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Forces for Good?

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FORCES FOR GOOD? NARRATIVES OF MILITARY MASCULINITY IN PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Evidence of military involvement in sexual exploitation and aggression against civilians on peacekeeping operations has led many feminists to question the appropriateness of using soldiers to create peace. They argue that the problems stem from a particular form of military masculinity, hegemonic within Western militaries, associated with practices of strength, toughness, and aggressive heterosexuality. Masculinities, however, are multiple, dynamic, and contradictory. As they are constructed in relation to the contexts men find themselves in, involvement in peacekeeping may itself play a role in the construction of alternative military masculinities. Examining autobiographical accounts of soldiers involved in peacekeeping in Bosnia in the 1990s, I argue that there is evidence of an alternative discourse of 'peacekeeper masculinity', but question whether it fully challenges the hegemony of the warrior model. I acknowledge that peacekeeper masculinity is also problematic because although it disrupts elements of the traditional linkages between militarism and masculinity, it still relies on a feminized and racialized 'Other.' Yet, I suggest that this is not the only way in which peacekeeper masculinity can be viewed. It can alternatively be considered part of a 'regendered military' which may be a necessary component of successful conflict resolution.

KEYWORDS:

INTRODUCTION

Evidence of military involvement in sexual exploitation and unchecked aggression against civilians on peacekeeping operations has led many feminist activists and scholars to question the appropriateness of using soldiers to create peace.[1] They argue that the problems stem from a particular form of military masculinity, hegemonic within Western armed forces, associated with practices of strength, toughness and aggressive heterosexuality. Masculinities, however, as the work of Connell and others has shown, are multiple, dynamic and contradictory, due to their being actively constructed – they are processes, not character types (Connell 1987; 1995). They are constructed in relation to bodies, social definitions of a man's place and the shifting contexts men find themselves in (Hooper 2000; Connell 2002a). As such, involvement in peacekeeping may itself play a role in the construction of alternative military masculinities (Enloe 1993: 33). In this article, I analyse autobiographical accounts of soldiers involved in peacekeeping in Bosnia in the 1990s, in order to explore whether there is evidence of an alternative discourse of 'peacekeeper masculinity.' I go on to discuss two crucial questions. If there is such a discourse of peacekeeper masculinity, does it challenge the hegemony of the warrior model of military masculinity? Secondly, what are the implications of peacekeeper masculinity, both in terms of achieving peace and security, and in terms of gender relations?

Firstly, I discuss the concept of masculinity and its construction in the British Army. I then outline the changing operational environment implied by the military's aim of being a 'force for good.' In the third section, I justify the method employed: discourse analysis of

autobiographical accounts. The main body of the paper then analyses soldiers' reflections on

peacekeeping in three sections, considering the practices they are involved in, relations with

women and relations with men. The fifth section discusses the significance of peacekeeper

masculinity and the sixth concludes.

CONSTRUCTION OF MILITARY MASCULINITIES

Following the work of Connell, I use a definition of gender as practice. Gender is something

which is actively negotiated by men and women, in relation to both their physical

embodiment and social structures within which they live (Connell 1987; 1995; 2002a). As a

result, there is more than one way – although not infinitely possible ways – of being a man or

a woman. Crucially, the concept of gender is, by definition, relational. In order to construct

masculinity, ideas of femininity must be constructed that are supportive and complementary.

Army training is a key site where such constructions take place. This training is a 'critical

period in a man's life,' which works by breaking down civilian identity and rebuilding the

individual as a soldier (McManners 1993: 112). Many accounts of military training

demonstrate how gender informs this process, as all things 'feminine' are disparaged, and

'manhood' is equated with toughness under fire.[2] Men, on the whole, find combat horrible

and unnatural, resulting in the need for this gendered combination of harsh discipline in

training, punishment for desertion, and rewards for fighting (Goldstein 2001: 253). As Enloe

memorably put it: 'If masculinity "in the raw" were sufficient, there would be little need for

the sweat, blisters, and humiliations of basic training' (Enloe 1993: 55).

However, as indicated by the emphasis on gender as practice, there is always freedom for

variety and multiplicity in models of military masculinity. By choosing their branch,

regiment, and job specialisation, for example, military men construct different military masculinities (Barrett 2001). Nationality, race, age and class all also intersect with gender and play their part in the construction of military masculinities (Hooper 1998: 29; Higate and Henry 2004: 484). The word intersect is crucial as identities are not constructed as a collection of discrete elements, but 'gender infuses all our identities so that race, age, class, ethnicity, ability and nationality are also gender specific identities' (Peterson and True 1998: 16). As such we have the different masculinities of officers, where authority and rationality tend to be emphasised, and the infantry soldier, where masculinity is more likely to be constructed around ideas of physical strength and aggression (Enloe 1993: 57; Connell 2002b: 38). Moreover, there is complexity and contradiction within models of military masculinity. For example, despite the notion that soldiers have to be tough, and 'real men don't cry', war stories and soldiers' testimonies abound with evidence of soldiers showing emotion, crying and handling other's grief with compassion and empathy (Morgan 1994; Hynes 1998).

In the British Army, despite the multiplicity and contradictions, the construction of the soldier as tough, brave, ready for action and also hard drinking, heterosexual and physically fit, can be said to have prevailed as the ideal or 'hegemonic' model (Higate 2003c: 30). This does not mean that all soldiers fit this description; it means that this model commands power and respect and is recognisable as an ideal (Carrigan, Connell and Lee 1985: 592-600). Indeed, the majority of men will most likely not fit the description. If, however, they do not challenge the dominance of the ideal, they are 'complicit', reaping the rewards of the 'patriarchal dividend' (Carrigan, Connell, and Lee 1985: 594). The concept of hegemonic masculinity helps us theorise how masculinities can vary and change and yet why men overall have remained in positions of power and wealth. Multiple masculinities exist in the military but the hegemony of the warrior model is part of the reason that certain men dominate within the

military, why there is pressure on men to conform to this form of masculinity, and why many
feminists find using the military as an instrument of peace problematic. This is why it is
important to consider not just whether alternative military masculinities are being constructed
but whether they challenge the hegemonic model.

FORCES FOR GOOD?

There have been fundamental changes to militaries throughout the western world in the post
Cold War period, not least the increased focus on broader regional and international security
tasks such as humanitarian and peace support operations (Moskos, Williams and Segal 2000:
3; Dorman 2002; Cheeseman 2005: 71). The British Army fits this trend in many ways, and
has fashioned itself as a 'Force for Good' (Ministry of Defence 1998; 2003; Dandeker 2000;
Dorman 2005). Of course, the British Army has always been involved in a variety of tasks,
including counter insurgency operations, peacekeeping and domestic duties as well as
warfighting. However, the growing employment of the Army on peace operations and other
non-traditional security tasks in the 1990s arguably required it to place a greater emphasis
than ever before on non combat skills (Moskos, Williams, and Segal 2000: 3).

Given that gender is a practice, something we do, and as we do new things, in new contexts,
we construct new gender identities, did this involvement in peacekeeping operations in
Bosnia in the 1990s have an impact on the construction of military masculinities? I am not
suggesting that all or most British soldiers changed from enacting 'warrior masculinity' to
'peacekeeper masculinity' in a linear development. Due to the fact that soldiers are trained for
fighting, which is linked to masculinity in training, but have often found themselves doing
other things, there have always been contradictions within the masculinities of soldiers in the

British Army. What I am suggesting is that the focus on peacekeeping in the Balkans in the 1990s may have affected these contradictions in interesting and significant ways. How did soldiers make sense of what they were doing? Can we identify the attempt to construct masculinities in British Army perhaps more conducive to the achievement of peace and security? Most importantly, if so, do they challenge the hegemony of the warrior model of masculinity?

READING AUTOBIOGRAPHIES

This paper seeks to explore these questions using four autobiographical accounts of soldiers involved in peacekeeping in Bosnia in the 1990s – Monty Woolley, *Cleanse Their Souls: Peacekeeping in Bosnia's Civil War 1992-1993* (Woolley 2004*)*, Milos Stankovic *Trusted Mole: A Soldier's Journey into Bosnia's Heart of Darkness* (Stankovic 2000), Colonel Alistair Duncan, "Operating in Bosnia," (Duncan 1994) and General Sir Michael Rose, *Fighting for Peace: Lessons from Bosnia* (Rose 1998). Woolly served in Bosnia in 1992–3 as a Lieutenant in 9th/12th Lancers. Bosnia was his first tour of duty. Stankovic (his name comes from his Yugoslavian father) was a major in the Parachute Regiment. Known as Mike Stanley in the army, Stankovic is fluent in Serbo-Croat and served as a battalion liaison officer in 1993, and then as a liaison officer in 1994 under General Rose. Duncan commanded a British UN Battalion in 1993 and Rose was Commander of the UN Protection Force in Bosnia from January 1994 to January 1995. All four are similar in class and education in that they are British officers, educated at Sandhurst, but differ in that they range in rank from Lieutenant to General, in age from 20s to 50s, and in national origin as Stankovic has a Serbian father. As officers, they are likely to draw on different aspects of hegemonic military masculinity than

ordinary soldiers; however, as members of combat regiments, the idealised notion of the brave, heroic, strong warrior remains potent.

Autobiographical accounts offer an information-rich source of soldiers' reflections, describing in detail the various events and personalities over the course of their tours of duty. Of course, they also have their limitations. They can only offer partial, subjective accounts, may overemphasise some events and misrepresent others, and contain only what the authors want recorded for public consumption (Personal Narratives Group 1989; Harrison 2001: 111; Smith and Watson 2001). However, the narrative style offers a level of detail about how soldiers make sense of what they were doing on peacekeeping operations which makes them particularly useful sources for researching gender identities. As such, the potential problems inherent in reading autobiographies – that they are not objective, reliable versions of events – can be, in a sense, a strength. They are not being used as sources of historical fact about the conflict in the Balkans, but for what they tell us about the constructions of masculinity of the authors. As Smith and Watson put it: 'any utterance in an autobiographical text, even if inaccurate or distorted, characterises its writer' (Smith and Watson 2001: 12). Of course, autobiographical accounts fail to provide representative cases from which we can generalize. However, the intention of this paper is not to make generalisations about the overall state of British masculinities during the 1990s. Rather it is looking for understandings by considering the cases of 'key informants' who have a 'profound and central grasp of a particular cultural world' (Plummer 2001: 154).

Discourse analysis can be used to investigate gender identities in autobiographical texts because of its close attention to the gendered structure of language. Discourse theorists argue that language is a system of signs, and that the meaning of things is established through a

series of juxtapositions, rather than anything to do with the essence of the thing itself (Hansen 2006: 19). Feminists have drawn attention to the way in which the privileged term of each juxtaposed pair is associated with masculinity. Such gender dualisms have political significance far beyond their role in male-female relations. Due to their role in structuring language and thought, gender dichotomies structure how we think and act about everything, including global politics (Peterson and True 1998: 19; Hooper 2000: 43; Cohn, Hill and Ruddick 2005).

Hansen further argues that the giving of meaning is rarely achieved through a simple binary, however, but rather through a more complex process of positive 'linking' to other terms and negative 'differentiation' from their juxtaposed 'Others' (Hansen 2006: 19). Thus certain terms are linked to each other to form a discourse of masculinity (hard, rational, strong, tough men) whilst simultaneously being differentiated from other terms, which form a discourse of femininity (soft, irrational, weak, tender women). This is important because it is through the linkages as much as the differentiation that gendered dichotomies have political salience beyond male/female relations.

The authors unintentionally but inevitably draw on these gendered discourses when writing their autobiographical accounts. For example, soldiers are well versed in the official military and state view that peacekeeping and humanitarian intervention are about a 'Responsibility to Protect' (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty 2001) or 'Saving Strangers' (Wheeler 2000). Feminists have highlighted the gendered and racialized nature of this dominant discourse, which positions the international community as the heroic, white male necessary to protect the vulnerable, inferior, feminised 'Other' – the state it must rescue (Orford 1999; Razack 2004; Whitworth 2004). Autobiographical accounts are not written in a

vacuum, and either reinforce or disrupt such discourses through their choice of words,

analogies and metaphors. If soldiers involved in peacekeeping portray civilians in target states

with agency and worth, or valorise skills and practices associated with conflict resolution,

skills and practices which are traditionally linked to femininity, they disrupt traditional

discourses. It is through paying close attention to linking and differentiation that we can see

the possibilities of challenging or destabilizing these discourses (Hansen 2006: 21).

For this article, passages where the authors reflect on peacekeeping activities – what they did

and why – and relations with others (men and women) were transcribed for discourse

analysis. These passages in particular were chosen because it is in such reflections that we

would expect to see reinforcements of or challenges to the traditional discourses. Thematic

accounts for each author were written up as a case study of a soldier and his construction of

masculinity, paying attention to where traditional linkages and differentiations were

reinforced, and where they were challenged. Then the data was reanalysed across the case

studies, taking each theme in turn in order to explore the similarities and differences across

the four autobiographies, in order to be sensitive to the intersectionality of gender with class,

age, rank and nationality (this method is based on Connell 1995: 87-89).

PEACEKEEPING AS EMASCULATING, PEACEKEEPING AS MASCULINE

Analysis of the four autobiographies indicates that the soldiers experienced a tension between

the desire to do what they learned to be most effective in bringing about peace and the desire

or demand to be manly. This tension can be seen in two themes which run through soldiers'

reflections. One is that peacekeeping practices are inferior, frustrating and less manly pursuits

than real fighting. The other is the many attempts to position peacekeeping as thoroughly

masculine behaviour. The former theme reinforces the traditional gender discourse and the hegemony of the traditional warrior masculinity. In the latter, however, we can start to discern the destabilization of the traditional linkages and differentiations, and the construction of an alternative military masculinity, associated with peacekeeping. Moreover, this construction is simultaneously the attempt to position it as the new hegemonic masculinity. Hegemony is not achieved through a contest for superiority between ready formed masculinities or groups of men, but is intimately connected to the construction of such groupings (Carrigan, Connell and Lee 1985: 594). When soldiers valorise peacekeeping tasks as masculine, they are not only asserting that there is another way to be a 'real man'; they are asserting that it is *the* way.

Peacekeeping is one of a broad repertoire of both formal and informal activities undertaken by the 'International Community' to prevent, halt or resolve conflicts (Mazurana et al. 2005: 18). Activities involve peace negotiations, monitoring cease fires and humanitarian activities such as delivering aid and reconstruction work. In Bosnia, the mandate stipulated that British soldiers use force only in self-defence and in reply to attacks against United Nations 'safe areas' (United Nations 1996). It is this minimal use of force which perhaps most clearly distinguishes peacekeeping from war fighting, and which the soldiers' reflections on peacekeeping focus on.

In the autobiographical accounts, there are occasions when the authors find this command to control the use of force and to focus on negotiation frustrating and, as I argue, more than that, emasculating. Woolley links the UN approach to timidity, indecisiveness and impotence (Woolley 2004: 80-81, 136). When providing security for aid convoys and unable to return fire when under attack, Woolley complains:

> This position was risible in the eyes of the locals and fast costing us their respect. The boy in the playground who had continually bitten his lip needed to give the school bully a swift right hook and show him for the coward he was. To put up with continued digs and snipes would only lead to others being bullied as well; it had to be stopped (Woolley 2004: 80-81).

The analogy with bullying in the school playground indicates how it is masculinity which is at stake. This theme of emasculation is echoed by Stankovic, who writes of his frustration at the way in which soldiers are 'proscribed by ludicrously complicated rules of engagement which effectively neuter any soldier on the ground,' and given just enough leeway to administer 'miniscule amounts of firepower, usually in the protection of aid agencies' (Stankovic 2000: 324), and Rose who is angered when his approach to the mission is labelled as 'soft' (Rose 1998: 210, 289).

The authors prefer to take a 'more robust' (Rose 1998: 17, 19, 35, 53) or more 'hardline' (Rose 1998: 57) approach. Taking tough action and being involved in actual fighting is exciting (Stankovic 2000: 67; Woolley 2004: 139, 179), restores self esteem (Woolley 2004: 55, 91) and gets results (Rose 1998: 73, 156, 187). Where fighting is not an option, masculinity can be asserted in other ways. Duncan recounts an incident where the British soldiers have to back down and defuse a situation of increasingly dangerous firing between them and some Croat forces. After the British company commander talks to the local Bosnian commanders and manages to de-escalate the situation he 'ended up parking his Warrior in the main street of Gornji Vakuf between the two factions and smoking a couple of packets of Hamlets, but he got away with it…' (Duncan 1994: 16). It is as if, after a potentially emasculating situation where a British soldier has had to minimise fire power and use

persuasion instead of force, he then has to reassert masculinity by demonstrating bravery and a 'too tough to care' attitude. Here, the traditional linkages between soldiers, toughness, action and virility, and differentiation from softness and passiveness, are reinforced.

However, all the authors at other points in their accounts construct peacekeeping as masculine. This is done in three ways. By claiming that peacekeeping is tougher, more dangerous and challenging than war (Duncan 1994: 12; Rose 1998: 4, 11, 163, 279; Stankovic 2000: 189). Secondly, by valorising and linking to masculinity the core principles of peacekeeping, impartiality and the ability to control the use of force (Rose 1998: 316-8, 354). After one of his interpreters is killed and some of his soldiers are convinced something must be done, Duncan argues: 'revenge is not the course of action of a civilised man; we must keep careful control of the way people behave and we must be seen to be impartial, actively impartial' (Duncan 1994: 16). Control and impartiality have traditionally been linked to masculinity, but they have not always been linked to the model of warrior masculinity, hegemonic in the Army, which has more commonly been linked to aggression and a desire to defeat the enemy. The third way, however, is potentially more radical in that soldiering is linked to traditionally feminised practices. Here, the everyday practices of peacekeeping such as building friendships, drinking coffee and chatting are linked to bravery and effective soldiering. For example Woolley writes of the importance of 'meeting the locals, showing them we were human, building friendship, gleaning information, or at least moods, and demonstrating to them that we were not scared of their environment' (Woolley 2004: 154). Similarly, Rose writes that at checkpoints, 'It was far better to sit with [local soldiers] in their bunkers drinking coffee and discussing the current situation than to stare at them from behind armoured glass' (Rose 1998: 106-7, also see 143 and 176; Duncan 1994: 13, 18 and Stankovic 2000: 353). Further new linkages are made when the authors make the case for

negotiation being superior to using force and requiring 'toughness' and 'aggression' (Rose 1998: 73, 335; Stankovic 2000: 335, 343).

This is contrasted with more traditional military practices which are disparaged. Excessive military hardware is said to make soldiers more vulnerable and subjects of ridicule (Woolley 2004: 154). The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)'s preferred approach to the conflict – to wage war from the skies on the Serbs – is feminised. NATO pilots are 'precious', cowardly, and 'zip around making pretty patterns in the sky' before missing their targets (Rose 1998: 189, 258-262; Stankovic 2000: 322-3). Although there is a long history of rivalry between different branches of the military, which partially explains soldiers' animosity towards airmen, the fact that they present the rivalry in gendered terms is significant. For Rose and Stankovic, even when involved in peacekeeping, soldiers are more masculine than pilots engaging in war fighting. This contributes to the new discourse of military masculinity, linking soldiering and masculinity to peacekeeping rather than war fighting.

The new linkages and differentiations indicate (and construct) alternative military masculinities, associated with peacekeeping practices; but does this peacekeeper masculinity challenge the hegemony of the warrior model? In other words, how do we know if the disruptions to the traditional discourse are more significant than the contradictions which have always existed in military masculinities? To answer this, consideration of the relational aspect of masculinity construction – the following two sections – is required.

RELATIONS WITH WOMEN

As masculinities are constructed in relation to ideas about femininity, consideration of
attitudes towards women, and the various interactions and relationships with different women
on peacekeeping operations are essential when exploring constructions of masculinity (Enloe,
1993: 19-20). Feminist scholars have pointed out how women and femininities are
constructed in specific ways during times of conflict, irrespective of what women actually
do.[3] The portrayal of women as supportive wives and mothers or as passive victims in need of
protection is the essential counterpart to the hegemonic military masculinity of the heroic
warrior. 'Armed conflict encourages expectations that men will fight and women will support
them on the "home front". The popular perception is that men are soldiers or aggressors and
women are wives, mothers, nurses, social workers and sex-workers' (El Jack 2003: 3). When
the context is peacekeeping, what happens to such positioning?

The lack of attention to women in the autobiographical accounts is indicative of how little this
discourse is challenged. Certainly, it is in the contexts of wives, mothers and sex workers in
these autobiographies that women receive many of their mentions. For Woolley in particular,
and Stankovic at times, a casual sexism is apparent in the objectification and trivialization of
women (Stankovic 2000: 289, 347; Woolley 2004: 105, 112, 114), casual approval of
pornography (Stankovic 2000: 30; Woolley 2004: 156), and ignorance and apathy about the
violence done to women through trafficking (Stankovic 2000: 69). When Stankovic recounts
an event which involves the women of Hadzici, who stage a road block in order to demand
the return of their husbands, they become the 'mad women of Hadzici,' who are hysterical
and have to be humoured in negotiations, as if the women are a mere nuisance and as if
negotiating with them was all a big game (Stankovic 2000: 81-2).

However, there is notable variation, with Stankovic at other times, and Rose fairly consistently, writing of women – both from the Balkans and their domestic lives – with respect and admiration. Of course, it is not unusual for men to love and admire the women in their personal lives yet to participate in the constructions of femininity which position masculinities and men as superior. The question becomes one of whether women in general are being positioned as subjects with agency and worthy of respect, not passive victims, sexualised objects or serving men. For example, Rose's account of the same women of Hadzici treats them as strong women, important players in trying to achieve justice (Rose 1998: 115). That there is simply not enough material in these accounts to answer that question here is frustrating but unsurprising. Enloe may be right that men learn about 'appropriate' male behaviour by 'relying on (while still controlling) women, by fantasizing about women, and by working to separate themselves from women,' but because it is assumed that men 'naturally' feel what they feel and do what they do, these processes are rarely remarked upon (Enloe 1993: 19).

RELATIONS WITH OTHER MEN

Just as masculinities are constructed in relation to femininities, they are constructed in relation to other masculinities. This is done when, whether at a conscious or subconscious level, men accept or reject different ways of being a man demonstrated by other men, and in actual interactions with other men, often involving power struggles to assert one's masculinity. The authors construct their masculinity in relation to many different groups of other men, including for example politicians, journalists and NGO workers, but the most common 'Other' for their constructions of the 'Self' is the Balkan soldier.

As above, there are two competing themes. Sometimes the Balkan soldier is described with admiration, in ways which reinforce the traditional links between warriors, masculinity, and toughness. Woolley notes approvingly that 'Bosnia is a man's world and I think drinking is a respected pastime' (Woolley 2004: 27), and that 'These men seemed proud, happy and confidently at ease, very much men's men. Their respect for size and strength was clearly part of their culture' (Woolley 2004: 28). Similarly, when Stankovic tells his girlfriend that the locals kept fighting in the -67 degree temperatures, without protective clothing or vehicles, he notes: 'We think we're hard as nails in the Paras, but these boys are in a completely different league' (Stankovic 2000: 74).

This discourse is backed up by the construction of military masculinity in relation to 'City Boys back home with their stripy suits, filo-faxes and sad nights out' (Woolley 2004: 125-6, also see Stankovic 2000: 136), the NGO workers with their 'scrawny beards, check shirts and hill-walking trousers' (Woolley 2004: 124) who are mere naïve 'do-gooders' (Stankovic 2000: 64, 65, 92, 169) and politicians and academics, who are often characterised by indecision and hypocrisy (Rose 1998: 225, 259, 279; Stankovic 2000: 440). Such differentiations from these 'Others' serve to reinforce the traditional discourse linking soldiers with masculinity, toughness and action, and cement the discursive solidarity between fighting men.

The more dominant theme, however, finds the local soldiers presented as hyper masculine – aggressive, irrational and violent. This portrayal of the 'Other', constructs British military masculinity as more controlled, civilized and intelligent. Size and strength are always commented upon: Stankovic encounters 'a Neanderthal – six foot four, thickset, huge head with black, close set, unintelligent eyes and a skinhead crop' who leaves the bar to fire his

machine gun into the night (Stankovic 2000: 70; also see Woolley 2004: 13, 116, 196). Rose

notes that Mladic, 'fat, swaggering and coarse-featured' (Rose 1998: 48) launches into

'crazed accounts of what he would do to anyone who threatened the Serbs' (Rose 1998: 274).

Duncan cites an incident where a local general, General Pralic:

> leapt out [of his car] brandishing his pistol and shouting and screaming against
>
> everybody. The subaltern took his helmet off, climbed out, fetched his interpreter and
>
> said, "General, I don't know what you're doing but officers should not behave like
>
> that. Put that pistol away, calm down and behave like a gentleman" (Duncan 1994:
>
> 18, also see 11).

The projection of aspects of traditional hegemonic masculinity which come to be rejected and

then projected onto less privileged groups of men is not unique to this context (Niva 1997;

Hooper 1998: 37). There is a long history of British military masculinities being constructed

in relation to the backward, irrational, violent 'Other' of various parts of the British Empire.

The imperial mission was intimately connected to masculinity as British soldiers were

constructed as 'naturally' braver, more professional and more disciplined than the masculinity

of the men in colonized nations. Orford has shown how discourses of humanitarian

intervention not only continue this tradition of portraying the elite men of target states as

aggressive and violent, but position the civilian population as in need of protection.

Constructions of peacekeepers as 'the heroic agents of progress, democratic values, peace and

security' thus demand a variety of racialized or feminized 'Others' (Orford 1999). What, then,

is the significance of 'peacekeeper masculinity'?

DOES PEACEKEEPER MASCULINITY MATTER?

There are two aspects to the question of the significance of peacekeeper masculinity. Firstly,
does it challenge the hegemony of the traditional 'warrior' masculinity in the British Army?
Secondly, given its colonial heritage, what difference does it make, in terms of achieving
peace, security and gender equality?

I have argued that attempts to construct peacekeeper masculinity are simultaneously attempts
to position it as hegemonic. This can be seen in the way in which the hyper-masculinity of the
Balkan commanders is not a stable construction, but rather one which is always at risk of
collapsing into femininity. Accordingly, Stankovic's Neanderthal ends up crying when his
machine gun breaks (Stankovic 2000: 71). Rose's descriptions of the big, aggressive, local
commanders contain as many references to physical weaknesses, irrationality and an excess
of emotion (Rose 1998: 200, 252, 256, 274, 287). The linking of the Balkan commanders, in
other respects the epitome of warrior masculinity, to the feminised traits of weakness,
irrationality and emotion, not only constructs peacekeeper masculinity as controlled,
disciplined and physically fit, but as superior, the ideal way of being a soldier and a man – the
hegemonic model.

Conversely, in the frustration expressed about having to restrain the use of force, and envy
towards those who can get on with the business of fighting, the traditional discourse linking
soldiers to masculinity, to fighting, aggression and beating an enemy, is repeatedly reinforced.
A more accurate characterisation of what we can read from these autobiographies, then, is
perhaps that the traditional model of military masculinity has adopted some of the practices
associated with conflict resolution, but not at the expense of war fighting practices, which
remain valued and respected. It has been argued that this strategy of 'dialectical pragmatism,'

whereby hegemonic masculinity appropriates from other masculinities whatever appears to be

pragmatically useful for continued domination, is how hegemonic masculinity operates in

other contexts, and indeed, by definition (Hooper 2000; Demetriou 2001; Connell and

Messerschmidt 2005: 844, 848). For example, Niva identifies a new form of US military

masculinity emerging out of the first Gulf War, when an 'openly articulated sense of manly

vulnerability and human compassion' appeared to have replaced 'bravado or stern

invincibility' (Niva 1997: 118). Niva contends that rather than fundamental change, this was

nothing more than 'a redefinition of masculinity in man's favour through an expansion of the

concept of legitimate masculinity and thus an extension of masculinity's power over women

and deviant men who do not measure up to this new paradigm' (Niva 1997: 122).

This raises our second question: what difference does peacekeeper masculinity make? Many

have argued that even such an ostensibly more benign masculinity is problematic because of

its construction of the 'Other' as primitive, irrational, aggressive and in need of protection and

the 'Self' as superior, democratic, peace-loving and humanitarian, thereby continuing a

patronising imperial discourse and legitimising intervention (Orford 1999; Razack 2004;

Whitworth 2004). Moreover, as peacekeeper masculinity remains a militarized masculinity,

constructed through feminized others, it reinforces hierarchical gender relations which ensure

that power, wealth and respect are only available for certain groups of elite men. It also

legitimizes the military and the militarization of peace processes (Cockburn and Zarkov

2002a: 16). We then neglect alternative ways of resolving conflict that recognise the gendered

structure of inequality and exploitation upon which many conflicts rest (Enloe 1993; Orford

1999; Whitworth 2004; Mazurana 2005).

On the other hand, it would be a mistake to dismiss the discourse of peacekeeper masculinity. Do we really want to say that it makes no difference, that it is just the latest incarnation of hegemonic masculinity, if soldiers are constructing the skills and practices associated with conflict resolution as masculine? Any disruptions to the traditional linkages of military masculinity with aggression and winning by force are surely important. According to Connell and Messerschmidt, hegemonic masculinity can be positive: 'the conceptualization of hegemonic masculinity should explicitly acknowledge the possibility of democratizing gender relations, of abolishing power differentials, not just of reproducing hierarchy' (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 853). Of course, the construction of peacekeeper masculinity through a feminized 'Other' raises serious doubts over the extent to which it can be said to be abolishing all power differentials, but that should not blind us to what is progressive. Soldiers who portray negotiating for peace and reconstructing schools as masculine are worth taking seriously, not just because they are not prioritising combat, but because they are challenging traditional gender dichotomies. They are challenging both the privileging of the masculine over the feminine and the association of masculinity with war and femininity with peace, an association which has made it so hard for both women and men to challenge militarism and war (Enloe 1993; 2000; Tickner 1999: 8; Kovitz 2003: 6).

Moreover, there is evidence that a peacekeeper masculinity which democratizes gender relations – which embodies the best of both 'feminine' and 'masculine' qualities and is available to both women and men (Cockburn and Hubic 2002: 117) – would be welcomed by women in countries experiencing conflict. Cockburn and Hubic conclude from their finding that women's organizations in the Balkans wanted peacekeepers to be both more militarily assertive *and* more gender sensitive and inclusive:

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> The women are clearly not saying 'feminize the military'. On the other hand, they
>
> are just as clearly not admirers of Rambo. They are not saying 'we love your macho
>
> ways'. … Rather, we would suggest, the women are implicitly asking for a
>
> regendered notion of the soldier (Cockburn and Hubic 2002: 116).

The discourse of peacekeeper masculinity which exists in these autobiographical accounts,
albeit alongside the traditional discourse, is important because a 'regendered' notion of the
soldier requires the creation of new linkages and differentiations. The questions then become,
firstly, whether it is possible to construct this masculinity without relying on a negative
construction of the 'Other,' and secondly, how to encourage and build upon such
constructions.

In this latter respect it is significant that Duncan and Rose appear more able and willing to
construct peacekeeper masculinity than Stankovic and Woolley. As a Colonel and a General,
it is possibly this seniority in both age and rank which gives Duncan and Rose the space to be
able to construct such alternative masculinities. In comparison to Woolley and Stankovic who
need to prove themselves to be tough, the masculinity of Duncan and Rose is not in question,
given their elite position and military record, allowing them to enact feminised traits without
fear (see Segal 1997: 103). Peacekeeper masculinity will only be significant, however, if it is
viewed as acceptable throughout the military. This requires that lower ranks are both
adequately trained in peacekeeping skills *and* feel secure enough in their masculinity to be
able to enact skills which have traditionally been positioned as feminine. As we have seen,
training has traditionally focused on making young officers and recruits feel anything but
secure in their manhood. Thus the promotion of peacekeeper masculinity would require a far

more fundamental overhaul of training than is either recognised or desired in current British Army policy.

The other pressing question raised by this paper is what the status of peacekeeper masculinity might be in the current post September 11 era, with the British Army on operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Iraq has been characterised as 'three block warfare' where troops might be involved in traditional peacekeeping activities in one block of a city, peace enforcement in the adjacent block and full blown combat in the third (Holmes 2006: 105). Such complex operations where soldiers are expected to win hearts and minds, create peace and security, yet also use all their combat skills, provide increasing opportunity for the kinds of tensions explored in soldiers' reflections in this paper. Evidence of British Army involvement in the abuse of Iraqi civilians suggests that soldiers are not coping well with such tensions. In terms of peacekeeper masculinity, on the one hand, the increasing resistance in Iraq and Afghanistan to the presence of British troops and the consequent increase in casualties arguably reduce the space for alternative masculinities to be constructed and thrive – the emphasis becomes one of force protection and combat. At the same time, it is increasingly clear that the traditional warrior model of masculinity is not enough to cope with the complex demands of such operations.

CONCLUSION

I have argued that there is evidence in the autobiographical accounts of the construction of an alternative military masculinity, associated with the practices of peacekeeping, and including skills and values traditionally positioned as feminine. Although this peacekeeper masculinity does not fully challenge the hegemony of the warrior model, its challenge to gendered

dichotomies associating masculinity with war and privileging them over femininity and peace, has the potential to be more significant than many feminists allow. It is through such challenges to traditional gender dichotomies that we can open up the space to challenge both militarism and oppressive masculinities.

Scepticism about the value of peacekeeper masculinity centres on the way in which it forms part of a discourse of the West as the heroic, white, male 'Self,' intervening to save a primitive, feminised, racialized 'Other.' This discourse constructs identities which both legitimise military intervention and disguise the role of the West in causing inequality and conflict. Whilst not denying the importance of these arguments, I have suggested that firstly, we consider ways in which peacekeeping masculinity could be constructed without forming part of a sexist and racist colonial discourse and secondly, that we should not ignore what is positive about peacekeeper masculinity. Rather than insisting that it only serves to legitimise militarism, I argue that it can also be interpreted as a challenge to militarism. This challenge is in line with the Balkan women's organisations who requested a 'regendered' military (Cockburn and Hubic 2002). It is to acknowledge that there are qualities in traditional military masculinity which are positive, such as bravery, ambition and steadfastness (Connell 2002b: 39), which, if combined with traditionally feminised qualities, such as caring, patience and empathy, could provide a model of soldier identity ideally suited to conflict resolution. That such change is unthinkable to many British Army policy makers today (Cockburn and Hubic 2002: 118; Higate 2003a), does not mean that the emergence of a discourse of peacekeeper masculinity is insignificant. Disruptions to established discourses linking masculinity and militarism are there to be encouraged and exploited rather than dismissed and ignored.

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Notes

[1] See for example, Fetherston 1995; Lorentzen and Turpin 1998; Cockburn and Zarkov 2002b; Razack 2004 and Whitworth 2004.

[2] See for example Enloe 1993; Morgan 1994; Goldstein 2001; Higate 2003b; and Whitworth 2004.

[3] See for example, Enloe 1989; Enloe 1993; Elshtain 1997; Enloe 2000; Moser and Clark 2001; El Jack 2003 , and Mazurana, Raven-Roberts and Parpart 2005 .

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