

## The dance of militarisation:

### A feminist security studies take on the political<sup>1</sup>

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My thinking about 'the political' starts with a personal puzzle: On 5 November, 2013 Sven-Göran Eriksson- the former coach of the England football team- is a guest on BBC One's Breakfast television show. Sven – as the Brits like to call him- is promoting his biography but the reason this brief moment caught my attention and subsequently sparked an interest in militarisation is, firstly, that Sven is, just like me, Swedish. We both come from a cultural background that in 2014 celebrated '200 years without war', that prides itself on its 'neutral', 'alliance-free' and peace-loving history no matter how questionable such statements are. Secondly, Eriksson is a football coach; a role that one would think has got nothing to do with the Armed Forces or even the study of global politics. But, the interview happens to take place during Remembrance Week and he is sitting on the BBC sofa wearing a poppy, the pin that is sold and bought as part of the Remembrance events in the UK. As a Swede, or perhaps just an outsider, I have always found the events and activities around Remembrance Week intriguing but to see Eriksson wearing a poppy sparked something in me. In the evening, still amazed over what I had seen on TV in the morning, I talked to my then British housemate about it all. He, however, could not see what the fuss was about. 'But that [wearing the poppy] is just what we do', he said.

My personal puzzle – my own awkwardness – led to a research interest in the political puzzle of militarisation: how militarisation as a security practice forms part of sense-making in the everyday. Intrigued by the political puzzle of militarisation, it is precisely the notion of 'common sense', that which we tend to accept as 'normal' and that which is deemed apolitical that takes centre-stage and moves me towards an analytical focus on

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the everyday as not just an object of study to which theories of IR can be applied but as a way in which global politics more broadly is performed and produced. More specifically, my thinking through what security *does* politically draws on three main sources of theoretical and methodological inspiration: Judith Butler's (2011) influential ideas on performativity (of gender as well as discourse); cultural theorists Roland Barthes (2000a) and Stuart Hall's (1997) focus on the seemingly apolitical, politics of 'common sense' in the everyday; and, within International Relations (IR), scholars working either on aesthetics or popular culture in order to also take visibility and emotionality into account (cf. Bleiker 2001, 2009; Shapiro 2013; Weber 2005). The aim is twofold: to showcase how feminist contributions to security studies have a different 'entry-point' to the political; and to demonstrate how a methodological approach guided by the political puzzle chosen for analysis opens up space for more creative engagements within our field (see also Bleiker 2003).

The argument presented is built on three anchoring concepts, which also corresponds to how the text is structured. Combined, the three sections demonstrate what a feminist security studies take on 'the political' can offer: it involves a focus on the everyday as the site *where* the political puzzle is found; 'dance' is used as a methodological metaphor to explain *what* the political puzzle of militarisation is; and 'family' is the gendered analytical concept used to show *how* Remembrance events are normalising militarisation as the character of society. More specifically, in the first section I disentangle 'the political' theoretically by negotiating ontological tensions within our discipline: between poststructuralist theorising and emancipatory critical security studies on the one hand and between poststructuralism and emancipatory feminism on the other. I end with a poststructuralist feminist analytical focus on the political as bodies in the everyday. In the second section, I explore 'the political' methodologically through the idea of militarisation as a choreographed security practice in the everyday. I first discuss different understandings of militarism and militarisation and, then, by merging feminist scholarship on militarisation with cultural studies' focus on the politics of the everyday, I explain how my approach to militarisation offers a nuanced way to explore the hidden politics of militarisation. I conceptualise the normalising process of militarisation as a dance because it captures subtle movements, bodies and emotions. In the third section, I illustrate my argument about 'the political' empirically by focusing attention to mainstream television coverage of the 2013 Remembrance week in the UK

as one example of the dance of militarisation as a security practice in the everyday. By, in this way, showcasing how - precisely because feminist researchers ask feminist questions - the starting-point of much feminist research is already based in political puzzles of everyday insecurity and/or inequality, I argue that feminist security studies potentially 'enter' the political differently and, thus, potentially performs critical security studies in a way that opens up a space to move beyond the dominant narrative of our discipline. I conclude with a call for letting our political puzzles, rather than the academic field, guide our research design as a way to ensure a more creative engagement with our disciplinary future.

### **I. Tracing the political in feminist security studies**

We have grown accustomed to think about research in IR as mapped along different theoretical perspectives (often with 'feminism' as an add-on at the end of a textbook or module) and in critical security studies the narrative of our subdiscipline is often, still, one of Schools or 'generations', as two recent mappings of the discipline shows. In an article titled 'The future of critical security studies' Christopher Browning and Matt McDonald (2011) maps the critical security studies 'project' around three themes, out of which the latter two are considered part of 'the future': as a critique of realist approaches to security and its limited focus on states as political actors and security as *military* security; the politics of security (what security does politically); and, last, the ethics of security (Browning and McDonald 2011). The second theme of the politics of security, in which feminist contributions are recognised, 'encourages reflection on the role of representations of security in encouraging sets of policy discourses, legitimating the roles of particular actors or indeed constituting political communities in particular ways' (2011: 238). To me, however, there seems more to say about the relationship between security and 'the political' than that covered by policy, political actors and political communities, and, there seems more to say about the future of critical security studies than the two paths [politics and ethics of security] identified. In the first issue of *Critical Studies on Security*, Nik Hynek and David Chandler (2013) argue for a reclaiming of 'critical' in critical security studies as an emancipatory project. They argue that due to the fact that critical security studies has grown so large and diverse there is no point in keeping the prefix 'critical' (2013: 46). To them, critical security has lost its

emancipatory potential, or at least, they suggest, critical security studies is 'no longer productive of *emancipatory alternatives*' (2013: 46, emphasis added). To them 'CSS [Critical Security Studies] can only be understood as a study area on the basis of the 'alternative emancipatory approach' established by the 'first generation' of critical security studies scholars, meaning Ken Booth and the so-called Welsh School then based at Aberystwyth (2013: 47). Importantly for the argument presented here, Hynek and Chandler argue that the 'emancipatory impetus' of CSS was 'exhausted and out-manuevered' by poststructuralist theorists, defined as the third 'generation' of CSS scholars,<sup>2</sup> in the late 1990s and 2000s. In their view, this closed down the space for 'critical' advocacy and policy collaboration between academics and foreign policy think-tanks and organisations (2013: 48). I will return to how assumed tensions between emancipation and poststructuralist research can be overcome, but at this point it is suffice to note that from a feminist perspective the way in which both 'the political' and the academic field of critical security studies is presented, and ultimately reinforced, is problematic. The historical narrative about three familiar Schools or 'generations' of security studies, risks missing much work on the relationship between 'the political' and 'security' that fall outside the mapping of our discipline as 'Schools'.

A feminist discussion of 'the political' and its relationship to 'security' tends to start with 'gender', even though there is no agreed upon definition of what gender is or how gender should be studied amongst feminist scholars. In fact, this is the point - there are by necessity many feminisms: different feminist perspectives that, guided by different political puzzles, treat gender as an analytical category differently. Still, most often a focus on gender involves ideas about how bodies are identified and/or self-identify [or not] with categories of 'sex'; how bodies culturally and socially matter differently as a result of how they are 'sexed'. Since the 1980s, feminist scholarship in IR has done much to highlight how the ways in which wars are fought, justified and made sense of, has everything to do with gender - which means that ideas about 'security' are also inherently gendered. Feminist scholars have shown how ideas about states, nationalism and above all, militarism are intimately linked through notions of gender.<sup>3</sup> However, because of the links between masculinity, militarism and war, feminist scholars and

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<sup>2</sup> The Copenhagen School of critical security studies constitutes the second generation.

<sup>3</sup> See Shepherd 2012; 2015, and Stern and Wibben's virtual collection in *Security Dialogue* for more detailed overviews of 'feminist security studies' and how gender matter in global politics.

activists have often been associated, and often also self-identified, with anti-war sentiments and pacifism and, as a result, been wary of any engagement with the academic discipline of Security/War/Strategic Studies (and initially even IR). To some, 'feminist security studies' is an oxymoron, too others feminist security studies is simply too narrow of a focus, as Carol Cohn explains: 'In short, I cannot make progress on the problems I am most interested in ameliorating in global politics within the confines of security studies. Thus, I choose not to devote much energy to engaging with it.' (Cohn 2011: 584). Similarly, Soumita Basu notes that 'the confluence of feminism (broadly, a worldview) and security (a concept) has yielded a field of research that is more than the sum of its parts' (Basu 2013: 457). Furthermore, discussing 'the political' from a feminist perspective, it is important to reiterate that an analytical focus on gender is not necessarily feminist. The difference is, to paraphrase Cynthia Enloe, that a feminist perspective, albeit in different ways, puts *politics* – and thereby *power* – at the core of the analysis in a way that a gender analysis does not (2010: xi-xii). In other words, what is feminist is that which concerns 'the political'. In addition, because feminist activism and research often is based in a perceived lack of attention to women's experiences, expertise and equal rights, 'the political' is commonly intimately linked to calls for women's emancipation. In one of two recent forums on 'The State of Feminist Security' (Lobasz and Sjoberg 2011; Shepherd 2013), Annick Wibben argues that feminist research, by default, encompasses some basic commitments that are not negotiable: 'feminism is a political project committed to emancipation/ empowerment and broader social justice' (Wibben 2011a: 591). In the second forum, Basu makes a similar claim: '[U]nless a research project takes account of its *emancipatory potential*, what is feminist about it?' (Basu 2013: 457, emphasis added).

As already hinted at, from a poststructuralist perspective, however, emancipation, is a controversial concept. Within critical security studies literature more broadly, Ken Booth's argument that security and emancipation are two sides of the same coin; that the securing/freeing of people from 'physical and human constraints which stop them carrying out what they would freely choose to do' (Booth 1991: 319), has been critiqued for a lack of attention to 'the political' and, as a result, for reinforcing existing global power structures (see Bilgic 2015; Nunes 2012 for overviews of debates on emancipatory security studies). Within feminist debates, poststructuralist feminism has been, and at times still is, seen to constitute a 'contradiction in terms' because the

emancipatory stance of feminism and the deconstructive purpose of poststructuralism seemed to clash (see also Roseneil 1999; Baxter 2003). The issue concerns whether or not 'woman' should be the default subject of feminism. To poststructuralists there is no, cannot, nor should there be, singular pre-existing feminine subject or a single feminist approach, which means that the category of 'woman' can never be fixed. Instead, combining poststructuralist theorising with feminist analysis means an exploration of how 'woman' discursively 'get said' (Zalewski 2000: 69) in a much broader sense than simply focusing on actual women. To some feminists, this is seen as undermining the feminist commitment to women's agency and, thus, not compatible with a commitment to feminist politics as women's emancipation.

As a way to overcome this assumed tension and think about poststructuralist research as both political and emancipatory, Jennifer Mustapha's alternative mapping of the discipline of critical security studies is useful. Rather than telling a story of different theoretical perspectives, Mustapha's mapping is based on Stephen K. White's formulation of strong and weak ontologies. She notes how, today, 'critical' in CSS can refer to an emancipatory project, to epistemological interrogation, to ontological deconstruction, or to some combination of all three (Mustapha 2013: 69). To this end, Mustapha's argument about strong and weak ontologies in critical security studies research not only demonstrates how different approaches relate to the political but above all Mustapha carefully disentangles tensions within poststructuralist research broadly conceived, particularly between anti-foundationalist postmodern approaches and reconstructive projects. In particular, Mustapha notes that while 'a sizeable faction' of CSS is concerned with the construction of 'alternative security futures', which suggest some form of emancipatory political action, anti-foundationalist postmodern approaches maintain that the appropriate role for theory solely is about destabilizing the concepts of modernity, which means that any re-visioning of alternative security futures is undesirable (Mustapha 2013: 72). Here, the practice of security, presumably that of the state, is understood to be the source of *insecurity*, and, as insecurity is seen as part of the human condition there is not necessarily something that can and should be avoided (2013: 73). Alternatively, with a weak ontology, Mustapha argues, 'theorizing challenges the basic presuppositions of realism and understands "security" to be a practice that must be interrogated and destabilized for the purposes of revealing (*and remedying*) sources of insecurity' (Mustapha 2013: 74, emphasis added). The point,



Mustapha argues, is not about 'trying to operate without ever making foundational claims, but rather being very careful not to naturalize particular security logics as being timeless and inevitable' (Mustapha 2013: 76). While the poststructuralist ethic of reflexivity makes it problematic to claim what *is*, Mustapha suggests that it would still be possible to make *tentative* claims about what *might be* (2013: 74, emphasis in original). In addition, if we agree with Wibben that what makes feminist security studies feminist is ultimately that it asks feminist questions (Wibben 2011a: 591), and if we focus on 'emancipatory potential', as Basu puts it, rather than the end-goal of 'women's emancipation', then this offers a space to move beyond the subject of 'woman' as the main/only analytic focus for feminist security studies.

To me, what unites various strands of feminist research is a feminist questioning about how bodies matter politically. Most often, the focus is on 'women', i.e. those bodies identified as female, precisely because such bodies have been underrepresented or represented in particular ways in global politics, but a focus on bodies also include attention to male, intersexual, queer, transsexual, and/or raced, classed, aged, able/disabled, or in other ways 'othered' and to how such categories are constructed and continuously reproduced. Lauren Wilcox argues, and I agree, that feminists are also uniquely positioned to theorise the body-politics of war, violence and vulnerability, without necessarily reducing these concerns as something that specifically affects women or men as sexed bodies (Wilcox 2011: 596-8, see also Wilcox 2015). My point here is that because feminists ask important questions about 'bodies' in relation to 'security', feminist scholars often have a *different way into* 'the political'. Feminist research agendas are often tuned in to stories, experiences and representations of peoples/individuals/bodies rather than states or political elites. The famous feminist slogan 'the personal is political' (and international), thus, generates an interest in bodily, personal and everyday experiences almost by default (see also Wibben 2011b; Parashar 2015 on narratives and feminist story-telling). This is how feminist security studies potentially *performs* critical security studies differently. To a poststructuralist feminist, moreover, the everyday becomes a site where shared meanings are negotiated and where gendered constructions of power legitimise certain practices and exclude others. The 'emancipatory potential', then, is to make feminist sense differently, to unmake common sense, to creature ruptures and dissonances that make us think anew. This also resonates with Laura Sjoberg's remarks on feminist security studies:

[T]he purpose of doing research in Feminist Security Studies is to raise problems, not to solve them; to draw attention to a field of inquiry, rather than survey it fully; to provoke discussion, rather than serve as a systematic treatise. (Sjoberg 2011: 602)

Thus, to clarify, the emancipatory potential of feminism is not limited to the approach to emancipation that Hynek and Chandler discuss but fundamentally about how feminist research, including poststructuralist, is inherently political. Mustapha's focus on 'alternative security futures' and 'remedies' in relation to weak ontologies potentially offers yet another opening for *how* poststructuralist feminism engages with 'the political'; indeed how it might be 'critical'. By asking feminist questions even poststructuralist feminists are able to make '*tentative* claims about what *might be*' (Mustapha 2013: 74).

## II. Dance and the political puzzle of militarisation

*A militarizing maneuver can look like a dance, not a struggle, even though the dance might be among unequal partners.*

- Cynthia Enloe (2000: 10)

'Militarism' is commonly understood as 'The belief that a country should maintain a strong military capability and be prepared to use it aggressively to defend or promote national interests' but also 'a political condition characterized by the predominance of the military in government or administration or a reliance on military force in political or diplomatic matters' (OED 2014a).<sup>4</sup> 'Militarisation', on the other hand, is defined as 'the action of making military in character or style' (OED 2014b). Thus, in popular definition militarism is a noun whereas militarisation has the meaning of a verb. For the purpose of my argument it is important to note that militarism as a 'belief' indicates awareness and a consciousness, whereas the definition of militarisation as an action does not say much about how that might happen. Yet, even though militarism is often recognised as a belief and militarisation as a process, the concepts are often used

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<sup>4</sup> I use the Oxford English Dictionary as a reference to get at the popular, common, understandings of these terms.



interchangeably, which suggests that the relationship between militarism and militarisation is understudied.

There are several ways in which militarism and militarisation historically have been defined or conceptualised in IR (see Stavrianakis and Selby 2012 for an overview) but perhaps most commonly militarism is seen as equivalent to military build-ups, an approach that is dominant within contemporary peace research and remains focused on [states'] quantitative increases in weapons production and imports, military personnel and military expenditure. Here, militarism is *measured* through various indicators. For example, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) famously publishes statistics on states' arms expenditure. There have also been attempts at measuring militarisation: The Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC), for example, has published a so-called 'Global Militarization Index', through which they claim that 'worldwide militarization is objectively depicted for the first time.' The Global Militarization Index measures a country's level of militarisation by comparing its military spending in relation to its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and health spending, information compiled from SIPRI, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Health Organization (WHO) (BICC 2014).

While Stavrianakis and Selby argue that militarism and militarisation have been sidelined in IR since the end of the Cold War, by discourses such as 'failed states', 'new wars' and 'human security' but also by the predominance of discussions on 'security' and 'securitization' (2012: 6), these interrelated concepts have remained central to feminist scholarship on war. In the glossary to the *Gender Matters in Global Politics*-textbook, militarism is defined as 'the belief that the most appropriate solution to a problem or response to an event is the military one' and militarisation as 'the process by which beings or things become associated with the military or take on military characteristics' (Shepherd 2015: xxv). Elsewhere, Kronsell and Svedberg think of militarism as 'the underlying value system that permeates military organisations and war activities' and militarisation as 'the process of preparing and engaging in the actual war-related practices' (2012: 5). Importantly, what feminist scholarship adds to knowledge about militarism and militarisation is how such concepts are often linked to nationalism and always linked to gender as a critical factor in the construction, perpetuation of, but also as the potential reversal of militarism (cf. Ruddick 2002 on Maternal Peace Thinking and

an ethics of care). From a feminist perspective, thus, militarism is not easily measurable and not merely an ideology/belief/value system but ultimately also about social relationships in the everyday organised around war and preparation for war. In this way, a feminist perspective on militarism facilitates a focus on *people's* rather than state officials or the government's preparation for war. I build on these feminist insights on militarism and militarisation but in contrast to Kronsell and Svedberg's definition of militarisation as the process of preparing and engaging in '*actual war-related practices*', I explore militarisation as the '*process of preparing*' for *the idea* of war, and in relation to the definition presented in Shepherd (2015), my aim is to problematize what '*military characteristics*' actually involves, in the everyday.

First, drawing on Enloe, my starting point is that militarisation must also be understood as a specific, cultural transforming process by which a person or a society gradually comes to '*imagine military needs and militaristic presumptions to be not only valuable but also normal*' (Enloe 2000: 3, emphasis added). To Enloe, the more militarised an individual or a society is, the more '*normal*' military needs and militaristic presumptions become. Crucially, this means that processes of militarisation do not only take place in the obvious [military] contexts and places but, in fact, the list of what can be militarised is virtually endless (Enloe 2000: 4). In other words, processes of militarisation can be found anywhere in the everyday.

Second, a simple Google Images search on '*militarization*' results in, almost exclusively, images that include weapons and/or military equipment or personnel in some form. A majority of images also centre on the increased militarisation of police and policing. These examples of how militarisation is used and understood are not necessarily wrong, but in my view these understandings of militarised as in *military-looking* only give a partial understanding of militarisation and they certainly fail to problematize differences between militarism and militarisation. To me, these images have more to do with militarism as a political condition in which the reliance on military force in political matters is strong. These images might show *the effects* of a militarizing process but they do not necessarily tell anything about the process of militarisation. My argument is that *there is more to militarisation than what is immediately apparent*. Enloe's influential research on militarism and militarisation offers a substantial piece of the political puzzle that is militarisation, yet, in order to explore *the process* of militarisation in more depth,

first, I turn to cultural theorists Roland Barthes and Stuart Hall and their ideas on 'common sense', myth, discourse and ideology. Then, I return to the metaphor of dance.

In the preface to the essay collection *Mythologies*, first published in 1957, Barthes explains how he 'wanted to track down, in the decorative display of *what-goes-without-saying*, the ideological abuse which... is hidden there' (Barthes 2000b: 11, emphasis in original). Elsewhere, Barthes suggests that if we can understand how a narrative is seen and consumed as common sense, we can expose underlying hierarchical structures. He refers to the 'narrative situation' as the protocols and 'grammar' according to which the narrative is consumed (Barthes 2000a: 287). Moreover, my use of ideology in this paper is also inspired by Stuart Hall's discussion of Althusser's break with classical Marxist formulations of ideology (1985). Here, ideologies are systems of representation, frameworks of thinking and calculation about the world, the 'ideas' which people use to figure out how the social world works, what their place is in it and what they *ought* to do. Thinking about ideologies as systems of representation - composed of concepts, ideas, myths, or images- acknowledges their essentially discursive and semiotic character; that ideological knowledge is the result of specific practices- the practices involved in the production of meaning; and also that they are plural: 'Ideologies do not operate through single ideas; they operate, in discursive chains, in clusters, in semantic fields, in discursive formations' (Hall 1985: 103-4).

Althusser tries to think the relationship between ideology and other social practices in terms of the concept of reproduction. What is the function of ideology?  
It is to reproduce the social relations of production. (Hall 1985: 98)

For the purpose of this article, the ideology of militarism is about the reproduction of the production of war. Ideology is a practice; militarism is a security practice. To Barthes, myth is a language and in *Mythologies* he explains the mythical value in a wide range of cultural artefacts in the everyday, such as newspapers, Hollywood film-stars, food, sports (2000a). To Hall, language and behaviour are the media of the material registration of ideology, the modality of its functioning (1985: 99). That is why we have to analyse or deconstruct language *but also behaviour* in order to decipher the patterns of ideological thinking inscribed in them (1985: 100). Importantly, Althusser says these systems of representation are essentially founded on unconscious structures (1985: 106). As Hall explains:

We know the words to the song, “Rule Britannia” but we are “unconscious” of the deep structure- the notions of nation, the great slabs and slices of imperialist history, the assumptions about global domination and supremacy, the necessary Other of other peoples’ subordination- which are richly impacted in its simple celebratory resonances. (Hall 1985: 106)

Similarly, Cynthia Weber discusses the politics of Barthes’ ideas on myth - that which is seen as common sense- through the concept of ‘unconscious ideology’, ideology that is not formally named and that is therefore difficult to identify. It is the common sense foundation of our world-views that is beyond debate (Weber 2005: 5). Weber argues that we use ‘unconscious ideologies’ to help make sense of our worlds, very often without realising it. And because we do not realise we hold unconscious ideologies or use them to make sense of our worlds, we very rarely interrogate them. We rarely ask difficult questions about them that might upset them as common sense (Weber 2005: 5). This is because something that appears to be natural and unalterable also appears to be apolitical. This is how power works by appearing to take the political out of the ideological (Weber 2005: 7).

Both militarism and militarisation has to do with ideology and both function as *preparation for war*, but in different ways. I find it useful to think of militarism as those relationships directly linked to military institutions, soldiering and practices of warfare, whereas I think of militarisation as forming part of the not-so-obvious practices, relationships and politics of militarism in the everyday, in particular those that have ‘travelled’ to non-military contexts. I use media scholar Roger Silverstone’s understanding of media (drawing on Hannah Arendt) as a cultural space where the world, in the form of mediated narratives and images, appears to us, and, as a result, is interwoven with everyday experience and constituted as our lived world (2007: 27). Here, media ‘are part and parcel of the everyday, just as the everyday is part and parcel of the media’ (2007: 19); media is the everyday environment in which we live; the everyday is mediatised.

Thus, I think of militarism as an open, visible and conscious display of, and belief in, militaristic ideology and militarisation as a much more subtle process of the normalisation of a militarised society: I think of *militarisation as a normalising process to*

*do with preparation for war - the social and cultural preparation for the idea of war, which relies on a gendered logic and takes place in the mediated everyday.*

Furthermore, it is precisely because the normalising process of militarisation is much more subtle, hidden and potentially 'unconscious' that I find it useful to explain it through the methodological metaphor of dance, inspired by the quote by Enloe at the start of this section. Dance is an understudied topic in IR, yet at the same time it seems that dance is 'everywhere' in global politics. There are multiple resonances of dance and national identity: forming part of international spectacles such as the Olympic Games' opening ceremonies as displays of multiculturalism; military parades as rhythmic, orchestrated performances; or the suppression of indigenous dances under colonial rule. As a metaphor for militarisation as 'preparation for war', the concept of dance is fitting due to its historical role in preparing fighters for war but also, from a feminist perspective, because of its focus on bodies. Dance anthropologist Susan Reed situates studies of dance and movement within broader frameworks of embodiment and the politics of culture. Dance scholarship, she argues, has a lot to say to our understandings of culture, movement and the body; the expression and construction of identities; reception and spectatorship; aesthetics; and ritual practice (Reed 1998: 504). Through emotive, non-verbal communication dance can be a powerful political tool, at times even more so than official political rhetoric or intellectual debates (Reed 1998: 510-11). Enloe's idea that militarizing maneuvers can 'look like a dance' works because the concept of dance captures the study of bodies in motion as 'structured movement systems', as expressions and practice of relations of power that are made into common sense, but also because dance puts focus on how bodies move us through non-verbal communication.

Thinking about militarisation as a practice of unconscious ideology, as a dance through which both 'security' and 'the political' is communicated, offers one way in which to explore the hidden politics, or in Barthes' words, the ideological abuse of everyday myth-making and construction of common sense. It enables a focus on how a society's military character is entertained beyond the obvious 'military-looking' characteristics. Thus, whereas images of an increasingly militarised, as in *military-looking*, police force and the Global Militarisation Index both tell us something about a state's preparation to use political violence, domestically or internationally, in relation to actual

military/violent capabilities, my feminist perspective offers an analysis of a society's preparation for war and/or the use of force not only much more broadly, but also in more depth: by exploring how society in general supports *the idea* of war. This is about people's rather than state officials' or the government's preparation for war. What we are talking about, then, is *expressions and impressions of the militarisation of society* in a broader, common, sense. As common sense, dance is the link between militarisation and the political.

### **III. The dance of militarisation: Remembrance and Family**

*In the contemporary mediated space of appearance, what we see is what we get. What we get we tend to accept uncritically.*

-Roger Silverstone (2007: 51)

If we, as Enloe suggests, think of the militarisation of society through 'maneuvers' in our mediatised everyday lives, focusing on Remembrance Week might seem too obvious as it is indeed about, by and for the Armed Forces; the events are visibly militarised as in military-looking. However, if we follow the metaphor of dance, it is possible to zoom in on those maneuvers that have 'travelled', or sometimes literally 'danced', from the obvious military contexts into non-military ones. The example with 'Sven' is one, how BBC One's biggest autumn entertainment show *Strictly Come Dancing* became poppy-themed or how public transport and taxis in London were dressed in poppies during Remembrance Week in 2013 are a few out of many others (British Legion 2014a and b). What is interesting to me is the process through which we read these events, how we might consider these militarised events 'just normal', forming part of common sense, the sense of 'but that is just what we do' as my former house mate put it. It is about *how* militarisation impacts upon and makes lasting impressions on our everyday lives. Ultimately, it is about the politics involved when there is little space to resist these maneuvers, because it just does not make any sense to do so. More specifically, of course, a feminist approach to militarisation is interested in the gendered aspects of such processes of normalisation, of how militarisation links to and ultimately manipulates ideas about both femininity and masculinity, and, indeed 'family'.

Next, I turn my attention to one of the main events during Remembrance Week: the so-called Festival of Remembrance at the Royal Albert Hall at which the Queen and other members of the Royal Family as well as Government officials are present. The Festival is aired at prime-time on BBC One on the Saturday evening of Remembrance week. According to the British Legion, who is organising the events around 'remembrance', the idea is to 'ensure that those who gave their lives for peace and freedom are remembered'; 'to reflect the nation's concern that the human cost of war should not be forgotten' (British Legion 2014c). Remembrance is therefore about heroism as the ultimate sacrifice. Heroism means great bravery, it is the quality of being a hero, however, as feminist scholars have shown, heroism is also an inherently gendered concept, typically associated with men, masculinity and patriarchal values (see Elsthain 1985; Åhäll 2012). There are two main aspects as to why I think 'family' is a useful analytical concept. To start with, 'heroism' in relation to Remembrance events are not just about the sacrifice of the soldiers, it is also crucially about the sacrifice and 'heroism' of those who are staying at home, often girlfriends, wives, mothers, children, i.e. the support-network for wars' heroes and heroines. Families are also officially recognised as 'the force behind the force' within armed forces and military communities, which the annual celebration of Military Family Appreciation Month in the US is but one example of (US Army 2015). From a critical perspective, feminist scholars have demonstrated in numerous ways how women, mothers and mothering have always been very important for the continuing processes of militarisation (see Enloe 2007; Bayard de Volo 2004; Varzi 2005). Moreover, Alison Howell, in her research on Anglo-American armed forces' contemporary management of their soldiers' mental health, argues that the family is treated as a military instrument. Through policies promoting emotional self-governance and 'Family fitness' as a way to achieve resilience, the family (most often wives) become part of the maintenance of soldiers' fitness for re-deployment (Howell 2015). With these insights, many feminists are sceptical about the idea of 'remembrance' as only about honouring those that have died. Instead, the organisation of remembrance events might have much more to do with the living; about present and future wars rather than those of the past.

In addition, 'family' is useful as an analytical concept because of its proximity to what is 'familiar', that which is 'part of one's everyday knowledge', that which makes [common] sense. The theme of 'family' relates to every one of us. Through emotional imagery of



'family' we don't need to have a personal relationship to the military. We understand the sacrifices that service men and women as well as their families make. Importantly, familiar images, familiar traditions, familiar clichés about 'family' usually portrays a particular heteronormative family unit as common sense; it privileges the norm of heterosexuality in society. With this caveat in mind, it is through what is normatively 'familiar' that the idea of family offers a way to think about *how* the remembrance events form part of the normalisation of militarism; how the process of militarisation works. It is precisely because notions of family are normatively familiar that it makes sense to think of militarisation as a movement that is not a struggle, but a dance.

The official theme for the 2013 Remembrance activities was indeed 'family'. A girl-band called The Poppy Girls, made up of daughters to serving Armed Forces personnel, was formed to perform for the Queen at the Festival of Remembrance. In the time leading up to the Festival the Poppy Girls were often in the mass media, met with both the Prime-Minister and Prince William, but it was what happened immediately after their Festival performance that soon turned into an 'internet sensation' (YouTube 2013).

Huw Edwards, the host, began speaking as the five girls, dressed in [innocent] white as usual, were ending their performance with a group-hug, also as usual: 'Now, let me just explain that one of our Poppy Girls has a father currently deployed on operations in the Indian Ocean,' Edwards said. 'Lieutenant Commander Billy Adams isn't due back until another three months, so unfortunately he wouldn't have been in the position to see his daughter perform tonight.' The camera zooms in on Megan, one of the youngest Poppy Girls. 'Well Megan', Edwards continues, 'we have a very nice surprise for you right now.' Still focused on Megan's face the camera catches her surprise. At the same time, from opposite the stage, her father starts to walk down the steps towards his daughter, to standing ovations and cheers from the audience. Megan shouts 'Daddy!' and, still holding the microphone in her hand, runs across the floor to greet him. He embraces her and lifts her up in his arms. She is sobbing. It is a very emotional reunion.

This scene, referred to as 'The moment a 10 year old is reunited with her father' quickly spread on social media. On YouTube there are several clips uploaded, one of which has had more than a million views. The morning after the BBC One Breakfast show was reporting live from the family's home. This emotional reunion clearly resonated with a lot of people. And, on the one hand, what is not to like about a young girl's reunion with

her father who is bravely serving his country in a dangerous place far from the safety of home? Nothing of course. On a personal level, we can relate, we feel for them, however, when we get emotionally involved, questioning becomes difficult, and in the process we risk forgetting the politics of what we are watching.

As Enloe reminds us, militarisation requires political decisions. What we, the Queen and the British Prime-Minister are watching at the Festival of Remembrance is a carefully orchestrated political event: it is a militarised maneuver in our mediatised everyday. Not only are the daughters playing an active role in the staging of their [and symbolically all military-] fathers' heroism, but to choreograph, to use the dance metaphor, the Festival of Remembrance in this particular way, the expected outcome is emotive. By being invited to be moved - to be touched - by the emotional family reunion, the audience also plays a role in the process of militarisation.

This is how Remembrance can be seen as a process of militarisation that justifies militarism as the character of a society. Through familiarity, the militarised maneuvers are successful when they are normalised, and it is because gender relations play an important part in the processes of normalising militarism that a feminist perspective is needed in order to analyse the 'hidden ideological abuse', as Barthes puts it, involved in such processes of normalisation and constructions of 'common sense'. This is how the emotional family reunion between Megan and her father plays part in the dance of militarisation.

### **A feminist security studies take on the political**

With this article I hope to have shown how feminist security studies guides me to refigure the political in critical security studies; how, and where, the political informs security and vice-versa. In the introduction, I explained how a personal puzzle framed an interest in the political puzzle of militarisation. In the first section, I traced 'the political' theoretically by negotiating ontological tensions between poststructuralist theorising and emancipatory critical security studies on the one hand and between poststructuralism and emancipatory feminism on the other. I argued that feminist theorising opens up for an alternative way into security studies, based in an analytical focus on 'the political' as bodies in the everyday. In the second section, I presented a nuanced understanding of militarisation as a security practice in the mediatised

everyday as an example of a feminist security studies take on the political. I developed my thinking through the methodological metaphor of dance to explain the subtle process of militarisation. I argued that unless we pay attention to what is happening beyond the most visibly militarized context, beyond the display of weaponry, soldiers and armed forces, we will miss an important dimension to the logics of militarisation. *We will miss how the dance of militarisation is performed.* In the third section, I illustrated the dance of militarisation empirically with an analysis of a choreographed political performance of Remembrance. I used the notion of 'family' as an anchoring concept to unmake common sense and to make feminist sense of the hidden politics of militarisation.

By asking feminist questions about political puzzles of bodies and 'security' in the everyday, by engaging with and destabilizing gendered power relations, feminist security studies 'enter' the political differently. This is how feminist security studies performs critical security studies in a way that opens up a space to re-imagine the political and to offer 'alternative security futures' and 'remedies', to use Mustapha's words. This is why it is crucial to keep not just *adding* a feminist perspective to security studies but to actually *do* and *produce* the discipline of security studies from a feminist perspective. Learning from feminist theorising by letting political puzzles guide the research design, rather than the academic field, we might ensure theoretical and methodological creativity in a way that leads to that the future of critical security studies is heading in new and exciting directions, beyond the limited mappings in Schools and theoretical perspectives, beyond the dominant narrative of our discipline.

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