'Victims, Perpetrators and Actors' Revisited:[1] Exploring the Potential for a Feminist Reconceptualisation of (International) Security and (Gender) Violence

Laura J. Shepherd

In the discipline of International Relations (IR), which takes seriously issues of war and peace, there has been a lack of attention paid to theorising security in relation to violence. In this article, I explore the potential for a feminist reworking of these concepts. With reference to a range of literature addressing security and violence, I offer some insights into the relevance of such a reconceptualisation. I draw attention to the ways in which work on issues of violence and security function to reproduce understandings of these concepts that delimit the value of both academic theorising and policy prescription. In the study of security, because of the discursive power of the concept, and of violence, these considerations are particularly important, as they can literally be issues of life and death.

Keywords: gender; violence; security; discourse

> Women's bodies have actually become battle grounds ... the violence is all about destroying ... the inbuilt strength of a woman to build a community (Ruth Ojiambo Ochieng, Uganda, 2006).

> We have documented ... systematic sexual violence, committed by the Burmese military as a weapon of war in the ongoing conflict ... where women are raped ... in order to terrorise the women, and the local community, morally, psychologically, and also physically (Nang Charm Tong, Burma, 2006).

> We've had reports from women ... about some very difficult situations that lesbians have been going through. There is more violence towards them because they've broken away from the gender role expected of them. This is why there is more repression ... they suffer direct repression on their bodies and their lives (Elisabeth Castillo, Colombia, 2006).[2]

The personal narratives presented above, provided by women reflecting on the difficulties of co-ordinating research on and activism against gendered violence, are disturbing to say the least. Taken from the website of Amnesty International's 'Stop Violence Against Women' campaign, these testimonies draw attention not only to the crucial need to better the experiences of women who live under threat of

violence, but also to the conceptual and practical impediments to combating violence against women in contemporary academic and policy environments. In the academic environment of International Relations (IR) as a discipline, one of the most salient obstacles is the way in which gendered violence has been conventionally and conceptually precluded as an object of study (Peterson and Runyan 1999, 115–117).

Feminist challenges to the well-defined and equally well-defended boundaries of IR[3] have drawn attention to the potential not only of transgressing those boundaries but also to the importance of understanding violence in relation to security. Turning the analytical focus of this research to *gendered* violence is motivated by two related concerns. '[V]iolence establishes social relationships ... it marks and makes bodies ... it constitutes subjects even as it renders them incomplete' (D'Cruze and Rao 2004, 503). This latter understanding of violence, as constitutive of subjectivity, has historically been absented from academic theorising of security, where violence is conventionally conceived of as a functional mechanism within an anarchic international system.[4] Second, given that violence 'marks and makes bodies', I seek to understand the types of body that are marked and made through violence that is specifically gendered—that is, violence that 'emerges from a profound desire to keep the binary order of gender natural or necessary' (Butler 2004, 35). I argue that studying the subjects produced through gendered violence in the context of debates over the meaning and content of security provides more coherent accounts of both violence and security.

The notion that identity is central to theorising security has been well explicated by scholars critical of conventional approaches to security.[5] 'Recognising gender as a significant dimension of identity and security opens the door to non-state-based views of security and aptly illustrates how identity shapes individual and collective security needs' (Hoogensen and Rottem 2004, 156). However, most of these critical voices seek to enter into academic debates on security by broadening the accepted agenda of security—to include the recognition of multiple phenomena, from earthquakes to economic deprivation, as threatening to security—and proliferating the referent objects of security discourse, such that security is no longer solely the concern of states but also of communities, societies and individuals. While scholars of security have contested the parameters of debates about security, and feminist scholars of security have drawn attention to the importance of gender as a category of analysis, there is little work being done on the ways in which the organisational logics of security and violence are discursively constituted (see Shepherd and Weldes (forthcoming)).

In this article, I argue that a feminist reconceptualisation of (international) security and (gender) violence can be achieved through the operationalisation of a series of deconstructive analytical strategies,[6] which begins with paying attention to the academic literature that is, in part, product/productive of these discourses. In the following section, I discuss the implications of espousing a feminist poststructuralist politics. In the third substantive section, I map out the logic of critique that enables the reconceptualisation of violence and security that I offer in my analysis. The critique is conducted through reference to the literature that addresses these issues. I conclude that such a reconceptualisation, which pays due analytical attention to

the ways in which discourses of (gender) violence and (international) security function to inscribe boundaries that constitute the horizons of possibility for the configuration of subjectivity and political community, is both necessary and possible.

Contributions of a Feminist Poststructuralist[7]

In this article, I explore the discursive constitution of concepts of (gender) violence and (international) security in particular texts. However, this research is explicitly not 'merely theoretical', or 'academic' in the pejorative sense of the term.[8] My interest in the concepts of international security and gender violence is indeed motivated by a desire to see whether these concepts could be fruitfully reconceived, but the article also considers the implications of this reconceptualisation for policy and academic work. I wish to provide for those undertaking such work alternative concepts with which to proceed. I identify myself as a feminist researcher, and recognise that this entails a curiosity about 'the concept, nature and practice of gender' (Zalewski 1995, 341). This curiosity questions the ways in which gender is made meaningful in social/political interactions and the practices—or performances—through which gender configures boundaries of subjectivity. I espouse a feminism that seeks to challenge conventional constructions of gendered subjectivity and political community, while acknowledging the intellectual heritage of feminisms that seek to claim rights on behalf of a stable subject and maintain fidelity to a regime of truth that constitutes the universal category of 'women' (Butler 2004, 8–11). While a feminist project that does not assume a stable ontology of gender may seem problematic, I argue, along with Judith Butler, that '[t]he deconstruction of identity is not the deconstruction of politics; rather, it establishes as political the very terms through which identity is articulated' (Butler 1999, 189).

A focus on articulation entails a further commitment to the analytical centrality of language—or, as I see it, discourse. Elizabeth Grosz argues that an integral part of feminist theory is the willingness to 'tackle the question of the language available for theoretical purposes and the constraints it places on what can be said' (Grosz 1987, 479). To me, this aspect of feminist theory is definitive of my feminist politics. If 'men and women are the stories that have been told about "men" and "women" ' (Sylvester 1994, 4), and the way that 'men' and 'women' both act and are acted upon, then the language used to tell those stories and describe those actions is not just worthy of analytical attention but can form the basis of an engaged critique. Furthermore, an approach that recognises that there is more to the discursive constitution of gender—the stories that are told about 'men' and 'women'—than linguistic practices can enable thinking gender differently.

Alison Stone argues that this type of approach constitutes a 'genealogical feminism', in which the organisational logics of feminism—historically assumed to be 'women' and/or 'gender'—are 'continually re-enacted through corporeal activities' (Stone 2005, 12). This approach allows for research that investigates the ways in which 'women' as subjects and objects act, speak, write and represent themselves, and are represented, written about, spoken about and acted on. There is no singular feminine subject or feminist method, just as, in my understanding, the notion of a

singular feminist project is unsustainable. I seek to contribute to contemporary debates in their desire to think differently the concepts of gender, violence, security and the international by investigating how these concepts are (re)presented and (re)produced in a particular discursive context.[9] Such a concern, at least with regard to gender, is indicative of not only a feminist project but also a poststructural politics (Flax 1990). I argue, along with Butler, that poststructural political research centralises power, and takes the investigation of practices of power to be 'the very precondition of a politically engaged critique' (Butler 1994, 157).

I offer a feminist reconceptualisation of (international) security and (gender) violence because the current conceptualisations are not adequate for the task of thinking gender differently in the context of violence and security. They do not allow for the development of theory or practice that is capable of addressing the complexities inherent in these issues. As Wendy Brown argues, 'What suspicion about the naturalness of gender subordination persists when feminism addresses only the wrongs done to women and not the socially produced capacity for women to be wronged, to be victims?' (Brown 2003, 11). In the context of security, investigating this capacity manifests in a curiosity about 'what Foucault would have called the overall discursive fact that security is spoken about at all' (Dillon 1996, 14) and the ways in which performances of security discourse function to (re)produce particular configurations of social/political reality.

From Existence to Violent Reproduction

Surveying two bodies of literature, one concerned with security situated firmly in the discipline of International Relations and the other more broadly sociological, addressing violence and gender, demands that careful consideration is given to the links between them. In the discussion of the literature on violence, I draw out the ways in which the various approaches conceptualise the referent object of their analyses, and how they conceive of threat—in this case, violence. Similarly, in the discussion of the security literature, I question how different approaches to security conceive of the referent object of security, and how they too conceive of threat. In both cases, I offer a discourse-theoretic account that emphasises the (re)productive function of violence in the ordering of social/political reality. However, the critique is structured such that the links between the literatures can be effectively highlighted, rather than proceeding with each literature in turn, as illustrated in Table 1.

Sovereign Individuals, Sovereign States

The foundational assumptions of every body of literature are often implicit, or taken to be unproblematic. Each literature, in this case that which addresses 'violence against women' and that which addresses 'national security', speaks to a specific manifestation of violence and is informed by a particular logic of gender and security. On its own terms, each literature is internally both coherent and consistent, although there are significant differences between the ways in which this coherence and consistency is constructed. In this section, I proceed as outlined in Table 1, exploring the literature on 'violence against women' and 'national security' to investigate the ways in which (gender) violence and (international) security are conceptualised within these works.

Table 1: Illustrating the Dynamics of Critique

	Violence	Security
Empiricist	'Violence Against Women'	
		'National Security'
Constructivist	'Gender Violence'	
		'International Security'
Discourse-Theoretic	'Violent Reproduction of Gender'	
		'Violent Reproduction of the International'

Jill Radford, Liz Kelly and Marianne Hester are prominent researchers concerned with 'violence against women' and they situate their work in a context of the debates within wider feminist theorising, stating that 'throughout the 1980s a series of separations occurred, of women's studies from feminism; of theoretical writing from women's lived experiences; of knowledge creation from activism' (Radford et al. 1996, 8). Their implicit placement within these dualities is on the side of an activist feminism concerned with 'women's lived experiences'. Researching and writing about 'violence against women' has a particular, albeit internally differentiated, politics that differs in several key ways from researching and writing about 'gender violence', and one aspect of this is the location articulated by Radford, Kelly and Hester above.

Researching 'violence against women' is an explicit challenge to the self-proclaimed objectivist and value-free research programmes of mainstream social science. This can be understood as a political undertaking in two main ways; research was conducted 'with the aim of *achieving a description* as well as a *comprehensive understanding* of the problem' (Dobash and Dobash 1992, 283, emphasis added). These two aspects—the description and the understanding—were conceived as separable and separate. It is vital to note that the academic study of 'violence against women' claims as its intellectual heritage critically important activity and activism in communities throughout the UK and the US. 'Starting at the grass roots level, feminists named its existence ... and began to put into place an underground network of shelters and safe houses for women. Only then did significant numbers of mental health professionals, social science researchers ... and policy makers begin to notice' (Bograd 1988, 11).

Research that focuses on 'violence against women' posits women as coherent and stable subjects whose life experiences can be ameliorated by appropriate policy practice. This approach identifies materially determined gendered individuals as a

result of its empirical approach to the study of politics and social life. The notion of sovereignty is central here, and provides an important link to the literature on international security. The subject constructed through the discourse of 'violence against women' is assumed sovereign, the 'women' affected by violence have sovereign rights over their own material forms and should not therefore be subjected to violence. Moreover, this sovereignty is pre-constituted and taken to be an empirical 'reality'. In a similar manner, the assumed sovereignty of the state is the foundational truth claim of literature on 'national security', which I discuss in the following paragraphs.

Both internal and external sovereignty are central to the conception of the state that informs conventional IR security literature, and the logical corollary of this conception constructs the state system as anarchic. Realist IR theory 'sees' the state as its object of analysis and therefore '[s]tates are the principle referent objects of security because they are both the framework of order and the highest sources of governing authority' (Buzan 1991, 22). Within both classical (or 'political') realism and neo-realism (or 'structural realism'), the state is represented as a unitary actor.[10] Both variants proceed according to the assumption that all human existence is bounded by states, according to the assertion that states are the primary object of analysis. If, as Kenneth Waltz claims, '[s]tatesmen and military leaders are responsible for the security of their states ... no one at all is responsible for humanity' (Waltz 1959, 416), then states are further assumed to be the object to which security policy and practice refers and humans can only be secured to the extent that they are citizens of a given state.

John Herz's conception of the 'security dilemma' is explicitly premised on assumptions regarding the potential of human nature, and therefore state behaviour, to provide circumstances of collaboration and co-operation. The 'human nature' under discussion is, on closer inspection, the nature of 'man' (see Morgenthau 1973, 15–16), and is thus problematic in its partiality as well as its pessimism. Insecurity, according to Herz,

> stems from a fundamental social constellation ... where groups live alongside each other without being organised into a higher unity ... Since none can ever feel entirely secure in such a world ... power competition ensues and the vicious circle of security and power accumulation is on (Herz 1950, 157).

The 'fundamental social constellation' posited by classical realists is a population of rational, unitary, masculine entities that will never, and can never, be otherwise.

The concept of security driving these prescriptions is premised on a particular vision of the social relations between states, and furthermore constructs a particular notion of what is considered to be a security threat within this conceptualisation, as eternal and external to the state. While 'human nature' drives state behaviours according to classical realists, neo-realist assumptions concerning the construction of security in an anarchic system appeal to a structural logic of uncertainty. 'Uncertainty is a synonym for life, and nowhere is uncertainty greater than in international politics' (Waltz 1993, 58). The necessity of security behaviours is thus derived from the anarchic system and 'rests on the argument

that the distribution and character of military power are the root causes of war and peace' (Mearsheimer 1990, 6). Thus threats, reduced to external violences and ultimately war between states, are perpetual, a theoretical move that serves to perpetuate the understanding of security as reducible to military force. This functions to blind those working within a conceptualisation of 'national security' to the possibility that threats are various constructed depending on context. Moreover, the structural context of anarchy that is taken to be a foundational reality within this conceptualisation prescribes and proscribes certain behaviours that are then never opened to critical scrutiny, a point to which I return in the conclusion of this article.

The Social Construction of Individuals and States

Although researchers working on 'violence against women' would identify (patri-archal) power structures that facilitate the continuation of violence against women, thinking about 'gender violence' enables a more sensitive understanding of the representation of women as simultaneously 'victims, perpetrators [and] ... actors' (Moser and Clark 2001) and the different conceptualisation of power that this representation entails. The conceptualisation of power that underpins work on 'gender violence' is implicated in the conceptualisation of violence. Caroline Moser suggests that there is a 'gendered continuum of conflict and violence' (Moser 2001, 31), and, moreover, that this continuum is a result of the ways in which 'gender is embedded in relations of power/powerlessness' (ibid., 37). While I sustain the challenge to a unidirectional power–violence relationship as offered by work on 'violence against women', the 'embedded' nature of gender in power as suggested by Moser and others does not fully problematise the links between masculinity and violence that are assumed by the previous literature.

In an attempt to move beyond what she terms 'gender traditionalism', in which gender is readable from sex and differences between genders are thus biological, and 'gender liberalism', which stresses the equality of the genders despite differences between them, both of which 'can combine in unfortunate ways ... to prevent gender from being seen as significant or explanatory' (Cockburn 2001, 14), Cynthia Cockburn develops a subtle and thoughtful account of gender violence with specific reference to situations of armed conflict. Centralising the power inherent in gender relations enables the 'uncovering [of] the differentiation and asymmetry of masculine and feminine as governing principles, idealized qualities, practices or symbols' (ibid., 16).

However, Cockburn 'calls, first, for a sensitivity to *gender difference*' (ibid., 28, emphasis in original) that I believe may undermine the utility of this approach. It does, in a way, put the empirical cart before the theoretical horse. If difference between the genders is taken as a starting point for the analysis of gender, then the (re)production of this difference is obscured from critical attention. However, this approach, in contrast to research addressing 'violence against women', does not assume sovereignty of a stable subject. Attention is paid to the ways in which individuals are both product and productive of their social environments, positing a socially constructed individual within a similarly socially constructed matrix of

gender relations. Gender is therefore not assumed to be a transhistorical or universal system of identity production, nor is it assumed that individuals experience gender in the same way, even within a particular social/political context. This emphasises the ontological difference between research on 'violence against women' and 'gender violence'. The former assumes a material reality and, in the context of gender, gender can thus be read unproblematically from sexed bodies. The latter approach focuses on gender as a social construct, where sexed bodies are gendered in accordance to variable matrices of gender norms.

Those who work within a conceptualisation of 'international security' are more loosely bound by their theoretical assumptions and research priorities than those who work on 'national security'. The literature on 'international security' incorporates work on 'human security', 'critical security' and 'common security'.[11] The literature represents a variety of different theoretical frameworks, and draws heavily on representations of, and arguments concerning, 'global civil society' and cosmopolitanism, as I discuss further below. However, in this analysis I treat these works as minimally unitary, and label them 'international security' for three interconnected reasons.[12] Primarily, the term 'international' easily differentiates this approach from the literature on 'national security'. Second, the use of the modifier 'international' denotes the association of this approach with global, or universal, values. Third, the term resonates with the discipline in which this literature is situated—International Relations.

Often tracing its heritage back to the 1994 United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Human Development Report,[13] which includes a chapter entitled 'New Dimensions of Human Security', work on 'international security' seeks to reconceptualise security such that the referent object is no longer conceived, as in 'national security', as the sovereign state (see Newman 2001, 240; Booth 2004, 5). As Matt McDonald explains, this reconceptualisation is 'a potential response to the growing insecurity of security' (McDonald 2002, 277) and incorporates several of the critiques discussed above. Roland Paris argues that this 'paradigm shift' does not necessarily represent a coherent research agenda (Paris 2001, 92–93), but recognises that this work comprises 'a distinct branch of security studies that explores the particular conditions that affect the survival of individuals, groups and societies' (Paris 2001, 102). Broadly, the analytical focus of 'international security' is 'we, the peoples' (Dunne and Wheeler 2004) and research within this conceptualisation requires the recognition of 'both the indivisibility of human rights and security, and the concomitant responsibility to rescue those trapped in situations of violence, poverty and ill-health' (ibid., 20).

Theorists of 'international security' have argued that '[e]ven though state-based conceptions of security have taken precedence, alternative ways of thinking that give priority to individual and social dimensions of security' are also possible (Bilgin 2003, 203). If 'anarchy is what states make of it' (Wendt 1992, 395) and states are not constructed as the unproblematic unitary rational actors pursuing defensive policies, as assumed by theorists of 'national security', then co-operation is as likely as hostility in the domain of international relations. In fact, it is argued, conceiving of security as 'international' highlights the importance of relations between states and the salience of the construction of an 'international community' (McRae 2001,

19). However, just as the state is asserted as autonomous within the conceptualisation of 'national security', as I have described above, in this conceptualisation 'international security' is similarly asserted as relational. These assumptions are in opposition but are equally problematic, as both assumptions treat the state and the international as predetermined objective realities, which impacts on the ways in which it is possible to conceptualise security.

Richard McRae (2001, 20), for example, argues that 'global civil society' needs to address the issues of insecurity facing those 'citizens of ... noncountries' (ibid., 19) whose governments are unable to provide adequate security measures. Tim Dunne and Nick Wheeler also cite the co-operation of 'an alliance of states and transnational civil society' (Dunne and Wheeler 2004, 10), needed to 'rescue those trapped in situations of poverty and violence' (ibid., 20). Recognising the 'structural inequalities generated by global capitalism' (ibid., 16) goes some way towards challenging the assumptions of 'national security' literature, in the same way as work on 'gender violence' offers sustainable critiques of the literature on 'violence against women'. However, theories of 'international security' neither take into account the implications of their representations of a 'global civil society' vs. citizens of 'noncountries' who need rescuing, nor engage in critical discussion of the very notion of 'global civil society'. The concept of 'global civil society' is ideologically and normatively loaded with implications of its global reach, its civilised nature and its social form. All of these characteristics are in opposition to their relevant 'others', the local/parochial, the uncivilised and the forms of behaviour associated with states and international institutions, all of which are conceived of as negative.[14] Despite this, the construction of 'global civil society' is under-theorised, represented unproblematically in the literature on 'international security' and assumed to confer authority and legitimacy in the realms of morality, efficacy, democracy and social cohesion (Scholte 2002, 159–164).

Furthermore, 'international security', in both broadening and deepening the concept of threat (Booth 2005b, 14–15), implicitly conveys the urgency and priority built into the concept of security propounded by work on 'national security', in which security is, as discussed above, 'the highest end' (Waltz 1979, 126). 'An implicit assumption ... is that the elevation of issues of human rights, economic inequality and environmental change, for example, to the realm of security will allow greater priority to these issues' (McDonald 2002, 277). Even as it problematises the conceptualisation of security evidenced in the conceptualisation of 'national security', literature on 'international security' tends to naturalise it, constructing security as a 'single continuum ... protected and enhanced by a series of interlocking instruments and policies' (McRae 2001, 22). This suggests that the approach to 'national security' is broadly valid, needing only supplementary analysis to fill in the gaps rather than a thorough reconceptualisation of its basic organisational concepts.

The assumptions underpinning literature on 'international security' lead to policy prescriptions premised on the triumph of liberal values, implemented by 'a progressive alliance between ... cosmopolitan transnational civil society and enlightened state leaders' (Booth 2004, 6). The formation of an informed and activist global civil society, with all the problems inherent within that concept, is seen as a

necessary step to the provision of security. Well-established international institutions and collectives capable of providing security and guaranteeing freedoms are also vital on this view. Ultimately, the critique I offer is concerned that the conceptualisation of 'international security' I discuss here 'constitutes a Western project, predicated on the values of the developing world' (McDonald 2002, 293). In the articulation of this conceptualisation of 'international security', the values upon which the prescriptions are founded are not opened to critical scrutiny, and effect closure on the ways in which it is possible to think not only about security but also international relations more broadly.

The ontological assumptions of this second approach differentiate it from work on 'national security', as this approach posits the international as a socially constructed zone of co-operation rather than assuming the reality of an anarchic international domain. However, violence and threat are still ever-present in this conceptualisation, but thoughtful security policy and practice can ameliorate the situations of individuals, societies, communities, states. ...[15] These subjects are recognised as constructs of their social/political milieu on this view. Just as research on 'gender violence' does not see a universal stability to matrices of gender norms, research on 'international security' investigates the ways in which norms and ideas function in international relations to construct the subjects of inquiry—states. In the following section I map out an alternative approach to the study of violence, security and the international, arguing that states and subjectivity can be conceived differently with potentially radical ramifications for the discipline of IR.

Performances of State and Subjectivity

I find it far more persuasive to conceptualise gender violence, of which violence against women is a part, as violences that are both gendered and gendering. Power is conceived of within this mode of analysis as productive, a conceptualisation that Peter Digeser has called 'the fourth face of power' (Digeser 1992, 980). Influenced by the theorising of Foucault, 'the critical issue is, "What kind of subject is being produced?" ' (ibid), and, through which discursive practices are these subjects being produced? Thinking about 'the violent reproduction of gender' allows for the consideration of the ways in which culturally and historically specific narratives or discourses produce particular understandings of notions of violence, gender and power, thus enabling the emergence of gendered subjects. By analysing the ways in which these subjects are temporarily 'fixed' through discursive practice, through their *performance*, it is possible to investigate 'the discursive practice by which matter is rendered irreducible'—that is, how it comes to be accepted that subjects embody a pre-given materiality—and to refuse the conceptual bracketing of the 'problematic gendered matrix' that organises the logic of this materiality (Butler 1993, 29).

To illustrate this perspective, it is possible to make meaning of rape as an instance of the violent reproduction of gender. I am not disputing the 'reality' of rape as a crime; rather, I follow Sharon Marcus when she asserts that 'rape is a question of language, interpretation and subjectivity' (Marcus 1992, 387). Along with Marcus, I am working towards the formulation of a politics of rape, which conceives of the

act itself, the circumstances which 'allow' for the act, the immediate and long-term legal procedures following the act and associated reportage and documentation as equally implicated and important in the theorising of rape, arguing 'against the political efficacy of seeing rape as the fixed reality of women's lives, against an identity politics which defines women by our violability' (ibid.).

The legal definition of rape was amended under section 1 of the UK Sexual Offences Act 2003. Section 1 of the Sexual Offences Act 1956 stated that '[i]t is an offence for a man to rape a woman or another man'; the relevant legislation now rules that 'A person (A) commits an offence if—(i) he intentionally penetrates the vagina, anus or mouth of another person (B) with his penis; (ii) B does not consent to the penetration; and (iii) A does not reasonably believe that B consents' (OPSI 2003). This legal definition of rape is interesting on many levels, but for the purposes of this analysis I would like to consider the implications of closing off the discursive space for women to be agents of rape. Rape can be seen as a culturally sanctioned masculine realm; although the legislation talks of 'men' the assumption is that masculinities will map on to socially defined 'male' bodies, following the myths of a 'natural' gender order. In the UK, rape is discursively constructed as a resource of gender violence, a violent means of inscribing the boundaries between masculinities and femininities, apparent from the outset once the legal definition of rape has been examined.

Research that addresses the 'violent reproduction of the international' conceives of security as a set of discourses rather than as something that can be achieved either in absolute or relative terms, and is also concerned with the demarcation of boundaries in the study and practice of I/international R/relations.[16] Engaging with research that works within this conceptualisation can explore how these discourses function to reproduce, through various strategies, domains of the international with which IR is self-consciously concerned. Thus the violences and the threats, as much as the states and security itself, are interpreted though the practices that enable individuals as social beings to make sense of their social location and identity. Literature that addresses 'the violent reproduction of gender' conceives of violence as a site at which genders are reproduced; literature that addresses the 'violent reproduction of the international' conceives of violence, of which security practice and policy is an integral part, as sites at which the international is reproduced. Including not just acts of inter-state war, but also instances of civil conflict and oppressive practices within and between states, expanding further to problematise the legal structures, policy practices and the research that guides these, theorists are enabled to investigate the ways in which these acts of violence articulated through discourses of security function to perpetuate 'the international' as various spatial and conceptual realms. Thus, within this conceptualisation it is possible to say that states, acting as unitary authoritative entities, perform violences, but also that violences, in the name of security, perform states. Undertaking research within this conceptualisation allows for a holistic perspective on the ways in which discourses of security reproduce grammatically correct narratives of identity and being-in-the-world, of which in international relations the 'international' is a key organising concept.

One aspect of the ways in which discourses of security, and the violences undertaken with reference to these discourses, function within international relations is to delimit

the state as boundary between the domestic and the international realms. States are assumed to be unitary and authoritative, to maintain both internal and external sovereignty, and furthermore, it is assumed that the internal organisation of the state is undertaken in the best interests of the citizenship—to protect and serve the population. Unsettling 'the international' as an *a priori* unsafe/safe domain (in the discourses of 'national security' and 'international security', respectively) challenges this truth of security as propounded by the two conceptualisations outlined above. Considering the ways in which this domain is (re)produced is vital to understanding how security functions as a discourse. James Der Derian addresses the 'new techno-logical practice' of simulation as a means of identifying 'the reality principle that international relations theory in general seeks to save' (Der Derian 1990, 300). The reality principle of the international as a conceptual domain is undermined by the intertextuality of simulation and policy procedure and discourses of security help to reassert the primacy of the international in the ways described above, through the identification of objective threats, the construction of international order and the perpetuation of the myth of the state.

Towards a Feminist Reconceptualisation

As Spike Peterson and Jacqui True comment, 'our sense of self-identity and security may seem disproportionately threatened by societal challenge to gender ordering' (Peterson and True 1998, 17). That is, the performance of gender is immanent in the performance of security and vice versa, both concern issues of ontological cohesion (as illustrated in Table 2). Taking this on board leads me to the conclusion that perhaps security is best conceived of as referring to ontological rather than existential identity effects. Security, if seen as performative of particular configura-tions of social/political order, is inherently gendered and inherently related to violence. Violence, on this view, performs an ordering function—not only in the theory/practice of security and the reproduction of the international, but also in the reproduction of gendered subjects.

Butler acknowledges that 'violence is done in the name of preserving western values' (Butler 2004, 231); that is, the ordering function that is performed through the violences investigated here, as discussed above, organises political authority and subjectivity in an image that is in keeping with the values of the powerful, often at the expense of the marginalised. 'Clearly, the west does not author all violence, but it does, upon suffering or anticipating injury, marshal violence to preserve its borders, real or imaginary' (ibid.). While Butler refers to the violences undertaken in the protection of the sovereign state—violence in the name of security—the preservation of borders is also recognisable in the conceptual domain of the inter-national and in the adherence to a binary materiality of gender.

This adherence is evidenced in the desire to fix the meaning of concepts in ways that are not challenging to the current configuration of social/political order and subjectivity, and is product/productive of 'the exclusionary presuppositions and foundations that shore up discursive practices insofar as those foreclose the het-erogeneity, gender, class or race of the subject' (Hanssen 2000, 215). However, the terms used to describe political action and plan future policy could be otherwise

Table 2: Towards a Feminist Reconceptualisation of (International) Security and (Gender) Violence

Gender violence Approach	Focus	Subjects	Subjects	Focus	International security Approach
Violence Against Women	Empirically identifiable gendered entities and the violences they experience	Sovereign individuals	Sovereign states	Empirically identifiable (state) entities and the violences they experience due to the anarchic international system	National Security
Gender Violence	Constructed gendered entities and the violences they experience	Constructed individuals	Constructed states	Constructed (state) entities and the violences they can prevent due to the co-operative international system	International Security
Violent Reproduction of Gender	Discursively constituted gendered entities and the function that violence performs in (re)producing these discourses	Performative individuals	Performative states	Discursively constituted entities and the function that violence performs in (re)producing various international systems	Violent Reproduction of the International

imagined. They could 'remain that which is, in the present, never fully owned, but always and only redeployed, twisted, queered from prior usage and in the direction of urgent and expanding political purposes' (Butler 1993, 228). The concepts both produced by and productive of policy could reflect an aversion to essentialism, while recognising that strategic gains can be made through the temporary binding of identities to bodies and constraining of authority within the confines of the territorial state. This is, in short, an appeal to a politics of both/and rather than either/or. Both the state (produced through representations of security and violence) and the subject (produced through representations of gender and violence) rely on a logic of sovereignty and ontological cohesion that must be problematised if alternative visions of authority and subjectivity are to become imaginable.

International Relations as a discipline could seek to embrace the investigation of the multiple modalities of power, from the economic to the bureaucratic, from neo-liberal capitalism to the juridical. Rather than defending the sovereign boundaries of the discipline from the unruly outside constituted by critical studies of development, political structures, economy and law, not to mention the analysis of social/political phenomena like those undertaken by always-already interdisciplinary feminist scholarship, IR could refuse to fix its own boundaries, and refuse to exercise sovereign power, in terms of authority, over the meanings of its objects of analysis. Future research on global politics could look very different if it were not for the inscription of ultimately arbitrary disciplinary borderlines that function to constrain rather than facilitate understanding.

It may seem that there is a tension between espousing a feminist poststructural politics and undertaking research that seeks to detail, through deconstruction, the ways in which particular discourses have failed to manifest the reforms needed to address security and violence in the context of gendered subjectivity and the constitution of political community. In keeping with the ontological position I hold, I argue that there is nothing inherent in the concepts of (international) security and (gender) violence that necessitated their being made meaningful in the way they have been. Those working on policy and advocacy in the area of security and violence can use the reconceptualisation I offer 'to enable people to imagine how their being-in-the-world is not only changeable, but perhaps, ought to be changed' (Milliken 1999, 244).

As a researcher, the question I have grown most used to hearing is not 'What?' or 'How?' but 'Why?'. At every level of the research process, from securing funding to relating to the academic community, it is necessary to be able to construct a convincing and coherent argument as to why this research is valuable, indeed vital, to the field in which I situate myself. A discursive approach acknowledges that my legitimacy as a knowing subject is constructed through discursive practices that privilege some forms of being over others. In the study of security, because of the discursive power of the concept, and of violence, which can quite literally be an issue of life and death, these considerations are particularly important. Furthermore, as a result of the invigorating and investigative research conducted by exemplary feminist scholars in the field of IR,[17] I felt encouraged to reclaim the space to conduct research at the margins of a discipline that itself functions under a misnomer, being concerned as it is with relations inter-state rather than inter-national. As Cynthia Enloe has expressed it,

> To study the powerful is not autocratic, it is simply reasonable. Really? ... It presumes *a priori* that margins, silences and bottom rungs are so naturally marginal, silent and far from power that exactly how they are *kept* there could not possibly be of interest to the reasoning, reasonable explainer (Enloe 1996, 188, emphasis in original).

If this is the case, I am more than happy to be unreasonable, and I am in excellent company.

About the Author

Laura J. Shepherd, Department of Political Science and International Studies, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2TT, UK, email: *l.j.shepherd@bham.ac.uk*

Notes

1. The title of this article is derived from the extremely influential collection of essays on this theme, edited by Caroline Moser and Fiona Clark (2001). The article itself draws on aspects of my doctoral research and develops further debates outlined in my 'Loud voices behind the wall, gender violence and the violent reproduction of the international' (2006).

2. All of these testimonials are taken from the 'Stories' page on Amnesty International's web portal devoted to stopping violence against women, at http://web.amnesty.org/actforwomen/stories-index-eng [accessed 4 April 2006].

3. There is an enormous amount of literature on this subject. See, *inter alia*, Keohane (1989) and Weber's (1994) response; Zalewski (1995); Jones (1996) and Carver et al.'s (1998) response; Sylvester (1996); Tickner (1997); Sylvester (2002); Carver (2003); Steans (2003); Agathangelou and Ling (2004).

4. See, *inter alia*, Herz (1950) and Waltz (1979); Mearsheimer (1990 and 1995).

5. See, for example, Campbell (1998); McSweeney (1999) and Bilgin (2003).

6. Throughout this article, I use the bracketed form ⟨(international) security and (gender) violence⟩ to indicate the mutability of these discourses—that is, to draw attention to the ways in which security and violence can be differently inter/nationalised and gendered. When I use the unbracketed form ⟨international security and gender violence⟩, I refer specifically to the discourses that (re)produce the meaning of security and violence through particular organisational logics of the international and gender.

7. I use the representation of 'poststructural' rather than 'post-structural' to indicate that I consider myself to be still 'structural', building on it, rather than hyphenetically separable.

8. In keeping with much common sense usage of the term, The Oxford English Dictionary defines academic as not only 'relating to education and scholarship' but also 'scholarly rather than technical or practical' and 'of only theoretical interest'.

9. I employ the bracketed (re) to indicate that these practices do not conjure fully formed objects, subjects and the relationships between them within a given discursive terrain but draw on the existing knowledges about these subjects and objects in order to construct or (re)legitimise an intelligible 'reality'.

10. For representations of the former, see Morgenthau (1948, 154 and 1973, 6–7). For the latter, see Waltz (1993, 76–77 and 2000, 5). Keohane offers a useful overview of both strands of thinking on 'national security' (Keohane 1986, 7–16).

11. On 'human security', see, for example, UNDP (1994); Tehranian (1999); Thomas 2000; McRae (2001); Newman (2001); Paris (2001); Thomas (2001) and Thomas and Tow (2002). 'Critical security studies' is exemplified by Booth (1991 and 1995). See also Krause (1998); Croft and Terriff (2000); Booth (2004) and Dunne and Wheeler (2004); Booth (2005a); Sheehan (2005).

12. See also Roland Paris (2001, 87) and Edward Newman (2001, 240–242), both of whom offer a similar justification for treating these works as a conceptual and analytical whole.

13. See Paris (2001, 89); Thomas (2001, 162) and Thomas and Tow (2002, 178); Smith (2005).

14. See, *inter alia*, Shaw (2001) and Chandhoke (2002) for explorations of the discursive construction of global civil society. See also Hopgood (2000) for an excellent critical approach to this issue.

15. Regional blocs? Continents? The planet? The universe? ...

16. See, *inter alia*, Dillon (1996); Doty (1996); Dalby (1997); Walker (1997); Campbell (1998) and Butler (2004); Shepherd and Weldes (forthcoming).

17. See Zalewski (1995); Enloe (1996); Enloe (2000) and Sylvester (2002) for particularly noteworthy reflections on feminist IR.

Bibliography

Agathangelou, A. and Ling, L. M. H. (2004) 'The house of IR: From family power politics to the *poisies* of worldism', *International Studies Review*, 6:1, 21–49.

Bilgin, P. (2003) 'Individual and societal dimensions of security', *International Studies Review*, 5:2, 203–222.

Bograd, M. (1988) 'Feminist perspectives on wife abuse: An introduction', in K. Yllo and M. Bograd (eds), *Feminist Perspectives on Wife Abuse* (London: SAGE, 1988), 11–27.

Booth, K. (1991) 'Security and emancipation', *Review of International Studies*, 17:4, 313–326.

Booth, K. (1995) 'Human wrongs and International Relations', *International Affairs*, 71:1, 103–126.

Booth, K. (2004) 'Realities of security: Editor's introduction', *International Relations*, 18:1, 5–8.

Booth, K. (ed.) (2005a) *Critical Security Studies and World Politics* (London and Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner).

Booth, K. (2005b) 'Critical explorations', in K. Booth (ed.), *Critical Security Studies and World Politics* (London and Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner), 1–18.

Brown, W. (2003) 'Women's studies unbound: Revolution, mourning, politics', *Parallax*, 9:2, 3–16.

Butler, J. (1993) *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (London: Routledge).

Butler, J. (1994) 'Contingent foundations: Feminism and the question of postmodernism', in S. Seidman (ed.), *The Postmodern Turn: New Perspectives on Social Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) [original 1990, presented at the Greater Philadelphia Philosophy Consortium], 153–170.

Butler, J. (1999) *Gender Trouble* (rev. edn) (London: Routledge).

Butler, J. (2004) *Undoing Gender* (London: Routledge).

Buzan, B. (1991) *People, States and Fear* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf).

Campbell, D. (1998) *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (rev. edn) (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press).

Carver, T. (ed.) (2003) 'The Forum: Gender and International Relations', *International Studies Review*, 5:2, 287–302.

Carver, T., Cochran, M. and Squires, J. (1998) 'Gendering Jones: Feminisms, IRs, masculinities', *Review of International Studies*, 24:2, 283–297.

Chandhoke, N. (2002) 'The limits of global civil society', in *The Global Civil Society Yearbook*, The Centre for the Study of Global Governance, 35–53. Available online at: http://www.lse.ac.uk/Depts/global/Publications/Yearbooks/2002/2002chapter2.pdf [accessed 10 August 2006].

Cockburn, C. (2001) 'The gendered dynamic of armed conflict and political violence', in C. Moser and F. Clark (eds), *Victims, Perpetrators or Actors? Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence* (London: Zed Books), 13–29.

Croft, S. and Terriff, T. (eds) (2000) *Critical Reflections on Security and Change* (London and Portland, OR: Frank Cass).

Dalby, S. (1997) 'Contesting an essential concept: Reading the dilemmas in contemporary security discourse', in K. Krause and M. Williams (eds), *Critical Security Studies: Concepts and Cases* (London: UCL Press), 3–32.

D'Cruze, S. and Rao, A. (2004) 'Violence and the vulnerabilities of gender', *Gender and History*, 16:3, 495–512.

Der Derian, J. (1990) 'The (s)pace of International Relations: Simulation, surveillance and speed', *International Studies Quarterly*, 34:3, 295–310.

Digeser, P. (1992) 'The fourth face of power', *The Journal of Politics*, 54:4, 977–1007.

Dillon, M. (1996) *Politics of Security: Towards a Political Philosophy of Continental Thought* (London: Routledge).

Dobash, R. E. and Dobash, R. P. (1992) *Women, Violence and Social Change* (London: Routledge).

Doty, R. L. (1996) *Imperial Encounters* (London and Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press).

Dunne, T. and Wheeler, N. (2004) ' "We the peoples": Contending discourses of security in human rights theory and practice', *International Relations*, 18:1, 9–23.

Enloe, C. (1996) 'Margins, silences and bottom rungs: How to overcome the underestimation of power in International Relations', in K. Booth, S. Smith and M. Zalewski (eds), *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 186–202.

Enloe, C. (2000) *Bananas, Beaches and Bases* (2nd edn) (London and Berkeley, CA: University of California Press).

Flax, J. (1990) 'Postmodern and gender relations in feminist theory', in L. Nicholson (ed.), *Feminism/ Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 1990), 3–62.

Grosz, E. A. (1987) 'Feminist theory and the challenge to knowledge', *Women's Studies International Forum*, 10:5, 475–480.

Hanssen, B. (2000) *Critique of Violence: Between Poststructuralism and Critical Theory* (London: Routledge).

Herz, J. (1950) 'Idealist internationalism and the security dilemma', *World Politics*, 2:2, 157–180.

Hoogensen, G. and Rottem, S. V. (2004) 'Gender identity and the subject of security', *Security Dialogue*, 35:2, 155–171.

Hopgood, S. (2000) 'Reading the small print in global civil society: The inexorable hegemony of the liberal self', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 29:1, 1–25.

Jones, A. (1996) 'Does gender make the world go round? Feminist critiques of International Relations', *Review of International Studies*, 22:4, 405–429.

Keohane, R. (1986) 'Realism, neorealism and the study of world politics', in R. O. Keohane (ed.), *Neorealism and Its Critics* (New York: Columbia University Press), 1–26.

Keohane, R. (1989) 'International Relations theory: Contributions of a feminist standpoint', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 18:2, 245–254.

Krause, K. (1998) 'Critical theory and security studies: The research programme of "critical security studies" ', *Co-operation and Conflict*, 33:3, 298–333.

McDonald, M. (2002) 'Human security and the construction of security', *Global Society*, 16:3, 277–295.

McRae, R. (2001) 'Human security in a globalised world', in R. McRae and D. Hubert (eds), *Human Security and the New Diplomacy* (London: McGill-Queen's University Press), 14–27.

McSweeney, B. (1999) *Security, Identity and Interests: A Sociology of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Marcus, S. (1992) 'Fighting bodies, fighting words: A theory and politics of rape prevention', in J. Butler and J. Scott (eds), *Feminists Theorise the Political* (London: Routledge), 385–403.

Mearsheimer, J. J. (1990) 'Back to the future: Instability in Europe after the cold war', *International Security*, 15:1, 5–56.

Mearsheimer, J. J. (1995) 'The false promise of international institutions', *International Security*, 19:3, 5–49.

Milliken, J. (1999) 'The study of discourse in International Relations: A critique of research methods', *European Journal of International Relations*, 5:2, 225–254.

Morgenthau, H. (1948) 'World politics in the mid-twentieth century', *Review of Politics*, 10:2, 154–173.

Morgenthau, H. (1973) *Politics among Nations* (5th edn) (New York: Knopf).

Moser, C. (2001) 'The gendered continuum of violence and conflict: An operational framework', in C. Moser and F. Clark (eds), *Victims, Perpetrators or Actors? Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence* (London: Zed Books), 30–52.

Moser, C. and Clark, F. (eds) (2001) *Victims, Perpetrators or Actors? Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence* (London: Zed Books).

Newman, E. (2001) 'Human security and constructivism', *International Studies Perspectives*, 2:3, 239–251.

Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI) (2003) 'Sexual Offences Act 2003', Available online at: http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2003/20030042.htm [accessed 8 January 2007].

Paris, R. (2001) 'Human security: Paradigm shift or hot air?', *International Security*, 26:2, 87–102.

Peterson, V. S. and Runyan, A. S. (1999) *Global Gender Issues* (Oxford and Boulder, CO: Westview).

Peterson, V. S. and True, J. (1998) ' "New Times" and new conversations', in M. Zalewski and J. Parpart (eds), *The 'Man' Question in International Relations* (Oxford and Boulder, CO: Westview), 14–27.

Radford, J., Kelly, L. and Hester, M. (1996) 'Introduction', in M. Hester, L. Kelly and J. Radford (eds), *Women, Violence and Male Power: Feminist Activism, Research and Practice* (Buckingham: Open University Press), 1–16.

Scholte, J. A. (2002) 'Civil society and governance in the global polity', in M. Ougaard and R. Higgott (eds), *Towards a Global Polity* (London: Routledge), 145–166.

Shaw, M. (2001) 'The unfinished global revolution: Intellectuals and the new politics of international relations', *Review of International Studies*, 27:4, 627–647.

Sheehan, M. (2005) *International Security: An Analytical Survey* (London and Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner).

Shepherd, L. J. (2006) 'Loud voices behind the wall: Gender violence and the violent reproduction of the international', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 34:2, 377–401.

Shepherd, L. J. and Weldes, J. (forthcoming) 'Security: The state (of) being free from danger?', in H. G. Brauch et al. (eds), *Globalisation and Environmental Challenges: Reconceptualising Security in the 21st Century* (Mosbach: AFES-PRESS).

Smith, S. (2005) 'The contested concept of security', in K. Booth (ed.), *Critical Security Studies and World Politics* (London and Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner), 27–62.

Steans, J. (2003) 'Engaging from the margins: Feminist encounters with the "mainstream" of International Relations', *The British Journal of Politics & International Relations*, 5:3, 428–454.

Stone, A. (2005) 'Towards a genealogical feminism: A reading of Judith Butler's political thought', *Contemporary Political Theory*, 4:1, 4–24.

Sylvester, C. (1994) *Feminist Theory and International Relations in a Postmodern Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Sylvester, C. (1996) 'The contributions of feminist theory to International Relations', in S. Smith, K. Booth and M. Zalewski (eds), *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 254–278.

Sylvester, C. (2002) *Feminist International Relations: An Unfinished Journey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Tehranian, M. (ed.) (1999) *Worlds Apart: Human Security and Global Governance* (London: I. B. Tauris).

Thomas, C. (2000) *Global Governance, Development and Human Security* (London: Pluto).

Thomas, C. (2001) 'Global governance, development and human security: Exploring the links', *Third World Quarterly*, 22:2, 159–175.

Thomas, N. and Tow, W. (2002) 'The utility of human security: Sovereignty and humanitarian intervention', *Security Dialogue*, 33:2, 177–192.

Tickner, J. A. (1997) 'You just don't understand: Troubled engagements between feminists and IR theorists', *International Studies Quarterly*, 41:4, 611–632.

United Nations Development Program (UNDP) (1994) 'Human Development Report 1994', Available online at: http://hdr.undp.org/reports/global/1994/en/ [accessed 29 August 2006].

Walker, R. B. J. (1997) 'The subject of security', in K. Krause and M. C. Williams (eds), *Critical Security Studies: Concepts and Cases* (London: UCL Press), 61–82.

Waltz, K. (1959) *Man, the State and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press).

Waltz, K. (1979) *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley).

Waltz, K. (1993) 'The emerging structure of international politics', *International Security*, 18:2, 44–79.

Waltz, K. (2000) 'Structural realism after the cold war', *International Security*, 25:1, 5–41.

Weber, C. (1994) 'Good girls, little girls and bad girls: Male paranoia in Keohane's critique of feminist International Relations', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 23:2, 337–349.

Wendt, A. (1992) 'Anarchy is what states make of it', *International Organization*, 46:2, 391–425.

Zalewski, M. (1995) 'Well, what is the feminist perspective on Bosnia?', *International Affairs*, 71:2, 339–356.