

Co-opted feminist war rhetoric and the veiling of voices in US and Norway

If all the terrorists September 11, 2001 had been females, female terrorists, and if Osama bin Laden had been a woman - what kind of stories would have been told or rather, what questions would have been asked? Let me suggest some: How is it possible for Muslim women to commit such atrocities? Are they not mothers - not real women – or were they forced by others? Perceptions of and questions related to something essential female, would certainly have been raised. Female terrorists are by many still perceived as an oxymoron, a contradiction, and against the natural order of human beings. (von der Lippe, 2003, 2007) Nobody asked if the terrorists were “real men”, if they were fathers and husbands or forced by somebody – their wives? – to commit the terror attacks. Nobody asked if the terror attacks were sanctioned by Islam or legitimized in any sura. The terrorists were all male and nobody seemed to see any gender – their gender was taken for granted. Questions which might have broadened the perspectives in the aftermath of the terror attacks, were not raised. The rhetorical space was easily kept restrained. Gender blindness has important consequences not only inside war rhetoric and war stories, but consequences also in the real world where real lives are torn apart and destroyed. (Enloe: 1990, 2006, Bell: 1995, Elshtain: 1987). The focus in this article is limited to the Afghan war, initiating, however, the ongoing wars on terror. The Afghan war came, so to say, as a package containing a celebration of neoliberalism, modernity and democracy – juxtaposed with liberation of Muslim women from “brown men” (Spivak, 1988) and embedded with an appellation to Muslim females in general (von der Lippe, 2007). Referring to academic studies and critiques addressing rhetoric, dominant Oriental and gendered discourse, the article is about similarities and differences in mainstream U.S. and Norwegian mass media. It is about how co-option of feminist rhetoric is undertaken by powerful women in the two countries; the small, peaceful, liberal and social democrat Norway, apparently opposing the superpower U.S. It is also about silencing of voices and bodies – verbally as well as visually.

Immediately after the terror attacks the UN gave USA, i.e. George W. Bush, legitimation for military actions against the terror network(s) hiding in Afghanistan - thereby contributing to a global silencing of any real resistance against this war to come. When president Bush told he should “hunt bin Laden out of his hole” and seize him “dead or alive”, there were few voices opposing the “hunt”, many (outside US) opposed, however, his frontier rhetoric – and many also opposed the dichotomy: Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists. (Bradford, 2006) This was very much so in Europe, Norway included. When Norway, trustful and loyal

member of NATO since 1949, decided to join the international security forces in Afghanistan, ISAF, in February 2002, as did many European countries, the critique was minimal and marginalized. January 2008, after the death of two Norwegian male soldiers and one male journalist, opposing voices were heard and listened to – for a short period of time. It goes nearly without saying, that the comparison of war rhetoric as such and gendered war rhetoric in particular undertaken here, will make manifest differences at more than one level. The North-American neoconservative gendered rhetoric will serve as point of departure for approaching dominant aspects of liberal, socialdemocrat Norwegian rhetoric. Main issues to be discussed are how liberal feminist rhetoric may be effectful by differing from the neoconservative in USA.

The article contains five parts, opening with the rhetoric of silence as well as the rhetoric of gendered silence. The rhetorical approach to silence and the marginalizing of voices, will be seen in relation to the Italian philosopher, Antonio Gramsci's understanding of hegemonic discourse. (Gramsci, 1929/1978) Gramsci's concept, hegemony, may illustrate aspects of how subtle pressures by power elites are applied to gain the consent of subordinated groups. In the second part I discuss studies of the rhetoric of USA's First Lady, Laura Bush, (Dubworny, 2005, Flanders, 2004), which will serve as point of departure for a rhetorical analysis of two powerful Norwegian women, one spokesperson for the Governmental Foreign Committee from 2001 to 2005, the other secretary of today's Foreign Ministry. (von der Lippe 2007)

The visual rhetoric, however different from verbal rhetoric, is put forth in the fourth part. It is a rhetoric interacting with verbal rhetoric and a rhetoric telling us stories about worthy and unworthy human beings and often much more effectfully than verbal rhetoric. Dana Cloud's studies on visual ideographs (Cloud, 1994/2004), perspectives drawn from Susan Sontag (1977/2003), from post-colonial studies or orientalism, feminist orientalist not least, will be of great importance to underline the silencing or veiling of voices in visual war narratives. This means that rhetoric applied on today's war stories is broadened by thoughts from non-rhetorical arenas.

By referring to hegemonic discourse in IR studies in the fifth and final part, the liberal Western feminist cooptation is discussed by focusing on a specific rhetorical use of the UN Resolution 1325 – a resolution explicitly sensitive to women's issues in times of war and peace building processes. This may be helpful to show how patterns of thoughts are embedded in gendered rhetoric, albeit somewhat differently in different countries and not only in mainstream media, patterns which often tell us little about the world and much about ourselves – not only as readers and viewers of mainstream media, but also as scholars, peace

researchers included. It may, I hope, also contribute to an increased awareness of and discussions on how gender sensitive knowledge as well as resolutions are applied if or when global power structures are marginalized and many feminist voices outside the Western sphere are silenced.

Rhetoric of gendered silence

A rhetoric of silence might seem peculiar, given the Western tendency to overvalue speech and speaking out, Cheryl Glenn tells us. (Glenn, 2002) Within the rhetorical tradition focus is mainly on who is seen and what is read or heard. Most often it seems as the speaker of interest is the one who decides when it is time to talk and time to be silent. It is thus mainly about successful and not successful rhetoric from the perspective of the powerful. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell's *Man Cannot Speak for Her* (1989) inaugurated the feminist rhetorical project and contributed to opening the doors for feminist rhetorical studies which, to some extent, reformed the discipline. A few years later, Patricia Bizzell, co-editor of *The Rhetorical Tradition* (2000), writes that the feminist project continues to present the "most trenchant challenges to traditional scholarly practices, opening up exciting new paths not only in the material scholars can study, but also, and perhaps ultimately more insignificantly, in the methods whereby we can study it" ("Feminist Methods":8).

When it comes to rhetorical studies of war narratives in mass media, the "exciting new paths" are rarely seen. I therefore use, as indicated, the expression "gendered silence of rhetoric" for the traditional gender blind rhetoric. At the latent and ideological level, the traditional perspective implies embedded masculinism, a masculinism from above devoid of any awareness of gender, class, ethnicity or race. What is not heard, read or seen is often more rhetoric than what is heard, read or seen. There are indeed many silences – particularly in war rhetoric.

There are some important "new paths", though, when it comes to rhetorical studies of gendered silence and gendered silencing. "Just as we use words to obfuscate meaning or to buy time, we use silence, sometimes productively, sometimes not – just as we use speech," Glenn writes (Glenn, 2002: 4). The question is not only whether speech or silence is the most productive, effective or appropriate; rather it is one of a rhetoricity of purposeful silence when it is self-selected or when it is imposed. "When silence is our rhetorical choice, we can use it purposefully and productively—but when it is not our choice, but someone else's for us, it can be insidious, particularly when someone else's choice for us comes in the shape of

institutional structure. To wit, a person can choose silence, but the choice isn't really hers because speaking out will be professional suicide. In short, she's been disciplined—and silenced.” (Glenn, 2002:5) Glenn is discussing rhetoric and silence within the North-American culture. The literally suicide is not discussed, neither is the threat of being killed because not choosing silence.

When silence is imposed on us, it really might be a question of life and death. Silence may be a way of survival or a very conscious way of resistance. When silence is not chosen and thus broken but there is nobody to listen, your value as human seems to be zero - or as Jacqueline Jones Royster puts it: "What I am compelled to ask when veils seem more like walls, is who has the privilege of speaking?". (1996:36)

Who has, takes or gets this privilege, is of course much more than a question about gender, it is also more than a question of ethnicity, religion and class – it is about all of these factors. And it is about power. The rhetoric of gendered silence has to some extent been broken as the dichotomy private/public is challenged. The rhetoric of gendered violence is often seen and heard in many countries, but is it really listened to? When discussed in public it seems each time to be represented as something "new" or something happening only occasionally and is in Western media mainly framed or labeled as "family tragedy". (Thorbjørnsrud, 2005)

Cynthia Enloe gives brilliant examples to illustrate an other aspect of rhetoric of gendered silence, not explicitly rhetorical silence, but implicitly she does so when discussing people belonging to the "margins". (2004: 19-42) There has to be some group with sufficient power to create a center to make some individual or group belong to the margin. Enloe writes:

"There is yearly and daily business of maintaining the margin where it currently is and the center where it now is. It is harder for those at the alleged center to hear the hopes, fears and explanations of those in the margins, not because of physical distance – the margin may be two blocks from the White House (...) but because it takes resources and access to be "heard where it matters." (p. 20) Those who reside the margins tend to be deemed "silent".

From "the center", be it Washington, New York, London, Paris or Oslo, Afghan people seem indeed to be deemed to be situated in the very margin. Afghans of both gender, the men as potential terrorists or potential collaborators and friends, as well as the women in need of Western protection, have been marginalized and stereotyped, in different ways, though, and with extremely different consequences. Belonging to various tribal centers at home, Afghan men are seldom listened to from the Western center(s). Most of them are attributed a masculinity alien to Westerners, a masculinity with rhetorical potency: They are suppressors of

women – and many of them are indeed exactly this. The Western logic of argument easily slides into the traditional "we-must-protect-their-women" – and nearly by all means.

The rhetoric of gendered silence has for most Afghan women been a chosen silence in public, a silence primarily based on a choice to survive or not to survive. The choice was not taken due to lack of needs, passivity or indifference. Some Afghan women had, however, risked their lives and for decades cried out asking the world - the international community - to listen. Few heard their voices and even fewer listened. Gayatri C. Spivak's famous essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak?", is as relevant to day as it was 20 years ago. Then came September 11th. All of a sudden the gendered violence, be it private or public, was no longer silenced. For a short time, the voices of some Afghan women were heard – but were these voices and these women really listened to? (Cooke, M. 2002, Flanders, L. 2004, Ayotte, Kevin J og M. E. Husain, 2005) Glenn's words: "Really listening across worldviews operates as a straining toward interstanding - glimpsing what lies between the 'I' and the 'other'", seem in this context similar to some utopic dream world.

The authority of the dominant group is not imposed by violence on individuals, but offered to them in subtle ways. What is offered for consideration is not just an assertion of another value, or set of values. The twist is that hegemonic discourses, according to Gramsci (1978), are offered as something you already agree with, as a reflection, so to speak, of your own desires, needs and wants, and in which you can effortlessly recognise yourself. Hegemony thus seems to offer what you already want anyway. This kind of hegemony was shortly after September 11th not threatened in Western countries, and the gendered rhetoric of protecting and liberating Afghan Muslim women (and children) included, was a rhetoric fitting very well into the hegemonic discourse, but fitting less into the discourses of most Afghan women. The authority has been imposed by violence. The authority is not offered Afghan (men or) women in any subtle ways. (Pankaj Mishra, 2002, Fariba Nawa, 2001) A "gender sensitive" Operation Enduring Freedom began and opposing voices were by few exceptions silenced. There are of course, different forms of patriarchy and some are indeed preferable to others. No one system of thought can, however, claim to represent any ordinary site for ideas concerning women's – or men's - freedom. (Eisenstein, 2002) Among Afghan women there were – and are – multiple voices or at least some polyphony. Despite a common desire for security and freedom (from oppression) among Afghan women, any hegemonic discourse will be experienced as a discourse from above. (Enloe, 2004:276-289) This kind of hegemony was shortly after September 11th not threatened in Western countries, and the gendered rhetoric of protecting and liberating Afghan Muslim women (and children) included, was a rhetoric

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The selection of feminist rhetoric discussed and analyzed below, may be somewhat limited. I will focus on some stories within the war narratives, verbal and visual, which I find particularly relevant for a comparison between U.S. and Norwegian rhetoric to be made. In the second and following part it is U.S. first lady, Laura Bush, who is the rhetor – it is some significant tropes of her rhetoric I am approaching.

Metamorphosis and feminism

Who speaks and acts in mediated narratives stories, thus who is listened to and how one is represented, is often equivalent with those estimated as news worthy. Who seldom speaks and is represented as actor, is, in some respect or other, not estimated as news worthy. This is even more so when it comes to war stories. In USA there were several news worthy women deploring women’s conditions under the Taliban rule in the autumn 2001; there were of course a Condolezza Rice, also a hard-line Pentagon spokeswoman Victoria Clarke and a chief political adviser to Dick Cheney, Mary Matalin – among others. Zillah Eisenstein talks about the ”U.S. showcase masquerades as a modernized masculinity in drag.” (2002: 83) Among those others, was First Lady, Laura Bush, who might have experienced a metamorphosis shortly after September 11.th. All of a sudden she appeared in public as a news worthy *political* spokeswoman – and consoler in chief - on national security and international issues. USA’s first lady was not only news worthy as spokesperson on her own right, she even made six political speeches on Afghan issues – on behalf of Afghan women(-and-children) – avoiding, though, any ”masculinity drag”. One of these was a radio address or ”speech for the nation”, speeches her husband – commander in chief - until then had the monopoly to make.

Inspired first and foremost by Tascha Dubwrny (2005), Shawn and Blair (2002), I am approaching (parts of) her first speech, 17.11, 2001: “Muslims around the world have condemned the brutal degradation of women and children by the Taliban regime. The poverty, poor health, and illiteracy that the terrorists and the Taliban have imposed on women in Afghanistan do not confirm with the treatment of women in most of the Islamic world, where women make important contributions in their societies. (...) Only the terrorists and the Taliban threaten to pull out women’s finger-nails for wearing nail polish. The plight of

women and children in Afghanistan is a matter of deliberate human cruelty, carried out by those who seek to intimidate and control.”

By including “Muslims around the world” as her equals, she is appealing to some universal ethos. She is the all embracing mother figure, excluding only Taliban from her empathy. What signifies her speech is how she discusses the violation of women’s rights. She does so without always adding children to Afghan women or women’s rights. Her rhetorical interpellation may reach both liberals and (neo)conservatives of both gender. The juxtaposition, women-and-children - the “plight of women and children” – is, though, continually in focus. This juxtaposition serves as closure of various passages in her speeches, bringing women back into a relationship with their families – as mothers.

Laura Bush is, as Dubwry so vividly describes it, drawing upon the traditions of the republican mother pulpit and crafts an argument for women’s rights that upholds a traditional understanding of womanhood, balancing on a tight rope between the premodern binary private/public dichotomy and a liberal feminist rhetoric. Women-and-children functions in much the same way as abstractions like equality, democracy, modernity and liberty, despite the materiality of both women and children. It indicates the importance of recognizing the ability of material concepts to act as ideology in certain types of discourse - an acknowledgment of the ideological foundations in understanding the material world. Women-and-children gets its meaning through its specific applications and works to support visions essential to rallying wartime nationalism and to presenting citizens with a sense of their nation’s special benevolence. By adding the Taliban threat “to pull out women’s finger-nails for wearing nail polish”, the materiality of suppression seems complete.

A brief glimpse at another speech, as part of an USAID event with Hamid Karzai, dated 29.1.2002, may serve as an illustration of her balancing between neoconservative/maternal and liberal/modern feminist rhetoric. Her exordium is: “And today we continue to speak out on behalf of women and children - especially girls – who, for years, were denied their basic human rights of health and education. Thanks to the efforts of the international community, the days of oppression and terror by the Taliban are becoming memory, we must never forget the atrocities that took place (...) We will not forget that 70 percent of Afghans were malnourished. (...) Thanks to the international coalition these days are now over. The rights and dignity of women and children are once again a priority for the government of Afghanistan.”

The all embracing maternal “we” is strengthened, the agents are first and foremost “the international community” and “international coalition” on whose behalf she is talking – as she

in fact is talking on behalf of and instead of Afghan women. The former librarian's potential ethos concerning her engagement for education, may also be seen as part of her maternal-liberal rhetoric, appealing to most people all over the world. The first lady has once earned for her living, she has thus been more than a wife "standing by her man". Upholding, though, the saving of Afghan women and children as ideograph – be it Afghan or US women (and children), with similar rhetorical dimensions as "building block" in "the international community" – she takes no risks and provokes few.

Ideographs are usually culture bound, meaning different things in different areas, some, as women-and-children, do, though, appeal to common values all over the world, at least to some extent. Her speeches, appearing in public argumentation, may very well have contributed to motivations and justifications for actions performed in the name of the public. Laura Bush chooses a combination of domesticity and maternal values with independence and access to the public sphere, demonstrating at least some erosion of the public/private dichotomy. Her acts of social politicking are mainly practiced on topics related to women and children and simultaneously she is a visible voice on important deliberative matters. She is thus "standing by her man", G. W. Bush, the commander in chief, as the consoler in chief for women (and children) - all over the world?

Liberal Norwegian co-option of feminism

Laura Bush's slogans became to some extent the slogans in dominant Norwegian mass media as well, spoken by powerful Norwegian women. While the first lady represented herself both as a visible helpmate to her husband and as an independent, involved woman with her "own" agenda, the two Norwegian women, whose rhetoric I now will approach, have both roles including institutionalized political power. Seen in context, the synchrony of the "feminist" US and Norwegian rhetoric, is, albeit some differences, not only of great rhetorical importance, but of importance for feminists and feminisms as well – and particular in a climate of another kind of synchrony: today's global wars on terror and increased awareness of gendered issues as expressed in the U.N. Resolution 1325.

Rhetoric exists within particular historical moment in which soft or less soft feminism can be used strategically to justify US foreign policy. While the First Lady had to balance between a neo-conservative and liberal coopted feminist rhetoric, Norwegian female representants of the power elite were dancing on a different tight rope: They had to reach a rather liberal Norwegian public, characterized by equity feminism, i.e. a feminism focused on incorporating

women into existing maledominated (market)liberalist ideology, and simultaneously they had to avoid identification with both the U.S. president, the commander in chief, and the consoler in chief, Laura Bush.

The social democrat and the leader of the governmental defence comitee from 2002 to 2005, Marit Nybakk, was for several years the most important spoke person for Norwegian co-opted feminist rhetoric. In 2002 she opened many of her articles (and speeches) as follows:”Here in the West we for a long time closed our eyes to the brutal treatment of Afghan women because it did not occur to ourselves. Then we experienced September 11 th. and the US-led war to fight against Taliban and the terror network al-Qaida. This is indeed a necessary war.” The interpellation of all people in the West, an all embracing non-gendered “we”, is symptomatic for Nybakk’s rhetoric; alluding both to religious rhetoric (“... because it did not occur to ourselves”/thou should love ...) and to an important Norwegian author and poet, Arnulf Øverland and his poem “You shall not tolerate so terrible well, the injustice that doesn’t strike at yourself...” (“Du skal ikke tale så innerlig vel den urett som ikke rammer deg selv...”)

Elements of love for ”the others” as prescribed in the Bible and viril war rhetoric (“...this is indeed a necessary war”) is, though, indicative of some robust strenght regardless of gender. Equality between women and men, may be seen as part of a ideographic building block within Norwegian war-and-peace rhetoric.

Nybakk, to some extent contrary to Laura Bush, is still breaking the silence about Afghan women, she is not, however, breaking with the rhetoric of gendered silence: During her visits to Afghanistan, mediated in Norwegian mass media, she continously talks on behalf of Afghan women. She is not seen together with them listening to them; their voices are neither heard nor listened to. She is still closing her eyes - ”because it does not occur to herself/ourselves”? The Laura-like maternal rhetoric is here – as elsewhere – absent. The focus is on humanitarian support, Norwegian humanitarian foreign policy and on women’s rights.

This is even more evident when it comes to the rhetoric of the actual Minister of defence, Anne-Grete Strøm-Erichsen. In an article (2007), titled ”Why do we send soldiers abroad,” she writes:”We who every day are working with foreign issues, we know why we are in Afghanistan. For us it is thus easily to forget that it might not necessary be so for others”. Her ethos is somewhat threatened and she has to stand up as one-who-knows-better-than-others, i. e. docere, which seldom is the way to sucess. Strøm-Erchsen continuously reminds us, as she does in this article, that “... we take part, not in war, but in military engagement”, because ”we want to contribute to peace and conflict resolution”. This is, she continues, ”a moral duty

and a natural part of our tradition of peace building and stabilization in the world. Norway's aim is "prevent weapons of mass destruction to come into the hands of terrorists." The humanitarian rhetoric, rhetoric of democracy and freedom, is the red-cross-thread here, running together with traditional gender neutral or gender blind rhetoric. Marginalization of the feminist rhetoric is probably a must since hearts and minds after years with warfare are difficult to reach by such interpellation.

In rhetoric antonyms often become synonyms: the transformation of peace into war – peace means war and war means peace - is common and nearly classical in all war rhetorics. Norwegian peace rhetoric is upheld despite a non-traditional Norwegian foreign policy – NATO's and Norway's out-of-area-warfare." Together with 25 other members of NATO Norway has promised to take part in security and peace building in Afghanistan. Thereby we will also strengthen our common freedom, culture and civilisation," Strøm-Erichsen also tells us in this article. Her eulogy is thus not only pointing to Norway and to NATO, but to the Western culture and civilisation as such. Doing this rhetorical manoeuvre, she is able to include USA, without, though, explicitly including the super- or hyperpower in her panegyric of "our engagement". The invisibility of Afghan women is compensated by an increased focus on NATO; a NATO, apparently independent of USA.

Rhetorical practices are, Kenneth Bruke tells us (1950), activities concerning identities. In Norwegian war rhetoric this is of utmost importance and in another way than rhetoric and identities in USA. For rhetoric to be successful, the audiences must experience that their autonomy is upheld and simultaneously experience identification with the rhetorical interpellation. Identification is about being equal and different, unified and separated. Identification with USA is difficult to establish with George W. Bush in power. Identification with NATO, ISAF and UN is on the other hand strong. Norwegian politicians of both gender are taking part in a rhetorical tight-rope-balancing – different from the North-American and on various levels. Norway, never big enough to have colonies and never big enough to begin a war, is a peacebuilding country per se, and Norwegians are naturally born peaceful, preferring skiing and football for fighting. (See Leira, 2005)

Strøm-Erichsen's speech in Brüssel 2006 to members of EU (European Union) on security issues, may serve as one more illustration of promoting self-evident truths within an apparently harmonious security discourse. Having assured the members of European Union of the Norwegian support to NATO (and EU), she pays specific attention to the war in Afghanistan: "First, the international community must coordinate civilian efforts in a better way. Today the civilian aspects of our engagements, in Afghanistan and elsewhere, are often

fragmented and uncoordinated. This means that the overall results are less effective.” Catastrophes for Afghan civilians are presented as insufficient coordination of “civilian efforts”; it is simply a coordination problem. And the problem is “gender neutral”. The war in Afghanistan thus seems to be a logistic question rather than the very military occupation as such. “Second”, she continues, “development can not take place without the necessary level of security. There needs to be close cooperation between NATO, the EU and the UN, as well as with other international actors, including NGO’s.” The harmonious unity between presumably opposing organisations is taken for granted, and gender is still not an issue. The same organisational harmony is then elevated to include the World Bank: “(...) informal consultations on Afghanistan held this month between senior representatives from NATO, the UN, EU, World Bank, is an excellent initiative to co-ordinate the international community’s efforts to support reconstruction and development in Afghanistan.” Some magic harmony seems to exist; “gender neutral” organisations of all categories ought simply to co-ordinate their efforts.

“On a final note, “ the defence minister notes, “I would also like to welcome the EU conclusion on “promoting gender equality and gender mainstreaming in crisis management, in line with the UN Resolution 1325. This is an important progress. Norway puts great emphasis on the UN resolution and has adopted a national action plan to promote gender issues.” The harmony is at last fulfilled as she “welcomes” the EU members to be on line with Norway – and the UN Resolution.

Metamorphosis happens at different levels and in different contexts. Also NATO seems to have undergone some kind of metamorphosis and has become an organisation for peace-building, independent of USA. The building blocks applied by both these two women thus differ from the US ideographs, and not only by avoiding the juxtaposition women-and-children or references to finger nails and the Norwegian co-option of the U.N. Resolution 1325 (which will be discussed in the final part). The similarity is to be found in the three women’s rhetorical promotion of benevolent philanthropy – dressed in – or without – feminist clothings.

Veiled voices in visual protection scenarios

Visual rhetoric, however different from verbal rhetoric, is also a question of news worthiness. Who seldom is seen as actor, is, in some respect or other, not estimated as news worthy. It is thus about silencing or veiling of voices and of visualizing voices. To supplement the

rhetorical comparison of co-opted feminist rhetoric, my intention is here to bring forth some aspects of how voiceless, veiled bodies mediated in all Western countries, may have contributed to the success of the rhetoric of gendered silence analysed above.

Interpretations do, however, necessarily move across different strata of representations – no code controls all signs, and any sign can shift across multiple codes. All seem to see the same thing, yet the full meaning of the image remains unarticulated and may become a site of struggle (over meaning). This struggle over meaning is to a lesser extent any struggle when it comes to mediated images of war. They have come to represent an extremely and increasingly elaborated template for imaging and representing wars of both the past century and of the twenty-first century. Ideas about nation-state, glory, patriotism, honor, security, protection and humanity come probably more than ever in human history from what we see, thus from what images tell us in framing parts of warfare realities. (R. Hariman and J. L. Lucaites, 2003. See also B. Zelizer, 2004, B. v.d. Lippe, 1992)

In the construction of Afghan women, eliding their agency, foregrounded by their clothing, i. e. the burqa, they easily became a somewhat homogenous mass of females – or rather a mass of burqas. Wandering alone, together with children or with other women, in desert-like terrains, in cities filled with ruins after decades of warfare, the Afghan women became icons, representing what Western females are not. They became, as Stabile and Kumar so illustrating describes them “the passive grounds for an argument aimed at imperialist domination, the discourse of protection used by politicians and media alike – denied women any agency decision-making process that affected their daily lives and futures.” (2005:770. See also Susan Jefford, 1991, J. H. Stiehm, 1982, C. A. Stables, 1994)

The iconic status of the Afghan women, imprisoned not only within their burqa, but imprisoned as citizens too, cannot, as both some postcolonial theorists (Thorbjørnsrud, 2005, Ahmed, 1992, M. Cooke, 2002:468-470) and Susan Sontag (1977:85-91) tell us, be understood without context, i. e. their history and culture. This too may be seen as part of a rhetoric of gendered silence. The Afghan women became voiceless veiled bodies.

Identification was built on victimization and protection mainly – against gendered villains or male barbarians. The voices of well educated women were silenced as these women also were invisible or at best marginalized. By fear of making the protection scenario less plausible? one may ask. The central framework employed to justify the U. S. war in Afghanistan was very much the traditional Orientalist. (L. Ahmed, 1992, J. Glazov, 2004, M. Lazreg, 1994, U. Narayam, 1997)

The Western gaze silenced more by invisibility: It silenced the scream of children eagerly running to catch Western packets of sweets from above, which were not packets of sweets but cluster bombs, the gaze gave no open doors to weddings where hundred of family members were gathered. During traditional Afghan wedding the saluting with guns is a part of the celebration - not Taliban/al Qaida attacks. The invisibility of multiple villages devastated and unknown numbers of inhabitants killed by similar mistakes, is a silencing so necessary for the Western rhetoric to succeed.

The extremely selective selection of images served most of all as references to ourselves, to what differs “us from them”. Robert Hariman and John Lucaites suggest this by saying “the public as a body of strangers constituted solely by the act of being addressed and paying attention, it can only acquire self-awareness and historical agency if individual auditors see themselves in a collective representations that are the material of public culture.” (2003:36) And the collective representations have to be supported by stable representations of ourselves, not the least visual representations.

Once more the West is constituted as a beacon of civilization carrying the heavy burden and obligation to tame the some part of the Islamic world and liberate some of its women. Stable and Kumar express this clearly: “It served to erase not only the political struggles of women in Afghanistan against both the Northern Alliance and the Taliban, but those of women in the West as well, who, contrary to Orientalist claims about the eternal virtues of Western civilization, have had to organize and fight for what rights they enjoy today.” (2005:776) Cloud, referring to MCGee, is linking the potential power of images to ideographs and writes:” The idea of *the visual ideograph* – which are more than recurring images that shift in meaning depending on context; they also *index verbal ideographic slogans, making abstractions such as < clash of civilizations> concrete.*” (Cloud, 2004: 287) Burqa-veiled women could easily be seen as “clashes-of civilization”, one more proof of Huntington’s visions for the future, similar to, but perhaps with somewhat less literally effect than, the “clash of the twin towers”?

Repetitive representations of burqa-veiled Afghan women as well as dark haired “brown” men restrained the visual polysemy of Afghans as human beings. The veil was mainly capitalized as both a visual and linguistic signifier - in all Western countries. The clothing of Afghan men were of less – if any – importance; the faces of brown men were, though, capitalized in a similar manner, thus as visual and linguistic signifiers of an enemy image, thereby strengthening the rhetorical potency of the veiled female bodies in need of protection. Abu-Lughod is even more explicit in her feminist perspectives on Orientalism. She sees an

imperial logic that genders and separates subject peoples so that men are the Other and the women are civilizable. “To defend our universal civilization we must rescue the women. To rescue these women we must attack these men. These women are to be rescued not because they are more “ours” than “theirs” but rather because they will have become more “ours” through rescue mission.” (2002, p. 469) Images of brown, dark haired and bearded Muslim men, represent a masculinity of aliens, the lowest kind of masculinity at the oriental masculinity hierarchy. (E. Said, 1988, R. W. Connel, 2002: 53-75)

The demonization of out-group males is a key feature of the propaganda discourse that paved and paves the way for gendered discourses, be they visualized or verbalized. A reification of Afghan men as potential or real terrorists differ not fundamentally from the reification of Afghan veiled women. They all easily come to represent not only the enemy, but also the evil, the monsters and the sub-humans – another evidence of “the clash”? When seen, the Afghan men easily become concrete visualizations of the abstract terms associated with enemy images, similar to the veiled bodies as concrete proofs of victimization.

Alongside women, in need of protection, some few men among “these others”, are, however, always seen as civilizable – even within hegemonic discourse. Seen together with other war Afghan men, war lords or not war lords, the blurring lines between “them” and “us”, between potential terrorists and the civilizable Karzai-men, might have complicated the visual icons and the visual ideographs. Seen together with Karzai and with Western politicians, they were simultaneously seen with some identity attributions somewhat similar to Western masculinities. They are in fact a necessary component for legitimation of war. It has to be somebody – some one’s bodies – worthy to protect, liberate and with whom civilization can be built. (E. Rosenberg, 2002, G. Stables, 2003, von der Lippe, 2003) President Karzai, his men – thus implicitly the brutal patriarchal warlords - were contributed human characteristics, deprived, though, they too, of any real selfdefined agency.

Sometimes it seems easier to identify with oppressed women than with powerful, strong and potent women who also might be in need of support, support based, however, on solidarity as equals. Potent Afghan women speaking themselves about needs and aspirations based on their own experiences, could perhaps have raised problems to the humanitarian rhetoric of feminist cooptation. The Norwegian identity – as well as the North-American – might have been challenged by seeing Afghan women acting – most of them more forcefully than the majority of Western women ever have done.

The voices in these visual epics were mainly the voices of benevolent Western fathers - and mothers. The main assumption in North-American and Norwegian mass media seemed to be

that Muslim women and some men were better off after an invasion representing both modernity, democracy, civilization, liberation and liberation of women. The verbal rhetoric and its (temporary) success could have been severely threatened if the selections of images had told other stories. Without narratives relief – verbal, visual or both – the rhetoric would have failed.

Feminist co-option

The voices listened to and voices silenced in mainstream media, tell us much about who and which values are “protected” and how protection is legitimized. These voices thus tell us much about whose security is on the political agenda, at the global, national and regional levels. The rhetoric analysed above, may, to some extent, and despite the limited material, mirror some aspects of hegemonic discourse among scholars as well as scholars belonging to various – and competing IR discourses, some feminist discourses included. (di Stiphano, 1983, J. H. Stiehm, 1982. See also P. A. Chilton, 1995, 1996, von der Lippe, 2002, 2003, 2007)

The assumptions not only the realists within the hegemonic discourse use when analysing states and explaining their behaviour in the international system are still, and despite both changes and challenges to this discourse, heavily dependent on characteristics that we in the West have come to associate with masculinities—hegemonic masculinities—such as autonomy, sovereignty, autonomy, independence, power, stability, strength and honour. In the name of universality it is mainly realists and neo-conservatives who are criticized for having constructed a world view based on the experiences of some (or even a few) men. (A. J. Tickner, 1992, 2001) Cheryl Glenn may be right when she underscores that silence can be a specifically feminist rhetorical art, often one of resistance. In a talkative Western culture which equates speech with civilization itself, the silence focused on in this article, could instead be seen as symptomatic for “our” civilization’s representation of itself. It is about who is or are in power of the power of words and images telling us stories about ourselves and a specific Western way of shaping realities.

Contrary to the Bush-women, who often speak negatively of feminism, of welfare mothers, day care, abortion or other issues of concern for women, most Norwegian women are firmly positioned as liberal feminists. Abortion in Norway as women’s choice is taken for nearly-granted, welfare mothers is often a political issue, but not welfare mothers as such. Even welfare fathers are sometimes discussed. Many of these gains are obtained exactly by the

social democrats, mainly women within this party, gains which have neither challenged marketliberalism nor the U. S. hegemony in international relations. (H. Hernes, 1998, C. Holst, 2002)

The dominant Norwegian gender equality policy is also called a "balance equality" because of its focus on a 50/50 balanced relationship between men and women. Gender justice is mainly considered synonymous with gender balance. (Thus differing from Nancy Fraser's feminism, conf. her concept of "participation parity", 2003. See also C. Holst, 2007) This is, as will be seen, of some importance for the rhetorical use of UN Resolution 1325 – also within mainstream Norwegian feminist peace studies, represented not the least by Helga Hernes. (2007/2008) Excluding the blurring lines between war, military occupation and security, she makes manifest her co-opted feminist position safely within the Norwegian – and hegemonic – discourse.

"The fact that international operations will demand a steady increase in demand for personal able to communicate with both women and men, has been the main reason for the decision to increase the number of women (in armed forces)," Hernes summarizes her interpretation of the UN resolution 1325. The meaning of "international operations" is not discussed and is juxtaposed with peace- and conflict processes. From this perspective it goes nearly without saying that we should welcome an increased number of women in armed forces – a balance equality rhetoric.

The taken for granted of Norway as participating in peace-building operations independent of U.S.'s war on terror, is the perspective Hernes uses when seeing what might be seen in the Resolution 1325. She takes a position of a woman seeing who may protect whom from whom. The benevolent mother sees no villains within the forces of which Norway is part. Out-of-aera-operations, i. e. wars, be it under ISAF, NATO and by some rhetorical magic (at least) more or less independent of USA, are absent and silenced.

Rhetoric is essentially situational. What matters, first and foremost, is not what rhetoric means, but what it does in and with the world. The rhetoric used in this text may rather be seen as propaganda for recruiting Norwegian women in armed forces and thereby attributing the Afghan war a character of serving human- and women's right issues too. The privileged masculinity of the Afghan public sphere is evaded and erased. Afghan women are made invisible and muted in Hernes' text – a text abstracted from the actual situation, thus abstracted from the fact the real wars are going on. She omits exactly what Cynthia Enloe underlines when discussing this Resolution: "(...) when on occasion women's liberation is wielded instrumentally by any masculinised elite as a rationale-of-convenience for their own

actions, we should go on high alert; they'll put back on shelf this rationale-of-convenience just as soon as it no longer serves their deeper, longer-range purpose." (2006: 263) By avoiding any thoughts of this kind, Hernes is able to position herself as gender aware peace researcher and feminist, working for women's liberation - within the armed forces, and thereby protecting and liberating brown women from some brown men? The white man's burden has now become the (some) white woman's burden.

The protected or victim has changed. In 2001 it was the North-American people, then it became the Afghan people, mainly women(-and-children) violated by the terrorists as villains, who were very much the same in Norway and U.S.. When it comes to the protagonist(s) within the stories, the difference may – to some degree - be seen within the frame of a "womenandchildren-protected-by-stateswomen-scenario, paraphrasing Cynthia Enloe's "womenandchildren-protected-by-statesmen"-scenario. (C. Enloe, 1992, p. 96) The Western way of understanding liberalism and democracy, women's liberation included, still seems to be pregnant with positive futures - only Westerners are able to offer others a teleological path to the future. (Z. Eisenstein, 2002. See also Saba Mahmood, 2001) We all have the same interests - don't we? And "we-even-know-how-to-obtain-these".

One can choose silence, but if this choice is not one's own choice, silence might mean violence. Afghan women did not choose this silence, they even continuously broke the silence, without, however, being really listened to. And the violence continues, but is rarely seen. As objects of a voyeuristic Western gaze, the Afghan women – and men - might also be seen as subjected to "imperial feminism" – white women alongside white men protecting the others from burqa and brown men.

To avoid silencing completely the voices of Afghan women, let me quote Malalai Joya, Afghanistan's youngest and most out-spoken parliamentarian – representing, however, not all Afghan women (April 12, 2007): "The US government removed the ultra-reactionary and brutal regime of Taliban, but instead of relying on Afghan people, pushed us from the frying pan into the fire and selected its friends from among the most dirty and infamous criminals of the "Northern Alliance", which is made up of the sworn enemies of democracy and human rights, and are as dark-minded, evil, and cruel as the Taliban". How many outside Afghanistan have heard about her or seen this heroine? She is – as is the case for other Afghan women opposing the war – not worthy to be listened to.

Liberal Norwegian feminists seem to see some feminist subject positions within today's hegemonic global discourse order, without, however, discussing how such positions could or should be established. At a time with increased awareness of women's equal rights issues, the

co-optation of feminist rhetoric contribute, in my eyes, to shift the neo-colonial system of meaning from self-interest to self-sacrifice, just too wellknown from history.

Gender alone does not account for the complexities of national identities in times of war – it is the interplay of gender, race, nation, religion and economic power structures that provides a deeper understanding of the issues at stake and sometimes class, race and nation “trump” gender. Who has the privilege of speaking “when veils seem more like walls”, as Royster puts it (and I referred to above), is more important than the veiling of bodies. My story about gendered war rhetoric and veiling of voices in mass media as well as in academic discourses, may shed some light of some parts of what is at stake at a global level when gender awareness is included – an awareness so easily co-opted in Western rhetoric of liberation within a gender equality discourse.

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