Men and Masculinities

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What is This?

The Reconstruction of Masculinities in Global Politics: Gendering Strategies in the Field of Private Security

Saskia Stachowitsch[1]

Abstract

The concept of masculinities has been central to the analysis of private security as a gendered phenomenon. This research has either focused on the identity constructions and practices of security contractors as men or on masculinity as a theoretical and ideological framework for making sense of security outsourcing. This article aims to overcome this dualism by developing a relational, strategic, and discursive understanding of masculinities and focusing on the gendering strategies that create them. These strategies are identified as masculinization of the market and feminization of the state, feminization and racialization of (some) security work, hypermasculinization as a critical or affirmative discourse, romanticizing the autonomous male bond, and militarization of private security. It is argued that private security as well as critical discourses on it integrate business, humanitarian, and militarized masculinities in a way that ultimately legitimizes masculinism and reconstructs masculinity as a privileged category in international politics.

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The military and security realm is a central space in which notions of political participation and citizenship have been historically linked to masculinity (Morgan 1994). The state military and in particular the institution of national conscription have not only shaped ideas of what it means to be a man but also related these ideas to political subjectivity. In the process of nation-state building and military institutionalization, militarized masculinity has acquired hegemonic status beyond military contexts (Cockburn 2010; Hearn 2012) and justified the political marginalization of women and other feminized groups. With the privatization of (some) military capacities, the nexus between state, masculinity, and the military is changing, but without being dissolved. As the following analysis will show, the global market for force provides a new sphere in which national and international politics are linked to masculinity.

Private security has become a short-hand term for the commodification, commercialization, and marketization of security functions associated with the state's monopoly on violence. These processes entail the gradual outsourcing of security provision to private military and security companies (PMSCs) as part of neoliberal restructuring at the state and international level. This trend is observable in the civilian (e.g., airport security) and the military realm, where it affects supply and support capacities as well as armed security (e.g., close protection or the guarding of military bases). US- and UK-based companies have been at the center of this development. Hence, these two national contexts provide the empirical basis for this article.

Private security is a gendered phenomenon, deeply intertwined with gendered state and global transformations in the neoliberal era. Masculinity has been a prominent concept in the emerging research on this subject (Via 2010; Higate 2012a, 2012b, 2012c; Joachim and Schneiker 2012a; Chisholm 2014; Eichler 2013). It has provided a starting point for micro-sociological analysis of contractors' practices as well as for studies of larger processes of remasculinization at the national and international level. This research has highlighted that private security constitutes a variety of masculinities, which integrate business, humanitarian, and militarized characteristics; that masculinities are being redefined in and through new security regimes; that security contractors make sense of their practices through the framework of masculinity; that masculinities serve to devalue the labor of men from the Global South; that masculinist perceptions inform redefinitions of security; and that masculinities are used to legitimize the outsourcing of security functions.

In this research field, masculinity/masculinities have, however, been used and defined in multiple ways: interpretations developed in sociologically oriented critical men/masculinity studies have been most commonly employed in research on security details on the ground, while definitions developed in feminist international relations (IR) have informed broader analyses of masculinity as a framework for legitimizing or even enabling security privatization. These approaches are grounded in divergent ontological and epistemological traditions; tensions between them mirror broader conceptual debates on masculinities and international relations, a

research field, which remains divided between masculinity scholars focusing on the practices of men and (feminist) IR scholars engaging with masculinity's conceptual, ideological aspects.

Against this background, the article contributes to the recent and growing interest in masculinities and PMSCs through an evaluation of the theoretical perspectives used in this literature and the development of a relational, strategic, and discursive approach. This widens the potential of this research field for the theorization of the relationship between masculinity and global politics, particularly with regard to the issues of war, conflict, security, and militarization. Private security is a privileged case for making these connections because it is not only a heavily male-dominated space, it also represents ''an exemplary context in which to integrate the micro-practices of masculinity with the 'higher level concerns of IR''' (Higate 2009, 8). It is a prime site in which the changing relationship between state and market is being negotiated and security redefined in the neoliberal era. Because definitions of security and market-state relations are deeply intertwined with modern gender orders, private security is a crucial sphere in which masculinities are being reconstructed and adapted to the conditions of the neoliberal era.

To transcend the practice-ideology dualism prevalent in this research field, the article focuses on gendering strategies reproducing masculinities in discourses of/on private security which are identified as *masculinization of the market and feminization of the state, feminization and racialization of (some) security work, hypermasculinization as a critical or affirmative discourse, romanticizing the autonomous male bond,* and *militarization of private security*. This approach combines Christina Beasley's (2008, 2012) critique of masculinity studies, feminist IR understandings of masculinities in global politics, and Wetherell and Edley's (1999) definition of masculinities as discursively created subject positions. This enables mapping masculinities in relationship to femininities and to each other and works against the notion of a competition between different ''models'' or ''types'' of masculinities, that is, the militarized/state and business/market variant. Rather, the aim is to highlight the blurred boundaries and new interactions between state- and market-defined ideals, which result from new arrangements between the state and the market. Following feminist theory, the boundaries between state and market, public and private, are not only gendered but also fluid and constantly contested rather than statically defined, for example, by the monopoly on violence (Löffler 2012, 72). Hence, there is no fixed boundary between private security markets and the state and consequently no fixed boundary between state and business masculinities. This refutes the dualism between the masculinist global security market and the allegedly gender-equal state (Stachowitsch 2013) and highlights the gendered interactions and discursive redefinitions of the boundaries between them. This goes beyond the notion of diversified masculinities as cultural adaptations to the emergence of different groups of men, for example, ''softer'' masculinities as a reaction to changes in military organizations (Barrett 1996). Rather, the strategic and political aspects of masculinities are being targeted and

their role in shaping new security regimes and world politics more broadly (Tickner 1992; Parpart and Zalewski 1998; Hooper 2001). Jutta Joachim and Andrea Schneiker (2012a) have already shown that the private military and security industry reconstructs masculinities through gendered marketing strategies. This article widens the focus beyond industry discourses and asks how other actors are involved in this process and what the implications are for the gendering of the international. It is argued that private security ultimately legitimizes masculinism and reconstructs masculinity as a privileged category in global politics.

The empirical analysis is based on a wide range of materials to capture the broad spectrum of masculinities in the realm of private security. The study conducts secondary analysis of fieldwork on the practices of security personnel on the ground (Higate 2012a, 2012b, 2012c, 2013; Chisholm 2009, 2014); participant observation at the *2nd Private Military and Security Conference*;[1] and content analysis of industry documents (e.g., codes of conduct and websites), popular culture products (e.g., video games and autobiographies), policy papers, and academic debates. This follows Cynthia Enloe's (1990) claim that international relations take place and are being constructed in different social settings and spaces and cannot be limited to the official arenas of interstate politics.

Toward a Relational, Strategic, and Discursive Definition of Masculinity

Against the notion of masculinity as eternally oppressive and powerful, critical men/masculinity studies have formulated a concept of masculinities as plural and hierarchically positioned. Connell's (1995) concept of hegemonic masculinities has been central to this approach, but remained subject to manifold reinterpretations and critiques (Hearn 2004; Petersen 2003; Beasley 2008, 2012). The tension between minimalist interpretations of masculinity as a set of gendered practices and broader definitions, which highlight the role of masculine norms in sustaining the power of the ruling class (Tosh 2004, 48), could not be resolved.

Definitions of hegemonic masculinity as "the currently most honored way of being a man" (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, 832) have been particularly criticized for leading to problematic "trait models of gender and rigid typologies" (p. 829). Against such notions, Christina Beasley (2008, 94) has developed a broader and more process-oriented definition. She defines (hegemonic) masculinity as "a political ideal or model . . . explicitly differentiating it from the study of masculinities associated with actual socially dominant men." With this, she builds on feminist critiques that have argued for a "broad articulation of masculinity as a production of gender, distinct from, if not in contradiction with, so-called male bodies" (Wiegman 2002, 51) and redefined masculinity "as an attribute of power rather than an attribute of men" (Hooper 2000, 63).

Beasley's critique particularly relates to the masculinities and globalization literature, which is relevant for discussions of masculinities in/and global politics, and Connell's

> transnational business masculinity hypothesis (Connell 1998), the idea that global markets and transnational corporations provide the setting for a transformed pattern of business masculinity, which is achieving a hegemonic position in global gender relations. (Connell and Wood 2005, 362)

This argument is criticized for buying into the "decline of the state" hypothesis and not systematically engaging with state transformation (Elias and Beasley 2009, 291), for "economistic readings of hegemony" (Beasley 2008, 93), and for lacking a comprehensive gender perspective, obscuring women's role in shaping world politics (p. 92). To overcome these shortcomings, Elias and Beasley (2009, 290) suggest a focus on the *processes* through which certain spaces such as global markets and companies acquire hegemonic status and what role masculinity plays within them. Applied to private security, this draws attention to how masculinities are implicated in making PMSCs central players in the provision and definition of security.

Approaches in feminist IR deepen Beasley's critique by contributing a relational and strategic definition of masculinities, further shifting the question from what model of masculinity is hegemonic to how masculinity is utilized in political struggles for power. Feminist IR generally focus on the workings of masculinities as modes of hierarchical exclusion in global politics (Hutchings 2008b, 25). They put emphasis on contextualization and ask how specific masculinities and femininities are defined in relationship to each other under specific conditions (Hooper 1998, 32). For this, Hutchings (2008a, 390) suggests focusing on the "formal, relational properties of masculinity" rather than think of it in terms of specific characteristics. This means that traits such as aggression, strength, assertiveness, rationality, and so on, cannot be simply labeled "masculine," even though they might be strongly associated with masculinity in many cultural and historical contexts. Rather, we need to look for gendered dualisms and how they operate according to a hierarchic opposition between femininity and masculinity or between ideal and deviant (feminized, hypermasculine, etc.) masculinities in a *specific* context, for example, the "weak" state and the "robust" market in arguments for the private sector's superiority. It is this logic of contrast (between different masculinities) and contradiction (between masculinity and femininity) that gives masculinity its flexibility and adaptability to "challenges raised by practices of international politics such as war, trade and diplomacy" (Hutchings 2008b, 28).

This turns our attention to the strategic moments of masculinity and how it is upheld as a privileged category despite its shifting and contradictory content and its constant redefinition. Susan Jeffords (1989) has coined the term *remasculinization* for this renegotiation of masculinity which is not just an adaptation of male identities to new conditions but a reconstruction of male dominance in the face of its

questioned power base. Masculinism as the ideology of male dominance constantly enforces the association of power and masculinity, regardless of the historically and culturally specific notions of masculinity (Hooper 2001, 62).

This process is not automatic, but organized through *gendering strategies* which build on and emphasize hierarchically gendered dualisms (Hooper 1998, 32, 47), for example, the feminization of civilian and governmental institutions opposite the masculine soldier/veteran (Jeffords 1989, 185) or the hypermasculinization of the enemy, for example, terrorists, "Evil Empires," or the "Axis of Evil." These strategies "constitute 'men' and 'women' and masculinities and femininities in particular ways" (Khalili 2011, 1473). By doing so, they make sense of the "direction and consolidation of [social and political] changes by upgrading or downgrading various activities, practices, and groups of people in the struggle for recognition and power" (Hooper 2000, 62). The following analysis is thus more about understanding how masculinities are being created through these strategies and how they operate in political projects than about which masculinities can be observed and labeled as hegemonic in a given field.

In this context, the notion of *strategies* does not relate to "the concept of strategic action [originating] in theories of rational choice" (Crow 1989, 4) and "implying the presence of conscious and rational decisions involving a long term perspective" (p. 19). Rather than invoking the idea of a rational, utility maximizing, and economistic actor, strategies in this sense are understood as a complex of (at times) nonconscious and embodied social practices that follow an (at times) unknown logic from the perspective of the actors involved. Strategies are tied to "questions of power" and are implemented to "secure and sustain powerful positions" (p. 3). This analysis shows how masculinities work within such strategies.

Feminist research has shown that masculinity "operates as a resource for thought . . . as a kind of commonsense, implicit, often unconscious short-hand for processes of explanatory and normative judgment" (Hutchings 2008b, 23) and as a framework through which social relations and political events are being understood (Tickner 1992). Masculinities can thus normalize and naturalize global policies and developments. This is particularly the case in debates on changes in warfare, which "can be analyzed as . . . a way of making sense of the way in which war is changing" (Hutchings 2008a, 401). In this context, identifying war with masculinity provides conceptual resources, which can authorize discriminations between "good" and "bad" war (Ibid.). Following the aforementioned relational and contextual conceptualization of masculinities, gendering strategies do not depend on specific definitions of masculinity but on constructions of gendered hierarchies, which legitimize some perspectives and delegitimize others through associations with masculinity and femininity.

Finally, for tying different gendering strategies to different groups of actors and to counter too abstract and disembodied definitions of masculinity, the empirical analysis employs Wetherell and Edley's (1999) definition of masculinity as "a subject position in discourse that is taken up strategically by men in particular

circumstances'' (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, 841). Masculinity, they argue, is consciously or unconsciously adopted and abandoned according to structural, institutional, and historical positionality. It is thus a way to position oneself through discursive practices rather than a certain type of men (Ibid.). The following analysis assumes that masculinities do not only enable men's self-positioning but also women's, and that they can be ascribed to individuals and groups, as well as processes, states, institutions, and other social phenomena. This discursive framework reconciles embodied and conceptual dimensions of masculinities. "The field" is not viewed as separated from ideological meta-constructions. Rather a continuum is assumed between academic, policy, and industry discourses on one hand and practices and performances on the ground and at the management level on the other hand. Practices of industry representatives, security experts, and contractors are understood as implicated in the process of reproducing masculinities, not as mere reflections of abstract representations. They actively shape and pluralize available masculine subject positions. Thus, masculinities are not just "out there" for the taking, but created and transformed by active male and female agents embedded in social and political power relations.

Overall, this relational, strategic, processual, and discursive concept of masculinities shifts the focus from identifying diverse, hierarchically positioned, or competing models of masculinities in private security to the (discursive) power struggles and gendering strategies, through which private security is constituted as a privileged masculine sphere. Masculinities are not studied in terms of their social acceptability but in terms of how they are strategically employed in discourses on the changes in warfare. The analysis grasps how masculinities are reproduced in social power struggles, for example, between the private security industry and the advocates of state warfare, and how they are thereby reaffirmed as an authoritative claim in international politics. The reconstitution and diversification of masculinities is thus analyzed not only as a function of the private military labor market but also as working toward a broader legitimization of male dominance and masculinist ideologies in global politics.

Gendering Strategies in Discourses on Private Security

The following sections analyze gendering strategies and how they reproduce masculinities in discourses of/on private security. The analysis looks at media reporting, the industry's self-representations, popular culture, academic discourse, and embodied performances of private security at the field and management level.

Gendering Military Labor Division

Academic, media, and industry discourses reconstruct masculinities in the context of private security by gendering the labor division between private and state

forces—that is, feminizing or masculinizing either the private or the public capacities in warfare—for the purpose of legitimizing outsourcing policies.

Masculinizing the Market and Feminizing the State

The most common variant of this strategy is the masculinization of outsourced labor, that is, its association with strength, assertiveness, and competence, and the subsequent feminization of state forces, casting them as ineffective, weak, and democratically constrained. This is achieved through a focus on traditionally masculinized military functions, that is, combat-intensive occupations, and silencing the (much larger) sector providing unarmed support and supply services. In academic discourse, this gendering is apparent in arguments that link privatization to casualty aversion and claim that PMSCs provide the military with the necessary masculine skills of fighting, killing, and dying that it can't provide among its own soldiers in the post-heroic age (Singer 2003, 58). In these representations, the feminized state appears as an overstrained actor depending on the decisive force only the private sector can provide. The democratic western state is accused of "political unwillingness to intervene" due to "the risk of high costs of war in terms of blood and money" (Branović 2011, 11). It is argued that weak states on the global periphery especially look to PMSCs for strength (McIntyre and Weiss 2007; Howe 2001), omitting how PMSCs can contribute to a state's weakness. Joachim and Schneiker (2012a) have shown in their study of PMSCs' websites that feminization of conventional military forces is also an important strategy for companies to position themselves as superior security providers. The portrayal of state militaries as weak, incapable, and ineffective (p. 18) invokes these companies as willing, risktaking, and responsible.

Likewise, this gendering strategy is employed by industry advocates to criticize anti-privatization policies. Doug Brooks, former president of the industry's trade association *International Stability Operations Association* (ISOA), for example, supports his critique of the alleged public "bias" against the industry by claiming that PMSCs are more efficient, innovative, flexible, pragmatic, and faster than other security providers (Brooks 2000, 131). State militaries, he claims, are "unwilling or unable to provide the necessary security" and "embarrassingly inadequate" (p. 138), while the international community "shies away" from the use of PMSCs (p. 135). Brooks underlines his stance against the UN's anti-mercenary policies by portraying PMSCs as "extremely competent" and "fully capable" (p. 135), while the United Nation is ridiculed for its demand that companies must be "squeaky-clean" to participate in humanitarian operations (p. 131). Public institutions at the state and international level are thus associated with feminine stereotypes (irrational, shy, childish, and emotional), while the private sector represents the masculinized counterpart (rational, effective, professional, and tough).

This discourse heavily draws on neoliberal market ideology and thus on the market's gendered legitimacy by highlighting PMSCs' competitiveness and cost efficiency (p. 138). While the IMF and the World Bank impose budgetary pressure

on governments to promote outsourcing (Branović 2011, 14), their neoliberal narratives are taken up to argue that market regulation by public bodies is harmful, that the market should self-regulate to unfold its beneficial effects, and that this would automatically drive ''bad'' companies out of business (despite evidence that misconduct has not prevented rehiring of problematic companies; Pingeot 2012, 7).

These arguments made in academic, management, and industry discourses are related to current attempts by governments to increase regulation and control over the private security industry. The industry has so far tried to mitigate these attempts by joining state-led endeavors to put forward regulatory mechanisms, such as the *International Code of Conduct* (ICoC), and by arguing that the masculinized market rather than the feminized state is the only necessary regulatory mechanism. This logic devalues democracy and transparency in military affairs by constructing them as obstacles to efficient security provision. The gender-integrated state military, which has often been argued as an issue of democratic citizenship rights (Stiehm 1996), is thus put in opposition to the male-dominated and market-regulated space of private security.

Performances of security experts and industry representatives at the observed conference also repeatedly referenced the market as a source of legitimacy. Responsibility for misconduct of private contractors was largely put on clients, who, it was claimed, needed to make sure they hired only responsible companies. This could easily be achieved, several debate participants argued, if clients only did the necessary research on their prospective business partners. The market also served as a legitimization for inequalities within the industry. During debates following a panel on gender issues, gender equality in the industry was dismissed as an unrealistic goal because of an alleged lack of demand for female contractors, even though it was admitted that supply of capable women was available. One debate participant informed presenters that his wife was ''a better shot'' than he, but he still believed women could not be integrated into private security because nobody would want to hire them. In this argument, women are excluded because of the market and not the industry's prejudice. This supply-and-demand logic is a different discourse than the one against women's integration in the state forces which most frequently refers to masculinist protectionism or women's lack of physical or mental capabilities (Stachowitsch 2012). Contrary to these arguments, claims relating to market ''laws'' cannot be challenged by women's performance or by democratic values of equal citizenship because the market, in comparison to the state, has no obligation to be democratic and the paid contractor does not have to represent the citizen-soldier.

Feminizing and Racializing (Some) Private Security Work

In her study of private contractors on US military bases, Isabella Barker (2009) observed the opposite form of gendering, namely the association of the private sector with feminized reproductive/menial labor and the state forces with masculinized

combat functions. Barker found that a basic argument for privatization is that menial work in supply and support is "detracting the soldier from his/her proper masculinized role as a war fighter" (p. 216) and keeping this work in-house "would . . . effeminize members of the military, thus weakening their effectiveness on the battlefield" (p. 227). Following this argument, this labor needs to be out-sourced to low-wage workers from the global South, not just because of cost efficiency, but for maintaining the proper masculinity of the US Armed Forces. The feminization of this work becomes a legitimization for privatization policies (p. 215). It builds on the "freeing men for combat" argument, which has been successfully employed to argue for women's integration into noncombat capacities of state militaries and solidified the "feminine" status of this labor.

The feminization of menial (or particularly dangerous) security work has been shown to be deeply intertwined with processes of racialization and embedded within colonial legacies (Barker 2009; Chisholm 2014). Racialization as a gender-ing strategy legitimizes the exploitation of workforce from the global South for the benefit of Western geopolitical and business interests (Chisholm 2014). It estab-lishes a hierarchy between different masculinities and assigns different groups of men their "appropriate" positions in the security market (Chisholm 2009, 2). Building on colonial histories, the white, western, military-trained contractor is viewed as the "legitimate source of knowledge on security issues" (p. 6), responsible for the man-agement of local and third-country nationals constructed as martial races, such as Gur-khas (Chisholm 2009, 2013) or Fijians (Higate 2012d). This idealized masculinity makes the associated industry appear as a legitimate player in international politics.

Again, the market serves as a framework for this racialization and feminization. While the alleged "cost efficiency" of workforce from the global periphery is used as a legitimization for outsourcing (Barker 2009, 215), market mechanisms justify the lack of labor rights for these men, by constructing the market as a neutral space in which all participants start out on equal footing. This notion of the market also informed performances at the observed conference. As a comment on the poor working conditions of Gurkhas in the industry, a CEO of a large UK security com-pany stated that this was just an inevitable outcome of market mechanisms and not to be blamed on the industry. Those who lacked the most marketable assets (train-ing in western military institutions, proficiency in the English language, etc.) were claimed to fall behind due to the unchangeable workings of the market, rather than being exploited by the industry. This market discourse upheld neoliberal claims that supply and demand were neutral, objective categories and not socially con-structed. The market conveniently affirms the racialized stereotypes which recruit-ment strategies are already based upon.[2]

Another form of feminizing privatized labor is the gendering of the offensive/defensive divide along the lines of state/private. Contracting states as well as com-panies emphasize that the labor division between states and PMSCs assigns offen-sive capacities to the former and defensive ones to the latter. Lauren Wilcox (2009, 229) has shown that gender "constitutes the offense/defense binary by assigning

more value to the offensive posture than the defensive posture." Offensive strategies are therefore given priority because of their association with idealized warrior masculinity and masculinized traits such as activity, strength, bravery, chivalry, and boldness. This form of gendering works as another way of justifying privatization by assuring the public that the "real," that is, "manly," military capacities remain with the state.

Despite their contradictory content, the above-mentioned gendering strategies (masculinization and feminization of private security) construct a hierarchical relationship between state and market through the framework of masculinity for the purpose of legitimizing privatization. Through highlighting one sector of outsourced labor (either combat-intensive or supportive capacities) and disguising the other, they idealize masculinity as an assertive, efficient, and militarized trait, but differ in their evaluation of which actors (state or private) are best suited to perform it. In both cases, private providers enable the proper (white) masculinities required for warfare. Both refer to the market as an authoritative claim—a gendering strategy that affirms the market's superior status by constructing it as masculine. The market appears as rational and efficient and thus draws its legitimacy from the privileged status of masculinity.

Hypermasculinization as a (de)Legitimizing Strategy

While drawing on hierarchies between the masculine and the feminine serves to legitimize private security and its agents opposite the state, constructions of deviant hypermasculinity are employed to delegitimize either private security as a whole or certain actors within it.

The Hypermasculine Contractor in Critical Discourses

Critical media reporting on PMSCs, which has considerably shaped public opinion on private security, has frequently made the unprofessional and gun-toting contractor their focus, relying on the dichotomy between deviant and ideal masculinity. Stereotypes of contractors as "trigger-happy Blackwater Cowboys" (Higate 2012a, 322) are created through focusing on armed security services, individualizing contractors as "unique men" devoid of social context, and "moralistic pathologising of their 'character'" (p. 324). *The New York Times* reporting on private contractors between 2009 and 2012, for example, predominantly portrayed contractors as greedy and unpatriotic, as "beefy men with beards and flak jackets" (Glanz and Lehren 2010, A1) and "burly, bearded and tattooed security men" (Arango 2012, A1). This image was contrasted with the disciplined, patriotic, and self-sacrificing state soldier as the embodiment of ideal warrior masculinity. It was claimed that private forces did not bring the "same commitment and willingness to take risks" as "public servants motivated by, and schooled in, the common good and simple patriotism—not profits or private ambitions" (Friedman 2009, A31).

By implying profit and private ambition as motivators of contractors and patriotism and public service as those of state soldiers, the hierarchically gendered dualism between market and state was reaffirmed through constructions of ideal and deviant masculinity.

The constructions of the state soldier in opposition to the contractor also have larger geopolitical implications, because, as Aaron Belkin argues for the US case, the ideal masculinity of the soldier is relevant for the legitimization of US foreign policy. The masculine soldier as a symbol of the nation "reinforces an impression . . . of American hegemony abroad as civilized, just, and legitimate" (Belkin 2012, 43). Advocates of state warfare thus refer to this model of the state soldier and insist that the hypermasculine contractor, believed to harm the struggle for "hearts and minds," cannot embody the nation. It follows that his misbehavior also cannot delegitimize foreign interventions and US geopolitical interests. In this sense, discourses critical of private security resemble debates on women's military integration, in which contra-arguments often deny women the ability to represent the nation. The employed prejudice is similar to that against the private contractor: Both are portrayed as unpatriotic, career- and money-oriented agents of professionalized, "unheroic" warfare (Stachowitsch 2012). Criticism of military privatization and opposition to gender integration thus both idealize masculinity associated with the males-only state military.

Hypermasculinization is also observable in policy debates. A policy paper on the UN's use of PMSCs (Pingeot 2012), for example, offers an implicitly gendered critique of private security. Contractors are discredited as "insensitive, arrogant and violence-prone" actors (p. 7) with a "tough, 'hard security' approach," "contemptuous warrior ethos" (p. 8), and "field-hardened . . . special operations warriors . . . accused of bravado, cultural superiority, roughneck behavior, and a propensity for the use of violence" (p. 15). Like in media discourses, these "guys with tattoos and sunglasses" are criticized for fostering resistance against foreign interventions (Ibid.). The hypermasculine image is used to liken PMSCs to mercenaries and contrast them with other, more legitimate actors in global politics, in this case the United Nation.

The hypermasculinity narrative either omits local and third-country nationals from representations of private security or it includes this exploited workforce in its accusations of hypermasculinity, for example, by portraying Gurkhas as "famously battle-hardened Nepalese" (Pingeot 2012, 13), echoing the marketing strategies of companies, which exploit their labor, and colonial narratives of "martial races." In this case, hypermasculinity as an argument against privatization silences and thereby reinforces exploitation. Overall, discourses critical of private security also work as a vehicle for the reconstruction of (white) masculinity as a privileged category in international relations.

The Hypermasculine "Other" in Industry Discourses

Hypermasculinization not only works as a strategy for delegitimizing private security, it is also employed by PMSCs "to set themselves apart from mercenaries

[and] their private competitors'' (Joachim and Schneiker 2012a, 1). In their marketing strategies, PMSCs construct other security providers as uncontrollable, aggressive, violence-prone, and uncivilized. In these portrayals, only a certain type of provider—their company or the industry more broadly—can offer the appropriate masculinity required for dealing with international crises, a kind of middle ground between the feminized masculinity of the state and the hypermasculine enemy (e.g., terrorists) or less reliable competitors. Doug Brooks even employs fear of mercenarism as an argument for privatization by claiming that ''international bias against (PMSCs) means that their potential for peacekeeping, peace enforcement, and humanitarian rescue missions could very well remain tragically untapped. Ironically, not using legitimate private firms will probably lead to a resurgence of uncontrollable individual freelance mercenaries who will flock to satisfy the profitable demand for military expertise, but who have far less regard for the legitimacy of their clients'' (Brooks 2000, 129).

The stereotype of the ''freelance mercenary'' resembles the media's portrayal of the contractor as someone motivated by ''financial gain'' or ''mere adventure'' (p. 131).

Hypermasculinization depends on constructions of other, more ''appropriate'' masculinities. The private security industry particularly draws on the market-related ideal of professionalism, portraying PMSCs as legitimate businesses staffed with highly skilled professionals (Joachim and Schneiker 2012a, 495). With his fieldwork on contractor masculinities in two UK training companies, Paul Higate (2013) shows that professionalism versus hypermasculinity is also an important trope and point of reference in training practices on the ground. Training routines construct ''lifting the industry up'' (Higate 2013, 18) as an important goal for men aspiring to work as security contractors. This professional-hypermasculine opposition is framed through ''distinctions configured to a large degree through the American versus British masculine archetype'' (p. 2). Future contractors are taught not to be a ''billy big bollocks'' like their stereotypical US-American colleagues (Higate 2013). While patriotism and adventure featured prominently as motivators in surveys of US contractors, they too expressed ''a strong interest . . . to be considered professionals in the provision of security'' (Franke and von Boemcken 2011, 737).

Another positive self-image constructed in opposition to the hypermasculine other is that of *global governance masculinity*. In the public self-representations of the industry, the tendency in recent years has been to actively avoid association with militarized traits (Higate 2012b, 183), divert attention from the armed sector of the industry, and stress the connection to peace and democracy (Leander 2010). The industry tries to avoid public criticism of mercenarism by stressing their role as ''new humanitarians'' (Joachim and Schneiker 2012b) and their participation in nation-building efforts (Higate 2012d, 42–43). In addition to the issue of public reputation, the industry has identified nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and international organizations like the United Nations, which has a clear anti-mercenary

policy, as a growing market for their services (Pingeot 2012, 15). In this context, PMSCs increasingly employ "United Nations policy language, evocative of peace, legality and economic progress" (p. 14). This entails the establishment of codes of conduct and self-regulatory accountability regimes, which also include some language on the protection of women against violence, albeit no measures to enforce it. As Joachim and Schneiker (2012a) have shown, this association with humanitarianism, NGOs, and peace-building is intertwined with gendering strategies that construct private security providers as "ethical warrior heroes." This is also reflected in contractors' self-perceptions: "helping others" (64.6 percent) and "making a difference" (38 percent) were among the most often cited motivations for US contractors (Franke and von Boemcken 2011, 735).

This humanitarian masculinity also provides the subtext for video games such as *Blackwater*, a first-person shooter codeveloped by the founder of the notorious security company, Eric Prince. In this game, players assume the role of a Blackwater operative protecting aid workers in a volatile North African country. Even though the game is purely about shooting "villains" with assault rifles, shotguns, and sniper rifles, the lead designer of the game is quoted as explaining the fictional characters of the squad team as follows:

> They're there working with the UN and trying to protect people. No one wants to be a hero. . . . If there's one thing that's important to Blackwater it's their 100% success rate for protecting people. (quoted in Gaudiosi 2011)

This discourse reconstructs the legitimacy of masculinities in international security by creating the "appropriate" masculinity of the enlightened humanitarian security professional, who draws legitimacy from global governance regimes, neoliberal market ideals, and the "softer" masculinity of the "soldier-scholar" who also increasingly features as the masculine ideal in state militaries (Khalili 2011).

Romanticizing the Male Bond

Even though official industry, media, and policy discourses disapprove of overtly masculine representations and performances, popular culture often celebrates masculine autonomy and self-reliance, when depicting contractors. This builds on the romantic image of mercenaries as "the exotic, the adventurous, the heroic and those who challenge authority and convention," which has established them as "cult heroes" during the 1980s, particularly in the United States (Taulbee 1998, 154).

Video games such as *Soldiers of Fortune* romanticize autonomous, violent masculinities (Chisholm 2009, 7). With trigger-happy squad team members Devin, Baird, Smash, and Eddie, a "gang of brothers" with no other objective than "surviving the next day" (Gaudiosi 2011) also features in *Blackwater*. Another video game, *Army of Two*, tells of two former Army Rangers now in the service of a security company. As the name indicates, their bond which is strengthened by betrayal

and conspiracies of higher-ups is a central narrative plot. Players can save and heal their partner; they can also applaud each other's actions by giving high fives and playing air guitar on their weapons.

A number of autobiographic and (semi-)journalistic accounts (Schumacher 2006; Scahill 2007; Pelton 2006) also emphasize the "over-the-top, white, dominant, hypermasculine performance within the security industry" (Chisholm 2014, 5). They portray contractors as "autonomous, highly patriotic, rational and self-reliant," as men "fighting against all odds and keeping calm under intense combat" (Chisholm 2009, 6–7). They should, it is argued, be allowed a "certain level of machismo" (p. 7) because of the environment they operate in. Academic writing on private security has also contributed to constructing private security "as the epitome of masculinity" (Ibid.). Notions of masculinity under extreme conditions emphasize the exceptional status of private security and justify masculine excesses.

Paul Higate (2012b) shows that a sense of male autonomy and empowerment which is supported by the hands-off policy of many companies also informs contractor practices on the ground. Because the constraints of normal military life and legal frameworks of accountability are often lifted in private security work, this context can foster empowered militarized masculinities (Higate 2012b, 188–89) and a "fratriachal sub-culture . . . turning on frontier or cowboy identities where operations could be conducted by teams of brothers working to their own rules of engagement" (Higate 2012c, 454). In these contexts, private security is constructed as an exclusive male bond under exceptional circumstances, in which masculinity itself, rather than masculinized perceptions of patriotism and idealism, becomes the main motivation.

Militarization

The association of private security with military institutions and values is frequently observable in different discourses. It represents a gendered discursive strategy that draws on military/militarized masculinities as superior subject positions. Belkin (2012, 3) defines "military masculinity as a set of beliefs, practices and attributes that can enable individuals—men and women—to claim authority on the basis of affirmative relationships with the military or with military ideals." This can be done through "practices that include serving in the military, referencing one's military record, or promoting martial values" (Ibid.). By doing so, one is playing on the "relationship between masculinity, authority and military institutions and ideas [which] has, more often than not, been privileged and even glorified during the past century" (p. 49).

Research suggests that the industry does not only recruit largely from the population of state military veterans but also draws its legitimacy from militarized masculinities. Spearin (2006), for example, argues that the industry does not only utilize special operations forces as personnel but also benefits from the excellent reputation, professional training, and ethics that are being provided to these men

by the state military and then transferred to private markets: ''The marketability of *elite* status . . . is an important factor that PSCs rely on for promotional purposes'' (Spearin 2006, 64). This status is highly masculinized, because special forces continue to exclude women in most western militaries, despite a general increase in women's military participation and recent policy change in the United States. Beyond veterans of elite units, Amanda Chisholm (2009, 4) found in her fieldwork on contractor practices in Afghanistan and Nepal that ''anyone with formal or informal association to western military training could market themselves as experts and authorities on security.'' This association with the military—and particularly with its masculinized sectors (special forces, ground-combat units, and leadership positions)—gives persons or organization privileged access to lucrative contacts (Ibid.). Militarized masculinity thus serves as a resource of power in private security and vice versa.

Militarized conceptions also inform practices of security elites and contractors on the ground. Franke and von Boemcken (2011) have shown that contractors see ''their . . . service as a way to serve their country'' (p. 735) and as a ''logical continuation of their previous military and law enforcement careers'' (p. 738). The state military and its values thus represent an important motivational reference point for contractors in the field and shape their biographies beyond their actual military service. The observed conference gives ample, if anecdotal evidence that this is also the case for the management level. The list of participants, of whom over 80 percent were male, included military men from the ranks of lance corporal to major general. One-third of the presenters had served in the military, graduated from military academies, and/or worked in the militarized sectors of civilian politics. It was common for speakers to reference their military backgrounds during presentations and floor discussions to challenge those allegedly less knowledgeable about the ''realities'' of security work. Association with the military defined who could claim expert status on security. These performances were not traditionally militarized, but largely drew on the legitimacy of the ''soldier-scholar'' who is characterized as sensitive, humanitarian, literate, articulate, and an advocate of human and women's rights (Khalili 2011, 1475). Suits and ties were worn instead of uniforms, and power point presentations featured academic, humanitarian, and managerial language.

These gendering strategies complicate the representations of the industry to the outside world and marketing strategies of individual companies, which avoid association with the state military or even present themselves in ideological opposition to it. National militaries and state warfare provide an important context for private security because notions of militarized masculinity inform positioning within the industry. As many companies ''entirely depend on their host country for contracts'' and view ''themselves as extensions of their government's policies and interests'' (Pingeot 2012, 14), they draw on the legitimacy of masculinities derived from the state context. Hence, there is no distinct ''private contractor masculinity'' defined in opposition to the state military. Militarized masculinity is employed to exclude civilians, non-westerners, and women from security work and discourses.

Conclusion

Discourses of/on private security reproduce masculinities based on a contrast between the feminine and the masculine, ideal and deviant masculinity, and a hierarchization of masculinities. The state, the market, and global politics represent the relevant contexts in reference to which these interconnected masculinities are being created. This article examined gendering strategies employed by different actors, instead of "types" or "models" of masculinity associated with different groups of men. These strategies were identified as masculinization of the market and feminization of the state, feminization and racialization of (some) security work, hypermasculinization as a critical and an affirmative discourse, romanticizing the autonomous male bond, and militarization of security practices, that is, the associations with militarized masculinity.

A discursive definition of masculinities as subject positions, combined with Beasley's critique of masculinity studies (2008, 2012), and feminist analysis of international relations, was introduced to the research field to overcome the gap between research on the practices of contractors as men and research on masculinities as ideological frameworks for making sense of security privatization. Assuming a continuum between more embodied and more abstract notions of masculinity revealed the diversities and contradictions inherent in masculinity constructions at different levels of private security: from field to management, from popular culture to marketing campaigns, and from media and policy debates to academic scholarship. While these discourses differed in their evaluation of private security, they were connected by masculinity as an interpretative framework.

The assumed dualism between traditional militarized masculinity on the one and rational business masculinity on the other hand has already been criticized (Carver 2008; Hutchings 2008b). The case of private security takes the dissolution of this dichotomy even further: both images are effectively merged, in one industry and in each individual working in it, and they are complemented by a wide range of other masculinities derived from different contexts, such as global governance. Through these masculinities, debates on military privatization also articulate transforming gender relations in civilian and military life, for example, the increasing "feminization" of state forces.

The diversification of masculinities provides a way for security elites to draw from different sources of legitimacy: the heroic, warrior identity of traditional military narratives; the humanitarian ethics of global governance associated with civilian and democratic ideals; and neoliberal market ideology promoting professionalism, cost-effectiveness, and efficiency. The ability to move strategically between these different masculinities is however constrained by a group's or individual's position of power. While CEOs of security firms can assume military masculinity at one point and emphasize the market/business variant at others, third-country or local nationals have considerably less mobility and can hardly escape the marginalized positions ascribed to them by western managements.

While it is theoretically possible for women to take up these masculine subject positions, they also have a much harder time to tie in with the narratives of manhood based on the military, global governance, and international business.

''Othering'' discourses of the industry resembled anti-privatization discourses in terms of their hierarchical gendering. By portraying the counterpart as not enough or too masculine, masculinity is used as a point of reference on both sides. No matter who is perceived as the ideal or the deviant embodiment of masculinity and no matter what characteristics this masculinity is supposed to incorporate, masculinity is the framework through which the issues and problems of private security are being perceived and discussed.

These results have broader implications for international politics. As feminists have pointed out, the global arena ''is likely to be a primary site for the cultural and social production of masculinities'' (Hooper 1998, 28). In the context of current state and global transformations, private actors, such as transnational corporations, NGOs, or paramilitaries have become ever more relevant in defining international relations. Among them, the private military and security industry is an important player, one that western military powers increasingly depend upon in their security operations. Hence, private security has become an increasingly relevant field for the reconstruction of masculinities in the global arena. Its hybrid borders with state militaries enable the survival of masculinities, which have been challenged in the public realm. In the market sphere, they are reconstructed as desirable or even necessary for/in global politics.

In this sense, masculinities identified in the analysis are not just functional adaptations to the requirements of new security regimes, global warfare, and transnational business. They serve as a framework for theorizing international relations, also in discourses critical of private security. Masculinities draw the lines between state and non-state and between ''good'' and ''bad'' war. As a reaction to neoliberal restructuring which partly undermines traditional bases of male power (state warfare and military organizations), these masculinities reassert male dominance in international politics. They work as modes of exclusion, not only from the most lucrative and prestigious jobs in security provision, but from the authority to partake in discourses on war, peace, security, and other global issues. By diversifying masculinized subject positions, private security multiplies the sources of legitimacy for masculinism in global politics and impedes its critique. The analyzed masculinities thus work as a resource of power in international politics and, in turn, private security works as a resource for masculinities' superior status.

Private security also has particular relevance for the research on masculinities and international relations, because the industry increasingly defines the very notion of ''security,'' a highly gendered concept that has become hegemonic in international politics and its academic reflections. Future research needs to specify how, by constructing the global sphere as requiring masculinized skills, private security contributes to the marginalization of nonsecurity framings of social and political conflict and the militarization of foreign policy (Leander and Van Munster 2007, 201). More

research is also needed on the importance of masculinities for the normalization of the contractor business and the legitimation of violence in security provision. Masculinities are likely to play a central role in reconstructing the gendered distinction between deviant, transgressive, disruptive, or illegitimate violence on one hand, and on the other, legitimate, controlled, or "last resort" violence constitutive of the professional terrain of private security.

Further, the issue of gender discourses in the private security industry should be considered. Feminist analysis has formulated substantial critique of how gender issues and gender mainstreaming are being incorporated in global security regimes to serve the legitimation of militarized projects and organizations (Harrington 2011; Reeves 2012). Future research should thus take a closer look at how "gender" is being integrated into industry discourses in the name of self-legitimation and how gender scholars might be contributing to this purpose. Additional areas worthwhile of investigation include issues of global labor migration and how the industry reconstructs masculinities and gender relations in the communities from which it recruits its cheap labor, that is, the global South. In-depth research is also needed on the role of masculinities in rearticulating the shifting borders between state and market and in upholding the gendered notion of them as separate, even dichotomous entities.

To understand how masculinities in private security influence notions of global politics, the scope of analysis has to be expanded beyond the industry; different sites—from scholarly debate to popular culture—have to be acknowledged as spaces in which IR are being theorized and, more often than not, reaffirmed as masculine.

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Notes

1. This two-day conference was organized by the Private Military and Security Research Group at King's College London in cooperation with the Royal United Services Institute, where it also took place in September 2012, the University of Bristol, and the Economic and Social Research Council's (ESRC) Global Uncertainties Programme. It included about 180 participants: CEOs of major security companies, policy analysts, political consultants,

government and nongovernmental organization (NGO) representatives, and academics. The author attended the conference as a presenter and coorganizer of a panel on gender issues. Observation of the conference serves to grasp semipublic debates between industry representatives, policy makers, and academics.

2. This argument is based on observations made by Amanda Chisholm which she discusses in more detail in her forthcoming work.

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