

# GENDER AND MILITARY CULTURE



LIVES, BODIES AND  
SOCIAL CONTROL UNDER WAR

**CENTRE DELÀS**  
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REPORT

no. 30



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Lives, bodies and  
social control under war

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

When militarism enters a society, it mobilizes all the material resources available in the service of war, including human resources. At the same time, war needs a determined economic, political and moral base to be carried out, and values and capacities that generate a society willing to surrender, sustain and nourish it. That is, people willing to die and kill in defence of the state or motherland, and people willing to assume the reproduction, upbringing and care of the former for free.

And in this process of generating identities aimed at waging war, militarism will take advantage of structures already created, such as gender roles and hierarchies or the sexual division of labour, which reserves for men the exercise of political power in the public domain and leaves women in the private sphere, while naturalizing their assumption of reproductive tasks. When the culture of war penetrates societies, it relies not only on this sexual division of the public and private worlds, but on the whole social construction of the categories of men and women, which we call "gender" and which provides, in short, the identities that militarism needs for its objectives.

An example of this, is the traditional stereotypes of militarized masculinities and femininities: they are heroes and saviours of the nation, and they are the self-sacrificing mothers and wives of the motherland and its soldiers, substitute labour force or animators to raise the morale of the soldiers, while the forms of exercising masculinity or femininity that do not fit in the norm are invisibilized. But beyond this return to tradition, the need for assets to wage war opens spaces for the participation of women in the public and political sphere, as well as for their incorporation into roles that imply the exercise of violence. From the 1970s onwards, with the rise of feminist movements and the co-option of the discourse of gender equality by states, the militarization of women becomes tangible as ever, with their incorporation into the forces Armed Forces of many countries, which even resort to specific recruitment campaigns.

But militarization does not impregnate and affects only the public sphere, it also permeates homes and human and family relationships, generating material consequences on the lives and bodies of people. The war speech, the devaluation of the value of life, the construction of the "other" as an enemy or the promotion of certain masculinity and behaviours, can generate an increase in violence and feed back what already existed in the private sphere as a control mechanism on women, children and non-hegemonic sexual and gender identities.

This report analyses precisely the relationship of mutual dependence between militarism and patriarchy, the social structure that subordinates all identities, and especially women, to adult heterosexual men. At the same time, it also exposes how the militarization of a society and military culture interact with gender, that

is, how the differentiation between men and women is mobilized for war. Even when this implies the rupture of notions and associations, such as those of femininity and peace, which had accompanied us throughout life.

## INTRODUCTION

The present report is the starting point for the **new line of research on Gender and Militarism** of the Delàs Centre, which will also include the publication of a report on the gender and conciliation policies of the Spanish army, as well as the first Conference on gender and militarism, which will be held on November 17, 2016. The objective of the actions is to open the way to the incorporation of a gender perspective in research on militarism and culture of peace in Catalonia.

Militarism, the ideology that justifies the military path and the use of force to manage conflicts (Calvo, 2015), influences the economic, political, cultural, educational spheres, religion or the media. In this exercise, military doctrine is related to and fed back to already existing social structures, which will be decisive in fomenting or impeding the penetration of the military and in putting all necessary resources at the service of war.

At the same time, if war requires a determined moral, economic and political base to be carried out, it also requires a social militarization, that is, the exaltation of values and capacities that generate a society willing to deliver, sustain and nourish it. Authoritarianism, aggressiveness, strength, obedience, hardness, courage or violence are some of the attitudes that have historically been associated with the military sphere, but also the exercise of power, state management and international relations. At the same time, these values associated with both militarism and the very exercise of politics are closely linked with a concrete way of understanding masculinity, that is, of being a man (Cohn, 2013). The war would thus be a celebration of this masculine power (Tickner, 1992).

But militarization does not impregnate only the public sphere, it also permeates homes and human and family relationships, taking advantage of the sexual division of labour and the stereotypes that prevail in society to their benefit. This report specifically analyses the interdependence between militarism and the Patriarchate, the social structure that subordinates women and confines them to the private sphere, reserving for men the monopoly of public space (Pateman, 1988). At the same time, it also exposes how the militarization of a society and military culture interact with gender, that is, how the differentiation between men and women is mobilized for war (Eisenstein, 2004).

In addressing how militarism reinforces or modulates certain gender stereotypes as a matter of convenience, the report presents the debate on the incorporation of women into formal and informal armies, i.e. the exercise of violence. Is this incorporation an advance towards effective equality or a claudication before the militarization of our lives? What are the effects of the entry of women and other gender identities into military and armed structures on the traditional idea of femininity and masculinity? Does it generate a change in the receiving institutions themselves?

In order to properly contextualize the culture of war and its way of conceiving human life, the individual and his freedoms and rights, politics, conflict management and violence, the first point of this report will be devoted to militarism and its implications, especially in Western societies. The approach of the close relationship between militarism and gender, and the consequences that this alliance generates, both in terms of violence and conditioning of social relations, as well as in the economic and public policies, is the heart of this work. This point is accompanied by an analysis of how masculinities and femininities are constructed in war cultures and what resistance emerges just before the debate on the militarization of women and their incorporation into armies and armed structures is introduced.

Thus, the majority of authors cited in this article are investigators that analyse militarism transversally from the gender variable.

## 1. MILITARISM, NEW WARS AND THE VALUE OF LIFE

It is difficult to understand the impacts of militarization on men, women, and other gender identities in a society without talking about the value of life in war cultures, and how the concept of enemy is configured in each moment. Who is the enemy, what is worth of those who are not ours and what is allowed to do with their bodies? It was essential, therefore, an introductory paragraph that contextualizes how the violence that already exists in the internal dynamics of a society and, especially, in the private sphere, extend to the public sphere and become a generalized mechanism to manage conflicts.

Virtually all human cultures have faced the experience or threat of warfare (Goldstein, 2001). It is estimated that more than **27 million soldiers** currently participate in formal armies (International Institute for Strategic Studies, The Military Balance, 2014). But war, as we have historically conceived it, has mutated, and the number of people enrolled in armed and paramilitary groups increases this figure unofficially. Pere Ortega pointed out in an article, citing data from the Uppsala University's Department of Peace and Conflict Research, that in 2012 there were 33 armed conflicts, while the data indicated that in 2014 this number had increased to 41 (Ortega, 2015).

However, the frontier between open war and covert warfare is diluted, giving way to new war configurations that have no beginning or end, nor do they take place within clear temporal and spatial boundaries. The line between civilians and soldiers, between regular forces, insurgents, civilians and mercenaries is now more diffuse than ever (Engstrom, 2013), any civilian can become the target of a drone, a militia, a group of mercenaries or of the autochthonous franchise of a terrorist group that receives orders from a command that is thousands of kilometres away. By surprise and without uniforms. Civilians are thus found in the midst of war.

The badly-called "global war on terror," initiated with a statement by former US President George W. Bush five years after the September 11, 2001 attacks on the twin towers (Gordillo, 2015), imposes a permanent state of emergency which extends the classic justification of violence by the liberal state in terms of protection and security, and becomes a trench and perfect alibi for a **reduction of rights and freedoms** that the population will accept under fear (Tortosa, 2006). Daily life and the normal functioning of power are impregnated with the threat and violence of war (Negri & Hardt, 2006). The constant alert, the construction of the 'other' in negative terms, the hatred of the different, the dissident and the aversion to those that are not useful for war, are imposed.

Likewise, the military tavern is outsourced to parastatal armies, militias, criminal banks and armed corporations with the participation of states and private companies (Newman, 2004). The goal of the new wars is no longer the conquest



of territory, but its very existence is an end. For authors such as Rita Segato, “the progressive loss of control over the economy and capital, makes the powers see the proliferation of wars as their last form of domination” (Segato, 2013).

With the emergence of the Islamic state replacing al Qaeda as a new global threat, discourses on the need for unprecedented -and questionable- measures to combat terrorism have also permeated supranational governance institutions. In November 2015, the United Nations Security Council adopted the resolution 2249, which called for “all necessary measures to combat ISIS” (The Military Balance, 2016), while the European Union moves towards a an ever more hermetic shielding of exterior (and interior) borders to contain the exodus of refugees and migrants from Africa and the Middle East. With a growing number of police and armies patrolling the streets of European cities as a deterrent to possible attacks and the rise and institutionalization of fascist movements, **militarization takes on new forms of legitimacy**, in this case the protection of the European identity.

In this context, it is evident that the centrality of the protection of life, which lived its golden age with the deployment of the international Human Rights (HR) system, moves and becomes universalized. Thus, three phenomena occur:

- **Globalization** commercializes fundamental human rights, especially the right to life and to security, through the widespread violation of the economic, social and cultural rights of the population in a situation of exclusion (Villán Durán, 2006). Non-Western, -and non-white- lives are left unprotected from the HR system, devalue and become extremely precarious.
- The “fight against international terrorism” generates a moral vacuum in which are accepted -in Western societies- **legislations of exceptional character** that suspend procedural and democratic guarantees and open the doors to excesses and abuses of power by security forces (Villán Durán, 2006). These violations of basic freedoms, even in their most brutal versions (such as homicide or torture), are legitimized and converted into a rational fact. Killing another person ceases to be a crime or scandal to become a “social necessity” (Martín Baró, 2003), previous construction of motherland enemy figures and threatens security. Them and potential terrorists -depending on their ethnicity, ideology or religious belonging- will also see their right to life and integrity compromised.
- **Violence against women and sexual identities** and gender dissidents (gays, lesbians, transsexuals, transgender, intersex, or non-hegemonic masculinities) ceases to be a side effect of the widespread violence of war and becomes a strategic objective towards the moral defeat of the enemy (Segato, 2013, 2014).

Finally, as a culture of war constructed on a set of values and attitudes based on the centrality of violence (Camps-Febrer, 2016), militarization entails a reorganization of society in economic, educational and gender terms. Indeed, this latter perspective is key to analysing how class, social, ethnic, and institutional inequalities become acute in contexts of armed violence and how women’s access to power and resources is affected (Cohn, 2013). Thus, militarization has clear material and symbolic implications for men, women and other existing sexual and gender identities in society.

## 2. MILITARISM AND GENDER: A PROFITABLE RELATION

*Many women say, "War? Do not talk to me about war.  
My life is quite like a battlefield."*

*Cynthia Cockburn, The Continuum of Violence:  
A Gendered Perspective on War and Peace*

Not all identities have historically had or have access to state control, institutional politics or the exercise of violence. Nor to decisions about how, when and against whom it is used. There are ethnic and cultural access barriers (for example, indigenous communities in Latin America or African Americans in the United States), but also barriers of class and economic stratum. Thus, social militarization, that is, the penetration of the military establishment and its values into politics, society, economy or education (Calvo, 2015) is a mechanism of reproduction of class and ethnicity, since it extends the universal ideal of "service to the motherland" as a form of full right access citizenship (Levy and Sasson-Levy, 2008).

But this consideration of citizenship is at the same time based on a previous exclusion of women from the access to the public and political spheres, found in the very foundations of modern states and liberal democracies. And is that when Thomas Hobbes, the fundamental theoretician of liberalism, says that the state is an artificial man product of the social contract (Hobbes, 1695, 2003) literally refers to man as a concrete social reality, not to the human being as a universal category. What is -ultimately- defended by internal or external war is this social contract "between free men" (Rousseau, 1751), which acts as the basis for the regulation of the rights and duties of citizens and which, as indicated again, excludes more than half of the population.

While the social contract regulates civil liberty in the public sphere, it leaves the private sphere in the hands of another contract, the sexual one (Pateman, 1988), regulated by men through marriage and formalizing the assumption by women of the tasks of reproduction and care of the new generations, in a naturalized way and without retribution. This sexual division is the economic and political basis of modern societies. And violence, in its physical, symbolic and institutional aspects, is a domesticating act, an instrument to maintain domination and control over women (Segato, 2003), and the division of both spheres. The reproduction of identities that exert this violence is, thus, a social necessity.

When the culture of war penetrates societies, it relies not only on this sexual division of the public and private worlds, but on the whole social construction of the categories of man and woman, which we call "gender" (Sjöberg and Via, 2010) and that provides the identities that militarism needs for its objectives.

Gender, understood not only as a way of categorizing individuals from their sexuality, but as a system of unequal power relations, is the axis that organizes patriarchal societies. Since gender is a functional and malleable construction, functioning through symbolism, representations, values and stereotypes (De Lauretis, 1989), the meaning of what involves to be and behave as "a man" or "a woman" will depend on the historical, economic and political moment.

Then, when a war approaches or threatens it, the system reorganizes its gender relations in the face of the new situation. The values proper to military culture colonize our bodies and minds and social relations, that is, politics in its broad and integral sense (Camps-Febrer, 2016). Obedience to authority, aggressiveness, discipline, acceptance of hierarchy, distort the moral system and force new legitimacies.

Masculinity and femininity, as a set of stereotypes and social expectations associated with each of the two genders (Sjöberg, 2014), discipline individuals to force their adaptation to "the norm," excluding those sexual identities that are not

introduced in this strict and functional division. In turn, these societies privilege values, behaviours, stereotypes and abilities over others, especially those linked to the maintenance of the patriarchal order. The identities that are promoted and privileged more clearly from the institutions, and -in the case of masculinities- those that hold power and dominate the decision spaces, are the so-called hegemonic identities (Kimmel, 2007).

If the construction of masculinities and femininities focused on the production of goods and reproduction, and the care of industrial and peasant labour, respectively, now it will also be directed towards the maintenance of war. Hegemonic masculinity, as we shall later see, becomes the soldier, the man who is willing to die and kill for the motherland, while the femininities are, in turn, converted in the necessity that a group of civilians support the elites for free or altruistically (Gazteizkoak, 2008).

It is no coincidence, then, as we will see in the next section, that the useful femininities in militarized cultures are those of the mother, the wife, the sex worker and the worker who replaces those who have been called up. Nor is it that in all known conflicts - past and present - the vast majority of combatants have been men. This complementarity, which, as we have seen, does not only appear in times of war but is preliminary, is a sample of the relationship of deep interdependence between gender and militarism (Reardon, 1996), while the Patriarchate generates identities that war needs, and militarism reinforces the monopoly of heterosexual men on the public and political spheres, while at the same time seeks the necessary legitimation of the violence that the Patriarchal system needs to perpetuate itself.

### **Generalization of violence, life defencelessness and moral rupture**

"War and peace, start at home," the women of Sierra Leone (Cockburn, 2007) explained to Cynthia Cockburn. For women, the border between war and peace is not so significant. If militarism and the culture of defence take us back to the concept of human security, it is important to understand the complexity of what this concept of security means for the lives of those social subjects who are constantly subjected to private violence.

Recovering the idea of changes in the moral and values system generated by militarization. The legitimacy of violence, and changes in the moral and values system, has very clear material consequences on the bodies and lives of non-hegemonic/privileged identities. It has, therefore, effects on the daily lives of people. Some are very simple, a marriage for example can be directly affected if the husband decides to enlist in the army of his country, and all its environment assumes that the needs of the soldier will prevail over those of the woman herself (Enloe, 2007). Others are much deeper and more collective.

In patriarchal and militaristic societies, the fact that men and women are or should be in a certain way - normativity - and that violence is inherent to the human being, become almost dogmas of faith. On the other hand, militarized life imposes a common homogeneous consciousness on those who are part of the select group of the elected, through group identification and, for example, the use of uniforms. At the same time, values such as male companionship or corporatism, the gregarious spirit, the uncritical obedience of orders or loyalty to the institution are exalted. There are counterparts, of course. The group will always defend "their own". And this, with militarized institutions behind, the transformations already mentioned in the scale of values and the legitimacy of violence in the name of security, can contribute to the increase of impunity of abuses of power over bodies that are not "theirs".

Military socialization seeks to cancel the individuality to create a contingent of soldiers willing to do everything for their country. Membership of the select

group, of this new collective identity, isolates its members and establishes a profound difference between the “others” and yours. A difference that is not minor. Militarization is based and extends thanks to the creation of the figure of the enemy to fight, that the *Dictionary of war, peace and disarmament* of the Delàs Centre defines as “a problematized, stereotyped and distorted construction of the “other”, which contributes in a clear way to the dehumanization and desensitization of suffering” (Calvo, 2015).

The enemy does not always take the same form, it varies according to the moment and the context, but deep down this dehumanization impregnates all the subjects that do not fall within the privileged group. Thus, women, non-hegemonic masculinities, LGBT people, migrants, political dissent or ethnic and religious minorities also become enemies. This negative *alterization* generates distinctions between valuable lives, those that deserve public acts and tributes, tears and official mourning, and destructible lives, which can disappear in a way that is presented to us as “natural” (Butler, 2011). Differences also exist between existing and non-existent lives, that is, those that are subject to citizenship rights and those that are not. Men have the right to defend their lives, and the abuses they receive, as well as their dead, are part of a system of rights that punishes the violations that are committed in the public domain. Contrary, violations occurring in the private sphere, which women suffer mostly, are legitimized and protected from political, educational, judicial and religious institutions, despite being regulated within the penal system. At the same time, “second-category” lives that do not officially exist as subjects of law, can end up in detention centres without guarantees, while “first-category” lives are entitled to a fair trial and are subject to legal guarantees.

Precarious lives coincide, in these cases, with the lives most in need of protection, but the reaction they generate is exactly the opposite. This fact generates a moral rupture in the society. The value of bodies is also unequal: those of warriors are honoured, while vulnerable bodies can be beaten and become a battleground for the destruction of the enemy (Segato, 2014). Thus, in times of war or armed conflict, women’s bodies are an extension of the front line.

In fact, one of the most tangible consequences of the militarization of society, whether before, during or after a conflict, is the increase of gender, homophobic and xenophobic violence, and especially the violence that takes a sexualized form of brutality. And militarism, due to its authoritarian nature, seeks the annihilation of the opponent, whether it is an ideological, sexual, ethnic or religious opponent. This way, military violence transcends the limits with which it balances official violence, legitimizing its generalization in the structures that the Patriarchate already disposes of.

One of the most stereotypical abuses in this sense is the generalization of rape and sexual violence in all its forms as an act deeply associated with the imbalance of power between men and women, between heterosexuals and homosexuals, and even as a tool to discipline other male bodies and create relations of subordination, for example, between soldiers and civilian men, between combatants from different sides or even between men occupying different positions in the military hierarchy of the same army.

These forms of violence and control, however, are not a consequence of the conflict, but are a continuation of those already exercised against women in times of “peace” in patriarchal societies. It is a pre-conflict structural violence that survives. It is the so-called *continuum of violence*. Without detracting, however, that the specific conditions that create militarization and armed conflict, such as the extreme legitimacy of the use of force, can affect the victims of this violence differently and, in addition, open a field of permissiveness where precarious bodies can be treated in ways that otherwise would not have been morally acceptable (Urban Walker, 2009).

In conclusion, it is basic to consider how non-hegemonic identities relate to the figure of the enemy/adversary to understand the devaluation that their bodies and their lives suffer in military contexts and, especially, but not exclusively, armed conflict. On the other hand, a proper understanding of this *continuum of violence* that blurs the border between war and peace, will be difficult to conceive a human security perspective that does not exclude women and dissident sexualities. But militarism does not only generate physical consequences, it also materially impedes the lives and basic social rights of the population where it penetrates.

### **Other consequences: military expenditure, public investment and institutional exclusion**

Some of the material consequences of the exceptionality imposed by militarization are the exclusion of women and dissident sexual identities from the public sphere, where social, political and cultural rights are made effective. If women's citizenship rights have already been historically problematized, as we have seen, because of the elitist character of the social contract, the drift towards militarism further reduces the circle of those who have access to decision-making.

The division between the public and private spheres is thus made stricter and translates into a strong masculinization of institutions and spaces of political power (Cockburn and Zarkov, 2002). Those institutions that intervene directly in the development and management of the war industry and military culture, especially tend to be headed by men, while in the departments most closely linked to the reproductive and care spheres (education, health, social affairs) is symbolically more accepted a female leadership. The experiences of women at the head of defence and foreign affairs departments in militarized societies are scarce but remarkable. In Spain, Carme Chacón led the Ministry of Defence from 2008 to 2011, amid constant criticism for her management, during which she authorized an outside intervention in Libya.

Militarization, as deeply intricate, also, with the economic system, generates consequences in the prioritization of public spending and public investment of the states. If defence and security spending is an economic priority, budget items should be cut from other areas in order to balance budgets. The military logic makes many governments allocate to defence and security a budget greater or equivalent to investment in education, health, housing or prevention of gender violence. In Spain, for example, the final military expenditure of 2015 - calculated by the Delàs Centre and incorporating the hidden budget items and those that are not considered properly of defence, like the CNI - was of 17.465 million euros. This figure, three times higher than that of the Ministry of Defence, represents 1.6% of the Spanish GDP. At the same time, social investment has continued to decline since 2008.

When this cut-out or reduction of the investment affects feminized areas or areas related to the social dimension, it is evident that the charges that women assume in an unpaid way increase because they respond to social needs that must be answered. At the same time, women continue to assume most of the partial, temporary and precarious work, which is exacerbated in times of conflict when they become the substitute labour in jobs previously occupied mainly by men, but in worse conditions. Thus, the feminization of poverty, precariousness, isolation, internal displacement, rupture of the family and community fabric are other impacts of militarization on the daily lives of women.

In short, considering all the above, the overall effect of the militarization of a society is the displacement of life care as a priority and its replacement by the culture of death and war. Its consequences on the social construction of men and women, what we call militarized masculinities and femininities, as well as for the interpersonal relations within a society, deserve a deep dissection.

### 3. MILITARIZED MASCULINITIES AND FEMININITIES

Someone has to kill and die in wars or in these militarily armoured borders. And someone has to take care of the soldiers, the future camps and the rest of the population, especially when the social investment falls to the benefit of military expenditure. Thus, the militarization of women is crucial for the militarization of governments and is necessary for the militarization of men (Enloe, 2000).

In order to enrol the general population in the functions required for war, the epic has traditionally been used. Soldiers are the warriors that take care of the family and, by extension, the nation, while women are glorified as mothers and wives of the heroic soldiers and the whole motherland. This story contributes to the hegemony of traditional models of man, woman, sexual and family, granting social hegemony to a type of highly dominant masculinities, based on violent values and behaviours. Women come to play the role of the “others”, of the necessary reinforcements, of the bodies that feed the gears of war machinery so it does not stop functioning. The agency disappears in favour of complementarity between “hard men and tender women”.

But the reality is that the majority of men do not wish to risk their lives in a war. It builds, then, a whole system of motivations that go from the political and symbolic fact (patriotism, the nation deserves to be saved) to the emotional. The chivalresque protection of women is, also, an effective motivation (Goldstein, 2001), especially at the discursive level. This is why an aura of pure souls (Elsh-tain, 1987) of innocent and vulnerable, in need of protection, for whom it is worth fighting for, is built around women that stay at home. Even when the complexity of the real roles that women and men develop during wars directly challenges this idea, the dichotomy warrior/pure soul perfectly functions as motivation to make war and die (Sjöberg, 2014).

This is why, analysing the type of gender identities, masculinities and femininities that creates and privileges militarism, is central when understanding the functioning of war itself.

#### **The militarized masculinities**

To make war, justify and take decisions that favour it, a specific man profile is needed, a strict association between masculinity and the military fact. The man is the soldier. As Joshua Goldstein would say, recovering the idea of a reciprocal relation between gender and militarism, “warriors are constructed in masculine and masculinity is constructed through war” (Goldstein, 2001) But, considering that we no longer live -mostly- in a structure of clans and warriors, it is evident to think that these masculinities require training and preparation to rapidly react in an aggressive way without fear or any emotion that paralyze them. This “training” is a process of re-socialization and apprenticeship of new guidelines that is well-carried within the military institution -for the soldiers- or through the political, media, educative and in the family core discourse, which requires society’s complicity as a whole. The identity that arises from this process is called militarized masculinity or “hypermasculinity” (Enloe, 2000).

Within hypermasculinity, which is characterized by attributes like aggressiveness, misogyny, devaluation of what is considered feminine, competitiveness and domination will (Ni Aoláin, Haynes and Cahn, 2011) the traditional idea of virility sharpens, becomes more extreme. The hierarchic relation between dominant and subaltern or subordinated identities, becomes stronger and stricter. Even in the absence of conflict, in militarized and plunged into economic crisis societies, hypermasculinity offers a way out of the frustration for not being able to comply with the role assigned (*breadwinner*, professional winner) and allows again the acquisition of a new power status, bringing back “the man”. Violence is, in this

way, a means to re-establish the lost domination, to access the limited available power arenas in extreme circumstances.

If the survival of the military institution and its intervention in conflicts depends on the ability to attract new members, especially young men, the claim will be the easy access to be “real men”. Thus, the passage through the army or the insurgent group becomes the substitute for the old rituals of passage or initiation of the infant/young child to the adult man, a role that in many countries, and in Spain until two decades ago, did the obligatory military service (Zulaika, 1989). The military service would not be, therefore, as much a service to the state as the possibility of being considered within true masculinity. (Gül Altınay, 2006). Thus, an absolute association between the military values and the characteristics of the masculine gender is achieved (Martín Baró, 2003). Courage, obedience and corporatism are exalted and rewarded, and the good citizen is one who is willing to resolve conflicts through violence. It is, therefore, the military institution, which defines what is patriotic masculinity, the “healthy” masculinity (Camps-Febrer, 2015). On the contrary, the pacifist man is represented as effeminate, coward, disloyal and treacherous to the nation and its sex (Yuval-Davis, 1997).

And it is that the army not only does not process according to what type of masculinity -for example, homosexual or transsexual masculinities- in addition, it ends up defining the normality, that is to say, modifies the models of behaviour that are considered exemplary in a society. By generating such a strong group identity and a competitive environment, the desire to continue to be considered as a member of the elite pushes young people to constantly demonstrate their commitment to values, to “have to live up to it.”

These dynamics of blackmail and permanent inclusion-exclusion of the primary group, combined with *male-bonding* (corporatism between hegemonic masculinities and their aspirants) that characterize from the army to the youth groups, generate and legitimize a level of violence towards the others. Identities, in the military case with the only brake on the punitive mechanisms of the same institution.

### **The parallel violence: punishment and exclusion**

The enhancement of values such as violence, brutality and reification as synonymous with “man” is not possible without the devaluation of all traits associated with femininity, which will be identified as contrary to the interests of war (Peterson, 2010). Disdain for the feminine, along with the progressive dehumanization of the “others”, is part of the emotional preparation for the elimination of the adversary (Withworth, 2004) and paves the way for generalized violence outside the war itself, but also in what are known as ‘parallel violence’, that investigations such as ‘Silences, parallel violence in the Armed Forces’ (Adelantado and others, 1999) brought to light, about the environment of coercion and violence in which the masculinities that integrate an army are forged. Soldiers are continually exposed, within the army, to daily levels of violence that do not respond to the goal of preparing them for the defence of society.

This parallel violence against the members of the military itself punishes any weakness or dissent to hegemonic masculinity with physical and sexual punishment, reclusion, ostracism, coercion and, ultimately, with exclusion from the system of privileges and political power. The clearest example is the dogma that survives in the army around obligatory heterosexuality -one of the *sine qua non* conditions for being considered “man” - and the association of any different trait or behaviour with homosexuality. A few months ago, for example, a former soldier with severe aftermath of his stay in an international mission, acknowledged in a report that “in the army you can take the discharge for physical reasons, but if you request it for psychological or emotional reasons you are a traitor or a queer” (“Psychological consequences”, *Diario VICE*, 9/12/2016).

Militarized men, then, must be courageous, loyal, virile and endure stoically and without sinking the situations they contemplate and contribute to generate. But fear is an unpredictable and instinctive warning mechanism, difficult to avoid in extreme situations. Violations and abuses by peers and superiors, and the obligation to remain silent about them for the good of the institution, can undermine the feeling of corporatism and loyalty. And the hypersexualization that is associated with the virility and dehumanization of the enemy can lead the soldiers to commit acts to obtain the approval of the group that generate a psychological breakdown and a moral dissociation between who they would like to be and who they are. The elite of hegemonic masculinity is, therefore, an unstable and unfit privilege for all.

Despite the pre-eminence of these referents and models, there are masculinities that oppose resistance to be instrumentalized for war or escape from normativity. One of the closest examples of this largely conscious gender dissent is the action of the anti-militarist movement and the movement for insubordination and conscientious objection, which led to the end of compulsory military service in Spain in 2001 (Compairé, 2011) and, therefore, a key element in the militarization of young people.

As we have seen, the construction of the militarized heterosexual man as a privileged subject also involves the construction of the rest of the subjects and, especially of the femininities, as complementary.

### **The militarized femininities**

The stereotypical image of men as the perpetrators of war and of women as passive victims of it, although it has contributed to evidence of the systematic nature of violence received by women, has also fuelled limited representations of femininity. In this way, the capacity of women to be active subjects in conflicts has come second, and the variety of their experiences, ignored (Mendia, 2008).

If masculinity in war contexts equates the soldier, femininity is wholly associated with caring figures. The social construction of women in general, but especially in relation to violence, is based on characteristics such as passivity, innocence, purity, peaceful mood, beauty, submission, vulnerability and the need to be protected (Sjöberg, 2014). In a practical dimension, as we have seen, this basis is essential for women to naturalize the assumption of reproductive and affective work in an unpaid way. The feminine figure that symbolizes this type of femininity is the mother, associated with peace, to the incompatibility between the exercise of violence and the capacity to generate life. Paradoxically, in militarized societies, the figure of the mother is used as a fetish to symbolically cover the war rhetoric and justify it. Thus, the individual mothering role is extended to the whole society, women serve as biological and social wives and mothers of soldiers, future camps and the entire nation (Cooper, 2014).

In essence, militarized femininities do not differ in excess from the hegemonic model of femininity of patriarchal societies, rather they are characterized by their instrumentalization in the service of war. Femininity is a tool in the hands of military officers and civil authorities, who enrol women in the military cause, for example by making them feel indebted to the motherland, responsible for victories and defeats, loss of lives and values, to make them feel proud or convincing them that they act out of patriotism or love (Enloe, 1989). This account also has consequences on the bodies of women and on dissident sexual and gender identities. Beyond human security and the scope of this term, which we have already addressed in the previous point, the culture of war reinforces the bond of ownership of the state and of hegemonic masculinities, but also of other total institutions such as the army and Church, on people's bodies and, especially, on their sexuality and reproductive capacity. Thus, it is not surprising that, if



motherhood is symbolically the most valuable role it gives women in militarized societies, agency mechanisms on one's own body such as abortion are - still - more restricted. Militarism as an ideology, then, does not lack of a moral program based, above all, on the rejection of abortion and homosexuality (Digby, 2014).

Thus, if the public role reserved for women is the symbol of the disinterested sacrifice of their progeny for loyalty to the motherland, this subject also assures legitimacy and an access to public space that women do not have in other positions (Young And Willmott, 1986). In Argentina, Northern Ireland, the Balkans, Kurdistan or the United States, women have opposed war precisely from this position of mothers, offering resistance from the only female social subject that was heard (Cooper, 2014). A legitimacy in part conferred by the non-transgression of the limits of femininity.

But the stereotype of purity and fragility that still survives is constantly challenged, as we will see in the next section on the militarization of women, by the material reality and by the multiplicity of the roles they play in contexts of social or armed conflict (Cohn, 2013). And it is that, many women, not only do not have a passive role in the militarization, but contribute decisively raising the morale of the troops, providing comfort during and after the war, replacing men as labour force so as not to stop the economic machinery -with the consequent aggravation of the double shift-, reproducing values and militaristic ideology to the new generation of soldiers and collaborating with the logistics as nurses, administrative, communicators, telephone operators, messengers, sex workers, cooks, logists, devoted wives, teachers, drivers and even as soldiers and combatants (Nordstrom, 2007).

### **Women are pacifists: myth or reality?**

While it is true that both men and women participate in anti-militarist and pacifist movements around the world, the prominent and preeminent role of women in these movements is undeniable. In addition to leading them in many cases, women stand out for playing an essential role in the recovery of interpersonal ties and in building alliances and bridges to reverse negative alterity (Farr, 2002). The women's association with peace, on the other hand, is historical, from the foundation of the International League of Women for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) in 1915, to the outstanding role that Colombian and Filipino women have exercised in the construction of peace agreements in their respective conflicts.

If before we analysed how the military culture exacerbates the restrictions of access to public space and participation, it is worth noting now how peace movements can act as catalysts of this same participation. In fact, one of the most interesting features of women's relationship to peace movements is the frequency with which they organize themselves separately in their own spaces, choosing their own forms of protest -such as silent eves- and maintaining control over their actions (Cockburn, 2007).

However, within women's movements for peace, very different visions coexist. They are composed of women who consider themselves to be pacifists, others anti-militarists, both at the same time, those who believe in just wars or who are simply against that particular war (Cockburn, 2007). It is difficult, therefore, to speak of pacifist feminism as a homogeneous whole, and on the contrary, quite easy, to associate women with pacifism automatically and without nuances. This association comes from afar and has different perspectives.

The most essentialist view of this relationship is based on the "naturally peaceful" nature of women (Fukuyama, 1998), generators of life, and considers that the impulse to threaten or to snatch her is unnatural and goes against the same feminine condition. There are also currents, quite hegemonic in international

feminism, which consider that the socialization of women builds a moral basis to value conflict management methods such as empathy, mediation, negotiation and positive otherness. Women are educated in maternal thinking and care ethics, so we do not feel compelled to engage in violence unless we are constrained by the situation (Ruddick, 1989).

But reality is, again, much more complex. Women respond in very different ways to militarized violence, and not always do it in a peaceful way, but if the public visibility of pacifist and anti-militarist women's movements is already quite limited, even if they do not transgress gender norms, active roles in conflict are even more invisible.

Women have transgressed their position of mothers and caregivers countless times throughout history, in a permanent questioning of the idea that war is antithetical to the essence of femininity. If the second wave of feminism had within it the claim of spaces for women in the public and political spheres, and paved the way for the hegemony of pacifist feminism, it also opened the way for the incorporation of women into the armies and insurgent groups in the name of formal equality.

The idea that underlies, once again, is the ability of the culture of war to instrumentalize the existence of the social categories of men and women for their own benefit, obviating that human diversity breaks with the strict categorization that is made of men and women. At the same time, the resistance generated in this dynamic demonstrates the complexity with which we relate to militarism from the genre.

#### **4. WOMEN MILITARIZATION: EQUALITY OR COOPTION?**

It is as true that women have been the forerunners of pacifist movements as they have never been absent from the war (Cohn, 2013), although until the last decades their participation took forms that -mostly- did not transgress the hegemonic models of femininity. In the great world wars, women joined the formal armies by developing logistical and support roles, mainly as nurses, cooks or messengers, taking advantage of the slits that open up at a time when all the available human resources are needed. Tasks which, in the vast majority of cases, and with exceptions such as the more than 500,000 women of the Soviet army or partisans who joined armed resistance against fascism in countries like France, Bulgaria, the former Yugoslavia, Spain, Holland, Italy or Germany, were in line with social expectations about femininity.

In contexts of conflict, therefore, a very dual dynamic is created in terms of gender roles. On the one hand, militarization requires the return to traditional stereotypes and the sacralization of motherhood, and on the other hand, the need for assets to replace those killed in war, even if these are women, opens a space of a certain exceptionality, empowerment and participation (Zirion, 2012). The fact is that, whether or not they participated in the war, the great war conflicts of the last century have been key to the militarization of women, in the form of logistical support, symbols of the motherland, iconic images, encouragement for the soldiers, substitutes labour to the war economy or broadcasters of war-mongering propaganda.

From the 70s and 80s onwards, coinciding with the rise of the feminist movement, the discourse of formal gender equality began to be assumed by states and supranational institutions. The militarization of women becomes as tangible as ever, with their incorporation into the armed forces of many countries, which even resort to specific recruitment campaigns. While the participation of women in armed action was already a reality in the ranks of some armies and guerrillas, the difference between these latter processes and inclusion in the regular armies will be mainly one: social support and stigma. The complicity of the patriarchal

institutions will allow women access to the exercise of violence without suffering, but as a counterpart, the ostracism and stigma that accompanied militia women of other armed structures.

Thus, apparently, the system itself will allow some break with traditional roles as a symbol of modernization and progress of both the military and the state itself. But has the formal entry of women into the army involved a real transformation of gender roles in patriarchal societies? Has the feminization created a real change in the military institution in quantitative terms of these structures?

### **Incorporation of women into regular armies. The reality**

The incorporation of women in the formal armies is generally carried out in a partial way and with restrictions on the roles and tasks that they can develop. Limitations, still in force in many cases, refer to the development in operative combat positions, infantry, special forces or detachments such as submarine units. The entry of women will also coincide with a change in the type of interventions. With the deployment of the Human Rights system and the consolidation of supranational organizations, military operations are designed with humanitarianism, in which other types of capabilities are demanded more associated with femininity.

Currently, only about 16 countries allow the deployment of women in combat positions, most of them following the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. The United States is one of the most recent cases of veto lifting of women in direct combat units, which it did in 2013, although two years later only two soldiers had passed physical tests. Women are still excluded from some positions, such as those tanks' machine guns (Rayas, 2014). In Spain, where the army was opened to women in 1989 and access to combat positions since 1999, there are still limitations such as that a woman officer serving in a unit can not have an immediate superior or a lower-ranking officer of the same sex. The reality of the incorporation of women in the latter country will be broken down in a report, also elaborated by the Gender and Militarism working group of the Delàs Centre, which will succeed this one.

The justification for the permanence of vetoes is generally based on the physical differences between men and women, on the type of physical evidence to be passed, on the lack of psychological preparation, or on the belief that the mixture of men and women in combat units "reduce cohesion" among the group. In a 2009 British Defence Ministry publication reviewing the incorporation of women into combat positions, it is emphasized that "the inclusion of women in these roles can adversely affect cohesion within the unit, which would have potential adverse effects on the group's effectiveness in high-intensity combat."

This argument points to the real reason for the exclusion of women from combat tasks: it is the physical and symbolic space that would imply a clearer break with traditional femininity. Women are physically and morally unable to execute the guidelines without assuming a burden on the unit partners or without making the group lose effectiveness. The symbolic exclusion of women from the military institution is based on this thought, even from women inside, despite the illusion of formal equality.

It was logical to think that the integration of women into a highly codified masculine space, in one of the main institutions transmitting violent masculinity, would not be simple. Although part of international feminism celebrated this veto lift as a step towards the full incorporation of women in all areas of society and, at the same time, towards the feminization of the army, the reality decades later is that women are excluded from the hard core of military identity (Cockburn, 2002). Women will have access to the front line, but they will never be part of the privileged elite.

In fact, the response that generate the femininity transgressions of female soldiers, even when they act to emulate hegemonic masculinity, is a clear reflection of this exclusion. The 2003 Abu Ghraib torture scandal, for example, was an absolute turning point in the conception of the role of women in the military. The soldiers in charge of this Iraqi prison were women, precisely because the men were in combat positions. They committed torture and physical abuse against the prisoners and even sexually abused them. The rumble that this case created and its implications blew the premises of the Western feminism, especially American and British, which started from the basis that women soldiers were morally different from male soldiers (Ehrenreich, 2004). The representations and narratives that were built around the soldiers involved (mentally ill, sexual obsessive, etc.) differ from the narratives that have been deployed in similar cases involving male soldiers, where the justification of “boys will be boys” was imperative.

Gender bias is also tangible, with respect to the expectations of progress within the army, in the glass ceiling that limits the advancement of women in the military hierarchy, common to all armies, but especially in the forms that this military hierarchy adopts to remind soldiers of their gender belonging.

One of the most perverse identity labels, in this sense, within the military institution is sexual violence. The fear of harm and dishonour that the enemy can inflict on the bodies of the combatants has been one of the arguments against the participation of women in the front line. The wombs of the nation cannot be exposed to the sexual brutality of the adversary. It is estimated, however, that 20-21% of women have suffered violence and sexual abuse in the US Army at the hands of their peers or superiors (Rayas, 2014). The double moral in this case acts as a reminder that female soldiers continue to be crossed by patriarchal violence and, above all, that the hetero male chauvinist military establishment is capable of absorbing female individuals (Eisenstein, 2007), but does not abandon privileges of gender nor male corporatism.

Subsequent management of sexual abuse allegations within the military is an empirical evidence of the extent to which women’s entry has occurred without rigid military structures adaptation. In many cases, internal complaint and sanction mechanisms are not guaranteed and adequate victim support is not provided, which often has to deal with the stigma of disloyalty and betrayal of the institution.

Analysing the real impact on the gender regime that has meant the entry of women into the military, to which extent -antimilitarist feminism asks itself- encouraging women to join the military institution has not meant to send them directly to the lion’s den?

### ***Purplewashing. Militarization and co-optation of the women’s rights discourse***

Just as the peace-keeping discourse has been co-opted to justify the war with the so-called “humanitarian missions”, or the discourse of gender equality to favour the militarization of women, rhetoric about Human Rights of women has been used in the last 15 years to justify military invasions and wars. And is that, one of the most common tools of promoting militarism in Western societies is the use of women as a flag. The so-called *purplewashing* or purple lavage, is to provide a veneer of liberal-colonial feminism in military interventions to legitimize them as actions of almost moral and ethical obligation. *Purplewashing*, currently closely linked to Islamophobia, is used to reinforce Western moral superiority, making invisible the struggles of those who do not conform to the colonial pattern, making the peoples essential, and ultimately legitimizing any kind of economic or military intervention towards the rest of the world.

One of the quintessential hits of this co-optation of feminist discourse for concerned purposes is the Bush administration's sudden conversion to feminism, covering the real reasons that led to intervention in Afghanistan under the rhetoric of women's liberation.

At the same time, many media offered a simplistic view of Afghan women. Time and again, its oppression was transmitted to the Western public without exposing its complexity of intervening factors, from the misery, to the cycle of violent foreign interventions in the country, the lack of infrastructures, etc.

The simplified view of Eastern patriarchy, in the media or in political discourses, is one more of the stages that Western interventionism has ideologically constructed to the global South. It is again the famous "*white man's burden*"<sup>1</sup>, the white man who bears with dignity the obligation to civilize the other, to evangelize it, to modernize it, to develop it, to democratize it and to free itself from its own barbarity. But now it is the white man and woman who must liberate the Oriental women from the barbaric patriarchy of Oriental men. Who can refuse? Who can turn away from the Afghan woman imprisoned under the burka? Who can obviate the acid-burned Iraqi woman in a honour crime? Who can deny support for a military intervention that, according to George W. Bush, freed the Afghans?

In this *purplewashing*, Oriental women are victims without agency, without liberating capacity. They are not agents of change, and in the exceptions of those who fight in an acceptable manner (and this excludes armed struggle and immolation), they do not have enough resources or capacities to free themselves in their own way. Cyntia Enloe, recalls how the images of "women and children"<sup>2</sup> were already used in the First Gulf War, in that case Western women living in Kuwait who were to be liberated from Saddam Hussein's claws.

## CONCLUSION

Militarism has a gender, and war culture does not exist without the roots in the social construction of men and women, both in a material sense and on a more symbolic plane, to the point that war can be considered the maximum representation of the Patriarchate (Tajahuerce, 2016).

Likewise, if the Patriarchate naturalizes violence against women and LGBTI identities to maintain control over their bodies, militarism generalizes this violence and turns it into the mechanism for resolving conflicts. The generalization of these means, therefore, further elicits decision-making spaces, reducing the exercise of institutional and social power to those subjects who can impose on others by force.

In war cultures, the value of human life is denigrated and duelling hierarchies are established. The commitment to kill and die for the motherland, the obedience to authority, the respect for hierarchy and discipline carries the privilege of being mourned as a hero. Precarious lives (women, migrants, religious and ethnic minorities), in the name of protection from which society has militarized or intervened in a conflict, are violated without society reacting.

However, the reality of masculinities and femininities on the eve of constant war, is neither static nor simple. As dynamic social constructs, there are subversions and resistances, conscientious objector masculinities, women joining military ranks as combatants, or dissident women and sexualities organized to occupy the public sphere from non-violence.

1. '*The White Man's Burden*' is the original title of a poem by Rudyard Kipling, published in 1899 in the United States of America and popularized as an allegory of the supposed altruism of the civilizing task of white *men* towards 'inferior races' of the world.
2. Or in her own words, of "women and children", in this permanent whole of women as minors, victims without agency.

Although we are not, in many cases, aware, militarization is part of the DNA of our society. It is not an isolated factor that can be dissociated from the social structure or the economic system. Therefore any action for demilitarization -understood as a process that seeks to reduce or eliminate the military values of culture, education and society- that does not contemplate the bilateral and interdependent relationship between gender and military culture, will see its effectiveness ruptured in building a stable peace.

From this perspective, it will be necessary to devise demilitarization as an integral process based on the abandonment of violence as a tool for managing social conflicts, including those taking place in the private sphere. This integrity requires, not only the physical participation of women and gender identities excluded from the decision-making and power spaces, but also the inclusion of the needs of both the victims of violence and women who have participated in the military logistics -mothers of soldiers, war widows, military nurses, sex workers- and the consideration of the differential effects that militarization has meant for the lives of women.

A comprehensive process, therefore, requires profound and structural changes that reverse these consequences, such as the demilitarization of state institutions, the replacement of military ideologies and the elimination of military organizations, the reaffirmation of civil control over the State and economy and the civilian recovery of power and of decision spaces. Broadening the circle of access to decision-making, in addition to increasing the quality of the democratic society, allowing the return of non-hegemonic identities to public participation without being stigmatized and violent, however it will be a partial inclusion if the division between public and private areas remains intact.

Likewise, the demilitarization of the State to overturn economic priorities, reducing security and defence spending to free economic and human resources that are reinvested in the assumption of the affective and care tasks (health, dependence, education) that the State has outsourced to women without remuneration. Finally, demilitarization must also be a psychological process, encompassing minds, education and the media system, and dismantling the glorification of the armed forces and violence, and placing sustainability and the protection of life as top priorities.

However, the path towards a pacifist society will require the approach of invisible, daily and standardized violence, as well as the one acting in the private sphere. Without a redefinition of the concepts of peace and violence that contemplates the redefinition of sexual hierarchies, gender identities and their relation to power, women, gays, lesbians, trans and intersex will continue to live in war.

On the other hand, a process of demilitarization that obscures the experiences of these women and of non-normative gender identities, including violent femininities, will not attack the foundations that have led that society to become militarized. They will have to be visible not only the contributions of peace activists and pacifist feminists, that play a key role in restoring peace, but also in the case of conflicts involving women as combatants, the needs and specific challenges that these pose.

The exclusion of entry of violent women as feminine identities can end up feeding essentialist and partial conceptions about femininity and the vision of women as beings without agency or decision-making capacity. However, the real relationship of women with military institutions and the exercise of violence still generates a lively debate within feminism: Are we historically far from war due to our biology, the socialization we have received and the impacts that violence has on our lives, or simply because historically we have had less access to weapons? Are cases such as Abu Ghraib's tortures and abuses isolated or occurring in proportion to the number of women in the armies?

A dilemma that also extends to the glorification by broad sectors of the left of women fighting in guerrillas and armed groups. The vision of a woman with a rifle in this case seems to us empowering, liberating, and it creates admiration. Without judging the reasons that drive women to take up arms when war knocks at the door, is the fetishization of the guerrillas a battle won by militarism, as is the case with the inclusion of women in the army and with *purplewashing*?

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