Prostitutes, Mercenaries and Feminism: The Public and the Private in International Relations

Prostitutas, Mercenários e Feminismo: O Público e o Privado nas Relações Internacionais

Prostitutas, mercenarios y feminismo: lo público y lo privado en las relaciones Internacionales

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Abstract

Feminist approaches have become increasingly present in International Relations studies. Using these theoretical perspectives, the present article analyzes the basis on which rests the prejudice toward prostitutes and employees of Military and Private Security Companies (MPSCs). The premise is that social constructions ideally locate the role of women in the private sphere, while public spaces are reserved for regular military soldiers. Our argument is that both the prostitute, when positioning herself in the public environment, and the MPSC employee, when in the private sphere, destabilize the expected idealities for their categories, generating distrust, repulsion, and uncertainty.

Key-words: Prostitutes, Mercenaries, Feminism, Public and private, Private Military and Security Companies.

Resumo

Abordagens feministas têm se tornado cada vez mais presentes nos estudos de Relações Internacionais. Utilizando essas perspectivas teóricas, o presente artigo analisa as bases sobre as quais se sustenta o preconceito em relação às prostitutas e funcionários de Empresas Militares Privadas (MPSCs). A premissa é que as construções sociais localizam idealmente o papel das mulheres na esfera privada, enquanto os espaços públicos são reservados aos soldados militares regulares. Nosso argumento é que tanto a prostituta, ao se posicionar no ambiente público, quanto os funcionários de Empresas Militares Privadas, na esfera privada, desestabilizam as idealidades esperadas para suas categorias, gerando desconfiança, repulsa e incerteza.

Palavras-chave: Prostitutas, Mercenários, Feminismo, Público e Privado, Empresas Militares Privadas.

Resumen

Los enfoques feministas se han vuelto cada vez más presentes en los estudios de Relaciones Internacionales. Desde estas perspectivas teóricas, este artículo analiza las bases sobre las que se sustentan los prejuicios en relación con las prostitutas y los empleados de las Empresas Militares Privadas (MPSC). La premisa es que las construcciones sociales ubican idealmente el papel de las mujeres en la esfera privada, mientras que los espacios públicos están reservados para los militares regulares. Nuestro argumento es que tanto la prostituta, al posicionarse en el ámbito público, como los empleados de Empresas Militares Privadas, en el ámbito privado, desestabilizan los ideales esperados para sus categorías, generando desconfianza, repulsión e incertidumbre.

Palabras clave: Prostitutas, Mercenarios, Feminismo, Público y Privado, Empresas Militares Privadas.

Introduction

The public/private dichotomy has been used to categorize human beings and normalize their actions as social agents (Barry, 1996; Chapkis, 1997; Gorman-Murray, 2008). The construction and cultural dissemination of this dichotomy point to ideal spaces of occupation of gender that reproduce relations of domination between the masculine and the feminine. The emergence of feminist approaches in International Relations (IR) since the 1980s has sought to introduce the study of these dichotomies into more traditional academic debates. According to feminist theory, binary oppositions such as public and private spaces are mobilized to accommodate pre-defined social roles, with each gender occupying an expected location. Any undue occupation of spaces by certain identities would be seen as abnormal or pathological.

Traditional male-privileging views assign women to the private sphere, the ideal place for their assumed natural qualities and virtues, such as motherhood, love, trust, and integrity. On the other hand, men, likewise idealized for their bravery, boldness, and strength, would find in the public sphere the necessary tools so that their own natural virtues could be fully expressed (Siltanen; Stanworth, 1984).

Drawing on the analytical contributions of feminist scholars, the present work analyzes two categories that contradict this logic of the public/private: the prostitute and the mercenary. Without ignoring the fact that there are also male sex workers, as well as female mercenaries or employees of Military and Private Security Companies (MPSCs), this study focuses on the socially constructed idealities around these professions. Despite the fact that there are men who prostitute themselves and women who work for MPSCs, the narratives that describe these functions refer us to the role of the feminine and the masculine respectively.[3]

Our argument is that, in contradicting the acceptable logic of their social roles, both the prostitute, occupying the public environment, and the mercenary, when situated in the private sphere, destabilize the expected idealities of their genders, generating distrust, repulsion, and uncertainty. The analysis is developed with reference to a literature composed of theoretical views in the areas of Sociology and International Relations.

3. We may even note that part of the prejudice that is held about men prostituting themselves or women fighting as mercenaries or soldiers comes precisely from the social expectation that delimits their professional idealities into the two genders.

In particular, we try to show how the problem of gender manifests for the two categories analyzed. Through a literature review on this topic, and applying a deductive methodology, we'll discuss the reasons for these specific cases.

The definition of the public/private dichotomy is not a consensus in the literature. In a more traditional sense, the realm of the public is linked to the idea of social practice and politics. According to Hannah Arendt (2016), the very condition of being human requires the company of other people who give meaning to the actions of our species. Thus, according to her, a person who lives in complete isolation from other people, would not differ from other animals for not being able to obtain awareness of their condition or give meaning to their acts as something that occurs beyond the merely biological processes of survival (labor).

The condition of being human requires the activity of creating artificialism over the natural world (work), and, on a social level, practicing interaction in the plurality of a society (action). In this way, the private realm would be linked to the mere effort of survival and to the more restricted human interactions originally linked to family. The creation of the public space occurs in the transposition both of the family nucleus and of the condition of mere provider of biological life. The public (usually guaranteed by the establishment of the State, but historically also having its condition created by the role of religion) would be the exercise of plurality in social and political spheres with the aim of generating consensus, not by the exercise of violence, but by discourse and persuasion (Arendt, 2016).

In this article we work with the dichotomy of public and private using the state sphere as a reference. The regular soldier, by nature an agent of the state sphere, would always be in the public domain. Not so much for defending the interests of society (which could also be done by private agents), but because they are subject to control, inspection, and regulation by governments. Similarly, the activity of prostitution would also be in this public sphere because it is subject to regulation and control by the State.

The mercenary and the figure of the domestic woman would be in the private sphere. Both would not be subject to state inspection and regulation, since their relationships (the mercenary with their contractor and the wife with her husband) ideally don't belong to State interference.

When referring to combatants considered mercenaries, we are not including employees of larger and more transparent Private Military and Security Companies, which are subject to state laws and become susceptible to government regulations. In these cases, social prejudice is minimal or almost nonexistent because the State can control and limit the scope of their actions. Social prejudice towards the figure of the mercenary, when referring to MPSCs, comes precisely from companies that escape this regulation, leaving their employees free to act without any interference from the States.

The same occurs with the phenomenon of prostitution. Those women who prostitute themselves as the only means of survival are not the main targets of social prejudice. These are considered more as victims of

society than susceptible to social opprobrium. By prostituting themselves only for their own sustenance, such women are merely ensuring their biological subsistence (labor). However, those who choose this profession freely, even having other opportunities to ensure their own sustenance, are the main victims of collective prejudice. It is precisely these last women who, instead of limiting themselves to the private sphere of the family nucleus, submit to the regulation of their activities by public bodies, and, therefore, move out of the private sphere and come to be situated in the public sphere.

The debate on mercenaries and prostitutes, with their respective prejudices linked to these two figures, can contribute to a better understanding of two contemporary debates in this area of knowledge. One of them refers to the use of Private Military Companies. Beyond discussions about effectiveness, pros and cons, and the legitimacy of these organizations, there is an ongoing debate about whether the employees of these companies can or cannot be considered modern-day mercenaries.

This discussion becomes relevant not just from a legal standpoint (since mercenary activity is prohibited by the Geneva Convention) but also because the prejudice surrounding the figure of the mercenary leads to any study advocating the closeness between employees of MPSCs and mercenaryism resulting in the tacit delegitimization of the use of these companies. Thus, understanding the origins of the international community's aversion to the figure of the mercenary means situating the debate beyond its merely legal aspects, showing all the complexity of this type of discussion.

A second debate in vogue in International Relations lies in the feminist view of this field of knowledge. Among the various points addressed by feminist authors in IR, we find the denunciation of the sexist view of society that restricts women's roles to spaces ideally considered as private. In this way, women who act in the international environment are often prevented from playing roles as soldiers; from occupying decision-making positions and even from acting in prominent positions in international politics. Therefore, understanding how these idealities restrict and judge the places reserved for women also means having a clearer view of how prejudices can arise from the transpositions of these barriers created by the sexist view. The case of prostitutes, although it can also be applied to the domestic environment (as in the case of mercenaries), helps us better understand the dynamics and the basis of these aversions created by the breaking of these idealized locations by societies.

We begin the article exposing the emergence of feminist theories in International Relations and its main approaches: liberal, critical, constructivist, poststructuralist, and postcolonial. Above all, we emphasize the omnipresence of the gender problem in its critiques and analyses, as well as the denunciation of the power relations and domination that this variable carries. Proceeding with the theme of prostitution, the second part analyzes feminist approaches to prostitution, highlighting the sexological, constructivist, and Marxist interpretations of the theme. We introduce into our analysis a discussion about the binary dichotomies between the prostitute and her conceptual opposite, namely the wife/

mother, showing how the characteristics attributed to each category diverge substantially from each other.

After that, we advance with the analysis of the figure of the mercenary and his conceptual opposite, the soldier in the regular armed forces. In this part, we highlight how the private version of the soldier—the mercenary or employee of an MPSC—destabilizes the idealities expected for his category. Just as the ideal space of occupation of women would be the private sphere, in the case of the soldier defending the homeland, it would be the public sphere. While the soldier (public) is associated with love of the motherland, humanitarian work, nationalism, and ideology, the mercenary (private) is seen as someone who is at the service of whomever pays more; the mercenary is seen as serving their personal interests and can easily abandon their charge in case of a more attractive offer.

In the third and fourth parts, we discuss how gender identities in the international environment (in the case of mercenaries) reproduce the same logic of domination found in the local sphere (the case of prostitutes), reserving for each category a space considered legitimate for the stabilization of their identities. Because they fail to understand the ideational logic, both in the international environment and in the domestic sphere, these workers end up being the targets of prejudice because they do not occupy the places reserved to them.

Feminism and International Relations

Feminist theories emerged in IR between the late 1980s and early 1990s (Sylvester, 2003; Tickner, 2001), associated with the so-called third debate (Lapid, 1989).[4] The first works in the 1980s aimed to question women's role in global politics and how they would be represented (Elshtain, 1987; Enloe, 2014). More than that, these works challenged scholars in International Relations to think about how their theories could be reformulated and their understanding of global politics improved by paying special attention to new analytical experiences. According to these authors, only with the introduction of *gender* analysis in international studies would we observe a considerable analytical impact on some key IR concepts such as sovereignty, state, and security (Sjoberg; Tickner, 2013b). The introduction of the gender issue as a relevant category and analytical tool would construct alternatives to disciplinary studies dominated by rationalist and reproductive methods of the logic of masculine (True, 2005; Ackerly; Stern; True, 2006; Steans, 2006). Certain that women would be underrepresented in IR, the main concern for feminists would be to explain the subordination of the feminine gender, or the unfair asymmetry between the positions held by women and men in the social, economic, and especially political spheres (Whitworth, 1994).

According to these authors, global politics would not only relegate female experiences to the margins, but would also ratify relations between dichotomies, especially those related to the division between the public and the private. Women would be ideally reserved for the private sphere and characterized by irrationality, weakness, emotion, sensitivity,

4. According to the author, the first debate would be between realists and idealists. The second between neorealists and neoliberals. The third between the latter and post-positivist theoretical approaches, among them, feminism.

and motherhood. Men would be assigned to the public sphere and idealized as rational, virile, strong, brave, and heroic (Shepherd, 2010).

Feminists questioned the frontiers through which such opposition had settled in the international arena and sought the means to combat them. Starting from hermeneutical, discursive and humanistic methodologies, they used philosophical traditions previously ignored by conventional approaches, looking at global politics through "gender lenses" (Peterson, Runyan, 2010; Sjoberg, Tickner, 2013a).

In the field of foreign policy, feminists warn that the male sex is not only dominant, but also the policymaker based on the assumption that if they are rational and strategically oriented actors, they would be better able to represent the nation's line of defense, making better life or death decisions (True, 2005). In their study of foreign policy and defense, Nancy E. McGlen and Meredith Reid Sarkees (1993) concluded that women are rarely insiders in the political game and even more rarely make or participate in foreign policy decisions that lead to war, for example.

But despite sharing a deep interest in gender equality or, as they prefer to assert, in "gender emancipation" in IR, feminism is not a one-note theory. The variety of activism associated with feminism parallels the innumerable paths that its arguments may take (Jaggar, 1983; Mohanty, Russo, Torres, 1991; Steans, 1998; Sylvester, 1996; Zalewski, 2000). Liberal Feminism, for example, draws attention to the subordination suffered by women in global politics and argues about the need to include women in the areas of the public sphere that have been denied to them (Sjoberg; Tickner, 2013b). It departs from the assumption that women have the same capacity for action as men and cannot be excluded from any social sphere: higher education, government, international institutions, and financial affairs, among others. Liberal feminists investigate, for example, the inequalities between men and women and the human rights violations committed disproportionately against women, such as international trafficking and rape at war. Their approach uses gender as an explanatory variable in the analysis of foreign policy through statistical variations (Caprioli; Boyer, 2001). They also argue that discrimination deprives women of having equal rights to achieve their own goals. While men are judged by their individual merits, women are judged by their feminine qualities or collectively as a group. Such barriers could be eliminated by removing the obstacles that underpin them, and by providing equal opportunities to both genders (Whitworth, 2008; Tickner, 2001)[5].

Critical Feminism, by contrast, goes beyond Liberal Feminism and its use of gender as an analytical variable. This approach focuses less on women's participation in the public sphere and more on unequal relationships between men and women as gender representations in a patriarchal society, in which men have historically wished to control women's sexuality, reproduction, and other social roles. For critical feminists, men and women are essentially different and similar to each other in several respects. These authors tend to agree that men are less prone to showing emotion and more aggressive and competitive, while women are more caring and more emotional. In these terms, society is organized taking into account masculine characteristics, privileging patriarchal norms and

5. However, Liberal Feminists tend to be criticized by other approaches for using methods considered positivist in their analyses. See, for example, McMillan C (1982) Women, Reason and Nature: Some Philosophical Problems with Feminism. Princeton: Princeton University Press; Steans J (2010) 'Feminist perspectives' in Steans J et al. An Introduction to International Relations Theory: perspectives and themes, 3rd edition. Essex: Pearson, p. 155-82; and Mohanty CT, Russo A; Torres L (eds.) (1991) Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

rules, influencing not only our institutions, but also the way we see the world (Fraser; Nicholson, 1990).

The same impetus for achieving change in the way we understand international politics is also shared by Constructivist Feminism. Constructivist feminists focus on how ideas about gender form and are shaped by global politics. In her book *The Global Construction of Gender,* Elisabeth Prügl (1999) analyzes how women have been treated in international negotiations and in international law. Even when they represent a greater number of workers than men, women still suffer lower wages and poorer working conditions. In the specific case of domestic workers, the author explains that the justification is given because domestic work is not considered "real work," since the private sphere associated with the family differs from the public sphere in which work, in fact, would occur, lacking higher wages and individual rights. Such a dichotomy would not be limited to the local environment, but also the international (West; Austrin, 2005). Although in similar positions and with responsibilities as great as those of men in international organizations, the salary between them would diverge under the claim that women are less productive than men who hold the same positions. Prügl and other Constructivist feminists study the processes by which ideas about gender influence global politics, as well as the ways in which global politics shape ideas about gender.

In an even more relativistic and discursive spectrum, Post-structuralist Feminism constitutes one of the most important contributions to International Relations. Post-structuralist feminists assert that the meanings attributed to the things around us are coded through language (Sjoberg; Tickner, 2013b), and that linguistically constructed dichotomies such as strong/weak, rational/emotional, and public/private serve to empower the masculine over the feminine. As regards international relations, the civilized/barbaric, order/anarchy, and developed/underdeveloped dichotomies play an important role in how we divide the world linguistically, always considering a positive side and a negative one. In this way, post-structuralist feminists want to deconstruct hierarchies, especially those related to gender that lead women to be portrayed as inferior and men as superior. To disrupt the hierarchies that privilege one (man) to the detriment of the other (woman), it would be crucial to verify how we value and ratify the superiority/inferiority relationship between genders.

Some prominent works by poststructuralist feminists, the main theoretical argument of this article, serve as the basis for the deconstruction of social roles, especially those related to the valuation of gender dichotomies. Hooper (2001), among others[6], are examples of poststructuralist researchers who have contributed to feminist thought. Shepherd's work, in particular, looks at how the concept of gender factors into the UN Security Council resolutions and how it is implemented in peace processes. In arguing that women are more peaceful than men, the former would be expected to be more involved in conflict negotiation processes, assuming that they would be more adept at dealing with the stabilization of violence and the resumption of peace.

6. See also Shepherd L (2008) Gender, Violence, and Security: Discourse as Practice. London: Zed Books; Sylvester C (1994) Feminist Theory and International Relations in a Postmodern Era. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Sylvester C (2003) Feminist International Relations: An Unfinished Journey. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

However, this process does not always work, revealing its precariousness and simplicity, as well as the very inability of the United Nations to include women in their peacemaking processes. Something that could represent gender emancipation instead reinforces the continuity of dichotomies and stereotypes around women.

Post-colonial Feminism is also based on binary dichotomies created from gender relations (Spivak, 2010; Lorde, 2007). Its concern, however, is with the relationship of subordination established under the aegis of imperialism. In claiming that history has been told by colonizers who tend to be white and Western, post-colonialist theorists embark on a difficult task: rewriting history including those whose perspectives have been excluded, as well as incorporating interpretations from the margins. Post-colonial feminists criticize Western feminists for treating women as a homogenous category, failing to recognize their differences in culture, social class, race, and geographic location. Such disregard would deprive women of their own stories by assuming that they all have similar needs for emancipation when in fact their realities are quite different.

Prostitutes and mercenaries

Feminist approaches in International Relations introduced gender as an essential variable to analyze the dynamics of actors' interactions in the international environment. However, despite this effort, their analyses still seem to have little practical impact on international policies (Hutchings, 1999). Feminist analysts argue that this vacuum exists because politics, at its various levels, is still considered a mostly male environment (Enloe, 2014). Nevertheless, because it is the only approach that uses gender as an analytical starting point (Sylvester, 1996), some themes find in feminism a legitimate spokesperson for their positions. Prostitution is one such theme.

Commonly considered an intrinsic condition of women under a patriarchal society (Barry, 1984; Gorman-Murray, 2008; Pateman, 1998; Scoular, 2004) and often cited as the absolute embodiment of male patriarchal privilege (see Kesler, 2002, p. 219-35) prostitution has been approached from different perspectives. Sexological approaches, for example, start from the premise that male behavior, when using women in prostitution, is a simple result of their biological imperative, for which such behavior would be natural. Constructivist approaches, on the contrary, consider male behavior in relation to prostitution as historical and socially constructed through male domination in detriment of female subordination, with responsibility and guilt over the existence of prostitutes (Jeffreys, 1997; Rezeanu, 2015). Marxist feminists allege that prostitution is the only activity in a capitalist society in which women are, not infrequently, better paid than men (Overall, 1992)[7].

As previously observed, the private sphere has historically been considered feminine, while the public sphere has remained exclusive to the masculine gender (Bourdieu, 2002; Bryson, 2007; Löfren, 2003) with each environment having expected and acceptable behavior. In the case of women, the good wife, affectionate, reproductive, and sensitive, would

7. For a critique of the Marxist analysis raised by Overall, see Laurie Shrage's (1993) Moral Dilemmas of Feminism. New York: Routledge.

find in the domestic environment the ideal place where her natural virtues would blossom. Prostitution, by contrast, contradicts this logic. If the private sphere is the proper place for a woman, the prostitute, in pervading the public environment, violates the natural order of things.

At the state level, prostitution in the past was considered by authorities as a problem of law and order; an abnormal phenomenon that would be associated with other anomalous behaviors such as drunkenness and trickery, causing embarrassment and public annoyance in neighborhoods, threatening security and violating peace. Authorities generally took steps to control or to curb prostitution, limiting it to certain areas, and registering women who provided sex services in taverns, pubs, and brothels. From the morality point of view, prostitution was a sin or an addiction. Prostitutes would be "fallen women," lacking redemption and salvation (Outshoorn, 2004).

From the 1970s, with the strengthening of feminist movements, a great effort has been made to change the stigma created around the prostitute. Claiming that the arguments surrounding the practice said little or nothing about the actual situation of women, feminists problematized this practice, presenting the idea of "erotic work" (see Chapkis, 1997 and Nagle, 1997) in an attempt to eliminate the stereotypes surrounding prostitution and to bring the discussion to a commercial and professional level (Augustín, 2005; O'connell Davidson, 2002). The use of new terms such as "sex work" or "sex worker" represented not only an important semantic change but also the strengthening of the practice in terms of work and human rights[8] (see Delacoste; Alexander, 1998 and Pheterson, 1989).

8. In this article, we used the term "prostitutes" as it is the one most closely associated with the prejudice under analysis. Although we agree that the term "sex workers" is more appropriate, this choice would not reflect the prejudice present not only in reality but also in the designation of this type of professionals.

In relation to the study of prostitution, at least two great perspectives are present in the literature. The first argues that women who work as prostitutes are exploited by the sex industry (mostly men). In addition, prostitution and the sex industry together would serve to sustain and reinforce this practice while strengthening the distorted image created around the prostitute. The second argues that in a free society, prostitution is chosen by many women as a way of working, although they do not enjoy the same rights afforded to other professional workers (O'connell Davidson, 1998). These women should be free to work without fear of exploitation or violence (O'neill, 2001). More than that, sexual/erotic work arguably serves as a "liberating ground for women" (see Chapkis, 1997) regarding the discipline of their social role, traditionally relegated to the private sphere. These authors also argue that violations of the practice are linked to the legal and social construction of prostitutes as sexual deviants rather than as workers (O'connell Davidson, 2002). Such a view becomes even clearer in light of criticisms of binary dichotomies around sex: normal/abnormal, pleasurable/dangerous, healthy/ill. In this way, prostitutes, besides being stigmatized, are seen as dangerous due to the fact they became accessible to anyone, what is considered inappropriate for the feminine gender.

But we are far from reaching a consensus regarding the idea of considering prostitution a job, especially as regards its ability to liberate women from a strictly patriarchal society. Jill Jesson (1993), in reviewing several papers on the subject, argues that feminism and prostitution are

not easily reconcilable. If, on the one hand, some feminists claim that prostitution is a free choice that empowers women in a society that has little to offer them, many others understand that, regardless of how the practice is seen, it will always represent a masculine exploitation of the feminine. For more radical feminists, for example, prostitution makes a woman a "sex slave" because of the sexual violence that is always present in the relationship between genders. In addition, legalizing the practice means authorizing and granting men the right to women, legally affirming a phenomenon to be combated (Barry, 1996; Jeffreys, 1997). In other words, exploitation and submission would continue, only under a different guise.

Regardless of which argument best represents prostitution, the fact is that by introducing the idea of gender into the discussion, feminist analysis challenges the sexual and social inequalities which, in their view, serve to replicate ideology, patriarchy, and hierarchical gender relations (Barry, 1996).

In turn, studies on Military and Private Security Companies (MPSCs) have noted the growth of this market after the end of the Cold War[9]. Several factors are considered responsible for this exponential growth: the large labor force, militarily well-trained and idle, available for hire by these companies; the presence of cutting-edge weapons on the black market—mainly from the former Soviet republics—and offered at relatively low prices to the private sector; the increase in the number of regional conflicts, generating a greater demand for private security services; and the advent of the neoliberal wave with its assumption that privatization is the best way to increase the efficiency of services provided in society (Singer, 2003).

The myriad of services offered by MPSCs has since ranged from contributing troops for direct combat to reinforce the regular military and personnel in conflict zones to providing military apparel, training soldiers from various countries, and/or working on data processing and logistics. Unlike the former mercenaries, who concentrated their efforts on direct support of regular troops during battles, the current MPSCs also provide aid to humanitarian organizations by supporting populations in regions hit by natural disasters and supporting UN peace operations (Avant, 2005; Ostensen, 2009).

> Private security companies provide military and security services to states, international organizations, INGOs, global corporations, and wealthy individuals. Every multi-lateral operation conducted by the UN since 1990 included the presence of PSCs (AVANT, 2005, p. 7).

With the Cold War leading to the growth of MPSCs, there emerged, as might be expected, criticisms surrounding hiring these companies. Among the main arguments used in opposition to this phenomenon are: the high costs and the lack of transparency in the contracts between states and MPSCs; the de-characterization of the nature of states due to their loss of legitimate monopoly over the use of violence; the constant reports of incidents between MPSC employees and the local populations in the regions where they operate; the lack of a clear legal framework for accountability on mistakes made by the MPSCs on the battlefield; and

9. It is a fact that PMSCs (Private Military and Security Companies) can be hired by various international actors, including states themselves. However, even when they are serving governments and, therefore, in pursuit of public objectives, the prejudice surrounding the term 'mercenaries' still prevails. Evidence of this is the numerous criticisms made by authors who work on this topic regarding this type of hiring when done by state agents (AVANT, 2005; SINGER, 2003).

the need for greater control of the activities of these firms by the contracting actors (Thomson, 1996). Several experts still criticize MPSCs for the notion that their employees' activities approach mercenary activities condemned by the international community (see Percy, 2007).

In spite of the criticism, however, the growth of the MPSC market seems to be an irreversible phenomenon. The degree of dependence that states have developed in relation to these agents, as well as the need for continuity of services provided to international organizations—especially in humanitarian missions—has made the search for better regulation and transparency of this market the only feasible option to combat the misconduct of MPSCs. As international efforts move towards further limitation of their functions and activities, there is also a collective commitment by the companies themselves to increase the legitimacy and confidence of the international community in the services provided by the MPSCs (Chesterman; Lehardt, 2009).

For centuries the hiring of mercenaries to fight in conflict regions has fueled the imaginary and the discussion about the legitimacy of this phenomenon. Accused of going to war only for material gains, mercenaries have always been seen as second-rate soldiers. Authors studying politics and war have always characterized mercenaries as materialistic people who cannot be trusted, either because of the danger of their changing sides if the enemy offers a greater value than the one already paid, or their easily fleeing from conflict when the violence gets out of hand (Chestermn; Lehardt, 2009).

As noted previously, one of the main criticisms of the activities of Military and Private Security Companies is precisely the proximity of the services offered by these companies to the centuries-old mercenary activities. Authors who try to show the similarities between MPSCs and mercenaries often do so to delegitimize these companies as legitimate actors in the international scene. The more the figure of the MPSC employee is narratively approximated to the role of the former mercenaries, the less legitimacy these companies have to continue offering their services (see Lanning, 2005).

> [...] The private military market was delegitimated by the end of the 1800s for both material and normative reasons. The practice of hiring foreign soldiers was universally condemned and legislated against, culminating in the Geneva Conventions that withdrew from mercenaries the legal protections that soldiers enjoyed in warfare. Essentially, the mercenary trade was criminalized (SINGER, 2003, p. 42).

The inverse of this logic can also be seen. The narratives constructed mainly by the owners of these companies, which emphasize the humanitarian work of the MPSCs and idealize them as maintainers of the international order and as stabilizers of conflict zones, try to bring the identity of these actors closer to the narrative ideality of regular soldiers. Dissembling the material motivation of these officials, defenders of MPSCs try to build a counter-narrative that distances the role of their employees from the traditional caricature of the mercenary and brings them closer to the UN's blue helmets with their broad legitimacy already won internationally (Lanning, 2005).

The narratives about MPSCs are not exempt from the relations of power and gender present in every international phenomenon. Discourses on the role of these companies, as well as the imaginary created from their representations, are embedded in subjectivities that idealize the roles of the masculine and the feminine, placing them in supposed discursive arenas with apparent status of naturalness. Through the processes of contraposition, reification, and erasure of identity instabilities, narratives about MPSCs are constructed by contrasting the nature of their activities with other similar phenomena present in the international environment, such as mercenaries and regular armed forces (Singer, 2003).

As with all social phenomena, all constructed identities are ideally linked to the public domain or the private sphere. In this way, the narratives about regular soldiers, precisely because they emphasize their nationalistic aspects and ideological motivations, end up relating them to the public scope. Adherence to the military must be justified by supposed ethical and collective standards and not by personal and financial interests. In this way, the arena of the public ends up becoming the place par excellence of these characters (Singer, 2003).

As for the mercenaries, we can verify the opposite logic. Stories about soldiers of fortune identify them as selfish characters that join in as supporters of regular troops only to take advantage of the money paid by their contractors.[10] In this way, the private sphere becomes the natural domain of this type of agent because the construction of its image ends up presupposing the total absence of national or ideological values (Singer, 2003; Thomson, 1996).

But other ramifications can still be found in these accounts of regular soldiers and mercenaries. Both identities are linked to the role of masculinity, defenders of the homeland or feminized victims (Eichler, 2015). However, although the narratives refer both the soldier and the mercenary to the role of the masculine, the former is always portrayed as a civilized masculinity, while the latter is related to barbaric masculinity, one that imposes order from virility and unorganized efficiency. MPSC employees would thus be posited somewhere between these two identity ideals. When represented as conflict stabilizers, they would approach the public sphere of the regular soldier. However, when narratives about MPSCs depict their military capabilities and efficiency by force, their identity would tend to approach the opposite field, the private sphere and close range of the mercenary.

10. Machiavelli's The Prince already drew attention to the danger of relying on mercenaries. According to the author, mercenaries would not be trusted to fight for money and would be on your side only in times of peace. See Niccolo Machiavelli's The Prince (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011).

Prostitutes, Mercenaries, and Feminism: The Public and the Private

Several academic studies have already been and continue to be done regarding MPSCs. Several authors in the field of International Relations study and are dedicated to the classification, criticism, and defense of, or at least reflection on, the future of this security market.

Although studies on feminism and International Relations have left their status of marginality in recent years, research on the relationship between gender and MPSCs is still relatively scarce. Among the efforts to think about the relationship between these two themes, there are

productions that call attention to the reproduction of the relations of exploitation caused by neoliberalism within these companies. Research shows how hiring MPSCs replicates the dominant male logic in the regular military. Other authors demonstrate that MPSCs are a depository of the male chauvinist imaginary that relates the role of their (male) employees to the protection of their always feminized victims.

> Though different in content, critical accounts of the contractor business, particularly in the media, take part in this gendered framing of the new state-market relationship and rely on the ideal of soldier masculinity associated with state forces. The stereotype of the hyper masculine, aggressive, greedy, and unpatriotic contractor is contrasted with the image of the disciplined restrained, patriotic, and self-sacrificing state soldier (Stachowitsch, 2015, p. 32).

We believe, however, that other relationships between MPSCs and gender issues can be unraveled. Especially those that refer to the criticisms suffered by these companies and the imaginary that delimits masculine and feminine roles within the armed forces. The choice of this study to focus on the designation of mercenaries is justified by the contemporaneity of the debate on the modern configuration of these agents through MPSCs (Private Military and Security Companies). Moreover, for comparison, the figure of the mercenary is the one that best aligns with the role of prostitutes by traversing a path inverse to them in a process of displacement from their idealized locations.

As seen in this article, the field of International Relations is marked by the presence of gender positions that ideally delimit the scope of the masculine in counterpoint to the space supposedly belonging to the feminine. The construction of gender identities in the international environment, in the case of mercenaries, reproduces the same logic of domination found in the local sphere for the prostitute, reserving for each category a space considered legitimate for the stabilization of their identities.

What we can perceive is that the debate about the legitimacy of MPSCs is based on subjective standards of judgment that go beyond the nature of the services provided by these companies. When questioning the lawfulness of the MPSCs, we are tacitly wondering how much their activities can be considered as belonging to the public sphere or not. Any private connotation of their services can generate destabilization in the construction of their identities due to their supposed proximity to the role of the mercenary. Considering the employees of PMSCs (Private Military and Security Companies) as mercenaries not only places these companies in a legal limbo – due to the prohibition of mercenary activities by International Law – but also disqualifies the work of these agents by linking their activities to merely private interests. This portrayal of PMSC employees as mercenaries distorts the idealized nature of war as a phenomenon of public character with collective goals to be achieved.

The same occurs, only in reverse, in relation to the construction of the feminine role. As the ideality of the woman is situated in the private sphere (mother, wife, daughter, etc.), any activity of a public nature by these will be considered as undue. The legitimacy of female activities depends on the private nature of their intentions. The public

offering of the woman's body generates gender identity destabilization because it places women in an inappropriate environment according to social conventions.

In this way, mercenaries and prostitutes have something in common. Both have difficulty securing their legitimacy because they are supposedly in undue spaces (public or private) according to gendered social constructions. The former would be private soldiers, deprived of the supposed public nature of the profession. The latter would be public women, thus counteracting the ideally deprived character of the feminine role.

Conclusion

Feminist studies in International Relations have brought to the forefront issues of gender, public and private spaces, and relations of domination. Approaching post-positivist theoretical currents, the authors of these approaches have always tried to identify and denounce the constructions of assumptions that would delegate to the feminine marginalized places in the international environment when compared to the constructions of masculine gender present in this space.

First, the present article has demonstrated how the feminine gender figure is socially located as the occupant par excellence of private spaces. In this way, the ideal woman (wife, mother) should occupy activities that always place her in the domestic/private sphere as opposed to in the public world. Any woman who dares to occupy a culturally reserved area (in this case a public space) would be viewed negatively by society as she is in an undue place relative to her social condition. Prostitutes would thus be targets of prejudice and marginalization precisely because they transpose these conventions.

Then, we try to demonstrate that similar phenomena also occur with employees of Military and Private Security Companies. While they are still in the process of growing and consolidating in the international arena, these companies would be building their own identities between the role of soldiers in the regular armed forces (public/legitimate) and that of mercenaries (private/illegitimate). The more these companies approach the identity of the mercenary, the less legitimacy they gain from the fact that they occupy the private space and therefore, are inadequate to those who serve and defend the homeland motivated by pure love of country. The opposite is also true. By approaching regular soldiers (or blue helmets), the MPSCs would emphasize their role of stabilizing conflicts and humanitarian work, which would place them in the public arena, thereby increasing their legitimacy vis-à-vis other international actors.

Prejudice, present both in relation to prostitutes and mercenaries, would have a common, but inverse, subjective basis. In the case of prostitutes, they would be marginalized due to the fact that they are women who take place in the public sphere, considered inappropriate according to the idealization of women. The mercenaries, on the other hand, would suffer prejudice by positing themselves in the private sphere, also considered improper for a soldier in defense of the motherland.

In this way, what can be seen in the discussions on prostitution and mercenarism would not be as objective questions, as the traditional debates have tried to lead us to believe. Behind the discussions about the

legitimacy of prostitutes and mercenaries would be the construction of gender identity with its respective places of action. By occupying the public space, prostitutes, like mercenaries in the private sphere, subvert a gender ideality by not submitting to the socially constructed spaces considered most appropriate.

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