Introduction

Cost-benefit analysis have for a long time been predominant in studies related to privatized security. They emphasize efficiency and effectiveness, focus on quantifiable and technical criteria, and are based on the assumption that PSCs are apolitical actors. In contrast, a gender perspective makes apparent the political nature of the industry by drawing attention to what forms an important, but much neglected, part of its power and success: the gendered hierarchies on which it rests.

Such a perspective directs our focus to the relations that actors maintain both within the industry and between PSCs and their clients and beneficiaries. It makes us aware that PSCs have a public and a private face and that the two are interdependent. While the public face often paints a picture of a company which cares for its employees and is staffed with former elite soldiers, the private face tends to be made up of less qualified personnel that often work under questionable conditions and whose existence is not mentioned. In short, what we see when we examine PSCs through a gendered lens differs from what we commonly find in the literature where classifications of the private security industry usually are based on the services that companies offer, and thus conceal how PSCs themselves try to influence their image and turn into political actors by both relying on while simultaneously (re-)defining understandings of masculinity and femininity.

We draw on the work of Sharoni (2008) and Mannitz (2011) as well as others who suggest that in militarized spaces, such as war, gendering takes place through the construction of masculinities and apply it to PSCs and their industry to uncover the hierarchical power relations within. Masculinities are multiple in form, 'depend ... on the clear dichotomy of us versus them' (Sharoni, 2008, p.152), and find expression in 'a discourse of power' (Sharoni, 2008, p.151) or rather 'discourses of domination' (Sharoni, 2008, p.152). In militarized spaces
historically they have been constituted by dichotomies such as that of 'peaceful women/bellicose men,' 'protector/protected,' or 'colonizer/colonized' (Sharoni, 2008, p.152). More recently, however, and owing to the complex demands posed upon states by the changed nature of warfare and the multidimensional character of peacekeeping missions, we can find more 'hybrid' forms of masculinity (Mannitz, 2011, p.690). Soldiers have to be brave warriors, managers, peacekeepers and humanitarian aid workers all at the same time today, a challenge which PSCs help state militaries to master by, as we illustrated elsewhere, functioning as 'masculinity multipliers' (Joachim and Schneiker, 2012).

On the one hand, companies strive for hegemonic masculinity by claiming 'to provide security in a professional, ethical manner and to care about the world’ (ibid., p.13), and, on the other hand, rely and depend upon 'masculinities' and 'femininities' of a lesser kind. The claims that PSCs make with respect to their capabilities, such as offering all-encompassing protection or having the resolve to go anywhere, at anytime, whatever the risks entailed (Joachim and Schneiker, 2012, p.13), suggest that there is someone less manly and with less resolve, but also someone who is willing to pay the price. As such, the industry together with multi-national companies more generally constitute new 'transnational arenas ... where hegemonic and subordinate masculinities are constructed' (Connell, 2005, p.849; see also Hooper 2000). These arenas are characterized, according to R. W. Connell (2012), by a 'strong gender division of labor and a strongly masculinised management culture' (Connell, 2012, p.4).

Because hegemonic and other forms of masculinity are (re-)configured discursively, including through speech, images, and practices, we carried out a discourse analysis of the
websites of 23 PSCs and articles by representatives of the PSC industry that have been published in the *Journal of International Peace Operations* (JIPO), which is the journal of the U.S. industry association International Stability Operations Association (ISOA).

This chapter begins by elaborating on the concept of masculinity before we then turn to the discourse analysis which reveals the multiple masculinities on which PSCs and the security industry rest.

**Gender and the Construction of Masculinities**

War and militaries are central sites where masculinities are constructed (e.g. Kovitz, 2003; Hutchings, 2008, p.391). Because masculinities intersect with other identity-forming categories, such as ethnicity, race, disability, religion, age, or class (Higate and Henry, 2004, pp.481–498) and are therefore both plural and fluid in form (Cornwall and Lindisfarne, 1994, p.12; Petersen, 2003, pp.57–58; Higate and Henry, 2004, p.483), they move our focus from men and women to patterns of gender relations and hierarchies that exist between different hegemonic and subordinate masculinities and femininities (Kaufman, 1994, p.144; Kimmel, p.1994; Hooper, 1998, p.35; Wadley, 2010, p.49).

Masculinities are constructed through different discursive practices, involving among others feminization, masculinization, pathologization and colonialization: *Feminization* can be used to either downgrade or to upgrade masculinities. By assigning attributes traditionally

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1 Academi, AKE, Atlantean LLC, BH Defense, Blue Hackle, CACI, Cochise Consultancy, DynCorp, Engility/MPRI, Erinys, G4S, Greystone, Hart, Pacific Architects and Engineers (PAE), Pax Mondial, RedFour, Reed, SOC, Specops, Sterling, Tactical Security Solutions, Tactical Solutions International, Triple Canopy.
associated with women and conceived of as being of lesser value, such as flexibility, ‘nurturing, ... empathy, and compassion’ (Kaufman, 1994, p.148), the masculinity of men may be called into question or transformed into acceptable and superior masculinities (Hooper, 1998, pp.28-53). *Masculinization* can also be used as a strategy to affirm superiority. But in contrast to strategies of feminization it draws on what are considered accepted and desirable masculine attributes. *Pathologization* refers to the branding of subordinate masculinities as pathological or aberrant 'through accusations of hypermasculinity' (Hooper, 2001, p.74). Last but not least, *colonialization* rests on the dichotomy between what is assumed to be an expression of hegemonic masculinity, for example, the colonizer, and what is deemed to be subordinate, the colonized (Sharoni, 2008, p.152). It differs from the former strategies insofar as it is characterized much more by intersectionality exhibiting references to ethnicity, race or class.

Examples of socially constructed hegemonic and subordinate masculinities can be found in the context of the ongoing 'war on terror'. According to Sharoni, the U.S. military and its allies have 're-creat[ed] the old colonialist narrative of Western/‘enlightened’ men waging war against ‘other’/often dark-skinned men' in the aftermath of 9/11 (Sharoni, 2008, p.152). In this respect, 'the white, wealthy, western, heterosexual hegemonic male identity is constituted, in part, by constructing other groups of men as threatening, including men of Muslim and Arab background and those identified as "non-western," as well as people of color, immigrants, refugees, non-status people and women' (Rygiel, 2006, p.147). Colonization, however, also takes place in the arena of the transnational economy. Yet, in this context the construction of 'the worker' rests on a colonialist logic with supposedly irreconcilable differences (Agathangelou, 2002, p.143; Peterson, 2003; Gibson-Graham, 2006) between, for example, 'history-making capitalist economies vs. history-lagging non-capitalist ones; wealthy centers vs. exploited peripheries; transnational firms vs. territorially
bound states; globe-straddling cosmopolitans vs. locally bound parochials' (Chang and Ling, 2000, p.32).

The different strategies, while often employed independent of or in combination with each other, are helpful to understanding the ongoing privatization of security. As Isabelle Barker (2009), for example, illustrates in the case of the U.S. Army, outsourcing 'social reproductive tasks [such as the provision of food or doing laundry] that have nothing to do with the masculine role of the combat soldier' (Barker, 2009, p.226) to poor men from the South allows 'the U.S. armed forces to be figured, first, as made up of soldiers endowed with attributes of aggressive masculinity, and second, as an apparently homogenous middle-class entity' (Barker, 2009, p.227). This division of labor, she argues 'symbolically reinforces the soldier’s role as a masculinized "war fighter" with a second level of implications: supporting the corresponding and increasingly imperial posture that the United States has assumed in the world in this first decade of the twenty-first century' (Barker, 2009, p.217). Furthermore, it 'echoes earlier colonizer-colonized relations in that domestic life and reproductive labor continue to be critical sites for demarcating lopsided positions of power in international relations' (Barker, 2009, p.217).

PSCs, we argue, use strategies of masculinization and feminization to legitimize themselves as acceptable superior security actor. To the outside, and to set themselves apart from state militaries and other private security companies, they present themselves as 'professional security expert,' 'ethical hero warrior', and 'responsible, equal opportunity employer'. On the inside, however, this image rests on and requires lesser valued colonized and feminized masculinities. While professional security experts distinguish themselves based on their first-class training, experience they have gained in different settings as well as being able to offer turn-key solutions to any problem, the ethical hero warrior is willing to go
anywhere to provide protection, “committed to ethical and moral conduct, but also truly concerned about peace” (Joachim and Schneiker 2012: 2). With respect to the equal opportunity employer, PSCs pride themselves of their commitment to diversity, of caring for the well-being and safety of their employees and being a family friendly workplace.

Public/Hegemonic and Private/Subordinate Masculinities and PSCs

PSCs construct their public face almost exclusively with reference to accepted hegemonic masculinities. Throughout the web pages of the companies we analyzed, the professional expert, ethical hero warrior and humanitarian is overly present. In almost all of the cases, he is thought of as white Northern male who possesses exceptional expertise and experience, is well trained due to his often former membership in elite units of state militaries or employment in other corporate enterprises, guided by moral values, and brings security to the colored insecure people in the South. By comparison, the private face is made up of lesser valued masculinities and femininities, behind which we find the less skilled, less paid, and less secure who in many respects do not fit the norm. While mostly hidden or less overt, this lesser masculinity is not only essential for the construction of the hegemonic kind, but it also helps to upgrade it even further. By either portraying men from the Global South as a threat or by employing locals and people of different color, companies can respectively though simultaneously present themselves as ‘invincible protector’ and ‘socially conscious, responsible equal opportunity and diversity employer’. In this section, we will provide evidence of how PSCs construct the different masculinities through both language and images and by drawing eclectically on both masculine as well as feminine attributes.

As to the professional expert, statements such as those of the former company Blackwater and now Academi are typical for almost all PSCs. Its ‘world-class leadership and
management team is made up of experts with decades of unique experience from U.S. government service and work in the private sector' (Academi, 2014; see also Sterling 2014c). In statements of this kind companies almost always assert their superiority and claim to have, such as Tactical Solutions International 'the finest operational talent available on the planet' (Tactical Solutions International 2014a). While the assertions regarding excellence and superiority are often made with reference to staff, they nevertheless also are assumed to apply to the company as a whole. AKE, for example, claims to have 'experience in resolving situations too difficult for others' (AKE 2014b) and BH Defense declares: 'In fact, because of the expertise we apply to risk identification and mitigation—plus our battle-tested, on-the-ground experience in getting things done— BH Defense is the only U.S. government contractor continuing full support operations during the current crisis in Iraq' (BH Defense 2014a).

Claims with respect to the professionalism and expertise are considered important elements of contemporary modern hegemonic masculinity (Hooper, 2001, p.152; Barrett, 2001, p.92). In the case of the PSCs in our sample they are accompanied by photos which we also would expect to find on internet pages of conventional companies such as insurances of banks. They often show men in business suits, sitting at conference tables or are involved in negotiations. If women appear, they are shown in roles or as carrying out services more traditionally associated with women, as for example, as employees instead of in leadership positions, as clerks in office settings answering phones or typing or in cafeterias, handing out food (e.g., PAE, 2014). Under the header ‘Our People’, G4S, for example, shows two white older male as representatives of the executive team and the group board, and a woman of color as representative of ‘our employees’ (G4S, 2014). The mostly male leadership and management teams are argued to '… have a myriad of exceptional international military and commercial operational experience, and are renowned for dealing with high-risk situations
and complex operations’ (Specops 2014d). They are comprised of individuals who often studied at prestigious universities (see, for example, Hart, 2014b). While the image that PSCs present seems to be that of an inclusive employer caring for diversity, their statements are nevertheless indicative as to who is associated with hegemonic masculinity and who is through strategies of feminization and colonialization rendered subordinate.

Although there is rarely explicit ‘othering,’ the statements as well as the photos of the companies we analyzed nevertheless often leave no doubt as to where excellence, know how and expertise as well as security is presumed to reside, i.e. in the North. RedFour’s instructors are ‘former Elite British Forces’ (RedFour, 2014a) and the ‘distinguished leadership and staff’ of Blue Hackle has ‘UK or U.S. Special Forces background’ and ‘worked and lived in the countries where you need protection’ (Blue Hackle, 2014a). Signs for colonialization can be found in reference to those who need to be trained or secured or are perceived as threat and are assumed to reside in the South. A photograph on the webpage of Blue Hackle entitled ‘Our People’, for example, shows three white males, two of them in combat fatigues, who look directly into the camera, next to nine men of color, most of them with black beard, who hold a certificate in their hands and who mostly have their faces lowered or have their eyes covered by a cap (ibid.; see also Erinys, 2014b; Reed, 2014a; Specops 2014c) while one of DynCorp shows Northern men in military gear searching an Arab man (DynCorp, 2013). And the company AKE next to a photo of Kabul declares that it 'seeks to influence, educate and effect change within the culture of the client's organisation' (AKE 2014c).

In addition to the professional, superior security expert, hegemonic masculinity also has traits of both of the more traditional masculinity, the ethical hero warrior, and the more temporary and feminized kind. With respect to the former, many companies pride themselves for their ex-military personnel that has served in Western states' special forces (Specops,
Consequently, in their application forms companies ask future employees to give their 'military service record' (Tactical Security Solutions, 2014a; see also RedFour, 2014b). In addition to showing men wearing combat gear and/or being heavily armed (e.g., Cochise Consultancy, 2014a; Greystone, 2014b; SOC, 2014a; Tactical Solutions International, 2014b) or by displaying armored vehicles (e.g., Reed, 2014b; Greystone, 2014a), companies also make reference to values associated with hero warrior masculinity.

The company CACI, for example, claims that its employees ‘stand up for the truth, value, honesty and integrity, and are fully accountable to what [they] do’ (CACI, 2014d) while DynCorp asserts to ‘Do the Right Thing – always for [their] customers, employees, and those [they] serve’ (DynCorp, 2012). Allied Security expect of their officers that they ‘act as an example to all including his fellow officers’ (Allied Security, 2014): ‘He must maintain calm in the face of danger, he must maintain his dignity in the face of scorn and ridicule, he must maintain his self-respect in the face of temptation and opportunity for wrongdoing keeping the company’s reputation also’ (Allied Security, 2014).

The ethical hero warrior is presented as a ‘clean’ soldier carrying out ‘clean’ operations that take place ‘without incident or loss’ (Blue Hackle, 2014b). The companies' staff members are always portrayed as being physically in good shape. PSCs, such as Tactical Security Solutions even explicitly state that their 'officers must demonstrate fitness for duty by performing periodic timed physical fitness tests and participate in periodic medical and psychological screening' (Tactical Security Solutions 2014b). Not a single wounded employee is shown on the company website we analyzed and only few admit like Sterling that some of their employees have died during operations (Sterling 2014d).

Given that PSCs such as BH Defense claim to operate 'with ZERO serious injuries to employees, clients, partners or civilians' (BH Defense 2014b), they implicitly suggest that
they are better than any other security actor, particularly the military. In contrast to them, so
the impression gives, they are invulnerable and their operations do not cause any collateral
damage. Because of their alleged superiority, companies such as Tactical Solutions
International, assert that they can ‘meet identified shortfalls in various state, federal and
friendly foreign organization operations and specialized training programs’ (Tactical Solutions
International 2014a) while at the same time support their home state's forces and policy
objectives. The company Sterling, for example, is ‘Protecting Our Troops’ (Sterling, 2014a)
and CACI conceives of ‘America’s missions’ as ‘our missions’ (CACI, 2014d) and states:

As America’s national priorities have changed dramatically over the years,
CACI has renewed its commitment and responsibility to support the men and
women in our armed forces. We honour our country by striving to look beyond
the work we do every day, and we work hard to support causes that matter and
recognize patriotism (CACI, 2014a).

While few companies in our sample have such explicit references to patriotism, but instead
communicate it in a much more subtle fashion through, for example, expressed commitment
to veterans (e.g., Academi, 2014), it nevertheless forms an important aspect of ethical hero
warrior masculinity which traditionally has been equated with ‘the brave, physically strong,
emotionally tough warrior hero’ (Woodward and Winter, 2004: 289), but which more recently
has been ‘refurbished’ and experienced a ‘slight feminization’ (Niva 1998: 118).

This more contemporary and more feminized type of masculinity is constructed
through attributes such as empathy, intimate knowledge of culture and local circumstances,
flexibility, connectedness, or caring as opposed to expertise and technical know-how. In this
respect the public face of PSCs resembles less that of a generic company or does not remind
one of state militaries, but rather of humanitarian organizations. While Chochise Consultancy
has 'passion' (Cochise Consultancy, 2014b), Erinys claims to 'create a safe and secure environment' (Erinys, 2014a) and 'will listen carefully to [its clients] needs' thereby 'leaving [the client] confident in the knowledge that [he is] in safe hands' (Erinys, 2014b), PSCs such as Hart 'firmly believe in empowering the communities in which we work, and strive to establish strong relationships within them' (Hart 2014c; AKE 2014a). AKE (2014a) prides itself for having proven that a ‘positive and interactive relationship [with the] local community is tantamount to success and can provide an additional layer of security’, while Pax Mondial (2014) considers ‘[c]ultural awareness and deep understanding of local nuance and political and economic context … keys to ensuring effective and safe overseas operations.’ Rather than showing offices or men wearing combat gear, statements such as these are accompanied by images that communicate that companies ‘care’. They show children that have been given shelter (Triple Canopy, 2014b) or haven been given food. Nevertheless, they also indicate who is assumed to be in need of help and protection—colored women and children struck by conflict or environmental disasters (e.g., Hart, 2014a)—and who are the protectors/securers—men in the global North.

The mingling of more traditional forms of masculinity with feminine attributes is also apparent in the corporate responsibility that PSCs claim for themselves. At the same time as companies promise to offer protection and physical security, they 'support[...] international and local efforts to combat and eliminate corruption and financial crimes' (Triple Canopy 2014c), they also promote 'environmental stewardship worldwide' (Sterling 2014b) and the welfare of the people in the areas they operate. For example,

Hart recognises the struggles faced by locals in the community and seeks to offer support through employment, training and promotion of individuals as well as encouraging the use of locally-owned businesses for the supply of
services and goods. Hart was a pioneer in its policy to maximize employment using the local population, thereby ensuring a broad spectrum of tribes and religions were represented. As well as the economic benefit this has for families and individuals, client/asset security is enhanced by a sense of local ownership and a tried and tested local intelligence network. (Hart 2014d)

In addition, companies such as SOC declare that '[t]hrough our SOC Cares program, we aim to give back to our communities' (SOC 2014c). Caring as opposed to acting rationally, the local and the family as opposed to the (inter-)national and the public life are associated most often in Western societies with femininity. While otherwise less valued, in the self-presentations of PSCs, these attributes become upgraded and masculinized.

The feminization of masculinity also extends to the relationship between companies and its employees. On the internet page of DynCorp one can read that it ‘care[s] for the safety, security development, and well-being of our employees’ (DynCorp, 2014). SOC even goes so far to state that ‘SOC is a known and trusted employer to a diverse group of individuals that call SOC "home"' (SOC, 2014b) and CACI declares that it 'embraces diversity and inclusion as central to our business strategy' (CACI, 2014c) and 'provides careers for talented veterans with disabilities' (CACI, 2014b).

Overall, PSCs increasingly declare to have adopted a diversity policy. But the image that the companies thereby construct is ambivalent. At the same time as, for example, the company Tactical Solutions International claims that its 'staff consists of current and former members of elite units within the military and law enforcement communities' (Tactical Solutions International, 2014a) it also declares to be 'firmly committed to the principles of equality of opportunity in employment and human relationships. The Company believes diversity strengthens its work force and enhances its competitiveness' (Tactical Solutions
International, 2012, p.10). It furthermore 'is committed to recruiting, hiring, developing and promoting employees without discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, national origin or ancestry, disability, marital status, veteran status or any other status protected by law not listed here.' (Tactical Solutions International, 2012, p.10). Similar, the company Triple Canopy states that '[a]pplicants receive consideration without regard to race, age, ethnicity, religion, gender, national origin, disability' (Triple Canopy, 2014a), but acknowledges at the same time that 'more than 80 percent of our employees have served in the U.S. military' (Triple Canopy, 2014a).

While the public face of PSCs is constructed through the professional security expert, the ethical hero warrior and the caring humanitarian aid worker, it is important to mention that these types of masculinity are linked and intersect with each other as Specops (2014a) notes: ‘Our employees have gained their current expertise by working ... [e]ither as high risk security consultants in war zones or as body guards in the South American jet set environment’ and Engility stated ‘[w]hether for military or humanitarian missions or for private business projects, our experts have the technical skills, education, language, capabilities and international experience to meet the complex needs of our customers worldwide’ (MPRI, 2011).

The private face looks different, is often hidden, and therefore hard to grasp. On the internet page of the company Blue Hackle one can read ‘[s]tandard low profile Blue Hackle personal security team’ showing four men wearing traditional clothing (Blue Hackle, 2014c). The private face is made up of lower valued masculinities and ascribed, though not exclusively, to Southern men. It lends force to postcolonial scholars like Pratt (2013; see also Chisholm in this volume) who content that, ‘hierarchies of race, gender, and sexuality … are central to the political economy of imperialism’ (Pratt, 2013, p.774). Subordinate forms of masculinities are essential for PSCs, their success, and the hegemonic forms with which they
construct their public image as the former president of the international private security
industry association, *the International Stability Operations Association (ISOA)*, Doug Brooks,
notes with respect to Third Country Nationals (TCNs) which many companies employ and
without whom, according to him, ‘[n]o international stability policy could succeed’ (Brooks,
2011, p.6). Contrary to the highly skilled, professional experts from the global North, they are
not only ‘cost-effective labor’ and bring with them ‘expertise and off-the-shelf experience’
(ibid.), but as Whitney Grespin (2012), an operations associate of the PSC *Atlantean, LLC*,
states in the *Journal of International Peace Operations*, in connection with TNCs comprising
*ad hoc* teams, they have often ‘little to no training in third world countries’ (Grespin, 2012,
p.18).

The way in which representatives of the ISOA describe the work performed by TCNs
is evident of colonialization and devaluing masculinization. It fits with what Ayesha Imam
(1997) refers to as the 'sexual narrative of consumption.' Those 'providing services[,] are
never positioned as agents' (Imam, 1997, p.295). Instead, Northern employees define the
norm, possess superior skills and resources, and therefore manliness while those in the South
are the 'different other,' subordinates who are controlled by the norm, have lesser abilities, and
are less masculine. Statements with respect to TCNs ‘exhibit... a clear connection between
low wages and the definition of the job as supplementary … and the fact that the lifestyles of
people of color are defined as different and cheaper' (Mohanty, 1997, p.6). The lower living
costs of TCNs in their home countries, in addition to their low levels of training, serve as
reasons for the wage difference between Northern and Southern employees: 'From a fairness
perspective, even though TCNs and LNs [local nationals] often earn substantially less than
their Western counterparts, they also enjoy an even lower cost of living back home' (Messner,
2007, p.32).
Although representatives of the ISOA claim that TCNs work in stability operations because they want to be there' (Brooks, 2011, p.6), the argument that TCNs are 'freely choosing to go to Iraq for the very reason that the money on offer is not only good, but even irresistible' (Messner, 2007, p.32) already suggests that there might not be a real choice to begin with in light of the miserable living conditions in most of the TCN’s home countries. Moreover, claims such as these hide the fact that for some the promised Garden of Eden turns out to be 'hell' (Indian employee of a Halliburton subcontractor, quoted in CorpWatch, 2005, p.10). Many of them work for subcontractors of PSCs such as DynCorp and end up being feminized/colonized, performing not only tasks traditionally expected of women or the colonized, including 'cooking, cleaning, laundry, construction and other support tasks necessary to operate military facilities' (Al Jazeera, 2014b), but also relegated to 'the bottom of the social hierarchy on U.S. bases. They earn far less than American or European contractors, work 12-hour days with little or no time off and, on some bases, aren’t allowed to use cellphones or speak to military personnel' (Al Jazeera, 2014b). According to the Project on Government Oversight, a U.S-American NGO, such practices are not isolated cases, but the result of a complex system of outsourcing (Isenberg and Schwellenbach, 2011).

In sum, the identities of PSCs are comprised of both hegemonic and lesser valued masculinities and femininities. Together they form an important, though less acknowledged, source of power allowing companies not only to set themselves apart from competitors and state militaries, but also to respond and relate to their clients in a flexible manner.

**Conclusion**

A gender perspective draws attention to the multiple masculinities and masculinity hierarchies within the PSC industry. It makes us aware that PSCs are not neutral or apolitical actors but actively take part in the (re-)construction of gendered categories. Rather than efficiency and
effectiveness alone, as is often suggested, the success and influence of PSCs also hinges on hegemonic and subordinate masculinities. The professional security expert and hero warrior afford not only Navy Seals, generals or Westpoint graduates who offer custom-tailored security solutions and master any challenge, but rests and depends upon the insecure and invisible local and Third Country Nationals. It is these two faces, the ambivalences and interdependencies that exist between them that make it possible for them to present themselves as legitimate and superior security actor in a competitive market. Hence, rather than equating power and influence with market shares, a gender perspective draws attention to the productive power of PSCs. By appropriating accepted and familiar masculinities and femininities, companies influence not only how they are perceived by different publics, but they also contribute to the normalization of private security more generally. Because PSCs draw on gendered identities to which their clients can relate and with which they can identify, it becomes potentially more difficult to call into question or contest their practices.

Based on these findings future research from a gender perspective might take a closer look at these individual identities of PSCs and how they, for example, manifest themselves in recruitment practices or in job advertisements and whether we find them equally represented or whether some identities are given preference over others. Furthermore, subsequent studies might also examine what role these identities play in company-client relationships. Previous research suggests that PSCs cater to their clients’ needs. Hence we would expect these identities to be more or less prominent depending whether companies provide services for state militaries, international governmental organizations, or humanitarian non-governmental organizations. Research such as this would not only help us to determine where gender matters, but it also would allow us to comprehend more fully what PSCs are about.
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