

# The coverage of war, security, and defense policy: Do Women matter? A Longitudinal Content Analysis of Broadsheets in Germany

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## ABSTRACT

*Our social consciousness reserves the role of the fighter solely for men. And because of our accepted model of womanhood, women are not considered as being authoritative, competent, or decisive actors in the context of war and violence. Violence and war are topics that make it especially difficult to perceive women as acting subjects. The media provide an important social space for the construction of social consciousness and, additionally, construct gender characteristics and gender concepts themselves. It is said that especially during armed conflicts or other violent crises, female acting subjects leave the public (=media) stage—a place on which they are underrepresented even under normal circumstances—. Media coverage of war, it is said, assigns the role of the victim to women. However, we do not actually have much empirical evidence to support this view due to the significant lack of quantitative studies on media coverage of women during wartime. As a result, in Germany we conducted a complex framing analysis of media coverage of war between 1980 and 2000. This paper deals with the results of this framing analysis and the representation of women during wartime in quality German newspapers. It is the first longitudinal gender-specific framing analysis of war coverage ever—not only in Germany.*

## INTRODUCTION

Gender is a socially constructed category which produces asymmetries and differences and which determines the distribution of power between men and women. This principle operates together with, or possibly in opposition to, other principles of differentiation such as, e.g. class, nationality, or ethnic origin. Gender roles and gender concepts are also constructed through the media, i.e. media contexts. One can even assume that the media also has a significant role in the construction of gender roles. Media coverage of war is no exception to this, all the more since gender has played a central role in media's coverage and promotion of war (Cloud, 1994; Enloe 1994, 2000a, 2000b; Rabinovitz, 1994; Wiegman, 1994)

It would seem plausible to assume that gender-stereotypical media reports become particularly recognisable in war coverage and that definite differences in the framing of male and female actors with respect to the particular topic become apparent.<sup>1</sup> However, until now this question has not been investigated in a broad and representative fashion. Although the Anglo-American communication science field carried out content analyses of war coverage during

the first and second Gulf wars, during the Falkland crisis or the military confrontations between Palestinians and Israelis, gender-specific questions were not part of the research agenda.<sup>2</sup> Hence, our project attempted to generate the first reliable empirical data on a broad basis for a gender perspective. For this purpose, the gender of all affected actors and persons occurring in war coverage was coded.

In the context of war and violence or defense policy, women hardly seem to be present as significant actors in public consciousness.<sup>3</sup> It seems far more likely that they are left playing the role of the victim – especially since in the media, the role of the victim is generally assigned to females (Fröhlich, 2000). An impressionistic observation shows that the coverage of war by the media portrays men in accordance with traditional gender images. Men are somewhat expectedly depicted as active participants in war (or even as advocates of war). Women, on the other hand, are quite naturally portrayed as such ‘subjects’ who disapprove of military and violent confrontations, and who act peacefully and are made to suffer in the occurrence of war.<sup>4</sup>

In light of this, theoretical studies claim the following: In order to legitimize war, the military and political decision-makers foster and exploit the image of the peaceful yet powerless weak woman in need of protection as well as the image of the powerful and strong man, who is principally willing to go to war and protect and defend women, children, and the elderly (e. g. Fröhlich, 2002a, b; Klaus, Goldbeck & Kassel, 2002; **Stabile & Kumar, 2005**). The annihilation, trivialisation, marginalisation, and instrumentalisation of women in war coverage, on the whole, leads to the experiences of women in war —as acting persons or persons affected— being cut out completely (see for example Del Zotto, 2002). Thus, women in and their daily life during war tend to be treated largely as a social border problem or, at best, are presented comparatively prominently for legitimating purposes. The accusation therefore stands: Gender-stereotypical war coverage essentially reduces the experiences of women during war to an emotionalising function of women, who are in turn supposed to give war coverage an ‘affective impulse’.

Taking into consideration the briefly described theoretical background, we assumed that the dominating role of female actors in war coverage is not that of acting subject but rather that of affected object. This assumption also seems to be plausible since it still constitutes a worldwide exception that women are active in military operations or that they play an important role on the relevant political stage. Therefore, the most prominent role of women during wartime seems to be that of the victim —politically or militarily instrumentalized, as well as selected, described, and interpreted, mainly by male journalists, and thus almost always without an individual voice—. Yet one can assume that this ‘female silencing’ is further enhanced by the fact that most victims of war are portrayed as an anonymous mass. The latter —i.e. the assumption that victims of war in media coverage are mostly discussed and portrayed as an anonymous amorphous mass— was, in fact, eventually confirmed by the general results from our content analysis.

## METHODOLOGY

The data presented in this contribution stem from a longitudinal quantitative and qualitative framing analysis of German newspaper coverage of international wars, as well as coverage of the German federal security and defense policy that occurred between January 1, 1989 and

December 31, 2000.<sup>5</sup> The news material we looked at came from the politics sections of Germany's two most respected daily newspapers, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ), and the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (SZ). In total we identified and analysed 10,104 articles on international wars and 3,193 articles on the German federal security and defense policy (N = 13,279 articles).<sup>6</sup> The articles were partly on microfilm (FAZ from 1989 to 1992; SZ 1989 to 1993) and partly on CD-ROM (FAZ 1993 to 2000; SZ 1994 to 2000).<sup>7</sup> Apart from categories measuring the thematic framing of German war coverage in general, we also built categories that measured the framing of 'protagonists' mentioned within the respective coverage. As 'protagonists' we considered individual persons as well as well-nigh anonymous groups of people.<sup>8</sup> The category 'protagonists' allowed for two further specifications: (1) 'actor(s)' and (2) 'affected person(s)/victim(s)'. For each actor and each affected person/victim, the respective gender<sup>9</sup>, nationality, and actual performing role<sup>10</sup> was detected. We also detected the respective type of war<sup>11</sup> and the region<sup>12</sup> where the respective war took place. Besides these demographic variables, we also ascertained whether and how the respective protagonists were explicitly characterized with descriptions that exceed simple demographic information (see Table 9). We conducted three tests of intercoder reliability.<sup>13</sup> The mean of the intercoder reliability was 0.91, which represents a very good result.

We developed the following definition of 'war':

War is a conflict which (1) at least once within the given research period meets all of the following criteria: (2) a mass conflict which is settled by at least two armed-forces (official/regular troops, no paramilitary units or police-forces) (3) at gunpoint, in the course of which the respective violence must be more than just sporadic, spontaneous, or isolated.

For 'German security and defense policy', we developed the following definition:

German federal security and defense policy comprises the following measures for the (1) protection of German citizens: All measures related to (2) the military in the (3) national sphere, within the scope of (4) international alliances, organizations and any systems of mutual collective security including activities of (5) peacekeeping and measures to cope with crises and to prevent conflicts. It also includes activities of (6) total defense in regard to the (7) official German armed forces.

## QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

Only two percent of the actors and one percent of the victims in the media coverage analysed by us were women or girls. However, among the men or boys there were fifty percent (actors) and thirty-one percent (persons affected). At least on this broad level, the general assumption that women are being marginalized in war coverage is confirmed for the time being. However, on the whole, we hardly found any evidence to support the hypothesis that females are mostly portrayed as victims. In light of this general background, separate analyses seem useful here since the results pertaining to topics related to war could be different to those pertaining to topics related to security and defense policy (compare Table 1).

TABLE 1

GENDER TERMS IN TOPICS IN FAZ AND SZ FROM 1989 TO 2000 (PROPORTIONS)						
Proportions <sup>A</sup>	All topics		Topics related to war		Topics related to security/defense policy	
	Actors (n=12,435) %	Affected (n=9,601) %	Actors (n=9,544) %	Affected (n=7,493) %	Actors (n=2,891) %	Affected (n=2,108) %
Man, Boy	50	31	46	30	62	34
Woman, Girl	2	1	1	1	3	2
Both sexes	x	x	x	1	x	x
Gender-neutral	48	68	52	69	34	64
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
<p><i>Note:</i> Due to the sampling design, which includes all possible cases, no significance tests were conducted.</p> <p><i>Basis:</i> All topics that treat an actor or victim</p> <p><sup>A</sup> Cases in which no definite actor/person affected could be identified are not included.</p> <p>x Less than 0.5 percent</p>						

Compared to the proportion of women as actors in war-related contributions (one percent), women were (with three percent) slightly more likely to occur as actors in articles on security and defense policy. Similarly, this also applies to the comparison between the proportions of women affected in articles related to war and in those related to security and defense policy (one and two percent respectively). In general, these proportions are too low to draw clear conclusions.<sup>14</sup> In view of this, for once there are (until further clarification) doubts regarding current theses that proclaim that in the media coverage of people affected by war and victims of war, women are most likely to be mentioned. Our results do not support such a conclusion. Moreover, our results also show that a linguistic presentation that identifies both sexes (e.g. ‘the male and female soldiers’ or ‘the men and women in the refugee camps’) has not yet become standard in the analysed coverage of FAZ and SZ. People are relatively often described as being the gender-neutral term of ‘victims’ in articles related to war.

In the following, a longitudinal perspective is adopted i.e. gender terms between 1989 and 2000 are analysed in more detail. Table 2 shows the annual proportions of gender terms for topics related to war.

TABLE 2

ANNUAL PROPORTIONS OF GENDER TERMS IN TOPICS RELATED TO WAR IN FAZ AND SZ FROM 1989 TO 2000 (LINE PERCENTAGES)						
Proportions	Actors (line percentages)			Affected (line percentages)		
	Man, Boy (n=4,441) %	Woman, Girl (n=135) %	Gender-neutral (n=4,988) %	Man, Boy (n=2,216) %	Woman, Girl (n=78) %	Gender-neutral (n=5,160) %
1989	33	x	67	18	-	82
1990	45	1	55	21	1	78
1991	42	1	57	18	X	82
1992	34	1	65	23	2	74
1993	69	1	30	47	1	52
1994	48	2	50	32	2	66
1995	40	1	59	24	1	75
1996	43	1	55	29	1	70
1997	46	3	51	38	1	61
1998	43	2	55	30	1	69
1999	52	2	46	32	1	66
2000	45	3	52	35	1	63

*Note:* Due to the sampling design, which includes all possible cases, no significance tests were conducted  
*Basis:* All topics related to war that treat an actor/person affected

In almost all cases, gender-neutral terms dominated in both groups. However, on the whole, the proportion of neutral descriptions is significantly lower in 1993, which is in favor of male descriptions. While gender-neutral descriptions dominate for the vast majority of years, their proportion is quite clearly lower in 1993. In the groups of the persons affected though, gender-neutral terms tended to still be slightly in the majority, while the trend in the group of the actors is almost turned upside down. The extraordinary development in the year 1993 can be taken as an indicator of the greater increase in personalisation. And, in turn, this development can most likely be attributed to the media coverage of the wars in former Yugoslavia.<sup>15</sup> This also applies to the year 1999. In that year, the proportion of gender-neutral terms also lay significantly below the usual level, while the proportion of explicitly *male* terms was on the rise. The general results from the content analysis of our study on wars worldwide show that in 1999 the war in Kosovo dominated the war coverage. The fact that in the years 1989 and 1993 hardly any changes occurred in the group of the female persons affected, is therefore certainly

rather surprising. This is especially true considering up until now it has always been argued that particularly in the war proceedings in former Yugoslavia, female victims were explicitly instrumentalized to legitimize the entry of NATO and the European community into this war.

The military confrontations in which the Federal Republic of Germany has actively intervened in, reveal in the media coverage that was analysed a more individualized portrayal of the subjects involved. Both the perpetrators and the victims receive an identifiable face. Hence, the media coverage seems to be rather characterized by an “episodic framing” (Iyengar, 1991) or through case studies (Daschmann, 2001). This conveys a greater power of convincing the recipient and creates a greater extent of emotional involvement, which, in turn, can lead to a greater acceptance of the military intervention. Individual human beings and not anonymous masses are being protected and villains are being punished.

Let’s now consider the following (Table 3) which details the relevant results for the topics related to security and defense policy.

**TABLE 3**

ANNUAL PROPORTIONS OF GENDER TERMS IN TOPICS RELATED TO SECURITY AND DEFENSE POLICY IN FAZ AND SZ FROM 1989 TO 2000 (LINE PERCENTAGES)						
Proportions	Actors (line percentages)			Affected (line percentages)		
	Man, Boy (n=1,804) %	Woman, Girl (n=88) %	Gender-neutral (n=993) %	Man, Boy (n=725) %	Woman, Girl (n=37) %	Gender-neutral (n=1,345) %
1989	53	1	46	14	1	85
1990	66	-	34	29	1	70
1991	50	4	47	14	-	86
1992	50	1	50	12	1	87
1993	69	2	29	46	X	54
1994	65	2	33	39	2	59
1995	62	x	37	34	-	66
1996	63	6	31	39	5	57
1997	59	3	37	46	2	53
1998	65	4	30	37	3	60
1999	68	3	29	38	3	59
2000	62	9	29	36	3	60

*Note:* Due to the sampling design, which includes all possible cases, no significance tests were conducted  
*Basis:* All topics related to security and defense policy that treat an actor/person affected

In security and defense policy, gender-neutral as opposed to gender-specific terms only dominated among the persons affected, but not among the actors. Among the latter, the greater possibilities for personalisation in conjunction with the news factor ‘elite person’ take full effect.

In the media coverage of security and defense policy, the proportion of gender-neutral terms declines in favor of gender-specific terms as the time frame studied progresses. Contrary to the topics related to war, we also find a definite increase in female gender-specific terms. In the security and defense policy related coverage, females also benefit slightly from

this trend, which can possibly be attributed to greater medial personalisation or increased PR activities.

In the course of time, the proportion of females among the actors increases and reaches a relatively 'high' proportion in 2000. The slight increase in the number of female actors in the second half of the 1990s with respect to the topic 'security and defense policy' could reflect a factual development: In the period studied by us, there are increasingly more women present on the political stage. In any instance, through the media we obtain more information about women who are politically active or hold relevant mandates, offices, or positions. This also applies to international diplomacy as well as foreign and security policy, which receive greater attention in times of crisis and war. Women such as the former US foreign minister Madeleine Albright, the UN-special correspondent for Bosnia Linda Chavez, the Austrian foreign minister Benita Ferrero-Waldner, and the commissioner for the armed forces of the German parliament, Claire Marienfeld, are representatives of such a development. In view of this, in the following we would like to take a closer look at the topic 'security and defense policy' and, based on the results for individuals, examine our impression that the increase in female actors can mainly be attributed to female politicians (also diplomats etc.). As Table 4 shows, our results certainly support this impression.

**TABLE 4**

<b>GENDER TERMS IN TOPICS RELATED TO SECURITY AND DEFENSE POLICY IN FAZ AND SZ FROM 1989 TO 2000</b>								
<b>(PROPORTIONS)</b>								
Proportions <sup>A</sup>	Abstracta %	International		National				
		UN %	Others %	Politicians %	Army %	Rebels %	Civilians %	Others %
<b>Actors</b>	(n=2)	(n=87)	(n=106)	(n=1,964)	(n=504)	(n=19)	(n=27)	(n=175)
Man, Boy	-	51	22	69	63	47	15	30
Woman, Girl	-	1	2	4	1	-	4	2
Both sexes	-	-	-	X	x	-	-	-
Gender-neutral	100	48	76	27	36	53	82	67
Total <sup>B</sup>	100	100	100	100	100	100	101	99
<b>Affected/Victims</b>	(n=10)	(n=70)	(n=92)	(n=596)	(n=1,057)	(n=10)	(n=137)	(n=122)
Man, Boy	-	40	13	50	33	56	42	38
Woman, Girl	-	-	1	2	2	-	-	2
Both sexes	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Gender-neutral	100	60	86	49	65	44	58	60
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
<i>Note:</i> Due to the sampling design, which includes all possible cases, no significance tests were conducted								
<i>Basis:</i> All topics related to security and defense policy that treat an actor/person affected								
A. Cases in which no definite actor/person affected could be identified are not included.								
x. Less than 0,5 percent								

The proportion of female actors in the topic 'security and defense policy' is high within the role of 'national: politician' and reaches the highest value of all roles if the role 'international: UN' is included. Noticeably, a term that describes both sexes almost does not occur at

all and, if at all, only in the group of the acting politicians and (interestingly) the acting military (in both cases, however, the proportion lies below 0,5 percent). For politicians as actors, this can be explained by the already discussed real increase in the percentage of women as politicians, which obviously seems to persuade journalists to actually mention both sexes in mixed gender groups. For the ‘military’ as actors, the result could be explained by the fact that in the 1990s, women continually obtained more access to the armed forces (not only in the US). In Israel, for example, women have had to take part in compulsory military service already for quite some time. In Germany, the legislation was changed at the end of the 1990s and women were able to serve their military service. It would seem plausible that this is reflected in the coverage of security and defense policy through a terminology that includes both sexes such as ‘male and female soldiers’.

Additionally, in articles related to war, women, if at all, occur in the role of acting politician (Table 5). In view of the previously described changes in the access of women to the armed forces, it is also surprising that in the war-related coverage, women as actors and as affected persons are even less likely to be mentioned as members of the army than in the security and defense policy coverage. One might have previously assumed that their ‘exotic status’ in the army would have given them a certain news value.

**TABLE 5**

<b>GENDER TERMS IN TOPICS RELATED TO WAR IN FAZ AND SZ FROM 1989 TO 2000 (PROPORTIONS)</b>								
Proportions <sup>A</sup>	Abstract	International		National				
		UN %	Others %	Politicians %	Army %	Rebels %	Civilians %	Others %
<b>Actors</b>	(n=114)	(n=779)	(n=652)	(n=3,368)	(n=1,876)	(n=1,081)	(n=374)	(n=12)
Man, Boy	26	40	28	60	46	37	6	39
Women, Girl	-	3	1	2	x	x	2	1
Both sexes	-	-	-	X	-	x	1	x
Gender-neutral	74	57	71	38	54	63	91	60
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
<b>Affected/Victims</b>	(n=168)	(n=358)	(n=191)	(n=2,107)	(n=1,280)	(n=865)	(n=1,616)	(n=253)
Man, Boy	17	33	19	43	41	32	5	28
Woman, Girl	2	1	-	2	x	x	2	x
Both sexes	1	x	-	-	-	x	2	x
Gender-neutral	80	66	81	56	59	67	91	71
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

*Note:* Due to the sampling design, which includes all possible cases, no significance tests were conducted  
*Basis:* All topics related to war that treat an actor/person affected  
A. Cases in which no definite actor/person affected could be identified are not included.  
x. Less than 0.5 percent

In the coverage relating to war, gender-neutral terms are by far used most frequently with respect to civilians — this applies to actors as well as victims (ninety-one percent each). Therefore, FAZ and SZ mention civilians generally as an ‘amorphous mass’—. Obviously, not even



the war coverage of specific war events offers a possibility to break up the, on the whole, rather anonymous and tiny individualized portrayal of civilians. It is actually completely the opposite, in fact: Compared to the media coverage of security and defense issues, the proportion of gender-neutral terms in the media coverage related to war even increases, which leads to a decrease in the gender-specific and mainly male terms as a kind of zero sum game.

Let's finally take a detailed look at the portrayal of women in war coverage. For this purpose, we will reverse the perspective of the presentation and not look at the proportion of women in specific types of coverage, rather in reverse analysis, looking at how the women portrayed as compared to the men or non-specified subjects are distributed among the different characteristics.

From the perspective of framing, it seems useful to classify the gender terms according to war types and war regions. Table 6 displays the relevant results.

**TABLE 6**

<b>GENDER TERMS FOR ACTORS AND VICTIMS ACCORDING TO WAR TYPE AND WAR REGION IN FAZ AND SZ FROM 1989 TO 2000</b>						
Proportions	Actors			Affected		
	Man, Boy (n=4,410) %	Woman, Girl (n=135) %	Gender neutral (n=4,988) %	Man, Boy (n=2,216) %	Woman, Girl (n=78) %	Gender neutral (n=5,160) %
<b>Type of war</b>						
Autonomy	62	79	70	64	74	59
Inter-state	15	10	10	13	9	16
Anti-regime	22	10	20	23	15	24
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
<b>War region</b>						
The Balkans	37	37	35	38	45	35
The Middle, Far East	38	24	33	36	19	36
Africa	15	7	17	15	5	16
Asia	6	28	8	6	21	8
South America	3	2	4	3	1	4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
<i>Note:</i> Due to the sampling design which includes all possible cases, no significance tests were conducted						
<i>Basis:</i> All topics related to war that treat an actor/person affected						

Noticeably, the largest proportion of women in wars is for autonomy: seventy-nine percent of the actors who are explicitly described as female and seventy-four percent of the females affected occur in this context. Their proportion is thus definitely higher than the proportion held by male or gender-neutrally described subjects. This can possibly be attributed to the fact that in this type of war, it is more likely that the differences between those who conduct war and those who are affected by it are more transparent than as might be the case in wars between nations.

Significant differences also occur with respect to the region of war. Asia stands out among the actors and persons affected. In this region, when compared to other groups of subjects, a markedly large number of women occur as actors or persons affected. Twenty-eight percent of the female actors can be attributed to this region, but only six percent of the male actors. Even more succinct is the result for the Balkans region. Although there are no prominent differences among the actors, there certainly are among the persons affected. Therefore, it does seem that there is a slight tendency to portray women a little more often in the role as the victim with respect to the military confrontation in the Balkans.

For the articles with a relevance to war, a further detailed examination of the gender terminology can be carried out if one sorts the results according to specific topic areas and events (Tables 7 and 8).

TABLE 7

<b>GENDER TERMS FOR ACTORS ACCORDING TO TOPICS AND EVENTS IN WAR-RELATED TOPICS IN FAZ AND SZ FROM 1989 TO 2000 (PROPORTIONS)</b>			
Proportions	Actors		
	Man, Boy (n=4,410) %	Woman, Girl (n=135) %	Gender neutral (n=4,988) %
<b>Topic areas</b>			
War-related topics in total	45	41	49
Topics related to security and defense policy	30	25	25
Other political areas	25	34	26
Total	100	100	100
<b>Type of event</b>			
War-related events	49	22	57
National political events	22	42	17
Treaties	18	11	12
International political events	10	24	12
Total	100	100	100
<i>Note:</i> Due to the sampling design, which includes all possible cases, no significance tests were conducted			
<i>Basis:</i> All topics related to war that treat a topic or event and which mention an actor			

**TABLE 8**

<b>GENDER TERMS FOR PERSONS AFFECTED ACCORDING TO TOPICS AND EVENTS IN WAR-RELATED TOPICS IN FAZ AND SZ FROM 1989 TO 2000 (PROPORTIONS)</b>			
Proportions	Affected		
	Man, Boy (n=2,216) %	Woman, Girl (n=78) %	Gender neutral (n=5,160) %
<b>Topic areas</b>			
War-related topics in total	51	59	49
Topics related to security and defense policy	26	10	26
Other political areas	24	31	15
Total	100	100	100
<b>Type of event</b>			
War-related events	49	43	48
National political events	22	38	17
Treaties	14	9	12
International political events	14	7	11
Total	100	100	100
<i>Note:</i> Due to the sampling design, which includes all possible cases, no significance tests were conducted			
<i>Basis:</i> All topics related to war that treat a topic or event and which mention a person affected			

In the group of the persons affected, one can identify —although only based on a low number of cases— only weak and barely interpretable effects for females. A different picture emerges in the group of the actors: There are also hardly any differences for women/girls with respect to different topic areas if one disregards the fact that the proportion of women in those topic areas that are not related to war or security and defense policy ('other political areas') is slightly higher. However, more striking effects occur in the different types of events. As actors, female subjects represent the highest share with respect to national political events. This is most likely to be further evidence of the fact that their role as politician dominates in this case. When compared to their role as actors in the military, which as already described, also truly increased in importance during the 1990s, this result stands out even more. The low proportion of females as actors in the event context of treaties and agreements could signal that female politicians are mainly active in advisory and preparatory areas of national politics and, hence, less likely to belong to the decision-making elite. The only other explanation is that, in this regard, they are being marginalized by the media.

Further explanations could be provided by the characterisations, which were coded for the specific subjects —as long as it was explicitly recognisable—. The 'prime role' of females is revealed —the one of the victim as a particular form of affected person (compare Table 9).

TABLE 9

CHARACTERISATION OF ACTORS AND PERSONS AFFECTED IN ALL TOPICS IN FAZ AND SZ FROM 1989 TO 2000 (PROPORTIONS)				
Proportions <sup>A</sup>	Man, Boy		Woman, Girl	
	Actors (n=1,116) %	Affected (n=706) %	Actors (n=191) %	Affected (n=31) %
<b>Perpetrator, of which...</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>
... Biest	5	5	-	-
... Aggressor (male/female)	18	5	3	3
... War criminal	5	17	-	3
<b>Victim, of which ...</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>77</b>
... Dead (male/female)	3	20	-	26
... Displaced (male/female)	x	2	-	7
... Raped (male/female)	-	-	3	35
<b>War-related characteristic, of which...</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>3</b>
... Peacemaker (male/female)	6	2	16	-
... Diplomat (male/female)	10	1	6	-
<b>Nation, Religion</b> (patriot, fanatic...)	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	-
<b>Politics, State</b> (statesman, hardliner, doer...)	<b>15</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Power</b> (imperialist, world policeman, powerful person...)	7	7	-	-
<b>Conscience</b> (doubter, moralist, pacifist...)	9	1	25	-
<b>Help</b> (humanitarian helper, saviour...)	4	2	19	3
Total	100	100	100	100
<i>Note:</i> Due to the sampling design, which includes all possible cases, no significance tests were conducted				
<i>Basis:</i> All topics that treat an actor/person affected				
A. Cases in which no definite actor/person affected could be identified are not included.				
x. Less than 0.5 percent				

However—and this again puts the result into perspective—the characterisation as a victim is also the single dominant characteristic among male persons affected (thirty-six percent). Moreover, it should be pointed out once more that female persons affected constitute a drastic minority compared with absolute female actors (n = 31 vs. n = 191).

Our study, on the one hand, confirms previous assumptions concerning the dominant role of the victim among women in war coverage, but on the other, also puts the assumptions into perspective: The statement that the role of the victim is the generally dominating role of women in war coverage simply cannot be confirmed. Instead—if at all—the role of an acting female politician or diplomat dominates. As was to be expected, the female actor also experiences characterisation as an insisting and warning ‘consciousness’ and as a member of aid organisations. It is true that the role of the victim dominates among characterisation of female persons affected. However, this also applies to male persons affected – although this domination of the victim characterisation is not as easily noticeable. And yet in any case it becomes obvious that the breadth of characterisations of female persons affected is significantly narrower than among males.

## QUALITATIVE RESULTS

In order to take a more precise look behind the stage of the quantitative results interpreted thus far, we examined those articles in which female subjects could be identified more readily. Out of pragmatic considerations, we limited our focus to those articles that were available as print copies from the microfilm material (therefore excluding material that was only available on CD-ROM). The number of cases for female subjects was comparatively low yet still not without relevance.

As already observed, among the female actors, female ‘politicians’ dominate. In comparison, female civilians or soldiers constitute an ever-diminishing minority. Table 10 provides an overview of those female subjects that were counted as *actors*.

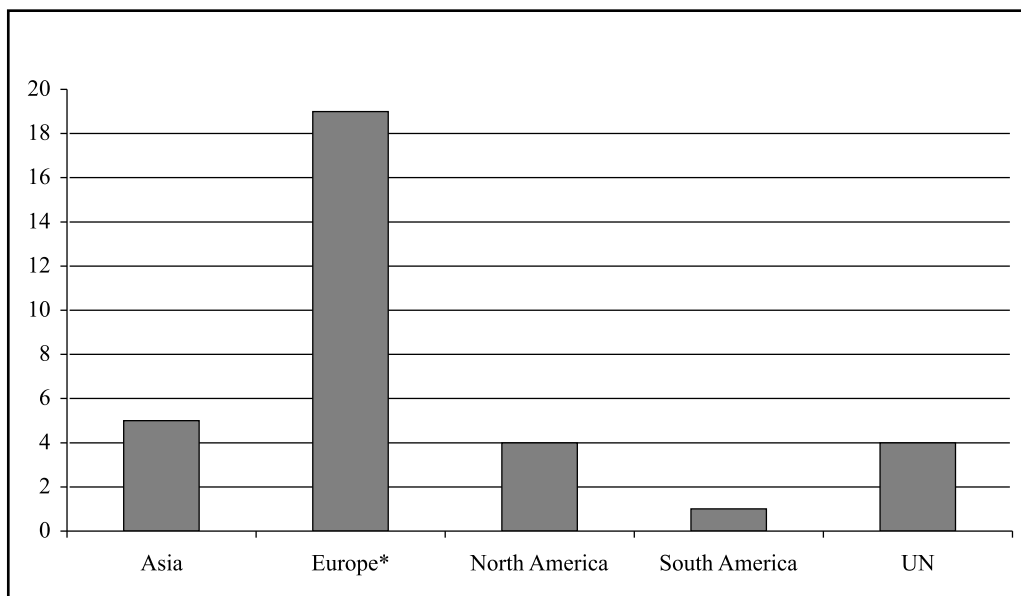
**TABLE 10**

SELECTED ACTORS ACCORDING TO FUNCTION AND COUNTRY (DETAILED ANALYSIS OF SELECTED ARTICLES)		
Name	Function	Country
Madeleine Albright	US foreign minister	USA, Europe
Louise Arbour	Prosecutor at the war crimes tribunal in The Hague	Bosnia, France
Ingrid Becker-Inglau	Member of Parliament for SPD	Germany
Angelika Beer	Spokesperson of the Greens for defense policy	Germany, Kosovo
Bertini	Director of World Food Programme	Sudan
Jelena Brasja	Director of Caritas, Archdiocese Zagreb	Former Yugoslavia
Violeta Chamorro	President	Nicaragua
Linda Chavez	UN special correspondent	Bosnia
Tansu Ciller	Prime minister	Turkey
Anne Gazeau-Sécret	Spokesperson of the foreign ministry in Paris	France
Chadischat Katajewa	Nurse, mother	Chechnya
Tanja Kreil	Electrician	Germany
Chandrika Kumaratunga	President	Sri Lanka
Claire Marienfeld	Parliamentary commissioner for the armed forces	Germany
Angela Merkel	Chairperson of CDU	Germany
without name	Assassin; “Liberation tigers of Tamil Eelam” (LTTE)	Sri Lanka
without name	Soldiers	USA
without name	Future soldiers	Germany
Pam O’Toole	Spokesperson of the UN High Commissioner of Refugees (UNHCR)	Democratic Republic of Congo
Joan Ruddock	Member of the cabinet	UK
Cornelia Schmalz-Jacobsen	Official assigned to the integration of foreign immigrants	Germany
Clare Short	Member of the cabinet	UK
Heide Simonis	Minister-president of Schleswig-Holstein	Germany
Rita Süßmuth	President of the German Parliament	Germany
Megawati Sukarnoputri	Presidential candidate	Indonesia
Ferrero-Waldner	Foreign minister	Austria, Europe

The newspapers obviously mention female actors in their role as politicians and/or diplomats more often with name and position than is the case in other role characterisations (e.g. soldier, assassin). From the perspective of news value theory, this can be explained by the interplay of the news factors ‘personalisation’ and ‘elite person’. In eight of the thirty-five articles selected, the female actors were also mentioned in the header – by name, by their position, or through a description of their function.

The distribution of the regional origin of the female actors can also be explained with news value theory (compare Figure 1).

**FIGURE 1**  
**ORIGIN OF FEMALE ACTORS IN THE TOTAL MEDIA COVERAGE OF FAZ AND SZ FROM 1989 TO 2000**



\*Europe: 2 subjects from the UK; 1 from France; 2 from former Yugoslavia; 11 from Germany, 2 from Turkey, 1 from Austria

While the newspapers portray women mostly as actors directly/individually (especially elite persons), a wholly different picture emerges for female *persons affected*: As theoretical considerations and first explorative results imply (Fröhlich, 2002a, b), women also generally occur in an anonymous form in the role of person affected in the coverage of the media examined by us. The detailed analysis of selected newspaper articles (print copy version) resulted in only two *affected* women that could be identified by name (compare Table 11).

**TABLE 11**

SELECTED ACTORS ACCORDING TO FUNCTION AND COUNTRY (DETAILED ANALYSIS OF SELECTED ARTICLES)		
Name	Function	Country
Group	Chechen women	Chechnya
Without name	Student from the Technical Uni. Berlin	Germany
Without name	Muslim women	former Yugoslavia
Group	Women from Sierra Leone	Sierra Leone, Togo, USA
Vera Zidic	Citizen	former Yugoslavia
Natalja Aljakina	Journalist	Russia
Group	Hundreds of women & children as hostages	Russia
Without name	Citizen	former Yugoslavia

Results from an earlier case study on media coverage of war (Fröhlich, 2002a, b) show that the journalistic genre ‘*news item*’ dominates (80%) the war coverage of German daily newspapers. This genre, one can assume, offers little space for the type of media coverage through which the special familiarity with the victims (and perpetrators) can be created—for example, through a personalisation that moves away from anonymity—. In general, this remains confined to more interpretative presentation types and genres such as the *extensive report* (‘reportage’). Thus, we want to explore this question further and find out whether in our study, effects of this kind occurred (see Table 12).

**TABLE 12**

GENDER TERMS FOR PERSONS AFFECTED ACCORDING TO JOURNALISTIC STYLE/GENRE IN FAZ AND SZ FROM 1989 TO 2000 (PROPORTIONS)						
Proportion	News flash %	News item/ Brief report %	Extensive report %	Documentation %	Opinion/ editorial %	Other factual styles %
<b>Persons affected</b>	(n=918)	(n=7,383)	(n=423)	(n=94)	(n=725)	(n=58)
Man, Boy	33	31	30	35	28	33
Woman, Girl	1	1	3	2	2	2
Both sexes	x	x	x	x	X	X
Gender-neutral	66	68	66	63	70	66
<i>Note:</i> Due to the sampling design, which includes all possible cases, no significance tests were conducted						
<i>Basis:</i> All topics						

As could be expected, factual (88%) styles (genre ‘*news item*’) of journalistic coverage also dominated in our study. And indeed, we find in our data a result that supports the thesis, albeit on a relatively low level: In news flashes and news items/brief reports, the proportion of female persons affected is at its lowest (one percent), which, in fact, does not apply as such to male persons affected. In the group of extended reports, the proportion is three times as high (three percent). A summary calculation which compares the proportion of all factual styles in total, as well as the two styles that were combined ‘*extensive report*’ and ‘*opinion*’, results in

a ratio of 1.1% of women in factual styles and 2.4% in opinion dominated ones. Moreover, on the whole, the proportion of male persons affected within the different styles varies far less significantly than the female ones.

## SUMMARY.

The results of our study have only partially confirmed the theoretical assumption that existed up until now with regard to the role and portrayal of women in war coverage. In parts, interesting divergences from existing assumptions have also resulted. The most important result of our analysis contributing to the gender perspective is the still prevalent dramatic marginalisation of women in media coverage of war as well as in coverage of security and defense policy. The explicit naming of the gender in the case of female subjects remains the great exception. In fact, the marginalisation is even more pronounced in war coverage than in the security and defense policy. However, in the media coverage of security and defense policy, indications of a positive trend also exist. In the final year of our observation period, there is even a pronounced high in the naming of female actors with regard to security policy topics. Whether this result can be attributed to a random mid-high, or whether it signifies the beginning of a stable trend cannot be answered with our data.

The frequently made claim that women are mainly portrayed in the role of the victim in war coverage cannot be fully confirmed by our results. On the one hand, this can be attributed to the fact that we only examined *daily newspapers*, and the thesis regarding the (supposedly) dominating victim frame was established predominantly with respect to television and coverage in political magazines. On the other hand, it could also be connected to the fact that we analysed so-called quality newspapers (broadsheets) and not tabloids.

The drastic marginalisation of female subjects in war coverage might have a simple reason: A gendered ‘unofficial/official’ news source dichotomy. As Del Zotto (2002) wrote in her study of media representations of the war in Kosovo, “the ‘unofficial/official’ news source dichotomy is gendered because so much of women’s political agency is conducted through ‘non-official’ channels” (p. 148).

The main result, namely the drastic marginalisation of female subjects in war coverage, has an unpleasant side effect for the analysis of the data in general: Since the number of cases for the female subjects (‘actors’ as well as ‘persons affected’) is very low in total (= marginalisation), further quantitative data analyses are a problem. Hence, more profound studies about gender-specific portrayal should be carried out qualitatively and require careful interpretation. Basically, all content analytical studies about the portrayal of women in war coverage will most likely have to face this general problem. To put it in a more exaggerated fashion: Where there is nothing, nothing can be analysed.



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## NOTES.

1. Which to some extent reflects the reality of women during wartimes: "much of the research on women and war suggests that war magnifies already existing gender inequality and women's subordination" (Turpin 1998, p. 15).
2. This is also true for research in Europe. For Germany, compare e.g. the theoretical examinations of the topic in Pater (1993) and Kassel (2002), and the empirical case analyses of Fröhlich (2002a, b) and Jaeger (1998, 2002).
3. Even on the international stage, the topic has received recent attention: On October 24, 2000, the UN security council in New York considered for the first time the consequences of war on women and the possible contribution of women to peace. Since then, the number of female spokespersons for the organisation and special correspondents (e. g. Linda Chavez and Pam O'Tool) has also increased in the UN.
4. Incidentally, Zur & Morrison (1989) refute this assumption in empirical studies as a sort of myth: "The belief that war is a male institution which has no appeal to women is important because it implies that it is man's responsibility to prevent wars from occurring. The myth which views women as peaceful but powerless, and men as warlike and powerful does not acknowledge the interdependent relationship of men and women in the making of war. (...) wars do not simply exist through male advocacy, they also stem from the influence of a complex cultural system." (p. 532)
5. The two-year project (summer 2001–summer 2003) was funded by the national German Research Foundation (DFG reference number: FR 976/7-1).
6. We did not build samples; therefore, statistical significance tests are not necessary.
7. For the content analysis, paper copies were produced only of the microfilm articles.

8. In the original analysis, institutions/organizations in addition to so-called 'abstracta' (for example "peoples of the world" etc.) were also considered as 'actors', but are not relevant for the research question of this contribution.
9. Besides 'male' and 'female', also 'gender-neutral' (for example "the refugees suffered from...", "the volunteers helped with..." or "the troops moved...") and 'both sexes' (for example "all inhabitants, women and men, fled...").
10. International: 'UN', 'other than UN'. National: 'politician(s)', 'army', 'rebel(s)' and 'civilian(s)'.
11. Autonomy, inter-state, anti-regime.
12. The Balkans, the Middle & Far East, Africa, Asia, South America. According to our definition of 'war' (see above), the Balkans was the only region in Europe where war took place within the defined research period. The armed conflicts in Northern Ireland and in the Basque Provinces of Spain were not defined as wars within the range of our definition.
13. The test included all formal variables as well as an appropriate selection of content related variables.
14. At this stage it should be mentioned that the actors and persons affected did not have to be mentioned in one article at the same time. Therefore, for example, an actor could be portrayed without there being a direct reference to a person affected. From a data analysis viewpoint, the proportion of actors and affected persons cannot be compared directly.
15. In fact, fifty-six percent of all topics in war coverage of that year were concerned with those conflicts.

