

Masculinized Strategic Studies: It's Impact on the Daily Discourse of Security Policies

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Abstract: *The paper deliberates on addressing the question as to how the masculine streak in the security structure appears as “normal” and why does it get normalized in the security structure. It would look into how the shortcomings of the conventional perceptions and decision-making have impacted the national security concerns of the state as it is generally taken for granted that the national security discourses are built along the lines of masculinist high politics. The military bend of International Relations working in close quarters with disciplines like Security Studies, comes up with a subdued response to the numerous hurdles in the security of humans and the environment.*

The paper is divided into four parts; the first part attempts at looking into the background and defining the concept of “masculinity”; masculinity in international security studies and at the different variants of masculinity and the different layers of masculinist traditions that are spread across the spectrum. In the second part, the paper looks at the absorption of qualitative masculinist attributes that permeate the discipline of international security studies. In the third part, the paper examines the military bend of masculinity in security studies. The fourth and the final part of the paper talks about how the masculinist trend plays a role in promoting the gendered biases against both the male and female victims in the light of the eschewed gendered security policies.

Keywords: Masculinized Security Studies, Strategic Culture, Militarized Security, Policy-Making, Gendered Bias.

Introduction

Lucidity, strength, power and independence are such attributes which have always been credited as essential as well an integral part of the rational public men seen in the helm of public and state affairs. Such beliefs, which are also internalized by the wider world, also prepare the ground for such misguided notions to be put to practice. These set of qualities are considered “masculine” and have been associated with statespersons, bureaucrats, diplomats and, of course, the military chiefs. There is also an unhealthy

apprehension of values considered to be “feminine” or womanly, as they are driven by emotions and not reason, naivety, weak, sensitive and opting more for cooperation than conflict. Women are perceived to be unprepared for the tough life of a public man and rough situations which might arise while defending the country.

The military bent of subject like International Relations, which is connected closely with discipline like Security Studies, offers a subdued response to the numerous hurdles that come in the way to the security of humans and the environment. J. Ann Tickner, in her book *Gender and International Relations*, went on to elucidate how the realist attributes of rationality, strength and power which are correlated with foreign policy, even military and national affairs, perpetuate the hegemonic masculinity of these issues which are strategic in nature (1992: 3). She suggests that instead of taking power as the coercive means through which a state ensures security at the expense of other states, an ethos of ‘mutual enablement rather than domination’ could make up a positive and peaceful notion of security (ibid: 65; Ruddick 1989).

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Background and Definition of the Concept of Masculinity

The recent scholarship in the field of international relations showcases the excessively gendered nature of the discipline wherein there is a great divide in the comprehension of the issues on the lines of femininity and masculinity. But only when femininity and masculinity are studied collectively, can we draw upon a holistic understanding of how the gender factor works into international politics. However, any serious attempt which is made into bringing forth a gendered perspective in to the discipline cannot be done before beginning with a debate on masculinity itself (Tickner 1992: 6).

The majority of the policy-making bodies in the international arena are seen to be adhering to the real politic frameworks, which is seen to be completely devoid of women in terms of representation in the policy-making course or in accommodating the interests and issues of women. The fields of diplomacy, military, defense and even commerce excellently exemplify how women have only been recent additions (Grant 1992: 86). At this point, it is greatly important to comprehend that gender theorists 'are not generally referring to biological differences between males and females, but to a set of culturally shaped and defined characteristics associated with masculinity and femininity' which varies from person, time and extent (Tickner 1992: 7). This is also because real politics begins with the assumption of rationality which favours masculinity and is explicitly rooted in it. These also incidentally are the war-prone qualities which give rise to the offensive security policies of a state (Hutchings 2008: 392).

The state system can many a times be perceived to be at the heart of the power associations in the case of the variable called gender. The state being at the core of this power system, is unable to see gender, as it is inundated by men, and so no difference is visible. There is a gendered division of labour and power relations in the international system, which is widely visible in the manner that the subject is considered to be coming under the realm of "hard politics", such as military affairs, defense, police work, economic policies, and women are generally made to look after areas of "soft power" like social and health welfare, women and child development and education. The idea behind this distinction is to depict these hard-powered divisions as heavily masculine and where women are more often allotted areas that are peripheral to the working of the state. It is at times like this that women miss out on opportunities in participating in the policy-making process and even on the representation front.

Definitions of Masculinity and Masculinized Security Studies

Conventionally, it can be observed that literal and cultural narratives of the concept of gender arise from the society itself. This leads on to an understanding that a person's behaviour is determined by the gender that she/he identifies with. Masculinity as such does not exist in vacuum, and only exists in contrast to femininity, and it is manifest in the different cultural treatment of the males and the females of the society. Raewyn Connell, in her book *Masculinities*, talks about the four main strategies of arriving at the definition of masculinity, which are more often seen to be combined while being put to practice (2005: 68)

The first is the “essentialist’ definition and it is seen to single out a feature that delineates the nucleus of the masculine (ibid.). Sigmund Freud also can be seen equating masculinity with being activeness and femininity with passivity (Freud 1905). The second is the positivist strategy, which essentially is rooted in empiricism, and which brings out an oversimplified definition of masculinity which identifies it with the factuality of what men are. This definition forms the logical bedrock for the drawing of the “masculinity-femininity (M/F) scales in psychology” (Connell 2005: 69). However, it needs to be reckoned that, the attributes of masculinity and femininity go well beyond the compartmental sexual divisions; rather, they stretch out to the different ways as men and women combine elements of both in different proportions (Kessler and McKenna 1978).

The third is a “normative” definition which recognizes the differences, but end up offering a standardized understanding of masculinity, which combines the behavioural patterns that men possess. In this, there is a stringent division of conventional sex roles and behavior as individuals approach masculinity and femininity in varying degrees and methods. The problem here is that these ascertained norms are strictly built to be followed by the majority of the men. The question arises here is that does that make this section of the men “unmasculine”? There is yet no adequate measure to analyze the stipulated amount of manliness needed to be called masculine, or the lack of which might stereotypically lead on to one being called gay or effeminate (Connell 2005: 70).

The fourth strategy, called the ‘semiotic’ approach, characterizes masculinity through the usage of a structure of symbolic distinctions where the traits of masculinity and femininity are contrasted in totality. Active examples of this strategy can be found in the field of structural linguistics, wherein the fundamentals of speech are made distinct by their contrast from one another. This has been put to use widely by feminist scholars and the cultural study of gender and symbolism (ibid).

Masculinism emerges automatically, in its own rights, while there is any discussion on the issue of male privilege. What is at the root of the gendered oppression is rather an amalgamation of other hierarchies as patriarchy, race, class (Walby 1990). The term androcentric¹ might also be a more suitable one to delineate the present-day gender relations. Many gender theorists are of the view that the contemporary gender order can be accused of playing out in just the same manner, which is correlated to the male anatomy and the masculine power that they derive from it. But most importantly, a distinction is sought to be made between men and masculinity,

the latter of which can be held to charge for the terrible disparity in the gender continuum. Masculinity facilitates men's access to power and privilege, not because of their bodies but through the cultural association of their bodies with the idea of masculinity. It is these qualities of masculinity which are allied with the concept of power (Hooper 2012: 42).

Male identities are internalized in language as well as institutional practices. There is an intrinsic pattern in the starkly drawn pervasive gender binaries that drive the epistemological dualities of the social culture as has been observed in the works of French psychoanalytic feminists working on Jacques Lacan's theory of development and linguistic separation of the Self from Other (ibid: 43). These binaries perpetuated and drew hierarchical structures which equated masculinity with being active and successful and femininity with compliance and passivity (Moi 1985). These strands of phallogocentric logic eliminate any optimistic legroom for women to climb up the ladder of gender hierarchy which unfailingly places them below the masculine. This is how the masculine and the feminine are portrayed to be relational to each other, even in the terms of linguistic designs. Despite the fact that these terminologies are mostly rendered as relational, while putting these dichotomous terms in to conceptual use in our daily lives, they appear naturalized and all encompassing. Phallogocentrism originates from the allegorical linkage between speech and the elucidation of the male and the female that emanates from the presence of the penis, in the case of the masculine and the absence of it, in the case of the female.

The various shades of Masculinity and Masculinized states

In the course of studying women, there has arisen a widespread debate regarding the variations that crop up based on race, religion, class and even sexuality². Feminism, as such has to embrace on the task of incorporation all these differences too (Harding 1986). However, the tendency of scholars to often study men and masculinities as monolithic constructs as an undifferentiated whole is challenging and problematic. The multiple varieties of masculinities are assimilated to the point of global and universal subjugation of women (Connell 1987: 183; Blanchard 2014: 63). Similarly, impossible and romanticized ideas of real manhood are set in front of the society and they are put at odds with other alternative and "secondary" masculinities, as for instance, black masculinities, queer masculinities, trans-masculinities, Asian masculinities, Arab masculinities, African masculinities, disabled masculinities, working class masculinities, and the like. The positioning of masculinity is in two pronged directions, external and internal;

the external on the one hand is portrayed in the amalgamated domination of the male over the female and the internal on the other hand, is the ascendancy of one class or section of men over another in the gamut of the masculinities exists. Feminist critiques and gender theorists ought to also recognize these multiple masculinities and the fact that even within the array of these multiplicities, there is the presence of the hegemonic and the subordinate among them (Connell 1987: 183). Here the role of power returns to affirm the fact of the way in which hegemonic masculinities attempt to maintain its dominance in the flexible scales of gender construct and identity. The capillaries of power struggle among the diverse range of masculinities and their access and benefits from power is depicted fittingly in the fluid process of delineating the model kind of hegemonic masculinity for the popular and social imagination (Connell 1987: 184).

The idea of hegemonic masculinity originated around twenty years ago and has impacted recent studies on the subject of gender, masculinity and social hierarchies. The theory of hegemonic masculinity first emerged as a result of a field study on social inequality in Australian high schools. The study discussed about the debate on the function of men's bodies and their experiences that went in to the construction of masculinities and the role that they play together in Australian labour politics (Kessler et al. 1982). The project pragmatically substantiated the presence of multiple masculinities and hierarchies, both in terms of gender and class. The idea of hegemonized masculinities came around to be complimented with the phrase of 'emphasized masculinities' to depict the hierarchical differences between, not merely the masculine and the feminine, but also the different variations of men.

Among the multiple layers of masculinities that expand in distinct patterns in cultural, historical, institutional and political avenues, the type which is to be considered here is the "citizen warrior", "rational economic man", "civilian strategist", "good soldier" and martyr and also the breadwinner (Murphy 1998). Acknowledgement should also be made of the presence of alternative and even competing notions of masculinities, as for example, the idea of the Japanese corporate *Sararīman* (salary man) which shifted the contending divide between the farmer and the warrior after the Japanese defeat in World War II and played a crucial role in the social and economic revolution that came in Japan's way (Dasgupta 2003: 122).

On top of the above variants of masculinity, it is also imperative to analyze the significance and privilege of belonging to a particular brand of masculinity, that too the most influential in the sociological pyramid, which the white

male belongs to. The international system and the Westphalian state model is in fact created entirely by the hands of the white male, keeping in mind the sociological situation of the time-period, where the involvement and role of any other actor was completely out of the question. Whiteness as a privilege is at most times invisible to the white male population themselves; rather, their self-conception is of a just, rational person and real people (Halberstam 2002: 353). This claim to universality and normality of the white male position is used to create generalized and universalizing understandings of international politics, society and economics (Dyer 1997: 2). It is not surprising now that the present international system emanates out of these “entrenched privileges”. It is this same whiteness that can be attributed to the titular idea of hegemonic masculinity.

To a large extent, hegemonic masculinity is not compatible with the majority of the male individuals and can be challenged both by resistant femininities and alternative masculinities (Dunn 2008). Though it may appear as complex, nevertheless, gender is encouraged in various ways in which it intermingles with the motivation of maintaining intersectionality with other elements of power relationships, be it race, class, fluidity in gender, age, nationality etc. Intersectionality encourages us to analyze gender not in isolation, but rather, through situating it in relations with various dimensions of power can be challenged both by resistant femininities and alternative masculinities’ (ibid.). The study of these intersectionality assists in identifying and structuring the linear development of marginalized masculinities as “protest masculinities”, “working class masculinities”, and other unemployed working-class masculinities who struggle for the cause of challenging the dominance and influence and authority of middle-class bourgeoisie masculinities.

While studying these protest masculinities which are a marginalized section in itself, the issue of queer masculinities needs to be considered more specifically as it can be said to be situated on the fringes of the power equation within their own gender. The interrelationship of hegemonic masculinity with homosexual masculinity has revolved around the point of criminalization of homosexual relationships. In the case of male-to-male sex it has also to endure along with the social stigmatization, the possibility of intimidation, terrorization and even violence, be it legal or even illegal. The reason behind the pressure to ‘act like a man’ emanates from the unknowing fan base of hegemonic masculinity. More often than not, the reason behind this is due to the choice of homosexual masculinity to opt out of the conventional gender order and sex-specific behaviour, destabilizing the definitions of stereotypical masculinity in society. The larger issue is

that hegemonic masculinity identifies as to being entirely heterosexual and departing from this narrative and being homosexual shatters this hegemony.

The Military Bend of Masculinity in Security Studies

In a world entwined with violence and wars, masculinity plays the role of the enabler of this complicated relationship. The innate aggressiveness in the whole securitizing agenda lacks any space for females in the course of decision-making in the sphere of national security (Blanchard 2003: 1290). The task of protecting lives and honour of the “weaker sex” falls under the purview of the male combatants. This binary has served as a significant rationale behind differentiating the two sexes. The problem that arises here is that gender is more of a social construct, rather than a biological divide (Hudson 2005: 156; Tickner 1997). Social constructivists argue that war is a constructed phenomenon, rather than being unavoidable, as suggested by realists (Tickner 1992: 51).

Frank Barret (2001: 79), in his article ‘The Organizational Construction of Hegemonic Masculinity: The case of the US Navy’, went on to define the term hegemonic masculinity as:

... a particular idealized image of masculinity in relation to which images of femininity and other masculinities are marginalized and subordinated. The hegemonic ideal of masculinity in current Western culture is a man who is independent, risk-taking, aggressive, heterosexual and rational.

The definition of hegemonic masculinity that Barrett builds on is the one provided by R. W. Connell (1995) in her large body of work. In an work that he wrote in 2001, Barrett demonstrates how certain attributes are taken to be associated with masculinity and additionally are valorised in contrast to certain others, which are not. The qualities that are highlighted as being significant and instrumental in maintaining the preservation of the state system are incidentally the same ones which are identified as masculinist characteristics. This might as well be the method to confirm to the idea of hegemonic masculinity in the scrutiny of military culture. This is precisely how culture is rooted quite understatedly so in the varied methods of conducting masculinity and perpetuating it onto the value systems that disparages the feminine other, that might comprise not merely women, but the children, the homosexual and even the aged.

From the above deliberations, we might arrive at the realization of the variable of masculinity which went on to be recognised as the rationale

behind political violence. These observations imply a causal or constitutive relation between war and masculinity that might be mutually enabling (Elshtain 1995; Barrett 2001). Carol Cohn added emphasis on the point by drawing our attention to ways in which the attributes of masculinity permeates the discipline of nuclear politics, where security and defense analysts use it to recognize the significance of their defense policies and decisions (Cohn 1989).

In the current times, the portrayal of men in popular culture and media too goes a long way in reinforcing the stereotype of men being violent towards women and even other men. Moreover, trends of hyper-masculinity in the discourse of strategic and security studies, is rooted in and is accentuated by the gendered militarism, an aspect that is so starkly evident in the gendered militarism and militarized masculinities of this discourse of national security. What is much needed is a re-imagination of masculinity not merely in the discipline under observation, but also in the general understandings of daily personal experiences of civilians (Salter 2013: 74-75).

The definition of a patriot in the common parlance is envisaged as man who more often than not is in the military, working towards securing their countries along with the women and children, from intruders and other enemy states or organizations. Perceiving women who are aware of foreign policy concerns and international affairs as being too emotional to be trusted with crucial decision-making activities necessitated for the sake of national security is a long-standing concern of gender theorists. Weakness has time and again been associated with femininity and a great impediment in issues of national defense. In the name of politics, what we have been experiencing is majorly the politics of men, as it is only men who are always in majority, be it in parliaments, politicians, bureaucracies, military generals, pressure groups and even in the corporate houses. Even the role of leaders appointed is traditionally offered to men on a more priority basis. The very few women leaders who have been successful in breaching this divide, such as Indira Gandhi, Angela Merkel and Margaret Thatcher, have been able to do so only by being able to manoeuvre past men's networks, rather than that of the women (Connell 2005: 204).

As mentioned earlier, even women in key positions in the state politics are made out to be too emotionally volatile to be trusted with the hard decisions that are to be made for the security of the state. Following this line of argument, there is a latent resistance to accepting women in primary roles of leadership and command. The role of the head of the state that may be the President or Prime Minister, being assigned as the role of the

Commander-in-Chief, leads to the popular understanding that the post is to be associated with the attributes of manliness and masculinity. This in turn leads to form the basis of the distrust and uncertainty in electing a female to these posts (Tickner 1992: 3). Even when a woman happens to be the head of the state, there is always present a small inclination to institutionally resist it. This is evident in the inadequate representation of female leaders in the political arena worldwide, so much so that women's voices are deemed to be feeble.

Masculinist trend towards the Gendered Biases of the International Security Policies

Gender theorists have discussed at length about the deep relation between masculinity, war and violence. Joanna Burke examined how masculinities were constructed in the World War I period in Europe. The drills in particular contributed to bringing about economy in emotions and self-discipline in men on military training (Bourke 1996: 178–80).

Men not partaking in war-fighting and other military activities were also looked down upon, as opposed to military men, who lived with the high possibility of death or physical disabilities. Barbara Ehrenreich views that it was not merely men who made wars, but rather many a times it is the opposite, when wars made men (Ehrenreich 1987: xvi). Military service, which is still compulsory in many countries, is seen to be providing a rite of passage for boys to turn to men; involving a very physical training that shapes the male body and mind (Hopper 2012: 81-83). It is this hegemonic masculinity that is at play which overlooks the security needs of male individuals and constructs the victim identity around the female. The tendency to create these binaries of victimhood and aggressor result in the stereotyping of gender behaviour which assumes the aggressor to be perpetually male. For example, if we take the case of child soldiers who are enlisted by a variety of groups, most are presumed to be males. Many even find it difficult to envisage female fighters, be it child soldiers or adults, despite the fact that 30% of child fighters are observed to be females (Fox and Lawless 2004). It is also important to remember that not all of the child soldiers who happen to be female are active combatants, as a majority of them are on the other hand conscripted, more so forcefully and through abductions and kidnappings for purposes of doing domestic work and also as sex slaves.

R. Charli Carpenter stresses that even when the human security approach recognizes gender constructs, certain practices only come to reify the same

gendered understandings of who is it that is to be secured. The programs and modules that tender to Gender Based Violence (GBV) irrefutably end up depicting women and children as the principle target that require protection, ignoring defenceless men who are especially affected in an occasion of violence (2006: 85). Men and boys often are killed or maimed in clashes and at times of conflict, in an effort to wipe out the future warriors. These gendered assumptions, while drawing up GBV modules, operate on the logic that overlooks the trepidations of civilian men (2006: 99). The feminist security perspective commits to rendering this narrow definition of the victim and perpetrator as false and works on the broadening of security by redefining and bringing about a common and comprehensive understanding of universal security (Hoogensen and Stuvoy 2006: 209). In the words of Tickner and other feminist scholars, there might be two possible ways to bring about a satisfactory balance among the sexes. In the first place, there is the need to alter the discourse around the discipline and practice of security by highlighting the inequalities and the issues in the production of the concept of gender, and secondly, increasing the universal participation and representation of women in the political, economic, social, military and foreign-policy process and decision-making, where traditionally, women have been systematically been absent and marginalized in all spheres of key decision-making, in international and the local organizations (Tickner 1992: 142).

Violence on Men and its Role in Building the Hegemony in Masculinity

Matther C. Guttman argues that masculinity is unconsciously or consciously taken to be the norm, and studying it as a separate discipline is unnecessary. In popular perception, the discipline of gender studies is generally taken to be synonymous with women's studies. Going even further, it has to be understood that a satisfactory comprehension of masculinity cannot be had by merely reducing it to a biological study of the male sex and only men (1997: 403). Hence in order to transcend the lenses of security from realist frameworks to human security, what is needed is to understand that the focus should not merely be on including women and looking at how they were overlooked and even hampered as women beings, but also how the gendered security should not be at the cost of marginalization of men. This would involve looking in to the cases of how men are targeted and victimized, in times of conflict and even in peace times.

There is a remarkably negligent amount of study in the case of male sexual violence in wartime or otherwise. The evidence of the use of sexual violence

upon males came to light most extensively in the aftermath of the Yugoslavia war that started in 1991, where instances of the use of sexual violence as a tool of war was reported extensively including several cases of sexual violence on females. Curiously enough, there was hardly any news of any kind of assault on the men. These cases of sexual violence may range from cases of forced nudity to instances of mass rape and torture, and sometimes both. On further probing, the cases of sexual violence and assault on men too came to light. However, the evidence of male rapes in war time is not confined to the case of Yugoslavia alone: it stretches to political prisoners in confinement too, both in war time prisons and state prisons. These cases are not merely scantily reported, but there is also a dearth of any actions taken subsequently around them. Cases in Greece, Chile, El Salvador saw many reports on instances of rape and sexual assault on political prisoners. Reports from the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture depict that many of the Sri Lankan refugee men in London in 1997-98 also faced such sexual violence (Oosterhoff et al. 2004: 68-73). The media coverage in the news channels and popular culture has scant accounting of this situation. The most recent cases of such instances came out with the pictures of the heinous and inhuman sexual and physical torture being inflicted on the Abu Ghraib prison inmates in Iraq.

Sexually assaulted victims are often perceived in a negative light owing to gender stereotypes according to which the women perpetual victims while the males are the aggressor. Even the medical help that is provided is insensitive of the situations of male rape victims and even dismissive of it at times, are unable to help them deal with the trauma inflicted upon them and provide the same support that the female victims of trauma are able to access. The shame of being homosexually assaulted weighs down upon them on a number of occasions and results in them being increasingly marginalized, because of the narrow idea about any other form of sexual behaviour, apart from the heterosexual kind (Oosterhoff et al. 2004, 68). Hence, it is safe to comprehend that this very same stereotype of the masculine as the “active and aggressive” kind does not hamper anyone else more seriously than the men themselves, just as the attributes of “passive and peaceful” females affect women.

Even in the occupational front, men face these gender biases at a far larger extent than we let ourselves realize. Men working as health care workers, male nurses, baby-sitters, at some point of their career, face questioning gazes regarding their choice of careers. This is evident in the perception that the care-giving business is essentially the domain of the women.

Concluding the paper, we can say that the social constructs of binaries in the sphere of gender would require a serious relook at the established hierarchies of gender and engendering the discipline of security studies and policy-making. There is also an urgent need to take in the subject of male insecurities seriously, and persuade men along with women to contribute towards bringing down these gender inequalities (Cohn 1993: 239). Men have to come out and voice the security and other feminine concerns of women and comprehend the full extent of their insecurities, together with women. The very nature and essence of these organizations and institutions that are broadly masculine need to be altered.

Notes

1. Androcentrism refers to the gender order which places the male gender above the female in the gender hierarchy. In the daily social, cultural and economic activities also the masculine stand point is placed at the pivot of worldly understanding and practices.
2. Human sexuality and sexual orientation have been psychologically and physically found to be in a continuum between heterosexuality to homosexuality at various degrees. Alfred Kinsey, in his experiment and study of sexuality in the 1940s of sexuality, found that sexuality is fluid in nature and may shift along the continuum.

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