Hegemonic bodies in robotic warfare

A critical discursive analysis of drone warfare through a feminist perspective

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Abstract

This thesis is a critical discourse analysis of robotic warfare through a feminist perspective. The study aims to investigate how gender norms and militarization affects the drone operators within the United Stated Armed Forces. Also, whether the drone operator's gender anxiety created in a hegemonic masculine and militarized society embodies the drones and shapes robotic warfare. The theoretical framework is based on three concepts within feminist war theory, namely *hegemonic masculinity, militarism and militarization*, and *embodiment.* The thesis analyses text and social practices in accordance with Norman Fairclough's approach to Critical Discourse Analysis. The collected data consists of text such as speeches made by the former president Barack Obama, but also narratives, the image of the drone, as well as societal practices such as whether the drone operators decide to fire, what their reactions are and what actions are taken by different actors that could be understood as protecting a gender identity. The thesis finds that robotic warfare can indeed be understood to be shaped by gender norms and militarism. The competition of hegemonic positions in society influence how the drone operators behave and who is targeted, this shapes the way war is practiced using drones.

Keywords: *drone warfare, hegemonic masculinity, militarism, militarization, embodiment, critical discourse analysis*

Contents

1.Introduction

1.1   Background and research problem

The Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) has in the struggle of perfecting war through technological innovations, created new possibilities for warfare (Rasmussen 2006:3). Nobody had ever been made subject to targeted killings with the use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, UAVs, or drones, before 2002. (Allinson 2015:113) However, between 2002 and the time of writing, the minimum number of confirmed strikes in Yemen, Somalia, Pakistan and Afghanistan have risen to 2,274 strikes conducted by US action (The Bureau of Investigative Journalism). Some argue that the development towards more and more autonomous drones deserves close attention (Holmqvist 2013:544).

The drone itself is however not new. The unmanned *Firebee* was a small airplane that had already existed for a long time when it was modified in the early 1960s. One could drop the *Firebee* from a bigger plane, and it released a parachute as it did not have the ability to land on its own. The modification of the *Firebee* into a more autonomous remote-controlled drone, started in the middle of the Cuban crisis. During the early 1960s two American U-2 planes were shot down. The first plane was shot down in 1960 and the pilot was taken prisoner by the Soviet Union. This ignited a crisis in the Soviet-American relation. The second plane was shot down in 1962, in the middle of the Cuban crises, this time the pilot did not survive. The need for drones to perform suicide-like missions without risking American lives suddenly became very important (Agrell 2013:12-13). The drone was first used in an armed conflict during the Vietnam war. They were now armed with one missile, or equipped with intelligence gathering systems (Agrell 2013:14). Since then, drones have been incorporated in more air forces around the world, Israel and Iran also have armed drones. Today, the majority of the strikes are however conducted by the United States Armed Forces (Agrell 2013:9, 20).

We have clearly come a long way from the traditional Clausewitzian war when the fighting took place at a predetermined battlefield to wage "*a duel on a larger scale*" (Clausewitz 2007:13). Today's "war amongst the people" has made new ways of war possible (Smith 2006:353) such as cyberwar and the use of drones. Within the sphere of drones as a weapon in armed conflict, moral and juridical questions appear (Chamayou 2015b) Questions are also raised concerning the efficiency of targeted killings with drones, claiming that the drone strikes

and the omnipresent surveillance cause a frustration among the people that in turn create new terrorists (Chamayou 2015a:70). This phenomenon is so pervasive it has been coined *"the accidental guerilla phenomenon"* by David Kilcullen (Leek 2016:60).

The moral and legal implications take up a lot of space within the academic debate, (Shaw 2013, Allinson 2015, Chamayou 2015a, 2015b), this study does however not intend to take a moralizing or a legal perspective but rather to focus on the individuals behind the machines. Cara Daggett (2015:363) argues that drone operators easily get disoriented when fighting war from a distance, and this changes the intelligibility of killing. She also claims that other soldiers criticize the operators for not being *real warriors,* the operators are simultaneously insisting that their experiences are as real as any other combat experience. Daggett argues that the operator's identity as masculine and brave soldier can be argued to be influenced by gender anxiety and frustration (Dagett 2015:364). Lauren Wilcox argues however that this frustration does not only affect the mentality of the operators, but also affects who is targeted (Wilcox 2015:23). This leaves me to wonder, can gender norms and militarism affect this kind of warfare and if so how?

By analyzing written and spoken language in combination with social practices, this study aims to investigate whether gender norms and militarism can be understood to shape the discourse of drone warfare.

1.2   Purpose and research question

The purpose of this study is to display the power relations among drone operators in the United States Armed Forces, and further an understanding of how power relations between bodies can shape the way they behave in war. The study does not aim to explain nor contribute with a solution to the situation. The aim is rather to further an understanding, examining the external and internal discourse of the use of drones in armed conflict.

This study is limited to the United States Armed Forces, as they carry out the large majority of targeted killings with the use of drone strikes today (Agrell 2013:20) Only drones that are used in armed conflict will be taken in consideration. The time frame for this study is limited to the time during the Obama administration, more precisely during 2008 to 2016. This is when the drone attacks are at its highest level (The Bureau of Investigative Journalism) and when the external discourse is erupting. The internal discourse is defined as the perspective of the drone

operators themselves whereas the external discourse in this study is limited to the national perspective understood from speeches and statements made by the former president Barack Obama, the perspective from within the Armed Forces as well as the image of the drone.

This paper aims to investigate the discourse of drone war through a feminist war theory perspective, using the method Critical Discourse Analysis. The study aims to answer the following research question:

Can gender norms and militarism be understood to shape robotic warfare, and if so how?

1.2 Disposition

The remainder of this thesis is structed into four separate chapters. The second chapter contains the theoretical framework, including the subchapters *2.1 Previous research in feminist war theory 2.2 Theoretical framework.* Chapter three aims to explain how the research is conducted by discussing choice of methodology and method, containing the subchapters 3.*1 Ontology and Epistemology, 3.2 Discourse analysis, 3.3 Research design 3.4 Material,* and *3.5 Operationalization*. The fourth chapter contains the empirical analysis, here the paper aims to analyse the research problem with the assistance of the described theory using the methodology demonstrated earlier. This chapter contains the following subchapters; *4.1 The external sociolinguistic discourse 4.2 The internal sociolinguistic discourse.* The last chapter is where the paper is concluded. This chapter is divided into the following subchapters;*5.2 Concluding discussion and 5.3 Future research.*

2. Theory

2.1 Previous research in feminist war studies

"War should be studied up from people and not down from places that sweep blood, tears and laughter away" (Sylvester, 2012:484).

The purpose of feminism, is to challenge the hierarchal structure of power that exist between human bodies, and listen to those who have not yet been heard. (Butler 1999[1990]:46, 153) Feminist war studies is thus concerned with how power between bodies is understood up from individuals, by analysing human experiences in war (Sylvester 2013:62). The above quote incorporates the essence of feminist war studies. As it states, it's aim is to study war from below, from the perspective of those who participate in war and experience it. Sylvester explains, that contemporary feminist war studies does not focus on why wars occur but rather on how war is experienced (Sylvester 2013:61).

Many scholars in feminist war studies focus on women's agency in war, as oppresses or empowered actors (see Eriksson Baaz & Stern 2009, Elshtain 1995, Sylvester 2013:52-56). This study will however not focus on the binary structure, woman / man, but instead on the hierarchal structure that exist not only between men and women but between all bodies regardless of sex.

This study focuses on how hierarchal power structures between bodies control soldiers in war. As is stated in the previous chapter, this study departs from the theoretical concepts, *hegemonic masculinity*, *militarism and militarization* and *embodiment*. Other scholars who research militarism with a gender perspective is Cynthia Enloe, Sandra Via and Victoria Basham. In Enloe's work from 2014, she analyses militarized understandings of women and men in other places than in war, such as in Asian sewing companies. Enloe questions how it is understood as natural that women sow, and why women often are considered as "cheap labor" (Enloe 2014:33-36). Via analyses private firms working as contractors for the United States Armed Forces, such as the organization Blackwater. She studies the private contractors from the perspective of hegemonic masculinity and militarization, claiming that the hyper-masculine image is created in militaries masculine society and depends and certain understandings of what

is masculine and feminine (Via 2010: 49-53). Basham exemplifies militarism and militarization from the aspect of everyday life. She analyses the phenomenon "the poppy appeal", which is the run up to the British celebratory Remembrance Day. During this event people are encouraged to buy paper poppies to pin to their jackets in remembrance of the British soldiers who have "fallen in war". Basham analysis this incorporation of military affairs in civilian life, and analyses how female soldiers are remembered differently than male soldiers (Basham 2016:888).

Synne Dyvik is one scholar who studies embodiment. She applies the theory on the narratives of Norwegian soldiers deployed to Afghanistan. Dyvik tries to make sense of the soldier's use of Viking mythology, and analyses how they identify with their image of the historic national warriors. She also analyses how they experience an incorporation in a collective body as the soldiers prepare for combat (Dyvik 2016:135-142).

This study will depart from the above understandings of *hegemonic masculinity, militarism and militarization* and *embodiment* but applies it to robotic warfare. The study aims to investigate the intelligibility between masculinity and war, and try to understand whether this hierarchal structure can shape the way people act in a militarized society and how these same individuals embody war through the use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, more commonly referred to as drones.

2.2   Theoretical framework

This paper will focus on individual drone operators within the United States Armed Forces. The study will analyse these individuals as part of a militarized society, using a theoretical framework consisting of three separate concepts within feminist war studies which build on each other to create a three-dimensional theoretical framework. These are, *hegemonic masculinity, militarism and militarization* and *embodiment*. Hegemonic masculinity and militarism are often understood as interwoven (Via 2010:43) this study extends this understanding to include embodiment. As these concepts are part of a narrow discussion within feminist war studies, a theoretical foundation will explain the philosophical perspective, and set

the stage for the concepts which follow in the subchapter, 2.3.1. The theoretical foundation consists of the theories *biopower* and *performativity of gender*.

2.2.1 Theoretical foundation: Biopower & Performativity of gender

Earlier understandings of power, perceive power to be possessed by the head of the state. This notion of power recognizes disciplinary laws and legislation to uphold the power which rightfully belongs to the sovereign. Thomas Hobbes famously illustrated this idea through his fictional figure *the Leviathan*. The Leviathan is a creature whose torso constitutes the bodies of thousands of men and whose head wears a crown symbolizing the royal authority. The creature demonstrates the society, illustrating how the sovereign keeps the societal body intact by his position of total power. Hobbes argues for the legitimacy for centralized power, including the sovereign right to take life and let live (Foucault 2003:29, 241).

Michel Foucault criticized this traditional understanding of power, and argued that the head of the state cannot *hold* power, as power cannot be *given* or *possessed*. Foucault claims that power is something that flows between human relations as part of a chain. Power is acted, or performed, it is never applied to an individual but passes through them. Power is best studied at its outer limits as power cannot have a single centre (Foucault 2003:29).

During the seventeenth century, the power of life fell under the control of the state making the biological political. The essence of power of life is to have the right to kill, which has in later discourses become rather a strange right. During the nineteenth century, the society transformed, altering this sovereign legitimacy. Instead of the right to take life and let live, Foucault argues that that sovereign claims the right to "make life" and "let die". What this indicates, is a means to control society by controlling the power that flows between human relations. By separating, aligning and surveilling the individual human bodies, control can be established. This involves the differing between human bodies, using methods of exclusion and punishment, which forces people to act in accordance to certain patterns. Instead of the disciplinary power to take life, we now have the regulating power over life. In this sense norms become helpful, as they have the ability to regulate and control both the individual body as well as an entire population. A political system based on biopower is based on a hierarchy between human bodies. This system can also be labelled as state racism, and a parallel can be drawn to

Nazi Germany, which is an example of this system in an extreme form (Foucault 2003:241-254, 259).

As Judith Butler (1999[1990]:xvi) points out, race and gender cannot be treated as analogies. However, the notion of biopolitics can be applied in both instances to make sense of hierarchy between different bodies as a means to control a population.

Butler argues that gender is not a casual result of sex and there is no reason to assume there are only two genders. Gender is a socially constructed representation, and can just like all things be represented differently throughout time and space, in different ages and in different cultures. The sex you are born with is not related to your gender, gender is not something you are given, but like the Foucauldian notion of power, gender is something that you practice, or perform (Butler 1999[1990]:10, 25).

Butler (1999[1990]: 2) builds on the statement made by Simone de Beauvoir; "*One is not born a woman, but rather becomes one.*". Here she argues that gender is something that is impersonated and performed, there is no gender identity behind the performativity of gender. Butler goes back to Nietzsche who once claimed; *"there is no 'being' behind doing, effecting, becoming; 'the doer' is merely a fiction added to the deed—the deed is everything."* (Quoted in Butler 1999[1990]:33)

Cynthia Enloe explain femininities as the ways in which girls and women are *supposed to* think and behave (Enloe 2014:3). As does Butler argue, that socially constructed norms are applied to all human bodies, regulating their behaviour. Men and women are both expected to act in certain masculine or feminine ways. When an individual fails to act in accordance to these predetermined patterns they become subjected to discrimination and harassment (Butler 1999[1990]:xiii). What is described here is a regulating biopolitical system based on a hierarchy between human bodies, what Foucault equals to state racism, but which Butler widens to include gender.

The binary relation between men and women entail the oppression and exclusion of women from representation. Women who perform in accordance to a masculine role, or act "butch" are simply trying to acquire the status of a man in society. However, the masculine heterosexual hegemony suppresses what disrupts the reproductive and medico-juridical sexuality. Butler argues that the difference between masculine and feminine traits can be simplified with femininity as everything that masculinity is not. That femininity is *the other*, the negative opposite of masculinity (Butler 1999[1990]:xi, 27).

2.3.1 First concept: Hegemonic masculinity

Building on Butler, we can argue that women are not the only subject of feminism as femininity does not even relate to the female sex. Feminism is rather the notion of gender inequality, and the biopolitical hierarchy in human relations. Feminist war studies is hence the study of human relations in war.

Masculinity is constructed differently throughout different ages and cultures (Hutchings 2008:389). Earlier masculine ideals have included the importance of emotionality and sentimentality. Men who cried and were gentle had the highest status in society during the late eighteenth century (Capp 2016). Contemporary reoccurring ideals of a masculinity is a heterosexual man who is risk-taking, courageous, aggressive, rational and independent. Endurance and absence of emotion is also something commonly assumed a masculine trait. These same qualities are also considered essential in the ideal soldier (Hutchings 2008:389, 393). According to Kimberly Hutchings, this is not a coincidence. She argues that war and masculinity secure each other's intelligibility as they are dependent on each other in order to survive. War requires the production of these masculine men, and men require war to uphold their hegemonic position in society. (Hutchings 2008:391) This hierarchy does not simply differ between men and women, but also differs men from men. This notion is referred to hegemonic masculinity. Those who fit the idealized image of masculinity acquire a higher status, whereas those whose behaviour falls outside of this frame become subordinated. Hegemonic masculinity also creates a framework of properties which creates acceptance for war as a social practice, as war creates intelligibility for hegemonic masculinity. (Hutchings 2008:391-392, Via 2010:43)

Going back to men who cry versus men who do not show emotion, this requires further clarification. Synne Dyvik argue that many war stories portray brave soldiers who hug and shed a tear, often as a fellow brother-in-arms is wounded or killed. In this context, crying can be a sign of masculinity rather than weakness. However, when a soldier fails to contain himself, breaks and shows signs of fear, this is instead a sign of weakness and femininity. (Dyvik 2017:86). The act of crying is hence not a sign of femininity in itself, but rather the lack of control. Being in control of the situation, make independent decisions and be in charge, is perhaps more distinctly the characteristics hegemonic system requires.

Contemporary masculinity incorporates militaristic traits to acquire the highest status in society (Sylvester 2013:42). It contributes to the exclusion and suppression of feminine traits, and contributes to making aggression and lack of emotion admirable. Dyvik explains the creation of military masculinities as the *weeding out* of particular practices deemed feminine (Dyvik 2017:93).

2.3.2 Second concept: Militarism and militarization

Militarism is a concept that has come to be associated with gender studies mainly through the work of Cynthia Enloe (Sylvester 2013:42). Militarism is a concept that incorporates a number of complex ideas who together foster military values in cultural economic and political affairs, in both military and civilian aspects of society (Enloe 2014:11) Enloe lists the most prominent ideas that go into militarism;

> The belief that men are natural protectors and that women should be grateful for manly protection, the belief that soldiers deserve special praise for their contributions to the countries, the belief that hierarchies of command are natural part of society, the belief that in human affairs it is natural to have enemies, the valuing of physical force over other modes of human interaction to resolve differences, the idea that any country without a state military is not a fully "mature" state (Enloe 2014:11)

Not all accept militarism as natural, and in order to understand why some groups or individuals adopt these ideas, the concept of militarization can be of help. Militarization refers to the process of which militaristic values become adopted by states, organizations or individuals. It is a step-by-step process that involves political, social and psychological aspects and requires specific ideas about femininity and masculinity. All things can become militarized, however militarization is not inevitable as it is dependable on certain ideas about femininity and masculinity which do not have to be fixed (Enloe 2014:11-12). Gender studies relates militarization to hegemonic masculinity, as it idealized militarized masculinities and enables men as well as states to prove their masculinity by behaving in accordance to the hegemonic masculine role (Via 2010:44). As is already stated in the previous subchapter, hegemonic masculinity and war are interdependent of each other (Hutchings 2008:391). In acting in accordance with militaristic values, one also acquire a higher status in society. Within the

Armed Forces, some argue that the collecting of combat experience is an essential part in the transition to become a real soldier (Dyvik 2017:86).

Militarism and militarization is the social practise which normalizes militaristic ideas in people's everyday life. It gradually becomes in total control of individuals, making them accept military activities as honourable and normal, and a necessary part of society. Societies can be persuaded into accepting militarism by popular culture such as mainstream fashion imitating military uniforms. Also through Hollywood films, which portray aggressive men with weapons as heroes, and women who are weak and attracted to the aggressive men. Militarization contributes to the belief that war is a necessity to society and a necessity to security (Sylvester 2013:42-45).

Incorporating women in the armed forces is by some argued to neutralize the hyper-masculine society that often characterizes military institutions. However, even though female soldiers are gradually becoming common, this is according to Sandra Via, not proving to degenderize the armies. Instead the female soldiers are often forced to prove their masculinity in terms of military-favoured social characteristics. However, contradictorily to this there is still an important emphasis in women "acting as women". The militarized female is the counterpart of the militarized male, and represents the biological and social reproducers of soldiers and the nation (Via 2010:44-45). Female soldiers are hence expected to behave in accordance to the stereotypical role of a woman, and simultaneously prove their militarized masculinity in their role as a soldier. Victoria Basham argues that women who choose to fight are often regarded with suspicion, whereas men who reject militarism are excluded and regarded as effeminate and even dangerous (Basham 2016:883). This thesis will study the drone operators as equally absorbent to hegemonic masculinity and militarization, regardless of their sex and gender.

Basham also defines militarism as the aggressive promotion of war-preparedness, and how this intersect with bodies and everyday experiences. To understand militarism, we must understand the everyday. Militarism can be understood as a deliberate, as well as unintentional extensions of military influence in the civilian life and prioritising of military institutions. Essentially, militarism glorifies war but erases violence, blood and death (Basham 2016:884-885).

2.3.3 Third concept: Embodiment

Embodiment refers to the impersonation of war (Brighton 2004:54). It is the process when the individual body experiences an incorporation into something larger than itself and becomes empowered (Dyvik 2016:143). Embodiment relates to the performativity of gender, but takes another more abstract dimension.

In performing in accordance with an image of a warrior, soldiers impersonate the characteristics of a socially predetermined warrior-role. The *new mechanism of power* as Foucault calls it, is power embodied in both an individual and a collective level. It is something that is practiced individually but taught as a social activity (Dyvik 2016:141) At an individual level, we can argue that soldiers experience an empowerment as they leave themselves behind and embodies the predetermined warrior-role.

Dyvik explains the term *muscular bonding* as a euphoric feeling and a feeling of fulfilment caused by the collective rhythmic muscular movements creating bonds of brotherhood. Dyvik emphasises the fundamental desire to participate in a collective brotherhood as an essential part in collective embodiment and in the creation of a single *combat body*. (Dyvik 2016:142) Brighton claims that soldiers are trained to evolve into a corporate identity, which has a single ethos and a single history. The soldier disappears as he becomes a part of the collective body (Brighton 2004:51). This body is what Dyvik refers to as a combat body. She points to soldier's narratives from war, where they explain the feeling of a *personal enlargement* in becoming a part of a collective ritual. Some soldiers describe situations where the border between the individual and the collective becomes blurred, and how are become filled with power and pride as they experience the embodiment of a collective body. (Dyvik 2016:142-143).

There are instances when soldiers are excluded from the collective body. These are usually soldiers who fail to perform in accordance with the hegemonic masculine role. These are individuals who break during combat or show signs of femininity and weakness. They are excluded, *weeded out* from the brotherhood and become outsiders (Dyvik 2017:85).

The concept of embodiment will be used in the study to understand whether the drone operators become empowered in acting in accordance to their image of the ideal soldier. More explicitly, whether their actions can be traced back to an ambition of advancing in the hierarchal ladder of hegemonic masculinity and militarism, being included in the brotherhood and not risking being weeded out. This theory will also enable a more abstract understanding of embodiment through the drone itself as a political agent and as incorporated in the collective body.

3. Method & Methodology

3.1 Ontology and epistemology

This thesis leans against a post-positivist philosophical perspective. This philosophy argues that social reality is socially constructed and imagined, in contrast to positivism which claims that social reality exists regardless if anyone is there to observe it. Post-positivists argue that the social reality can only be understood and interpreted, and cannot be uncovered and explained according to any causal laws. We must therefore recognize the issue of the researcher's bias, as nothing can ever be understood objectively (Della Porta & Keating 2008:23-24).

Within post-positivism there are different approaches to ontology and epistemology. This study departs from the social constructivist theory, which argues for separate approaches to physical reality and social reality. Social constructivists take the ontological position that physical values exist regardless of the observer, whereas social values and the essence of the physical values, are constructed by the observer as he is observing them (Della Porta & Keating 2008:23-24). This study simultaneously questions what can be known about any of these values, as objective and subjective meanings can be argued to intertwine. This places the study somewhat closer to interpretivist theory, which is yet further away from positivism (Della Porta & Keating 2008:24). This implies that the material will be interpreted and understood and not explained.

3.2 Discourse analysis

Methodology takes a central role in feminist war studies as it concerns how best to acquire and research ordinary people's experiences in war. Christine Sylvester argues that the superior methods to use in feminist war studies is either to conduct interviews or to use discourse analysis. This is because it allows the researcher to gain access to people's experiences in war from within, it also enables the researcher to study war up from the people who experience and

embody war (Sylvester 2013:50-52). This study will use critical discourse analysis as method to analyse the collected data.

3.2.1 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Discourse analysis is usually simplified into three approaches, also known as generations. This paper utilises the approach known as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which derives from the critical Marxist philosophical approach known as the Frankfurt school, as well as the French discursive approach represented mainly by Foucault. The purpose of CDA is to expose veiled power structures, by studying the interweaving of action with language. (Bergström & Boréus 2012:353, 373-374).

Discourses constitute the social world but is also constituted by the social world (Winther Jorgensen & Phillips 2002:61) Discourses reflects society; it shapes and is shaped. All approaches to discourse analysis has a focus on written and spoken language, (Bergström & Boréus 2012:356) however in CDA, the importance is not simply placed on what is said, but also on how it is said and how the text is produced, distributed and consumed. (Winther Jorgensen & Phillips 2002:61) The approach also widens the Foucauldian idea of discourse as it includes the new dimension *social practice*, as equally important to language. Social practice relates the discourse to ideology and power, focusing both on what is said and on what is done. This approach to discourse analysis is often criticised for being more abstract than other approaches, for example that of Laclau and Mouffe (Bergström & Boréus 2012:357, 399).

There are two versions of CDA. This paper follows the version developed by Norman Fairclough. This version is known as a narrower approach with more precise methods and guidelines. The other version of CDA includes numerous approaches, one of them represented by the same Fairclough together with Ruth Wodak. The latter version of CDA is a looser and broader method without any clear guidelines (Winther Jorgensen & Phillips 2002:60) this approach will therefore not be applied in this study.

CDA is used as an instrument to explore how language and social practice is related, focusing on decisive practices in social order. Its aim is to shed light on the dimension of social and cultural phenomena as well as ongoing processes of social change. (Winther Jorgensen & Phillips 2002:61, 69) Fairclough refers to his approach as a sociolinguistic approach, this incorporates semiotic figures as an element of the social. Fairclough stresses the fact that there

are textual movements in all social practices (Fairclough 2010:192). He paints a picture of his theory as a three-dimensional theory, however first the analysis is divided into two dimensions*; the communicative event*, when language is produced and consumed, and *the order of discourse,* what type or genre the discourse is (Winther Jorgensen & Phillips 2002:66).

The communicative event is then divided into three dimensions. These are *text, discursive practice* and *social practice*. Text include any form of language, such as speech, writing or an image. The discursive practise refers the production and consummation of text. What this framework means for the analysis of empiric material is that any communicative event should focus on the features of the text as well as how the text is produced and interpreted by the consumer. More precisely, on what part available and existing discourses play in affecting the author of the text in the production, as well as the consumer in the communicative event. The wider social practice that surround the text, the wider net of discourse which the discursive practice also a part of must also be analysed in order to fully grasp the discourse (Winther Jorgensen & Phillips 2002:68, 90).
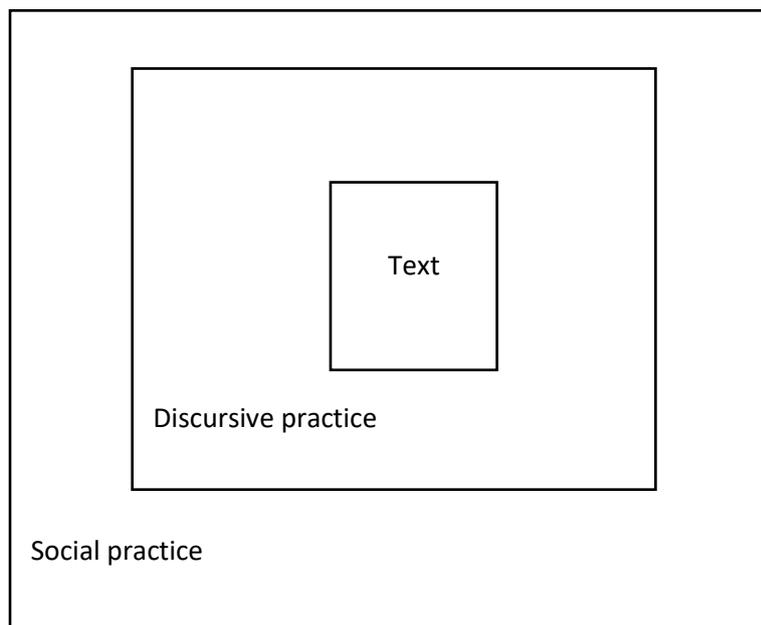
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Fig. 1 Fairclough's three-dimensional model for Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough 1992:73)

In contrast to other discursive theories, such as that of Laclau and Mouffe, the occurrence of certain words in the text does not have to indicate anything concerning the discursive content (Bergström & Boréus 2012:375, 399). The discourse is rather understood through the linguistic

features of the text, such as grammar, coherence, syntax but also vocabulary (Winther Jorgensen & Phillips 2002:69). Also, how the text is interpreted by the consumer carries an equal part in the discourse (Winther Jorgensen & Phillips 2002:68). This relates to Foucault's argument on intent contra outcome. It is only the result of an action that counts, never the intent of it, according to Foucault (Foucault 2003:28). This can be understood as the intended way to say something is irrelevant to the discourse, how it is said and how the receivers understand it are more important features in the discourse.

When different discourses and genres are mixed together in the same communicative event, *interdiscoursivity* occurs. This is simply a sign of socio-cultural change and can be understood by analysing the relations between different orders of discourse (Winther Jorgensen & Phillips 2002:73)

CDA recognized the Foucauldian notion of power as a producing force (Winther Jorgensen & Phillips 2002:63) this notion also requires that power must be studied at its limits, between human relations as power does not have a centre but is practiced (Foucault 2003:29). However, in the struggle to reveal the role of discursive practice in unequal power relations, CDA simultaneously deviates from the Foucauldian understanding of power. Power is rather understood to also further the interest of specific social groups (Winther Jorgensen & Phillips 2002:63). This relates better to the Marxists understanding of power (Foucault 2003:14).

Hegemony is a centrepiece in Fairclough's understanding of discourse analysis. Fairclough takes Gramsci's Marxist interpretation of hegemony. The concept is understood to be the leadership over economic, political, cultural and ideological aspects of society. Hegemony is however dependent on alliances rather that the total domination of subordinate classes, power is won through consent- with ideological pervasion (Fairclough 1992:91-92). This ties back to Foucault's biopower. What Gramsci and Fairclough refer to as consent, could be closely related to what Foucault calls norms.

One issue with applying discourse analysis to a study is that it requires numerous steps to be taken in the process of gathering enough text to understand a discourse. Hence there is often a lack of intersubjectivity in discourse-oriented studies, and it is not always clear to the reader how certain conclusions are drawn. (Bergström & Boréus 2012:403). Content analysis is one method that enables a more transparent course of action yet treats text. This approach is however considered nonsensical by this study as only what is said is taken to account but now

how it is said and what is not said. The quantity of certain words is also considered irrelevant here, which is the foundation of content analysis (Bergström & Boréus 2012:80-81)

3.2.2 CDA in practice

Fairclough suggests several linguistic tools as instruments in analysing text through a CDA perspective. These are; *interactional control, ethos, metaphors, wording* and *grammar*. Interactional control refers to the relationship between the speakers. (Winther Jorgensen & Phillips 2002:83) Analysing the discursive practice involves an attempt to track the process of the production of the text as well as the process of consummation. This can be done by for example comparing different text that are related to each other, and research the audience in order to understand the consummation process (Winther Jorgensen & Phillips 2002:82). Finally, social practises relate the wider net of discourse which this discursive practice is a part of, how these are conveyed and how they are regulated (Winther Jorgensen & Phillips 2002:90).

3.3 Research design

This study aims to further an understanding of one encountered research problem, using an already established theory. This design is commonly known as a disciplined configurative case study design. The design has a small causal coverage however enables in-depth analysis (George & Bennet 2004:75). As this study takes the ontological approach that does not recognize causal processes, this design is of most advantage for this study. The small coverage implies that the result of this study will only cover this particular case, it does not claim to be representative. A case study is also the preferred method when the study is based on a contemporary set of events, has little control over the behavioural set of events and poses a *how* or *why* research question (Yin 2014:9).

An alternative design for this study could be a theory testing research design. This would investigate whether the theory in question is applicable to one particular case (George & Bennet 2004:75) The puzzle of this study is however of an empirical nature rather than theoretical, hence the discipline configurative design will be used.

3.4   Material

This study is based on both primary and secondary sources. The primary material is based on the speeches and statements made by the former president Barack Obama on drones, during his presidency. These are retrieved from the site The American Presidency Project TM where all presidential public papers are available. Also from Obamas official website Obama White House. A dialog transcript recorded in 2010 encompass the centre of the material. The dialog is recorded under a duration of five hours and can be understood to enable a comprehensive overview of the discourse. The dialog was first obtained by a Freedom of Information Act request by *Los Angeles Times* reporter David Cloud. Parts of the dialog is however erased and replaced by the label "classified". As the large majority of the conversation is available, this study considers the information sufficient to use for analysis. This study cannot claim to be representative as only one transcript is retrieved. However, the aim of this study is to illustrate how to understand this phenomenon from the perspective of the theory, also, it does not take an ontological approach which recognizes causality. Thus, this does not pose a problem for the analysis. The site WikiLeaks is used to retrieve information, such as email correspondents between veterans and soldiers with the United States Armed Forces. Narratives from soldiers is found in secondary sources, however if the dialog is written in its full form and not as a summary it will be regarded as a primary source as it has not been interpreted by the author.

Concerning secondary sources, such as scientific articles and books, attention must be paid towards the bias of the authors, both towards the author of the article but also to the author of this thesis. This thesis takes the ontological perspective that bias cannot be avoided and that the researcher changes the material solely by her presence. This will be carefully considered using the critical criteria as described by Teorell and Svensson. This includes authenticity, concurrency, and partiality of the sender of the material (Teorell & Svensson 2007:105-106).

The secondary material consists mainly on the contemporary research of drones from a gender perspective. This includes research by scholars Caroline Holmqvist (2013), Grègoire Chamayou (2015a), Cara Daggett (2015) and Lauren Wilcox (2017). Holmqvist discusses the philosophy of contemporary warfare and the making sense of the use of combat-enabled drones in war. She focuses on the human experience in war, what it means to be human and how drones can be understood as political agents. Chamayou discusses moral and legal implications with the use of drones in war. His work is a comprehensive overview of the field of drone warfare

and will therefore be used extensively throughout the study. Daggett's study which is used in this thesis is a narrative analysis of how queer phenomenology makes sense of the spatiotemporal disorientation, within the binaries home / combat and distance/ intimacy, that exist among the drone operators. The article is moralizing, and treats the concept of intelligibility of killing (Daggett 2015). Lauren Wilcox's article is an extensive understanding of how racial and gendered algorithms play a role in deciding who becomes a threat and who doesn't, when visualized from above. The paper discusses and criticizes the reproduction of gendered and racialized bodies that enables the necro-politics of massacre which is a result of drone warfare (Wilcox 2017)

This study does not take legal or moral implications to account. This study aims to find the discourse and examine whether it can be understood to shape war.

3.5   Operationalization

With the assistance of the theoretical concepts *Hegemonic Masculinity, Militarism and Militarization* and *Embodime*nt, this study will analyse text and societal practices within the United States Armed Forces. The text consists of speeches made by the former president Barack Obama, narratives from veterans and soldier with the United States Armed Forces, a dialog transcript from drone operators, narratives from drone operators as well as the image of the drone. Societal practices can be whether the drone operators decide to fire, what their reactions are and what actions are taken by different actors that could be understood as protecting a gender identity.

The theoretical framework can be understood as separate concepts who explain three individual set of instances. They can also be understood to contribute to each other's understanding. Below is a figure that demonstrates how the theory is applied to the material.
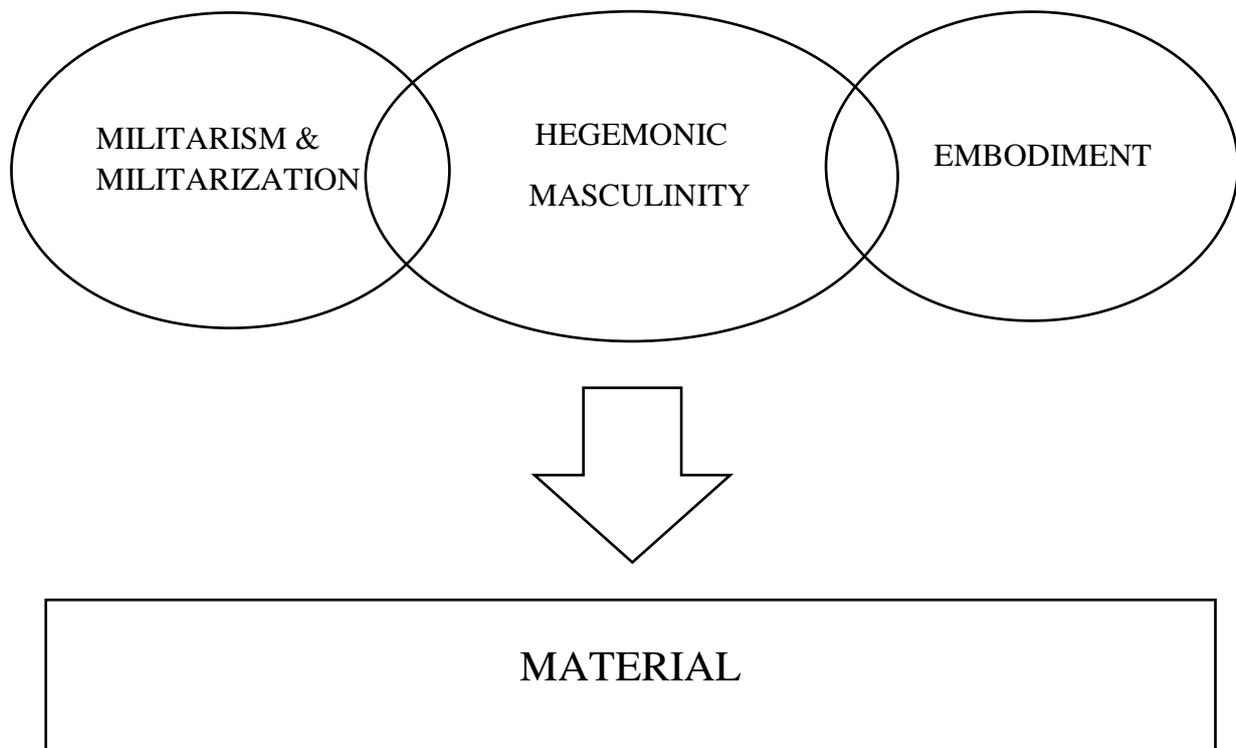
Fig. 2 Operationalization the theoretical framework

Analysing the material with the assistance of the theoretical framework implies reading a text in accordance with the methodological framework, to see how this text and societal practices

can be understood with the help of these concepts. For example, analysing two speeches made by the former president Barack Obama; one from 2013 and one from 2016, we can compare these to track the process of production. In the earlier speech, Obama stresses "*the decisions we are making today will define the future that we leave to our children*" in relation to the use of drones in armed conflicts (Obama White House 2013:05.39- 06.01). In the speech from 2016 Obama argues for the importance of "*protect the troops*" and "*prevent real threats to the American people*" (Obama White House 2016:27.41-27.59). Using Fairclough's instrument of text analysis listed above, this paper argues that we can find a discourse that accentuates protectiveness, responsibility, endurance, courageousness. The text also takes the militarized perspective as it takes for granted that physical force is the only way to resolve differences, and in stressing the importance of protecting the troops it also relates to militaristic ideals as soldiers deserving of special praise. Depending on who is addressed and how conservative the consumer is, the mentioning of children can relate to a traditional heterosexual family constellation with a mother a father and a child. The tracking of the process of communication by researching the audience can bring light to this. Analysing the text side by side with societal practices, such as the quick acceleration in drone strikes, we can argue that there is an external discourse pushing a masculine and militaristic interpretation of drones in armed conflicts that is enforces by the representative of the state.

The external discourse, expressed by the representative of the state and within the Armed Forces, will be concluded together with the internal discourse expressed by the drone operators themselves, in the aim to further in understanding in whether war can be understood to be shaped by gender norms and militaristic ideals.

4. Empirical analysis

The purpose of this chapter is to analyse the discourse among and around the drone operators within the U.S. armed forces during the Obama administration. This will be done by studying the external and internal sociolinguistic discourse of the use of drones and further examine if and how this discourse shape the way the drone operators behave in war.

4.1   The external sociolinguistic discourse

4.1.1 The national perspective

In an interview with Alexandra Schwartzbrot, Grègoire Chamayou (2015b) explains that the drone easily appears as the weapon for a coward. The operators hide behind a screen and are not required to prove their courage. Chamayou continues, explaining how this becomes problematic for the military who instead tries to turn this into their own benefit in stressing the humane way of warfare the unmanned weapons enable.

Cowardice and weakness, does not harmonize well with a militarized society (Hutchings 2008: 389, Enloe 2014:11) and the necessity to turn this around can hence be understood as important in the claiming of a hegemonic position. During his presidency, Barack Obama mentioned or participated in discussions on drones 36 times (Peters & Wooley 2017a). Nine of these times the conversation did not regard the drone per se, but was brought up during conversations on different topics such as technological developments (Peters & Wooley 2017b-2017j). However, the President mentioned drones in the context of protecting the legality of the use of drones three times during his presidency (Peters & Wooley 2017k-2017m). On six occasions the President spoke of drones as enablers of protection for those who are threatened or are in danger (Peters & Wooley 2017n-2017s). Three times Obama mentioned drones in the context of strength (Peters & Wooley 2017t – 2017u, 2017o), on five occasions Obama talked about drones in relation to control (Peters & Wooley 2017v-2017w, 2017o, 2017x., 2017y) and on thirteen occasions the President mentioned, or participated in discussions on drones as moral weapons and in relation to "making the right decisions"

(Peters & Wooley 2017r-2017s, 2017z. 2017a.1.-2017m.1). Twice the president talked about drones in relation to leadership (Peters & Wooley 2017y, 2017d.1.). This study will further examine a few of these occasions.

In a speech from 2013, president Barack Obama talks about all the Americans who have "*made the ultimate sacrifice*" and of those who have "*left pieces of themselves on the battlefield*". He goes on to talk about drone warfare and of "*how the decisions we are making today will define the future that we leave to our children*" (Obama White House 2013:05.39-06.01, Peters & Wooley 2017o). Deriving from Fairclough's framework, text is analysed in numerous steps, by talking about soldiers who have fallen in war, he ties his speech to the discourse of honourability and militarization. This romanticising of war, and the belief that soldiers deserve special praise for their contributions to their countries in accordance with militarism theory (Basham 2016:885, Enloe 2014:11) paves the way in which the audience interpret the rest of his speech.

As he moved on to talk about making decision and creating a better future for children, this also harmonizes with bravery and providing women and children with protection, which are also prominent ideas of militarized masculinity (Enloe 2014:11). However, how this text is interpreted by the consumer also depend on his or her experiences. If the person has been deployed, the relation to the family, can change the perception of whether drones are considered cowardice, or are enablers of a humanitarian way of warfare. In this speech Obama mentions drones 13 times. The President stresses how precise the drones are in comparison with conventional aircrafts, and how effective they are in defeating enemies. The President also mentions how the civilian casualties are tragic, but must be understood in comparison with the terrorist's aggressions towards the civilians, which are far worse. Also, that *"doing nothing is not an option"* (Obama White House 2013:19.10, 23.25-25.20, Peters & Wooley 2017o). It seems reasonable to assume that this speech intends to enforce an image of a charitable older brother, who needs to come in and steer up the situation. This implies strength and leadership, being in charge and the holding of humanitarian values, which can be related to rationality and righteousness. This clearly renounces cowardice and weakness.

In a speech from 2016 on countering terrorism, Obama stresses the drone's capabilities to "*protect the troops*" and "*prevent real threats to the American people*" (Obama White House 2016:27.41-27.59, Peters & Wooley 2017s). Comparing these two text who both stress the humanitarian aspects of the weapons as protectors of life, we can track the process of text production in accordance with Fairclough's framework. We can thus state that the separate texts

both create a sense of protection of life and has an aim to create a discourse of a humanitarian war. As Obama addressed the state of the Union in January 2015, he spoke of "*our leadership*" and "*our values*" before Obama moved on to his prohibition of torture and the use of drones in war (Obama White House 2015:46.11-46.30, Peters & Wooley 2017d.1). This discourse of leadership and humanitarian values clash with Chamayou's claim, that the drone appears as the weapon for the coward. This threatens the hegemonic position of those who pilot the drones, as well as the national power that the drone represents. By tying the drone to keywords such as *leadership* and *humanitarian values*, *protectiveness* and *making the right decisions,* it can be interpreted that this shapes the perception of the discourse into something that is relatable to humanitarian values and leadership, thus relatable to hegemony and being in charge.

All three speeches paint a picture of an external threat towards the American people, they also take for granted that physical force is the only way to resolve differences, which is very much in line with militarism and a militarizes society (Enloe 2014:11) The speeches can be interpreted to include a sense of praise for the troops, also this harmonizes with militarism (Enloe 2014:11).

4.1.2 Within the United States Armed Forces

While Obama is talking about the drone's ability to save American lives, the soldiers create a slightly different discourse. In an email directed to a list of war veterans, veterans are urged to click themselves into a website and vote on what they think of the new war medal. The medal in question is given to drone operators and cyberwar participants for their extraordinary achievements, and outranks the purple heart medal. The author of the email, Jon Stolz who is an Iraq war veteran and chairman for the organization VoteVets.org, does not agree with the ranking of this medal (WikiLeaks 2013b). In his email, he has included comments from the Facebook page where this subject was discussed;

> Ethan C: I think their service should be recognized with some kind of award but combat valor medals recognize real life and death situations on the actual battlefield. Combat awards should be given the highest placement. (WikiLeaks 2013b).

The pushback from the veterans resulted in a cancelling of the creation of the medal (Terkel 2015). Going back to Dyvik's argument, that soldier who has not experiences combat, has not yet transitioned into becoming a *real* soldier (Dyvik 2017:86). Drone operators claim however,

that they indeed experience real combat (Daggett 2015: page) and that it does indeed take courage to fly UAVs. They argue that it takes courage to do what is right, and that it takes courage to take another person's life (Chamyou 2015a:102). According to Dyvik, weakness within a militarized society in not appreciated nor welcomed. Rather, when signs of weakness appear, these are immediately excluded (Dyvik 2017:85). The operators insisting that they have courage could be understood as their claim of masculinity and pursuit of inclusion in the brotherhood.

Reports show that many drone operators suffer from PTSD, post-traumatic stress disorder, which has causes both the pilot and the families a lot of suffering. Some analysts argue that drone operators are experiencing a higher level of stress than units who are deployed to Afghanistan. This has provoked many American soldiers who claim that these pilots know nothing about battle fatigue, and have not *really* had to deal with the psychological effects of war (Chamayou 2015a:103, 106-108). One American soldier;

> "Ficken cry babies, that's what they are…Fire them and get somebody new who can deal with the
> stress of the air-conditioned trailer and going home every night." (Chamayou 2015a: 106).

In the documentary *Unmanned: America's Drone Wars* from 2013, a former drone operator describes the detailed images the operators are able to see on their screens on a clear skied day. He describes one attack were three armed men were walking in the mountains of Afghanistan, the drone operators fire, and the missiles strike all three. One of the men however, loses his leg and is still alive (Greenwald 2013:19.00). The drone operator continues;

> "Uh, he is rolling around. He is holding it and he is just like rolling around, but you can see like,
> where his leg is missing and the blood is spurting out and landing on the ground and it's cooling.
> It's hot, it's a hot pool of blood and it's cooling. And we keep eyes on and watch as the guy becomes
> the same colour as the ground that he bled out on. I can almost see his facial expression. It was,
> uh, I could almost see his mouth open and crying out…" (Greenwald 2013:19.30-20.20)

The scenes the operators are forced to witness are at times very explicit, Wilcox refer to this as an "intimate distance". Being able see what their actions result in causes a great deal of regret and stress among the operators who at the end of their shift go home to their families and help their children with their homework (Wilcox 2017:22). The telecommuting to the war zone creates a disturbance in the overall presence, making them feel as if they are in between two

realities (Chamayou 2015a:256). The term for this is deployed-at-station, their minds are in combat but their body is shielded from death which disqualifies them from being accepted as "real warrior" (Dagett 2015:362). This is an example of what Fairclough describes as interdiscursivity, when different discourses collide. The operators insist that their experiences are real, that they are indeed brave and that they experience real stress. Simultaneously other soldiers try to deprive them of their hegemonic position in the hierarchy, claiming that they are cowards and *"know nothing of battle fatigue"*.

The drone operator's experiences do not fit the ready-made map of hegemonic masculinities and are excluded from the group of *real warriors*. Daggett argues that this can be interpreted as a form of emasculation, as the bodies are removed from warzone, this deprives the individuals from acting in accordance with the hegemonic militarized masculine role (Daggett 2015:363, 374). Although they are not in line with the militarized masculinity, they claim themselves that their experiences are real. The pursuit of claiming one's masculinity can lead to further frustration.

4.1.3 The drone as an extension of the soldier

Butler writes in her book, *Frames of War,* (2016:xii) that just like soldiers use weapons in war, does weapons use soldiers. By positioning them, endowing them with perspective and establish the trajectory of their action, Butler argues that weapons frame and form anyone who enters, or does not enter, the visual or audible field. Weapons are an extension of the soldier, or rather, the soldier is an extension of the weapon.

Caroline Holmqvist argues that the development towards anonymous drones, capable of deciding on attacks, deserves close attention. The fact that drones are already expected to have a degree of self-awareness and autonomy is, according to her, "alarming". Holmqvist derives from Butlers above argument, taking into account that material object might have political agency, and thus the drone itself can be conceived as a political actor. Regardless of the drone's capability to make autonomous decisions, it is already a political agent. The drone is an apparatus of military power, or perhaps a body of collective embodied performances, a superhuman that extends the human capabilities (Holmqvist 2013:544-545).

Reaching back to embodiment theory, this concerns the perceiving of a personal enlargement and empowerment as, exempli gratia, soldiers embody- either a single warrior body, or a

collective combat body (Dyvik 2016:142). Tying this to Holmqvist argument on drones as a political actor, the drone itself could be comprehended to be a part of the combat body, or rather incorporating the bodies of flesh and blood into its own physical steely body. Chamayou briefly mentions that the drone has eyes, ears and other bodily organs. He refers to data fusion, the aim to fuse different layers of information together, which is gathers from both audio and video recordings (Chamayou 2015a:41). Wilcox furthers this argument, tying it to the idea of drones as embodied assemblages with visual, but also tactile, digital and affective senses. Wilcox understands the drone operators as incorporated into this assemblage (Wilcox 2017:21-22).

The operators are located half a world away from the drone, however as part of a unified body in which the drone is also a part, the eyes and ears of the body, are the eyes and ears of the drone. According to Daggett, one anonymous drone operator said that one time that the action was so intense that when the drone crashed he reached for the ejection seat, even though the drone was thousands of miles away (Daggett 2015:371). As Dyvik argues; what is individual and what is collective can become blurred (Dyvik 2016:143) and according to Chamayou, the operators experience a sense of confusion towards in what reality they are in (Chamayou 2015a:256). This study argues that the drone is an extension of the operator and that the operator is incorporated into the assemblage of the drone, causing disorientation.

4.1.4 The drone as a symbol of masculinity and superiority

Carmen Cusack claims that that weapons are in general associated with masculinity, however they can also be interpreted to be shaped as phallic symbols. The phallic association juxtaposes weapons, missiles and hence drones, to symbolising male aggression (Cusack 2015:132). As the drone has the ability to surveil the population, it sees all and hears everything (Chamayou 2015a:43), it is in total control and has the ability to practice power. The names of the surveillance drones are also relevant here. *Argus*, is the creature within Greek mythology with a hundred eyes. It is also known as *Panoptes* which is what Foucault's famous power analysis *Panopticon* was driven from (Chamayou 2015a:43). This analysis is highly applicable to this case. The ability to control prisoner's behaviour, or rather the behaviour of an entire society, by simply introducing the possibility that their actions might be watched. The controlling force can see all, but the observed see nothing (Foucault 1977:196-197). The drone is literally looking

down at a population which cannot see the drone from down below. Yet the people are aware of that the drone might be there to observe them. Control, aggression and independency permeates the discourse of what the drone symbolizes, relating the drone to hegemony and masculinity.

Fig. 3. MQ-1 Predator Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (Wikimedia Commons 2011)

The word for the drone itself also discloses the intention to create insect-like nano-drones (Feigenbaum 2015:268, Chamayou 2015a:56). This would imply tiny remote-controlled or autonomous machines, having the ability to enter any space unnoticed, though a window or small vents. This creates an opportunity for the battleground to expand dramatically, (Chamayou 2015a:56) leaving everything and everybody under the total control of the superior power controlling of the machines. The Israeli micro-drone *Mosquito*, is an example of an already existing drone in this size. However, with its weight of 0.5 kilograms, it has the ability to carry 150 grams, and is thus not armed (Agrell 2013:12).

Another aspect is economy. A leaked report from 2011 showed that the United States had spent 360 million dollars on the war against terrorism in Afghanistan alone, drone warfare being a large part of this (WikiLeaks 2011). As Foucault makes clear, economy is not related to power as Marxists would argue (Foucault 2003:14) as would Gramci (Fairclough 1992:91). However, the apparent capability to spend big amounts of resources at the situation still relates to the image of a provider and an able power player in charge. Even though money in itself does not directly lead to power, the expensive attributes enables the actors to perform power.

This study interprets the drone as the perfection of masculinity. The association of drones with the powerful image of hegemony and masculine aggression could be argued to shape the interpretation of the external discourse of drones.

4.2 The internal sociolinguistic discourse

4.2.1 The drone operator's perspective

In February 2010, a Predator drone crew spots three vehicles traveling together in a Taliban controlled area in the Pakistani province Uruzgan. As the vehicles occupants stop to pray, ground troops and Kiowa attack helicopters with advanced audio recording material attempt to search the probable insurgents for weapons (Wilcox 2017:11). In a dialog transcript, we can follow the conversation between the drone crew and ground troops. The troops cannot PID (positively identify) any weapons. The drone pilot says; "*Just keep looking, maybe we'll see something*" (Cloud 2011a:00.44). The crew is unable to identify weapons with certainty and they start to wonder when they will be able to start dropping the missiles. One crew member; "*Roger, given the distance and the lack of weapons PID we are having a hard time (garble, garble) and also the same with fires, (garble) to bring them in so we can engage but we really need that PID to (garble, garble) start dropping*" (Cloud 2011a:1:03). Suddenly members of the crew think they might have spotted children (Cloud 2011a);

> 1:06 (Pilot): JAG25/ KIRK97, your comms are weak and extremely broken uh understand we are still looking for PID, we are still eyes on the east side working om PID, we have possible weapons bu no PID yet, we'll keep you updated
>
> 1:07 (MC): screener said at least one child near SUV
>
> 1:07 (Sensor): bull(expletive deleted)…where!?
>
> 1:07 (Sensor): send me a (expletive deleted) still, I don't think they have kids out at this hour, I know they're shady but come on
>
> 1:07 (Pilot): at least one child…Really? Listing the MAM, uh that means he´s guilty
>
> 1:07 (Sensor): well maybe a teenager but I haven't seen anything that looked that short, granted they're all grouped up here, but.
>
> 1:07 (MC): They're reviewing
>
> 1:07 (Pilot): Yeah review that (expletive deleted)… why didn't he say possible child, why are they so quick to call (expletive deleted) kids but not to call (expletive deleted) a rifle

1:08 (MC) two children were at the rear of the SUV…I haven't seen two children

After a long conversation, involving confusion regarding whether weapons or children are identified, army commanders order the two Kiowa helicopters to get into position to attack. The drone readies one missile. Hellfire missiles strike the first and third vehicles which bursts into flames. (Cloud 2011b) The conversation continues.

04:40 (Sensor): What are those? They were in the middle vehicle.

04:40 (MC): Women and children.

04:40 (Sensor): Looks like a kid.

04:40 (Safety Observer): Yeah. The one waving the flag.

04:40 (Bam Bam41): And Kirk97, Bam Bam41.

04:40 (Pilot): Bam Bam 41 go for Kirk97.

04:40 (Bam Bam41): Roger, Kirk97. Do you have any updated on what you're able to see on the engagement site?

04:41 (Pilot): Kirk97. Uh, negative, we are still observing at this time. Still no weapons PID, everything else matches your assessment. Uh, still looking.

Confusion arise again.

04:43 (Pilot): That lady is carrying a kid, huh? Maybe.

04:43 (Safety Observer): No.

04:43 (MC): No.

04:43 (Sensor): Uh, yeah.

04:43 (MC): The baby, I think on the right. Yeah.

04:43 (Sensor): Yeah.

04:43 (Pilot): The middle.

04:43 (MC): Yeah.

04:43 (Sensor): Right there in the crosshairs.

After the engagement the team confirm that no weapons were identified (Cloud 2011:05.00). The occupants of the vehicles were civilians traveling together due to the unsecure environment. According to U.S. estimation, 15 to 16 men were killed in the attack and 12 were injured, including one woman and three children. However according to Afghan sorces, 23 people were killed inculding two boys who were three and four years old (Cloud 2011b).

Looking back at the conversation we can see that there was nothing apparent suspitious about the vehicles. Analysing the text, for example the sentence *"why didn't he say possible child? Why are they so quick to call kids but not to call a rifle?"* togther with the societal discourse- the fact that they fired, this study interpretes this as though the operators wanted to fire. Even though there were no weapons at the site, they still urged the other members to "*keep looking*", claiming that "*we need that PID to start dropping*". Eventhough there were children present, no close attention was payed to possitivly identify them as children, efforts were placed on identifying the weapons.

Why the operators did not take a moment to think of alternative explanations to who the travelers were, will be discussed with the perspective of the above explained theory. The belief that enemies are natural in human affairs and that physical force is preferred to resolve conflicts (Enloe 2014:11) are two of the most prominent aspects of militarism. These should however be understood together with the theory of hegemonic masculinity, which harmonizes with the theory of militarisic values. The importance of proving one's masculinity in a group is especially important in miliatarized societies (Via 2010:43). As Dyvik also mentions, weakness and femininty must be "weeded out" or excluded, from the militarized society. Individuals who do not perform in accordance with the masculine and militarisic role are suppressed and excluded from the community (Dyvik 2017:85). This study argues that this threat of being excluded when failing to act tough, aggressive, independently, courageously, , take risks while not show emotions- could pressure people into not wanting to be the person who asks the group to step down. That person who does not want to fire, could risk being pointed out as a weak link. As Hutchings argue (2008:391); masculinity and war depends on each other's intelligibility to survive.

This study argues that the gender anxiety that the drone operators might perceive in the pressuring of the soldiers to be aggressive and rational, could create a confirmation bias that made them see the picture they wanted to see. Although no weapons were found they were convinced that there must be weapons somewhere. It therefore seems reasonable to believe that they were looking for an enemy to shoot, to protect their gender identity by proving their courage, their masculinity, to the group and to their society.

4.2.2   PlayStation warriors & signature strikes

Drone war is often criticized for being similar to playing computer games (Chamayou 2015a:107, Daggett 2015:369). Although the imagery is often very explicit, the distance and the lack of smell, splatter and taste is excluded from the experience, making it seem less real. (Daggett 2015:369). When interviewed by American press, drone operators responded to the question *"How do you feel about killing through the intermediary of a screen?"* the answers were; "*Oh, it's a gamers delight."* And; "*It's like a video game. It can get a little bloodthirsty. But its fucking cool.*" (Chamayou 2015a:107). This was firmly denounced at a later date in the *New York Times*, when the seriousness of the technological innovations was better stressed, claiming; "*We are not just playing video games here.*" (Chamayou 2015a:108). Many drone operators agree with the latter, explicitly denying that they are PlayStation warriors;

> "You are 18 inches away from 32-inch, high definition combat… You are there. You are there…
> It's not detached. It's not a video game. And it's certainly not 8,000 miles away" (Air Force
> Times, in Daggett 2015:371)

There are two categories of drone strikes, the first is called *personal strikes.* This implies the tracking of a certain individual whose name is written on a *kill list* which is validated by the president himself. When the individual, deemed terrorist, is identified, the drone operators strike (Chamayou 2015a:56). The other kind of strike is called *signature strikes*. This refers to striking individuals whose identity is unknown, but who behaves in a particular way that is in accordance with how a terrorist would behave. These strikes rely on a pattern-of-life analysis and constitute the majority of all strikes made in total (Chamayou 2015a:47, Wilcox 2017:16 Shaw 2013:536). Here is one operator on gathering patterns-of-life analysis;

> "You become immersed in their life. You feel like you're a part of what they're doing every
> single day. So, even if you're not emotionally engaged with those individuals, you become a little
> bit attached. I've learned about Afghan culture this way… They are human beings, right? That is
> the bottom line, so it affects you to watch the impact of a kinetic strike." (Bergen and Rothenberg
> in Daggett 2015:371)

As argued earlier, the drone operators are at odds with the traditional warrior masculinity. The "intimate-distance" and attachment that is the result of this pattern- of-life analysis also involves a sense of protectiveness for the troops on the ground. Wilcox argues that borders are easily drawn between the national bodies and "the others". These distinctions are made through an

algorithmic analysis of visual cues, as well as affective and emotional ties (Wilcox 2017:22-23). Wilcox argues that the production of "racialized bodies" help *shore up* the threatened masculine identity of the drone operators. The emotion of hate as well as a sense of protection for the troops on the ground, contribute to an elevation of their masculinity and a production of a natural human enemy that must be destroyed (Wilcox 2017:23).

However, the decisions of who to target is not only based on said "visual cues" but is made using a *disposition matrix,* this constitute the components; human intelligence (HUMINT) and signal intelligence (SIGINT) (Wilcox 2017:15). These spreadsheets have become a permanent component of US national security (Shaw 2013:536). The intelligence is gathered from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the Joint Special Operators Command JSOC and the National Security Agency (NSA). The resulting meta data of the disposition matrix, is said to identifying nodes in a web of enemy networks. Wilcox argues however that the process is rather relatable to algorithms – a mathematical map of embodied associational relations. A code of patterns that are performative (Wilcox 20017:15-16) Wilcox claims that the code in itself would not make sense if it was isolated. The algorithms have to be considered in relation to the system of interpretation (Wilcox 2017:17) or in relation to the discursive practices that alter the interpretation of the bodies. More precisely, in relation to gendered, racialized and militarized discourses.

These gendered and militarized discourses can be spotted in the language of the drone operators. Going back to the dialog transcript from the massacre in Uruzgan we find the term "military aged male" or "MAM" being used thirteen times to describe a certain category the bodies on the ground (Claud 2011a:01.04 01.07, 01.10, 01.54, 01.57,03.00, 03.02, 03.05, 03.08, 04.12, 04.30, 04.56, 04.59). This term "military aged male" was later banned, with the argument that the term implied that every adult man was a combatant (Claud 2011b). Regardless if the term is banned, text- in this case separate words, witness of an underlying discourse that shape both text production and consumption.

Obama has answered to the controversial signature strikes, promising that new guidelines will reduce these kinds of strikes. According to John Bellinger, the former State Department legal adviser in President George W. Bush's administration, these new guidelines contain a vague language and loopholes that instead can contribute to more expansive operations (WikiLeaks 2013a).

We can hence state that actions are taken to reduce the gendered and racial biases in who is targeted, however we can also see that race and gender is indeed incorporated in the decision-making. Banning the term "military aged man" does not affect the confirmation bias that clearly exist in the statement: *"why didn't he say possible child? Why are they so quick to call kids but not to call a rifle?"* (Cloud 2011a:01.07). Wilcox argues that there is a joy and anticipation in the desire to see a target detroyed, and that hoping to spot weapons implies a hatred and dehumanization of the bodies on the ground (Wilcox 2017:23). Although some operators cliam to be personaly affected in being the witness of a kinetic strike, this study agrees with Wilcox in that there seams to exist an anticpation and eagerness to drop the missiles understood from the dialog transcipt above. This study argues this anticipation spirals from a deeper sense of gender anxiety which embodies the drone and is created in a militarizes setting of hegemonic masculinity.

5. Conclusions

5.1 Concluding discussion

Can gender norms and militarism be understood to shape robotic warfare, and if so how?

This thesis argues that gender norms and militarization can indeed be understood to shape robotic warfare.

From an external perspective, the discourse is understood to be ambivalent. The national perspective renounces any symbolism with weakness and cowardice and instead tries to push for a discourse of a humanitarian, however still masculine way of war. A robotic war, where no American lives are lost. Leadership, strength and protection are important component in this framing of the discourse of drones. This is understood as a way to claim the hegemonic masculine position of the nation behind the drone strikes. The external discourse within the Armed Forces, among the soldiers and the veterans, seem deeply provoked by the drone operators. They argue that their combat experience is not real, and call them cry-babies when they claim to suffer from PTSD. As soldierism is interpreted as deeply connected to combat experience within the Armed Forces, the claim of their combat experience not being real is a claim that the operators are not real soldiers. This implies increasing the pressure on the operators, to prove themselves as masculine to the community within the Armed Forces and live up the role the national perspective is contributing to designing.

This study also argues that the drone itself must be analysed as a body and as a political agent. This body is argued to be a symbol of masculine aggression, hegemonic masculinity and militarization. The powerful image associates these concepts to the external discourse of drones, and perhaps also the internal discourse. This study interprets the drone operators to identify with the image of the drone, and feel connected to the predator-machine which can be interpreted to symbolize the perfection of masculinity. The drone and the operator are continuations of each other are part of the same corporate body. The operator embodies the drone, making their mind experience "real combat" as their body is protected from physical harm.

This thesis argues that the drone operators perceive their identity as a soldier as questioned and threatened, and thus also their masculinity. In accordance with the theory of hegemonic masculinity and militarism, the identity of a soldier and of a masculine man is intertwined. In the creation of a discourse that the drone operators are week and cowardice, the drone operators experience gender anxiety and perceive their hegemonic position and inclusion in the brotherhood as threatened. In fear of being excluded, and of being kicked of the hegemonic steps of the societal ladder, they behave more aggressively. Wilcox argues that this anxiety leads the operators to experience joy and anticipation in seeing a target detroyed. This study agrees with Wilcox in that there seams to exist an anticpation and eagerness to drop missiles, mainly understood from the dialog transcipt displayed in earlier chapters.

Although many operators claim to be personaly affected in witnessing a kinetic strike after gathering pattern-of-life analysis, the disorientation among the operators affect their intellibility of killing. Among "visual cues" and terms that convey certain patterns, such as the term "MAM"; who is a terrorist and who is the neighbourhood baker might not always be clear. The pressure among the drone operators to constantly proving themselves as in control, making risk-taking decisions, being aggressive, courageous, emotionless and in charge, does not give the hypothetical baker any advantages.

This study argues that gender norms and militarization pressure drone operators to act in accordance with the hyper-masculine hegemonic role, to avoid being excluded from the community within the Armed Forces. The pressure to "act masculine" is enforced both from external perspectives as well as from the internal perspective. The discussion on whether the combat experiences are real or not, effectively decide who is a real soldier and hence who practice most power in the relation between the bodies in the Armed Forces. The practice of power, the competition of hegemonic positions in society, shapes the way war is practiced using drones.

Relating this study to previous research within this field, this study positions itself as an extension of Lauren Wilcox's and Cara Daggett's studies. Adding new material, it widens the discourse. Also by using a different methodology, this study contributes with support to previous assumptions.

5.1.1 Bias and alternative explanations

It is important to remember that this study views the situation from a certain, and a narrow perspective. There surely exist alternative explanations that could understand the increasingly aggressive drone strikes in a different way. Some argue that drone strikes are used as an alternative to imprisonment at Guantánamo Bay, which the Obama administration has struggled to shut down. Critics explain the escalation in drone strikes as a "rather kill than capture" strategy (Roberts 2013) which would essentially simplify the closing of Guantánamo Bay.

This study finds that this might be true, however this does not affect the outcome of this study. Whether aggressiveness is understood as enforced from above, it is also something that escalates in the relation between bodies in a militarized society that believes hierarchies between humans are natural. As has been shown in this study.

Critical readers of this study might however argue that this study is written from a biased viewpoint, and that there is no proof to these assumptions. The methodological approach that is applied to this study enables a large room for interpretation which clearly shapes the study and alters the argument and assumptions. The thesis is written from the perspective of a woman with feminist opinions, and all material has passed this biased interpretation. Although efforts are made for the study to be intersubjective, bias is something that is impossible to avoid according to the ontological perspective of this study. It is therefore critical to remember that this thesis is a written from one perspective, and different understandings are intelligible.

5.2   Future research

It would be interesting to widen this study using a larger material, to enable a deeper understanding of the discourse. To take a more narrative approach and conduct interviews with drone operators would certainly deepen the analysis and further a larger understanding of this subject.

The scope of this thesis does not cover the perspective of those who are on the ground being constantly watched by an invisible eye. As Cliff Leek claims, David Kilcullen has coined the phenomenon "*accidental guerrilla*", which refers to the creation of new terrorists by creating a

frustration amongst the people in the conducting of drone strikes (Leek 2016:60). Further research should be done on understanding these people from within, tentatively through interviews and through the theory of militarization.

Also, how gender is being shaped as the role of the soldier is changing would be interesting to investigate.

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