


BOOK REVIEW

***Masculinities, Gender and International Relations.* By Terrell Carver and Laura Lyddon. Bristol: Bristol University Press, 2022. 218 pp. \$139.95 (cloth), ISBN: 9781529212280; \$42.95 (paper), 9781529212297.**

Thomas S. Worth 

University of Wisconsin–Madison, USA

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What is the relationship between masculinities, gender, and international security practices? How do certain men “get away with” claiming dominant positions in the global gender hierarchy? How does this impact global conflict? In *Masculinities, Gender and International Relations*, Terrell Carver and Laura Lyddon explore these questions by examining the relationship between masculinity and the global arms trade. In doing so, they reverse the standard pedagogy of international relations (IR), which treats gender as a side topic of analysis, showing instead that gender is fundamental to the study of international security.

Carver and Lyddon argue that certain men can claim positions of legitimacy in the global arms trade because they reflect certain masculine traits that place them at the top of the global gender hierarchy. They also claim that most analyses of the global arms trade fail to consider the importance of gender and often treat men as de-gendered beings; therefore, they argue, we must “un-de-gender” the global arms trade. They suggest doing so by highlighting the role that men and masculinities have played in shaping the manufacture and trade of weapons and the relationship this has with male dominance in state rulership.

The authors build their theoretical framework by combining Antonio Gramsci’s definition of hegemony as “domination by consent” with R. W. Connell’s concept of “hegemonic masculinity.” Hegemonic masculinity highlights the gender-power relationships between individuals and the legitimizing process they go through to attain dominant positions in the gender hierarchy. Seen in this way, multiple types of masculinity exist in “nested hierarchies,” in which certain masculinities are positioned above or below other masculinities (and femininities). The authors use their framework to analyze men in the “top tiers of the political world, the military world and the commercial world” (13), seeking to understand how these men attain these security positions and maintain their masculine legitimacy.

Carver and Lyddon begin by investigating the relationship between masculinity and how states operate in the competitive “great power politics” arenas of war and trade. They demonstrate how militarism is both “a gendering process, and crucially a state-forming process” (19), because it helps create gender distinctions and allows for gender hierarchies to develop. Those at the top of those hierarchies—often white, traditionally masculine men—then use their legitimized positions to become state leaders who can engage in war and conflict. Here the authors show that the security dilemma underlying great power politics is actually a masculine security dilemma, as individuals and states compete over who can wield the legitimacy of dominant forms of masculinity. This insight suggests that future analyses of the security dilemma must consider its underlying gender components.

Following this, Carver and Lyddon shift to considering “boys and toys” masculinity, or what they alternatively refer to as “blowing shit up” (55). They reflect on the relationship between men and their weapons as a legitimizing force, looking at two models of masculinity: warrior-protector and bourgeois-rational. Both types of masculinity rely on proximity to weapons (either as producers, facilitators, or users) as a means of legitimizing their behavior and place in the gender hierarchy. The global arms trade, then, becomes a way that states can legitimize their behavior, using weapons to protect “women and children” and other people placed in subordinate positions in the global gender hierarchy. This chapter builds on the growing interest in disentangling the different styles of masculine logic that are used to legitimize the behavior of states.

Carver and Lyddon then shift their attention to international arms fairs: the arena in which nation-states, weapons manufacturers, and the business community come together to promote militarization, and simultaneously legitimize “great power politics and the competitive hierarchies of masculinization” (89). The exclusivity of the arms fairs (as private events) confers masculine legitimacy on the attendees (who are approximately 90% men) while also preventing people from attending who might contest the fair’s masculine legitimacy, like women activists seeking to draw attention to the violence and death resulting from the gathering. Their analysis of these arms fairs should encourage IR scholars to reconsider the overlap between international economics and security (which are still too often separated within IR). Furthermore, this analysis should prompt gender scholars to reconsider situations in which a single gender norm can produce divergent effects (e.g., both legitimizing the arms fairs and preventing their delegitimization).

They conclude by considering the gender order and antimilitarist activism, which confronts the relationship between arms and masculinity. It is no surprise, according to Carver and Lyddon, that some of the strongest and most consistent antiwar activism has been from women and feminist groups, stretching back until at least World War I. The global arms trade and war are meant to legitimize masculine dominance, and therefore feminist challenges to the legitimacy of the arms trade also act as challenges to the subordinated positions of women in the global gender hierarchy.

This book is an insightful reflection on the relationship between gender, masculinities, and IR, both for IR scholars and international security practitioners. However, it struggled at times because of a lack of a clear methodology or analytical framework. It was often unclear why certain data was chosen for analysis, how that analysis was conducted, and the criteria used for that analysis. Without a detailed explanation of their analytical process, the authors' assertions about the relationship between masculinities and global conflict at times felt more like anecdotes rather than analysis. Furthermore, it was sometimes difficult to follow along with their analysis, particularly in Chapter 3, because the data they analyzed was visual (but no images were included). Lastly, it was surprising that the book's title did not reflect one of its key topics, the global arms trade, which could affect its reach outside of feminist and gender scholars.

Even with these concerns, however, Carver and Lyddon have produced an important study of the relationship between gender, masculinity, and international security. They show how taking gender and masculinity seriously as analytical concepts can transform how we think about what is deemed "legitimate" in IR, particularly regarding the gender order and the global arms trade. This is especially useful when considering the current war in Ukraine, where masculinized (and feminized) framings of soldiers, statesmen, and (inter) national supporters have been used to (de)legitimize the war and the provision of arms on both sides of the conflict (Gaufman 2022; Shand 2022). *Masculinities, Gender and International Relations* is an excellent resource for understanding the deeply embedded relationship(s) between masculinity and international security.

References

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Thomas Worth is a PhD Candidate in the Department of Political Science at the University of Wisconsin–Madison: tsworth@wisc.edu