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Understanding Militarism after the end of the Cold War: history, IR, and media studies ask new questions

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Abstract

Since the end of the Cold War the study of militarism and militarization have been eclipsed by other, newer, concepts especially in the fields of history, international relations and media studies. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union militarization has taken a back seat in discussions and questions concerning new types of conflicts, security, and actors that began to emerge in the 1990s. In this article we document the work that has continued on the subject of militarism in various fields, explore the relevance of militarism as a concept in post-Cold War literature, and address what questions the field of militarism is equipped to answer.

Introduction

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, militarism as a field of study has become an evanescent figure, quickly fading away from crowded and shifting landscape in humanities and social sciences. The study of militarism and militarization that was appropriate in the age of super-power arms races, massive defence budgets, and even bigger standing armies began to give way to the subtleties of securitization. In international relations, militarism could no longer answer questions related to new discourses emerging around failed states, human security, and new wars with non-state actors (Stavrianakis and Selby 2014: 9). In history, militarism and militarization temporarily fell out of fashion among historians after 1989 or were no longer studied in their previously known forms, challenged by 'new military history' on the one hand, and losing the relevance of the Soviet Union as a strong referent object on the other. 'Militarization, if it is to retain value as a concept, needs to be redefined,' wrote Peter Wilson (Wilson, 2000, 37). While the decline in interest in militarism is more accurately described as a caesura rather than a termination of inquiry, by the beginning of the 21st century the analytical utility of studying militarism was being questioned. As Hugh Gusterson, pointed out, something was lacking in our treatment of the topic:

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What we need is a body of work that offers us what we now have for capitalism, colonialism, and globalization: a set of texts that analyze militarism in relation to nationalism, late modern capitalism, media cultures, and the state while mapping the ways in which militarism remakes communities, public cultures, and the consciousness of individual subjects in multiple geographic and social locations (Gusterson, 2007, 165).

Gusterson's call for the production of a body of work that relates militarism to the mainstream fields of history, security, and media studies inevitably leads to much broader epistemological anxieties about what questions those fields are equipped to ask, what methodologies they can furnish for the task at hand, and to what extent these fields are capable of operating in a paradigm that takes their practitioners deep inside inter-disciplinarity. The ontological challenge is that the study of militarism is simultaneously part of history and international relations and removed from it, which necessitates asking questions about methodologies, concepts, sources, and disciplinary boundaries since 1991. It is our intention to examine how militarism as a concept has transformed after the Cold War in three ways. First, what new questions and opportunities have emerged in the fields of history, international relations, and media studies since the end of the Cold War? Second, what methodological recalibration have these studies undertaken and what is still required to recapture the relevance of militarism and make it a justifiable and intellectually fruitful study? And finally, in the spirit of congenial interdisciplinary, what new questions and methodologies can historians borrow from international relations and media studies and how can the latter benefit from historicizing their own research agendas? To address these questions is the goal of this article. Our argument here is two-fold. In the questions it posits and in its intellectual scope, the study of militarism remains persistently relevant, if appropriately recalibrated to capture the impressive compendium of methodological and theoretical innovations. Second, the best way to capitalize on the new and exciting work being done in this field is to break out from our disciplinary silos to ask new questions and answer old ones with the vigour of new perspectives.

New history of militarism: from Fredrick the Great to Putin's militocracy

In his introduction to the 1989 collection of essays entitled *The militarization of the western world*, the US historian John Gillis called for greater focus on the concept of militarization over militarism as a basis for historical research. Gillis distinguished between militarism, 'usually defined as either the dominance of the military over civilian authority, or, more generally, as the prevalence of warlike values in a society' (Gillis 1989, 1), and, quoting Michael Geyer's contribution to the same volume, militarization, which the latter defined as 'the contradictory and tense social process in which civil society organizes itself for the production of violence' (Gillis 1989, 1; Geyer 1989, 79). Gillis continued that: 'The old concept of militarism served to shift the blame to others and divert attention from a society's own condition. Militarization, on the other hand, should force us to take a long hard look at ourselves.' (Gillis 1989, 3). This necessitated new approaches to historical research in the field on the grounds that: 'The concept of militarization also compels us to confront history in its totality and to override the conventional distinctions between political, economic, cultural, and social history that currently dominate the field.' (Gillis 1989, 3). In a similar vein, but looking to the future, in 1991, at the onset of the post-Cold War era, the British sociologist Martin Shaw, reflecting on the 'greater uncertainty today about the roles of war and military institutions in human society, than at any time in the twentieth century' (1991, 1), stressed the need for 'an approach to war that enables us to understand its relations with society, in the

broadest sense' (1991, 7-8). Referring to the valuable contribution of historians to understanding war and society, Shaw advocated 'the development of a historical sociology of war' (1991, 8), adding that 'the problems of understanding war, militarism and militarization in our own time' were defined according to the 'unprecedented relationship between social and military development' during the first half of the twentieth century (1991, 8).

How, then, since the end of the Cold War have historians addressed the development of militarism in Europe, and in what ways can historical work of this kind enlighten understanding of militarism in the present context? Starting with Prussia, considered to be the cradle of modern militarism, there emerged new lines of research, some challenging old dogmas, other staunchly confirming them (Citino 2012). While Franz Sabo has argued that the failure to defeat Prussia during the Seven Years' War galvanized the militarization of Europe in the 19th century and beyond (Szabo, 2008, 432-3), Peter Wilson has challenged the notion that the militarism of Wilhelmine Germany was a direct product of the 18th century Prussian social system (Wilson 2001, 24). He used the concept of 'social militarization' as an analytical tool to understand the extent to which 'army and society became inter-related' (Wilson 2000, 1). Wilson suggests the alternative consequence to growth of the Prussian armies through its canton recruitment system was not militarization of society but rather 'social disciplining' whereby values of obedience and subordination were reinforced in Prussian society. (Wilson, 2000, 21). He has cautioned against applying teleological arguments to 20th century Germany: 'The lines of continuity, though surely present, now seem less clear or straightforward and Frederick the Great no longer appears the direct antecedent of Kaiser Wilhelm, let alone Hitler' (Wilson 2001, 27). David Bell, alternatively, has argued that modern militarism had its origins not in Prussia but in revolutionary France in the 1790s. Bell sees militarism as an assumption of a clear separation between military and civilian societies, which he argued did not really exist before the French Revolution (Bell 2007, 12).

From a conceptual perspective, a survey of research since 1989 reveals conscious separation of militarization from militarism, as advocated by Gillis, although in his introduction to the 2003 edited volume *Militarism, Sport, Europe*, J. A. Mangan made it clear that while "'militarism" must be used with caution', it 'is perfectly capable of embracing "militarization" within its meaning – and analytical capacity' (Mangan 2003b, 2). Importantly, however, several historical works analyse processes akin to militarization, even if they do not widely adopt the term. John Horne's collection of essays on mobilization during the First World War is a clear example here, with mobilization defined as 'the engagement of the different belligerent nations in their war efforts both imaginatively, through collective representations and the belief and value systems giving rise to these, and organizationally, through the state and civil society' (Horne 1997b, 1). Therefore, in many relevant works, the examination of militarism/militarization is at times embedded within broader historical analysis.

Gillis' call in 1989 for the breaking down of barriers between the various historical sub-disciplines hardly went unheeded, as the following (albeit far from exhaustive) overview of relevant works illustrates. Multi-faceted examinations of mobilization for 'total war', for example, if not always employing the concept directly, embody analysis of militarization (Chickering and Förster 2000; Horne 1997a). Applying or combining a variety of historical and/or theoretical perspectives, these and other works have collectively contributed to analysis of militaristic cultures and the often complex social, political and cultural factors driving (or inhibiting) militarization in Europe during states of war and/or between periods of war, as well as the longer-term social and cultural consequences. While some of these studies adopt comparative and/or transnational perspectives, more have focused on national contexts. The themes on which these analyses are based include economic, industrial and technological

mobilization (Edgerton 1991; Showalter 2000; Flynn 2002), conscription (Flynn 2002), civil defence against air attack (Grayzel 2012), school education (Mangan 1996; Audoin-Rouzeau 1997; Fava 1997), cultural mobilization for war (Mommsen 1997; Verhey 2000; Goebel and Keene 2011; Irish 2015); veteran associations and paramilitary organizations (Reichardt 2002; Berghahn 2006; Millington 2012), the impact of particular societal cultures on combat performance (Bartov 1991; Watson 2008), militarism and sport (Mangan 1996, 2003a; Heck 2011), urban space and architecture (Gentile 1996; Goebel and Keene 2011), and the nature and concepts of civil society (Berghahn 2006).

Implicitly or explicitly, many of these works have questioned the role of the military and/or governments as the sole drivers of militarization, underlining the part played by civilian society in the process. Nicholas Stargardt has traced the evolution and origins of militarism as an idea in the writings of Marx, Engels, Kautsky and Liebknecht and proposes that civil society and not the authoritarian state provides a better window into growth of militarism. To him militarism 'is intimately connected to the intentions, programs, strategies and propaganda of political actors' (Stargardt 1994, 14). Broadening the conceptual horizon, John Moses has examined the intersection of religion and militarization to argue that Prussian militarism 'was justified theologically' (Moses 2005, 21), and how this 'Christian militarism' was in no small part sponsored by the Hegelian philosophy of the state (Moses 2005, 28). In a similar vein, Laurence Cole has analysed the role of veteran societies in sustaining military culture and the process of societal militarization in late Imperial Austria, noting, however, that the 'veterans' movement originated as an expression of civil society' (Cole 2014, 310). Continuing the revisionist streak, Jakob Vogel has challenged the top-down model of militarism, in which values and practices were communicated to civilian society from above by the military. He has examined militarism in terms of the bottom-up formation 'of an autonomous military culture', which he called folkloric militarism (Vogel, 2000, 488). Folkloric militarism was autonomous and widespread in Germany and France at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries. It saw 'chiefly apolitical enthusiasm for the military' and wilful appropriation of military values (488). Likewise, Isabel Hull has employed the concept of 'double militarism' to explain aspects of militarization of pre-World War I Germany. Although the government certainly sponsored agitation and nationalistic groups to support its military policies, it soon lost control over them, and became 'powerless to counter the populist military enthusiasm generated by populist groups'. While many studies have often concentrated on militarism's effect on society, the reverse is also true, claims Hull. Popular calls for increased militarization began to drive and influence policy in pre-World War I Germany (Hull 2005, 105-107). This symbiosis between the people and military calls into question other studies that see militarism as a part of an imposition managed by the military or the government for the sake of manipulating public opinion (Myerly, 1996, 172). Moreover, the coterminous existence of this grassroots militarism process in several European countries makes Prussian 'Sonderweg' militarism 'less distinctive' (Vogel 2000, 490).

Gillis' warning that militarism had been used as a means of judging oneself positively against an 'Other', epitomized, for example, in the Prussian Junkers (Gillis 1989, 1-2), has been addressed by studies which have questioned the assumption that Britain did not undergo militarization (Edgerton 1991; Hopper, 2011; Johnson 2015). In his analysis of the education of boys for war and imperial rule in the late Victorian and Edwardian public school system, J. A. Mangan refutes 'the self-indulgent myth of nineteenth-century Britain as an anti-militaristic society' (1996, 14). He and other scholars have referred to training and educational syllabi to examine the role of drill in militarizing British youth before the First World War and public debates on this (Penn, 1999; Mangan and Galligan, 2011). And John

Nolan has shown that despite our assumptions about the Elizabethan state, the period saw a significant militarization of the English nation (Nolan, 1994, 419).

Russia likewise has remained an important if contested subject for students of militarism and militarization. John LeDonne has called Imperial Russia a warrior state that saw militarization of public life in the 19th century and the transformation ‘of Fortress Russia into Fortress Empire’ (LeDonne 2004, 423). Alexander Golts and Tonya Putman have used a combination of structural approach and historicization to explain Russian as ‘a hierarchy of social values rooted in militarism’ (Golts & Putman, 2004, 124). Similarly, David Stone has historicized militarization in Russia to conclude its profound influence on Russian political development. Stone defined militarization as the organization of society for war, which, he argues, was perennially the case of Russia. Stone’s analysis of militarization of the Soviet economy and political system under Stalin was partly inspired by the notion that a definition of militarization would otherwise remain incomplete (Stone 2000, 9; Stone, 2006, xii). The latest study on the subject of militarism in Imperial Russian history, however, challenges and problematizes describing Imperial Russia as a ‘garrison’ state or militarized state (Hartley, 2008: 211). The debate about militarism in Russia has continued into recent history. Olga Kryshtanovskaya and Stephen White have used in-depth biographical analysis to introduce the concept of ‘militocracy’ to describe militarization of Russian officialdom since 1991. Especially under President Vladimir Putin, people from security and military backgrounds proliferated in government posts, but recent studies have challenged this interpretation (Kryshtanovskaya and White, 2003; Rivera and Werning Rivera, 2014).

Of key significance for the study of mediated and performance aspects of militarism/militarization in the present day, a notable body of work has focused on European fascist regimes’ employment, aided by media technology, of unifying national myths, aestheticized spectacle and ritualistic commemorations of fallen soldiers, as well as architecture and urban space, in their quest to create warrior societies during the interwar period (Gentile 1996; Falasca-Zamponi 1997; Reichel 1999). Such approaches are not limited to studies of fascism, as illustrated by George Mosse’s study of the ‘myth of the war experience’ which, he argues, originated from the wars of the French Revolution and German wars of Liberation against Napoleon (1990, 9), and Jeffrey Verhey’s analysis of the employment of the myth of the ‘spirit of 1914’ to sustain the German (First World) war effort (2000). Several studies have also underlined processes of normalization and trivialization of war, as evident in games, novels, the popular press, and battlefield tourism (see, for example, Mosse 1990; Leach 2009). Among such works, Andrew Donson has examined German youth literature before and during the First World War as an explanation for making a generation of people susceptible to nationalism and militarism (Donson, 2004, 579). J. A. Mangan, has similarly analysed the employment of prose, poetry and images to educate boys for war in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain (1996). In this context, Rosanna M. Gatens has reminded us about the importance of language in sustaining militarism in Germany in the 1920s, and how difficult it was to invent new words and language to demythologize, delegitimize and break the connection between heroism and war (Gatens, 2008, 35).

Finally, the history of militarism/militarization has been addressed in a number of studies of gender and masculinity. Several works analyse the mobilization of women, including how such processes shaped female identity and citizenship status (or were inhibited by fear that traditional gender roles would consequently be challenged) (Stone 1999; Darrow 2000; Grayzel 2012). Research has also focused on state intervention on the male body, applied through military drill, physical education, and sports (Bourke 1996; Mangan 1996; Mangan 2003a; Heck 2011), as a means of reinforcing militarism. Historians have examined the constructions of ‘military’ or ‘militarized’ masculinities and how they shaped ‘dominant’ masculinities in broader social environments (Higate 2003; McGaughey and Skinazi 2012).

Conversely, militarism's use of masculine identity and the metaphor of the male body to reinforce martial 'qualities' has been the subject of investigation, too (Mangan 1999; Dillon 2013).

The international relations of militarism

War, peace and issues around balance of power, armament and disarmament have been at the heart of international relations (IR) since its inception at Aberystwyth in 1919. The field was created because of and defined around the origins and conduct of war, thus distinguishing it from related disciplines such as history, economics, geography, and international law.

Throughout the Cold War, traditional IR scholars focused on national security and treated it as bound to military security, thus, normalizing militarism as central to international politics. This approach limited the scope of potential state behaviours as well as discussion around security (see for example, Tawney, 1920; Morgenthau 1948; Hartmann, 1962; Bramson and Goetals, 1968; Spanier, 1972; Stoessinger, 1974). Until the late 1970s, IR's working definition of security was strictly limited to the state as the referent object and the hyper-concern for military power in relation to preserving state sovereignty, such that security issues were only those for which military statecraft was relevant (Baldwin, 1997). The fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War disrupted IR's assumption that states would never voluntarily dissolve themselves and ushered in serious challenges to the *realpolitik* understanding of international politics.

Importantly, at the end of the Cold War IR shifted from a focus on 'militarism' and military security to 'security' more generally, marking a pivot in IR to situate military aggression 'under the mantle of security', with shrinking attention being paid to war whether as a cause or an effect of insecurity (Stavrianakis and Stern 2018: 5). With critical approaches bringing in other threats such as economic, societal, environmental and political fields (e.g., Buzan 1983), militarism was treated as *passé* and states were substituted for the individual as the referent object.

While the field remained state-centric for some critics of mainstream IR (Shaw 1994), generally lacking in the mainstream IR literature was a real debate over why militarism should be abandoned as a concept when security is broadened and/or the state-centric view is abandoned (Stavrianakis and Stern 2018). Feminist IR scholarship has been especially well-equipped to cultivate a multi-security, multi-level understanding of international politics, while also including scrutiny of militarization and militarism. This scholarship has posed serious challenges to the lack of gender analysis in mainstream IR studies on militarism as well as ushering in new methodologies from other disciplines, as seen with Enloe's 1989 seminal work *Bananas, Beaches and Bases* and her bottom-up approach to understanding the links between everyday militarism and international politics. This early gender analysis paved the way for feminist IR approaches that consider the powerful intersection of privileges or oppressions, for example, the intersection of gender, race and class. One fundamental characteristic of the modern state that is crucially overlooked by mainstream IR is that states are gendered constructions that rely on gendered divisions of power, including (re)productive labor (Peterson 1992).

Critics, both during and after the Cold War, have rightly pointed out that the limited definition of security was not as ideologically neutral as its proponents argued. These criticisms reflect decisions about value judgements and an ordered set of priorities about what social objectives *should* be pursued, which *should* be prioritised, and what values *should* be promoted (our emphasis). Carefully delimiting who is qualified to decide what security is and to whom it could apply delineated acceptable reality, discourse and stakeholders (for example, see Booth 1991). As Robert Cox stated, 'theory is always for someone and some

purpose' (1981: 207). Indeed, Enloe's call for a 'feminist curiosity' reminds us that these choices and assumptions are value-laden with a privileging of masculinity that we can begin to uncover by simply asking: where are the women and why? A common assumption in IR is that national security is military security, a belief grounded in the widespread assumption that the military is 'good, natural and necessary' for survival of the state (Jackson 2017). That is, the military is considered a 'normal' yet privileged part of society, and its presence is, therefore, difficult to question (Enloe 2000).

Reflecting on the idea that states are gendered puts militarism into perspective, calling on a wider variety of methodologies. As the amount of visual content continues to grow, more so now with widespread Internet use (Jackson 2018), and "visual language [has become] the language of contemporary popular culture—the language that amateurs and experts increasingly rely upon in order to claim contemporary literacy" (Weber 2008, 138) - feminist and critical IR provides an ever-growing methodology for understanding militarism. The mediation of war through, for instance, amateur videos posted online challenges traditional state-centric approaches to understanding the causes, effects, and continuation of war (e.g., Kuntsman and Stein 2015). Though questions around audience reception and response are often left unexplored because of the focus on the meaning constructions of the images themselves, recent IR work has included digital anthropology on whether threat narratives have been successful (Gaufman 2017); audience ethnography on audience perceptions (O'Loughlin 2011); the quantification of visual signifiers and the potential of constructing meaningful generalizations about audience perception and online messaging (Robinson and Schulzke 2016); and, a multi-modal approach to audio-visual analysis of militarism in video (Jackson 2017).

Media (studies) and militarism/militarization

History and IR are not the only disciplines that have attempted to interrogate the subject of militarization. The majority of the scholarly literature on the intersection of the militarism/militarization and the media is not actually conducted by media studies scholars but rather by researchers often considered to be on the periphery of other (traditional) fields (e.g., feminist international relations scholars – see above) (Corner and Parry 2017). As a group, media studies scholars began focusing on war and the media primarily since the Vietnam and the Falklands/Malvinas Wars and in any critical mass only since the US-led Gulf War in 1990-91 (Hallin 1997). Conventional research on the media and war focuses on news reporting, public opinion and other more traditional subject areas (e.g., see Miller and Bokemper 2016). However, the inter-disciplinary research on the periphery is influenced by 'cultural turns' across various disciplines in the social sciences and humanities with research on aesthetics, affective, performative, and visual analyses that require a reorientation of research foci and methodologies (Corner and Parry 2017: 3), often analyzing the everyday perspectives that are necessary for the continuation of militarization (Enloe 1989). This disparate but growing literature emphasizes the importance of narratives, symbols and images in constructions of militarism, and indicates the need to embrace interdisciplinary research on militarism/militarization and the media. It also exposes the need to scrutinize the ideological forces at play not only in convincing people that military preparedness is a 'common sense' necessity, but also in 'engender[ing] an emotional connection between fighting forces and the public' (Corner and Parry 2017: 4). The role of the media in the construction of narratives supportive, and even celebratory, of militarism pivots on communication as 'the process through which the state of exception gains hegemonic and ideological power and the symbolic means through which it is challenged' (Mihal 2015), the 'state of exception' being foundational to legitimizing war-making.

The relationship between the media and the military was firmly established during the birth of modern propaganda in World War I, and the current state of this relationship stems from that period (Andersen and Mirrlees 2014). The mediation of war and military activities is not the same as experiencing actual war because the causes of war and the realities of its aftermath are replaced by representations of symbolic violence (e.g., see Cohn 1993 for early discussions on representations of so-called ‘clean war’). The increasingly ‘militainment’ aspects of using popular culture and other forms of media in ways that are designed to entertain turns war into spectacle (e.g., see Stahl 2009 and Der Derian 2009). Further, due to new information and communication technologies (ICTs) including social media, the spaces of war overlap more than ever when actual war and media war blur the home-front and the battlefield, especially in ways that rest on Us/them constructions (Andersen and Mirrlees 2014).

In conjunction with these recent developments, the military’s use of, and involvement in, ‘media flows’ have developed in relation to two new resources: visualization and testimony (Corner and Parry 2017). These resources bring militarism into everyday lives in new ways, as is evident in a variety of places. For example, the very real potential for the acceptance of mass surveillance and the militarization of cyberspace and the implications this normalization has for democracy are tied to how the military presents itself in these media flows (e.g., see Laungaramsri 2016; Parks 2016). Further, ICTs are used to create individual participation in war-making, illuminating the pervasiveness of everyday militarism, e.g., when soldiers adapt their iPod music lists to a particular task at hand in order to prompt the necessary support for whichever emotion is required to perform that task (Daughtry 2014). Because visualization and testimony can influence identity constructions, they inform debates around context and whether researchers can use Internet materials as just another source of materials (Jackson 2018).

As with the field of history, one must question the conventional top-down understanding of the drivers of militarization. A key overarching interest that runs through the critical and feminist research on militarism/militarization and the media is ‘the ways in which military identities are negotiated and constituted through communicative practices - both those of producers and consumers’ (Corner and Parry 2017: 7). A focus on the everyday brings in a sense of temporality, and thus history, that ‘sheds light on the repetitive, ritualistic performance of subjectivities through mundane activities’ in the private sphere that is actually a ‘significant site of negotiation and contestation’ (Henry and Natanel 2016: 856; see also Wegner 2017). Mundane, everyday activities and items, then, are crucial for constructing and maintaining militaristic identities, for example: Natanel’s (2016) ethnographic work on the everyday and micro-strategies of dealing with occupation; Kuntsman and Stein’s (2015) work on Othering and everyday soldiering via social media posts; Hyde’s (2016) research on women’s emotional work and stability-making during war; Da Silva and Crilley’s (2017) discussions about the construction of everyday narratives online; or, Palafox’s (2000) statements about everyday people reflected in their songs as a type of political border.

One of feminist IR’s main contributions to the literature on the media and militarism/militarization is how varieties of masculinities and related intersecting characteristics used to marginalize or Other (e.g., race/ethnicity, class, sexuality) are recurring go-to mechanisms in the discourses that aim to instill acceptance of militarism as an organizing principle for society (e.g., see Peterson 2010 and Carpenter 2010). There is a “techno-muscularity” associated with militarized masculinity that permeates popular culture and imageries associated with Hollywood films, among other things (Boose 2006). Time and again feminist research indicates the intimate link between constructions of masculinities and militarism (often tied to patriotism and national identity constructions) and how this Othering is a crucial component of the power underlying militarism. These findings are evident

whether the research focuses on veterans (Pitchford-Hyde 2017); television (Han, Lee and Park 2017); movies (Ning, Chen and Hong 2016); military videogames (Robinson 2016; Saber and Webber 2017); or, non-governmental organizations (Lopez 2016), among others. Much of this research highlights the role of emotive cues or symbols that reinforce what is considered proper and thus difficult to question (Basham 2016; Corner and Parry 2017). This research indicates the importance of locating other ‘instances’ of everyday militarism as a way of showing how these instances are neither isolated nor extraordinary but rather hint at why we need to see militarism and masculinities across a longer spectrum of time and a wider spectrum of place. This type of feminist analysis provides opportunities for alternative explanations for how and why militarization remains a key organizing principle.

Whether in traditional media settings or in newer ones (e.g., through drone technology), feminist approaches to research on (the) media offer critical insights into issues around visibility: whether marginalized men become visible to the media when in the military (Alexander 2016); the differential treatment of killed servicewomen as attached to men (husbands or fathers) in contrast to servicemen being treated as individuals, rendering servicewomen less visible (Basham 2016); the mass collection of data via drones and the weaponization of the media (Franz 2017); or, the fact that the typical focus on the military as being in the public (rather than merging with the private) sphere ignores the necessary contributions (often) civilian women make to keeping the military going (Gray 2016; also see Enloe 1989).

Conclusion: new questions, sources, and concepts

John Gillis set the terms for the discussion of militarism in 1989 and since the end of the Cold War historians, international relations and security scholars, and media researchers have pushed the boundaries of the meaning of militarism and militarization with several important concepts. The meaning of militarism and militarization has changed and the sources to investigate it have become increasingly sophisticated. Social militarism, Christian militarism, folkloric militarism, double-militarism, and militocracy are all supremely useful tools of analysis that will promote and deepen our understanding of the degree to which militarism has played a role in social relations. They also encourage further conceptualization, problematization, and historicization of militarism as a process and as a cultural force, provoking such questions as: Is social militarization rooted in conscription practices of nation-states? Can we compare the Prussian canton system with the Russian serf-conscription levees? What is the line between militarization of society and social disciplining of a population? Similarly, folkloric militarism and double-militarism supply us with concepts to study militarism from the bottom up, without placing undue emphasis on the government or the military, while simultaneously probing the spread and support of militarism at the grass-roots level. Can we find evidence of Vogel’s folkloric militarism in the UK, Russia or Italy? Does including former members of the military or security services in the higher echelons of the civilian government make it a militocracy?

For historians, greater focus on an entangled-history approach to the study of militarism is required. Adopting ‘a transcultural perspective as the main point of departure’, focusing on ‘the interconnectedness of societies’, and stressing ‘the multidirectional character of transfers’ (Bauck and Maier 2015), entangled history helps to disrupt conventional national accounts of militarism in order to understand how it transcends national borders and political regimes.

International relations can also provide a powerful inspiration for historians. It offers insight into the role of the state, both in practice and conceptually. Because the state is considered to have a hold on the legitimate use of military force, the state is pivotal to understanding militarism. However, as more recent feminist and critical IR research shows,

the state level alone is inadequate for understanding how militarism works, when and why. In addition, these approaches challenge the assumption that the military is a ‘natural’ actor, a given factor in society rather than seeing its existence as based on normative decisions. Instead, by incorporating the intersection of privileges and oppressions it becomes possible to review what we know about militarization across time and place. Thus, IR is helpful for considering these processes historically as well as in terms of the communicative practices explored in media studies.

Media studies is pivotal for understanding militarism in past practices and contemporary developments, as so much of the recruitment and selling of war has taken place in visual and social media spaces. Media studies offers historians insights into how communicative practices and a focus on the everyday are central to understanding how militarism has been a key organizing principle for societies across time and space.

IR and media studies tools can prove crucial for the urgent task of unravelling and historicizing the complex nexus of religion, the military, and militarization. Recently we saw Russian Orthodox priests in Syria blessing Russian troops and missiles. How do we decode the larger cultural, media, and military significance of this practice? How have religion and the church been maneuvered to support militarism in the past and in the present? What are the broader consequences of this process? We need more interdisciplinary research to understand the consequences of such practices and to ask new questions.

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