speculative and had nothing to do with proper science. Together with the limitation of scientific work on the interpretation of *positive findings* (a term borrowed from the natural sciences) comes the concentration on the explanatory part of science away from understanding (for example, in the humanities departments).

Moving away from this rigorous positivism as in Comte was Karl Popper (1902-1994), regarded as the founding father of critical *rationalism*. Still, Popper holds on to the basic positivist paradigm that of interest for science is only what can be seen and measured. Humanities and social sciences in particular, such as the then newly emerging discipline of sociology that relies on a variety of methods and procedures, including interpretative and qualitative ones, opposed Popper and his critical rationalism. In their eyes, science was neither neutral nor could it be limited to quantitative methods (Schülein and Reitze 2005: 159). Evolving from this critique, the so called *positivism dispute* in German sociology since the 1960s arose between Karl Popper and the supporters of critical rationalism, on one side, and Theodor W. Adorno and Jürgen Habermas as representatives of the Frankfurt School Critical Theory, on the other. The two main disagreements were about methodology, with the Frankfurt School denying the exclusivity of quantitative methods, and the problem of value judgments (*Werturteilsstreit*) which, as Habermas and Adorno argued, inescapably influenced any scientific research. The Frankfurt Schools rejected the postulate of *Werturteilsfreiheit*¹⁰ and put the focus back on the problem of reflexivity. They emphasized again that there is always interaction between theory and reality, especially between research and researcher, and called for ‘a reflexive and critical self-positioning of the scholars in relation to practice and subject of research’ (Behrens 2009: 212).

With the renewal of reflexivity, they made important additions to the field of sociology. They argued that the world is only as it seems because we see it that way. Reality cannot, as it is understood in positivism, be detached from values, ideas, and subjectivity because there are subjects living in it, seeing it with their eyes, and even changing it through their existence.

By outlining the concepts of rationalism and positivism, two important aspects have been revealed, which should be considered in every academic research and that are particularly important to this article. Firstly, as post-rationalists emphasize, reality is never pre-socially or exogenously given, rather it is the result of human interaction and social discourse. From this perspective, the lack of women in politics would not be rooted in biological differences between men and women, but in the way we see politics and the way we see women—hence, the social patterns that have evolved through human interaction. Secondly, therefore, when people are the subject and object of analysis, academic research cannot be restricted to empiricism. Science cannot focus solely on what we are able to see and measure, as for example human actions and behaviour, but it has to include the ideas, values, and norms that stand behind them.

Most constructivist scholars agree on a core assumption that: Reality is not accessible as such. The world, as it appears, is rather constructed through the way we interact, through the shared ideas we have about the world, and through the way we experience our environment (Ulbert 2006: 409). Or, in the words of Berger and Luckmann (1966: 52), the founding fathers of constructivism: ‘Social order is a human product, or more precisely, an ongoing human production’.

This core thought of social constructivism is of enormous importance to gender studies, feminist theories, and feminism as such, even though the impact might differ depending on which kind of feminism is concerned because, as always, there are various, even contrasting, forms within the broad concept of feminism. They can be divided into three very broad ways of thinking: differential or equalizing (also: radical) feminism and the rather new school of deconstructing gender. All of them differ in their very core assumptions.

Differential feminists assume that there are fundamental differences between men and women due to their biological nature that cannot be changed. In their view, the biological sex influences the gender; both of them are unchangeably linked and thus determined. On the contrary, there is radical feminism, in which line of thought I have argued so far. Radical or equalizing feminists believe that the different roles men and women play in society are not due to profound biological differences, but to gender-related socialization and division-of-labour and thus constructed, an idea which is summed up in this one famous quote by Simone de Beauvoir (1974: 267): ‘One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.’

A concept central to radical feminism that has already been mentioned is the one of gender, referring to the social and psychological sex of a person as opposed to their biological sex. Tickner (1992: 7) defines gender as:

[A] set of culturally shaped and defined characteristics associated with masculinity and femininity.... In this view, biology may constrain behavior, but it should not be used too ‘deterministically’.

Gender in radical feminism is thus a term intending to conquer the thought of biological determinism and emphasize the socially constructed nature of gender roles. Spike Peterson (1994: 194) adds another aspect to the term by referring to gender as a ‘systematic social construction that *dichotomizes* identities, behaviors, and expectations as masculine and feminine’ [emphasis mine]. She emphasizes that, in theoretical construction and public perception, the concentration and insistence on a strict dichotomy of gender is very strong. The way gender is culturally shaped (through norms, discourse, etc.) does not seem too permeable or flexible, but rather inextricably linked to norms and social expectations. The dichotomy in gender is also apparent in the terms *masculinity* and *femininity*, which are central concepts to

this article. They are characterized as ‘gender terms’, ‘not [describing] natural characteristics’ and are therefore, as gender itself, understood to be socially constructed’ (Steans 2006: 8).

A relatively new school of thought in feminism is concerned with the deconstruction of gender. Judith Butler, the best-known representative and author of ‘gender troubles’, and other supporters of feminist deconstructionism take the theory of radical feminism another step forward. Other than radical feminists who distinguish between the given sex and the constructed gender, feminist deconstructionists claim that it is not only gender, but also sex, characterized by strict dichotomy, is a social construction. Instead of classifying people as either man or woman, this theory turns its attention to the differences between individuals. Assumed gender identities and common features are dissolved and deconstructed. Many aspects of the deconstructivist approach will find their way into this article’s analysis and conclusion. They are part of the solution, as the following analysis will show. However, radical feminism remains the theoretical basis of the analysis in this article because an examination of masculinity and femininity against the backdrop of deconstructivist thoughts is, strictly speaking, neither sensible nor possible.

The Masculinity of War and Combat

As has been demonstrated in the preceding discussions, the political sphere is generally a world of men—a fact that has caught the attention of many feminist scholars like Tickner (1992: 6) who argues that ‘politics and masculinity have a long and close association’.

Lack of women is apparent in international politics. Share of women decreases the closer the political position in question is related to national security and defence policy (that is to say, less than 6% of the world’s Defence Ministers are women). This suggests that the bond between masculinity and international politics is particularly tight when it comes to national security issues which, according to Tickner (1992: 5), is due to the fact that the ‘foreign and military policy-making has been largely conducted by men’, including both the decision-making by politicians and the actual execution by diplomats and soldiers. Because politicians and diplomats as well as soldiers have for a very long time been exclusively men, the concentration on men’s experiences is nowhere as apparent as it is in the concepts of war and security, fields that have been traditionally given very high priority in international politics as well as in theories of international relations. As Tickner (1992: 10) rightly notes: ‘Central concern of realism, the dominant paradigm in IR since 1945, has been with issues of war and national security’.

One can thus conclude that chiefly in the ‘heartland of the discipline of International Relations’ (Pettman 1996: 87) only men’s experiences have been included into the picture. The definition of war as an ‘intermediate armed conflict with more than 1000 battle-related deaths’ is particularly popular in the USA (Singer and Small 1972: 381). It supports the assumption that the picture of war is highly dominated by soldier’s and thus mostly men’s experiences. What is not taken into account is that approximately 90% of war victims are actually civilians, with the majority being women and children. Women’s experiences of war did not and still do not play an important role in the theorization and perception of the field. As Enloe (1983: ix) observes:

[M]ilitary history ... is written as though women didn’t exist, as though the Second World War ... depended solely on men in war rooms and in the trenches, as though my mother didn’t need to be mentioned at all.

Experiences particularly concerning women—like the resort to rape and sexual violence as tools of war and psychological warfare—are of less importance to the picture of war. As a consequence, a historical fact is systematically neglected: for instance, the fact that during and

in the aftermath of the Second World War, millions of women of all involved nationalities suffered repeated rape, mass rape, forced prostitution, and other forms of sexual violence by members of the Wehrmacht and the SS as well as the Red Army and, to a certain extent, the Allied Forces. Historians estimate that just in the area of East Germany some two million German women were raped after the defeat of the Wehrmacht in 1945 (Nawratil 2002: 121), which is often ascribed to the 'desire for revenge for the crimes committed by German soldiers in the Soviet Union' (Bruhns 2005: 85). This case is not isolated. During the Second World War, sexual war crimes were committed on almost every nation involved in the war. For example, Japanese armed forces kidnapped an estimate of 200,000 women and girls from East Asia to the battlegrounds to serve as sex slaves—the so-called 'Comfort Women'. To those who have visited concentration camps—such as Sachsenhausen, Buchenwald, and Auschwitz—they know that these camps included brothels that were built on instruction of Heinrich Himmler of the SS to ensure 'work motivation'. Hundreds of women were forced to prostitution, none of them were even financially compensated for forced labour (Caplan 2010: 82-108). Not only in concentration camps did the German army build brothels, but also in all war zones from the Soviet Union to France, all of them filled with kidnapped and raped women who were forced to prostitution. The amount of convictions for these sexual crimes, however, is suspiciously low. From over 17 million soldiers of the Wehrmacht until 1944, only 5,349 were sentenced and punished for committing sex crimes as opposed to 1.5 million convictions for desertion or purposive self-mutilation (Bruhns 2005: 84). These are facts suggesting that the violation of women was considered less serious than the violation of honour and patriotism. The fact that rape was committed by all involved armies might be a reason why sexual violence, especially during the Second World War, was accepted as some kind of collateral damage, even though it is actually to be considered a tactic of warfare.

During the war in Bosnia, about 50 years later, an estimated 20,000 women were raped, resulting in only 27 convictions. The 64,000 rape cases in Sierra Leone followed six convictions, and the 500,000 rape cases in Rwanda with only eight convictions. All these cases show that sexual war crimes did not only happen during the Second World War, but a characteristic of war itself—characteristics that are generally disregarded. Moreover, the small number of convictions suggests that sexual war crimes are still left unpunished for the greater part. But there have been some changes. In 1998, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda condemned rape as an act of genocide and only lately, in 2009, the UN Security Council introduced Resolution 1888 which condemns conflict-related rape and sexual violence as a war tool.

The facts produced in this passage show very clearly who seems to matter to the perception and the concept of war and who does not; whose experiences are considered to be of importance and whose are not. An almost exclusively 'female' aspect of war has been hidden, hushed, or trivialized; while men, as soldiers and politicians, have been in the centre of attention. But whenever women made an appearance in war-related contexts, if these topics are addressed at all, women would be portrayed and perceived as victims, passive, and exposed to assumed male aggression. Against this backdrop, is it surprising that women have a tough time gaining acceptance in international politics and war-related policy areas?

In contrast to women, men have always played an active part in international politics, both in the decision-making process and the execution. Some even believe that there is 'male exclusivity to combat' per se and that women are not suitable for soldiering and combats (e.g., Fukuyama 1998; cf. Steans 2006: 49). Fukuyama (1998: 24-20), a political scientist and author of *The End of History* claims that 'toughness and aggression in international politics' are necessary. He believes that women are more peaceful. Other scholars also associate women with 'peace and nurture' (e.g., Pettman 1996: 92). Thus, since women lack the so-called suitable traits for war and combat, they must be kept excluded from military affairs.

Fukuyama adds that men in general are, by nature, prone to violence and he traces this predisposition to the Paleolithic Age. Bringing up the well-known argument that men were hunters, Fukuyama claims that for this particular reason they are still (note: thousands of years later!) more aggressive than women. Fukuyama is thus pessimistic about the role of women in political leadership. The problem with this view, however, is that Fukuyama ‘worries a little that the female, and hence *over-kindly*, heads of state who arise in the northern democracies will be a poor match for the macho young males whom he expects to dominate the south’ (Ehrenreich and Pollitt 1999, emphasis mine).

In an extraordinary combination of sexism and racism, Fukuyama describes female political leaders as soft and charming Heads of State who need to be protected from macho males from the South because they themselves would not be able to deal with them (Tickner 1999: 6). Fukuyama’s article was not published in the 1950s; a well-known political scientist has recently expressed these ideas. This demonstrates how the hegemonic model of masculinity is maintained and re-assured in dissociation of both women and, what Connell (2005: 834) calls, ‘subordinate masculinities’.

This kind of association of women with peace does not only appear in the theoretical discourse, it also reveals itself in the case of actual female politicians like Carme Chacón who was inaugurated as Spanish Defence Minister in 2008. She herself states that her inauguration can actually change how the army is perceived: ‘It shows that the army doesn’t just have to fulfill this masculine role of force. It can be more feminine, more humanitarian’ (Chacón 2008; cf. Abend 2008). This statement has induced a high-ranking officer to tell the newspaper *El País*: ‘We will receive her with ... respect ... and perhaps a little more delicacy’ (Chacón 2008; cf. Abend 2008).

Even though Chacón and the emphasis that is put on gender equality by the Spanish government is certainly a model to follow for other states, these quotes and statements leave an ambivalent picture. Creating her image as a female and hence humanitarian and peaceful minister, Chacón actually triggers the impression of herself being protectable and less assertive. The persistent and commonly accepted association of women with peace, as expressed in both theoretical and public discourse, and the characterization as *over-kind*, protectable and rather passive as opposed to men as active, tough, and, aggressive, damages women’s credibility as actors of international politics. This kind of stereotyping must lead to the conclusion that:

[E]ven women who have experience in foreign policy issues are perceived as being too emotional and too weak for the tough life-and-death decisions required for the nation’s defence. (Tickner 1992: 3)

Unfortunately, these gender stereotypes—that is, ‘the beliefs people hold about members of the categories man or woman’ (Archer and Lloyd 2002: 19) like the image that men are violent and dominant, whilst women are peaceful and nurturing—are still widespread and commonly shared as shown in many surveys (Brovermann et al. 1972; Archer and Lloyd 2002; Kasten 2003; Eckes 1997).

Conclusion

This article started with the observation that men dominate the political sphere, more than any other areas of social life. The absence of women is particularly manifested in the affairs of international politics and matters of national security. Besides being underrepresented, female politicians are also evaluated differently and questioned more intensively than men. I have argued that this is largely due to the way the field of international relations, specifically the

military realm, is theoretically constructed and thus perceived by public opinion as something inseparable from masculinity. This assumption has been confirmed in the analysis.

In the theoretical part of my analysis, I observed that traditional and influential theories of international relations such as realism and liberalism are both characterized by a strong focus on the military aspect of international politics. The concept of war itself proves to be highly gendered in the sense that it only includes men's experiences into the picture since only men have been active participants in both its decision-making and execution. Through this, a very male picture of war has been constructed, containing a strong focus on soldier's experiences. Men are the norm, both as soldiers and as politicians—a norm in which every woman in the field is adjudged or subjected to.

What can be done to change this situation? From a constructivist point of view, 'reality' is not accessible as such, it is always constructed through the way we interact, and through shared norms and values and ideas we have. Where should we then start if not from our own heads? A change of norms, values, and ideas eventually brings about material change. So, if we wanted more than just an occasional head of state, more than just a tolerated alien in a political world of men domination, there are three tasks ahead.

The first will be that international relations as an academic field has to break away (even more) from its high concentration on war that has persisted for decades through the clear *interpretational sovereignty* of theories such as realism and liberalism. Since the army has and continues to be male-dominated in most countries, giving exclusive attention to the military sphere of international politics means giving attention to men predominately. It also means losing track of the vast issues of international politics that do not concern war at all—for example, human rights, environmental issues, as well as a broad range of actors like non-governmental organizations and transnational corporations. Approaches such as post-colonialism and feminism should thus continue to play an important part in international relations.

The second aspect that has to change in our minds is the common link of war with aggression, an association also made by Fukuyama when he concludes about the alleged male aggression's suitability for combat. This simplification does not meet the complexity and strategic nature of modern warfare or as social theorist Robin Fox put it:

Even the most primitive of wars is a complicated, orchestrated, highly organized act of human imagination and intelligence.... By the time we get to the large-scale wars of history, the aggressive component is even more reduced, and the logistical factors by far dominate the violent. (cf. Ehrlich 2000: 253)

Thus, even if men were generally more aggressive and prone to violence, it would still be 'a large step from what may be biologically innate leaning toward individual aggression to ... institutionalized group warfare' (Ehrenreich and Pollitt 1999). Dissolving the bond between the military and aggression would not only do justice to the army and the soldiers, who after all do not run around shooting people randomly, but also fulfill tasks like disaster relief and humanitarian interventions. Without the supposedly aggressive aspect of the army, which girls are brought up to avoid even more than boys, perhaps even more women would join the army, making soldiers' experiences more human's than only men's experiences.

What has to change in the third place is the kind of gender stereotyping that labels men as generally aggressive. Men are biologically not fundamentally more prone to violence and war. On the contrary, scholars emphasize that the 'male appetite for battles has always been far less voracious than either biologically inclined theorists of war or army commanders might like' which has led men through all Western history to self-mutilation and desertion to avoid participating war (Ehrenreich and Pollitt 1999). As stated before, 1.5 million soldiers of the Wehrmacht alone were convicted on these charges before 1944 (Bruhns 2005: 84). If men were born as aggressive killing machines why would that happen and why would so many

soldiers suffer from post-traumatic stress disorders? On the other side, also the assumption of women being generally more peaceful than men is not backed up by empirical evidence. On the contrary, there is historical evidence that male monopoly on warfare is not as eternal and universal as the likes of Fukuyama believes it to be, but rather it is a question of culture and social interaction.

Not least because of these examples of how men and women are not able or willing to fulfill the gender roles laid out for them, we should accept it as an individual task for all of us to overcome or at least question gender stereotypes when we are faced with them. Only if we start to consider people detached from their sex and regardless of their affiliated gender roles, as deconstructivist feminists do, can we see them as what they are: individuals with individual characteristics. A man can be soft and emotional, while a woman can be aggressive and dominant. Not until we break away from stereotyping can men and women have equal opportunities - even in international relations.

Notes

1. The Global Gender Gap Report, published by the World Economic Forum, is an annual report analyzing the level of gender equality concerning education and health and representation of women in the economic and political spheres. The 2010 report was written by Ricardo Hausmann from Harvard University, Laura D. Tyson from the University of California, Berkeley, and Saadia Zahidi from the World Economic Forum.
2. Only elected female Prime Ministers as Heads of Government and Presidents (with actual executive power) as Head of State, as well as Foreign and Defence Ministers are taken into account. Consequently, not included are Presidents of exclusively representative purpose as related to constitutional law, Queens (Great Britain, Denmark, Netherlands), as well as their appointed representatives—i.e., Governor Generals (e.g., St. Lucia, Antigua and Barbuda, Australia) and leaders of self-governing territories (e.g., Åland).
3. The choice of actors may look like a simplification since particularly in parliamentary democracies they do not decide on these matters on their own. In many cases the approval of different houses of parliament are needed to declare war, as enshrined in the very rigid rules and constitutions of the USA, UK, and Germany. Nevertheless, heads of state or government and ministers for defence continue to be commanders-in-chief and, therefore, play a special and outstanding role in war-related decision-making.
4. In the early years of her career, when Merkel was minister under chancellor Helmut Kohl, she was often referred to as “Kohls Mädchen” (Kohl’s girl) because she was believed to be fostered by Kohl. This is why Rita Süßmuth uses the expression ‘girl’ in this context.
5. The countries are: Argentina, Bangladesh, Chile, Croatia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, India, Ireland, Liberia, Lithuania, Mozambique, Philippines, Switzerland, and Ukraine.
6. Thucydides (c. 460 BC - c. 395 BC) and his ‘History of the Peloponnesian War’ have often been named the first work of importance to political realism.
7. For example, Morgenthau, Waltz, Mearsheimer, Keohane, Buzan, and Nye.
8. As in Waltz (2001): *Man, the State, and War*.
9. Again, I am aware that the history and development of the concept of positivism is far broader and more heterogeneous than described in this paper. I will set the focus on classical positivism of August Comte because the concept of positivism was first outlined in his work, and on critical rationalism of Karl Popper because he was involved in the positivism dispute in which the opposition of positivist thoughts gained voice.
10. The term ‘Werturteilsfreiheit’ is the German for the renunciation of, and the absence of, value judgments in scientific research. This goes back to the sociology of Max Weber.

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