

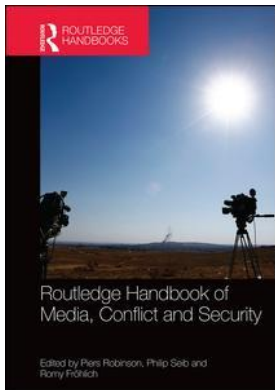
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### **Gender, media and security**

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## 2

# GENDER, MEDIA AND SECURITY

*Romy Fröhlich*

### Introduction

More than 20 years ago (1995), at the Beijing Platform for Action during the United Nations' Fourth World Conference on Women, Article 13 of the "Action for Equality, ..." stated: "The media have a great potential to promote the advancement of women and the equality of women and men by portraying women and men in a non-stereotypical, diverse and balanced manner, and by respecting the dignity and worth of the human person" and "stereotyping of women and inequality in women's access to and participation in all communication systems, especially in the media" was designated as one of the 12 most "critical areas of concern" (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women 1995). Five years later, in October 2000, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1325, in which, for the first time in its history, the Council dealt specifically with the consequences of armed conflicts for women. The resolution determines that women's contribution to conflict prevention, peacebuilding and peacekeeping is undervalued and calls for the active and unlimited global involvement of women in peace and security measures on an equal footing.

Resolution 1325 marked a turning point in the Security Council's handling of this issue, as they subsequently dealt with it three more times.<sup>1</sup> In their entirety, these resolutions describe the problems and develop clear ideas concerning how they should be handled, both politically and socially. Still, it is striking that the resolutions primarily refer to the role and participation of, and threat towards, "women" and "girls", that is, the *female* gender only, in wars and conflicts. The prevailing scientific understanding of gender is generally broader, although in science, too, the variable "women" is prevalent, even if there is also talk of "gender" (e.g. in the titles of academic works). Within a particular research context, however, we theoretically and empirically should understand gender as an analytical category (see the section on 'Gender') and not merely as a demographic variable.

Over the course of the last few decades, numerous scientific disciplines have discovered the gender issue within the topic of war, violent conflicts and security for themselves. Boyd (2005: 115) calls it "one of the most pressing problems of our time". However, the interdisciplinary character and the wide variety of different approaches in this field of research represent a special challenge. The interdisciplinary character the research topic "Gender, Media, War/Conflict and Security" has is actually located at the junction of various

scientific disciplines within the domain of the humanities and social sciences. These range from “international relations/studies”, and here, in particular, the field of “(critical) feminist security studies” (both specialist fields of political science), to communication research, media and/or journalism studies, to sociology, cultural anthropology, gender studies, philosophy or cultural studies – to name but a few. In a narrow sense, however, this research topic is not really dealt with in an *interdisciplinary* way. Instead, the separate disciplinary approaches to the issue exist rather independently from one another. Only very seldom do the respective scientific works refer to each other across disciplines. Hence, to understand the many insights research has provided on this issue, it is essential to determine the specific disciplinary context from which a given research project originated.

The various disciplines approach the issue from very different theoretical starting points, with different paradigms and different sets of methodological instruments. It would go beyond the scope of this contribution to systematically introduce and compare them. For example, while security studies focus on political, social, economic, or even ecological dimensions of human security, and also include questions of security *technology* in the core area of their disciplinary interest (Sylvester 2010: 24), the interest of communication science and media studies, for instance, lies exclusively in the political and social dimensions of the research topic. Failure to take this into account from the outset can quickly result in a tangled mess of theoretical approaches and models, empirical analyses and findings which cannot be compared to each other and/or even seem to be contradictory. Given the enormous (interdisciplinary) variety and complexity of the research topic, this article will deal with selected theoretical assumptions and empirical findings of gender-sensitive research in the field of communication science/media studies, and in the field of security studies.<sup>2</sup>

As a scholar of communication science, my selection and brief description of certain approaches from the field of feminist security studies<sup>3</sup> might appear questionable – it is certainly fragmentary and incomplete. However, my aim is not to provide a broad and complete overview of the relevant studies in either field but to offer an overview of the most influential and promising achievements of gender-sensitive research on media, war and security. In doing so, I focus deliberately on those works that expressly take into account the role and function of the media, theoretically and/or empirically.<sup>4</sup> This is naturally always the case when it comes to communication studies. As for security studies, their emphasis is generally on international (political) relations and not on the mass media. Therefore, only a few gender-specific studies within security studies generate significant amounts of empirical data concerning the role of the media. Most studies here are qualitative works on selected (largely prominent) media coverage cases.

This contribution might stimulate readers’ gender-sensitive lens for the following chapters of this volume and serve as a solid starting basis for students and researchers who are not yet familiar with the topic. Furthermore, I aim to identify possible linkages that might harbor potential for the development of future (truly) interdisciplinary research at the junction of these two disciplines which I will talk about in the last section of my contribution. I also conclude with new developments to be considered for further research. At the beginning, however, I want to briefly introduce the definitions of “security” and “gender” upon which my contribution relies.

## Definitions

### *Security*

International security studies – above all, the gender-sensitive studies or feminist security studies – interpret the term “security” to mean “*human security*”. For this interpretation it is important to consider the definition used by the United Nations Development Programme (1994), which defined the term “human security” for the first time in 1994 in its “Human Development Report”, thereby bringing about a paradigm shift that continues to considerably influence this scientific discipline to this day:

The concept of security has for too long been interpreted narrowly: as security of territory from external aggression, or as protection of national interests in foreign policy or as global security from the threat of a nuclear holocaust. ... Human security is not a concern with weapons – it is a concern with human life and dignity. ... Human security is people-centered. It is concerned with how people live and breathe in a society, how freely they exercise their many choices, how much access they have to market and social opportunities – and whether they live in conflict or in peace.

(pp. 22–3)

The report identified seven “main categories” which represent threats to human security: economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security (pp. 24–5). These categories continue to represent the areas of research within scientific security studies today – including gender-sensitive ones.

How “security” is interpreted is often closely linked with the conviction that establishing and achieving security is conditional upon providing protection and/or shelter.<sup>5</sup> This notion is criticized, particularly in feminist security studies, as being a masculine, authoritarian idea, since the appeal for protection and/or shelter often serves as a political and/or humanitarian justification for military intervention and war (cf. Tickner 1992, 2001). Thereby, those purportedly in need of protection (primarily women and children) are automatically degraded to being weak, dependently acting objects that are subjected, in turn, to additional violence. In this sense, Stiehm (1982) or Young (2003) (among others) interpret protection as a means of masculinizing the notion of security. Take, for example, the remarkable security events and legal changes<sup>6</sup> in the US after the 9/11 attacks as an instance of security policy, which is based on the logic of masculinist concepts of protection (Young 2003: 2). In this connection, Jonathan Wadley (2010: 52) speaks of protection as “a bad arrangement for the protected. Protection is, therefore, less about what is provided than it is about the effects of the performances undertaken in its name.”<sup>7</sup> As a consequence, I would go as far as to constitute any masculinizing interpretation of security to be, in this sense, a “bad arrangement” for those searching for security, and so the vicious circle caused by a typical masculinizing interpretation of protection and security becomes apparent: at the extreme, such an interpretation leads to war and/or other forms of violent conflict, which once again may well lead to security problems – now potentially even more problematic than before. This vicious circle is only one of many examples, which shows that Enloe’s (2000a [1989]) realization in her classic late 1980s work “Bananas, Beaches and Bases” that “the conduct of international politics has depended on men’s control of women’s lives” (p. 4) simply cannot be denied.

In addition, with reference to the seven categories named above, feminist security studies debunk another myth: that peace, understood as the opposite of war, automatically means *security*. This simplification is also criticized as a gendered perspective (if not more explicitly as a *masculine* perspective), because it ignores how, especially in pacified post-conflict situations, social and political life are frequently still in a state of lawlessness and chaos. In this state, security generally achieves, at best, a purely formal quality.

### Gender

Following Peterson's (1992) classic definition, I specify gender as "a socially imposed and internalized lens through which individuals perceive and respond to the world". On this basis, "the pervasiveness of gendered meanings shapes concepts, practice and institutions in identifiable gendered ways" (p. 194). Sjoberg (2010: 3) puts it slightly differently, albeit with largely the same meaning: "gender is a system of symbolic meaning that creates social hierarchies based on perceived associations with masculine and feminine characteristics". This includes the notion that organizations and even states, too, can become gendered (Sjoberg 2011: 110). Thus, I conclude that media organizations (radio and broadcasting stations, editorial departments etc.) are *gendered* entities – all the more, as "[g]ender is a socially constructed category which produces asymmetries and differences and which determines the distribution of power between men and women" (Fröhlich 2010: 1). This is what is meant when we talk about gender as an analytical category.

For centuries the asymmetric distribution of power between men and women has been observable in media organizations (cf. for example Gallagher 1995; Chambers et al. 2013). This is bad news, because many scholars have long assumed that the media play a significant part in the construction of gender roles (cf. Enloe 1994, 2000a, 2000b; Fröhlich 2010; Rabinovitz 1994; Wiegman 1994), and therefore it is assumed that gender balance in the media contributes to a more balanced/realistic media content. The logic of the media, however, strongly reduces the complexity of "real" reality (including the complexity of gender reality). Professional journalistic norms and rules are part of this particular media logic and determine the selection of events and the production of media content. These norms abolish possible influences of particular gender perspectives in journalism and thus contribute to the reduction of complexity.<sup>8</sup> This process of complexity reduction also necessarily underlies the media coverage of war, violent conflicts and security.<sup>9</sup>

### Gender, war and media: selected theoretical and empirical findings

It is not until the media begins reporting on a war that it becomes a topic of public discussion and, therefore, a relevant problem in communities not involved in the conflict. Thereby, the media also report on matters of security and defense policy and, in doing so, create a public forum for debates on how politics and society should react to the changes brought about by new violent conflicts and wars. The political scientist Piers Robinson (1999) was one of the first researchers to investigate the question as to whether news media can drive foreign policy. And John Shattuck (1996), United States Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor from 1993 to 1998 under President Bill Clinton, provided a clear example of this notion: "The media got us into Somalia and then got us out." In view of this, Berkowitz (2003) coherently defines military power differently than before, namely as the ability to collect, evaluate and process *information*, and then *communicate strategically*. Today, Berkowitz considers this communicative ability – Miskimmon et al. (2013) speak of "strategic

narratives” – to be even more decisive than military strength as measured by arms, troops or the quality of their weapons and military intelligence. The accuracy of this assumption can be illustrated with reference to the “information war” in the current Ukraine–Russia conflict (cf. Pikulicka-Wilczewska and Sakwa 2015). With respect to the power of the combatants’ state and/or media generated communication/propaganda, Giles (2015: 1) speaks of “Russia’s hybrid warfare” and Dyczok (2015: 198) of the “initial effectiveness of Russia’s information machine”. Hutchings and Szostek (2015: 184) claim that “[t]he conflict in Ukraine has thus become an “information war” as much as a conventional one”.

Even though the mass media’s presentation of war, violent conflict and security (policy) is of utmost importance in the field of communication science and media studies, the numerous international empirical studies on this topic have a noticeable blind spot: there are only very few empirical *gender*-sensitive studies on the topic. There is, however, a vast body of theoretical work from neighboring disciplines. The overwhelming majority of these theoretical works originates from the context of political science security studies, within which feminist security studies constitute a special area. Here, empirical analyses in a narrow sense are very rare. The underlying thesis, which proceeds fundamentally and consistently on the basis of one-sided and stereotypical thematization and representation of women and men, both in coverage of war and conflict, and in political and military public relations, is to an extensive degree substantiated in theoretical terms and supported largely by narrative single-case analysis. And indeed, our dominant model of womanhood comprises neither technological competence nor courage or physical strength. No wonder then that violence, conflict, war and security are topics that make it especially difficult to perceive women as *acting subjects* (cf. Elshtain 1987; Elshtain and Tobias 1990). And no wonder then that women hardly seem present in public consciousness as significant *actors* in war and conflict, defense and security policy.<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, and in accordance with traditional social perceptions of gender, men are constructed almost naturally as active participants in war and conflict – as fighters, aggressors and offenders on the one hand, and as active defenders and warrantors of security on the other; moreover, men (in particular, the military) are even considered as promoters of war (Fröhlich 2010). In contrast to this, women are perceived (not only by the media) as a “pacifying influence” (Sjoberg and Gentry 2007: 2), as beings who almost naturally oppose war and/or (warlike) violent conflicts, who are peace-loving and resistant to violence, who suffer from violence and so on. Elshtain (1987: 4) refers to these stereotypes as “Just Warriors” and “Beautiful Souls”. Several empirical studies – mainly qualitative ones – found evidence that media coverage of war and conflict assigns the subordinate role of the peaceful, passive victim, the vulnerable and powerless dependent and survivor, and the sexual object all to women – all in need of security, protection and relief (cf. Cloud 1994; del Zotto 2002; Elshtain 1982, 1987; Enloe 1994; Fröhlich 2013; Rabinovitz 1994; Stables 2003; Wiegman 1994). In doing so, the media simply “reinforce and reproduce the existing social order” between men and women (Lemish and Barzel 2000: 150). As Stabile and Kumar (2005: 765) accurately explain, “[f]ighting brutality against women and children is not the expression of a specific culture; it is the acceptance of our common humanity – a commitment shared by people of good will on every continent”.

This “commitment of common humanity” also applies with regard to female soldiers. If they are taken as prisoners of war, they transform from acting security promising subjects into passive, protection-seeking objects. This was made most clear in the prominent case of Jessica Lynch, imprisoned and liberated during the Iraq war in 2003 (cf. Froula 2006; Howard and Prividera 2004; Kumar 2004) as well as in similar but less well-known situations (see also Nantais and Lee 1999).

Zur and Morrison (1989: 532) refute assumptions about the peaceful and powerless female victim as a sort of myth:

The belief that war is a male institution which has no appeal to women is important because it implies that it is man's responsibility to prevent wars from occurring. The myth which views women as peaceful but powerless, and men as warlike and powerful does not acknowledge the interdependent relationship of men and women in the making of war. ... wars do not simply exist through male advocacy, they also stem from the influence of a complex cultural system.

Sylvester (1987, 2010) and Sjoberg and Gentry (2007) also strongly question the myth of the peaceful and innocent female victim and, therefore, advocate a model of security policy that recognizes the violence of women as deviation as well as the gendered nature of violence (and security) in general. Nevertheless, it is the media's preferred point of view when reporting on wars and violent conflict (cf. e.g. Fröhlich 2010; Lahav 2010; Tuchman 1979). Why is it that we only very rarely find news stories in our media on the many women who during wars and barbarous conflicts perform acts of tremendous violence and aggression – types of violence and aggression that we, as Sylvester (2010: 31) puts it, “associate with aberrant militarism and sadistic politics”?<sup>11</sup>

Some authors conclude that the media are used to a great extent to promote war and to obtain public support for military interventions (to restore security) – in particular, by conveying stereotypical pleas for military intervention to protect and/or free innocent women and children and to re-establish security (e.g. Cloud 2004; Klaus and Kassel 2005; Orford 1999; Stabile and Kumar 2005). Young (2003: 2), for instance, argues “that an exposition of the gendered logic of the masculine role of protector in relation to women and children illuminates the meaning and effective appeal of a security state that wages war abroad and expects obedience and loyalty at home”. Brownmiller (1994: 38) argues that the transformation of women's bodies by national actors into a symbolic battlefield of virtual conflicts is a crucial prerequisite for such a process.<sup>12</sup>

Other authors, however, argue that especially during armed conflicts or other violent crises and conflicts, female acting subjects leave the public (media) stage – a place where they are underrepresented even under normal circumstances. They are “pushed to the margin and perceived as peripheral to the events” (Kumar 2004; Lahav 2010: 263; see also, e.g. Lachover 2009; Turpin and Lorenzen 1998). Although there are hardly any quantitative studies with a broad scope on this question, the few that do exist (Fröhlich 2010, 2013; Harp et al. 2011) all come to the same conclusion, which, in the most recent of these studies, Harp et al. (2011: 211) summarize as follows: “the exclusion of women's experiences [in and by war coverage] is the norm instead of the exception”.

The very few cases where women do become significant actors in war, conflict and security coverage are cases that represent deviance from the usual gender-stereotypical expectations, one example being female suicide bombers.<sup>13</sup> But since, as Sjoberg (2006: 195) writes, “current gender stereotypes are incompatible with these women's behavior ... their stories are marginalized [in the US media] and their realities are buried even deeper”. Such processes of marginalization play an important role for military communications, since the narrative of weak women who need security and thus need to be protected, defended and liberated by male heroes (as the above-mentioned case of Jessica Lynch illustrates) only works if female brutality is ignored by the media and does not enter the public perception (cf. Froula 2006; Prividera and Howard 2006; Virchow 2005).

Thus, even deviance from the expected “normality”, which usually results in high newsworthiness, does nothing to change the consistent marginalization of the reality of women in wars and violent conflicts. In the case of deviance from the usual “female” normality, a suitable and different gender stereotype was quickly found: that of the “fallen woman”.<sup>14</sup> The use of this stereotype reduces the issue’s complexity. The reduction of complexity, in turn, is an important function of the mass media, which is why, undoubtedly, journalists willingly pick up the military’s interpretation of such events as a case of a “fallen woman”. This example clearly shows how amplification effects occur in war reporting (almost unconsciously): due to journalistic war reporting’s dominant alignment with military elite sources, in combination with the power of culturally effective gender stereotypes. Journalists have great difficulty shedding the latter, and shrewd military PR knows how to exploit this.

Taken together, it seems plausible to assume that gender-stereotypical media reports become particularly recognizable in media coverage of war, conflict, defense policy and security. Feminist security studies provide interesting theoretical explanations, which I find very useful for studying the reasons for gender-stereotypical war reports. For example, during armed conflicts or other violent crises and conflicts, female (acting) subjects do not simply “leave” the public [and media] stage or “disappear” because their particular problems would not be of any interest for the media. In actual fact, rather the opposite is the case, as feminist security scholars point out when providing an explanation, which they do not explicitly link to the deficits of media coverage but which one can easily apply to the specific annihilation of female issues in media coverage on war and hostile conflicts: taking the case of rape during wartime as a very plausible example, security studies scholar Lene Hansen (2000: 295) describes silence and denial explicitly as “security strategies” of raped women or female victims of other physical and sexual assault. Sylvester (2010: 30) explains that this often is “the only way they [the victims] can create some security”. With respect to media coverage of war and hostile conflicts, this strategy leads, of course, to the annihilation of women and their experience with violence and (lack of) security.

On the other hand, rape during wartime and hostile conflicts is an example of the persistent “symbolic annihilation” (Tuchman 1978) of female issues by means of media coverage, even if women openly speak about it.<sup>15</sup> Peter Sartorius (1996: 15), a leading editor of the German quality newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and the newspapers’ war correspondent in the Balkans for more than four years, describes his experiences during his travels to the warring regions of Bosnia and Croatia, where he, like most of his colleagues, quite frequently met women who told him of the martyrdom they and others had gone through,

But could we, were we allowed to believe that? Where was, asked almost cynically, the proof of evidence? ... Was the flow of information controlled by propagandists ...? ... One undergoes a process of learning during a war, a process in which it is constantly hammered home that no one can be believed and that even tears do not have any powers as evidence. ... Later, when after intensive research primarily done by the female German journalist Alexandra Stiglmayer and the American Roy Gutman the presumptions were confirmed, I regretted that I did not denounce the crimes when I first heard of them.

*(Sartorius 1996: 15)*

This demonstrates the whole dilemma: regardless of whether women use silence and denial as security strategies during times of war and violent/hostile conflict, or whether they speak



openly about the life-threatening security issues they are experiencing, the media ignore their stories anyway.

The media's skillful ignorance of women's various experiences is further enhanced by the fact that they usually portray victims of war and hostile conflicts as an anonymous mass (refugee trails, for example; cf. Fröhlich 2010). "Individualization ... has to be banned from the context of war reporting, since the major objective is to demonstrate that larger groups of people, the entire population, or whole ethnic communities, and not individuals are involved ..." (Fröhlich 2013: 161). The dire consequence may be that women's particular security issues in times of war and hostile conflicts (in contrast to those of men) remain unknown, even within the system of political decision-making.

The appeal of women for (more, better, stable etc.) security is further trivialized in media coverage by the reduction of women's experiences to an "emotionalizing function" as a victim that is supposed to give war coverage an "affective kick" (Fröhlich 2013: 163). As the extract from Sartorius' field report (see above) shows, such emphasis on their supposed emotionality reduces their credibility and rationality. Against this background, another vicious circle becomes complete: besides the security argument, it is probably also the argument "women are too emotional" that determines the decisions of media organizations not to send too many female journalists as reporters into war and conflict regions. Although female war correspondents have become more commonplace nowadays, they still represent a small minority (cf. Fröhlich 2013: 160–4).

It is all the more surprising, since there are numerous examples for how female war correspondents often accomplish the extraordinary in their work. BBC correspondent Lyse Doucet offers one possible explanation for the fact that female war reporters constantly deliver stories that are considerably different from those of their male colleagues: it is her experience that in many war zones western female journalists are considered to be a kind of "third gender", which differs not only from men but also from the local women of the area in question. Therefore, they do not fit the mold of the usual gender-stereotypical behaviors and that is why they are secure and treated differently. "We aren't treated like the women of the place. We aren't treated like the men. But in traditional societies, where hospitality trumps ideology, we are almost always accorded the special privileges afforded to guests. In conservative societies, that also includes a belief that women need to be protected" (Doucet 2012: 151).

In various discussions about this phenomenon, several female war correspondents gave me another explanation for the differences seen in their journalistic work: since women are often denied the usual access – for instance, because access to certain elite events and sources (military and political) is reserved for the mostly male chief correspondents – they are forced to turn to supposedly less elite sources for their stories. Accordingly, for reasons of status, the professional role of female war correspondents would be much less shaped by the "intense pro-military bias", i.e. predictable patterns of reporting and editorializing (Entman 2013: 204), than is the case for their male colleagues. In this way, other stories come to light, "stories about people, not frontlines" (Maria von Welser, cited in Gernhuber 1996: 21). Hence, female war correspondents are possibly better placed to shed the media's general militaristic bias and to break out of the vicious spiral of elite silence.

### **Deficits of current research and challenges for the future**

The niche status of gender-sensitive research on media coverage of war, conflict and security (policy) is certainly partly to blame for a theoretical deficiency within communication science. This research could benefit enormously by taking into account the critical understanding

and approaches of gender-sensitive security studies. A first step would be to acknowledge, that men and women differ in their perception and relevance of violence, that they have different notions of and requirements for security, and different notions and expectations concerning the specific establishment and guarantee of security.

I also consider those approaches of security studies to be particularly valuable, which help to broaden the classical focus of conflict-communication studies on “military”, “war activities” or “diplomacy” toward *social* and *societal* aspects of threat and security. For instance: presenting ecological destruction (cf. Detraz 2009) within war coverage as a social/societal aspect of threat, security and consequence of war (for example as German media did during the early phase of the escalation of the violent conflict in Syria) should gain a particular qualitative relevance of its own, and thus could be scientifically evaluated as a specific criterion regarding the quality of media coverage. The same applies to coverage on social changes as a consequence of war (cf. United Nations 2002): how do media report on social changes which affect security or perceived security in war or crisis zones (for instance: people trafficking, sexual slavery and domestic violence; unemployment and the growth of exploitative informal economies; laying of mines and the decreasing possibilities for agricultural production and trading; the transformation of civilian roles during war); how do media report on civil society’s involvement in peace and reconciliation processes in post-conflict situations (for instance: civil grass-roots attempts and their engagement for peace as an opportunity to become organized); and so forth. None of these aspects explicitly represents gender reference. However, the various theoretical approaches of feminist security studies do show the ways in which gender-relevant links can be established – for example the rising risk of domestic violence in post-conflict phases (cf. Tickner 1992), the observable increase in patriarchal values during times of rising nationalism, the transformation of civilian *gender* roles during war and reversed changes in post-conflict contexts (cf. Theidon 2007; Wood 2008).

In doing so, communication studies should also review the prevailing (masculine) news factors and news values and their application in the journalistic selection process, which are considered a sign of professionalism. In the long-term, a reassessment of such professional norms and values, and the reassessment of existing notions of the ideal-type media discourse, could lead to a shift in media coverage of war and security policy. The work of feminist security studies makes a valuable contribution in this context (cf. Brownmiller 1994; Cloud 2004; Froula 2006; Hansen 2000; Kumar 2004; Lemish and Barzel 2000; Moser and Clark 2001; Privera and Howard 2006; Sjoberg 2006; Sjoberg and Gentry 2007; Stabile and Kumar 2005; Sylvester 2010; Tickner, 2001; Young 2003). However, empirical communication science has yet to develop more complex quantitative methodological approaches which analyze the actual gendered character of relevant media discourses more in-depth and with a broad scope (longitudinal studies, complete inventory counts, less single case studies). With respect to this, complex frame/framing analyses (Entman, 1993; Goffman, 1975), for instance, seem to be better for investigating the actual *discursive* as well as the *strategic* structure of media texts (including culturally determined contexts) than ordinary content analyses which merely focus on single topics, actors and/or evaluations.

The fact that communication science has so far overlooked previous research in gender-sensitive security studies smacks of ignorance – of which, incidentally, I am also guilty. On the other hand, the fact that gender-sensitive security studies deal with media questions on an almost exclusively theoretical basis and, with respect to the empirical dimension of their arguments concerning the media, rely heavily upon single qualitative case studies, is a question of the specific methodological approach and of the corresponding traditions of

this discipline. Still, it is somewhat confusing to me when, for example, Christine Sylvester (2010: 33) writes that women who are charged with (monstrous) aggressiveness and violence in wars “have been paraded in the press in gender particularistic ways”. There is neither empirical evidence nor a scientific reference for such a claim, which lacks intersubjective verifiability. If one then considers that there are currently less than a handful of empirical studies which, with a broad scope, provide valid empirical data on the gendered character of media coverage on war and security, it becomes clear generalizing statements like this are impossible. A “joint venture” between feminist security studies and gender-sensitive quantitative communication research would be a perfect match to solve these problems.

And there are further challenges to be considered: first, the public perception of gender in times of war and violent conflict meanwhile is determined not only by professional journalists but (increasingly) by non-professional ones (e.g. citizen journalists; e.g. the Arab Spring). Furthermore, the public perception of gender, to a greater degree than previously, is increasingly determined by professionalizing military/combatants’ communication. On top of that, in the military area there is more and more unofficial communication by various members of the military, who are involved in relevant public discourses on social media (e.g. video clips from cell phones on YouTube, blogs etc.). Research has not yet sufficiently dealt with this “differentiation of media actors” (Virchow 2012: 213)<sup>16</sup> – and certainly not in the specific context of gender-relevant questions.

Second, in view of the increasing importance of communication as a strategic weapon (cf. Berkowitz 2003), future research should also address the question as to which (dominant) gender representations are depicted in military’s/combatants PR and propaganda, in politics or by non-governmental organizations (NGOs; see also Chambers 2003; Kumar 2006). As yet, this has not been examined in any scientific discipline to any extent. Third, future gender-sensitive research in the field of media, war and security must anticipate the effects of globalization as well as the growing significance of supranational political and economic organizations (cf. Limor and Nossek 2006; Seib 2005). Crucial intervening variables result from these developments, both for the theoretical foundation of relevant studies and for the interpretation of the data they gather. The same is true for the currently increasing economic competition in the media system around the globe, and the casualization tendencies in journalism associated with this, including unmistakable de-professionalization tendencies. There is much to be done – let’s get started.

## Notes

- 1 2008: Resolution 1820; September 2009: Resolution 1888; October 2009: Resolution 1889.
- 2 This contribution does not include the topic ‘domestic violence and security’ (cf. e.g. Tickner 1992). Due to the limited scope of this article, I must also exclude environmental security as an issue of gendered violence and conflict (cf. also Detraz 2009).
- 3 For a good overview of feminist security studies in general, see also Blanchard (2003) and, more recently, Sjoberg (2010).
- 4 The focus is on English-language articles although there have been quite a number of German-language studies on this topic in the last ten years.
- 5 For the interdependences between ‘violence’ and ‘security’ see Shepherd (2007), who illustrates the potential of a feminist reconceptualization of (international) security and (gender) violence.
- 6 For example, the ‘USA Patriot Act’ (Pub. L. No. 107–56) of 2001 which covers inter alia the enhancement of domestic security against terrorism, surveillance procedures and border security; the ‘Aviation and Transportation Security Act’ of 2001 (Pub. L. No. 107–71); the ‘Homeland Security Act’ (Pub. L. No. 107–296) of 2002 which re-adjusted US immigration law and policy; the ‘Intelligence Reform and Terrorist Prevention Act’ (Pub. L. No. 108–458) of 2004 and so on. For more detailed information on more than 130 legislation acts (including

- legislation with floor action) all related to the 9/11 attack in 2001 see <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/terrorleg.htm> (accessed 24 June 2015).
- 7 For more information on the gendered nature of armed conflict and political violence, see also Moser and Clark (2001).
  - 8 Some authors see a solution for this problem in ‘peace journalism’ (cf. Keeble et al. 2010; see also the article in this compendium ‘News coverage, peacemaking and peacebuilding’ by Jake Lynch in Part III), or rather in the specific concept of ‘gendered peace journalism’ (Jacobson 2010).
  - 9 For the discussion about the hypothetical potential (more) gender-sensitive media coverage would have for the prevention of violent conflicts or for peace and security building activities – including the potential for early warning – see, for example, Schirch (2004) or Lloyd and Howard (2005).
  - 10 Since Resolution 1325 of the UN Security Council in 2000, the number of female UN spokespersons for the organization and special correspondents has only slightly increased (e.g. Linda Chavez and Pam O’Tool).
  - 11 For example, Sylvester (2010: 31) points out that more than 3,000 Rwandan women have been tried, and many sentenced – some of whom in international trials – for their contributions to genocidal acts.
  - 12 See also Faludi (1999: 36–7).
  - 13 For an overview of research on female suicide bombers in the media, see Naaman (2007).
  - 14 For more on narratives of violent women, see also Sjoberg and Gentry (2008). Another example is the case of the former US Army reserve soldier Lynndie England and the abuses of (male) Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison in 2004.
  - 15 For a comprehensive examination of news coverage of rape, see also Meyers (1997); for more information on rape as a war crime, see Tetreault (2001).
  - 16 As a rare example see Busch (2012).

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