International Feminist Journal of Politics

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rfjp20

Segregated brotherhood: the military masculinities of Afghan interpreters and other locally employed civilians

Sara de Jong (she/her/hers)

To cite this article: Sara de Jong (she/her/hers) (2022): Segregated brotherhood: the military masculinities of Afghan interpreters and other locally employed civilians, International Feminist Journal of Politics, DOI: 10.1080/14616742.2022.2053296

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/14616742.2022.2053296

Published online: 06 Apr 2022.

INTERNATIONAL FEMINIST JOURNAL OF POLITICS
https://doi.org/10.1080/14616742.2022.2053296

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Segregated brotherhood: the military masculinities of Afghan interpreters and other locally employed civilians

Sara de Jong (she/her/hers)

Department of Politics, University of York, York, UK

ABSTRACT

This article offers an innovative contribution to research on military masculinities by – counterintuitively – drawing on the experience of civilians, namely Afghan locally employed civilians (LECs), such as patrol interpreters. Centering the analysis on Afghan LECs' own gendered experience of war, this article forms an important counterpoint to the racialized hypervisibility of Afghan men in the discourses structuring the "War on Terror." The article's argument unfolds along two lines. On the one hand, it disrupts discourses that portray Afghan men as radically Other by demonstrating the parallels between Afghan LECs and Western soldiers, such as in their military coming-of-age stories and motivations for enlistment. On the other hand, it introduces the notion of "segregated brotherhood" to capture the everyday differentiations and inequalities that frame the relationship between LECs and Western soldiers. While this article's primary aim is to analyze the gendered experiences of LECs as under-researched but essential actors in the military missions in Afghanistan, by "returning the gaze" I also cast new light on the masculinities of Western soldiers, exposing their dependencies on locally recruited civilians, especially interpreters, thereby challenging masculinized accounts of Western soldiers' autonomy and neo-imperial power/knowledge.

KEYWORDS Military masculinities; brotherhood; conflict; interpreters; Othering

Introduction

> We did a lot of things for the British [soldiers]; without interpreters they couldn't do anything, do you understand? The only thing that was different was the weapon; we wore the same uniform, same shoes, same socks, same underwear. (former local Afghan interpreter for the British Army)

In the above interview quote, this former local interpreter highlights both the similarity between himself and the Western soldiers with whom he worked and emphasizes the particular significance of his role for the military mission. His voice and the experiences of local interpreters or other locally

CONTACT Sara de Jong sara.dejong@york.ac.uk Department of Politics, University of York, York, UK

employed civilians (LECs) have, however, so far been largely ignored in both mainstream and feminist international relations (IR). The silence on LECs is particularly striking because of the concurrent emphasis on population-centric counterinsurgency for the war in Afghanistan and feminist IR's interest in the "everyday" of war and conflict. For instance, Welland (2016, 130) describes how "in the population-centric counterinsurgency context of Afghanistan, soldiers were expected to live, move and work amongst the local population, to talk with them, listen to them and earn their trust," and argues that "everyday counterinsurgency practices included holding *shuras* with village elders, where senior military personnel would listen to concerns raised by locals." However, the local Afghan interpreters who mediated those encounters, and without whom most Western soldiers with limited Dari or language skills would have little to "listen to," remain invisible. This contrasts with the hypervisibility of Afghan men as insurgents or as a homogenized foil for Western (military) masculinities in the context of the justification of the so-called "War on Terror."

In this article, I contribute to the scholarship on military masculinities as well as broader debates on global racial power relations, by offering an analysis of the experiences of Afghan LECs, who engaged in shared spaces and activities with Western soldiers. LECs occupy a particularly interesting position in discourses about racialized masculinities in Afghanistan, which is characterized by ambivalences. As Afghan LECs, they aligned themselves, in a complex mix of pragmatic and ideological motivations, with the War on Terror, and thereby occupy a position at a distance from the discursively constructed archetypical "Muslim fundamentalist terrorist"; however, this does not mean that they did not experience the distrust and racism that fuels this construction, as I demonstrate. I draw on research interviews with Afghan male migrants who, after working in Afghanistan as interpreters or in other civilian support roles with Western armies, claimed asylum or were relocated to Western countries, including the United States (US), Canada, the United Kingdom (UK), France, Germany, and the Netherlands. From each interviewee's narratives about their employment, I trace their own understandings of manhood and masculinity.

Joining military institutions is a formative moment for many young men. For former LECs who become migrants in the West, their decision to take up employment with Western forces is doubly formative, as it also shapes their eventual migration. As Brigden and Vogt (2015, 6) have argued, "Migration journeys and wars can both be conceptualized as rites of passage and spaces of liminality." By attending to the production of masculinities in war as a space of liminality, I seek to disrupt the static accounts of racialized Muslim masculinities and "radically Other" men (compared to Western men) that appear in Orientalist discourse. Foregrounding the narratives of Afghan LECs who positioned themselves in relation to Western

soldiers also contributes to the broader postcolonial project of "returning the gaze" and serves as an important counterpoint to studies of Western military masculinities in which local Afghan Others mostly feature as a discursive foil. I follow the trajectory of Afghan men from the moment that they became LECs to the point where their employment became the ground for emigration from Afghanistan. My argument unfolds along two lines. On the one hand, I disrupt mainstream discourses that portray Afghan men as radically Other, by demonstrating the parallels between Afghan LECs and Western soldiers in reference to, for instance, their military coming-of-age stories and motivations for enlistment. On the other hand, I introduce the notion of "segregated brotherhood" to describe and draw attention to the everyday differentiations and inequalities that frame the relationship between LECs and Western soldiers.

Afghan and military masculinities

In post-9/11 mainstream political representations, Afghan men have become hypervisible as "backward, misogynist, potentially terrorist men" whose oppression of women justifies Western military intervention (Ferguson 2005; Manchanda 2015; Partis-Jennings 2017; Shepherd 2006). The image of Afghan men as primitive and violent has also served as a foil for the portrayal of Western soldiers as modern and peaceful, and hence as superior men (Duncanson 2009; Higate 2012; Pratt 2013; Shepherd 2006). Feminist and postcolonial discourse analysis of the international military intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq has, importantly, uncovered and critiqued the binary dynamics of the gendered Occidental Self versus the Oriental Other (Ayotte and Husain 2005; Ferguson 2005; Jabbra 2006; Shepherd 2006). While such discourse analysis has uncovered "the idea of masculine danger and the way that idea can be superimposed on an imagined Muslim male subject," its focus is not on understanding "masculinity as an embodied, potentially fluid, practice structured in complex social forces, based on Muslim men's lived experience" (Yurdakul and Korteweg 2020, 4). Gendered hypervisibility often has the effect of invisibilizing alternative and everyday gendered experiences.

Indeed, the voices of Afghan men about their own gendered experiences as racialized men and their reflections on masculinity and manhood have hardly been heard. The few studies on Afghan masculinity that present the views of Afghan men situate their research findings in relation to the men's receptiveness to gender equality and women's rights (Abirafeh 2007, 320; Bahri 2014; Chiovenda 2018; Echavez, Mosawi, and Pilongo 2016; Myrttinen 2018). This risks indirectly reproducing the image of the Afghan man as defined by his hypermasculinity and adherence to traditional patriarchal values based on tribal culture and religion. The dominant representation of

the Afghan man as a "pathologized figure" (Manchanda 2015, 130) suggests that Afghan manhood is not only aberrant but somehow exceptional. This has the effect of reifying Afghan masculinity and ignoring a diversity of experiences of manhood and masculinity. Considering Afghan men as radically Other also conceals the continuities with other men and masculinities.

While Western military masculinities have been analyzed in relation to discourses on local counterinsurgent barbaric masculinities and their "homosexualized" counterparts in the local security forces (such as the Afghan National Army) (Duncanson 2013; Welland 2016), the LECs with whom members of Western militaries interacted have remained under-researched. This article, therefore, contributes to feminist studies of everyday war that shed light on "the people placed outside IR's limelight, whose war has different dimensions" (Sylvester 2013, 673). It also aligns with the research agenda of critical military scholars, who have broadened their scope to include actors beyond state armed forces, such as by researching masculinities in private militarized security companies in Afghanistan and Iraq (Chisholm 2014; Higate 2012). This body of work has drawn attention to the racialized hierarchies operating in those spaces, which, as the analysis below shows, are also central to this study.

In contrast to the relative silence of IR scholarship on LECs as security actors or as migrants seeking protection (for an exception, see Baker 2010, 2012 (focusing on LECs in Bosnia–Herzegovina); Bos and Soeters 2006), there has been extensive media interest in LECs and the threats that they face in Afghanistan. This media interest gained further intensity following the US and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) withdrawal announcement in April 2021, reaching a peak during August 2021 when many Western nations made a last-minute effort to evacuate their former LECs. There is also an emerging scholarship from translation studies on interpreters in conflicts, primarily based on a critical reading of media sources (M. Baker 2010; Collin 2009; Footitt and Kelly 2012; Gaunt 2016; Inghilleri 2010; Rafael 2007; Rosendo and Muñoz 2017) and lacking a gender analysis.

The most significant study on LECs to date is Campbell's (2016) monograph *Interpreters of Occupation: Gender and the Politics of Belonging in an Iraqi Refugee Network*, a study of Iraqi former LECs resettled to the northeastern US, which charts their gendered identities and experiences in Iraq and the US, based on primary interview data. While Campbell's focus is on US-based LECs only and on Iraqi rather than Afghan LECs, below I draw out some of the parallels between our findings. That there are resonances between our data is not entirely surprising; while Orientalist discourses have been particularly pronounced with regard to Afghan men, during the invasion of Iraq, the trope of the violent, irrational, sexist Other man was also (re)mobilized. The Iraq war was cast as a competition between US and Iraqi manliness, with the latter being characterized as inferior due to its

irrationality, violence, and lack of respect for women's rights (Al-Ali and Pratt 2010; Sjoberg 2007). There are some differences between the representation of Afghanistan and Iraq, with the "rhetoric of saving women from Muslim fundamentalism, used by the US government in Afghanistan, not [as] readily available for use against the secular state of Iraq, which had much more liberal policies towards women" (Ehrenreich 2004, 136–137). Nevertheless, the "rescuing women theme" was promoted by the Bush administration in both countries (Jabbra 2006, 248), and US soldiers' training about Iraqi culture equally relied on gendered stereotypes about men and women (Campbell 2016, 63).

Methodology

The data that form the basis for this article were collected in the context of a project that investigates how LECs and their supporters advocate for protection, given the security threats that LECs face as a consequence of their employment. The main source for the analysis is 30 semi-structured interviews[1] that I conducted between 2017 and 2020 with male Afghan LECs who now live in the US, the UK, Canada, France, Germany, and the Netherlands. I identified some of the LECs interviewed for this study through media stories of their political activism and used snowballing within this (transnational) community and through advocacy organizations to recruit other participants. In this article, I also draw – to a more limited extent – on interviews that I conducted with Western veterans who became advocates for the rights of former LECs, and on autobiographies by Western soldiers that I collected in the context of the broader project.[2]

Most, though not all, of the LECs were in their late 20s or early 30s at the time of the interview and had entered employment in their late teens or early 20s. While in the case of some countries, such as the US, LECs were subcontracted through private companies, in the case of other states, such as Germany, France, and the Netherlands, they were directly contracted; the UK changed its practice from direct employment to subcontracting in 2014. With the exception of a few virtual interviews, I met most LECs in person in public spaces of their choice, such as coffee bars, while some collected me in the taxis that they drove or invited me to their homes. The contact with some research participants was limited to the interview appointment. With others, I spent whole afternoons or days, and with some, I have maintained contact over several years.

Since interview data is produced in the process of interpersonal exchange, the knowledge created is relational. Inevitably, what was said and how it was said was marked by my position as a white European woman in her late 30s with an academic job and with no affinity with military institutions. As Rose (1997, 318) suggests, it is impossible to establish exactly in what way, since

"assuming that self and context are, even if in principle only, transparently understandable [demands] an analytical certainty that is as insidious as the universalizing certainty that so many feminists have critiqued." Hence, while it may not be possible to exactly pin down the interactional effects of my identity in the context of the interview, it is important to recognize that the data and the analysis are situated and contextual. White women who worked in Afghanistan have been considered "both female and foreign, both vulnerable and powerful" (Partis-Jennings 2017, 418). However, it is important not to overstate gendered cultural differences or unfamiliarity, as most of my research participants had experience working with female Western soldiers and encountered white women after their migration, for instance, as resettlement caseworkers. In a few cases, there were connections between our educational and professional backgrounds, as some LECs had studied Politics or had worked in political institutions, including Western embassies and non-governmental organizations.

Locally employed civilians and military masculinities

Boys become men

As Brigden and Vogt (2015, 11) state, "the military has traditionally been viewed as a masculine social world." Enlistment has a long history of symbolically being viewed as a formative moment, making boys into men (Woodward and Winter 2007). The military should thus be understood as not simply masculine but as masculin*izing*. Afghan LECs occupied an ambivalent position within this military world (C. Baker 2010) as they were officially classed as "civilians" and did not undergo formal military training (though some had prior work experience with the Afghan National Army). However, as local employees, they participated in hypermasculine military spaces, such as military bases, often wore military uniforms, and sometimes carried weapons. A "military uniform not only shapes the body's external form, but [also] how the body is experienced" (Woodward and Winter 2007, 66).

Local patrol interpreters, in particular, are integrated in military practice, such as house searches, interrogations, and intelligence gathering, and are core players in the counterinsurgency doctrine of "winning hearts and minds." Moreover, interpreters and other LECs are often exposed to warfare for a prolonged period. In contrast to the limited timeframe of a soldier's "tour of duty" (which for the British Army typically lasts six months and for the US Army 12 months), LECs are often employed for several years. Hence, despite their civilian status, LECs tend to self-identify in military terms, and many Western veterans whom I interviewed indeed regarded their former local interpreters as brothers-in-arms. The account of 25-year-old Sifatullah,[3] whom I interviewed in Germany, echoes the familiar formative narrative in

which military service represents the rite of passage from boyhood to manhood. He reflected on the early days of his work as an interpreter for the German Army:

> I was 19 when I started, so right after high school. … I had never been away from my family for more than a week or five days … so the first time that I was away from my family was four months. I promised my mum that I would be back in two months, but it took four months, and my mum was crying on the phone. … For me [in the beginning], it was quite hard to get along with the [other Afghan] guys because I was the youngest, I hardly had a beard on my face. … I felt like I started when I was 19 and finished when I was 35, as an adult.

For Sifatullah, entering his three-year employment also coincided with internal migration in Afghanistan, amounting to "rites of passage" where the "spatial and partially social separation from the families and homes … contributes to cut the links with the period of childhood" (Monsutti 2007, 175). What is striking is that Sifatullah described himself as not only becoming an adult, but an adult who was older than his actual current age. Abdul-Ali also understood the seven years in which he worked for the British Army as a time during which he lost his youth:

> I was 18 when I started. … As we say in Afghanistan, your young age is from 18 to 25. I would not say "waste," but I didn't live [those] seven years. I was alive, but I didn't live, if that makes sense? Since I have moved to the UK, I'm actually seeing the joy of life, the joy of living.

It is useful to consider Irwin's (2012) important nuancing of the classic army narrative as "turning boys into men" when interpreting this quote. Drawing on her anthropological fieldwork in Afghanistan with the Canadian Army, she highlights the aging impact of combat on young soldiers and argues that war transforms them into "hybrid men" characterized by a curious combination of adolescent behavior and the features of old men (Irwin 2012). This is well captured in the quote from one of her key informants, a senior army officer, who told her that "there will be a lot of *old young men* going home from this tour" (Irwin 2012, 50, emphasis added).

By showing that the experience of Afghan LECs resonates with Western soldiers' stories of coming of age through military engagement, I disrupt mainstream representations of Afghan men as radically Other. I also seek to extend feminist critiques of this Othering, which tend to highlight and deconstruct contrasting discourses of Western and Afghan men, by instead integrating LECs into the same analytical framework as Western soldiers.

Following Duncanson (2013, 69), I treat masculinity not as a finished quality attached to certain bodies, but as a process consisting of "a variety of strategies" that are interconnected. One of these strategies, as Duncanson notes, is "the linkage of practices to terms which are conventionally

associated with masculinity." For instance, the practice of front-line combat can be linked to the concepts of strength and bravery and thereby masculinize those who are engaged in that practice. I follow Irwin's (2012, 69) broad definition of combat as including "any time outside the wire during which the potential for and threat of combat [are] ever-present … and occasionally manifest" and recognize that, for instance, the explosions of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in cases where the enemy is not immediately present are "nonetheless experienced as combat or combat-like" (Irwin 2012, 68). It thus becomes obvious that interpreters, especially patrol interpreters, do indeed face combat situations. This is well captured in the words of Qais, who told me when I met him in the Netherlands: "If there is [an] IED, it will not recognize 'Hey, you're a translator, you shouldn't be killed!'"

Many of the interpreters whom I interviewed had been injured and recounted how they had been "blown up" several times or had visible scars. As Nabi in the UK told me, "In 2007, I got blown up. The British officer standing beside me, he was killed. And I still continued my job till 2011." However, what set Afghan LECs apart from their Western soldier colleagues was that their injuries were not always properly registered in their staff records. Furthermore, they did not have an automatic right to quality medical treatment, and received lower compensation for life-changing injuries than Western soldiers (Kerbaj 2017; interview with senior military staff, March 13, 2017). LECs also do not generally have access to psychological veteran after-care.

Masculinization and feminization, as recognized by Duncanson (2009), include a privileging of some practices over others, with positive associations attached to masculinized practices. In the subsequent narrative by Sifatullah, the young man whom I interviewed in Germany, he described the initial period of his employment as one characterized by fear and the later period as one in which he was "fine" and even "enjoying it," going on to say:

> In the beginning, I always felt like I wasn't in the right place, because I was always scared when we were going outside. You know, you are in a military car with everybody with guns and helmets totally waiting for a bad thing to happen. … But months after that, I was totally fine with it, and to be honest, I was really enjoying it, because we were really, in a good way, doing something for Afghanistan.

Sifatullah's crying mother and his subjectivity during his initial entry into the job correspond with a "discourse of femininity (soft, irrational, weak, tender …), which get[s] transformed" into a "discourse of masculinity (hard, rational, strong, tough …)" (Duncanson 2009, 67). This transformation can be understood in the light of Duncanson's (2013, 60) reading of soldiers' narratives as "testaments of profound inner change," narratives of conversion and

change that are "in part about gender." These discourses are hierarchically organized, with negative emotions of worry and fear being attached to women (in Sifatullah's case, his mother) and to his previous feminized self as a boy. Manhood is associated with control and a lack of fear, as well as with patriotic duty. The transition from boyhood to manhood is also associated with autonomy, independence, and separation from parents.

Employment as opportunity

As has been shown in the preceding section, employment as a LEC often coincided with departure (at least temporarily) from the family home and a new sense of (adult) autonomy. It also provided (economic) opportunities for young men in a context of limited options. Lateef, a former interpreter in his late 20s who now lives in the UK, told me:

> It was an independent decision; even my father didn't agree with it. I left home without having said goodbye to my father. I packed my bag, and I told my mum, my brother, and sister, "I'm going to work with the British Government with the soldiers here from London. We are going to tackle the terrorism, hit the Taliban, bring peace. And also, I'm getting money."

As Campbell (2016, 130) notes in her study of Iraqi former LECs who have resettled in the US, some of her married interlocutors faced the paradox of "working as a patriarchal protector writ large and feeling neglectful of [their] own immediate family duties." While some of the Afghan LECs with whom I spoke indeed already had families, others were single young men who were keen to become financially independent and/or provide for their aging parents.

In interviews, LECs expressed their awareness that the Western soldiers with whom they worked were also temporarily separated from their families back home. In some cases, they articulated their own motivation to work with Western forces by reference to that sacrifice, with the shared masculinist role of protector transcending national boundaries. If foreign soldiers had left everything behind for the military intervention in Afghanistan, as young men from the country concerned, LECs perceived it as their duty to provide support. In the role of LECs, they could also reaffirm their masculinity by not accepting dependency on the paternalist intervention of Western soldiers and could even invert the (neo)colonial trope of "the West" needing to "protect" those in the Global South, by asserting themselves as protectors.

The recruitment of generally young Afghan men with an above-average education as local interpreters and in related jobs also needs to be contextualized within Afghanistan's history of protracted conflict. As Myrttinen (2018, 4) observes, "situations of conflict and fragility will empower some men, such as warlords and their patronage networks, but also undermine the possibilities of many men to live up to societal expectations to be economic providers,

protectors or decision-makers." For young men, working as an LEC was an attractive option in a context of limited opportunities. In this sense, their decisions and aspirations echo those of Commonwealth recruits in the British Army (Ware 2012) and of Gurkha private security contractors (Chisholm and Stachowitsch 2016). Habibullah, who was around 17 years old when he started working for the British Army and now lives in the UK, explained:

> The country is a backward [*sic*] country, and most of the people are jobless. There are no jobs, and no security. The only thing that I was hoping for was to support my family, because there was no one in my family to do so. My dad, he was unemployed, and he's quite old as well. … And therefore, the only option that I had at that time was to go to work for the British forces to earn some money and feed the family. So that was the main reason that I started working for the British forces. I left my university and tried to earn some money so that we could survive.

Mustafa, who had ended up seeking protection in Germany after his asylum claim was rejected in Norway, also mentioned the appeal of the financial incentives and the need to provide for one's family. This represents a common pattern of mixed ideological and pragmatic motives. He also added:

> Why should I not take part in the reconstruction and rebuilding of my country? We'd been suffering for quite a long time. … And I thought, "Now there is a new beginning: The coalition of NATO countries has come; it's going to be a good country."

As Campbell (2016, 123) has noted in relation to Iraqi interpreters who are employed by the US Army, "the language of reconstruction is clearly masculinized," combining national patriotism with US militarism. Henry (2017, 194) has importantly noted that "marginal military men" are not "without power or without a desire to be seen as powerful." This is important in the present context; not only did Afghan interpreters tend to come from relatively well-educated backgrounds, which afforded them access to foreign language skills, their subsequent employment as LECs also offered further social mobility, both through financial capital and the symbolic capital derived from imperial hierarchies.

As Young (2003, 2) has argued,

> viewing issues of war and security through a gender lens … means seeing how a certain logic of gendered meanings … help[s] organize the way people interpret events and circumstances, along with the positions and possibilities for actions within them.

Casting a gender perspective on young men's circumstances in a country of protracted conflict helps us to understand how the desire to perform a male breadwinner role, sometimes coupled with curiosity about Western culture,

adventurism, youthful ambition, and patriotic pride, informed their decisions to seek employment as LECs. I suggest that it is important to recognize that these motivations largely reflect those of Western soldiers, which also combine "patriotism/service, self-enhancement, acquiring job skills, funding education, pay/benefits, and travel/adventure" (Woodruff 2017, 582), albeit in profoundly different material and structural contexts. Recognizing these parallels is important to challenge notions of Otherness associated with Afghan masculinities. At the same time, it needs to be acknowledged that while the travel and adventure motivations of Western soldiers may be informed by Orientalist fantasies, LECs' curiosity about Western cultures is fueled by Occidentalist discourses that position Western culture as superior.

Lateef, who joined the British Army as an interpreter when he was 17 years old, told me that he viewed Western soldiers as "the heroes of civilized countries in the world. … [T]hat was the initial impression even of seeing somebody in a uniform with a gun." Before exposure to the distinct national military cultures through their employment, most LECs do not distinguish between US, British, or French forces; they are all just "Western." While Lateef now considered his initial motivation a misjudgment and critically interrogated the pretext for British and US engagement in Afghanistan, he described his initial motivation as follows: "When the Westerners came to Afghanistan, I was an excited boy. I thought these men with blond hair and blue eyes … were quite interesting. They're peaceful people; they built up their own nations." In the next section, I explore further how the racialized encounters between locally employed Afghan staff and Western militaries (re)produce "multiple masculinities" (Berg and Longhurst 2003, 352) through LECs' alignment with, as well as differentiation from, seemingly peaceful men "with blond hair and blue eyes."

Brothers in arms

Scholars of masculinities have argued that these are produced relationally (Woodward and Winter 2007). This extends not only to the relational construction of masculinities and femininities but also, for instance, to the interaction between local interpreters and their Western counterparts. Hence, in this section, I tease out masculinities from the interaction between LECs and Western soldiers, centering the perspectives of LECs, but also drawing on some of the interviews with Western veterans who reflected on their interactions with local interpreters.

Life at a military base is often described as providing an alternative community to the families and familiar surroundings that soldiers leave behind. As Whitworth (2008, 115) has noted, this military community has familial associations:

> [Upon entering the military,] most [soldiers] have come to see themselves as members of a new common family, a warrior brotherhood, which is very distinct from the larger world around them. That new family has its own set of values, prizes stoicism and solidarity.

As I discussed in an earlier section, in Afghanistan many LECs left their families behind for their employment, and in some cases, they were stationed in other provinces or isolated at forward operating bases. I argue that LECs are integrated into military brotherhood, albeit in uneven ways.

Many former LECs whom I interviewed described close relationships of brotherhood with individual Western soldiers. They fondly recalled them in the interviews, referring to them by their first names, and frequently showed me pictures on their phones with their arms around grinning soldiers. Former local interpreters adopted the local dialect of the troops with whom they were associated – for instance, a distinct Scottish twang. Mohammed told me about the following exchange with a British officer: "[I asked him] 'How can I speak … the English you speak?' … Every day he was giving me five swear words. In about two months' time, I knew swear words that even British people didn't understand." Local interpreters tended to have closer relations with officers than with lower-ranked soldiers, which exposed them to the class distinctions that operate in the military. Liaqat, who is now based in the UK, recounted how he struggled to interpret when soldiers frequently used the "F-word" and linked (gentle)manhood to rank: "It's much less with the officers because they're more polite. … But the soldiers, mainly they are a bunch of silly boys [laughs]."

Everyday brotherhood was also recounted by Western soldiers. As James, a British veteran who had served in Afghanistan, told me, "They knew all the military lingo. They would speak in abbreviations like soldiers did. They had soldier banter." Soldiers' humor "is used in a range of ways to sustain group bonds" (Woodward and Winter 2007, 69). The published diary of British Lieutenant John Thornton (2013, 61) describes one of his days in Afghanistan as "just gobbing off with the interpreter and drinking chai." In another diary entry about the death of an Afghan interpreter, he includes him in the community of soldiers: "We've lost our first man in Kajaki, an interpreter" (Thornton 2013, 50). Moreover, several fervent advocates for the protection and rights of former interpreters initially got engaged politically in demanding the international relocation of one interpreter with whom they had formed a bond while on duty. Matt Zeller, a former US Army Captain and founder of the US advocacy and support organization No One Left Behind, described to me his bond with Janis, his interpreter, who saved his life by killing two Taliban fighters:

> I was 26. I think I had grown up with this romantic idea of what it meant to be a soldier and serve my country. I never thought, nor did I ever envision that an

> Afghan man [Janis] who I didn't even know existed prior to meeting him would save my life … I had met him ten days before for all of five minutes, and here was somebody that our whole lives had basically been on this collision course, … marching through time to eventually we come to this critical moment in each other's lives … which would lead to this lifelong brotherhood.

However, the account of another former interpreter from Afghanistan shows how LECs often struggle to get recognition for their experiential and cultural knowledge from freshly arrived soldiers who view them as mere translation machines. Liaqat first highlighted how more experienced British officers with a history of tours in Iraq would be more appreciative of local staff: "They would be very respectful, calling you 'sir' and being gentle and kind." He then recounted that a new team insisted on going to a certain location, despite his warning that in each of the previous missions someone had died there. However, "the sergeant major said, 'Well, that's where we want to go, and we're soldiers.'" When they subsequently went on the operation,

> two of the soldiers were shot, one in the throat and one in the side. If I had not been there, I think the number of casualties would have been much, much more because I have been to the same location a number of times before this and the only one reason that the lives were saved was because of me. And on the way back when we were coming to the base, the sergeant major, he was in tears. One because he lost a soldier; secondly, it was a dramatic shot … And then he came down, opened my door and for a second I was like … "He is going to hit me now, because I told him not to go and now his soldiers are killed." But he held me in his arms and he hugged me and he said, "You are my hero." And the reason he said it is because of [my actions]. I took the gun and I was firing toward the enemy. And it was me telling which way we need to run back [as] I knew the area, how to maneuver around it. … There were some teams like that; they will respect you for what you know and what you provide them. It was not just the language.

While this story was told as an example of appreciation and elevation to heroism based both on "warrior-hero" prowess (Woodward and Winter 2007, 61) and security intelligence, it demonstrates the power relations in which LECs need to earn respect from Western soldiers rather than this being granted from the outset. It also shows LECs' continuous fear of being penalized for speaking up and talking back. That this is a reasonable fear becomes apparent in the next section.

Segregated brotherhood

Alongside accounts of masculine bonding and honorary brotherhood implying the affective meeting of equal men, there were other stories that complicated this narrative. Pointing to the structures of racialized inequality shaping the experiences of Afghan LECs, Asadullah, who is now based in Canada, explained to me:

> If an American or a British soldier was killed, you will see the next day, the whole camp displays a different kind of behavior toward the interpreters … as if it was not the Taliban who killed the soldier, but any Afghan. But for us, the person who was killed was someone we considered to be part of our team.

Hence, while LECs align themselves with Western soldiers, they can suddenly be denied this association when Western soldiers consider them part of the enemy, based on their ethnic and national identity. As Campbell (2016, 113) has argued, the "use of [brotherly] rhetoric [by Iraqi LECs] was not insincere; it represented an identification strategy to which young men turned to cope with rampant suspicion by US military personnel and contractors." Similar dynamics were found in relation to local interpreters in the former Yugoslavia, where Baker (2012, 139) identified a "procedural mistrust that underlay day-to-day camaraderie."

Higate (2012, 453) suggests that the term "fratriarchy" captures the "relational dynamics of newly emerging all-male groups." He importantly highlights the racial hierarchies within the fratriarchy of private military contractors, where "white western [men] were positioned as hegemonic in relation to subordinate Local National … men" (Higate 2012, 459). Drawing on this insight about the hierarchies among military men, I suggest the term "segregated brotherhood" to capture the uneven military brotherhood in which affective relations coexist with unequal treatment and suspicion. In a different context, Caraway (1991, 3) has used the term "segregated sisterhood" as it "invoke[s] a paradox, … suggest[s] a lack of coherence." Following Caraway, segregated brotherhood hence captures the tensions in the relationship between military personnel and LECs, since "in the logic of combining these two terms, each invalidates and cancels the other" (Caraway 1991, 3). Drawn into military brotherhood through their labor, standing, as many LECs emphasized, "shoulder to shoulder" with Western soldiers, LECs are separated from their Western brothers through the suspicion that follows them and the military and national policies that exclude them from soldier/veteran care and privileges.

The notion of segregated brotherhood also helps to illuminate the spatial separation of LECs and Western soldiers. This echoes the long history of racially segregated regiments and facilities, such as those employed to enforce the separation between African American and white American soldiers in World War I (Olusoga 2014). Certain areas of the military base were out of bounds for Afghan LECs, and national borders present barriers to LECs' migration to the nations for which they worked. As Sifatullah told me,

> We were not allowed to go to the same kitchen with the Germans. So sometimes when you come from a mission at 2 am in the morning, the kitchen is closed, so you need to have some backup in your room to cook something, so we had to go to the city, and it was always unsafe.

Perhaps the strongest expression of segregated brotherhood is in the differential treatment of casualties; the military mantra to "leave no one behind" is not always extended to local interpreters. Liaqat explained to me:

> That's what we believed – that they won't leave us behind. But I have come across situations in which the convoy was hit by an IED, and they only collected the bits of their own soldiers and left the interpreter. And then later they claimed, "Oh, we couldn't even recognize who that guy was." … There was a case where the interpreter was blown up. They left his body in that village, and after two weeks his family forced us [LECs] to find his body.

Segregated brotherhood also manifests itself in the multiple accounts about LECs who were made redundant for spurious reasons. The power differential between Western soldiers and LECs is pronounced since the former can fire the latter on the basis of minor offenses. Many LECs recounted stories about fellow interpreters who had faithfully worked for years for Western militaries but who were then fired by inexperienced, incoming Western soldiers who wanted to make their authority felt. These "offenses" could include carrying a mobile phone to remain in contact with their families (violating a ban on personal electronic devices), stealing a water bottle, being late for work – despite the transportation challenges faced by LECs who lived outside the base – taking a too-long lunch break, or getting into an argument.

In the UK, the response to a formal parliamentary question revealed that 35 percent of all Afghan LEC interpreters (1,010 out of a total of 2,850) were dismissed for disciplinary reasons, without the right to appeal (Jarvis 2020). In Canada, Asadullah recounted a story of a colleague who got fired:

> I saw it with my own eyes. We were in the chow hall [dining area/mess hall] eating; a team came from the mission, tired, dusty, dirty. They are, like, really hungry. They come to the chow hall to eat. And instead of giving him beef – [the interpreter] was asking for beef – they gave him pork. And religiously, most of the [local interpreters] are very strict. So, he asked, "What is this?" "Beef." When he started eating, he realized that's pork. He goes back there and starts fighting [with] him, physically. Or throws something on the cook. That's how they get blacklisted.

The seriousness of this incident could be dismissed with reference to parallel accounts of British soldiers secretly swapping the food of their fellow soldiers to their least favorite meal, with "sick humour and pranks" being used "not just as a way of coping with the hardships and deprivation of combat, but as a way of coping with the performance of military masculinity" (Woodward and Winter 2007, 69). However, this fails to recognize not only the cultural insensitivity and lack of respect in the incident in the context of a war in which Islam is generally vilified, but also the grave repercussions for LECs compared to the lack of consequences for what on first sight seem to be similar actions of Western soldiers. Nabi in Germany told me:

> Even if someone on the street says, "Hey, that guy is a risk for you, and he may have some links or connections with the extremists," then they believe that and they say, "Ha, be careful about him." Then [they say], "Excuse me, you cannot work with us anymore, you are fired."

As 30-year-old Qasim in the US recounted,

> They call you, "Terp,[4] come here – what is this guy saying?" If you say, "OK, just give me a few minutes, I'm in the middle of something," or maybe something like that, this person, if he gets mad … he can send an email, and you're fired. With such easy things, he can change that person's life.

Western veterans confirmed to me that decisions about disciplinary terminations were made without a second thought in the context of war with the pressure to "win" and stay alive. Transgressions by LECs, who, as discussed above, are already subject to continuous mistrust, were decisively penalized. This is in line with a culture in which "the supremacy of action over thought and the denigration of relational intellectualizing are gendered and become a justificatory mechanism, a fundamental structure of heroic masculinity which shuts down ethical cognition" (Partis-Jennings 2019, 256). Drawing on work that recognizes the exploitative labor conditions of racialized staff in the security and peacekeeping industries (Chisholm and Stachowitsch 2016; Henry 2017), it is also important to note that Western soldiers who fire LECs operate in a context in which they are confident that there is a reserve army of local labor available.

The repercussions of being dismissed extend beyond the loss of livelihood during conflict, thereby reducing the breadwinner opportunities that were key to sustaining the masculinities of Afghan men. It also eliminates the chance for protection of former LECs through international relocation; most terminated LECs are excluded from the (already limited) relocation schemes available to those at risk as a result of their employment. This reflects the broader unequal relationship in which seemingly trivial interactions have a long-lasting impact on LECs but not on their Western counterparts. There is no overarching international protection scheme that organizes the international relocation of LECs. The existing national relocation programs are non-comprehensive and differ starkly per country.

For LECs who are ineligible under the stringent criteria of national resettlement programs or for whom the waiting period is too long, fleeing and claiming asylum is the only option. Some end up claiming asylum in third countries rather than the countries that employed them, as the European Union's Dublin III Regulation stipulates that asylum seekers must claim asylum in the first safe country that they reach (El-Enany 2013). In the asylum process, the seemingly trivial photographs of local interpreters and Western soldiers grinning side by side can become crucial pieces of evidence. In political debates on resettlement schemes for LECs, which draw on

discourses of deservingness, despite the similarities with the mixed motives of many Western soldiers, the motives of LECs are scrutinized for their purity – did they work with Western forces because they are "allies" in the War on Terror, or are they opportunistic "scroungers"?

For those LECs who finally obtain leave to remain in a Western country, their former colleagues can be a lifeline for the navigation of and social integration in an unfamiliar country. While there are notable exceptions, including some of the veterans whom I interviewed (who had founded LEC advocacy and support organizations, such as No One Left Behind in the US, the Sulha Alliance in the UK, and the Patenschaftsnetzwerk Afghanische Ortskräfte (Afghan LEC Mentor Network) in Germany), in many cases migration further severs brotherhood. Jawed, whom I interviewed in the Netherlands, wondered why his former military comrades had never contacted him, despite his prominent media profile making it easy to trace him:

> We were colleagues, we were like good friends in a difficult situation. But now that we are gone from Afghanistan, nobody knows us anymore. That is very strange for me. I would never do that. If I were a soldier for the Dutch Army, the US Army, or NATO, I would protect my colleagues with my life. … I don't know how they sleep. If I would see that my interpreter is in danger, if I would know that my interpreter is not in a good situation, believe me, I wouldn't sleep. But they … nobody cares!

Conclusion

This article has contributed to feminist research on military masculinities, as well as to scholarship mapping the discursive and material effects of global racial power relations by providing insight into the experiences of Afghan LECs. I have upended the dominant trend in which Afghan men only become visible through the discourses and practices structuring the War on Terror by instead centering my analysis on how Afghan LECs describe their own gendered experiences of the war. I have challenged mainstream narratives that portray Afghan men as radically Other, by demonstrating the relevance of the "boys-become-men" narrative of military coming-of-age for Afghan LECs and showing that their motivations for "enlistment" closely resemble those of Western soldiers. Simultaneously, I have complemented existing feminist work that focuses on deconstructing the neo-Orientalist discourse of the War on Terror by decentering Western soldiers and foregrounding the perspectives of LECs. I have shown that LECs embraced opportunities afforded by military employment and that they made sense of these decisions by drawing on male-breadwinner and patriotic tropes. I have then highlighted how some LECs managed to successfully integrate into the affective community of the military family. At

the same time, I have proposed capturing the differentiations and inequalities that characterized the relationships between LECs and Western soldiers as "brothers in arms" with the concept of segregated brotherhood. These inequalities had far-reaching consequences and have led to significant injustices, such as LECs' exclusion from protection through international resettlement.

This article's primary aim was to present the gendered experiences of under-researched but essential actors in the military missions in Afghanistan to broaden the scope of studies of military masculinities by "returning the gaze." It has, however, also indirectly cast new light on the masculinities of Western soldiers. For instance, it has exposed the dominant and disrespectful behavior of some Western soldiers toward Afghan staff, as well as providing insight into Western soldiers' dependencies on locally recruited civilians. This analysis challenges masculinized accounts of Western soldiers' autonomy and neo-imperial power/knowledge and highlights vulnerabilities that remain unnoticed as long as the labor of LECs is left unrecognized.

Notes

1. The interviews with former LECs were mostly conducted in English, and in some cases in German and Dutch if that was preferred (translation of all interview quotes is mine). This means that interviewees spoke to me in the languages that they had primarily used in their professional roles as LECs and/or in the languages of their adopted countries.
2. In the context of the broader project, I interviewed 36 advocates and service providers in the US, Canada, the UK, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Belgium, including veterans, lawyers, representatives of professional interpreting associations, civil society activists, and caseworkers for refugee settlement agencies and local authorities. Additionally, I conducted a document analysis of, for example, media, reports, government statements, and court cases and carried out (participant) observations of several national and international political meetings on the protection and rights of LECs.
3. All names are pseudonyms.
4. While the abbreviation "terp" for "interpreter" is common, some LECs find it derogatory.

Acknowledgments

Earlier versions of this article were presented at the European Conference on Politics and Gender at the University of Amsterdam in 2019 and at the University of York's Critical Security draft reading group in 2020, and I have greatly benefited from the feedback from colleagues provided in these fora. I also want to thank the three anonymous reviewers and editor for the constructive and insightful feedback. This article could not have been written without the cooperation of the former locally employed civilians and the advocates who have so generously offered their time and stories.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes on contributor

Sara de Jong is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Politics at the University of York, UK. Her interests include the politics of non-governmental organizations, migration, gender, (post-)colonialism, and political brokerage. She is the author of *Complicit Sisters: Gender and Women's Issues across North–South Divides* (Oxford University Press, 2017) and co-editor with Olivia Rutazibwa and Rosalba Icaza of *Decolonization and Feminisms in Global Teaching and Learning* (Routledge, 2018). Her articles have been published in *Security Dialogue*, *PS: Political Science and Politics*, *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, and the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*.

ORCID

Sara de Jong http://orcid.org/0000-0002-5132-2777

References

Abirafeh, Lina. 2007. "An Opportunity Lost? Engaging Men in Gendered Interventions: Voices from Afghanistan." *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development* 3 (3): 82–87.

Al-Ali, Nadje, and Nicola Pratt. 2010. *What Kind of Liberation? Women and the Occupation of Iraq*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.

Ayotte, Kevin J., and Mary E. Husain. 2005. "Securing Afghan Women: Neocolonialism, Epistemic Violence, and the Rhetoric of the Veil." *NWSA Journal* 17 (3): 112–133.

Bahri, Javed. 2014. "Western Gender Policies in Afghanistan: Failing Women and Provoking Men." *Gender, Technology and Development* 18 (2): 163–185.

Baker, Mona. 2010. "Interpreters and Translators in the War Zone: Narrated and Narrators." *The Translator* 16 (2): 197–222.

Baker, Catherine. 2010. "It's Not Their Job to Soldier: Distinguishing Civilian and Military in Soldiers' and Interpreters' Accounts of Peacekeeping in 1990s Bosnia-Herzegovina." *Journal of War & Culture Studies* 3 (1): 137–150.

Baker, Catherine. 2012. "When Bosnia Was a Commonwealth Country: British Forces and Their Interpreters in Republika Srpska 1995–2007." *History Workshop Journal* 74 (1): 131–155.

Berg, Lawrence D., and Robyn Longhurst. 2003. ""Placing Masculinities and Geography." *Gender, Place and Culture* 10 (4): 351–360.

Bos, Geesje, and Joseph Soeters. 2006. "Interpreters at Work: Experiences from Dutch and Belgian Peace Operations." *International Peacekeeping* 13 (2): 261–268.

Brigden, Noelle Kateri, and Wendy A. Vogt. 2015. "Homeland Heroes: Migrants and Soldiers in the Neoliberal Era." *Antipode* 47 (2): 303–322.

Campbell, Madeline Otis. 2016. *Interpreters of Occupation: Gender and the Politics of Belonging in an Iraqi Refugee Network*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.

Caraway, Nancie. 1991. *Segregated Sisterhood: Racism and the Politics of American Feminism*. Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press.

Chiovenda, Andrea. 2018. "Shaping a 'Different' Masculinity: Subjectivity, Agency, and Cultural Idioms among Afghan Pashtun Men." In *Reconceiving Muslim Men: Love and*

Marriage, Family and Care in Precarious Times, edited by Marcia C. Inhorn and Nefissa Naguib, 63–84. New York: Berghahn Books.
Chisholm, Amanda. 2014. "The Silenced and Indispensible: Gurkhas in Private Military Security Companies." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 16 (1): 26–47.
Chisholm, Amanda, and Saskia Stachowitsch. 2016. "Everyday Matters in Global Private Security Supply Chains: A Feminist Global Political Economy Perspective on Gurkhas in Private Security." *Globalizations* 13 (6): 815–829.
Collin, Richard Oliver. 2009. "Words of War: The Iraqi Tower of Babel." *International Studies Perspectives* 10 (3): 245–264.
Duncanson, Claire. 2009. "Forces for Good? Narratives of Military Masculinity in Peacekeeping Operations." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 11 (1): 63–80.
Duncanson, Claire. 2013. *Forces for Good? Military Masculinities and Peacebuilding in Afghanistan and Iraq*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
Echavez, Chona R., SayedMahdi Mosawi, and Leah Wilfreda Pilongo. 2016. *The Other Side of Gender Inequality: Men and Masculinities in Afghanistan*. Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit Kabul.
Ehrenreich, Nancy. 2004. "Disguising Empire: Racialized Masculinity and the Civilizing of Iraq." *Cleveland State Law Review* 52 (1–2): 131–138.
El-Enany, Nadine. 2013. "The EU Asylum, Immigration and Border Control Regimes: Including and Excluding: The 'Deserving Migrant'." *European Journal of Social Security* 15 (2): 171–186.
Ferguson, Michaele L. 2005. "'W' Stands for Women: Feminism and Security Rhetoric in the Post-9/11 Bush Administration." *Politics & Gender* 1 (1): 9–38.
Footitt, Hilary, and Michael Kelly. 2012. *Languages and the Military: Alliances, Occupation and Peace Building*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
Gaunt, Caroline. 2016. "Ghostly Entities and Clichés: Military Interpreters in Conflict Regions." In *Mediating Emergencies and Conflicts: Frontline Translating and Interpreting*, edited by Federico M. Federici, 179–208. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
Henry, Marsha. 2017. "Problematizing Military Masculinity, Intersectionality and Male Vulnerability in Feminist Critical Military Studies." *Critical Military Studies* 3 (2): 182–199.
Higate, Paul. 2012. "Drinking Vodka from the 'Butt-Crack': Men, Masculinities, and Fratriarchy in the Private Militarized Security Company." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 14 (4): 450–469.
Inghilleri, Moira. 2010. "'You Don't Make War Without Knowing Why': The Decision to Interpret in Iraq." *The Translator* 16 (2): 175–196.
Irwin, Anne. 2012. "'There Will Be a Lot of Old Young Men Going Home': Combat and Becoming a Man in Afghanistan." In *Young Men In Uncertain Times*, edited by Vered Amit and Noel Dyck, 59–78. New York: Berghahn Books.
Jabbra, Nancy W. 2006. "Women, Words and War: Explaining 9/11 and Justifying US Military Action in Afghanistan and Iraq." *Journal of International Women's Studies* 8 (1): 236–255.
Jarvis, Dan. 2020. "Written Question for Ministry of Defence: Afghanistan: Interpreters." UIN 101279, October 9. Accessed March 8, 2022. https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-10-09/101279.
Kerbaj, Richard. 2017. "Army Interpreter Lost Three Limbs – But Not His Big Heart." *Sunday Times*, October 15. Accessed December 18, 2021. https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/army-interpreter-lost-three-limbs-but-not-his-big-heart-qs6wdv80 h.
Manchanda, Nivi. 2015. "Queering the Pashtun: Afghan Sexuality in the Homo-Nationalist Imaginary." *Third World Quarterly* 36 (1): 130–146.

Monsutti, Alessandro. 2007. "Migration as a Rite of Passage: Young Afghans Building Masculinity and Adulthood in Iran." *Iranian Studies* 40 (2): 167–185.
Myrttinen, Henri. 2018. "Navigating Norms and Insecurity: Men, Masculinities, Conflict and Peacebuilding in Afghanistan." International Alert Working Paper, November. Accessed December 18, 2021. https://www.international-alert.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Afghanistan-Masculinities-Conflict-Peacebuilding-EN-2018.pdf.
Olusoga, David. 2014. *The World's War*. London: Head of Zeus.
Partis-Jennings, Hannah. 2017. "The (In)Security of Gender in Afghanistan's Peacebuilding Project: Hybridity and Affect." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 19 (4): 411–425.
Partis-Jennings, Hannah. 2019. "Military Masculinity and the Act of Killing in *Hamlet* and Afghanistan." *Men and Masculinities* 22 (2): 254–272.
Pratt, Nicola. 2013. "Reconceptualizing Gender, Reinscribing Racial–Sexual Boundaries in International Security: The Case of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on 'Women, Peace and Security'." *International Studies Quarterly* 57 (4): 772–783.
Rafael, Vicente L. 2007. "Translation in Wartime." *Public Culture* 19 (2): 239–246.
Rose, Gillian. 1997. "Situating Knowledges: Positionality, Reflexivities and Other Tactics." *Progress in Human Geography* 21 (3): 305–320.
Rosendo, Lucia Ruiz, and Manuel Barea Muñoz. 2017. "Towards a Typology of Interpreters in War-Related Scenarios in the Middle East." *Translation Spaces* 6 (2): 182–208.
Shepherd, Laura J. 2006. "Veiled References: Constructions of Gender in the Bush Administration Discourse on the Attacks on Afghanistan Post-9/11." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 8 (1): 19–41.
Sjoberg, Laura. 2007. "Agency, Militarized Femininity and Enemy Others: Observations from the War in Iraq." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 9 (1): 82–101.
Sylvester, Christine. 2013. "Experiencing War: A Challenge for International Relations." *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 26 (4): 669–674.
Thornton, John. 2013. *In Helmand: Diaries of Front-Line Soldiers*. London: Bloomsbury.
Ware, Vron. 2012. *Military Migrants: Fighting for YOUR Country*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
Welland, Julia. 2016. "Gender and 'Population-Centric' Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan." In *Handbook on Gender and War*, edited by Simona Sharoni, Julia Welland, Linda Steiner, and Jennifer Pedersen, 127–145. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
Whitworth, Sandra. 2008. "Militarized Masculinity and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder." In *Rethinking the Man Question: Sex, Gender and Violence in International Relations*, edited by Jane L. Parpart and Marysia Zalewski, 109–126. London: Zed Books.
Woodruff, Todd D. 2017. "Who Should the Military Recruit? The Effects of Institutional, Occupational, and Self-Enhancement Enlistment Motives on Soldier Identification and Behavior." *Armed Forces & Society* 43 (4): 579–607.
Woodward, Rachel, and Trish Winter. 2007. *Sexing the Soldier: The Politics of Gender and the Contemporary British Army*. London: Routledge.
Young, Iris Marion. 2003. "The Logic of Masculinist Protection: Reflections on the Current Security State." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 29 (1): 1–25.
Yurdakul, Gökçe, and Anna C. Korteweg. 2020. "Boundary Regimes and the Gendered Racialized Production of Muslim Masculinities: Cases from Canada and Germany." *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies* 19 (1): 39–54.