IN WHAT WAY IS SECURITY A GENDERED CONCEPT?

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ABSTRACT

The Western security narrative is heavily gendered, which has consequences for discursively feminised persons. Security is categorised based on a hierarchical, gendered binary which undermines feminised security threats. This paper focuses on feminisation through an intersectional lens, taken in this context to mean people – not specifically women – who are discursively associated with acts tied to femininity, and thus relegated (Peterson, 2007: 13; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005: 842). For instance, people are feminised through performing informal labour such as care-work or sex-work, which is unvalued and excluded from the 'public' realm because it is associated with femininity (Peterson, 2014: 370). The paper seeks to expose the hierarchy of threats in Western security discourses that elevates masculinised, national security over 'other' feminised threats in the 'private' realm (Hooks, 1982: 22). Even though the state is a construction, in place to protect the people, it seems that feminised people tend to be secondary (Rousseau and Betts, 1994: 83).

KEYWORDS: *Gender binary; Informal Labour; Postcolonialism; Poststructuralism; Normalising Power; Biopolitics; Social Dominance Orientation Theory*

INTRODUCTION

This paper critically analyses security as a gendered concept by examining how 'threats' are constructed in a hierarchical and relational way through a binary of masculine (public) or feminine (private). Establishing a clear understanding of security as a gendered concept is important in uncovering the social relations that inform the way threats are constructed and comprehended. There are two key aspects to this. Firstly, analysing security through a feminist lens makes clear that gender is used as a form of power to legitimise certain militarised responses to security 'threats' (Cohn, 1987). Secondly, a divisive dichotomy of threats perpetuates dangerous and damaging masculinised security agendas. However, this dichotomy is a falsity since the masculine and feminine prop each other up in an "impossible constitutive dynamic" (Pin-Fat and Stern, 2005: 29). Therein lies the possibility to deconstruct binaried, hierarchical understandings of threats to security.

In order to develop a clear, intersectional argument for security as a gendered concept through dichotomised conceptions of threats, I will take both poststructuralist and postcolonial feminist perspectives. The paper also draws on Foucauldian ideas of power, particularly normalising power, to analyse how gendered hierarchies pervade security as a concept. Two key case studies are used to highlight that security excludes feminised voices and prioritises masculine threats in the 'public' realm, and equally how feminisation is the exclusion of masculinisation. 'Feminised' used here denotes those who are "sexually, racially, culturally, and economically marginalised" because ascribed feminised qualities, such as lacking agency, are attributed to subordinated people to indicate inferiority (Peterson, 2007: 13).

To build my analysis, the second section will outline a genealogy of International Relations (IR) through a feminist perspective to show how IR, and particularly Security Studies, has been constructed through a heavily Western and masculinised lens. To evidence this, I analyse poverty as a feminised

security threat which disproportionately affects the Global South and draw on the 'saving' Muslim women discourse as a case study to demonstrate the feminisation of the Global South. Section three critically examines the damaging consequences of trying to 'fit' sexual violence into the 'malestream' IR security narrative by taking a case study of the UN's masculinised response to rape as a weapon of war. Section four seeks to explain the reasons behind hierarchical conceptions of security explored in sections two and three. To do so, I look at gender as a form of power and how discursive constructions can limit perceptions of security. Section five considers whether an alternative is possible by asking whether security, embedded within gender hierarchies, can be deconstructed. The final section concludes by arguing that mainstream security discourses have negative consequences both in theory and in practice for the feminised. I add support to the feminist argument that continuous questioning of mainstream narratives is needed to loosen gendered, binaried understandings of security, which this paper also aims to contribute towards.

1. 'MALESTREAM' INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

2.1 Tracing the Genealogy of Security Studies in IR

Security has become synonymous with national security due to the prioritising of masculinised perceptions of 'threats'. The gendered hierarchies underpinning Security Studies can be genealogically traced through the construction of "malestream" IR (Youngs, 2004: 76), which originates from a specific and narrow lens; predominantly that of Western, white, upper-class men (Dunn, 2008; Peterson, 1992: 200). Some have argued that security is therefore 'naturally' skewed towards a Western and masculinised perspective, or even argue that wider IR is a gender-neutral discipline (Beauvoir, 1952: 161; Tickner, 1997: 612). However, feminists show that relational, gendered social hierarchies produced this specific lens, driven by invasive dichotomies (Jones, 1996: 410).

Furthermore, gendered binaries are particularly Western constructs, which overlook alternative systems and perspectives in non-Western security contexts (Kochems and Jacobs, 1997: 260; Butler, 1999: 19; Burns, 2018: 259; Tickner, 1992: 6).

This shows that gendered hierarchies *cause* the exclusion of feminised voices from mainstream Security Studies, but they are also a *consequence* of the masculinised narrative. The mainstream focuses on masculinised, external threats including war, terrorism, espionage or cyber threats – all of which are highly militarised and centre on securitising the state (CPNI, 2020). In contrast, feminised security threats such as health, inequality, finances, environment, and physical autonomy, are overlooked because they do not belong in the 'public' realm; they are instead considered internal or 'private'. Since the narrative elevates masculinised notions of security by focusing on the state (public) and is constructed through the image of its 'other' (private), it is implicit that feminised perspectives are relegated (Kristeva, 1986: 106). It is the construction of a binary opposition that creates this hierarchy of security threats. Between opposites, one side is always implicitly inferior (Peterson, 1992: 185; Derrida, 1967: 142).

Evidently, security is gendered in its construction and study. Security Studies is thus itself a source of power in producing specific ways of thinking and masculinised knowledge (Foucault, 1975: 27; Peterson, 1992: 192), deciding which threats should matter and how to react to them (Cohn, 2013: 49). Consequently, Security Studies contributes to the social structures which exert normalising power on each person through an 'either/or' thinking system with masculine being the 'norm', and feminine being deviant (Richter-Montpetit, 2018: 226). Termed "hegemonic masculinity" (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005: 832), this hierarchy translates into practice whereby the threats that are perceived to be important by masculinised Security Studies, are disproportionately focused on by governments.

Security has been confined to a state level because Western mainstream IR (realists and liberals) focuses on protection of the state and its masculinised agenda (Tickner, 1992: 42). Feminised security threats do not inform the security agenda — neither in theory nor practice (Kolodziej, 1992: 423).

2.2 Poverty as a Feminised Security Threat

A pertinent example of the hierarchies of security threats is poverty. Firstly, poverty disproportionately impacts the Global South, which is discursively feminised (Meger, 2016b: 379). Feminisation occurs through unequal relationships with the West via persistent neo-colonial patterns, exploiting informal labour and controlling security priorities (Peterson, 2007: 14). Informal labour is feminised because it is largely unrecognised and unvalued work by those subordinated, which is tied to femininity (Peterson, 2014: 370).

For instance, the outsourcing of wars to the 'non-West' – war typically being a masculine form of labour – becomes feminised through its informality as well as demonstrating 'weakness' of feminised states where the violence occurs, allowing neo-colonial "paternal intervention" (Meger, 2016b). This hierarchy of threats operates through gendered and racialised dichotomies, such as powerful/weak, saviour/victim, and us/them (Rao, 2010: 2). Indeed, the establishment of a binary between North/South is driven by the Western need to maintain a political understanding of itself as a masculine leader (Peterson, 2007: 17; Thobani, 2007: 171), legitimising neo-colonial intervention in the name of 'security' (Edkins, 2000: 7).

In this instance, gender intersects with race and geopolitics to subordinate the Global South, allowing the North to intrude, 'help', and abuse the (implied inferior) 'other'. This unequal power relationship is highlighted in the security discourse on 'saving' Muslim women, seeking to legitimise intervention and maintain neo-colonial patterns, as well as gendered hierarchies. This patronising discourse

not only works to sell the so-called 'War on Terror' (initiated against Afghanistan by the United States) to those 'back home' by drawing on Western feminist ideals but is also a way of trying to control the 'other' (Thobani, 2007). Despite many arguing that Islam liberates women (Milton-Edwards, 2000: 183), the Western discourse tries to undermine the wearing of the veil by implying that it subjugates Afghan women (Hobson, 2012: 10). For instance, following Bush's declaration of a 'War on Terror', TIME magazine published a report called Lifting the Veil, arguing that Afghan women's lives would be significantly improved following Western intervention (Berry, 2003). This was conferred by Laura Bush's radio address in November 2001, where she stated that "the people of Afghanistan, especially women, are rejoicing" (Washington Post, 2001). In attempting to Westernise Afghan culture through liberal ideology, "colonial feminism" is exported (Abu-Lughod, 2002: 784).

Another aspect to the gendering of this discourse is to imply that Muslim women need 'saving' from Muslim men by Western soldiers through a masculinised, militarised response (Sen, 1999: 199). It implies that the women are weak and vulnerable, whilst Afghan men are portrayed as 'backwards' (Said, 1978: 15), hence feminised, being further compounded as inferior 'others'. In contrast, the US perpetuates its hyper-masculinised image as a forceful saviour (Peterson, 2007: 17). This 'colonial feminist' discourse accordingly legitimises Western intervention by treating women as "objects of protection from their own (racial and national) kind" (Rao, 2010: 182).

This analysis of the discourse on 'saving' Muslim women has demonstrated the feminisation of the Global South through neo-colonial patterns of intervention. This adds weight to the argument that, since the Global South is feminised via unequal relationships with the Global North, poverty is considered a feminised security threat as it disproportionately impacts the Global South. This has evidenced the gendered binary within

mainstream (Western) security narratives, both in theory and in practice.

Secondly, poverty is exacerbated as a feminised threat since it is not seen to directly endanger the state, thus considered to be in the private realm (Waltz, 2000; Martin, 1992). Although the binary between feminine and masculine security is shown by feminists – such as Enloe (1989) – to be merely superficial, mainstream Security Studies produces and reproduces dichotomised images of threats to legitimise action or inaction. For example, in 2018, the US (the world's richest country) spent just 0.17% on development assistance compared to gross national income, despite a target of 0.7% (OECD, 2018). This inaction is legitimised by poverty being consigned to the private realm – thus not a matter of state security. In contrast, US military spending in 2018 was 3.3% (SIPRI, 2018).

If states do respond to poverty – especially poverty in the Global South – it is often militarised; foreign aid can fuel wars for further economic gain (Cramer, 2002) and is regularly used to justify intervention. Often, aid is politically guided and manipulated so that those who really do need help, do not receive it (Reno, 1997: 494), including stripping away welfare safety nets and jeopardising sovereignty, creating more instability in the state (Rao, 2010: 3-4). Poverty is restricted to the private realm until it can justify masculinised, militarised intervention and represents a dismissal of feminised security threats.

2. THE IMPACT OF FEMINISED SECURITY 'FITTING' INTO MAINSTREAM NARRATIVES

The impact of missing feminised voices in the security discourse is profound. To illustrate some of the important consequences, I take an example of the UN trying to fit sexual violence – a 'private' security threat – into the mainstream IR narrative, within the masculinised public realm.

Rape has repeatedly and systematically been used as a weapon of war. Recently, the UN started to pay closer attention and responded by securitising sexual violence through Resolution 1820 – a seemingly positive step (UN Security Council, 2008). However, this has led to rape as a weapon of war becoming fetishised and commodified, overlooking daily sexual violences. This commodification has arguably also been used to further a Western, capitalist and neo-colonial agenda (Meger, 2016a). Moreover, Nordås (2012) shows that there is "little evidence [to] suggest that the securitisation of sexual violence forwards its eradication in the context of war and conflict" (as cited in Meger, 2016a: 149). Despite mainstream security following militarised responses to threats, feminists often view this as negative for women's security (Tobias, 1990: 183).

3.1 Commodifying Sexual Violence

Conflict-related sexual violence is not only a gendered security concern insofar as women tend to be the victim, but also that the UN's response is particularly masculinised and militarised. Attempting to fit sexual violence into a narrow, mainstream idea of security appears to have worsened the situation. The recognition that states and international organisations will intervene and give aid to those facing abuse has led to increased use of the securitised discourse of wartime sexual violence to obtain resources (Meger, 2016a: 151). This is a clear demonstration of unequal power relations used to further manipulate and capitalise on women's (lack of) security via fetishisation.

Although Deveaux warns against a "tendency of a Foucauldian conceptualisation of the subject to erase women's specific experiences with power" (1994: 224), Foucault's conception of biopower can highlight how women and their bodies are used as a political field, composed of power relations (Foucault, 1975: 25-28). This illuminates the mainstream security agenda that homogenises and commodifies experiences of sexual violence.

In this context, Foucauldian conceptions of power do the opposite of overlooking women's specific experiences with power. I return to this analysis in section five.

3.2 Sexual Violence as a Weapon of Intervention

The way the West has commodified wartime sexual violence for its own kind of 'weapon', used to control the Global South, is equally damaging (Butler, 2016b: 80; Meger, 2016a: 154). Conflict-related sexual violence seems to be instrumental to Western security agendas (of intervention) and is elevated as a masculinised threat, but there is no real attempt to overcome the (feminised) problem. Sexual violence becomes commodified and decontextualised; gendered hierarchies that lead to rape as a weapon of war are ignored and non-conflict sexual violence is overlooked, consigned to the feminised, private realm of security. Sexual violence is also presented as indicative of the Global South, through strong racist undertones, and further entrenches marginalising binaries discussed in section two, centred on 'us/them' (Said, 1978; Rao, 2010: 182). Sexual violence also becomes commodified and decontextualised in this way, as it is falsely portrayed as a problem distanced from the Global North. This constructs a particular (elevated, masculinised) image of the North in relation to the (relegated, feminised) South.

Additionally, due to this feminisation of the Global South, the lives of those living there are overlooked in the Global North's response, evident in the homogenisation of experiences with sexual violence. Confronting the wider issue of sexual violence does not benefit Western, masculinised security; it is seen as an instrument of 'paternal intervention' rather than a need to protect 'others' (Meger, 2016b; Butler, 2016a: 34).

A key example of this was the United States' response to wartime sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Despite some intervention, sexual violence was ongoing and rising in the DRC throughout 2018, suggesting intervention failed to prevent such war crimes (UN Security Council, 2020: p.10). While I have very briefly highlighted this case to emphasise that there are significant physical consequences of commodifying and decontextualising sexual violence, including being used as a weapon of intervention, it is outside the scope of this essay to analyse this case in much further detail[1].

3. THE GENDERED BINARY OF THREATS AS A DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION

As demonstrated, dichotomised threats have damaging implications for the feminised (hooks, 1982: 22). It is thus important to use a feminist lens to uncover the intersectional gendered hierarchies underlying these dichotomies. 'Intersectional' gendered hierarchies, as touched upon in the introduction, relates to the feminisation of those marginalised through - often overlapping - social identifiers such as race, class, sexuality, and geopolitics. There are two key aspects to this analysis. Firstly, a feminine 'other' is constructed through, and relied upon for, masculinised conceptions of security in an "impossible constitutive dynamic" (Pin-Fat and Stern, 2005: 29). The hierarchical binary of security threats is therefore based on precarious foundations since the public and private – the masculine and feminine – are not separate at all. Secondly, masculinised perspectives on security compensate for this by attempts to further entrench the binary to maintain identity and power. Gender is again used as a form of power, reflected in the hierarchical discursive construction of threats (Cohn, 1987: 709).

4.1 The 'Impossible Constitutive Dynamic' in Security

Despite attempts to maintain distinguished gendered

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1 For a more in depth analysis of the way wartime sexual violence has been repeatedly used as a method of intervention through the use of three cases — one of which centres on the DRC — see Crawford's *Wartime Sexual Violence: From Silence to Condemnation of a Weapon of War*.

binaries in security, notions of feminine and masculine threats are inextricably linked (Buzan, 1991: 51). To understand what constitutes a security threat in mainstream IR, it must be conceived in the image of what it is not; a feminised threat. As described by Pin-Fat and Stern (2005: 29), the "possible [is] privileged as legitimate" but this can only be understood in the context of "the role the impossible plays". It is not only that gendered threats are relational, but that the excluded (feminine, impossible, private) is integral to constituting the masculine. This is important if there is to be a restructuring of IR away from 'malestream' perspectives, particularly within security. As Edkins (2000: 7) expresses, "any attempt to rethink the political space of the West must begin with an awareness of the impossibility of the classical distinction between private life and political existence". Section five expands on this.

4.2 Blurring the Binary

Evidently, the 'established' line between masculine and feminine is blurred which threatens mainstream security as a concept since its identity is constructed through the maintenance of this binary (Agamben, 1995: 187). The mainstream compensates by overemphasising and reiterating gendered norms and binaried threats (Pin-Fat and Stern, 2005: 33). Responses to certain (prioritised) threats are hyper-masculinised and militarised, whilst feminised security challenges are invisibilised (Tickner, 1997: 617), as was clear in the discourse on 'saving' Muslim women in the 'War on Terror', explored in section two. Binaries that order both the private and public realms of IR constantly deconstruct themselves, and are thus unstable and therefore unreliable (Derrida, 1982: 14). As Weber (2016: 37) explains, this means that "various invested actors [...] constantly attempt to stabilise these unreliable hierarchies and the figurations that authorise them [binaries] so they appear to be ahistorical, given, and true, so that they might more reliably function in domestic and international politics".

Gendered binaries in security generate and prop up hierarchies, contributing to uneven power relations (Dunn, 2008: 53). Since security is constructed through masculinised language (and so relies on traces of feminised understandings to relies on traces of feminised understandings to reflect what it is not), it is difficult to include feminised perspectives within the mainstream narrative (Cohn, 1987: 708). It is not that they are not there, but that they are hidden (hooks, 1982: 20) – the feminised is implicit and can be found through deconstructing the narrative. The possibility of generating new perceptions of security is limited since masculine, securitised language attaches meaning to 'reality', including what constitutes a 'threat' (Dunn, 2008: 49). This emphasises the question of whether mainstream security can be adapted, or if security must be deconstructed and rethought to include 'others'.

4. CAN GENDERED HIERARCHIES IN SECURITY BE DECONSTRUCTED?

Whilst there is a convincing case for deconstructing the gender binary which permeates all aspects of IR, not least security, there are many obstacles to reaching this point. Our language constrains us; we cannot imagine a world outside of our own images, given meaning through (speech) acts and heavily gendered (Pin-Fat, 2014). Similarly, gender is discursively constructed and legitimised through acts, or performativity (Butler, 1988: 522). Since we understand the world through gender (Peterson, 1992: 194-195), how do we create new (external) discourses when there is not the (internal) language or conceptualisation to do so?

5.1 'Reverse' Discourses

As Foucault (1976: 101) articulates, there is often a "reverse" discourse at work. Although the context of his argument is a discussion on sexuality, many of Foucault's conclusions can be applied to wider social structures. For instance, categorising women as 'feminine' in order to subjugate them (with the

negative connotations attached to this, such as being submissive) can lead to using this for empowerment (Kristeva, 1980: 144). Here, women 'reverse' gendered discourse but simultaneously make it more difficult to deconstruct through participating in the reproduction of oppressive dichotomies. Taking the previous example of conflict-related sexual violence, when feminists use securitised language in attempt to gain a serious response, such as the focused discourse on rape as a weapon of war, it gives credence to the masculinised agenda that they want to deconstruct because it ignores underlying gendered hierarchies and daily non-conflict related sexual violence (Meger, 2016a: 149). Yet, perhaps it is better as a solution than no attention being paid at all; using a 'reverse' discourse is arguably necessary for some progression.

5.2 Gender as a Form of Power

Power plays an important role in the construction of the gender binary through knowledge and in our structures of thought, such as language. Structures of thought can shift power relations in society, so that we might imagine an alternative to the gender binary. As Foucault posits, shifting to a different period of history and its corresponding episteme allows new discoveries that previously would have been seen as entirely illogical, whilst simultaneously limiting new thoughts from being had (Foucault, 1972: 191). We can only imagine what is within our current constructed language and knowledge, according to particular norms imposed (ibid.). Thus, despite the potential to deconstruct the gender binary, allowing a shift in ways of thinking and language, a new episteme will carry different limitations that currently cannot be conceived. The way that we categorise, hence limits, possibilities for imaging a different way of thinking about security outside of gendered binaries (Butler, 1988).

As previously discussed, gender is an expression of normalising power (masculinity being the norm) but this also translates into biopower. Young (1980: 144)

iterates this by showing how women internalise restrictiveness in all aspects of life for their own security, from the most discrete actions such as inhibiting the way they walk and sit, to the way they conduct themselves and speak (*ibid*.: p.153). Feminised people are involved in the masculinised security discourse, either in 'reverse' or because of internalised gender norms, often expressed through biopolitics (Foucault, 1976). This hinders the deconstruction of binaried discourses in security and IR more widely, since all are implicated within this narrative and even though the feminised do not get to shape the discussion, disruption would be unsettling (Edelman, 2004: p.41). As "authors of gender … entranced by their own fictions", most see the construction of gender as that of "necessity and naturalness" (Butler, 1988: 522). Could the disruption of such deeply entrenched political and cultural structures be as harmful and dangerous as maintaining the status quo?

5.3 Violent Hierarchies

Furthermore, social dominance orientation theory (SDO) suggests that it may not even be possible to create a new narrative with equal power relations (Parent and Silva, 2018), implying that transformations of power will only give rise to new hierarchies (Rao, 2010: 174). As Parent and Silva (2018: 404) explain, "[SDO] emphasises that group-based oppression is established and maintained via the maintenance of social hierarchies that provide access to resources for those in power and remove such access from those in less powerful groups."

This theory is tied to notions of power and dominance amongst particular (elevated, masculinised) groups in society whilst 'others' (feminised people) are disempowered and may seek to attain equality with said dominant group. SDO is, to a large extent, a way of securing the 'in-group' by excluding the 'other', in this case legitimised through images of inferiority attached to femininity (Pin-Fat and Stern, 2005: 34). Fear of the 'other' derives from concerns that if the 'out-group' were to be included, it might threaten the security of the superior group

with its backwardness (Kristeva, 1986: 104-106).

Further support for this view can be found in Derrida's Positions (1972), positing that the "violent hierarchy" found in dichotomies can be deconstructed, but opposition will remain since they are structurally necessary to produce meaning. Consequently, "the hierarchy of dual oppositions always re-establishes itself" (Derrida, 1972: 42). Yet, deconstruction is still useful in creating new understandings of terms, making their meaning and difference explicit, as well as how opposition interacts and can transform (*ibid*.: p.20).

Deconstructing the gender binary could provoke change in hierarchies of security by exposing the power relations between masculinity and femininity (Dunn, 2008: 51-52), in which the masculine has the "upper hand" and governs the feminine (Derrida, 1972: 41). Highlighting that 'public' and 'private' security are mutually dependent could contribute to the de-gendering of security as a concept, negating masculinised conceptions of security threats (Edkins, 2000: 7). Without securing the private realm, the public realm cannot be secure as the private is a pillar holding up the international system (Enloe, 1989: 197; Butler, 1988: 523). Overturning of a 'threat hierarchy' therefore comes from exposing that the binary between masculinised and feminised security is obscure (Weber, 2016: 42).

CONCLUSION

Security is a gendered concept in the way that threats are hierarchically constructed. Threats are relational but oppositional; masculine security is elevated whilst feminine is relegated. Two case studies — one analysing poverty as a feminised security threat, and the other examining the UN's masculinised response to wartime sexual violence — have been used to highlight that feminised voices are excluded from the security narrative and to illustrate the consequences of trying to mould them into a mainstream perspective. The reasons behind this, including the social structures and power relations that allow gender hierarchies to persist,

have been examined. In particular, looking at security as a gendered binary that is discursively constructed and legitimised, as well as questioning how this may limit its deconstruction.

To conclude, it is essential that the gender binary within security be deconstructed. The case studies demonstrated some of the implications of maintaining the status quo and attempting to fit feminised security into a 'malestream' narrative. Security does not need to rely upon a binaried understanding of threats, which comes with inherent subjugation of the 'out-group' to maintain the mainstream's agenda. Masculinised and feminised security are inextricably linked and reliant upon one another, thus IR must be recognised "beyond unhelpful binaries of power and resistance" (Richter-Montpetit, 2018: 240).

Yet, it appears unlikely that enduring Western neo-colonial agendas, infused with power, will halt due to feminised peoples' security being jeopardised. Even if there could be a restructuring of security, would it be the case that a new system simply be socially constructed again where the 'every man for himself' attitude continues, just with a different group at the bottom? (Parent and Silva, 2018: 404). It is difficult to imagine a solution within the confines of our thinking, since our picture of the world is framed within this current narrative (Pin-Fat, 2014: 33). However, this does provoke a deeper question of whether it is even worth challenging the current narrative to make way for a more equal (but still imperfect) alternative. The mainstream security discourse clearly has significant implications both in theory and practice for feminised persons. Kristeva (1980: 58) expresses her scepticism of gendered binaries, declaring that feminism must always be disruptive in the way it denies any concept of 'woman'. Hence, the central question to be continually analysed becomes 'whose security?'. The narrative is evidently not a natural 'given' and with all its flaws, must be constantly questioned and challenged to loosen "the hold of gender on meaning and life" (Ferguson, 1993: 4).

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