CULTURES OF MILITARISM

THE WENNER-GREN SYMPOSIUM SERIES

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Leaky Revelations: Commitments in Exposing Militarism


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Cultures of Militarism

Wenner-Gren Symposium Supplement 19

Danilyn Rutherford

Does militarism have a culture? It seems to be having a moment. Here in the United States, John McCain’s funeral brought home how deeply respect for the military has seeped into the American conscience, across the political spectrum. Congressional candidates from both parties tout their record of military service to demonstrate their fitness for public life. Military equipment and military training have made their way into policing, and defense contractors shape national politics—and the national budget—reaping handsome rewards. And that’s just here in this corner of the North Atlantic. Militarism moves across national boundaries in the form of peacekeepers and border security, money and ideas, adding to the power of industries and institutions that extend their reach worldwide. Militarism is having a moment, and that moment is now.

Between March 11 and March 17, 2017, in Sintra, Portugal, a sociologist, a historian, and 14 anthropologists from around the world met to make sense of this dilemma. Militarism may not have a single culture, but it definitely has cultures—regimes of power and the imaginations that take shape in different regions of this global formation. As the excellent papers in this special issue show, ethnographic research can shed vivid light on the forces at work as militarism extends its tendrils more deeply into everyday life. On the island of Guam, the legacies of US Empire are everywhere: in the soil, contaminated by toxics, in the sea, filled with rubble, in the atmosphere, shot through with noise. Militarism erodes the sacred spaces of the island’s owners, the Chamoru, who have lost their land, lives, and livelihoods to the cause. But militarism also finds expression in the bureaucratic strategies through which US leaders maintain ignorance of this violence. Catherine Lutz analyzes a report commissioned to document the environmental and cultural impact of base expansion. She shows how its form and structure allowed officials to misrecognize and silence public concerns.

In Colombia, as we learn from María Clemencia Ramírez and Alex Fattal, militarism has seeped into the policies and practices of a state set on gaining control of its “uncivilized” frontiers. Development and demobilization are not the wages of peace, but methods for winning a war; love and laughter have turned into tools for vanquishing threats. When militarism seeps into new spaces, these spaces change. Immunization was first and foremost a means to promote combat readiness, as Andy Bickford tells us. Israeli checkpoints add new elements to older methods of colonial policing, spurring new forms of resistance. This local scene, brought to life by Rema Hammami, reverberates in the broader methods described by Catherine Besteman as means of enforcing global apartheid: a separation that allows societies in the Global North to exploit labor from the Global South without any threat to racialized structures of power. Militarism penetrates the lives of anthropologists: interrupting their trips from home to the office, in Hammami’s case. It can also penetrate their thoughts, as Ayşe Gül Altunay relates, telling us how “methodological militarism” led her to omit the Armenian genocide and its aftermath from her critique of Turkish state power.

On the ground, militarism’s effects are messy, tragic, and lasting. The drone operators Hugh Gusterson studied may leave and jump into their cars to drive home past suburban malls, parks, and schools. US policy documents dissected by Danny Hoffman may lay out a futuristic vision of African security suited to what they call the “grey zone,” a deterritorialized space, where old models of combat no longer apply. But the friends and relatives of the teenager killed when the US-trained Liberian army surrounded their neighborhood know there is nothing utopian about war. They, like Diane Nelson’s Mayan interlocutors, pay the cost of these fantasies in lives cut short, homes destroyed, and landscapes rendered unlivable, all in the interest of keeping the world safe and comfortable for a chosen few.

The discussions were open and probing, and at times disturbing. Looking back, the conversation seems prescient. The symposium was of the moment, but framed in the tradition of the best anthropological thinking: with an eye toward both the fine-grained texture of people’s experiences and the broader histories that give them form. The Wenner-Gren Foundation has held a number of recent symposia focused on contemporary predicaments, including “Crisis, Value, and Hope: Re-thinking the Economy” (Narotsky and Besnier 2014), “The Life and Death of the Secret” (Manderson, Davis, and Colwell 2015), and most recently “The Anthropology of Corruption” (Muir and Gupta 2016).

Wenner-Gren symposia focus on pressing issues in contemporary anthropology, across all its variants and subfields. We look for topics that open onto broad disciplinary concerns and have the potential to move our thinking forward—topics

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with urgency and broad appeal, like the one addressed in this special issue. If you have an idea, we would love to hear from you. For information on the Wenner-Gren Foundation, the symposium program, and what makes for a good symposium topic, see our website at http://www.wennergren.org/programs/international-symposia.

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Manderson, Lenore, Mark Davis, and Chip Colwell, eds. 2015. The life and death of the secret. Special issue, Current Anthropology 56(suppl. 12).


Narotsky, Susana, and Niko Besnier, eds. 2014. Crisis, value, and hope: rethinking the economy. Special issue, Current Anthropology 55(suppl. 9).
This volume contributes to a new anthropology of militarism that has crystallized since the end of the cold war. Unlike scholars in mainstream security studies and political science, anthropologists treat militarism as a process rather than a reified, measurable quantum acting as an independent variable. Anthropological analysis of militarism focuses on the social construction of security threats; the decentering of the state’s monopoly over legitimate violence in an era where guerrillas, paramilitaries, and military contractors hold unprecedented sway; the increasing hybridization of war and peace in the context of a permanent war economy; the capillary colonization of social and imaginative life by military processes thanks to militarized media institutions; and the suffering, both bodily and psychological, of those who are killed, injured, bereaved, or dislocated by military processes. In the context of a global militarized capitalist system, this suffering is transmuted into profit in various centers of accumulation. Whereas folk ideology may portray individual military initiatives as defensive moves against aggression, this analysis reframes militarism as an integrated global system with its own escalatory logic that feeds off actors’ inability to recognize the ways in which each militarized action reinforces the growth of militarism as a transnational exterminist structure.

Anthropologists have written about warfare and military culture and have sometimes consulted for military bureaucracies, almost since the discipline’s inception. But the anthropology of militarism—a set of texts that self-consciously reflect on the dynamics of militarism and processes of militarization in their diverse forms and contexts—has only come into its own as a distinct field or set of conversations since, more or less, the end of the cold war. Before the mature emergence of the contemporary anthropology of militarism, the study of militarism in the academy was largely dominated by the fields of political science, international relations, and security studies and, within those fields, particularly by American practitioners who perceived military issues through the lens of the United States’ cold war interests (Cohn 1987; Dalby 1990). Such scholars tended to frame militarism as something that could be measured through statistics on the percentage of GNP devoted to military expenditure, the frequency of military coups, the role of military officers in politics, and so on. The state-oriented focus on statistical measurement is reflected as well in the Oxford English Dictionary’s definition of militarism as, in part, “the political condition characterized by the predominance of the military class in government or administration” and “the principle of maintaining a large military establishment.” Analysts in mainstream political science and security studies generally took the state as their superordinate unit of analysis while looking for the sources of militarism either in objectively discernible security threats to the state or in the absence of democratic institutions to restrain the military in domestic politics. These framings, by setting up a tacit binary of militarism and democracy and theorizing American militarism as a rational response to an anarchic international system, often rendered the aggressive militarism of the United States conceptually invisible.

In contrast, anthropologists’ interest in militarism has taken shape in the context of post–cold war transformations in the management of violence. These years have seen the violent reorganization of some cold war client states; the proliferation of militia-led insurgencies; the interpenetration of organized crime and drug trafficking with insurgency and counterinsurgency in parts of the global south; the articulation of counterinsurgency abroad with domestic policing at home in many Western countries; the reformulation of the United Nations into a set of texts that self-consciously reflect on the dynamics of militarism and processes of militarization in their diverse forms and contexts—has only come into its own as a distinct field or set of conversations since, more or less, the end of the cold war. Before the mature emergence of the contemporary anthropology of militarism, the study of militarism in the academy was largely dominated by the fields of political science, international relations, and security studies and, within those fields, particularly by American practitioners who perceived military issues through the lens of the United States’ cold war interests (Cohn 1987; Dalby 1990). Such scholars tended to frame militarism as something that could be measured through statistics on the percentage of GNP devoted to military expenditure, the frequency of military coups, the role of military officers in politics, and so on. The state-oriented focus on statistical measurement is reflected as well in the Oxford English Dictionary’s definition of militarism as, in part, “the political condition characterized by the predominance of the military class in government or administration” and “the principle of maintaining a large military establishment.” Analysts in mainstream political science and security studies generally took the state as their superordinate unit of analysis while looking for the sources of militarism either in objectively discernible security threats to the state or in the absence of democratic institutions to restrain the military in domestic politics. These framings, by setting up a tacit binary of militarism and democracy and theorizing American militarism as a rational response to an anarchic international system, often rendered the aggressive militarism of the United States conceptually invisible.

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The New Anthropology of Militarism: Four Features

Threat Constructions

These papers understand militarism as a process rather than as a bounded, measurable thing enmeshed in deterministic relationships with other reified variables. Militarism as an in efective force or bundle of processes acts upon society in powerful and expansive but uneven and contingent ways. Although militarism carves its way deep into social structures, it is also shaped and reshaped in the dialectical interaction between ingrained structures on the one hand and human agency and contingency on the other. It is capillary, shape-shifting, always in motion as it constructs threats, enrols constituencies, colonizes cultural life, and generates new loci of resistance. As Michel Foucault (2007:44) writes, security apparatuses “have the constant tendency to expand; they are centrifugal. New elements are constantly being integrated. . . . Security therefore involves organizing, or anyway allowing the development of ever-wider circuits.” And there is no domain of social life it does not touch. Just as contemporary wars seem to have no clearly demarcated end, so militarism has no discernible edge; it increasingly seeps into every corner of the world, every aspect of social life, in some way. Military/intelligence logics and personnel are now being directed to manage arenas of life formerly understood as outside the purview of the military, like development projects in Africa, humanitarian aid, and responses to environmental catastrophes, black markets, and the hacking of political parties’ computers. In the words of Catherine Lutz, one of the foremost anthropological theorists and observers of militarism, the process of militarization “has reshaped almost every element of global social life over the 20th century.”

It involves an intensification of the labor and resources allocated to military purposes, including the shaping of other institutions in synchrony with military goals. Militarization is simultaneously a discursive process, involving a shift in general societal beliefs and values in ways necessary to legitimate the use of force, the organization of large standing armies and their leaders, and the higher taxes or tribute used to pay for them. Militarization is intimately connected not only to the obvious increase in the size of armies and resurgence of militant nationalisms and militant fundamentalisms but also to the less visible deformation of human potentials into the hierarchies of race, class, gender, and sexuality, and to the shaping of national histories in ways that glorify and legitimate military action. (Lutz 2002:723)

As Lutz’s comment indicates, the material base of militarism is connected with ideologies and discourses through which proliferating militarized infrastructures and rationalities are normalized, naturalized, and legitimized. Such ideologies and discourses valorize the ethos of the warrior (Gibson 1994; Orr 2004; Webb 2018) and construct threats in such a way as to validate military spending, military interventions, and the militarization of formerly nonmilitary arenas of life. “To say that threats are “constructed” does not mean that they are imaginary...
or unreal. But threats can be figured through different narratives and addressed in different ways, and the choice of narrative figuration may have enormous material consequences. The Soviet missiles deployed to Cuba in 1962 were quite real and, if used, would have inflicted crushing damage on the United States. But the United States could have chosen to regard them as a reasonable counterweight to its own Jupiter nuclear-tipped missiles in Turkey, on the Soviet Union’s doorstep, rather than provoking a global crisis by narrating them as an existential threat (Weldes 1999). Likewise, based on the evidence of the last 2 decades of US-Vietnamese relations, the United States could plausibly have decided in the 1960s that its vital interests would have suffered little if a small country on the other side of the planet had actually have decided in the 1960s that its vital interests would have suffered little if a small country on the other side of the planet were allowed to “go Communist.” Instead, it fruitlessly expended the lives of over 50,000 Americans and 2–3 million Vietnamese in what American national security elites wrongly perceived, thanks to the consensually accepted domino theory, as a struggle it could not afford to lose. Or, as discussed in this volume, Turkey in the early twentieth century could have constructed Armenians as constituency to be accommodated, not exterminated, and Guatemalan and Colombian elites could have constructed rural challenges against inequality and injustice as a social problem to address through development and land reform, not a military threat that demanded counterinsurgency. In these cases, the preferred threat constructions militarized the problems at hand, mobilizing more resources for military projects and saturating the social field with militarized violence.6

We see this logic applied in the post-9/11 redefinition of local insurgencies in Africa as global threats within the rubric of the so-called Global War on Terror. For example, in his analysis of the growth of US counterinsurgency interventions against perceived terrorist threats in West Africa and the Sahel, Mike McGovern argues that “using the “T-word”” (2013:95) — that is, “terrorism”— was the best way for the US military commanders to direct attention toward Africa in order to obtain resources for their commands. African governments have also been attentive to this message, rightly perceiving that their claims to development or state-building assistance will achieve better results if tied to US military interests in fighting terrorism.7 Such redefinitions of conflicts whose origins might lie in specific localized antagonisms over trade, resources, or identity politics obliterates their political and economic particularities in favor of a response articulated in the terms of terrorism, sometimes with the ironic but unsurprising effect of actually encouraging alliances between local insurgents and global terrorist networks. They are also examples of a core characteristic of contemporary militarism that is in keeping with Foucault’s observation that security apparatuses are centrifugal in nature: the tendency of the United States (which currently has troops in 177 countries)8 and other major military powers to articulate localized conflicts to their own great power struggles, thereby adding fuel to the conflicts in which they intervene while expanding the scope of their own conflicts.

The figuring of such things as health epidemics, environmental disasters, famines, drug trafficking, unauthorized migration, and now computer hacking as security threats similarly invites militarized responses, routinizing military solutions to diplomatic, humanitarian, resource, and civic challenges.9 As US police forces are encouraged by the federal government to acquire surplus military hardware, even including armored personnel carriers (Apuzzo 2014), police across the world are now being trained and outfitted by military units and private military contractors, humanitarian emergencies become military operations to deliver food or support state-building projects in post-conflict zones,10 and border security enhancements include military units and technologies.11 Hoffman’s contribution to this volume (2019) analyzes how the militarization of a public health emergency — the Ebola outbreak in Liberia — provoked a civilian backlash (see also Hoffman 2017).

The predictable result of constructing such problems as threats in need of military solutions is a rapid expansion of military programs and institutions. As Lutz (2002) points out, processes of militarization redirect material resources to armies, intelligence agencies, defense contractors, military research and development, military hospitals, bases, and think tanks, making these resources unavailable for purposes such as education, health care, childcare, or private pleasure. In the United States, one of the most deeply militarized societies in the world, military spending — officially $580 billion for fiscal year 2017 — has been estimated to account for over 50% of the US federal discretionary budget.12 In an example of one of the feedback loops that give processes of militarization expansive momentum, it uses this influence to lobby for continued military spending, for military interventions, and for official threat assessments that favor its programs. To give some sense of the

7. Al-Bulushi (2014); Besteman (2017); Glück (2017); Stampnitzky (2013).
11. Davis (2005); Heyman (2008); Maguire, Frois, and Zurawski (2014); Menjívar (2014).
12. Calculating the percentage of the US government budget that goes to the military is a vexing task for a number of reasons: e.g., the intelligence budget is not public knowledge, and there are disputes over whether to count military costs of nonmilitary agencies such as the Department of Energy. For the case that 54% of the federal budget was expended on “defense” in 2015, see https://www.nationalpriorities.org/campaigns/military-spending-united-states/.
scale of resources at issue here, if we look at major defense contractors in the United States, Lockheed Martin has a 20% profit margin on annual sales of $51 billion—more than twice Nepal’s GDP (Hartung 2016; Stone and Ajmera 2018), and sales for Raytheon and Northrop Grumman in 2017 were $25 billion apiece.13 This structural concentration of resources and political power is an obvious common sense indicator and component of militarism, but it is by no means the only one.

Since at least the French Revolution, militarism and nationalism have been closely intertwined and, in an age of mass media and security panics, militarized threat constructions are powerful tools for mobilizing collective fears, hatreds, and hopes to bind populations. As Joseph Masco puts it, exploring powerful tools for mobilizing collective fears, hatreds, and media and security panics, militarized threat constructions are militarism, but it is by no means the only one.

In the age of thermonuclear war, the security state became a committed affect theorist, investing substantial multidisciplinary resources in efforts to understand public morale, contagious affects (panic, fear, terror), resilience, resolve, and the long-term effects of stress. The nuclear balance of danger was always an all-encompassing formation, creating a new executive (a president preauthorized to start a nuclear war any second of the day) and a new citizen-subject (recruited to reorganize everyday life around the minute-to-minute reality of nuclear danger). (Masco 2014:17–18)

State apparatuses and media empires work in concert to produce everything from TV series such as 24 and Homeland to Hollywood movies such as American Sniper, video games like Call of Duty, and the kind of advertising campaigns discussed by Fattal in this volume (2019; Crogan 2011; Der Derian 2001; Gibson 1994; Hammond 2007; Pedelty 1995; Pomarede 2018; Robb 2004). Thus twenty-first-century militarism has a media-saturated quality that gives it an unprecedented ability to deluge citizen-subjects with militarized imagery and, hence, to shape public culture and private fantasy, making us all military subjects whether or not we work for military institutions.

But such formulations still discuss the congealing of process into structure at the level of populations. When discussing processes of militarism, it is important to remember that the sharp end of militarization is found at the level of individuals and groups whose improvisations, though localized, are profoundly generative of the dramas and meanings upon which militarism feeds: Israeli soldiers and Palestinians interacting at checkpoints, drone operators deciding whether to attack desert convoys from the other side of the world, Guatemalan soldiers confronted by a woman with a baby begging for her life, and US military interrogators pressured to cross moral lines to get information about the insurgency all around them. Thus, writing about “judgment, initiative and creativity” among US prison guards at Abu Ghraib, Steve Caton and Bernardo Zacka (2010:207) write that “The security apparatus constantly deals with risk and uncertainty, and within that context, power takes on what we call an ‘improvisatory’ and even arbitrary quality. It must be open to contingency, possibility, and chance if it is to ‘know’ the reality it is to combat or contain or govern.” In recent years the performative improvisations of actors low down on the hierarchy have been enormously consequential in shaping the dynamics of militarism: a US soldier who rapes a teenager inflames an antibase movement in Japan, prison guards who snap souvenir pictures of abuse at Abu Ghraib throw the entire US occupation of Iraq into crisis, and a low-level military contractor who reveals the extent of the National Security Administration’s illegal surveillance of the American people ignites an international debate on civil liberties and surveillance.

Militarism after the State

Partly in thrill to Max Weber’s (1946 [1919]:78) celebrated definition of the state as that “human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory,” discussions of militarism in traditional security studies have been closely tied to state power. They have tended to be preoccupied with arms races and wars between states, the growth of national armies, and civil–military relations within states. But, as a number of analysts have observed, the relationship between states and military force has been unraveling rapidly in recent decades and, in Ssorin-Chaikov’s (2018:255) words, “we see a Weberian monopoly of legitimate violence distributed unevenly.” Ssorin-Chaikov coins the terms “hybrid war” and “hybrid peace” to evoke an era in which “open interstate conflicts have given way to proxy wars, civil wars, counterinsurgency operations, and other forms of state-induced violence ... a multitude of imperial interventions of different scale and different kind ... a world in which war is not quite war but also peace is not quite peace” (252–253).

In this world, the United Nations and the African Union have taken on the role of militarized transnational peacekeepers, even when local communities protest their presence.14 Peace movements such as the antibase movement discussed by Vine in this volume (2019), or earlier NGO alliances that succeeded in winning treaties banning land mines and cluster bombs (Rappert 2013), are also operating as transnational forces. Transnational religiously grounded insurgencies such as Al Qaeda and ISIS operate across state boundaries and draw on sources of legitimating authority at odds with the political geography of nation-states. In countries such as Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and Colombia, the state’s relationship to military force has morphed as paramilitaries, militarized gangs, and insurgencies vie for control of state territory and populations, as discussed by Fattal (2019), Nelson (2019), and Ramirez (2019) in this volume.


Meanwhile, in pursuing its wars of occupation in Iraq and Afghanistan, the United States has increasingly turned to contract laborers from countries in the global south such as Nepal, India, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Sierra Leone. These contractors are recruited through a shadowy underworld of human traffickers and private military contractors to fulfill essential noncombat or quasi-combat roles (Coburn 2018; Hoffman 2011; Li 2015b; Thomas 2017). By 2012 the United States had 88,000 American soldiers in Afghanistan and 117,000 contractors, of whom only one-third were American. Over 50,000 Nepalis alone have served on US bases in Afghanistan, employed by commercial military contractors such as Dyncorp. “Contracting means that citizenship is sometimes now less important than the company that employs you,” reports Noah Coburn (2018:18). While some Nepalis have done well financially from the war, those who were injured were owed none of the lifelong care for patriotic sacrifice that national militaries traditionally afford wounded veterans, being treated instead as disposable by the contractors who had hired them. Coburn (2018:12) reports that some Nepalis worked in “near slavery conditions” at the US Bagram base in Afghanistan, which employed so many third-country nationals that “it was hard to call it an ‘American base.’”

These contractors cleaned the base, cooked food and guarded convoys, and were also involved in almost every aspect of the war. . . . These workers were not on the base because their countries had a political commitment to beating the Taliban. Their presence was a result of the neoliberal tendency of the U.S. and others to outsource their work to the cheapest laborers they could find who moved across the world’s increasingly porous borders. (Coburn 2018:12)

Such developments are remaking the relationship between soldiering, identity, and the nation-state. Since the French Revolution in the West and anticolonial wars of independence elsewhere, “fighting for one’s country,” whether as a conscript or a volunteer, has been exalted as a sacrificial privilege of citizenship. Certainly in the United States, military service has been integral to struggles by African-Americans and women to achieve fuller citizenship and equality (Gusterson 1999). Now, even as US media create a kind of militarized hyperpatriotism — defined as lacking acceptable forms of political authority. A vicious cycle ensues, mediated by military intervention that strengthens the military state in the West while undermining political order at the point of intervention. Thus, as described by Gusterson in this volume (2019), drone warfare was imagined in Washington as a remedy for a collapse of governance in Waziristan but has instead intensified the very collapse it was supposed to avert. Similarly, the US-backed Ethiopian invasion of Somalia in 2006, intended to rout the rise of the Islamic Courts Union and return the country to democratic rather than Islamist rule, led instead to the creation of Al Shabaab (Besteman 2017; Scahill 2013). And in Colombia, Winifred Tate (2015) has shown how US policy makers imagined Colombian paramilitaries as evidence of an absent state rather than as a manifestation of state-supported terror. This enabled the United States to deliver to Colombia a massive military aid package to combat drug trafficking and the FARC, an offering that only provoked more violence (see also Gill 2016).

In the context of the so-called small wars,15 “fragmented wars” (Lukeman 2008), and “new wars” (Kaldor 2012) that increasingly characterize the global “securityscape,” a vast array of entities play a role in the decentering of state militarism (Albro et al. 2011; Gusterson 2004), including “failed states,” narco-states, paramilitaries, insurgencies, intrastate ethnoreligious wars, military contractors, the new mercenaries (Singer 2003), terrorist

15. Wars fought on the other side of the world involving relatively small numbers of US forces (by the standards of World War II or the Vietnam War) seem, by virtue of their distance and self-contained quality, “small” to American military commentators, but they are anything but small to those who live in the midst of them. Several participants in the workshop that produced this volume observed that war and militarism pay havoc with conventional assumptions about scale and the relationship between “the local” and “the global.”
organizations, militarized religious cults (such as the Lord’s Resistance Army in Uganda [Finnstrom 2008] and Boko Haram in Nigeria [MacEachern 2018]), ISIS, transnational peacekeeping forces, and international NGOs. The new anthropology of militarism is vitally concerned with mapping the dynamics involved in this great transformation of the management of violence from the state to extrastate entities, exploring how transnational labor is managed and articulated on military bases and in peacekeeping missions, understanding new relationships of soldiering and identity as they emerge, and bearing witness to the felt experience of the vast panoply of actors involved in the circuitry of militarism.

Emotions, Bodies, Memory

Anthropologists have been acutely attentive to the multifaceted complexity of the felt experience of living inside militarism. Such work has documented the phenomenology, discourses, and lived practices of people that have a variety of relationships to military institutions and processes: victims of death squads; conflict refugees; former child soldiers; insurgents; African, Israeli, and Latin American soldiers, as well as military veterans; those living under military occupation; those living on or around military bases; victims of the testing and use of nuclear weapons; biological and nuclear weapons scientists; and anti-military activists. Other work has highlighted gendered experiences of war, the human and environmental dislocations caused by war, and traumatic memory in the wake of mass killing.16

dangerous parts of the desert, die trying to cross into the United States (De Leon 2015).17

The recent forensic turn in the anthropology of militarism has provided a ground for convergence between biological anthropologists (who exhume the dead victims of atrocities so as to piece together, from forensic evidence, the stories of their deaths) and cultural anthropologists (who weave these personal stories into larger narratives of suffering, violence, oppression, and power; Ferrándiz and Robben 2017; Sanford 2003; Wagner 2008). Articles by Ferrándiz (2019), Nelson (2019), Altunay (2019), and Ramírez (2019) foreground the dangerously subversive potential of dead bodies that, ventriloquized from the grave, incite publicly constructed memories of atrocity and the public performance of memorialization. Moves toward public memorializations might reflect contexts where the silences of one generation incite the curiosity of another through a truth-and-justice logic of accounting for the past, although other contexts suggest different logics at work, such as in Cambodia, where many victims of the Khmer Rouge genocide, wanting to avoid a public reckoning, seem to prefer Buddhist notions of Kharmic justice to Western ideas of just punishment or restorative justice (Hinton 2016, 2018). As in Argentina and South Africa, a public reckoning with atrocity may happen within a generation or so, but in other places it has taken three generations or more, as discussed in Altunay’s article (2019) on the Armenian genocide and Ferrándiz’s article (2019) on Franco’s crimes. It seems clear that the willingness of the state to sponsor or entertain the generation of public memory about past atrocity is a key variable. (In the Argentine and South African cases, new regimes used the authority of the state to sponsor public hearings that made the crimes of past regimes publicly inarguable.) Diasporic communities and international NGOs may also be key actors in efforts to confront and memorialize historic violence.

Media also play an important role in maintaining or interrupting silences about past suffering and atrocities (Pedelty 1995). The international uproar caused by porn-infected photographs of ritual abuse of naked Iraqi prisoners at the US prison at Abu Ghraib shows the power inherent in images to shock and inflame public sentiment and to provide vivid specificity in support of claims that are otherwise abstract. This is why states have traditionally invested so much effort in controlling the access of reporters, especially photographers, to war zones, seeking instead to disseminate officially approved imagery. (After Hiroshima, e.g., it was a crime for any Japanese person to possess photographs of the aftermath of the atomic bombing, and the US government sought to saturate public knowledge of the bombing with approved texts and images.) However, in an era where cell phone cameras, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Wikileaks, and viral podcasts have radically decentered older mediascapes, it is increasingly difficult for the state to control the circulation of imagery about state violence—as demonstrated by the Black Lives Matter movement’s highly effective use of cell phone videos and as explored in this volume by Ferrándiz (2019) in regard to Franco’s atrocities in Spain. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to assume that the change here has been one of unambiguous democratization and transparency. Fattal’s contribution to this volume (2019) describes the marketing campaign to convince FARC and ELN fighters to demobilize that was designed by elite professional advertising firms contracted by the Colombian government. Fattal argues that the campaign militarized intimacy by using familial love as a marketing device that would help the government defeat the insurgency. Furthermore, as Rapport (2019) demonstrates in this volume, apparently straightforwardly transparent revelations can be, in fact, quite confected. Where this is not appreciated by consumers, this can lead to naivete, and where it is appreciated, it often leads to a disabling cynicism—a sense that in a pluralistic mediascape heavily saturated with conflicting narratives and images, nothing is reliable. This decentering of the mediascape has shattered what used to be plausible to imagine as a singular public into a mosaic of micropublics, each trapped within its own political echo chamber. In such a mosaicized mediascape, constituencies whose worldview would be most challenged by revelations of official atrocities may be immunized against their revelation. And, finally, in an era where the saturation of the public sphere with images of suffering has created “compassion fatigue” (Moeller 1998), the life cycle of such images has shortened dramatically, undermining their iconic power.

Suffering and Injustice

It goes without saying that militarism, like its close siblings capitalism and colonialism, is deeply imbricated with suffering and social injustice. While everyone who is not a pacifist can reference armed struggles they consider for just cause (from the Sandinistas for some on the left to the Afghan Mujahadeen of the 1980s for some on the right), it is the very essence of military operations that they kill and terrorize people—including, inevitably, innocent civilians as well as combatants. Some military operations exact a higher death toll than others, and some are more discriminate in picking targets than others (and we should not be dismissive of the importance of these distinctions), but it is the lowest common denominator of military operations that they all inflict death, injury, and suffering. This suffering includes a lingering aftermath to conflict that may take the form of cancer and other ailments settling into a population over decades because depleted uranium weapons, defoliants, heavy metals, solvents, and other toxins were released in war or preparation for war; or it may take the form of elevated rates of suicide, drug addiction, alcoholism, and spousal abuse among mentally and spiritually injured veterans. And, even when military forces are not used in war,
there is a high incidence of prostitution, violence against women, and damage to public health and the environment around military bases (Lutz 2001; McCaffrey 2002; Vine 2015).\textsuperscript{18} Essays in this volume by Lutz (2019) and Vine (2019) explore this kind of damage with nuance and precision. Moreover, the ways military spending is directed tend to reinforce and deepen social inequalities, enriching senior executives and stockholders of large military contractors such as Lockheed Martin, Boeing, BAE Systems, General Dynamics, DynCorp, and CACI as well as the penumbral swarm of retired military officers and high-priced consultants who provision them with advice, “studies,” and lobbying services. It should come as no surprise that macroeconomic analysis has found a clear correlation between high levels of military spending and high levels of social inequality (Abell 1994; Ali 2007). Seen in this light it is surely of the utmost concern that global military spending continues to rise and that processes of militarization reach ever more deeply into social and cultural life—from Hollywood movies to children’s toys and video game design (Allen 2017; Cheng 2013; Enloe 2000a, 2000b; Gibson 1994; Jauregui 2015).

Much anthropological writing on militarism, imbued with anthropology’s traditional preferential option for the poor and marginalized, emphasizes the suffering militarism leaves in its wake. However, some ethnographers have studied up or sideways (Stryker and Gonzalez 2014) to understand the perspectives of actors inside militarist organizations, and some strands in the literature on the anthropology of militarism make descriptively real, for example, the aesthetic beauty soldiers and weapons designers see in weapons, the threats soldiers and planners fear, or the felt righteousness of the causes for which warriors fight. In this volume Weiss (2019) provides a complex evocation of the contradictions and ambivalent feelings experienced by Israeli soldiers rebelling against their expected role in the subjugation and occupation of the Palestinian community. Analyses such as Weiss’s provide a much-needed window into the lived experience of militarist actors, challenging anthropologists to empathize with their dilemmas rather than just condemning them. Anthropology cannot produce a complete descriptive analysis of militarism without exploring the experience and cultural logics of soldiers, weapons scientists, and intelligence officers—perhaps anthropology’s ultimate others—as well as militarism’s victims. This raises problems of method and writing. How do anthropologists study people who may not want to be studied or are for other reasons inaccessible for conventional fieldwork? This may involve defetishizing participant observation in favor of a mixed-method approach that gives more weight to textual sources and set-piece interviews of the kind journalists practice. And, when it comes to writing, how do we write critically about militarist actors without leaving our subjects (as well as some of our readers) feeling set up and betrayed? Alternatively, how do we convey the cultural sense of militarist practices and institutions without feeling complicit (Gusterson 1997)\textsuperscript{19}?

Militarism’s Global Web

This volume goes to print at a moment when military programs continue to enjoy strong public support in the United States despite the fact that militarist processes have set entire regions of the planet (especially in the Middle East and the Horn of Africa) ablaze. According to Brown University’s Costs of War project (http://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/) the US interventions in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan have led to at least 370,000 direct deaths and 800,000 indirect deaths, have displaced over 10 million people, and have so far cost US taxpayers $5.6 trillion. If we then consider the conflict in Syria, that adds another 350,000–500,000 deaths and, astoundingly, over 6 million more refugees. And then there are the conflicts in Somalia, Yemen, and Libya, which have killed and displaced many more. And, while the numbers are horrifying enough, they do not begin to speak to other dimensions of suffering and destruction associated with the sundering of families, the trauma of witnessing relentless, organized violence for years, and the hopelessness that comes from watching the collapse of social institutions.

From our perspective as analysts of militarism, these conflicts in different countries, which tend to be reported separately in the media, are coproduced by a single bundle of underlying militarist processes and are integrated with one another, no matter how much local dynamics may vary. Indeed, this is the essence of militarism—its ability to be simultaneously local and global, to connect different geographical spaces and meaning systems through organized violence or the preparation for it, while obscuring the workings of the connective circuitry. The conflicts that appear to be “in” the Middle East, but that are really global in their reach and origins, are simultaneously “about” Sunni-Shi’a hostility in local Iraqi neighborhoods, the rivalry between Pashtuns and Tajiks in Afghanistan, jihadists’ dreams of a new Caliphate, the diaspora’s fantasies of “home,” a “clash of civilizations” in the heads of American neoconservatives, human rights hawks’ claims to want to protect Muslim women’s rights, military planners’ search for pipeline routes and geopolitical advantage, US presidents’ anxieties about re-election, and aerospace executives’ drive for increased profits. Barefoot guerrillas in the Hindu Kush, suicide bombers in Mosul, US special forces knocking down doors in the middle of the night, drone operators in Nevada, bemused generals in the Pentagon, speakers in suits at Washington think tanks, refugees clinging to flimsy boats in the Mediterranean, and assembly line workers churning out ammunition for M16s may never meet one another but are fundamentally joined by processes of mil-

\textsuperscript{18} The best source on such costs is http://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/.

\textsuperscript{19} Studies based in visuality (such as the “cosmic view” of air power studied by Kaplan (2006)) and “forensis” (as the reconstruction of violent events through mapping and modeling technologies by Eyal Weizman’s Forensic Architecture project [https://www.forensic-architecture.org/]) offer promising new opportunities for anthropological engagement.
itarianism that adhere to certain patterns: through a process of polarization, they create and intensify enmities, turning neighbors against one another; they create novel alliances between locals and outsiders; they inject weaponry beyond the normal reach of local fighters; and they spread, through a sort of process of contagion, exporting violence to and bringing weapons and fighters from contiguous territories and diasporic communities. Above all, following global capitalist and colonial pathways that have sedimented over centuries, they tend to transmogrify the bodily suffering and death of those in the periphery into wealth in the metropole: jobs in munitions factories or in the ever-expanding US Department of Defense, profits for shareholders in arms manufacturers, book contracts for defense intellectuals, and roles for actors in Hollywood war movies. This is not to say that no one in the metropole suffers and dies, but militarism is a global system that is tilted in favor of the West, which profits from suffering beyond its borders.

A number of commentators observed that, after World War II, Western societies failed to demobilize as they had after World War I, and that the world was increasingly in a permanent war orientation: military research and development continued; the arms industry remained a leading sector in the economy; nuclear weapons were placed on hair-trigger alert, and the horizon was constantly scanned for incoming missiles; the United States built a global network of hundreds of military bases, while both superpowers used military aid to build global patron-client networks; the United States and the Soviet Union used their military and intelligence forces to intervene in other countries’ affairs; and conflicts, invariably worsened by superpower sponsorship of contending factions, regularly erupted in the global south. Far from ameliorating this situation, the end of the cold war has, in the context of a struggle for resource access in the global south and the emergence of the so-called war on terror, produced a further intensification of militarism, which has morphed opportunistically as it has adapted to new economic, ideological, and strategic realities. If, instead of focusing on particular conflicts, we try to hold in awareness the system of global militarism in its entirety, we see a system that generates expansionary energy from its own internal conflicts: as actors within the system argue that threats from elsewhere within the system justify the accumulation of weaponry, the use of force, or the further securitization of daily life, the system deepens its grip upon us.

To make this case is to recapitulate an argument made by the great social historian E. P. Thompson (1980) in a much debated essay on “exterminism, the last stage of civilization.” Analyzing the cold war nuclear arms race, Thompson argued that Western and Eastern bloc critiques of the other bloc seemed, in their own context, progressive, but, seen from outside the entire conflict, merely served to consolidate and expand the underlying system, which he dubbed “exterminism.” He reframed democratic capitalism and communism not as contending systems but as complementary components of this exterminist system. Looking forward, he feared that this system could only be ended in a self-destructive genocidal spasm as its own contradictions became inescapable. The question before us now is whether exterminist militarism might be ended otherwise, slowly rolled back (as slavery and colonialism were) through the combined efforts of intellectuals, institutions, and social movements.

Until we recognize militarism for what it is, we cannot begin to roll it back.

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Undoing Academic Cultures of Militarism
Turkey and Beyond
by Ayşe Gül Altunay

What can we learn from exploring the history of the questions that could not be asked, the connections that could not be made, and the research that could not be done? What are the challenges of demilitarization for society and political institutions at large, when academic research itself is shaped by layers of silence? Asking these and other questions, this article proposes “methodological militarism” as a tool to understand the deeply ingrained workings of militarism in academic knowledge production and engages in a search for the “better story” of demilitarizing academia. Since January 2016, more than 2,000 academics in Turkey have been facing the dire consequences of having signed the Academics for Peace petition asking for an end to militarized state violence and human rights violations in Turkey’s southeastern cities. Departing from this moment of rupture and focusing critically on my own scholarship, the article raises questions about the historical making of the academic cultures of militarism as well as the limits and possibilities of their unmaking.

Stories give us access to the deeply human qualities of how political histories get written from the existential experience of trauma, loss, difficulty, and relationality. (Dina Georgis 2013:1)

Since January 2016, more than 2,000 academics in Turkey have been facing the dire consequences of having signed the Academics for Peace petition titled “We will not be a party to this crime!” asking for an end to militarized state violence and human rights violations in Turkey’s southeastern cities. As of August 2018, more than 500 signatories of the Academics for Peace petition have lost their jobs, and about 400 are facing court cases; dozens of academics have had to go abroad, receiving emergency funds for academics at risk, while many others are unable to leave the country due to arbitrary travel restrictions. While this moment is shaped by great uncertainty, precarity, and loss (of jobs, of departments, of academic freedom), it is also a creative moment when new forms of academic and political exchange and solidarity are being imagined and enacted.

Such moments also constitute, I believe, a valuable pause for critical self-reflection on both the potentials and the limitations of academic interventions into contested political issues. As Cynthia Enloe suggests, “The moment when one becomes newly curious about something is also a good time to think about what created one’s previous lack of curiosity” (2004:2–3). One can argue that academia in Turkey is experiencing a historic rupture and that the Academics for Peace signatories are paying a high price for decrying the recent acts of militarized state violence. But how about the past century of silence, complicity, and denial? What are its legacies in the repeating cycles of state violence and militarism, as well as in ongoing forms of academic militarism? What does the recent outcry tell us about the historical making of the academic cultures of militarism, as well as the limits and possibilities of its unmaking?

1. For more information on the Academics for Peace/Barış için Akademisyenler, see https://barisincakademisyenler.net/English. Since December 2017, the prosecutor’s office has been opening individual cases against the signatory academics. Including myself, close to 400 academics have either received a hearing date or have had several hearings already. In 16 cases, the verdict has been announced as 15-month imprisonment. See Human Rights Watch, “Turkey: Academics on Trial for Signing Petition—‘Terrorist Propaganda’ Stifling Free Speech,” December 5, 2017. https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/12/05/turkey-academics-trial-signing-petition (accessed August 8, 2018).

2. For the stories of academics regarding survival, solidarity, and making a new life after having been dismissed from various universities, see Lordoğlu (2018) and Inal, Beşler, and Talu (2018). The Academics for Peace initiative has received a number of international awards, including the 2016 Aachen Peace Award, the 2016 Middle East Studies Association Academic Freedom Award, and the 2018 Courage to Think Defender Award by Scholars at Risk.

3. Although there have been earlier cases of legal action against academics for their political activism or academic work (most notably against sociologist İsmail Beşikçi for his research on Kurdish society, language, and politics, which resulted in years of imprisonment), as well as a mass expulsion of academics and students from universities for political reasons after the 1980 coup d’etat, the scale of this rupture is unprecedented (see Bayer, Alğınalı, and Öztürk 2017).

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In her insightful book *The Better Story: Queer Affects from the Middle East*, Dina Georgis (2013) proposes story “as a method for social inquiry” (1) and a tool to understand the ways in which “histories are haunted by trauma and lost memory” (10). Her search for the better stories of postcolonial subjectivity takes her to “queer corners” that reveal (most visibly through art) the “traces of discarded experience” (Georgis 2013:21) and invites us to expand the repertoire of our better stories by critically analyzing the ways in which our stories are shaped by personal, political, and academic histories haunted by trauma and loss. In an attempt to respond to this invitation, this article is a search for the “better story” of undoing the academic cultures of militarism. It proposes “methodological militarism” as a tool to understand the deeply ingrained workings of militarism in academic knowledge production, with a particular focus on my own scholarship on militarism, genocide, and gender. What can we learn from “writing vulnerably” (Behar 1997) and exploring the history of the questions that could not be asked, the connections that could not be made, and the research that could not be done? What are the challenges of demilitarization for society and political institutions at large, when academic research itself is shaped by layers of silence? If the Academics for Peace petition is the better story for responding to militarized state violence in Turkey today, how can we imagine a better story than this better story? Although these questions arise from the context of Turkey, they are in conversation with a much wider—and urgent—search for the better stories of undoing academic cultures of militarism globally.

**Methodological Militarism and Academic Cultures of Militarism**

It is often much easier to analyze other people’s lack of curiosity than our own. For the past 15 years, inspired by the debates around methodological nationalism, I have written and lectured extensively on what I have called methodological militarism in other people’s scholarship, particularly the political science and international relations literature on “civil-military relations” (Altınay 2009). Before I discuss the ways in which I have recently become aware of the methodological militarism in my own work, let me first explain what I mean by this term with examples from the scholarship on the military and coup d’êats in Turkey.

Since the early 2000s, scholars working particularly on transnationalism, globalization, and migration have problematized the tendency in mainstream scholarship to take nations and nation-states as natural and inevitable categories of analysis, a tendency that has been called “methodological nationalism” (Beck 2000; Beck and Sznaider 2006; Chernilo 2006; Wimmer and Schiller 2003). According to Ulrich Beck and Natan Sznaider, methodological nationalism refers to equating society with national society “when the practice of the argument or the research presupposes that the unit of analysis is the national society or the national state or the combination of both” (2006:3). Wimmer and Schiller (2003) define methodological nationalism simply as “the naturalization of the nation-state by the social sciences” (576), and they identify three variants: “1) ignoring or disregarding the fundamental importance of nationalism for modern societies; . . . 2) naturalization, i.e., taking for granted that the boundaries of the nation-state delimit and define the unit of analysis; 3) territorial limitation which confines the study of social processes to the political and geographic boundaries of a particular nation-state” (577–578).

It is noteworthy that variants of methodological nationalism often coexist with critiques of essentialist, primordialist approaches to the nation. In other words, the very same scholars who adopt and contribute to the theories of nations as modern constructs often end up reproducing the assumptions of modern nationalisms. One important indication of this tendency is the strong hegemony of nationalism in shaping academic thinking, even years after its critique has become commonplace.

If our scholarship often suffers from subtle forms of methodological nationalism, we need to ask whether it may also be suffering from methodological militarism. Like methodological nationalism, methodological militarism can take different forms. In its most overt form, methodological militarism is the direct or indirect naturalization of ideas about the necessity and inevitability of militaries, military service, and related forms of organized violence in academic work. More generally, the scholarly neglect of the ways in which militarism and militarization have shaped contemporary societies and nation-states can be seen as a form of methodological militarism. A subtler expression of methodological militarism in social science scholarship is the trivialization or naturalization of military values, attitudes, and practices as part of everyday life, foreclosing the possibility of their critical interrogation.4

The scarcity of research and debate on conscription and conscientious objection in twentieth-century scholarship, for instance, can be seen as an indicator of methodological militarism, whereby the connections between conscription and citizenship remain unproblematized. Until recently, apart from the publications of War Resisters International (Horeman and Stolwijk 1998) and other anti-militarist organizations, conscientious objection (i.e., the refusal to serve in the military) has rarely been a topic of academic research and debate. Particularly since the 1990s, feminist scholars have been crucial in filling this gap, problematizing the strong connections between conscription and militarized, gendered citizenship (Cockburn 1998; Enloe 2000; Gutmann and Lutz 2010; Lutz 2002; Nagel 1998; Zeiger 1996). Ethnographic work on military service in a variety of contexts, from Bolivia to Israel, South Africa, South Korea, and the United States has shown the centrality of this practice in defining gender relations and the state alike (Altınay 2004; Cock 1991; Gill 1997; Helman 1997; Kwon 2001). Cynthia Cockburn (2007), in her transnational ethnography of feminist anti-militarism around the world, shows that not all feminist

4. For critical analyses of the militarization of knowledge in general, and anthropology in particular, see Gusterson (2007), Lutz (2002), Network of Concerned Scientists (2009), and Price (2016).
anti-militarists are anti-nationalist, and not all of them oppose the use of violence by “oppressed” groups. Yet, with notable exceptions (Enloe 2000; Kwon 2005), feminist scholars of militarism have focused less on oppositional forms of militarism as they present themselves in peace or “liberation” movements.

My first use of the term “methodological militarism” was in a 2009 article titled “Tabula An Ordu, Yoksayan Militarizm: Türkiye’de Metodolojik Militarizm Üzerine Notlar” (The military as taboo, militarism as nonexistent: notes on methodological militarism in Turkey), which focused on the political science and international relations scholarship on civil-military relations in Turkey from the 1960s to the 1990s (Altınay 2009). As the title suggests, the military as an institution has been a taboo topic for research in Turkey, and militarism as an analytical concept has entered the Turkish academic lexicon only after the 2000s. What we have instead is a relatively large body of scholarship on civil-military relations, starting in the 1960s and focusing on the ways in which the military has intervened in political processes and institutions. In this article, I argued that, in terms of methodological militarism, one can analyze this literature along two axes: their approach to military interventions in politics and their discussion of the “special place” of the military in Turkish society and culture.

A review of the civil-military relations literature from the 1960s to early 1990s shows that military interventions in politics are justified and naturalized in at least three ways (Altınay 2009). The first common argument regarding the major coup d’états in 1960, 1971, and 1980 is that there are legitimate reasons for the military to intervene in politics. According to political scientist William Hale, for instance, the 1960 coup d’état had prevented a possible civil war: “In defence of the army, it has to be said that if they had not intervened on 27 May then public disorder would almost certainly have continued and might have degenerated into civil war” (Hale 1994:110–111). Similarly, in relation to the 1980 coup d’état, he argues that if the political leaders had been able to collaborate in the years leading to the coup, “they should have been able to restore law and order,” and that “this would have removed both the necessity and the justification for a coup” (240–241). Because they failed to do so, “the eventual military takeover became a foregone conclusion” (241). In other words, for William Hale and many other Turkish and international scholars of civil-military relations, the military interventions of 1960, 1971, and 1980, either as a whole or selectively, were “necessary” and “justified.”

An extension of the first, the second widespread argument used to justify and naturalize military interventions is that the interventions were “successful” in restoring order, bringing back democracy, enabling economic development, writing a new constitution, and handing back power to civilian authorities in a relatively short period of time (Altınay 2009). One common feature of the scholarship that has defined the various coup d’états as successful is the total erasure or trivialization of torture, disappearances, and other forms of military and police violence used during the military regimes.

A third argument is that Turkish coup d’états are different from their counterparts in Latin America and the Middle East in that they have led to comparatively “short” periods of military rule, yet another sign of their intention to “restore democracy” (see Hale 1994; Heper 1987). In these expressions of what one might call methodological militarism, the use of military power in politics is presented as a legitimate aspect of democracy, leading to an intrinsic militarization of the concept of democracy, especially in reference to “developing” or “Third World” countries.

While many of the features of methodological militarism in the literature discussed above have been common in analyses of civil-military relations in other parts of the world as well, there is an additional axis along which methodological militarism finds expression in relation to Turkey: “the special place of the military in Turkish society and culture.” Until recently, a wide range of Turkish and international scholars have argued that the Turkish nation has historically been a “military-nation” with the military occupying a special place in Turkish culture; that the Turkish Republic has the “unique” feature of having been founded by soldiers (giving the military a special role in “keeping the regime secure”); and that the military is the most trusted institution in Turkey (see Altınay 2004, 2009). It is interesting to note that the discrepancies between these suggestions, especially the first and the second, are not noticed or explored in much of the literature, nor is it possible to find a comparative analysis, for instance, with the founding processes of other nation-states (many of which are through wars, by soldier-politicians) or the levels of trust in the military institution in other countries (Altınay 2009). Methodological militarism resulting from such lack of comparative attention and critical evaluation has contributed to the academic reproduction of the “myth of the military-nation,” a central element of Turkish nation building and state making.

This form of methodological militarism, naturalizing the idea that “Turks are a military-nation” either through direct references to this myth or through an avoidance to problematize it, has hardly been limited to the civil-military relations literature. It is only in the past 15 years that the concept of militarism has entered the academic lexicon in Turkey and that the myth of the military-nation has been scrutinized and denaturalized. My own dissertation and postdissertation research has been based on a recognition of this lack, contributing to the emerging critical literature. Yet, as I show below, even critical works on militarism, including mine, have not been immune to deeper layers of methodological militarism. While I

5. This literature has grown significantly since the early 2000s. For a selection of articles and books that mark the introduction of militarism into different fields of study, from anthropology to gender studies, to political science and international relations, see Açıköz (2012), Altınay and Bora (2002), Bahtı Paker and Akça (2010), Bügün (2007), Bircik (2012), Çınar and Üsterci (2009), Demirel (2004), İnele and Bayramoğlu (2004), Kanık and Altınay (2007), Parla (1998), Selek (2008), and Sunbuloğlu (2013).
was able to identify the methodological militarism embedded in the civil-military relations literature, it would take me much longer to see the ways in which my own scholarship suffered from the exact same problem. In what follows, I focus on my own scholarship on militarism, paying close attention to the lack of curiosity and silences in my work through the years. These reflections are shaped by the belief that a closer engagement with the layers of methodological militarism and academic silence that have shaped our scholarship might help us imagine more effective paths for academic and political demilitarization.

Layers of Academic Silence

My entry into what might be called militarism studies was in the mid-1990s, at the peak of the armed conflict between the PKK (Kurdistan Workers’ Party) and the Turkish armed forces, which had resulted in thousands of military and civilian deaths, a record number of arrests and torture cases, forced disappearances, and more than a million civilians being displaced from their villages and towns. Southeastern Turkey, the main war zone, had become heavily militarized and impoverished and was governed by Emergency Law, creating a two-tiered legal system in the country. Having grown up inside Diyarbakır and in the mountains of a small town called Çüngüş (Chungush), as the daughter of a civil engineer working in the construction of one of Turkey’s largest dams, my experience of the war was both distant and intimate at the same time. While I spent the early 1990s in the relatively privileged position of a university student in one of the country’s leading research and education institutions, Bogazici University, the mountains of my childhood had turned into a war zone. I had no idea whether my primary school friends had become soldiers, village guards, or guerrillas or were still able to live in their houses and villages. In my political science and international relations classes, there was little mention of the ongoing war and hardly any historical analysis of militarism and the “Kurdish question.” Militarism and militarization had not yet entered the academic lexicon in Turkey.

After 3 years of graduate study in cultural anthropology at Duke University, I came back to Istanbul to conduct a historical ethnography of militarism in Turkey, in an effort to understand the background of the ongoing war. How was it that young men in Turkey were unquestioningly joining the military to do their “compulsory military service” and turn into fighters, killing and being killed, maiming other bodies, and suffering from wounds both physical and psychological? How was it that there would be so little questioning of this whole machinery of war and the many other ways in which militarized notions of masculinity and femininity shaped people’s everyday lives, as well as state practices? What were the mechanisms and discourses through which the war was legitimized and sustained? Asking these questions, among others, I engaged in more than 3 years of ethnographic research that involved in-depth interviews with men regarding military service, with high school students and graduates regarding their experience of the mandatory National Security Studies course taught by military officers (taught under different names since 1926), with conscientious objectors regarding their motives for objection, and with many ordinary citizens regarding their daily militarized practices. An equally central aspect of my research was archival work on the construction of what I called the “myth of the military-nation,” which has been central to Turkish nationalist ideology and state practice since the 1930s, with its seeds being sown in the last decades of the Ottoman Empire.

My PhD dissertation, defended in 2001, and the book that followed in 2004, started with an analysis of the historical making of the myth of the military-nation in the early years of the twentieth century. The Myth of the Military-Nation: Militarism, Education and Gender in Turkey (Altunay 2004) was the first historical ethnography of a century of militarized nation-building in Turkey. It was also the first academic book that analyzed the short history of conscientious objection in Turkey, while also developing a feminist critique of militarism. Yet, it missed one of the most major—and most traumatic—events in the making of Turkish nationalism (see Akçam 2013) and the myth of the military-nation. The genocide of Ottoman Armenians in 1915 was addressed only in a footnote, introduced as a scholarly “debate” with the term “genocide” in quotation marks:

One of the most tragic events that marked this era was the deportation (telçir) and massacre of a large part of the Armenian population in Anatolia. Estimates of the number of people killed during the deportation of Armenians from their homes in various parts of Anatolia to Zor (a location in the desert in today’s Syria) range from 300,000 to 1.5 million. The debate over whether these killings constitute a “genocide” (planned by the Ottoman state against all Armenians) or a “necessary war measure” based on the atrocities caused by Armenian nationalists and their collaboration with Russia against the Ottoman state continues to be a source of major conflict amongst scholars, and between Turkish and Armenian diaspora communities in the U.S.A. and Europe, and strains the diplomatic relations between Turkish and Armenian Republics as well (see Akcam 2000). (Altunay 2004:169)

6. My dissertation research was supported by the Social Science Research Council–MacArthur Foundation International Peace and Security Fellowship and Duke University Advanced International Studies Fellowship, and it was enabled by the unwavering support and guidance of my advisor, Orin Starn, dissertation committee members Caterine Lutz, Arif Dirlik, Katherine Pratt Ewing, and Charles Piot and two former professors, prominent political scientists from Bogazici University in Istanbul, Yeşim Arat and Taha Parla. It was with this remarkable (international and local) academic backing that I, as a young graduate student, was able to conduct 3 years of research in a politically and academically risky field and write a thesis that tackled a century-old taboo. Further research and editing on the book was done after I started teaching at Sabancı University, which continues to be the only university in Turkey that has an Academic Freedom Statement (since 2002). See https://www.sabanciuniv.edu/en/statement-academic-freedom.
Was this because I, as an anthropologist and not a historian, felt unqualified to engage this literature? Was I afraid of taking on yet another challenge, another taboo, when writing on militarism and conscientious objection promised to be challenging enough? I agree with Cynthia Enloe that “uncuriosity is dangerously comfortable if it can be dressed up in the sophisticated attire of reasonableness and intellectual efficiency: ‘We can’t be investigating everything!’” (Enloe 2004:3). The research behind the book was conducted from 1997 to 2003 under difficult circumstances, with threats of police surveillance and legal investigation. It was also the case that I had been discouraged by even the most critical academics I knew, with arguments that either had to do with the “irrelevance” of the concept of militarism for Turkey (“We are not, after all, Germany or Japan in the 1930s or 40s.”) or with concerns regarding my safety (“I don’t want to be visiting you in prison”). And yet, these reactions had not prevented me from exploring the multiple layers of gendered militarism I had observed during my research. From conscientious objection to the National Security Studies course taught at high schools, from Sabiha Gökçen earning the status of the world’s first woman combat pilot by bombing Dersim, to the creation of a militarized, gendered, and ethnicized sense of national identity through the myth of Turks being a “military-nation,” The Myth was tackling many issues that had long been taboo in Turkish academia (as well as politics), and yet the Armenian Genocide had found its only articulation, in quotation marks, as an ongoing debate, in an embarrassing footnote. The significant links between a genocidal war experience that affected every part of the country and the making of “the myth of the military-nation” had remained not only unexplored but unacknowledged. Through what I thought was a critical ethnography of militarism, I was contributing to the silencing and trivialization of the Armenian Genocide, as well as to what Talin Suciyan (2016) has called the “the habitus of denial.” It is also the case that neither the voluntary academic readers of the book manuscript nor the anonymous reviewers of the publisher even mentioned the need to address the Armenian Genocide. Hence, I was operating in a larger academic “habitus of denial.”

The first small crack in this habitus came in 2005, a year after The Myth was published. I was among the presenters of the first critical conference organized in Turkey on the predicament of Ottoman Armenians. Attacked in the parliament and the media as the “genocide conference” and postponed for 4 months as a result of these attacks, the conference became a turning point in the academic and public recognition of the Ottoman genocide of Armenians in 1915. Although I had initially refrained from participating in the conference, thinking that, not being a historian, I was not qualified to present, reading two books and visiting an exhibit had helped me change my mind. The groundbreaking memoir My Grandmother by the human rights lawyer Fethiye Çetin (2004, 2012 [2004]), a cookbook memoir titled Sofranz Şen Olsun (May your table be jolly) by Takuhi Tovmasyan (2004), and an exhibit of postcards from all over Ottoman Anatolia curated by Osman Köker (2005) opened my eyes to both the ongoing legacies of the genocide (turning it into a contemporary issue, as opposed to a historical event) and my own responsibility to engage academically and politically with the emerging memory literature on it.

Having been particularly touched by Fethiye Çetin’s story of her Islamized-Armenian grandmother Heranush-Seher, I started a joint research project with her, interviewing other “grandchildren” like her who had Armenian grandparents, while growing up in “Muslim” families. This research took much longer than expected when Hrant Dink, a well-known Armenian Turkish public intellectual and a personal acquaintance of both of us, was murdered in 2007. Fethiye Çetin was not only his lawyer, following the many cases that had been brought against him on the basis of his writings and speeches, but also a close friend. Hrant Dink had been one of the major forces behind the publication of her book Anneannem, and he had been one of the first to write in his weekly newspaper, Ağos, about the predicament of Islamized Armenians. Most significantly, a news piece regarding the possibility that Sabiha Gökçen, Atatürk’s adopted daughter and “the world’s first woman combat pilot,” might be an Armenian orphan had initiated a major campaign of threats against him, as well as Ağos.

Our coauthored book with Fethiye Çetin was finally published in 2009 with the title Torunlar (Grandchildren), later to be translated into French, Eastern Armenian, and English (see Altınav and Çetin 2009, 2014 [2009]). Although it is impossible to know the exact figures, the estimates of those who survived the 1915 genocide through conversion to Islam are around 200,000. If this figure is accurate, it would imply that several million Muslims in Turkey today are in some way affiliated (as children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, in-laws, etc.) with converted Armenian survivors. Yet, sheer numbers are not enough to disturb deep nationalist silences. Moreover, much to our surprise, the silence on Islamized Armenians was shared by the Armenian and international academic literature as well.

First with anthropologist Yektan Türkilmaaz and then on my own, I started looking into the academic literature on 1915 to analyze the 90-year-long silence on Islamized Armenians (Altınav 2013; Altınav and Türkilmaaz 2010). Not only was the silence on Islamized Armenians a deeply gendered silence but it was also a key to better understand the gendering of the genocidal experience, the gendering of the memory works on the genocide, as well as the gendering of the scholarship itself. For almost a decade following my first conference presentation on the topic, I talked and wrote about this deeply gendered silence and the potentials of the recent unsilencing. In November 2013, I was among the organizers and presenters of the first international conference on Islamized Armenians, organized by the Hrant Dink Foundation. It had taken almost a decade for academic scholarship to catch up with the fiction and memory literature on Islamized Armenians and almost a century to begin to analyze this particular legacy of the genocide.

My own presentation at this conference focused on this century-long silence and gendered aspects of both the experience and the scholarship on Islamized Armenians. It was
high time, I argued, to see the Islamized Armenian survivors, most of whom were women and female children, not as undifferentiated victims (“womenandchildren” in Cynthia Enloe’s formulation), but as historical actors, resisters, and survivors. Although my presentation was one of the few that engaged gender, it was hardly comprehensive of the gendering of the genocidal experience. Most significantly, “sexual violence” was mentioned only once, in passing, and with no reflection on the impact of such violence on the perpetrators and their families. In other words, as a scholar of militarism who had worked for years on masculinity and war, I had nothing to say about the male perpetrators, who were equally gendered historical actors of the genocide.

Moreover, I was not only a scholar of militarism but a scholar of gender-based violence. Around the same time as I was working on The Grandchildren, I was also conducting (together with şevkiyat memuru) a nationwide survey and qualitative research project on gender-based violence and the struggle against it in Turkey. The book that resulted from the research did not address militarism, wars, or genocide, even in a footnote (Altunay and Arat 2009). It was as if an analysis of contemporary gender-based violence could be isolated from experiences and memories of wars and genocides, and vice versa, which, one can argue, is a form of methodological militarism.7

For almost a decade, my writings and presentations (in numerous conferences) on the Armenian Genocide had either totally bypassed or only tangentially discussed gendered and sexualized male violence as part of the genocidal experience. It was first in 2015 that I started raising critical questions about the (sexual) violence perpetrated by the “grandfathers” and the possible legacies of this widespread genocidal violence in the ongoing forms of gender-based violence in Turkey. Not surprisingly, this coincided with a series of questions I started asking about the legacies of the genocide in my own family. A few years after I had started to work on Islamized Armenians, following a TV program where I talked about it, I received a phone call from one of my father’s cousins who said, “You know that your great-grandfather was a deportation officer (sevkiyat memuru), don’t you?” Indeed, I did not know. I knew that my own grandfather was an officer who had fought in the Korean War as part of the NATO forces in the 1950s and was forced to retire early for political reasons in the 1960s. I also knew that he had a half-brother whose mother was Armenian, who was my great-grandfather’s second wife. But I had no idea that my great-grandfather was a “deportation officer.” For years, I could not learn more about him and his participation in the genocidal war effort.

In 2015, my great aunt was ready to talk more about her father’s participation in the war, and I was more ready to listen. According to her story, being among the few literate men of his time, her father had been summoned by the military to become a bookkeeper in a nearby town, Birecik, and he had stayed there for a year. It was during this time that he had married an Armenian woman, whose Armenian name no one in the family remembered, as a second wife. His Muslim wife, the mother of my own grandfather and great-aunt, was initially not happy with this marriage, but my great-aunt also remembered them as getting along well in the years that followed, raising their children together, until the Armenian wife died of a kidney disease. According to my great-aunt, her father had not been “one of those who deported the Armenians from their villages”; he had “only kept records of those who were passing through Birecik.” Indeed, Birecik was a major center on the deportation route, where many Armenians crossed the Euphrates on their way to the Der Zor desert in Syria.

I am still trying to process this brief exchange with my great-aunt, both personally and in terms of my academic work, asking a new set of questions each time I reflect on it. One major question has been: How is my great-grandfather’s act of “keeping record” connected to my own attempts at “keeping record” of the survival stories of Islamized Armenians? Was he indeed “just keeping record”? As horrific and tragic as this sounds within Hannah Arendt’s (1964) framework of “the banality of evil,” what else must have my great-grandfather experienced and done in his year of military duty as a “deportation officer”? What could have been the circumstances that brought him together with his Armenian wife-to-be? In what condition was she when she reached Birecik? Did she feel “saved” by my great-grandfather or “kidnapped” into a life of servitude? How did my great-grandfather experience this process, as well as all else he witnessed and participated in during this genocidal campaign? How did it affect his future relations, with his Muslim wife, his children, and others? How was his masculinity, his fatherhood, his spousehood shaped by these encounters? How have the silenced memories and postmemories (Hirsch 2012) of this intimate experience of the genocide shaped me, and my scholarship? Although I did not have a chance to meet my great-grandfather, I was able to talk to my own grandfather about his experience of war in Korea. His response to me—a 15 year-old teenager going through a heavily nationalist and militarist high school education, asking curious questions about the Korean war—was: “The war is a horrible experience. Terrible things happen to people at war. Everyone suffers. Everyone.” Not claiming pride, or asking me to be proud of him, not taking sides, and not glorifying the war, he had become my first teacher in (anti-)militarism.

Yet, it would take me 20 years of academic research and writing on militarism and gender, and 10 years of work on genocide, to begin to critically analyze the intimate connections between genocide, militarism, and gender-based violence with a focus on not only the victims but also the perpetrators. Analyzing the layers of silence, denial, and methodological

7. This can be raised as a general critique of the “male violence against women” scholarship globally: much of the scholarship focuses on contemporary experiences of violence, particularly in the domestic sphere, and fails to connect domestic/intimate violence to other forms of (collective) violence. See Adelman (2003) for a discussion of the militarization of domestic violence and Cockburn (2004) for a powerful argument on why we need to analyze violence as a continuum.
militarism in my own research turned out to be much more difficult than detecting it in the works of others. Before I reflect on this process and the possibilities of moving beyond methodological militarism to demilitarize academia, I would like to provide a historical context to the year 2016, which marks a moment of rupture in the academic and political history of Turkey.

2016: A Turbulent Year of Remilitarization, a Failed Coup Attempt, and Historic Academic Purge

April 2013 marked a turning point in the 30-year-long Kurdish-Turkish conflict (which had turned into a civil war with at least 30,000 casualties in the 1990s), when the imprisoned leader of the PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, declared a cease-fire and a withdrawal of rebel forces outside of Turkey to Northern Iraq. This process was accompanied by a government-led political effort to convince the Turkish and Kurdish populations around the country that a “peace process” was the best “solution” to this age-old conflict. With terms such as “terrorist” receding to the background, 2013 marked arguably the most “optimistic” moment with regard to a lasting peaceful resolution of what has historically been called the “Kurdish question.” The “peace process” was first challenged by the massive Gezi Park Protests of June 2013, which interrupted the plans of the government to move forward with constitutional change toward a presidential system. Between 2013 and 2015, the relationship between the government and the Kurdish-dominated People’s Democratic Party (HDP) shifted from collaboration (in the context of the “peace process”) toward growing critique and hostility. In summer 2015, after the historic parliamentary victory of the HDP with 12% of the national votes and the decrease in the ruling AKP’s votes, making it impossible for them to form a majority government, Turkey witnessed not only the end of what was called the “peace process” but an unprecedented move toward new forms of militarization.

In July 2015, a group of leftist youth preparing to cross the border to Kobane (the Kurdish-governed part of Northern Syria) with toys and other supplies for children who had suffered warfare in the previous year, were attacked by a suicide bomber, leaving 33 dead and many others wounded. In October 2015, the historic Peace Demonstration in Ankara, with participants from all over Turkey and from dozens of political parties and organizations, was also attacked by suicide bombers, leaving more than 100 people dead and over 500 injured.

This attack has been marked as the deadliest suicide bombing in the history of Turkey.10 Both attacks were attributed to ISIS (or its affiliates) and contributed to a growing sense of insecurity, as well as raising concerns over the indifference (or complicity) of the government and state institutions regarding violent attacks against civil society and political opposition (Yeginsu 2015).

At the same time as these attacks were taking place, the PKK started occupying certain Kurdish cities, with armed youth taking control over the residential city centers and digging “ditches” to keep security forces out. Named as “self-defense” by the PKK and its affiliates and as “terrorism” by the government, these actions marked the beginning of a renewed large-scale military conflict, this time taking place predominantly within cities rather than in the countryside. As a result of this process of growing insecurity and militarization, at the parliamentary reelection in November 2015, only 6 months after the June elections, the HDP could barely pass the 10% national threshold, and AKP once again had parliamentary majority. Their seats were enough to form a one-party government but not enough to change the constitution toward a presidential system.

December 2015 marked one of the darkest moments in Republican history when a number of major cities were demolished by tanks and heavy weaponry (used by the Turkish police and military forces to crush the Kurdish armed resistance), including the historical parts of Diyarbakır, which had been recognized as a World Heritage site by UNESCO. The year 2016 began with news and photographs of serious civilian casualties and rights violations in cities that were suffering under a blockade and heavy fighting, unreported by mainstream national or international media but circulating through social media and alternative news outlets. Although the deaths of soldiers and police officers found extensive coverage in national media, civilian deaths were either unreported or homogeneously presented as having been caused by PKK gunfire. The outcry over civilian deaths was found in social media, where there were also witness accounts of armed Kurdish youth being collectively executed in the basements of the buildings where they were hiding.11

8. In spring 2017, the constitution was amended through a national referendum, changing the political system from a parliamentary to a presidential system. In June 2018, Tayyip Erdogan was elected as the first president under the new presidential system.

9. For more context and historicization of the social, political, and economic dynamics that shape this period, see Altındağ, Orpnar, and Özyürek (2019), Yıldırım and Navaro-Yashin (2013), and Yörük (2014).


11. Indeed, human rights reports following the end of the blockade revealed bodies of dozens of youth in basements of apartment buildings, either shot to death, killed by bombs, or killed in collapsed buildings. In February 2017, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNCHR) issued a report (Report on the Human Rights Situation in South-East Turkey, July 2015 to December 2016) that cited severe rights abuses, including unlawful deaths; excessive use of force; torture; destruction of housing and cultural heritage; incitement to hate; prevention of access to medical care, food, water, and livelihoods; and violence against women, among others. See http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/TR/OHCHR_South-East_TurkeyReport_10March2017.pdf.
It was under these circumstances that a petition circulated among academics that called for a cease-fire, independent international monitoring, legal accountability for the illegal acts of the security forces, and a return to the peace process. Drafted and circulated by a relatively small initiative called the Academics for Peace, formed in 2010, this petition was signed by a record number of more than 1,100 academics in a matter of days. The day after the press conference, during which the petition was read in Turkish and Kurdish to members of the press, the petition was defined by President Erdoğan as an act of treason, and the academic signatories were labeled as “pseudo-intellectuals”: “These pseudo-intellectuals say that the state massacres people. You are full of darkness. You are not intellectuals at all. You are so ignorant that you don’t even know the directions to the east and here. However, we know the directions to our home very well. Turkey is not accountable to these people who call themselves academics. We are only accountable to our nation. Security forces will be there until the terrorist organizations leave the region completely” Agos (2016). In the same speech, and many others that followed, Erdoğan asked the state agencies to take the “appropriate actions” against these signatories.

The president’s unprecedented attack on the signatories of the Academics for Peace Petition resulted in even more academics signing it, bringing the number to more than 2,200 signatories within a week. On January 20, a press release announced the end of the petition campaign.12 In the months that followed, dozens of academics lost their jobs (some being taken into custody and their homes and offices being thoroughly searched), four academics were imprisoned for 40 days in March–April 2016 following a press conference, and a legal investigation was initiated for the first 1,128 signatories.

On July 15, 2016, Turkey experienced a failed coup attempt. Officers who were allegedly affiliated with a religious order led by Fethullah Gülen (who continues to reside in Philadelphia, USA) engaged in a coup attempt, bombing the parliament and killing more than 200 civilians who took to the streets to prevent the coup. With the majority of the military forces not participating in the coup attempt, and people taking to the streets in large cities, the coup attempt failed in a matter of hours. Soon after the military forces were taken under control, President Erdoğan called this attempt a “gift from God” as it would help him “cleanse the military” (Kingsley 2016). In the 2 years that followed the coup attempt, this “cleansing” took the form of Emergency Decrees (usually issued late at night) and targeted not only the military but the judiciary, state bureaucracy, and the universities as well.13

The crackdown on academia, which had begun before the failed coup attempt, was intensified with the declaration of Emergency Rule. As of August 2018, more than 500 signatories of the Academics for Peace Petition have lost their jobs, and dozens of academics have had to leave Turkey, receiving emergency funds from programs such as SAR (Scholars at Risk, USA), CARA (Council for At-Risk Academics, Britain), and the Philipp Schwartz Initiative (Germany). The passports of many others have been confiscated, preventing international travel.

The year 2016 was thus one of heavy militarization of Turkish politics and academia, with the Academics for Peace signatories becoming a major target of such militarization. How can one analyze the petition and the process it unraveled through the lens of methodological militarism? I suggest two related arguments. One, based on what the petition does not say, is that it presents an example of methodological militarism by not calling attention to the deadly consequences of an armed struggle and the ways in which it contributes to the militarization of politics, of the Kurdish struggle, and of everyday life in Kurdish-dominated cities. Indeed, while the petition problematizes state violence, asking for the rule of law and the recognition of human rights criteria, it does not address the violence perpetrated by the PKK and their contribution to the militarization of the conflict. While this is a valid and important critique, it is important to note that it is typically raised by those, including the government officials themselves, who are not critical of the state’s violence against civilians or who are legitimizing it as necessary in response to “terrorism.” Hence, this debate often takes the form of one form of methodological militarism facing another.

The responses from some of the Academics for Peace to such critiques, including myself (Allmey 2016), have focused on the issue of situated responsibility and accountability. As citizens of the Turkish Republic, we are responsible for taking task the human rights violations of the state. The PKK is not accountable to the signatories of the petition and did not need to be taken as a party to engage in this particular petition. There have also been responses referring to (post)colonial scholarship and problematizing the position of “Turkish” intellectuals discussing the tactics and strategies of the “Kurdish” struggle. These responses can be read in parallel to the concerns raised in the 2010 special issue of Current Anthropology, “Engaged Anthropology.” Introducing the special issue, Low and Merry argue that “anthropologists working outside of their own geographical or national regions often self-silence because they fear being considered a missionary or colonialist and are therefore reluctant to criticize societies or governments other than their

12. See https://barisincinakademisyenler.net/node/69.
13. According to the February 2017 report of the Human Rights Joint Platform, more than 100,000 people had been dismissed from their jobs in state institutions (including the military, policy, judiciary, and universities), and more than 2,300 institutions (associations, schools, etc.) had been closed down. See Human Rights Joint Platform/İnsan Hakları Or-
own. . . . The discipline’s emphasis on local knowledge and agency runs against the desire to critique the institutions of postcolonial societies” (2010:213). According to Smart, who focuses his article on this point, “anthropologists need to deploy social criticism outside our own societies with considerable caution and with acknowledgment that the road to hell can be paved with good intentions” (2010:329). While it is no doubt important to develop forms of “tactful criticism,” as Smart calls for, it is also important to question our construction of “the inside” and “the outside” and to be wary of falling into methodological nationalism. Is “our own society” the society that lies inside the borders of our nation-state? How do other categories of privilege, such as “race,” ethnicity, class, gender, and sexual orientation, shape the contours of “our society”? How can we situate ourselves between the position of the self-righteous, arrogant, privileged critic and that of the disengaged scholar who may end up being implicated in methodological nationalism, as well as methodological militarism? In the case of the Academics for Peace petition campaign, it can be argued that the petition remained oblivious to those sectors of the Kurdish society who were directly suffering from and were critical of the militarization of the Kurdish struggle and their cities, not only by the state but by the armed PKK forces themselves.

This argument regarding the pitfalls of the petition in terms of methodological militarism is based on what the petition does not say. How might the petition contribute to debates on methodological militarism and to the demilitarization of academia in terms of what it does say? The title of the January 2016 petition of the Academics for Peace was “Bu suça ortak olmayaçağız! /Em ê nebin hevparên vi sûcî!” (We will not be a party to this crime!) in Turkish and Kurmanci Kurdish. Many signatories later remarked the significance of this title in their decision to sign the petition, even if they had problems with the text itself (some of them for the reasons cited above). Reaching a record number of more than 1,100 signatures in a matter of days (and more than 2,200 in 2 weeks), the petition obviously touched a sense of strong discomfort in being the silent witnesses of an ongoing state crime against its citizens. Many of the later statements by individual signatories defined the act of signing the petition as an “act of conscience.” To what extent was this discomfort linked to earlier experiences of complicity and silence? To what extent does it represent a break in the academic cultures of militarism? Can one read this petition as a collective attempt at moving beyond the methodological militarism of academia, at least in terms of witnessing state violence against minorities? These remain as open questions for the time being. Currently, most scholars are engaged in various acts of “survival” in their precarious academic positions in Turkey, in equally precarious, largely grant-based positions in the diaspora, or outside academia if they have been forced to leave the university.

Writing Vulnerably as an Act of Demilitarization

In The Vulnerable Observer, Ruth Behar defines anthropology as “the most fascinating, bizarre, disturbing and necessary form of witnessing left to us at the end of the twentieth century” (1997:4) and discusses the possibilities that open up with “writing vulnerably.” Recent scholarship on collective memory and trauma highlights the need for such writing, especially in relation to experiences of collective violence and their transgenerational transfer (see Georgis 2013; Hirsch 2012; Schwab 2010). This article has explored the possibilities of understanding, and perhaps starting to undo, the academic cultures of militarism, through “writing vulnerably.” Any attempt to demilitarize academic practices and frameworks of analysis would need to pay close attention to the layers of “methodological militarism” that shape even the most critical scholarship on nationalism and militarism. And, as I have tried to show here, such attention requires an ever-deepening understanding of our positionalities and limitations.

When I look back on my previous lack of curiosity and the processes that led to deeper questioning, I would like to share the following as part of my ongoing self-reflections. First, the feminist motto of the personal being political, taken up by contemporary anthropology in the form of critical self-inquiry and an emphasis on “positionality” and “situated knowledges” (Haraway 1991) promises new possibilities for understanding the workings of methodological militarism and the academic cultures of militarism.

Second, taking this line of theorizing seriously would require a closer engagement with the connections between personal and political transformation. It would also require a more modest (or less self-righteous) mode of questioning. Drawing from Hegel’s concept of “reciprocal recognition,” Judith Butler suggests that “an ability to affirm what is contingent and incoherent in oneself may allow one to affirm others who may or may not ‘mirror’ one’s own constitution” (2005:41). With a better understanding of our incoherences and our own challenges in acknowledging academic and nonacademic complicity, we might develop better insight into those of others and engage in a deeper conversation. As Ruth Behar suggests, “When you write vulnerably, others respond vulnerably” (1997:16). Moreover, this understanding can go much deeper if we are able to engage the affective consequences of collective trauma and loss. In the words of Dina Georgis, “We have learned how to get angry and reclaim representation but not how to think about the emotional force of violent representation on the subjects of history. We have perhaps not learned how to imagine the kind of freedom that might come from grieving and becoming” (2013:20). This becoming is personal, political, and academic at the same time.

A third observation based on the moments when I became aware of my own silences and contributions to methodological
militarism is that they were often part of collective processes of silencing and critique. It was in the process of the first critical conference on Ottoman Armenians in 2005 that I first started conversing with the Armenian Genocide literature; during the Hrant Dink Memorial Workshop on Gender, Ethnicity, and the Nation-State in 2009 that I started deepening my understanding of the gendering of the Armenian Genocide (Adak and Altunay 2010); in the context of the centennial commemorations of the Armenian Genocide in 2015 and in our editorial projects on gender and genocide with Andrea Petö (Altunay and Petö 2015, 2016) that I first started voicing questions regarding the silence on sexual violence in the overall literature; and in the context of an ongoing book project with Fethiye Çetin and Arlene Avakian that I started articulating my positionality as the great-granddaughter of a “deportation officer.”

One can argue that the Academics for Peace petition and the ongoing political and legal process have constituted such a moment of self-critique at a larger scale. To what extent this moment will lead to a collective academic reckoning regarding the pervasiveness of the academic cultures of militarism and a move toward their undoing remains an open question. One can argue that the ongoing political repression of academic freedom and criminalization of democratic critique in Turkey do not provide the most conducive context for such unmaking. Perhaps it is precisely in these “dark times” that we can turn to Hannah Arendt’s use of “storytelling as critical understanding” (Disch 1994) and look for the “better stories” (Georgis 2013) of demilitarization. I agree with Dina Georgis (2013) that “we can always do better than our better story” (2) and that the current moment of collective loss might initiate an opening for us to better understand the affective registers of the past century of militarized loss in our lives and scholarship. After all, the better story of demilitarizing academia can only be a collective story.

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15. Tentatively titled Mirroring Lives across the Armenian-Turkish Divide: Conversations on Gender, Race and Genocide, the book is composed of conversations between Arlene Avakian, an American-Armenian scholar activist coming from an Ottoman/Turkish Armenian family of victims and survivors of the genocide of 1915; Fethiye Çetin, the granddaughter of a forcibly Islamized and Turkified Armenian survivor of the genocide; and myself.
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Militarized Global Apartheid

by Catherine Besteman

New regimes of labor and mobility control are taking shape across the global north in a militarized form that mimics South Africa’s history of apartheid. Apartheid was a South African system of influx and labor control that attempted to manage the “threat” posed by black people by incarcerating them in zones of containment while also enabling the control and policed exploitation of black people as workers, on which the country was dependent. The paper argues, first, that the rise of a system of global apartheid has created a racialized world order and a hierarchical labor market dependent on differential access to mobility; second, that the expansion of systems of resource plunder primarily by agents of the global north into the global south renders localities in the global south unsustainable for ordinary life; and, third, that in response, the global north is massively investing in militarized border regimes to manage the northern movement of people from the global south. The paper argues that “global apartheid” might replace terms such as “transnationalism,”“multiculturalism,” and “cosmopolitanism” in order to name the structures of control that securitize the north and foster violence in the south, that gate the north and imprison the south, and that create a new militarized form of apartheid on a global level.

In May 2016, Kenya announced its intention to close Dadaab, the world’s largest refugee camp, as well as Kakuma, another camp. Together the camps housed about 500,000 people, mostly Somalis who episodically arrived in the camps over the previous 25 years, fleeing from periodic violence compounded by famine in their homeland. Beginning with the collapse of the US-backed dictator’s government in 1991, Somalis fled genocidal violence by warring militias competing for territory during the 1990s, an era followed by another calamitous explosion of violence in 2006 that destroyed a brief period of relative calm when Ethiopia, with US military support, invaded to overthrow the nascent Islamic Courts Union government. The foreign invasion precipitated the emergence of Al Shabaab, a militant Islamic fundamentalist movement labeled as terrorists by the rest of the world, whose predations against civilians have persistently sent people escaping across the border into refugee camps during the past decade. Many in the camps have no homes to which they can return and no communities in Somalia where they are safe, a reality compounded by the fact that many camp residents arrived as babies or were born in the camps and have never even visited Somalia. With Kenya’s announcement about the camps’ imminent closure, Somalis throughout the diaspora began scrambling to try to figure out where their relatives in the camps should go.

For the past decade I have worked with Somali refugees who were resettled in the United States from Dadaab and Kakuma (see Besteman 2016). Tracking their efforts to find safety over the past two and a half decades has made visible for me a structure of global apartheid, backed by militaristic force, through which people from the global south try to navigate the borders, barriers, and violence imposed on them by governments and multilateral institutions based in the global north. Building from the experiences of Somali refugees, this paper offers a broad-brush view of a world order in which race and mobility feature as primary variables for which heightened security and militarization are the answer. This article attempts to sketch out some dimensions of this new world order, a militarized form of global apartheid.

Militarized global apartheid is a loosely integrated effort by countries in the global north to protect themselves against the mobility of people from the global south. The new apartheid apparatus takes the form of militarized border technologies and personnel, interdictions at sea, biometric tracking of the mobile, detention centers, holding facilities, and the criminalization of mobility. It extends deeply into many places from which people are attempting to leave and pushes them back, it tracks them to interrupt their mobility, stops them at certain borders for detention and deportation, pushes them into the most dangerous traveling routes, and creates new forms of criminality. It stretches across most of the globe, depends on an immense

1. As of this writing, the closure decision has been suspended.
2. This paper is a highly abbreviated version of a book project that develops the arguments, theoretical concepts, and ethnographic examples in much greater detail, including the cases of India, East Asia, and China, which are not discussed here due to space limitations. Furthermore, because the article condenses a broadly comparative and nuanced argument, I am aware that it may appear to reify categories like the “global north” and the “global south.” I hope readers will understand that these categories are, of course, internally complex and diverse and that my use of broad-brush tactics here is a heuristic necessity.

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investment of capital, and feeds a new global security-industrial complex. Because the new apartheid relies on and nurtures xenophobic ideologies and racialized worldviews, it recasts the terms of sovereignty, citizenship, community, belonging, justice, refuge, and civil rights and requires the few who benefit to collectively and knowingly demonize and ostracize the many who are harmed. I begin my analysis with an explanation of the terminology I utilize, followed by an overview of South Africa’s signature system of apartheid, which provides the structure for the subsequent elaboration of the emerging system of militarized global apartheid.

On Vocabulary

Throughout this article I use “the global north” to mean the United States, Canada, Europe, Israel, Australia, New Zealand, Russia, the Gulf states, and East Asia. This list overlaps considerably with the group of states identified by political scientist and Pentagon consultant Thomas Barnett (2003) as “the Functioning Core” interconnected through globalization in his influential “The Pentagon’s New Map.” Barnett argues that the Functioning Core should initiate US-led military occupations in the areas he identifies as “the Non-integrating Gap,” places outside of globalization that constitute the greatest security threats in the world today: “the Caribbean rim, virtually all of Africa, the Balkans, the Caucasus, Central Asia, the Middle East and Southwest Asia, and much of Southeast Asia.” Of additional concern to Barnett are the “Seam States”—Mexico, Brazil, South Africa, Morocco, Algeria, Greece, Turkey, Pakistan, Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Indonesia—that buffer the Non-integrating Gap from the Functioning Core. He promotes a strong US military presence in the Seam States as a strategy to control mobility and secure the Functioning Core against terrorism.

From the vantage point of my Somali acquaintances who live within Barnett’s Non-integrating Gap, the poverty and insecurity of the Gap look like an intentional creation of the Functioning Core—a series of militarized borders, imprisoning refugee camps, detention centers, tightly policed and dangerous border crossing zones, violent interventions by militarists and agents of the global north, and regions made unsafe by the rise of terrorist organizations in response to those interventions. While Barnett, much like Thomas Friedman (1999) before him, defines the Gap as globally disconnected—which for Barnett is a condition to be remedied through US-led military intervention—those who live within the Gap might see its insecurity as produced by a combination of militarized interventions by the global north (in support of friendly dictators, to overthrow unfriendly dictators, for the Global War on Terror, for resource extraction, and for other corporate interests of the global north) and militarized containment (closed borders, refugee camps, deportations and detentions of unauthorized border crossers) designed to thwart the border-crossing mobility strategies of residents forced out of the Gap by such interventions.

Life in many places within the so-called Gap is undeniably insecure. Returning to the experience of Somalis, every one of my Somali acquaintances in the United States had to leave behind in the refugee camps precious family members rejected from the official resettlement process managed by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the US State Department. Everyone I know sends monthly remittances and worries constantly about their relatives still living in insecure refugee camps and in the dangerous regions of Somalia subject to US drone and air attacks, famine, and attacks by Al Shabaab. My friends’ remittances flow through indigenous banking networks that are always under threat of being shut down by the US government for security reasons. Their remittances buy things obtained through informal long-distance trade networks interrupted by insecurity. Their relatives flee Al Shabaab into Kenya but are then forced to move from the camps when insecurities flare or their refugee statuses are revoked; they move between Nairobi and the refugee camps when xenophobic ethnic cleansings sweep Nairobi; they make their way north to get on leaky boats in attempts to cross the Mediterranean; or they make their way south to South Africa, where they face periodic xenophobic violence that leaves them maimed or dead (Steinberg 2015). Their search for security is hardly unique; the global south houses the vast majority of the world’s refugees and displaced people—those threatened by climate change, disease, poverty, and war. Barnett’s understanding of the Non-integrating Gap, much like Friedman’s earlier definition of “turtles” (e.g., those countries that resist joining capitalist globalization), mistakenly presumes that the poverty and insecurity in these regions is due to their global disconnections. But the view from the south reveals this to be a myopic argument that ignores global connections that pervade the global south through transnational emigration and diasporas as well as myriad global military, corporate, and nongovernmental organization interventions.

The life strategies pursued by my Somali acquaintances demonstrate how the available scholarly vocabulary fails to adequately capture the encounters through which people from the Non-integrating Gap engage the rest of the world. For the

3. First circulated as a PowerPoint slide, the argument later became the basis for an Esquire article and then a book of the same name (Barnett 2004). Barnett also includes in the Functioning Core some of South America, as well as India and China. I do not include the latter two states as part of the global north because of their status as migrant-sending states. India, in fact, was the country of origin of the largest number of immigrants in the world in 2017, at 17 million people (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2017). Barnett does not include the Gulf states, which are presumably lumped into the Middle East, placed within the Non-integrating Gap.


5. For anthropological critiques of Thomas Friedman’s The Lexus and the Olive Tree, see Haugerud (2005) and Nordstrom (2005).
Somali diaspora, “transnational” is inadequate because their connections are not necessarily made between and through national entities or frames but are made, for example, between refugees incarcerated in camps in Kenya and people living in stateless southern Somalia, between refugees living with no civil rights in South Africa and refugees in UNHCR refugee camps, between refugees in camps in Kenya and refugees in camps in Yemen. The nationalist frame is almost completely irrelevant in the lives of Somalis except for the fact that national governments from the global north, in the name of their own security, regularly intervene in Somalia or to contain Somalis, either through attempts to impose new governmental structures that continually prove irrelevant to people living in Somalia or to impose new security regimes through proxy armies, alliances with warlords, or drone attacks. And one of the primary ways in which the nationalist frame is made consistently relevant for Somalis seeking security is through militarized border controls that other nations wield against their ability to move, in effect incarcerating them in zones of profound and enduring insecurity. The central argument of this article is that the militarized border controls that constrain the movement of Somalis and others from the global south constitute a racialized global form that warrants the use of the term “apartheid.”

Somali is but one example of the effect of policies in the global north that incarcerate and traumatize people in the global south in the name of security and profit in the global north. In the globalized contemporary, the emergence of a system of militarized apartheid used by wealthy and powerful countries in the global north against people from the global south is the signature form of globalized structural violence of our era. Other scholars have used the phrase “global apartheid” to describe the historic and current world order, arguing that from the age of exploration to the age of imperialism, to the colonial era, to the Cold War, to the age of neoliberalism and the Washington Consensus, to the current moment, the global north has been engaged in projects of racialization, segregation, political intervention, mobility controls, capitalist plunder, and labor exploitation of people in the global south (Booster and Minter 2001; Hage 2016; Harrison 2002, 2008; Jacobs and Szoke 2015; Marable 2008; Mills 1997; Mullings 2009; Nevins 2008; Richmond 1994). While terms like “imperialism,” “globalization,” and “transnationalism” have been helpful for highlighting many important dimensions of these global processes, the term “apartheid” shifts the frame to capture the use of race and nativist language to structure mobility, belonging, elimination, and extermination, as well as the relevance of border controls and the hierarchical modes of excluding or incorporating racially delineated people into a polity for labor exploitation. My argument builds on this perspective by acknowledging the significance for this emergent world order of new forms of militaristic border security and containment.

After reviewing the basic dimensions of how apartheid was implemented and regulated in South Africa, I turn to a consideration of how the contemporary iteration of a racialized world order and a hierarchical labor market dependent on differential access to mobility on the basis of origin replicates apartheid structures. Along with imperialist interventions, the expansion of systems of “capitalist plunder” (Clarke 2010:59) engineered by agents of the global north into the global south renders localities in the global south unsustainable or unpromising for ordinary life, forcing people from the global south to confront the apparently contradictory demand for their labor and the militarized borders of the global north in their search for security, employment, and a sustainable life. The article notes how the global north is massively investing in militarized border regimes that reach far beyond territorial borders to manage the movement of people from the global south, both to create an exploitable labor force and to contain those considered “undesirable” or expendable in detention centers or refugee camps far from the borders of the global north. The effects include drownings in the ocean, deaths in the desert, detention centers, refugee camps, and holding facilities as the global north invests in ever more militarized forms of engagement and control, redirects vast resources to fortify its borders, and divests from most forms of engagement with the global south other than exploitation and policing.

### Apartheid

From 1948 to 1990, South Africa created the most extensive and extreme apartheid structure in the contemporary era. Apartheid is a legal edifice that mandates, constructs, and enforces the supremacy of one racial group over another. In South Africa, the apartheid system supported by the National Party after its political victory in 1948 systematized white supremacy through policies and laws designed to manage the “threat” posed by Black people by incarcerating them in zones of containment, while enabling their controlled and policed exploitation as workers on whose labor South Africa was dependent. The basis of creating an apartheid social order is the invention of mutually exclusive legally defined identities and the sorting of those identities into geographically demarcated areas through mandated residential racial segregation. In South Africa this was accomplished through the creation of distinct official racial categories into which every single individual was placed, a process accompanied by the delineation of race-based geographical areas and the removal of people rendered “out of place”—because their state-assigned racial identity was not

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6. In South Africa, “Black” has historically been used to include people defined as ethnically Black African, Indian, and Coloured, a legal category created for everyone else who did not qualify as white (such as people with Khoi, Malay, Chinese, and mixed race ancestry). The set of policies that came to constitute apartheid in South Africa did not appear in 1948 as a newly designed model of social order; rather, they reflected and persistently expanded colonial era practices of racial identification and segregation, the restriction of voting rights to White people, divide-and-rule governance practices for Black people, and the exploitation of Black workers—all fundamental components of colonial intervention and control in South Africa that preceded the rise of the apartheid state under the National Party (Frederickson 1981; Wolpe 1972; see also Mamdani 1996; Pierre 2013).
consonant with their residence—in order to create residential zones of racial homogeneity. The removal of people of color from newly designated white space affected 3.5 million Black South Africans, making this process “one of the largest mass removals of people in modern history” (Michigan State University, n.d.).

A particularly devious component of the apartheid racial landscape was the creation of new independent “homelands” for Black South Africans, which enabled their disenfranchisement from areas legally defined as white. Black South Africans were stripped of citizenship rights in white South Africa and reassigned through removal to urban townships or to one of the homelands, which were small, overcrowded, remote, fragmented geographical areas that were far from life sustaining. Homelands offered little to support Black South Africans: they were infertile places devoid of the modern amenities, education, infrastructure, health care, and service delivery that White South Africans enjoyed, governed through structures and authorities emplaced and managed by the apartheid regime. While the apartheid government promoted the homelands as spaces of cultural authenticity and native belonging for Black people, in reality they functioned as population dumps and labor reserves from which men and women were drawn into white South Africa to work in the mines, on farms, and in domestic service to create profit and comfort for White South Africans. The legal presence of Black workers in white South Africa was contingent on employment. Because the South African economy was heavily dependent on Black workers, the government issued passes to Black workers that identified them as employees, and without those passes, their presence in white space was illegal. The purposeful impoverishment of the homelands ensured a labor supply of Black people who had to seek employment from White people outside the homelands, but as noncitizen guest workers, they lacked the right of democratic participation extended by the state to their White employers.

Black South Africans, of course, refused to comply with removals, border controls, mobility controls, and the pass system, relentlessly moving into white spaces, establishing squatter communities, moving through white spaces without passes, resisting efforts to remove them back to homelands, and in general challenging constraints on their mobility and civil rights. The militarized security apparatus required to maintain racial segregation; monitor borders and mobility; catch, detain, and deport people who violated pass laws and residential zoning laws; protect white neighborhoods against black mobility; watch, police, and supervise the movements of Black people in white territory; and monitor the activities of anti-apartheid activists was not only extraordinarily costly but ultimately unsustainable.

In sum, “apartheid” as it unfolded in South Africa contained five key elements. First, apartheid relies on an essentialized cultural logic that ties people to place through racial and nativist ideologies and discourses. Second, ethno-racialized groups and their respective territories created through apartheid practices are unequal because the territories inhabited by the subjugated are disenfranchised and impoverished by design. Third, the delineation of territorial belonging is reinforced by a bureaucratic system of identity documentation and mobility controls that perpetuate racialization. Fourth, in addition to being a system of identity management, racial segregation, and racial supremacy, apartheid is also, critically, about the control and exploitation of the labor of the subjugated. And fifth, because apartheid is exploitative, unfair, and unjust, its maintenance requires a massive, pervasive, and expensive militarized security apparatus. Across all five elements is the role of the state in sanctioning, through law and policy, racial oppression as apartheid’s distinguishing feature. These elements, I argue, are now taking shape systemically on a global scale through a constellation of policies and laws, many of which have roots in white settler and European colonialism and imperialism. To build my argument that we are living in an age of militarized global apartheid, the following sections address each element in turn.

Cultural Identity, Nativism, and the People-Territory Link

Two decades ago, Gupta and Ferguson (1997) wrote about the efforts by political elites and anthropologists alike over the past century to tie people to place, thus enabling the illusion that cultural identity roots people in particular geographical places where they are imagined naturally to belong. Tying people to place through the simultaneous creation of cultural identities linked to nation-state membership informed the idea of immigration and influx control, making mobility seem threatening to the consolidation of nationalist identities within politically delineated territorial borders.

Over the past century, states in the global north have been crafting nationalist identities for citizens while building mechanisms to police cross-border movements of citizens and noncitizens as a critical expression of sovereignty. Such identities took shape within historic struggles over European imperialism and colonialism across the globe—struggles that racialized populations and produced racialized categories of slaves, indentured laborers, and indigenous peoples. Racial differences emerged in particular localities in conjunction with place-specific hierarchies and conditions of colonial or imperial relationships, but place-specific racial logics across the globe were connected through what Lisa Lowe (2015) calls an “Anglo-American settler imperial imaginary” (8). Consequently, over the past several hundred years, a central component of nationalist identity formation has been the role of race and, in different places and with different iterations, white supremacy, in structuring membership, belonging, and hierarchies of inclusion and exclusion.

7. The South African government removed people categorized as Indians and Coloureds to separate residential zones, not homelands.

8. This statement is not intended to imply that the homelands did not carry emotional and affective meaning for those who lived there. See Dilmini (2009).
As is well known, the consolidation of nationalist identities occurred through the promotion by elites of particular ideologies, discourses, and cultural understandings about who belonged to the nation-state by virtue of descent and birth (and thus who did not), political processes of exclusion, and the creation of the passport used by countries to clearly brand those who belong and to exclude those who do not (Torpey 2000). The study of nationalism as a politically and ideologically engineered project has generated an enormous amount of scholarship that will not be reviewed here, except to note that in the white settler colonial states of the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand (as in South Africa), in the colonizing states of Europe, and in the new nation of Israel, the process of consolidating a nationalist identity connected to political membership was a specifically and lethally racialized project. Along with genocides and removals of indigenous peoples, white settler societies built liberal democracies fundamentally based on whiteness (and in the case of Israel, Jewishness), and the racial hierarchies worked out through European colonialism shaped racialized national identities in Europe. The history of liberalism is uncontrollably conjoined with the history of imperialism and colonialism—a history of racialized segregation, white supremacy, and resource extraction that underpins the current iteration of global apartheid (Losurdo 2011; Lowe 2015).

In the United States, the very first legislation to define the qualifications for citizenship (the Naturalization Act of 1790) restricted citizenship only to free Whites, whose mobility into the United States remained unfettered, a law that remained on the books until 1952. This policy obviously required the government to create rules to determine who could qualify as white and to use such racial categories to determine political enfranchisement, including influx control policies. Post–Civil War concerns about consolidating an American identity based in whiteness produced, for the first time in American history, influx control policies that defined particular racial groups for specific exclusions. National-origins quotas emplaced in 1924 and lasting until the 1950s restricted Asians and others deemed nonwhite with a color bar that mirrored the color bar previously used against African Americans and indigenous peoples who were already in the United States (Calavita 2007; Frederickson 1981; Losurdo 2011; Ngai 2004; Omi and Winant 2015). Despite the legal and social transformations signaled by immigration reform in 1965 as well as other progressive legislation intended to interrupt the history of white supremacy in the United States (such as the Voting Rights and Civil Rights Acts), ensuring white supremacy nevertheless remained an ongoing political project in subtle as well as overt ways.

Canada, Australia, European countries, Israel, and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries—Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE—enacted similar racial logics of exclusionary citizenship, through genocide and removals of indigenous colonized peoples in the cases of Canada and Australia, through ideologies of racial superiority, through laws that racially restricted citizenship after the end of colonialism in Europe, and through restrictive heritage-based requirements for citizenship in Israel and the GCC countries. Following the end of European colonial rule and the emergence of a global regime of mandatory citizenship, European states that had offered a limited extension of citizenship to some of the colonized began curtailing that policy, constructing instead a new regime of mobility controls (such as France’s restrictions on citizenship for the children of immigrants enacted in the 1980s and the UK’s restrictions after 1962 on immigrants from India, the Caribbean, East Africa, and Hong Kong; Losurdo 2011; Mills 1997:29; Richmond 2005; Silverstein 2005; Stolcke 1995; Torpey 2000:150; Wilder 2005). Thus, at the very moment that former colonies were transitioning to independence and gaining political freedom, former colonizers were working to ensure the hegemony of an international structure to control population movement, enforce the national conferment of citizenship as the only form of internationally recognized political belonging, and make certain that they could retain whiteness as a key factor in determining who would be allowed to cross their borders.

Israeli citizenship law defines Israel as a Jewish state devoted to maintaining and protecting a Jewish character, and Israel’s immigration and naturalization policies are specifically intended to ensure the ongoing political and social marginalization of Palestinian and other non-Jewish people (Barak-Erez 2008; Gans 2008; Mundlak 2007; Willen 2010). A heritage-based definition of citizenship is also employed in the Gulf states, all of which make it virtually impossible for foreign migrant workers—a vast majority of the population in all Gulf states—to obtain citizenship (AlShehabi 2015; Gardner 2010; Longva 2005; Mahdavi 2016). Citizens, who receive substantial economic benefits and access to secure public jobs, are empowered to police the presence of migrant workers through the kafala system, through which migrant workers, mostly from the global south, are allowed entry on visas controlled by citizens. The kafala system enables a strict hierarchy between those whose ancestry grants them rights of belonging through

9. See Gatrell (2013) on post–World War I population movements in Europe that pushed people into areas that “matched” their nationalities as new nation-states consolidated. Sassen (1999) argues that World War I refugee flows produced new, interlinked conceptions of state sovereignty and nationalism in Europe, a conception that became globally hegemonic.

10. There is a huge literature on this point. See, e.g., Frederickson (1981); Hage (2000); Losurdo (2011); Lowe (2015); Mills (1997); Shamir and Mundlak (2013); Wolfe (1999, 2006).

11. “Europe was made by its imperial projects,” write Ann Stoler and Frederick Cooper (1997:1).


13. See also the essays in Suske and Jacobs (2015) assessing the ways in which Israel is an apartheid state.
citizenship based on genealogy and those who lack such rights despite their economic contribution to the nation. It is a form of supremacy (with roots in the relationships between regional ruling families and British colonialism) that follows the same logic of identity and belonging used to shape Canada, Australia, the United States, and European countries as white states and Israel as a Jewish state.

To summarize thus far: rights to legal membership in the modern nation-state have taken shape through the delineation of territorial borders; the extension of rights of membership based on logics of belonging defined by settler colonialism (United States, Canada, Australia, Israel), heritage, and the particular population dynamics in play under and following colonialism (Europe, Gulf states; also East Asia); the management of documentation to identify who belongs and holds citizenship rights (passports and visas); and the identification and management of internal others who are temporary or permanent residents but who are denied full citizenship rights. The chorus of scholars cited here have carefully charted how these processes took shape over centuries of what Cedric Robinson (2000 [1983]) called “racial capitalism”: the systemic processes of exploitation and profit that characterized settler colonialism, plantation slavery, the displacement of indigenous people, and the creation of racialized mobile populations of immigrant indentured labor and workers. Concurrently, official policy and populist rhetoric in countries across the global north cohered an understanding of belonging that enabled the delineation, containment, and exclusion of those defined as foreign others—those who do not really belong to the nation. Policing the mobility of those who do not really belong has become a primary occupation of states in the global north, through a growing array of surveillance technologies that turn racialized bodies into borders to be monitored and interrupted.

Impoverishment and Disenfranchisement

The second element of apartheid is the rendering of ordinary life as unsustainable in areas designated for the racialized underclass while also ensuring that the apartheid state maintains a hand in monitoring and managing such areas. Scholars have recorded the devastating impact on local lives in the global south of a wide variety of interventions by the global north, actions that followed and sometimes continued the decades of plunder by colonial extraction, including the following:

1. Military interventions such as support for dictatorships, insurgencies, and wars that left devastation and vast population displacement in their wake.14

2. Austerity regimes imposed by multilateral institutions based in the global north in the form of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) that diminished the provision of public services, produced widespread unemployment, opened national resources to the marketplace, sparked riots over food prices, and produced a crisis of legitimacy for governments.15 Millions of those displaced from their jobs or their land by austerity programs left home to look for work, becoming excess workers within the new neoliberal world economic order.

3. Corporate capitalist plunder throughout the global south by agents of the global north seeking to extract profitable resources either directly, through agreements with militias or local political elites that bypass and exploit local residents, or through imposing mandates regarding land tenure and agricultural practices that benefit foreign corporations.16

4. Trade agreements that benefit the global north and hobble the global south, like the effect of NAFTA in Mexico that devastated Mexican farmers (Holmes 2013; Nevins 2008).

5. Large-scale land acquisition for the production of biofuels, timber, and food crops in places like Sudan, Mali, Madagascar, Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Mozambique by firms and governments from China, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Japan, Europe, and the United States (Sassen 2014). Economies weakened by structural adjustment policies have been unable to absorb the displaced, producing impoverishment and exodus.

Elizabeth Povinelli (2011) has argued that late liberalism is about making any form of life that does not create market value dispensable, and, if such non-market-productive life forms are defined as threatening to the market, then the state strangles them as a potential security risk. When applied to a theory of global apartheid, it becomes clear that the aggressive penetration of neoliberal capitalism (and capitalist plunder) in the global south has created “excess populations” that are to be either captured for the market as cheap producers, exploitable workers, or temporary guest workers or made expendable through forced removals and displacements, incarceration into refugee camps, or being allowed to sicken and die. The patterning of this transformation is driven by a racist logic of securitization that defines bodies in the global south as either security threats to or exploitable labor for the global north.

Identity Documentation and Refusal

In response to immigration panics, the global north has consolidated what some have referred to as a “fortress” operation through expanding deportations and tightening the requirements for allowing entry that reflect a clear geographic and racial

14. On Central and South America, see Bohmer and Schulman (2008); Coutin (1993); García (2006); Grandin (2006); Manz (2004); Tate (2015); on Africa, see Besteman (1999); Morgan (1990); Nordstrom (1997); Weissman (2014); on Southeast Asia, see Tang (2015); on Iraq and Afghanistan, see Crawford, Lutz, and Savell (n.d.).

15. Of the many reports that explain and critique SAPS, see in particular Brown (2015:135–150); Caplan (2006); Ferguson (2006); Finnegan (2003); Goldman (2005); Grandin (2006); Harrison (2002); Harvey (2005); Klein (2007); Pfeiffer and Chapman (2010); Sassen (2014); Stiglitz (2002).

16. For examples, see Clarke (2010); Grandin (2006); Hedges and Sacco (2012); Solari (2005); Striffler and Moberg (2003); Tabuchi, Ruby, and White (2017); Watts (2006).
bias (Carr 2012; Cetti 2015; Davis 2005; Miller 2012). People in the global north who lack appropriate entry documents face a context that analysts call “cirmigration” (see Vasquez 2015): immigration panics that conflate undocumented status with criminality or terrorism, drawing out racialized fears of immigrants and producing a surge of policing and surveillance to identify, incarcerate, and remove the undocumented (see also Gomberg-Muñoz 2016b; Hing 2009). The racial logics motivating and guiding these practices mirror the management of pass law violations in apartheid South Africa that filled jails with Black people. In the global north of today, just as in apartheid South Africa of the last century, states have embarked on programs of mass refusal and mass incarceration to discipline, punish, and remove from society undocumented racialized foreigners. Containment and refusal policies include the management of the international refugee regime—a paramount example of the link between nationalist associations of race and place, identity documentation, and border control—and guest and temporary worker programs that allow border crossing only for the purpose of labor exploitation.

Gaining official refugee status by the UNHCR is made contingent on a strict reading of political persecution that gives people the right to have crossed an international border to make a claim of persecution but then strips them of all meaningful political and civil rights in countries where they do not “belong” while their claims are reviewed by authorities. The formal global process of refugee identity documentation and management makes extensive use of refugee camps—what Khosravi (2011) calls “the most significant characteristic of the modern nation-state” (70)—as holding facilities to restrict the mobility of refugees. The international system of such camps protects state sovereignty, and specifically the sovereignty of wealthier countries in the global north that fund the agencies that manage refugees, from the movement of people in the global south, where the majority of refugees originate and the majority of refugee camps are located (Gatrell 2013; Hyndman 2000; Legomsky 2006; Verdirame and Harrell-Bond 2005). As Albahari (2015) has observed, the “overraching aspiration” of Frontex, the European Union (EU) agency responsible for border control policy created in 2005, is to ensure that “potential asylum seekers and persons needing protection do not reach the territory of EU countries in the first place” (90) because of the legal obligation to consider the asylum applications of those who manage to cross the EU border. The same desire governs asylum policy in the United States and in Australia, whose brutal militarized efforts to bar ships carrying refugees from docking have prompted international outrage (New York Times Editorial Board 2015a).

Israel’s version of this theme is the construction of the largest detention center in the world as well as a wall across the Sinai to thwart African refugees, while flatly denying almost all asylum claims and blocking any right to legal employment or state benefits for African immigrants (Shamir and Mundlak 2013). Elsewhere in the global north, Japan and South Korea accept very few refugees each year, citing concerns about maintaining cultural and racial integrity as a justification for their closed-door policy. The GCC states have allowed some refugees to enter, but as temporary guests and not as refugees with a path to citizenship.

Critical scholars thus argue that the international management of refugees enacts a fundamental inequality that grants power to the global north over people in the global south who are fleeing persecution, war, or disaster, often for reasons enumerated in the previous section.17 Meanwhile, people who carry passports from the global north can usually go wherever they want.

Because people from the global south are on the move for a variety of reasons that do not neatly fit into the official requirement for refugee status, the global north has emplaced other forms of containment, such as detention centers and holding facilities, in addition to refugee camps, to arrest the movement of those who lack official entry visas. Detention centers originated in South Africa when the English created internment camps during the Boer War and have since become a favored model for countries across the global north for managing unwanted immigrants who are suspected of lacking an authorization of residence (Fassin 2011). In the United States, the 1986 and 1996 immigration reform acts expanded the criteria for detaining and deporting immigrants, allowing the number of detainees to balloon to over 400,000 per year since 2012, held across a shadowy and secretive network of public and private facilities, with a budget for their detention in 2016 of over $2 billion. Over 30,000 immigrants, the vast majority from Mexico and Central America, are imprisoned in detention centers in the United States on any given day, a quota set by Congress and fulfilled by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Consequently, the business of detention has become hugely profitable, with the two major private contractors posting net profits of $301 million (Corrections Corporation of America) and $115 million (GEO Group) in 2013 alone (Detention Watch Network, n.d.; Fleischner 2016; Gavett 2011; Gonzalez-Barrera and Krogstad 2014; Miller 2014).

In addition to detention centers within their borders, some countries are increasingly intercepting migrants at sea long before they reach the border and removing them into off-shore holding facilities (Amnesty International 2016; Flynn 2014; Legomsky 2006). In addition, countries in the global north are now outsourcing the detention of migrants to transit countries where they can be kept far from the borders of the global north: the EU border has been pushed into Turkey, Mali, Libya, Senegal, Tunisia, Morocco, and Ukraine, which receive European funding to detain and deport migrants despite the horrendous conditions in some of their detention facilities (Albahari 2015; Cetti 2015; Lucht 2011; Trilling 2015). Because these agreements

17. For ethnographic discussions of these points, see Agier (2005); Hyndman (2000); Nyers (2006); Turner (2010); Verdirame and Harrell-Bond (2005). On the narrowing of opportunities for asylum, see Bohmer and Schuman (2008); Fassin (2005).
originated from the very small numbers of Africans attempting to reach Spain and Italy in the 1990s, Ruben Andersson (2014b) argues that the massive outpouring of investments in border security prior to 2013 (e.g., prior to the Syrian crisis) was explicitly to keep black Africans from moving north. The racist logics driving border security penetrate into North African countries charged with detaining black Africans who periodically round up black people to display for official visits from their European funders (Andersson 2014a).

Similarly, the US border now exists between Mexico and Guatemala, where the United States funds and empowers Mexican security forces to detain and deport migrants from farther south. Such policing operates outside of American, European, and Australian regulatory control, is subject to little oversight or transparency, and offers countries on whose behalf migrants are detained and deported deniability about human rights abuses conducted by the countries and contractors they fund.

Detention removes from society those considered undesirable while authorities decide where they should go. The spectacular rise in deportations—to 2.5 million people in the United States over the past decade—has led scholars to call this the Age of Removal and to label the United States as a Deportation Regime (Marshall 2016). Since deportations require authorities to figure out where they think deportees belong based on the logic that ties people to place, people are deported to countries they may have left as infants and perhaps never even visited. The resonances with apartheid South Africa’s insistence that Black South Africans “belong” to homelands that they may have never visited is obvious. Research on the fate of deportees reveals the stigma, dislocation, and alienation they experience after being deported to countries where they lack social networks, language skills, and political rights. They are “de facto aliens in their country of citizenship” (Coutin 2010:206).

The disregard for human life, dignity, and basic rights evinced by refugee camps, detention centers, off-shore holding facilities, and deportation is made even more brutally clear with the murderous effects of border management regimes whereby Mediterranean maritime patrols for Frontex push migrants into more dangerous sea routes, the Prevention through Deterrence strategy along the US-Mexican border funnels migrants into ever more hostile desert environments, and Australia’s maritime patrols push boats overloaded with migrants back out to sea. Because of these strategies an estimated 20,000 people drowned in the Mediterranean during 1994–2014—and a record high of over 5,000 in 2016 alone—trying to reach Europe. Thousands have died in the Sonoran Desert, most disappeared by the desert’s desiccating power before their remains can be discovered. An estimated 2,000 people have died, most by drowning, at the Australian frontier during 2000–2016 (Albahari 2015; BBC News 2014; Border Crossing Observatory, n.d.; De Léon 2015; New York Times Editorial Board 2015a, 2015b). The now-normalized practices of abandoning people in refugee camps, incarcerating people in secretive detention centers, and interrupting migrant routes in order to push people into life-threatening environments show the centrality of racism for creating categories of the disposable and killable and the lengths to which countries in the global north will go to restrict the entry of brown people from the global south because they lack entry documents.

Such outcomes will likely only increase with the emergence of smart borders that use a combination of biometric and other data sets to manage mobility. For example, the biometric border utilized by the US VISIT (US Visitor and Immigrant Status Indicator Technology) program relies on a strategy of defining the mobile according to a hierarchy of “risk” characteristics. An algorithmic analysis of a broad array of data sets, including biometric, health, financial, educational, travel, communications, and other information produces a risk assessment of each traveler and identifies risky categories of people, long before a traveler reaches the US border. As Louise Amoore (2006) argues, the application of biometric borders and the push to clearly and unambiguously define illegitimate travelers will mean that the undocumented can be profiled as terrorists and thus made subject to violent interventions, including detention, imprisonment, and death. Since racial profiling is allowed by the US Department of Homeland Security and by border security operations in the EU and Canada, there is no doubt that Smart Borders will continue to utilize racial criteria to target immigrants, most especially the undocumented, for scrutiny and disposability (Menjívar 2014; Shields 2015; Vukov 2016).

Labor Exploitation

And yet, while engineering the most highly elaborated border controls ever, the global north remains dependent on the labor of border crossers for everything from agriculture to domestic service, restaurant and hotel work, elder and childcare, amusement parks, poultry and seafood processing, logging, heavy construction, sex work, and more. Because the demand for cheap labor confronts the fortress mentality, many countries in the global north have created complex, layered forms of “hierarchical integration” (Razsa and Kurnik 2012)—policies that allow the entry of temporary migrants to perform certain economic functions while denying them basic rights of self-determination, democratic participation, and civil protections, just like South Africa’s pass law system. In fact, guest worker programs in the global north are modeled on South Africa’s pass system to regulate Black labor for the benefit of White employers (Hahamovitch 2011). In reviewing Europe’s efforts to create a shared approach to managing migrant workers, Feldman (2012) shows how in the early 2000s neo-nationalists who favored policies to protect the White working class and cultural integrity came to an agreement with neo-liberals who welcome the economic benefits of globalization on a strategy to allow cyclical migration into

18. Carasik (2015) reports that the United States provided Mexico with nearly $3 billion to combat the movement of unauthorized people and drugs between 2008 and 2015. See also Menjívar (2014).
Europe of temporary guest workers. This compromise approach, utilized as well in the United States, Canada, Japan, Australia, and the Gulf States, satisfies almost everyone except the migrants themselves, he argues.

Temporary migrants are allowed to cross borders into countries in the global north through a dizzying array of work visa categories that apply to different sectors of the economy and carry different rights and protections. Work visas, which are intended to ensure control over imported workers, share a set of similar characteristics across the global north: most are temporary, forbid migrant workers from bringing their families, are controlled by employers and not workers, and are often managed by labor brokers who charge high fees to prospective workers, leaving them deeply indebted. They are designed to create a flexible, replaceable, disempowered, and disposable workforce that cannot make demands on the host country and will not challenge the cultural integrity of the host culture.

Reports by ethnographers and labor activists about the consequences for workers of the guest worker visa programs for agricultural workers in the United States and Canada are uniformly dire, leading the Southern Poverty Law Center (2013) to call them “a modern-day system of indentured servitude” (2). Because workers are bound to the employers who control their visas, it is nearly impossible to challenge widespread wage theft, derelict housing, denial of access to medical care, abuse, confiscation of documents, retaliation, debt bondage, and blacklisting (Benson 2008; Binford 2013; Brennan 2014; Hahomovitch 2011; Holmes 2013; Southern Poverty Law Center 2013). The GCC countries are those most dependent on guest workers, where guest workers primarily from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, the Philippines, and Indonesia comprise between 50% and 90% of the population in each country. Guest workers arrive through the kefala (or kafala) system. Kefala visas are controlled by employers, do not grant workers protection by labor laws, forbid their involvement in labor unions, deny them a path toward citizenship, require celibacy of women guest workers, impose stringent rules about family reunification, and make it nearly impossible to protest abuse (see AlShehabi 2015; Dito 2015; Gardner 2010; Mahdavi 2016; Parreñas 2008). Similarly, Israeli law stipulates that migrant workers can never be considered residents for purposes of social security benefits, must permanently remove their babies from Israel when a mother’s visa expires, and cannot hold a guest worker visa at the same time as another family member (Mundlak 2007; Willen 2007).

In all countries where they are used, guest worker programs enable the importation and expulsion of people in response to economic fluctuations, political currents, and security panics. Just as with the periodic deportation frenzies of Mexican workers in the United States during the twentieth century (Nevis 2008; Ngai 2004), GCC states expelled Yemeni, Jordanian, and Palestinian workers after their home countries supported Iraq in the 1991 Gulf War (Flynn and Grange 2015), and after the first intifada, Israel replaced Palestinian workers who commuted from the Occupied Territories with imported workers from Thailand, Turkey, China, and the Philippines. The 200,000 workers imported by Israel during the 1990s became 10%–12% of the labor force and were targeted by mass deportations in 2002–2004 and again in 2012 in response to an economic downturn and a political campaign that promoted the deportations as a security measure to protect Israel’s Jewish character (Raijman and Kemp 2007; Shamir and Mundlak 2013; Willen 2007). The “exclusionary and oppressive effects” (Shamir and Mundlak 2013:128) of the legal regime governing migrant workers are multiplied by abusive racial profiling practices during deportation campaigns, ensuring that migrant workers are persistently and only recognized as temporary and expendable foreigners. As Menjívar (2014) has noted for the United States, across the global north, in the name of security, citizens are comfortable with the suspension of civil rights of immigrants in the form of racial profiling, detention, surveillance, criminalization, and deportation.

In many countries in the global north, the contained and controlled workforce of authorized guest workers is augmented by a much larger workforce of undocumented people who endure exploitation, racism, insecurity, and the persistent threat of deportation in order to perform jobs that citizens refuse to do. Nondemocratic states, like those in the Gulf, can import huge numbers of guest workers while enforcing restrictions on their rights and making “draconian use of deportation,” but, as Castles (2006:746) suggests, democratic countries such as the United States and Japan prefer to tolerate high levels of undocumented workers instead, because of the possibility that documented guest workers will use democratic ideologies and institutions to fight for expanded rights and pathways to citizenship.

The numbers are very high, indeed. One in four foreign-born persons in the United States is unauthorized, totaling over 11 million people in recent years (Dreby 2015). Mexicans comprise 58% of the undocumented in the United States, many of whom work in agriculture, where Mexicans, half of whom are unauthorized, constitute 94% of the workforce (Holmes 2013). Migration scholars in the United States argue that the current approach to migrant labor in the United States intentionally creates an exploitable racialized underclass. Visas for nonagricultural short-term jobs are capped far below demand, and, while visas for agricultural workers are not capped, many employers choose to hire undocumented workers rather than confront the bureaucracy required to apply for legal papers for the workers they seek to import (Wilson 2013). Undocumented people earn less, pay taxes but cannot collect benefits, have less job security and more dangerous jobs, have greater financial insecurities, cannot complain about poor work conditions or abuses in the workplace, and have no opportunities for upward mobility. Their situation is “precarity as policy” (Gomberg-Muñoz 2016a:147).

19. The implications of such a large undocumented workforce extend throughout society, as an estimated 16.6 million people in the United States live in mixed-status families, where undocumented workers are dependent on their documented spouses for things like driving and bank accounts.
The outrage is compounded: across the United States, immigrants held in detention centers awaiting trial and possible deportation are used as cheap labor. Some receive only credits toward toiletries and food in return, and others earn about 13 cents an hour, a pay rate put in place for prisoners in 1950 and never changed since then for immigrant detainees. During 2013, according to the New York Times, between 60,000 and 135,000 immigrants “worked in the federal government’s nationwide patchwork of detention centers—more than worked for any other single employer in the country” (Urbina 2014). These are not people convicted of a crime—they are civil detainees awaiting a judge’s determination of their legal status.

Ethnographies about the experiences of those in the global north who hold guest worker and undocumented status describe the racialized hierarchies of belonging, rights, and human value created and reinforced by migration controls (see, e.g., Benson 2008; Boehm 2016; Brennan 2014; De Genova 2005; Feldman 2012; Gardner 2010; Gomberg-Muñoz 2011; Holmes 2013; Jackson 2013; Khosravi 2011; Mahdavi 2016; Parreñas 2008; Willen 2007). The resonance with South Africa’s apartheid era pass laws is evident. What these ethnographers describe is a system of labor control that depends on importing people from regions that have been made unsustainable for human life and ensuring their exploitability in the global north by criminalizing the presence of those who lack documents or by making their presence in their place of employment dependent on their employer, who holds their labor contract. The labor structure simultaneously ensures that they submit to racialized hierarchies that put them on the bottom and denies them rights and recognition as members of the national body.

The Militarized Global Apartheid Apparatus

Thus far I have been building my argument about global apartheid. Here I turn directly to the militarized security apparatus that maintains that apartheid. In the past two decades, the EU and the United States, as well as Israel, have transformed border security into a spectacularly militarized operation that absorbs ever-growing resources, sets a global standard for nationalist aspirations, and feeds xenophobic political rhetoric.

The US border, most especially in the south, has become a militarized zone with the transfer of military technology and strategy, including helicopters, aircraft, balloons, drones, radar, surveillance technology, high-resolution video cameras, satellites, vehicles, weapons, and other hardware, some repurposed from wars abroad. In a first for the military, legislative reforms in the 1990s linked to the War on Drugs allowed the military to join local police and border patrol to provide training, equipment, technology, border surveillance and intelligence, and even to deploy ground troops (Dunn 2001; Heyman 2008; Palafox 2001; Rosas 2007). The effect of border militarization, in concert with the Constitution Free Zone stretching inland 100 miles from the border, is a de facto military occupation where policing has shifted from community oriented to militaristic; where militarized language and behavior are now the norm for local police and border patrol agents; where military tactics like raids, interrogations, and extensive surveillance techniques are routinely employed; where military training to identify specific targets translates to racial profiling to catch those suspected of lacking documents; where militarized operations are conducted in secret without public review; and where civil rights do not need to be observed (Dunn 2001; Miller 2014; Nevins 2001).

And yet, despite the massive militarization of the US border, the vast majority of immigrants who attempt to cross without documents are successful, leading some commentators to suggest that the militarized performance of border security is intended to appease white racism and discipline brown migrants, drawing a clearly demonstrated "line of exclusion, guaranteeing eternal inequality between those who have and those who do not” (Miller 2012), while also ensuring a steady supply of exploitable labor. The militarized border is thus like a spectacularly costly form of hazing that makes visible a “merciless logic of disposability” (Rosas 2007:97) that stops some and kills some while forcing those who successfully get across to endure painful, wrenching, humiliating journeys that demonstrate with utter clarity that the global north sees them as replaceable, exploitable, abusable, and forgettable.

Even before the refugee "crisis” of 2015, the EU similarly plowed money into militarizing its border regions in an attempt to push back African and Middle Eastern migrants, investing 2 billion euros in fences, surveillance systems, and personnel during 2007–2013 (Trilling 2015). The Frontex budget expanded from 19.1 million euros in 2006 to 84.9 million in 2012, reaching 98 million euros by 2014 (Andersson 2014b). Meanwhile, the maritime rescue operation Mare Nostrum by

20. The number of people employed to carry out this work is staggering. The Border Patrol expanded threefold in the decade after 9/11. After the Border Patrol joined the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in the Customs and Border Protection Division (CBP) in 2003, the CBP became the single largest federal law enforcement agency in the United States with 60,000 employees. Immigration and Customs Enforcement employs another 20,000. Miller (2014) adds to this the 200,000 employed by the Department of Homeland Security and the 650,000 police officers affiliated with border security to claim that the total number of personnel assigned to work on border security has become "the equivalent of a small army” (18). The financial resources are equally staggering: the Border Patrol budget has tripled since 9/11, reaching $3.8 billion in 2015 within a CBP budget of $12.8 billion, within a DHS budget of $81 billion (US Department of Homeland Security 2016).
the Italian navy launched in 2013 was replaced a year later by Triton, a Frontex maritime operation created to secure the border rather than offer rescue (which was subsequently taken on by humanitarian volunteers and activists; Tazzioli 2015; see also Albañari 2015). The rising number of deaths by drowning is the unsurprising result of a militarized curtain intended to push people into the most dangerous sea routes. Because militarizing the borders is legal, migrant deaths in the sea and in the desert cannot be legally attributed to the border security policies of the global north, making deaths on the border battlefield unacknowledged as a casualty of war.

Conclusion

The security apparatus described above, like apartheid, de-humanizes racialized others through blocking their routes of mobility, channeling them into the most dangerous regions of the sea and the desert, incarcerating them in refugee camps in remote and inhospitable regions for indeterminate periods, and subjecting them to removals from white space over and over and over again. The United States, Europe, Australia, Israel, and other countries in the global north are claiming to maximize their own self-protection through gating, policing, removing, and drowning people. These are state-sanctioned investments in forms of structural violence that cause people to die. Border controls, deportations, and deaths in the desert and at sea reveal state sovereignty at its points of enactment and clarify how the state uses law, territorial boundaries, and militarized security structures to promote and ensure a particular hegemonic racial identity. In the United States, the extensive removal of minorities into prisons and immigrants into detention centers affirms, in case there was any doubt, the hegemony of whiteness as an ongoing state project. States shape populations by policing who gains entry and by removing the undesirables. Removals are acts of racism—they are racist projects of cultural consolidation, and they are often hidden within self-serving discourses of security. Apartheid in South Africa collapsed because of its unsustainable internal contradictions, the debilitating financial cost of its security apparatus, and its inherent evil. This is something worth thinking about.

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“Kill-Proofing” the Soldier
Environmental Threats, Anticipation, and US Military Biomedical Armor Programs

by Andrew Bickford

While vigorously exploring new and improved external protection technologies, the US military has long focused on ways to internally armor the soldier through biomedical interventions. The goal of these projects is to create a new kind of soldier with different expectations of performance, capabilities, and survivability. Much of the focus of US military biomedical performance-enhancement programs is on the impact of environmental threats and infectious disease and how soldiers break down due to these stressors. Zeroing in on this trend, I examine two US military biomedical armor projects intended to protect soldiers against the environment and disease. Employing a kind of anticipatory military biomedicine, both projects call for the embedding of “inbuilt” and “unseen” biomedical technologies and prophylaxes in the body of the soldier. As I discuss here, US military biomedical research is intended to provide soldiers with protections to allow them to deploy in any condition or climate around the world and to protect them from any and all pathogens they might encounter on the battlefield. As the US military increasingly sees the entire globe as a battlefield, it must anticipate, imagine, and design new ways to protect soldiers in order to make them deployable anywhere in the world.

It is my goal to provide our men and women with an unfair advantage over the enemy. (Mark Callahan, Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, 2007)

War has always changed soldiers: the rapid advances in firepower and operational tempo in warfare demand new ways of enabling soldiers to keep up and fight better, stronger, faster, and longer, and drugs and medicines have long played a role in sustaining soldiers in battle. Throughout the history of warfare, groups, cultures, and nation-states have attempted to develop superior warriors or “supersoldiers,” to better train and armor their soldiers against the enemy, and to make them more resilient and useful. “Armor” comes in many forms: material, ideological, psychological, and, increasingly in the US military, biomedical (see Bickford 2008, 2011, 2018; see also MacLeish 2012). Whether through war magic or technology, those concerned with warfare and violence have tried to devise ways to make their soldiers or warriors better than their enemies, or at least make their soldiers or warriors believe they are better armed and armored than their enemies.

Soldiers do not simply emerge sui generis; they are first imagined, designed, and made into a specific form at specific times and in political, cultural, military, and technological contexts (Bickford 2011, 2018; Terry 2017). They are the vectors and products of a wide array of policies, research programs, images, imagination work, technologies, and desired outcomes. One of the ways in which citizens are made into soldiers is through military medicine and the reshaping and remaking of the enlistee’s body to fit military needs. Military medicine—in the sense of a directed application of biotechnology to achieve desired effects—is a key component in the design and “making” of modern soldiers.

Much of the focus of current US military biomedical performance-enhancement programs is on the impact of environmental threats and infectious disease on US soldiers and how soldiers break down due to these stressors. Zeroing in on this trend, I examine two US military biomedical “armor” projects intended to protect soldiers against the environment and disease. Employing a kind of anticipatory military biomedicine, both projects call for the embedding of “inbuilt” and “unseen” biomedical technologies and prophylaxes in the body of the soldier, viewing environmental stressors and infectious disease as major factors in soldier breakdown and mission failure: Marion Sulzberger’s (1962) proposal was to create soldiers for the US military who had their own inbuilt, unseen, biomedical armor—what he termed Idiophylaxis—and the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency’s (DARPA 2007) Inner Armor program that was designed to create “kill-proof” US soldiers.

Idiophylaxis and Inner Armor bookend the decades-long concern with environmental and disease threats in the US mil-
itary, and they present different but related ways of how the US military imagines and develops different “inbuilt” and embodied solutions to constant battlefield problems based on advances in biomedical technology (see Bickford 2018). As I discuss here, US military biomedical research is intended to provide soldiers with protections to allow them to deploy in any condition or climate around the world and protect them from any and all pathogens they might encounter on the battlefield. As the US military increasingly sees the entire world as a battlefield, it must anticipate, imagine, and design new ways to protect soldiers in order to make them deployable anywhere in the world. Projects like Idiophylaxis and Inner Armor highlight the shifting biomedical, political, and cultural imaginaries and forms of anticipation at play in military performance-enhancement research, and they explore how visions and perceptions of diseased battlefields (and, even if unmentioned in military reports, people) are translated into military biomedical projects and “solutions,” which are then embedded in the bodies of soldiers. Military medicine and biotechnologies are key components of the anticipation/imagining/planning nexus, of the ongoing attempts to ensure that the soldier does not break down and fail on the battlefield.

Biotechnology, Soldiers, and Protection

US Army recruiting slogans like “Army Strong” and “An Army of One” hint at the desire to have enhanced supersoldiers who are better than unenhanced soldiers and who have the firepower and combat capabilities of entire companies of soldiers. Current research into powered exoskeletons and advanced forms of body armor such as the TALOS (the Tactical Assault Light Operator Suit, a liquid-metal combat suit designed to protect US special forces operators) fires the public’s imagination and helps us imagine Iron Man–like supersoldiers (it is not by chance that the TALOS is nicknamed the “Iron Man Suit”). These kinds of technologies are what the military refers to as “skin-out” enhancements, that is, technology worn outside of the body that can be put on or taken off at will.

While vigorously exploring new and improved external protection technologies, the US military has long focused on ways to internally armor the soldier. The goal of these projects is to create a new kind of soldier, a soldier with different expectations of performance, capabilities, and survivability from previous types of American soldiers. Much of the vision and portrayal of the enhanced supersoldier comes from US military medicine and biotechnology research. US military biomedical and performance-enhancement research is intended to anticipate threats (however the military defines “threat” at a given time and place) and manipulate the bodies of soldiers to meet and counter these threats (Bickford 2008; 2018; Clarke et al. 2010:4–6; Perkins and Steevens 2015; see also Terry 2017). Some of these internal protections might seem farfetched—such as making the soldier immune from nuclear flash burns—or quotidian—such as making the soldier more resistant to bug bites and blisters (Bickford 2018; Sulzberger 1962). Regardless, the biological makeup of the soldier is the subject of intense research and design, imagination and planning. Military environmental and performance-enhancement research are not only about adapting or reacting at the level of combat systems, tactics, or strategy: they are also about reacting to and anticipating possible battlefields and environments at the level of the biology of the individual soldier.

The US military takes a “nuts-and-bolts” approach to defining and imagining biotechnology, restricting it to a very technical/scientific arena, rather than thinking about its far-reaching implications. A report on the future uses of biotechnology for the US Army defines biotechnology as a technology that “uses organisms, or tissues, cells, or molecular components derived from living things, to act on living things” and “[it] acts by intervening in the workings of cells or the molecular components of cells, including their genetic material” (National Research Council 2001). Ongoing developments in biomedicine offer new ways to understand, see, and imagine soldiers and promise to expand and enhance the body’s ability to overcome and survive the battlefield and its myriad stressors.

Enhancements intended to be embedded in the body of the soldier—“skin-in” enhancements—constitute the direct manipulation and militarization of the soldier’s own biology for military purposes. The vast array of projects conducted and underway demonstrate the breadth of military performance-enhancement research in the United States: the Land Warrior, Objective Force Warrior, and Future Force Warrior suite of programs that included both skin-out and skin-in enhancements; skin-in projects such as Peak Soldier Performance and the Metabolically Dominant Soldier; attention-enhancing drugs like Modafinil designed to “enhance situational awareness” and prevent the “degradation of decision making”; trauma-blocking drugs like Propranolol, intended to block traumatic memories and possibly prevent PTSD; attempts to harness the “sleep-wake cycle” and keep soldiers alert and in combat for days on end; “power dreaming” as a way to care for PTSD; specially designed performance-enhancing foods; hyperhydration to reduce the logistics stress of carrying water into combat; and projects like Idiophylaxis and Inner Armor, concerned with mitigating environmental and disease threats to the soldier. All of these projects demonstrate the intensity of the military’s focus on the interior of the soldier.

Anthropologists and other social scientists are increasingly interested in war, trauma, and enhancements (Finley 2011; Hauzinger and Scandlyn 2014; Messinger 2010; Terry 2017; Wool 2015). As iterations of military biopower, US military biomedical research and performance-enhancement projects are intended to manipulate and mediate the war/embodiment dialectic, shaping it in “positive” and militarily useful ways (see Bickford 2018; Clarke et al. 2010:4–6; Foucault 1979, 1980; Hogle 2005; Scarry 1985; Terry 2017). Terry (2017), for example, examines the logics and ethics of military biomedicine, enhancements, treatment, and rehabilitation, focusing on the development of advanced prosthetics as forms of performance enhancement for severely wounded US soldiers. As Terry de-
scribes it, biomedicine in a military setting incorporates the “multiplying branches of modern biological sciences in their convergence with medical research, treatment, and profiteering” (Terry 2017:3). She adds that “national security, warfare, and biomedical logics form a nexus in which deliberate violence—war—is bound up with far-reaching aspirations about improving life” (Terry 2017:27). As concerted projects of improvement and enhancement, Idiophylaxis and Inner Armor reflect similar aspirations about life and fortitude; in their overlapping we see abiding values tied to life and its improvement. And yet they also signal something new: the ability to make these visions come to life in the bodies of soldiers themselves. Improving life in the abstract, to extend Terry’s argument to these projects, depends on improving the life of war’s most critical instrument—the body of the soldier. While biomedical logics are about anticipation, they are not just about anticipating the “future as a salve for the present” (Terry 2017:54). This anticipation is also about a future of military fear, uncertainty, and surprise, of threats unknown and possibly inexorable. Increasingly, the task of this kind of anticipation is to find solutions inside the bodies of soldiers before combat and deployment even take place in order to mitigate future military uncertainty.

My interest in this biomilitary dialectic is in how advances in biomedicine offer the military new ways to understand, imagine, and design soldiers and how these advances promise to expand and enhance the soldier’s ability to overcome and survive the battlefield and possibly all enemies and combat stressors. Though attentive to the discourse of improvement, my analysis of military biotechnology and performance enhancement nevertheless diverges from that of Terry (2017) in its point on the arc of soldiering. I examine military biomedical projects as interventions designed to keep the soldier whole and useful before and during combat, rather than as interventions designed to help heal the soldier after combat. My focus on military biomedicine and performance enhancement is on how improvement and enhancement are anticipated, imagined, planned, and designed before combat, with a focus here on military vaccines and immunizations as inner armor. I look at how the military anticipates and imagines environmental and infectious disease stressors to soldier combat performance and how it imagines, designs, and embeds unseen biomedical countermeasures in soldiers’ bodies to make them resistant and kill-proof in the face of the enemy, the environment, disease, and the world.

**Idiophylaxis, Breakdown, and “Unseen Armor”**

Marion B. Sulzberger was an American medical doctor specializing in dermatology. Sulzberger conducted medical research on skin diseases in the Pacific during World War II for the US Navy (Mackee 1955:24), and in 1961, Sulzberger was appointed to the position of Technical Director of Research, Medical Research and Development Command, Office of the Surgeon General of the United States (Goldsmith 2003).1 At the Army Science Conference at West Point in 1962, Sulzberger gave a talk titled “Progress and Prospects in Idiophylaxis (Inbuilt Individual Self-Protection of the Combat Soldier)” and argued for a fundamental redesign of the combat soldier, with the goal of internally armoring the individual soldier with new forms of unseen biotechnology and immunizations (Sulzberger 1962; see also Bickford 2018).

Idiophylaxis is an early example of how US military researchers imagined melding biomedical advances and military necessity to anticipate, imagine, and counter environmental and disease threats to soldiers’ health and the kinds of enhancements imagined necessary to protect the soldier. Sulzberger’s rethinking of the soldier and biomedicine as unseen armor helped set the stage for later conceptions of biomedical armor and supersoldiers in the US military. Sulzberger’s plan was to provide inbuilt protection for the soldier through vaccinations and medications to allow the soldier to withstand combat and battlefield environmental conditions and stressors. For Sulzberger, these stressors included both actual combat, infectious diseases, and common battlefield medical conditions like blisters, rashes, and gastrointestinal illnesses that keep large numbers of soldiers out of combat (Sulzberger 1962). At the Army Science Conference, Sulzberger described the impact of environmental stressors and infectious disease on soldiers and how soldiers—and not weapons or other technologies—are the weak link in the synthetic battlefield weapon system: “It is not just a matter of belief but one of record that . . . the component man is the one that fails the most often. Moreover, he most often fails not because of bullets or missiles or any enemy action, but because of the stresses of climate and food and anxiety and disease” (Sulzberger 1962:317). To counter the impact of combat, the environment, and disease on the “component man,” Sulzberger stressed how idiophylaxis—and not external protection, like body armor—would provide better protection by internally armoring the soldier. Idiophylaxis would be accomplished by directly manipulating and enhancing the soldier’s biology through military medicine.

The improvement and strengthening of the combat soldier’s inbuilt self-protection by medical means is one of the central objectives upon which the United States Army’s research and development program is focused. . . . I have given the name “Idiophylaxis” to this form of protection. . . . We do include under Idiophylaxis every form of protection that can be given to the soldier by preceding mental and physical preparation through medical means. . . . Idiophylaxis includes . . . the immunizing procedures, the chemoprophylaxis, the medications and the anti-bodies which we can cause to be embodied in the soldier’s own person. It includes every protective capability with which we can medically endow him so that were he to be stripped suddenly naked, he still would

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1. Marion B. Sulzberger papers, 2014, MSS 86-4, cartons 6 and 9, Special Collections, Library, University of California, San Francisco.
Focusing on infectious diseases and the grave threat they pose to soldiers—threats that he considered greater than the enemy in many regards—Sulzberger detailed what he considered as the most important research and development components of idiophylaxis for protecting soldiers deploying around the world:

Perhaps the most militarily important field of all, is the Idiophylaxis which consists in conferring immunity or heightening resistance to various types of infectious disease. . . . Our global effort in this can be divided into three main phases:

1. Gathering from every part of the world information and specimens of diseases which may be encountered there by our soldiers;
2. Research on the causes and carriers of these diseases, their microorganisms and viruses and vectors in laboratory and experimental animals, cell structures, etc., both here and abroad; and,
3. To produce immunizing vaccines of all types and their laboratory tests and finally their clinical assays. (Sulzberger 1962:321)

Sulzberger envisioned applied military biomedical projects that would anticipate all infectious disease and environmental threats to the soldier and would utilize cutting-edge biotechnologies to develop soldiers who, through idiophylaxis, would be both internally armored and continually self-armoring, and thus prevent and mitigate the effects of disease, environmental stressors, and combat trauma (see Bickford [2018] for a longer discussion of idiophylaxis). Crucially, idiophylaxis would implant an auto-anticipation capability—a kind of inbuilt virus scanner akin to what we now find on computers—in the soldier’s body. Embedded and unseen, the biotechnology embedded in the soldier would make the soldier his or her own armor and biomonitor, constantly on guard and on the lookout for threats and pathogens presented by both the battlefield and the enemy. Four decades later, plans for providing inbuilt armor against the environment and diseases around the world, and the importance of medical anticipation and imagination in protecting US soldiers, would be broached again, but this time with the added promise of an “unfair advantage.”

Kill-Proofing the Soldier: Inner Armor, Environmental Hardening, and the World as Threat

Far ahead of its time in terms of what was actually medically possible, the goals and insights of Sulzberger’s Idiophylactic Soldier live on in current projects designed to create biological armor for the US soldier. At DARPA’s 25th Systems and Technology Symposium held in 2007, Michael Callahan, Program Manager of DARPA’s Defense Science Office, gave a presentation titled “Inner Armor” (see Bickford 2018). Highlighting the US military’s ongoing concern with the impact of environmental conditions and infectious disease stressors on soldier performance and breakdown, Callahan’s plans for new, enhanced US soldiers focus on protecting the soldier against both the enemy and the world, with both blurring together to produce “threats” to the soldier:

We have made extraordinary advances in the external, physical armor that protects our Soldiers from most of the enemy’s weapons. There is one flank that remains unprotected, and it is this gap that is responsible for continued unacceptable levels of morbidity, illness, injury and death. Not ALL of the threats encountered by our deployed Soldiers are inflicted by the enemy. The dramatic increase in the number of exotic, primitive and tropical battlefields brings the modern military into extreme contact with the world’s most hostile environments—and most dangerous threat agents. As a DARPA program manager and physician-scientist, it is my vision to address all of these threats, and to leave NO PART of the soldier unprotected. . . . It is my goal to provide our men and women with an unfair advantage over the enemy. In the next 2 years, I am developing technologies that will extend the soldier’s personal protection beyond bullets and bombs, to include protection against environmental threats, infectious diseases and chemical, biological and radioactive weapons. . . . The objective is to fortify the entire soldier against attack from the enemy—or from the environment. I call this comprehensive protection Inner Armor. (emphasis in original; Callahan 2007)

In order to counter what Callahan sees as the innate—and from his point of view, unfair—biological immunity advantage of the enemy and allow US soldiers to fight on exotic and primitive battlefields by mimicking organisms found in the world’s most toxic environments (and in the process, equating the human enemy with deadly organisms), Callahan intends to develop kill-proof US soldiers and give the US military the ultimate advantage of biological supremacy:

I will talk about two focus areas of Inner Armor—Environmental Hardening, which will allow Soldiers to excel in the world’s harshest environments, and Kill-Proofing, which will protect them against chemical, biological, and radioactive weapons. . . . Today’s wars require our military to deploy with minimal delay, to far-off, remote, and austere environments. These operations often require small, lightly provisioned teams capable of engaging an enemy that is fleet, camouflaged, skilled, and insidious. Under these conditions, casualties resulting from hypothermia, heat and altitude illness can have devastating consequences to life, to limb, and to mission success. . . . My job is to prove that high altitude acclimatization can be transplanted to Soldiers arriving from sea level, allowing them to immediately engage the enemy in the vertical environment. . . .

The second focus area in Inner Armor that I want to share with you is Kill-Proofing. As of today, our Soldiers are vulnerable to diseases to which the enemy is immune. When a
single soldier is infected, the mission is jeopardized and often, terminated. Let’s first look at ways to “kill-proof” our Soldiers against chemical and radioactive weapons. Over the last 2 years, surveillance studies of the world’s most toxic places, including nuclear waste and chemical weapons dumps, reveal that these ecological niches are teeming with life. The organisms growing in these areas have developed compensatory biological mechanisms to deal with radiation and chemical toxins. . . . Many of the enzymes under study share properties with drugs the physician uses to treat the side effects of radiation or chemotherapy. It is our intention to mimic these natural successes in the human body by producing synthetic vitamins and safe preventive drugs that will forestall the onset of radioactive and chemical injury.

Throughout recorded history there has been no greater natural threat to the soldier than infectious diseases. Currently, we prevent infections from exotic and tropical diseases through daily or weekly doses of microbial inhibitors and poisons, such as those used to prevent malaria. Today’s military vaccines only protect our Soldiers against 7 of the 44 highly dangerous pathogens that our Soldiers encounter in today’s conflict zones. . . . I envision that we will pre-position universal immune cells that are capable of making antibodies that neutralize tens, perhaps hundreds, of threat agents. Imagine that in the future, a universal immune cell can be quickly given to any non-immune soldier who is going into harm’s way, which will provide stand-by protection against any tropical infection, or agent of bioterrorism. . . . Over the last 15 years, 16 new killer pathogens have emerged, and most of these occur on foreign soil, including in regions which harbor terrorists. . . . We want our Soldiers against chemical and radioactive weapons. We have the drive, motivation and resources to environmentally hardened Kill-Proof Idiophylactic Soldier with his or her own Inner Armor will handle the exotic and primitive—and presumably Third World—battlefields and enemies of Sulzberger’s and Callahan’s fearful imagination with ease. It is a long-term fantasy of biomedical-cum-security anticipation and preparation played out in the bodies of soldiers.

Government (T)issue: Immunizations, Enhancements, and National Security

We might not generally think of vaccines and immunizations as performance-enhancement technologies, but in the military they are essential for enhancing and enabling soldier performance and internally armoring the soldier to deploy and fight in diverse battlefield settings. From the military’s standpoint, it is not an exaggeration to say that without these very basic enhancements, modern warfare might not be possible. Despite concerns and controversies about the safety and efficacy of vaccines and immunizations—for example, the military anthrax vaccine of the first Gulf War (see Lin, Mehlman, and Abney 2013; Terry 2017) and the rise of the “anti-vaxxer” movement in the United States—military physicians and planners continue to see them as essential tools in their armamentarium.

When a soldier enters the military, he or she relinquishes control over his or her body; one of the first things done to a soldier is a series of vaccinations, all administered in the space of about 2 minutes, with soldiers routinely receiving boosters or new vaccinations prior to deployments. These vaccinations dramatically make the point to the new recruit that the military will not be surprised by any “threat agents” to the soldier and will have immunizations ready to go, wherever and whenever needed. It also shows how the military is already anticipating and imagining areas as future conflict zones; to pre-position biomedical supplies is to imagine an area of the world as already a battlefield. Anticipatory biomedical research and performance-enhancement research is to take the uncertainty out of combat through the direct intervention of the state in both the terrain of the “enemy” and the biology of the soldier. In the imagination of the US military, if a project like Inner Armor is successful, environmental stressors and diseases that have hampered or prevented US military operations in the past will cease to be a hindrance. Weaving through both projects is a kind of ongoing military-environmental-biological-orientalist fantasy: the environmentally hardened Kill-Proof Idiophylactic Soldier with his or her own Inner Armor will handle the exotic and primitive—and presumably Third World—battlefields and enemies of Sulzberger’s and Callahan’s fearful imagination with ease. It is a long-term fantasy of biomedical-cum-security anticipation and preparation played out in the bodies of soldiers.

Projects like Idiophylaxis and Inner Armor are predicated on disease mapping the entire world to make sure there are no surprises on the battlefield. In both projects, the fearful anticipation and visions of diseased and dangerous battlefields for which US soldiers are not prepared lurk just under the surface. In terms of counterterrorism planning, Masco states that anticipation is the opposite of surprise (Masco 2014; see also Caduff 2008). But it is not just counterterrorism that relies on forms of anticipation; military biomedical anticipation is based on concerns about unknown disease vectors and battlefield pathogens and coming up with ways to counter these threats. Callahan’s plan to “pre-position universal immune cells” to produce antibodies on demand is a form of anticipation and imagination: the military will not be surprised by any “threat agents” to the soldier and will have immunizations ready to go, wherever and whenever needed. It also shows how the military is already anticipating and imagining areas as future conflict zones; to pre-position biomedical supplies is to imagine an area of the world as already a battlefield. Anticipatory biomedical research and performance-enhancement research is to take the uncertainty out of combat through the direct intervention of the state in both the terrain of the “enemy” and the biology of the soldier. In the imagination of the US military, if a project like Inner Armor is successful, environmental stressors and diseases that have hampered or prevented US military operations in the past will cease to be a hindrance. Weaving through both projects is a kind of ongoing military-environmental-biological-orientalist fantasy: the environmentally hardened Kill-Proof Idiophylactic Soldier with his or her own Inner Armor will handle the exotic and primitive—and presumably Third World—battlefields and enemies of Sulzberger’s and Callahan’s fearful imagination with ease. It is a long-term fantasy of biomedical-cum-security anticipation and preparation played out in the bodies of soldiers.

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Sulzberger’s Idiophylaxis and today’s plans for enhanced soldiers equipped with their own Inner Armor are part of a
genealogy of ideas and dreams of the soldier who can resist any and all battlefield and environmental conditions, who will be possibly kill proof and physically and mentally impervious to the horrors of war (Bickford 2018). They are also part of a genealogy of military biomedical research and the increasing importance of biology in military planning, research priorities, and funding. In 1962—the same year in which Sulzberger was developing and presenting his plans for the biomedically enhanced Idiophylactic Soldier and the expansion of military medical research focused on soldier enhancement and protection—Edward Shils first discussed the increasing “governmentalization” of science and the increased connections between the state, the military, and scientific research (Shils 1962; see also Aronova 2014:394). Today, this expansion of the state and the military into basic biomedical research can be seen in the soldier performance-enhancement projects of DARPA, the Battlefield Technology Office (BTO), the Natick Soldier Center, the Army Research Laboratory, the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, the US Army Research Institute for Environmental Medicine (USARIEM), and the increasing number of military-funded biomedical and psychopharmaceutical research projects carried out in US universities and private research corporations (Jacobson 2015; National Research Council 2001; Weinberger 2017). The soldier—or now, the “warrior,” “warfighter,” or “soldier-system”—is a key component and focus of military biomedical “big science” research (Armstrong et al. 2010; Jacobson 2015; Latiff 2017; Weinberger 2017). Biology underpins new forms of military anticipation and responses to strategic and tactical fear (Masco 2014) and efforts to use cutting-edge biomedical research to make US soldiers unbeatable on the battlefield and more easily reintegrated when they return home. If, as the saying goes, physics was the key military science of the Cold War, biology and various forms of biomedical research will be the key military sciences of the twenty-first century (see Hammes 2010:5).

The Pharmacological Battlefield: Climate Change, Infectious Disease, and Environmental Threats

The impact of climate change on global military and political strategy and tactics has long held the attention of US military planners, and the changing map of diseases brought about by climate change is clearly on their radar (Bickford 2015; CNA Corporation 2007; Department of the Army 2015; US Navy 2010; White House 2015 [despite attempts by the Trump administration to minimize the military impact of climate change (White House 2017), we can assume military officials tasked with planning and preparation will nonetheless continue to take it seriously]). As climate change reshapes the global disease map, the US military will try to track and predict the new contours and overlaps of infection, deployment, and conflict. Thinking about and analyzing climate change means thinking about and analyzing new kinds of medical changes and “terrains” and thinking about new kinds of security concerns. Tracking the spread of diseases through disease mapping and spatial epidemiology is important for protecting civilian populations (see Lakoff 2017), but it also has military applications that are not necessarily defensive. Spatial epidemiology and disease mapping—from a military standpoint—are exercises in security and conflict mapping, of planning for possible deployments into an area with particular medical “stressors.”

Vaccines and pharmaceuticals are generally dual use; that is, they benefit both civilians and the military and are usually developed by joint military and corporate and private-sector research initiatives, if they are not off-the-shelf drugs used for different indications by the military (see Armstrong et al. 2010; Greenough, Holmberg, and Blume 2017; Terry 2017). DARPA and the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (WRAIR), for example, have both been at the forefront of the development of a dual-use Ebola vaccine (see Pellerin 2014; Smith 2014; Tucker 2015; US Military HIV Research Program 2016), and the Chinese military also developed an Ebola vaccine that is slated to go into mass production (see Winsor 2015). DARPA also began its Blue Angel program in 2009, designed to speed up the mass production of strategically important vaccines (see Lo 2014). Under the aegis of DARPA’s Battlefield Medicine research directorate, two other programs tasked with improving battlefield medical logistics are in the works: Pharmacy on Demand and Biologically Derived Medicines on Demand. Both projects “seek to develop miniaturized device platforms and techniques that can produce multiple small-molecule active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) and therapeutic proteins in response to specific battlefield threats and medical needs as they arise” (DARPA 2007).

The military’s identification of climate change as a top security and strategic priority for the coming decades suggests future changes in strategy, tactics, and doctrine; planning and operations; and technology, research, and development funding. As climate change impacts the global landscape, it will also change the global security and conflict “scape.” In turn, the US military will attempt to come up with dual-use vaccinations and other kinds of medical “force multipliers” to deal with these changes. While saving and protecting civilians—and perhaps helping to stave off unrest, upheaval, and conflict—vaccinations also open up spaces to the military that might otherwise be closed off. If new forms of inbuilt armor are made available in the (near) future for soldiers, deployments once considered unimaginable could be anticipated and imagined as possible.

Advances in military biomedicine allow the military to imagine new forms of armor and deployments and think about and plan for combat in what it sees as diseased and dangerous primitive and exotic battlefields, a conflation that tells us how the military imagines the world, anticipates danger, and justifies the need for immunizations and inbuilt armor. A vaccine is both a response to and a predictor of a physical and medical space. Military vaccinations are embodied spatiotemporal markers for potential conflict: they prepare soldiers to enter environments that disease and other forms of health risks might prevent them from entering. As climate change exacerbates the intensity and
spread of diseases (see Cho 2014) and public health crises, ever-greater areas of strategic interest and importance to the United States and its allies theoretically could become off-limits (see Lakoff 2017). Vaccinations and other medications prevent diseases—like dysentery or malaria, for example—from becoming a kind of “area denial weapon.” Even if the disease in question has not been weaponized, it can still aid the enemy if the military does not have a way to counter it. Beginning with George Washington’s order to inoculate American troops against smallpox during the Revolutionary War (Lin, Mehlman, and Abney 2013:5), the devastating effects of disease on both sides during the Civil War (Sartin 1993), and concerns with battlefield losses due to diseases such as yellow fever, dengue, hookworm infection, and malaria during the War with Spain, in the Philippines, and during World Wars I and II (Slotten 2014), the US military has long been concerned with the impact of illness and disease on troop strength and combat capability. The enemy is not only the human enemy but the world of microbes, pathogens, and environmental conditions that attack the soldier. Threatened from within and without, the soldier is perpetually imperiled.

There is the ever-present fear that as diseases evolve and new threats appear, the military will not have the necessary or appropriate vaccinations on hand to allow for “safe” deployments or, conversely, they will have to deploy into an area knowing that they will have to contend with exposures and illness later. As such, these “nightmare scenarios” (see Masco 2014) and deployment possibilities will drive military medical research and development into militarily effective vaccines and countermeasures. Paying attention to which vaccines the military investigates and develops is a way to anticipate those areas of the world in which the US military is thinking about possible deployments.

Consider Ebola: the recent widespread outbreaks in Africa give us a chance to think about how the US military is preparing for future outbreaks of its kind in Africa and elsewhere and how all of this plays into programs designed to provide US soldiers with inner, unseen armor to negate these outbreaks. Given the growing importance of Africa in US strategic thinking, the increasing presence of the United States in Africa via AFRICOM, and the expansion of US military bases throughout the continent, the quick development of an Ebola vaccine is of great interest and use to the US military as well as government officials and nongovernmental actors (see Lakoff 2017; Terry 2017). Without a viable vaccination at hand, large parts of Africa could effectively become no-go zones for US forces (for the medical requirements mandated to enter AFRICOM, see the US Africa Command Instruction “Force Health Protection Requirements and Medical Guidance for Entry into the US Africa Command Theater” [US Africa Command Instruction 2017]). The development of an effective vaccine would be a very welcome development for people in countries impacted by Ebola, but it could also become a tool in the “great game” of influence and power projection in Africa (see Abramowitz 2017).

US military doctrine calls for various ways of preparing the battlefield for deployment and combat. One kind of preparation is the “medical intelligence preparation of the battlespace” (Joint Publication 2-01.3 2014) in the sense of monitoring health conditions and stressors of a potential battlefield and preparing soldiers to be able to fight and survive there. The deployment of US troops to help with the Ebola outbreak and provide humanitarian aid can also be seen as a kind of trial run for dealing with an outbreak of this kind. The military can observe how soldiers cope with a deployment into an area with a deadly disease outbreak, see if the contamination and decontamination protocols in place are adequate and effective, and determine if new medical preparations, protocols, and procedures need to be developed.

While vaccines help protect both civilians and soldiers, they also allow military planners and policy makers to imagine deployments and develop contingency plans they might not otherwise consider. Climate change will change the military-medical calculus of risk, deployment, and research and will go hand-in-hand with the new and plastic logics of disease prevention, pharmaceutical production, security, and military performance enhancement. Dual-use medicines benefit civilians, but they also help extend the military’s reach to all points of the globe. The slogan for Walter Reed Army Institute of Research in many ways makes this perfectly clear: “Soldier Health. World Health.”

The Tip of the Spear: Delegates, Protection, and Deployments

As military officials and politicians are fond of saying, soldiers are the “tip of the spear” of national policy. In this sense, they are the tools of policy makers and the tools by which policy is enacted. In order to be effective, tools must be well made, honed, kept in good shape, and protected. Latour’s notion of “delegates” allows us to cut through the ideological and semiotic fog of “protection” and think about what it means to be made into a tool of policy. Latour states that “whenever people want a particular task to be performed but would prefer not to do it themselves, they can delegate it to technology” (Brown 2009:172; Latour 1992, 1994). By embedding technology in soldiers, Idiophylaxis, Inner Armor, and other military enhancement projects are directed toward making soldiers into better, more efficient, and more reliable delegates of policy and force projection. Following Clausewitz, if “war is a mere continuation of politics by other means,” then technology turns the soldier into the delegate of the politician and policy maker in order to effect this continuation. Embedded technologies in the body of the soldier turn the soldier into a kind of “double delegate” of policy makers who want their ends achieved but cannot or will not perform the desired actions themselves; instead, they delegate soldiers to do it for them and develop and deploy technologies to help the soldiers better accomplish the task at hand and achieve the desired policy goals.
Biomedical enhancement research in the military is geared first and foremost toward enabling the soldier to successfully complete the “mission,” that nebulous concept of getting something done on the battlefield, whatever that something might be at a given time and place (see Masco 2014). As Masco writes, “Every system has built into its infrastructure a future crisis: the [counterterror] state is loading new capacities into the future as well as the conditions of possibility for new nightmares not yet realized” (Masco 2014:13). Masco’s observation holds true for military performance-enhancement research as well: enhancements both address perceived weaknesses and create new areas of concern for future mission failure—“nightmare scenarios” caused by environmental and illness—that need to be addressed and “corrected” in the body of the soldier.

Soldiers—the “Component Man”—are both metaphorical and literal tools of national security and defense policy and goals. In the process, the soldier becomes the fulcrum point of research, scientific development, budgeting, and acquisition, enmeshed in multiple, overlapping areas of biomedical power, discipline, and concern (see also Terry 2017). The soldier-delegate becomes the focus of military labor extraction and enhancement, the focus of power projected internally to allow for the external projection and deployment of the soldier and the focus of continued research to ensure that he or she continues to be a reliable, effective, and deployable delegate. Protective technologies, while potentially protecting the health and well-being of the soldier, are also directed at the protection of future policy possibilities and contingencies. As biomedicine makes possible performance enhancements and vaccines that could allow the soldier to fight in any and all climates and resist any and all pathogens, the entire world becomes a battlefield. This is a major, if unspoken, implication of Sulzberger’s Idiophylactic Soldier and DARPA’s Inner Armor programs: the imagined and anticipated battlefield needs the soldier who can stand up to its challenges in order for it to be a battlefield.

If they have not already passed, the days of the one-size-fits-all GI might soon be gone. Plans for “soldier-systems” (Latifff 2017; Martin et al. 2012; Martinez-Lopez 2004), with the body of the soldier functioning as the “operational platform” (Killion et al. 2009), imagine the enhanced soldier as a kind of biomodular platform to be modified according to each new mission. In this iteration of the soldier, we can think of biomedical enhancements as the building blocks of the new US soldier, tweaking and adjusting the soldier from the inside out. Idiophylaxis, Inner Armor, and other biological enhancement projects mark the development and emergence of a kind of high-tech neoliberal soldier who can be made and adjusted as needed for each and every battlefield and contingency (see Bickford 2018). Mimicking the flexible and modular production logics of late capitalism (as well as embodying its biomedical inventions), the new US soldier will be the living representation of the confluence of US military operational needs and requirements and big science biomedical research and design. Callahan’s dream of quickly “transplanting” en-

The Double-Bind of Protection: Performance Enhancement, Anticipation, and Ethics

The supersoldier has long been a staple of science fiction political imaginaries; Robert A. Heinlein’s Starship Troopers and the superhero Captain America come to mind here. And like Starship Troopers, Sulzberger’s neologism was an attention getter with a definite futuristic ring to it: the Idiophylactic Soldier conjured images of high-tech soldiers who were far beyond mere 1960s government issue soldiers. And DARPA’s twenty-first-century kill-proof soldier, with its unfair advantage of deathlessness, is a conception of the supersoldier as biomedical superhero, a conception of the soldier on a significantly different scale in terms of protective biotechnologies and what is possible, permissible, and ethical to do to the body of the soldier in the name of individual and national security. While promising safety and security, visions and promises of invincible and kill-proof supersoldiers also mask the implications and ethics of this kind of research. Enhancement projects also raise significant concerns about how the military will direct recruiting efforts to create new soldier-delegates. Recruiting campaigns will more than likely portray the benefits of enhancements and the chance to become a supersoldier without dwelling on the ethical or long-term implications of enhancements.

Military enhancement projects designed to counteract environmental and infectious disease stressors help us situate military performance-enhancement research in general and think about the links between soldier health and the macro-level of political and military necessity and conflict, as well as the impact of climate change on military medicine, operations, and planning. If military biomedical research is about anticipation, we need to anticipate how civil society and everyday life might be affected by these kinds of projects. Military performance-enhancement research opens up troubling questions about the militarization of everyday life for both soldiers and civilians, even if military researchers see their research as ethical and necessary engagements with biomedicine, creating beneficial and dual-use medicines directed toward saving lives around the world—though, admittedly, saving the lives of soldiers first (see Annas and Annas [2009]; Gross [2006]; Lin, Mehlman, and Abney [2013]; and Moreno [2012] for discussions of bioethics in the military).

These projects also let us think about the broader implications and uses of military biomedical armor and protection. What interests me is the potential double-bind of projects like Idiophylaxis and Inner Armor: US military biomedical and pharmacological performance enhancements both protect and
compel. They represent a kind of defensive and offensive conundrum of protection: biotechnology and performance enhancements may in fact protect and/or save the soldier, but they will also compel soldiers to fight, to lay their lives on the line in combat, and to expose themselves to continued—and perhaps even greater—risk.

Military health, and civilian health as well, operates on a sense of freedom; that is, one is to be free of worry about certain types of wounding or injury. Both Idiophylaxis and Inner Armor are concerned with a kind of freedom from injury and death and a strategic level of freedom from operational worry. But it is exactly this deployment of freedom that binds and constricts the soldier in a regime of health and turns him or her into a delegate of national security and power projection; military health must ensure that the soldier is constantly made free of weakness through application of new technologies, pharmaceuticals, and equipment. It is not a conception of health that seeks to restore the health of the patient; rather, it is the techne of the soldier, which, Gadamer argues, is "that knowledge which constitutes a specific and tried ability in the context of producing things" (Gadamer 1996:32). It is the military’s use of “health” to produce something new: a soldier-delegate potentially immune to wounding and—fantastically—to death.

While seemingly defensive in nature, this inbuilt armor would also allow the soldier to take part in offensive operations in hostile environments and on exotic and primitive battlefields that previously either hindered or prohibited engagements. In a world anticipated and seen as one of perpetual struggle and war, in the imagination of military researchers and in accordance with the needs of military planners, soldiers must be armored, physically and emotionally, internally and externally—but most importantly, internally—to make them useful to the military and the state. The techne of the soldier is the internal regulation of the soldier for the protection of the state: what might seem like positive, life-saving measures for the soldier could also be another way of making soldiers fight, ensuring deployability, and of harnessing a delegate or tool for national security purposes in a more effective and predictable manner.

By examining how the US military imagines environmental threats and disease, and imagines solutions, we can see how the military simultaneously imagines the component man and the world and presents militarized visions of terrain and tissue, environment and biology, threats and enhancements. Each new anticipated battlefield and each new imagined intervention to prevent death will open up new questions, new threats, and new avenues for unfair advantages and kill-proofing. Far from being a kind of military “exotica” or Wired clickbait, these research efforts—even if unsuccessful in their “pure” forms—will continue to drive the development of new types of protection, countermeasures, and weapons to overcome these countermeasures. Preparing for war is an ever-increasing struggle over anticipating, imagining, and manipulating the biology of the soldier. With its ring of science fiction, the “pharmacological battlefield” is the increasingly real terrain of military biomedical research, operational planning, and combat.

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Target Intimacy
Notes on the Convergence of the Militarization and Marketization of Love in Colombia

by Alexander L. Fattal

This article considers the convergence of militarism and marketing in Colombia and argues that the axis of that confluence is the drive to appropriate intimacy, a fleeting index of love. I scrutinize this phenomenon in the context of the Colombian military’s individual demobilization program, which, prior to the peace accord of 2016, worked with the advertising firm that managed consumer brands such as Mazda and Red Bull. The double meaning of “campaigns” and “targets,” in the parlance of both generals and executives, was not haphazard but, rather, was doubly focusing on an effort to lure FARC guerrillas out of the insurgency and transform them into consumer citizens. I analyze how both consumer marketers and military intelligence officers went about their targeted persuasion, each creeping into increasingly personal realms. Situating my research in the broader context of the Global War on Terror and the rise of the global middle classes, I suggest that the fusion of militarism and marketing in Colombia is a harbinger of an affective mode of governance in the early twenty-first century that blurs military and civilian spheres as well as the temporal distinction between times of peace from times of war.

“You are my child.” This profoundly intimate affirmation is the tagline for a sophisticated set of public relations/psychological warfare campaigns against Marxist insurgencies that the Colombian government outsourced to a leading consumer marketing agency between 2007 and 2015.¹ The You Are My Child Colombian government outsourced to a leading consumer marketing agency between 2007 and 2015.¹ The You Are My Child campaign of 2013 targeted individuals fighting in the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the Army of National Liberation (ELN), imploring them to abandon the armed struggle and return to their families. It was the fourth in a series of five Christmas campaigns that exploited the holiday’s symbolism and its cultural emphasis on family togetherness. The annual Christmas campaigns (2010–2014) were a joint venture between the Program for Humanitarian Attention to the Demobilized (PAHD), an agency in the Colombian Ministry of Defense that is charged with the disarmament and demobilization of guerrilla fighters, and Lowe/SSP3, a consumer marketing firm. The slash in the name signals a conjunction of Lowe & Partners, a London-based transnational advertising conglomerate, and SSP3, shorthand for the Colombian partners in the local marketing firm.² Lowe/SSP3 has managed brands including Mazda, Red Bull, and SABMiller in Colombia. Together they peddle images of the good life of consumer citizenship to guerrillas tired of the rigors of rebel life or demoralized in the insurgency.³

Elsewhere I analyze the curious collaboration between the PAHD and Lowe/SSP3, the campaigns it has spawned, and the marketization of counterinsurgency of which those campaigns are emblematic (Fattal 2018). In my ethnographic research on the 2011 Christmas campaign Operation Rivers of Light, I show how these large-scale publicity operations seek to rebrand the military as a humanitarian actor and buttress the legitimacy of

¹. This article draws on research and analysis from my book Guerrilla Marketing: Capitalism and Counterinsurgency in Colombia (Fattal 2018), esp. chap. 3. In this article, all names of people who are not public figures have been changed, as have some locations and front numbers.
². In 2015, 2 years after the primary research for this article concluded, Lowe & Partners merged with the Mullen Group, creating an even larger parent agency, the MullenLowe Group, and changing Lowe/SSP3’s name to MullenLowe SSP3. I use “Lowe/SSP3” here because that is what the agency was called during my principal fieldwork period, 2011–2013.
³. Portrayals of the good life in the campaigns designed by the PAHD-Lowe/SSP3 partnership involve scenes such as playing soccer with friends, hanging out with family during Christmas, and buying cosmetics (lipstick and moisturizing cream) to feel “like a woman again” (Fattal 2018, epilogue). Such representations ignore the economic precarity former combatants face once they leave the rebel ranks and as they struggle to adapt to a harsh economic environment. The breach between image and reality echoes the work of Lauren Berlant, who writes in Cruel Optimism that amid fraying fantasies of economic success, “adjustment seems like an accomplishment” (Berlant 2011:11). Indeed, a certain cruelty festered in the optimism peddled by the Colombian government’s mass publicity campaigns targeting the demobilized.

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the armed forces (Fattal 2018, chap. 2). Those processes are part of a wider nation-branding effort in which the government has sought to transform imaginaries of Colombia from a country wrecked by drugs, guerrillas, and paramilitaries into a postconflict society primed to receive tourists and foreign investment.1

The historic passage of a peace accord with the FARC in November of 2016 is the capstone of the Colombian state’s long-running performance of “postconflict” status. The peace agreement formally ended the government’s war with the FARC, although its implementation has been hobbled by bureaucratic bumbling and a lack of political will.3 The far-right victory of Iván Duque in the 2018 presidential election is likely to prune back the peace accord to its barest form.4 Paradoxically, the performance of postconflict status began 12 years before the accord was signed, during one of the war’s most intense periods, in the early 2000s, when the government created a series of bureaucracies to compensate victims; passed transitional justice laws that established truth-telling forums for perpetrators; and implemented policies to disarm, demobilize, and reintegrate combatants.5 At the same time that the state created new agencies to administer postconflict policies in the middle of a war, it contracted a series of experts in media manipulation to naturalize that contradiction and craft a narrative of a nation incrementally surmounting its ills. For example, McCann Erickson, the iconic Madison Avenue advertising firm, and John Rendon, the Pentagon contractor-cum-guru of information warfare, both began advising the Colombian Ministry of Defense on its communication strategy at the turn of the millennium.6

Lowe/SSP3’s demobilization campaigns played an important role in this renarration of the nation. The affective onslaught of the corporatized propaganda set its sights on categories as diffuse as the “national mood” (a term that reappears throughout the firm’s internal documents), the cultural atmosphere, and international imaginaries of Colombia.7 By giving primacy to the “structures of feeling” surrounding the military and the nation (Williams 1977), the men and women at Lowe/SSP3 who produce these campaigns treat individual guerrillas, the formal addressees of their campaigns, as straw figures in a twenty-first-century morality play. In the process, they reduce a historically dense and dizzyingly complex conflict to a tale of good guys and bad guys—short-circuiting an honest reckoning with the past.

The guerrillas have their own Manichaean narrative of righteous and evil actors, one that justifies their decision to take up arms in the early 1960s and persist in their armed struggle. The through lines of the FARC’s side of the story are structural and historical challenges: the need for land redistribution, elite indifference to the peasantry, political exclusion, and state repression. Despite the group’s inability to dedicate significant resources to its propaganda machine—due to the fact that the Colombian military kept it on the defensive since the early 2000s—the FARC never lost site of the importance of trying to promulgate a counterhegemonic narrative. During periods of negotiation (1983–1986, 1999–2002, 2012–2016), the government would cede to the FARC minimal political space, allowing the group’s leadership the opportunity to strategize together. During negotiations, the FARC would seek to take advantage of its access to microphones and the possibility of a political platform. During times of war it produced insurgent media: radio programs, basic web pages, prorevolutionary music, and short-form printed materials like pamphlets. Its own propaganda tended either to target local audiences where its fronts were active or broadcast via internet from exile (mostly in northern Europe and elsewhere in Latin America, where some of its militants had settled). Through websites often incorporated in Scandinavia, FARC sympathizers tried to circumvent the soft censorship of a corporate media oligopoly in Colombia.8 The guerrillas continually cast themselves as righteous actors of a "good cause." In line with a broader strategy of nation branding, former president Álvaro Uribe Vélez (2002–2010) often spoke about transforming Colombia from a land of terrorism to a land of tourism. Andrew Graan defines nation branding as “strategic efforts to formulate national identity as a branded commodity.” Graan posits nation branding as “a new modality of neoliberal governance in which the state is imagined as an entrepreneurial subject” (2013:164–165).

9. My use of “affect” in this paper follows the strain of affect theory emerging from the work of Brian Massumi. Interpreting this thread, Catherine Lutz writes, “the intent is to break down the distinction between the material and the immaterial” (2017:186). It is precisely this intention to dissolve the dichotomy between the immaterial and the material that draws me to affect theory, for I have seen how the FAHD’s campaigns generate both immaterial affects and material effects that are closely linked to each other. In this way my work echoes that of Adams, Murphy, and Clark (2009), which, according to Lutz, documents “the rise of regimes of anticipation, which direct emotional energy (especially hope and fear) toward the future, legitimating a sense of urgency to act today to minimize risk” (2017:187–188).

10. There has been limited scholarly analysis of the FARC’s own propaganda machine. During the negotiation period (2012–2016), the FARC created a broadcast television-style news outlet distributed on YouTube. Its...
Robin Hood–esque figures, even as their standards for recruitment and kidnapping fell in the 1990s and 2000s. As a result, the guerrilla movement swept more and more people into its often deadly web—as either new recruits (sometimes against their will) or hostages. The guerrillas’ narrative of themselves as a moralistic redistributive avenger also contrasted with the reality that their operations had grown increasingly enmeshed with the drug trade and illegal mining.

Reductionist, justificatory logic—apparent on all sides of Colombia’s war—is nothing new in the history of propaganda; rather, it is probably the practice’s defining feature. What is new is the degree to which the Lowe/SSP3–PAHD alliance sought to hitchhike on intimacy and love, an intensification that is entangled with an invasive trend in consumer marketing in the digital age. What at first appears as a novel convergence is but the latest knot in the two tangled threads of marketing and militarism. I take as given the idea, demonstrated by historical accounts of the coevolution of marketing and warfare in the twentieth century, that marketization and militarization are deeply interpenetrated (Ewen 1996). Psychological operations and propaganda each have their own histories that predated the creation of consumer marketing. What is emergent in the contemporary assemblage of persuasion and coercion is the premium on co-opting affective attachments in ways that scale down to the individual. Whether microtargeting to the points of psychologically profiling individual consumers or delineating miniaturized kill zones around a suspected terrorist, marketing’s and militarism’s respective drives to create profit or military advantage require ever more personal data. This drive to achieve an information advantage often entails unscrupulous methods with hidden and disturbing consequences.11 What I will suggest in the following pages is that the radical convergence of militarism and marketing in the early twenty-first century shapes an affective mode of governance that is already evident in Colombia and is emergent in other parts of the world.12 The partnership between Lowe/SSP3 and the PAHD in Colombia is a symptomatic response to the crosscurrents of two global affective trends in the early twenty-first century: simmering fears of an everywhere war and rising aspirations of the global middle classes.13 I will argue that intimacy lies at the crux of the forces of fusion pushing marketing and militarism into ever-closer collaboration.

The photograph of soldiers in formation holding posters from the You Are My Child campaign is instructive (fig. 1). Employing the ventriloquism that is central to their trade, the marketers created a disembodied voice—that of a guerrilla fighter’s mother who calls to her son or daughter to abandon the insurgency and return home for the Christmas holidays. The mothers sometimes appear in the photographs that are the essential element of the campaign. These are personal photographs, the kind that parents store in shoeboxes and tape into family albums. One picture features a puffy-cheeked toddler primly dressed in white. A second picture, of a boy posing in pants 2 years too big, is washed out in a sepia tone. In a third photo, grainy and poorly focused, a mother holds an excitable infant in her arms. From the mother’s gaze, it seems like she is collaborating to produce a memory with the photographer (the baby’s father?). The campaign’s full slogan—Before Being a Guerrilla/You Are My Child—is printed in block letters atop the images of guerrillas as children, often toddlers. The posters, elegant in their simplicity, served as the visual peg for a campaign that flooded Colombia’s television and radio airwaves. Lowe/SSP3 staged this photograph’s scene of soldiers pinching their fingers on command for a 2-minute video that it would use to publicize its campaign.14

Although images and sounds from You Are My Child are worthy of an article-length semiotic analysis, much of what is at stake in such soliderly scenes can be examined through the lens of the biblical parable of the return of the prodigal son (Cárdenas Sarrias 2005:62–69; Hoyos García 2011:80–83). Colombian anthropologist Juan Felipe Hoyos García writes, “The moral of the story is not only that the demobilized is a lost son who is accepted upon his return, but that his return reinforces the paternal relationship between the State and its subject”

original slogan was “breaking the media siege.” For a detailed parsing of the FARC’s foray into online news, see Fattal (2017). When the FARC ratified the peace accord of 2016, it held its final guerrilla conference in the Yari Plains in its southern stronghold and opened the event to the media. For an ethnographic account of that culture industry–like spectacle, see the epilogue of Guerrilla Marketing (Fattal 2018). Luis Trejos has written about the FARC’s international presence (2013) and its use of the internet (2012) in an earlier moment. His analysis finds that FARC-affiliated websites such as ANNCOL pulled together a loose global network of contributors. By doing so the guerrilla group sought to compensate for its exclusion from the public sphere at the national level.

11. For books about the tactics of data capitalism in the early twenty-first century and how it moves business into increasingly private realms, see Turow (2011) and Einstein (2016).

12. This convergence resonates with academic discussion about the military-industrial-media-entertainment network, or complex (Der Derian 2001; Stahl 2009). The PAHD strengthens the connective dashes of this conjunction by bringing the image-based work of advertising into ever-closer coordination with military operations.

13. Here I am gesturing toward the synthesis of two literatures, one that tackles the affective regime of the Global War on Terror and another that considers consumerism, aspiration, and the rise of the global middle class. I do not have space to synthesize both bodies of work here, but two emblematic titles are The Theater of Operations: National Security Affect from the Cold War to the War on Terror (Masco 2014) and The Global Middle Classes: Theorizing through Ethnography (Heiman, Freeman, and Liechty 2012).

14. The 2-minute piece serves as online publicity for the campaign itself and is emblematic of the recursive nature of mass publicity in the digital age. The marketers take as a given what anthropologist Christopher Kelty posited about the internet in 2005: that it is best conceived as a textual contest, in that it is constantly being rewritten (Kelty 2005:185–186). The staff of Lowe/SSP3 anticipates and shapes how its campaigns will circulate online after the mass publicity blitz on Colombian television and radio.
The dozens of campaigns produced by Lowe/SSP3 for the PAHD bear out Hoyos García’s analysis, but none so blatantly as You Are My Child. The campaign interpolates guerrillas as state subjects while also reactivating the gendered bonds of kinship. These are bonds that the FARC and ELN attempt to displace with the ties of camaraderie. (One former member of the FARC recalled his commander explaining to him and other new recruits that they needed to prepare themselves psychologically to kill members of their own families if their kin should betray the rebel movement.)

The soldiers in the photograph stand in for fathers presumed to be missing, metonymically casting the military into a relationship of proxy intimacy with mothers from the working classes from which the vast majority of guerrillas are recruited.15 The corporatized propaganda’s appeal to demobilize is a call to return to the domestic space of a mother’s love, while also resubjecting oneself to the dominion of the father figure of the militarized state. The mise en scène taps into a long-standing gendered allegory of parents’ unconditional love for their children, silently suffering mothers, and disciplinary but ultimately forgiving fathers.

The paternal state, however, is always eager to shore up its tenuous authority. Reading another image from You Are My Child against the grain, we see the military gluing the campaign’s posters to a humble brick exterior in an impoverished neighborhood of the southern city of San Vicente de Caguán, where the FARC maintained an active presence (fig. 2). By papering over this façade with the posters, the government is figuratively hiding the fissures opened by the territorial competition between guerrillas, drug lords, paramilitaries, and the Colombian government (backed by US military support). The intervention of the PAHD-Lowe/SSP3 partnership is emblematic of a much longer process by which the military gradually expands into outlaw zones in a bid to project, if not consolidate, its authority in a sovereign field that historians of Colombia have described as severely fragmented (Bushnell 1993; Safford and Palacios 2002).16

The way in which the military coordinated its marketized propaganda with its broader military strategy is noteworthy. The PAHD, Lowe/SSP3, and regional intelligence services throughout the country have triangulated to target specific fronts and individual combatants from the middle and upper rungs of the guerrilla hierarchy. These ranking insurgents can provide insights about their superiors; identify stashes of weapons, drugs,

15. Alternatively, in a Lacanian vein, the image evokes the idea of “extimacy,” which William Mazzarella paraphrases as the simultaneity and ambivalence between externality and intimacy (Mazzarella 2017:50), and, via Durkheim, “a peculiarly intimate anonymity” (Mazzarella 2017:58). The photographs used in the campaign are clearly intimate yet also “extimate” at the same time, in that the images are cast into a forced relationship with these anonymous soldiers who display such personal scenes on command.

16. I would take the descriptor of fragmented sovereignty in Colombia even further. The way that armed groups shift influence over territory and through time, in protean processes of demobilization and remobilization, illuminates a form of sovereignty that I consider to be “kaleidoscopic” in that the fragments are often in motion and colliding with each other.
and money; and cut into the guerrillas’ greatest advantage: knowledge of the terrain. Over the 9 years that I have researched the PAHD, from 2007 to 2016, I have watched its communications and strategic area unit, which is dedicated to targeting FARC and ELN leaders, work together in ever-closer coordination.

In what follows, I look beneath the PAHD’s mass-media campaigns to take seriously its announced targets, individual insurgents, and how the military tracks them down. By juxtaposing the public and clandestine sides of the PAHD, I am suggesting that the linguistic overlap of “campaigns” and “targets” in military and marketing parlance is not coincidental. The double meanings reveal a singular assemblage sharing an epistemological framework that seeks to manage structures of visibility and invisibility to maximum advantage. I will zoom in on the process of targeting, interpreting it as a switch that connects the counterinsurgency state and the marketing nation in Colombia. The instrumentalization of love is the ultimate target. Both sets of experts—generals and executives—have come to valorize and appropriate, by any means possible, intimacy, a fleeting index of love. To see how the targeting of intimacy works in the Colombian context requires first parsing a key term, “individual demobilization,” which in comparative perspective is not demobilization at all, but rather, desertion with benefits.

Individual Demobilization

Within the whack-a-mole logic of counterinsurgency in the early twenty-first century, militaries seek to debilitate terror-

networks, guerrilla insurgencies, and criminal syndicates by killing or capturing individuals who play key roles in an organizational structure. The Colombian military has adopted and adapted its US patron’s policy of tracking down leaders—nodes in an enemy network—by all means possible. Between 2008 and August of 2016, when a bilateral cease-fire went into effect, the Colombian armed forces killed four members of the FARC’s secretariat, a seven-member body composed of the group’s top leaders. (Previously, the military had not killed a single secretariat member.) Deserter—framed by the state as individuals who have “demobilized”—provide crucial human intelligence in the hunt for guerrilla leaders and in the counterinsurgency more broadly.

In creating the PAHD in 2003, the Colombian government floated the signification of the word “demobilization” in marketing’s world of noncorrespondences and then ingrained its new meaning through the repetitive language practices of bureaucracy. The policy innovation was a shift away from the United Nations’ perspective, which sees a peace agreement as a necessary precondition for any demobilization process (United Nations 2006). That was still the norm at the end of the Cold War in contexts such as Central America, where demobilization processes helped steer a transitional period after a peace


18. In 2011 the government killed Alfonso Cano, the FARC’s top commander. His assassination was the latest blow to the FARC’s leadership. In March of 2008 the military killed Raul Reyes, the FARC’s spokesman and then number 2 in a transborder raid in Ecuador. That same month, a subordinate of secretariat member Iván Ríos killed his boss to claim reward money (he cut off Ríos’s right hand as proof). In September 2010, the Colombian Air Force killed Mono Jojoy, the FARC’s leading military commander in the southeastern department of Meta. As in the story of Operation Genuine, microchips with GPS technology provided the military important geolocating information for the aerial assault.
agreement. When the PAHD began, however, it attempted to fill the vacuum created by a failed negotiation between the FARC and the government (1999–2002). In making this move, Colombia transformed demobilization from a mechanism for implementing a peace agreement into a means of debilitating the guerrilla threat. Demobilization became a means to peace by military pacification rather than a by-product of peace forged through political accommodation. Although my perspective on this instrumentalist redefinition of demobilization is critical, highlighting its hidden consequences on the social fabric and on the ability to delineate times of peace from times of war, I readily acknowledge its efficacy in terms of short-term security.

In 2014 I interviewed Sergio Jaramillo, who served at various times as Colombia’s national security adviser and high commissioner for peace (at times playing both roles simultaneously) during most of the administration of Juan Manuel Santos (2010–2018). We spoke in Cambridge, Massachusetts, over lunch after he lectured at Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government. He described the impact of the individual demobilization program: “Mono Jojoy [a notorious FARC commander] was much more worried about demobilization than kills in combat. If you kill somebody in an operation, you make people angry. If you demobilize someone, you leave a huge question mark. Where did they go? Why did they leave? Why are they there, and why am I here?” Jaramillo went on: “This program opened up the FARC. It allowed us to understand how the organization thinks—its commanders.” He described himself as “an addict” of the interviews that state agents conduct with former rebels. The entire Colombian security apparatus has become addicted to the information that former guerrillas provide. Feeding that addiction has meant that military officers surveil, dialogue with, and intervene in the lives of family members of guerrilla fighters.

The emphasis on family in the PAHD’s corporatized propaganda, evident in the You Are My Child campaign, has an incognito correspondence in the secretive world of military intelligence that underlies the PAHD. While mass publicity operations focus on the ties that bind, the military persuades individual guerrilla fighters by working through their most intimate relationships. Military intelligence units sell demobilization to individual guerrilla fighters with customized pitches that draw on troves of technical and human intelligence that lead them to the guerrilla’s family member or lover (active or former). This in turn invites “blowback,” which, as Joseph Masco has noted, is a response to a previous, classified action and a dynamic that leaves the wider public unaware of the retaliatory logic at work (Masco 2010:450–451). In the Colombian conflict, unlike in the Global War on Terror that Masco researches, the covert war is not concentrated abroad but, rather, is an all-too-domestic affair—a situation that has further militarized social relations.

Colombia’s targeted take on demobilization policy mirrors the high-tech hunt of drone warfare, with similar consequences. In his book Drone: Remote Control Warfare, Hugh Gusterson compellingly argues that drones have eviscerated the boundary between the battlefield and civilian space. Gusterson’s students, for example, felt that it would be legitimate for Taliban fighters to come to the United States and kill a drone operator as he drove to work (Gusterson 2016: loc. 925). Other commentators have noted how drone pilots must adjust to scenarios where worlds—military and civilian, combat and domestic—fold in on each other. Drones are but one piece of a wider story about late modern warfare’s growing resemblance to premodern warfare in its erasure of the military-civilian distinction. That erasure can be separated into two principal strands: the conflation of military operations and humanitarian interventions, and the bleeding, literally and figuratively, of conflict and post-conflict moments into each other. Colombia’s individual demobilization program sits at the muddled crossroads of these disintegrating categories, making it an opportune case through which to refract the more generalized logic of indistinction at play in cultures of militarism in the early twenty-first century.

The 2016 peace agreement, which the government is fitfully implementing at the time of this writing (mid-2018), is an effort to revert to the status quo ante, the time before 2003 when demobilization came after a cessation of hostilities and involved a group’s military structures, as opposed to individual combatants. But the government’s opportunistic resignification of demobilization between 2003 and 2016 cannot be undone so easily, for it entailed mobilizing massive amounts of symbolic capital. To displace the then-dominant notion of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) policy, the Colombian agencies charged with administering DDR programs hosted elaborate conferences in Caribbean destination

19. The government used the same term, “demobilization,” to describe its policy for implementing a negotiated accord with its paramilitary ally. Winifred Tate convincingly argues that the state essentially outsourced much of the counterguerrilla to the paramilitaries in the 1990s and early 2000s (Tate 2015). For a reckoning with the extremely problematic paramilitary demobilization of 2003–2006, see El Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (2015) and Romero (2007).

20. I draw attention to my use of “further” above, for it acknowledges that wars have long been fought on intimate terrain. For an ethnographically rich reckoning with the residual dynamics of Peru’s civil war with the Shining Path and how legacies of the conflict’s intimate dimensions play out in a postauthoritarian moment, see Theidon (2012). Similarly, Diane Nelson tracks the intimate legacies of race, class, and gender across postconflict Guatemala (Nelson 2009). What I am tracing here is an intensification rather than a novelty.

21. For an elaborate history of the gradual construction of the military-civilian divide over the longue durée, see McNeill (1984). Of particular interest in McNeill’s account is the creation of standing armies in Europe in the 1600s (124–136).

22. The literature about the convergence of militarism and humanitarianism has grown extensively in the last 20 years. It is too extensive to cover here. The volume edited by Didier Fassin and Mariella Pandolfi, Contemporary States of Emergency: The Politics of Military and Humanitarian Interventions, offers a rich sampling of the subliteratures (2010).
cities. In 2009 the government organized the International Conference of Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration in Cartagena and in 2013 the First Global Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) Summit in Santa Marta. These megaproductions featured delegates from dozens of countries and subtly peddled the terminological confusion between demobilization and desertion with benefits (legal forgiveness and limited welfare). Afghanistan and Somalia, US client states, have since embraced the Colombian model, and even some members of the United Nations technocracy have backtracked from a sharp division between desertion and demobilization.

What is at stake—life itself—is entangled with the semantics. Where the government sees demobilized combatants, the FARC sees deserters. Any accurate accounting of lives saved versus lives lost because of the individual demobilization program is impossible. PAHD officials like to claim that each demobilization of a guerrilla fighter saves three lives: the person who demobilizes, the soldier he might have killed, and the civilian who could die during their confrontation. While such a scenario is plausible, and the program has indeed saved some lives, the government’s framing forecloses the consideration of other all-too-common scenarios: rebels motivated to flee who get caught and killed, reprisals exacted on family members of the demobilized, and FARC commanders falsely accusing their militants of espionage in fits of paranoia. Although the policy has helped the military achieve its goals, and in some areas improved security, it has come at a high cost to the social fabric of local communities already torn by the constitutive ambiguity of guerrilla warfare: who is a civilian, and who is a member of an armed group. (This confusion is often mediated by proximity to a militant or informant of one of the armed actors in a given area, and kinship is often taken to be synonymous with proximity.) Individual demobilization, as a policy, nudes former combatants and their families into the invisible front lines of Colombia’s guerrilla war.

Let us consider the case of Pablo and his sister.

Operation Genuine (Operación Genuino)

I met Nicolás in 2007 when he directed the PAHD’s strategic area team, which is dedicated to demobilizing senior commanders. In 2011, when I returned to Colombia to conduct long-term fieldwork, Nicolás had ascended to the rank of lieutenant colonel and was directing a Regional Military Intelligence unit, or RIME, in the army. Although a secretary tried to act as his gatekeeper, subordinates poured through his door with problems to solve, documents to sign, and breaking intelligence to appraise. Nicolás reminded me that in the years when he led the PAHD’s strategic area unit, 2007 and 2008, it demobilized more guerrillas than in any year before or since (ACR 2011). Militarized persuasion was still very much his business, and, as I would learn, his strategy still centered on the exploitation of guerrilla fighters’ emotional bonds.

I arrived unaware of my good timing. Two weeks earlier, Nicolás’s RIME had demobilized Pablo, the third in command of the FARC’s Twelfth Front. Nicolás instructed José, a young intelligence officer, to talk me through the PowerPoint presentation about Operation Genuine. José opened a laptop, clicked on the file, and 50 thumbnails populated the left side of the screen. “We learned they were going to have a meeting of all of the front commanders from the bloc,” José said. The bloc in question is the Martín Caballero Bloc, which operated in Colombia’s northeastern Caribbean region. Militarily, it was the weakest of the FARC’s seven regional blocs, though arguably its most strategic, since it contained a disproportionate number of the FARC’s top ideologues, propagandists, and spokespeople. Those big fish—or, in military lingo, OMAVEs (the Spanish acronym for Military Targets of High Strategic Value)—camped on the Venezuelan side of the border. The RIME learned the benchmarks that the bloc commander had set for each front commander: how many ambushes, how many acts of sabotage, and how much extortion.

Blocs cover vast territories, which means that fronts are the most salient units of command. Three commanders and three replacements compose a front’s leadership. The front leaders within the Martín Caballero Bloc are mostly aging veterans. Of the few young, charismatic front leaders, Pablo stood out. According to the file that the military kept on him, Pablo is purported to have led FARC units that ambushed an army patrol, blew up railroad tracks and gas pipelines, erected roadblocks, and kidnapped people for ransom. Like much of the Martín Caballero Bloc, Pablo retreated toward Venezuela in 2003 when the military intensified its offensive in the region.

Nicolás and his team set out to demobilize Pablo. His desertion would deprive the bloc of an emerging leader, de-

23. Colombia has worked to situate itself on an upper-middle rung of the global hierarchy of security expertise below the United States and Israel (countries from which it contracts consultants) but above other Latin American nations. This too is part of Colombia’s attempt to reanimate the nation as a country that has transcended its history of political violence. Former Colombian generals, e.g., have advised the Mexican security apparatus and received media fanfare in Colombia for their work.

24. For evidence of this backtracking from a clear distinction between demobilization and desertion at an international level, see Robert Muggah and Chris O’Donnell, “Next Generation Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration” (2015:2–5). For a more extensive discussion, see the conclusion of Guerrilla Marketing (Fattal 2018).

25. Nicolás’s rise through the officer corps corresponded with reform in the military in the late 1990s and 2000s, when the Ministry of Defense set out to create a cadre of counterinsurgency warriors with unblemished records, so as to avoid endangering the supply of US military aid over pesky human rights concerns (Tate 2007).

26. Front numbers and other details of no analytical significance in this story have been changed.

27. For a regional history that documents and analyzes the social, ethnic, and political context of the armed conflict in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta mountain range, which is sacred to numerous indigenous groups, see FUCUDE (2009).
moralize his subordinates, yield intelligence on the bloc’s leadership, and, perhaps, help demobilize or kill an OMAVE. The RIME first had to determine who would be the best messenger. Two undercover spies concurred that Pablo’s sister was the family member closest to Pablo. Nicolás and his team reasoned that she had direct access to Pablo and that he trusted her.

They gave Pablo’s sister the code name “Abraham” and began an in-depth study of her life. Posing as market researchers for a cable television company, intelligence agents collected gossip from Abraham’s neighbors. Curious about this method, I prodded José for more details. The most common ruse, he said, was to pose as market researchers for cell phone carriers and begin with questions such as, “Which promotion do you like more, 10 free minutes, or call for less than 5 minutes as much as you like?” and then shift the conversation. “How do you get people talking?” I asked. “They’re very chatty,” José said, before explaining that the undercover agents offer “prizes” as a way to keep people talking.

José clicked on the next slide in the PowerPoint:

Findings
• Has debts
• Almost lost her job, which pays poorly
• Works 10 hours per day, 6 days a week
• Is easily persuaded by small gifts
• Her mother is very ill
• Abandoned her studies in 9th grade

A slide describing her strengths and the liabilities of contacting her listed the following:

Strengths
• Suspicious of strangers
• Was part of the FARC
• Comes from a FARC family
• Has a good memory

Liabilities
• In contact with the Martín Caballero Bloc
• From a neighborhood with subversive elements
• Unstable personality
• Undefined politics

Nicolás’s military intelligence unit decided to emphasize her opportunity to make extra money to pay her debts and help support her mother. To “win her affection and willingness to work,” as one subtitle in the PowerPoint read, they sent an agent to seduce her, or, in the literal translation of the Colombian Spanish, “to conquer her” (conquistarla). When I asked José if the agent and Abraham had slept together, he nearly spit out the ice pop he was sucking on. In a mixture of surprise and embarrassment he said, “I don’t know. What’s important is the work.” After a pause he answered obliquely, “In some cases they stay together.” The timeworn tactic of seduction remains a common tactic.

Throughout 2011, the Twelfth Front lagged in reaching its goals. By October, technical intelligence suggested that Pablo was preparing to lead a commission of insurgents into Colombia. In early December of 2011, the agent that Nicolás had sent to take Abraham dancing and “win her affection” invited her to lunch. It was “the most important moment of the operation,” according to José. “If his voice quivers, everything is lost.” The agent slid a folder across the table and said, “Open it.” Inside were photos: Abraham at work, her son, Pablo. She initially denied staying in touch with Pablo but later confessed that they communicated regularly. Visibly distressed, she asked, “Are you going to kill him?” José paraphrased the agent’s response: “No, we want him here like you, free.”

Abraham agreed to help the RIME demobilize her brother. She would travel to her brother’s camp when he was in Colombia. Christmas festivities provided a stellar opportunity. She carried whiskey, meat, and other gifts. Unbeknownst to her, the military hid a tracking device among the presents. On December 24, she hiked into the temporary camp where Pablo and his group of 15 rebels were celebrating Christmas. In a private moment, she appealed to her brother to demobilize and gave him a phone number to call. The next day, December 25, Abraham left the camp and called the intelligence agent who had seduced her to report the encounter.

The military, however, is a Hydra, and tactical intelligence teams working for high mountain anti-guerrilla battalions had simultaneously located Pablo’s commission. That news fed back to the general commanding the army’s First Division, who convened a meeting in which he decided to bomb Pablo’s commission on December 25. Nicolás claimed that he had opposed the general’s decision to bomb, hoping Pablo would demobilize and possibly bring his 15 subordinates with him.

The bombardment killed a female rebel in Pablo’s commission. The rest of the commission scattered and trekked back to Venezuela in small groups.

On December 26, Abraham called the intelligence agent. Furious, she screamed into the phone, “You tricked me! You made me kill my brother!”

At nearly the same time, Pablo called the number his sister had given him. He wanted to turn himself in.

In a video that is the climax of the PowerPoint, Pablo, illuminated only by the night-vision mode of the video camera, stumbles down the mountainside, whimpering in emotional overload.

Hoping to find other members of Pablo’s commission, José and other officers returned to the site of the bombardment with Pablo and a megaphone. Only chirping birds responded to their call. Then an officer in the RIME began to dial the cell phone numbers of members of Pablo’s front. José recreated the conversation for me:

**Officer:** I’m going to pass you to a friend of yours.

**Pablo:** What’s going on, compañero?
Two members of Pablo’s commission demobilized the following week.

The PowerPoint ends with a video of Pablo eating lunch with his mother and other family members. Knowing the backstory does not make the scenes of Pablo’s mother beaming with joy as she embraces him any less heartwarming. Pablo joined the FARC at the age of 15 and deserted at 36. Nicolás said, “Look at that, his mother’s love. He was her lost son.” The paternal figure of the state had dragged this prodigal son, lost to outlaw worlds, back to his mother’s arms.

When I met Pablo in the RIME’s air-conditioned library, he wore charcoal-colored jeans, a striped shirt, and large bee-eyed sunglasses. After explaining my research, I asked if he would grant me an interview. He asked a few questions, a quick cross-examination to ensure I was not affiliated with the guerrillas, and removed his sunglasses—a sign that I could proceed. He described the attack stoically: “They assaulted, shooting and bombarding. A girl was killed, and I was alone.” In the moment that Pablo turned himself in, he had visions of his own death at the hands of the military. What happened, however, was something else entirely. “They took me to the mall, the beach, things I never saw before,” Pablo said. “Imagine, I never saw the ocean, and they were saying, ‘Go in.’” At the age of 36, having lived in the Caribbean region his entire life, Pablo waded into the ocean and submerged himself in its salty water for the first time. With amazement in his voice, he said, “They asked me how I was feeling.”

The RIME set out to seduce Pablo, if more figuratively than it had seduced his sister. It paid for a hearty sancocho soup for his entire family, let him climb into a helicopter, and gave him a turkey on December 31. Nicolás acknowledged that his colleagues’ treatment of the demobilized is not always so kind. He contorted his face in mock anger and said, “Come here, you son of a bitch, give me the information,” to illustrate his point.

For Nicolás, the key to the process is spoiling deserters from the moment of first contact and, in a Machiavellian sense, caring for the demobilized in a way that exposes them to the pleasures of consumption. Nicolás boasted that the operation to demobilize Pablo had been “so effective that he still helps us, still advises us.”

While working at PAHD headquarters in 2007 and 2008, Nicolás learned the power of the gift, even if only a cell phone minute or a cigarette. The seductiveness of gifts and the exploitation of emotional bonds between guerrillas and their families are two of three axes of Nicolás’s demobilization strategy. The third is the crass persuasion of cash. Ministerial decree 22 of 2011 is an 18-page price list of what is to be paid to ex-combatants for collaborating with the government. A .50-caliber machine gun is rewarded with US$5,550; a dozen camouflaged pants, US$14; helping to demobilize a front leader, US$27,500. It did not surprise me when José said that the war college in Bogotá uses Operation Genuine as a case study. The operation combined age-old tactics of seduction with high-end GPS tracking devices and a well-calculated mix of threats, gifts, and cash.

Seven months after Pablo staggered down the mountainside to turn himself in, Brigadier General Jorge Eliecer Suárez Ortiz, who commanded the First Division, called a press conference to boast of the 40 demobilizations in his region that year: 29 from the FARC and 11 from the ELN. At the press conference, the military arrayed ex-combatants behind its senior leaders like human trophies (Iguarán 2012). Dressed in white shirts featuring the PAHD logo, the former guerrillas sat with their chins tucked to their chests and baseball caps pulled down over their eyes (fig. 3). The formation refashioned scenes of captured criminals, confiscated weaponry, and seized drugs marshaled for the cameras, a recursive trope (and arguably an organizing principle) of television news.

With the gaze of the demobilized guerrillas averted, the PAHD logo—a red heart claspings a white flag—is what pops out of the frame. The red heart evokes love and the white flag peace. Written across the white T-shirts is the PAHD’s slogan, “There’s another life, demobilization is the way out,” which highlights the individual volition of former combatants to abandon the insurgency. The question of will implicit in the slogan raises a series of provocative questions. To what extent have these prodigal sons returned to their families and to the state willingly, and to what extent have they been dragged back? What is the relationship between this image of former guerrillas arrayed like captured criminals and the photograph in which soldiers hold posters featuring childhood photographs of guerrilla fighters stamped with the slogan You Are My Child? And, crucially, what does it mean to instrumentalize love to dismember the guerrilla movement from within?

Target Intimacy

As Pablo’s case shows, the ostensibly separate realms of demobilization (persuasion) and combat (coercion) are so thoroughly intertwined that they cannot be disentangled. In Operation Genuine we see how the military exploits intimacy, particularly the bond between Pablo and his sister, to game a matrix of allegiance, paranoia, emotional bonds, and seduction to precipitate the desired betrayal. Love, in this instance, is opportunistic and seeks to subvert Che Guevara’s famous claim that love of one’s fellow citizens is the spirit of revolutionary praxis.28 In Colombia, the state’s counterrevolutionary project has operationalized love by constantly poking holes in

28. In a letter to the editor of the Uruguayan weekly Marcha, Che Guevara wrote, “The true revolutionary is guided by a great feeling of love. It is impossible to think of a genuine revolutionary lacking this quality” (1989 [1965]).
the guerrilla’s morale by fanning the embers of family ties left smoldering beneath the FARC’s efforts to supplant kin relations with camaraderie. Operation Genuine hinged on Pablo’s sister’s love for her brother and her intimacy with a covert agent. Though such sentimental exploitation is nothing new in the history of warfare, what is interesting is how this move tracks with Lowe/SSP3’s You Are My Child campaign. What I want to explore is the convergence between these two respective militarizations of love.

In 2012 I spoke with Juan Pablo, a young, sophisticated account manager who handles Lowe/SSP3’s business with the PAHD. He understood the importance of military pressure in the demobilization process through the theory of the “hierarchy of needs” developed by Abraham Maslow, a mid-twentieth-century American psychologist. Maslow’s tiered system, extraordinarily influential in consumer marketing, establishes a pyramid of human needs that, when fulfilled, enable what Maslow called “self-actualization” (1943). The hierarchy goes from the basic physiological needs of eating, sleeping, and breathing, at the bottom, to creativity, morality, and problem solving at the top. Juan Pablo explained the division of labor between soldiers and marketers. The military’s job was to attack the base of the pyramid. “When a helicopter is bombing every 3 days, your survival is in question. You don’t have food, it’s always wet, you can’t sleep, you’re sick.” The marketers saw their job as intervening on the third level of Maslow’s pyramid, “love and belonging.” “After we sufficiently attacked the base of the pyramid,” Juan Pablo said, “we jumped and attacked the third level.” Juan Pablo continued, noting that their Christmas campaigns were “done with an utterly emotional tone. It was a way of attacking the heart [of guerrilla fighters].”

This dual appropriation of intimacy in Colombian counterinsurgency correlates closely with a structural transformation in advanced capitalism, in which the creation of surplus value is tied to the production and exploitation of consumers’ affective investments in commodities. Here, too, love is the target. Kevin Roberts, the CEO of the advertising firm Saatchi & Saatchi, writes, “Lovemarks . . . represent the next step in the evolution of brands. Lovemarks are brands that are not simply respected and trusted, but loved” (Roberts 2004:74). Anthropologist Robert Foster writes that lovemarks “signal an emotional connection and attachment to a brand that goes beyond reason—and for which a premium price can be charged” (Foster 2007:708). As anthropologists of consumer culture William Mazzarella (2003, 2010), Robert Foster (2013), Kalman Applbaum (2003), and Constantine Nakassis (2013), among others, have shown, marketing channels consumers’ affective investment back into products. As marketers segment their targets into smaller niches, this exercise becomes increasingly invasive. The success or failure of emergent marketing tactics, as with wars waged principally through human intelligence, hinge on the ability to operate on increasingly personal levels. Of course, neither marketers nor generals work with true love

Figure 3. Demobilized guerrillas from FARC and ELN units in the Caribbean region arrayed before the cameras at a 2012 press conference. Image courtesy of Ministry of National Defense (Colombia). (A color version of this figure is available online.)

29. For a critique of how Maslow’s theory takes on evolutionary overtones as it is applied across geographic contexts in the marketing industry, see Applbaum (2000).
but, rather, exploit intimacy, critical moments of connection, and cathexis that might precipitate a decision—like abandoning the guerrilla movement.30

The PAHD’s dual targeting of intimacy is not without its consequences. Colombia’s demobilization program has become yet another front in the country’s 6-decade-long war, which—despite the peace accord of 2016—is currently mutating into its next iteration. As with other fronts, death surrounds it. A particularly tragic consequence of the policy is the way the FARC intimidates and sometimes kills family members of former rebels when deserters have successfully fled the region. Killing a family member is often the only means available to the insurgency to stanch the flow of critical intelligence that the demobilized provide their enemy. In a focus group organized by Lowe/SSP3 that I attended, one former guerrilla put it bluntly: “Before, the FARC didn’t mess with the family. Not anymore.” As the deceptions of war became more baroque, the demobilized and their kin were pushed into the conflict’s imperceptible frontlines.

In contrast to the United Nations’ vision of demobilization policy as a means of extricating people from an armed conflict, the intelligence emphasis of Colombia’s individual demobilization program flips combatants to a different side of the war.31 With the covert war hidden from public view, the compassionate, conciliatory, “humanitarian” image of the demobilization program as established in the hypervisible corporatized propaganda of mass-media campaigns such as You Are My Child is left unchallenged. Yet the state’s elaborate effort to game the matrix of what can and what cannot be made visible falls apart upon listening to the life histories of former guerrillas. Consider the case of Sergio. He deserted from the FARC, as had many of his siblings. Of the dozens of life-history interviews I conducted with former guerrillas, his was perhaps the darkest. The sheer quantity of deaths in his family on account of the war was staggering, which led me to ask how many members of his family the FARC had killed.

Sergio: Yeah, in the generation, and that’s on top of those who have been killed by the paramilitaries. Those who [the FARC] killed sympathized with them. They say they’re informants, that they’re twisted just because they step working with them—so they shoot them for not helping. They killed seven of my uncle’s children. [Emphasis added.]

The FARC killed Sergio’s father after the group failed to assassinate Sergio. In a recurrent dream, his father speaks to him from a coffin and urges him to be careful.

From the perspective of the Colombian security state, the deaths in Sergio’s family, due to blowback from the PAHD’s classified actions that turn demobilized fighters into informants, are acceptable collateral damage for a fountain of intelligence that the demobilized provide. Between 2003 and 2016, the period from the PAHD’s conception to its de facto supersession by the peace accord,32 the FARC’s military influence waned in all but a few regions where the guerrillas historically served as the de facto authority. The military’s battlefield success is due, in part, to the way that the individual demobilization program picks apart entire military structures from within. After Pablo demobilized, for example, the Twelfth Front went into receivership of the larger and more cohesive Fortieth Front. From a counterinsurgency perspective, the militarization of intimacy has proven effective. This, in turn, has enabled Colombian officers to make the case to their US patrons that American expenditures in the late 1990s and early 2000s have paid dividends and that the military is worthy of ongoing investment (Tate 2015).

The PAHD extends a Latin American tradition of serving as “empire’s workshop,” a zone where the United States can experiment with strategies and tactics for maintaining its hegemony in contexts where the stakes are lower than in the geopolitical flash points of empire such as Afghanistan, Iraq, and Iran (Grandin 2006; Priest 2013). In 2007, the Rand Corporation wrote a report to the US Joint Forces Command titled Enlisting Madison Avenue: The Marketing Approach to Earn- ing Popular Support in Theaters of Operation (Helmus, Paul, and Glenn 2007). Although the publication of the US Army’s counterinsurgency field manual a year earlier had been received with widespread publicity and controversy, the Rand report passed almost entirely unnoticed by scholars and journalists. Its authors write: “Like commercial firms that must update unattractive brand identities, so too should the United States consider updating its military’s brand identity to suit local units that are involved with Colombia’s premier illegal economies: drug trafficking, illegal mining, extortion, and kidnapping.

30. The FARC’s statutes make clear that abandoning the movement is cause for a revolutionary trial (which often leads to execution). Only in rare cases has the group received deserters back into its ranks.
31. As I show in chap. 4 of Guerrilla Marketing (Fattal 2018), the logic of side-switching, implicit in Colombia’s individual demobilization program, surges to the fore when former combatants’ economic reintegration falters and they find themselves broke and broken by their trial-by-fire induction into the wiles of savage capitalism in Colombian cities. Narco-paramilitary groups that control the marginal barrios that ring major cities often recruit former guerrillas, offering them a way to transcend their abjection through remobilization.
32. Nonetheless, the PAHD continues into the postaccord moment as a means of debilitating the National Liberation Army (ELN), a smaller Guevarist rebel group that has gained strength since the peace accord. I suspect that the PAHD also helps provide intelligence on dissident FARC units that do not ascribe to the peace agreement and continue to operate as local units that are involved with Colombia’s premier illegal economies: drug trafficking, illegal mining, extortion, and kidnapping.
current and future operational environments” (Helmus, Paul, and Glenn 2007:xvi). Whereas military strategists in the United States were theorizing about how to reposition the US military’s brand in the mid-2000s, the Colombian military was doing it. While the US Army was employing social scientists as part of a cultural (re)turn in counterinsurgency strategy, the Colombian government was deploying marketers—arguably the principal culture producers of our age—and receiving fanfare as opposed to critical opposition. (Lowe/SSP3 has received more than 60 industry awards for its work for the Ministry of Defense.) Working in tandem, the marketers and the military have militarized intimacy by operating on the cultural field and social structure, respectively.

Now that the Colombian government and the FARC have signed a peace agreement, the government is intensifying its diplomatic efforts to persuade other war-torn nations (and the foreign powers backing elements in those nations) that it has cracked the formula for ending intractable civil wars (even as political and criminal violence continue to scar the country). The claim is falling on receptive ears as the specter of the Cold War grows in the Middle East and the Global War on Terror becomes not only a self-fulfilling prophecy but also a self-perpetuating phenomenon. To complement its fawning piece on Lowe/SSP3’s work with the Colombian military, CBS’s 60 Minutes uploaded to its website an interview with producer Alan Goldberg about his experience making the segment. He concluded by saying, “Who knows what will happen after our report airs. Maybe Sokoloff’s [the featured partner of Lowe/SSP3] phone will be ringing off the hook from other governments looking for a way to solve their wars” (McCandless 2016). Goldberg is not wrong to think that the transnational circulation of Colombia’s brand of nonwar warfare—that is, warfare that masquerades as a postconflict intervention—is poised to reproduce. What he does not and cannot see are its consequences, how the government’s targeting of intimacy and instrumentalization of love have contributed to the militarization of sociocultural life. Colombia’s conflation of times of war and times of peace offers a cautionary tale for the global moment. In this article I have extended critical scholarship on the tactical dimensions of the hot peace of the Global War on Terror, pointing to yet another way in which war and peace comingle without clear temporal or spatial delineations. In conclusion, I would like to suggest that the fusion of militarism and marketing in Colombia illuminates the emergence of affective governance in the expansive, indeterminate zone between war and peace. That may sound grandiose, but in actuality it is all too personal. Scholars would do well to pay closer attention to the politics of targeting and the subtle movements of a variety of crosshairs into increasingly intimate realms.

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Unburials, Generals, and Phantom Militarism
Engaging with the Spanish Civil War Legacy

by Francisco Ferrándiz

Online enhancements: supplemental figures

This paper is based on a 16-year-long ethnography of mass grave exhumations in contemporary Spain and deals with the tortuous, painful, much-disputed, and incomplete unmaking of a concrete and massive militaristic inscription of Spain: that related to its last internal war (1936–1939) and subsequent dictatorship (1939–1975). To understand this process and its historical roots, the paper first dissects the formation of a “funerary apartheid” in the country since the end of the war. Second, it analyzes the impact on the social fabric of the mass grave exhumations of Republican civilians that started in the year 2000. Third, it traces how these disinterments have intersected with Spain’s most prominent Francoist stronghold, the Valley of the Fallen, and threaten the dictator’s burial place. Finally, it discusses the parallel dismantling of the dictatorship’s official statuary that once presided over prominent public spaces in many cities and some military quarters. It argues that rolling back militarization by dismantling war-derived cartographies of death, challenging military burial arrangements, or degrading statues of generals necessarily involves a certain level of remilitarizing by other means. I call this mirroring and deeply embodied memorial backfiring “phantom militarism.”

Overture

In Baraka, a 2007 documentary on his wheeling and dealing around Francisco Franco’s official statuary and its production process, iconoclast artist Fernando Sánchez Castillo discloses the origins of one dubious bodily trace that came into his hands by chance, encapsulating many of the tensions lingering in Spain’s contemporary relationship with its 1936–1939 Civil War and 1939–1975 dictatorship. The story goes like this: in November 1975, when preparing funerary masks after the dictator’s death, one of the casting technicians managed to pull out two eyelashes from a cast where they had stuck. According to this unverified story, he stored the generalissimo’s eyelashes in a plastic cigarette pack container for decades as a curiosity. After disclosing this to Sánchez Castillo in a video, he offered the eyelashes to him. The artist then proposed an economic transaction, one that transformed these uncanny traces of Franco’s body into a devalued political commodity. What are two eyelashes of a dictator worth? Sánchez Castillo then put these hairs on the art market in military style, amplified by a magnifying glass and protected by a 400-kg urn made of double bulletproof glass and iron beams. The genetic material in the hair follicles could offer the possibility of DNA analysis, scientifically resolving the contentious issue of the dictator’s infertility—linked to serious injuries he received in a skirmish in the African colonial wars in 1916—and the lingering gossip as to the true father of his recently deceased only daughter, Carmen. In the artist’s words, “It is curious how a pair of eyelashes could change many aspects of this country’s history, provoking a small convulsion among nostalgic followers... What fascinates me is the potential power of such a small object, its repercussions and legal status, and the entire possibility of transforming the dominant history of virility, the family and the conception of the State as it exists in totalitarian regimes” (Mosquera 2015: 276). Despite touring leading art fairs, the dictator’s would-be eyelashes have so far found no buyers (see fig. 1).

This provocative art piece, which swings between relic, fetish, and fake, is a burlesque expression of the tremendous power that Franco’s phantom, albeit collapsed into two unauthorized bodily traces, still has to mobilize emotions and political tensions in contemporary Spain, more than 40 years after his death. Meanwhile, his funerary mask and a cast of his hands are still on display in Toledo’s Army Museum, while since his death in November 1975 his remains have been resting peacefully in an oft-visited tomb in the gigantic pantheon in the Valley of the Fallen, isolated from the outside world by a 1.5-ton tombstone behind the Basilica’s altar. Franco’s lingering shadow still reigns

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1. Baraka, a state of grace or charisma in Arabic, refers to the nickname given to Franco by Moroccan troops because of his good luck in combat during the African colonial wars (Preston 1993:46).

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from this now-controversial monument, merging his regime’s undisguised militarism with conservative Catholic ornamentation.

This paper is based on a 16-year-long ethnography of mass grave exhumations in contemporary Spain and deals with the tortuous, painful, much-disputed, and incomplete unmaking of a concrete and massive militaristic inscription of Spain: that related to its last internal war (1936–1939) and subsequent dictatorship (1939–1975). To understand the intricacy of this process and its historical roots, it first dissects the formation of a “funerary apartheid” in the country since the end of the war, where the dictatorial regime increasingly forced the corpses of the winners and losers to inhabit two quite different spaces of death (Taussig 1987), as necropolitics became a salient feature in the architecture of national sovereignty (Mbembe 2003). Second, it analyzes the shocking impact on the social fabric of the mass grave exhumations of Republican civilians that started in the year 2000, as part of a broader social movement challenging the impunity of Francoist crimes. Franco’s forgotten victims, in the form of unburied wounded skeletons, started posing uncomfortable questions about the scope and depth of Franco’s legacy and the enduring impunity machine still covering it up decades after his death. This bottom-up process, initially driven by the grandchildren of those defeated in the war, defied public institutions and the judicial system’s capacity to respond and provoked surprising aftereffects that have brought to light profound contradictions in Spain’s relationship with its Civil War past. Third, as one crucial consequence, the paper traces how these politically charged twenty-first-century disinterments came to intersect with Spain’s most prominent Francoist stronghold, the Valley of the Fallen, and started to threaten both its patrimonial integrity, the status of its huge Civil War cemetery, and, very importantly, the dictator’s resting place behind the monument’s main altar. The disturbing finding that Republican civilians executed in the war could also be found in its subterranean crypts ignited a debate over the monument’s status. The pressure to remove Franco’s body from El Valle has unsettled the war-derived funerary hierarchy established during Francoism, especially the priority accorded to burial sites of other prominent generals participating in the 1936 coup d’état, whom public opinion growingly perceives as perpetrators of crimes against humanity (Ferrándiz 2014:205–259; Garibian 2016). Finally, it discusses yet another aftereffect of the exhumations and the mounting focus on the fate of the bodies of Franco and his generals, namely, the parallel dismantling of the dictatorship’s official statuary that had once presided over prominent public spaces in many cities and some military quarters.

This demilitarization process does not mean that Spain departs in any significant way from broader transnational processes where largely patriarchal military logics, technologies, and imaginaries increasingly seep into other nonmilitary dimensions of social life, right into the most intimate spaces of experience, creating tenacious reverberations and resisting undoing (Enloe 2007; Lutz 2001). In fact, rolling back militarization by dismantling war-derived cartographies of death, challenging military burial arrangements, or degrading statues of generals necessarily involves a certain level of remilitarizing by other means (Weiss 2018). I call this mirroring and deeply embodied memorial backfiring “phantom militarism.” As argued throughout the paper, this reflective militarism infiltrates the political memorial cultures accompanying the historical memory process, inevitably drenched by the warmongering traces, logics, and narratives unveiled in forensic grave disclosure based on crime scenes (Crossland 2002; Dziuban 2017; Renshaw 2011) or in the professional military careers and historically proven cruelty of rebel leaders under critical public scrutiny (Preston 1993). These ghostly resonances of the multiple manifestations of a specific military apparatus are not just spectral or metaphorical yet socially determinant forces. They are also grounded in concrete forms of materiality, be they injured skeletons, grandiose monuments, authoritative statues, or fleeting eyelashes (Gordon 1997; Kwon 2008; Labanyi 2002; Winter 1995). It is the resilience or fragility of this phantom militarism in the long term that marks the success or failure of a demilitarization process.

Beyond these uneasy Civil War traces exposed and challenged in the last 18 years, different levels of militarism coexist, flourish, and interlock in contemporary Spain, further restricting the undoing of militarism through the erasure of Franco’s traces. Security concerns are as rooted in Spanish public culture as in other similar European countries, particularly in relation to migratory issues and global Islamic
terrorism. A member of NATO, Spain is scaling up its military expenditure from 0.9% to 2% of its gross domestic product, despite the context of global economic crisis and drastic cuts to public services. The country is also a crucial node in Europe’s militaristic border fortification against immigrant flows from Africa (Suárez-Navaz 2015). The passing of the Law of Citizen Security in July 2015, restricting rights of expression and drastically extending state surveillance and punitive capabilities vis-à-vis its citizens, is another example of increasing militaristic seepage into public space and the everyday lives of its citizens. These developments have encountered considerable internal resistance in a country with significant antimilitaristic traditions cultivated in the opposition to the dictatorship, at least on the political left. Yet in the twenty-first century, except for the massive demonstrations against Spain’s involvement in the 2003 invasion of Iraq (which dovetailed in 2004 with the landslide defeat of the ruling right-wing party a few days after the 11M Islamic terrorist attacks on Madrid trains), none matches the scale of the political, symbolic, and technical efforts set in motion to uproot the lingering traces of Francoism’s anachronistic militarism.

On Funerary Militarism

The Spanish Civil War, originating in a military rebellion against the democratically elected Republican government on July 18, 1936, lasted for almost 3 years, leaving around 500,000 Spaniards dead. Around 300,000 were killed in combat, and up to 200,000 civilians were executed. These figures are only estimates, as there is still disagreement over casualties among historians, certain regions are understudied, and many data are still missing or difficult to access. As for the massive execution of civilians during the conflict, contemporary historiography places the numbers at around 55,000 killed in the Republican-controlled zone and as many as 150,000 in the rebel Nationalist zone during the war and the repression of the early postwar years (Ferrándiz 2013, 2015; Rodrigo 2008). To this figure, Paul Preston (2012:17) adds a further 20,000 executions after the war, not counting those who died from hunger and disease while trapped in a dense network of jails and concentration camps.

The killing sprees in the Republican and Nationalist zones were dramatic but differed significantly in numbers and scale. For Juliá (1999), “in the rebellious zone, repression and death had to do with the building of a new power; in the loyalist [to the Republic], repression and death were related to the collapse of any power” (25–26). General Emilio Mola, the main instigator and leader of the military uprising until his death in a plane crash in June 1937, openly referred to the insurgents’ plan in a meeting with municipal mayors in Navarra right after the coup: “It is crucial to create an atmosphere of terror. . . . We have to establish an overwhelming feeling of dominion eliminating without any scruple or reservation all those who do not think like us. No cowardice is allowed. If we hesitate and do not proceed with the utmost vigor, we will not win. Anybody hiding or protecting a communist or a Popular Front supporter [the left-wing coalition that won the 1936 elections] shall be executed” (Preston 2012:253). Drawing on Mola’s instructions and subsequent war edicts, radio broadcasts by coup leaders, and archival evidence, particularly death certificates and the bureaucratic records of kangaroo military courts (consejos de guerra), historian Javier Rodrigo (2008:42–49) also argues that there were crucial differences between the repressive actions on civilians carried out behind the front lines in Republican and Nationalist zones (see also Casanova 1999:159–177). According to Rodrigo (2008), the violence exercised by the Francoists responded to a well-designed “terror investment” (95) associated with a profoundly militaristic “blood pedagogy” (73), designed to paralyze the opponent during the war and inhibit any political or military response in its aftermath.

After the war ended on April 1, 1939, Franco shifted his attention from open battleground conflict and extensive rear-guard killing to other forms of repression and containment of the enemy in jails and concentration camps, as well as to trials, purges, forced labor, evictions, expropriation of property, and so on (Gómez Bravo 2017; Preston 1993; Rodrigo 2005). But he also looked to celebration, commemoration, and, very importantly for the core argument of this paper, honorable relocation of those who were killed on the Nationalist side, both on the front lines or in the rear guard. During the early postwar years, the state issued abundant funerary legislation specifically affecting the corpses claimed by the dictatorship. Meanwhile, the bodies of the defeated—expelled from the legitimate community of the war dead as “reds,” “Marxist hordes,” and ultimately “traitors” to their country—continued to accumulate in mass graves and remained outside lawmakers, ignored and excluded from the triumphant military-politico-religious project of a New Spain. The formation of a funerary apartheid, establishing asymmetrical connections between territory and necropower, therefore became a cornerstone in the construction of dictatorial sovereign control of the country (Mbembe 2003; Robben 2015).

The first wave of civilian exhumations took place immediately after the war, as part of the mourning for losses on the winning side, national reconstruction, and the organization of the new dictatorial militarized state (see fig. S1; figs. S1–S15 are available online). Both the military forces and core forensic institutions participated in hundreds of unburials and identifications, and the central government issued formal instructions to prevent spontaneous diggings (Ferrándiz 2014:145–155; Solé i Barjau 2008:96–102). In an unparalleled high point in November 1939, José Antonio Primo de Rivera, the founder of Falange (Spain’s main Fascist party) was dramatically paraded for almost 500 km over 10 days as his coffin was carried on the shoulders of his followers from his tomb in Alicante to the monastery of El Escorial, the most distinguished symbol of the Spanish monarchy and empire, where he was reburied in the Basilica above the Royal Pantheon (Box 2009). Many others
were reburied with religious and military honors in local cemeteries, occupying visible priority pantheons that can still be seen today (fig. S2). Plaques with the names of those “Fallen for God and Spain”—always presided over by the name of José Antonio, “martyr of martyrs”—were placed outside church walls in almost every village in the country, refreshing a centuries-deep alliance between nation, military, and Catholic Church.

As years went by, in parallel with the consolidation of the dictatorship and the honorable relocation of the mass graves of the victors, the country underwent an exhaustive militarization of its public spaces. Monuments to the memory of Francoist war martyrs were inaugurated everywhere. Streets were named after military officials and heroes across Spain. The sites of heroic battles were preserved in ruins, transformed into symbols of resilience and triumph (Viejo-Rose 2011:45–104). Roman-style equestrian statues of Franco were placed in prominent locations in Spanish cities. A triumphal arch commemorating the military victory was erected in one of Madrid’s main gateways (fig. S3). If the 3-year fratricidal war had not already generated enough combat, repression, executions, military operations, and long lines of terrorized civilians painfully shuffling into exile, Spain was now thoroughly reinscribed by a militarized symbolic and political logic. The memorial choreography of the war dead took place within a pervasive official narrative of military victory anchored in the concepts of religious crusade, heroism, and martyrdom—known in Spanish political history as National Catholicism—where the cult to the fallen played a predominant role in refashioning the new political body (Aguilar 2000; Box 2009, 2010). Many of these pantheons, plaques, monuments, and other heterogeneous infrastructures are still in their original locations in contemporary Spain, albeit now heavily questioned by sectors on the political left (Rubin 2018).

In 1959, 20 years after the end of the conflict, a new wave of unburials was to stir the Civil War dead, reinscribing worn-out religious and militaristic notions of martyrdom, sacrifice, and patriotism in the corpses of many war winners and generating further funerary slippage between the death spaces of triumphant and defeated. Over two decades, more than 33,000 bodies, both military and civilian, were dug up from burial locations across Spain and transferred to subterranean crypts in the Valley of the Fallen (Olmeda 2009). An early arrival was José Antonio Primo de Rivera, transferred from the monastery of El Escorial and ceremoniously placed before the main altar. For 15 years, he presided over the monument on his own, as the side crypts were filled with thousands of bodies of diverse origin. It was an honor he was to share as of November 1975, when, after a heavily militarized state funeral, the Valley became the burial place of Franco himself, who was placed behind the main altar, creating a politically charged funerary axis with Primo de Rivera (fig. S4). The fact that both men had died on November 20, albeit 49 years apart, consolidated a powerful commemorative date for the victors. The arrival of the dictator’s remains in El Valle unequivocally sealed the monument as Spain’s chief Francoist stronghold. Although most were brought during the 1960s, bodies from all over the country continued to arrive in the Valley until 1983 (see fig. 2).

Meanwhile, the vast majority of mass graves containing Republican loyalists—which continued to grow in the postwar years as a result of a repression that lasted well beyond the limits

Figure 2. Bottom-up view of the Valley of the Fallen, showing Franco’s emblem and the huge cross topping the subterranean Basilica. Photograph by the author. A color version of this figure is available online.
of the formal conflict—remained abandoned in miscellaneous locations outside cemeteries (at times right outside the wall) or in “second-class” civil sections of formal burial grounds. This topography of death was initially the result of a funerary punishment meted out in addition to the killing of people who were thus expelled not only from the legitimate community of the living by means of summary executions but also from the community of the dead by inappropriate or dishonorable burial. These undignified graves, outside conventional funerary spaces and ignored by postwar reburial laws, carried an admonitory message to potential political dissidents. As decades passed, some of these unprotected mass graves slid progressively into public secrecy, while others simply vanished. In cemeteries, bones frequently ended up in mixed ossuaries during refurbishments and relocations. Meanwhile, an unknown number of outdoor mass graves have been destroyed under Spain’s infrastructure modernization and real estate development, which entailed freeways, high-speed trains, urban and rural development, and general landscape transformation (fig. S5).

Oral testimonies from elderly people suggest that a small number of graves were furtively opened by relatives during the war itself and the subsequent dictatorship and the bodies clandestinely reburied in family pantheons in cemeteries. After Franco’s death in 1975, relatives conducted many exhumations with little institutional or technical support and limited media attention, within the framework of the emerging political cultures accompanying the transition to democracy. These local unburials—some followed by massive reburials in municipal cemeteries—gave those defeated in the war a crucial glimpse of public visibility after decades of erasure affecting both the executed and the survivors and initiated the process of acknowledgment and commemoration of their decades-long suffering and marginalization (see fig. S6; Aguilar 2017; Aguilar and Ferrándiz 2015; de Kerangat 2017; Mateo and de Kerangat 2018).

Franco’s Militarist Imprint under Siege

In his 1969 Christmas speech, approaching death, Franco reassured supporters that his militaristic legacy was “sewn up, all sewn up” (atado y bien atado) with the recent designation by parliament of Prince Juan Carlos de Borbón as his successor. A new monarchy was to emerge from his glorious military victory and dictatorial regime. There was at least some truth to this. His dictum is still recalled in public debates whenever a progressive initiative is successfully blocked or resisted by his political heirs. It is a fact that Spain is still struggling to fully get rid of the conspicuous traces of a dictatorial militarism dating back to the 1930s and that certain conservative forces that originated and flourished during Francoism remain strong in democratic guise, particularly in the political and legal arenas, as well as in powerful sectors of the Catholic Church. Paradoxically, the armed forces, heavily reformed during the tenure of Socialist president Felipe González (1982–1996), are credited by international observers such as Pablo de Greiff (2014:5–7), the UN’s Special Rapporteur on the Promotion of Truth, Justice, Reparation, and Guarantees of Non-recurrence, with a more professional and politically neutral role, except for some vanishing—though tenacious—nostalgic right-wing pockets.

To cut a complex debate short, in Spain’s transition to democracy (1975–1982), the dominant driving force was that of reconciliation, and the crimes committed by the rebellious army and paramilitaries during the war and later during Francoist were purposefully “thrown into oblivion” for the sake of peaceful coexistence, as Santos Juliá (2003), a highly influential Socialist historian, has put it (Ferrándiz 2008). An Amnesty Law passed in 1977 secured impunity for Francoist crimes. Despite these major concessions by the descendants of the defeated, a failed military coup in 1981—during which the parliament was taken by civil guards during the investiture of Prime Minister Calvo Sotelo and the city of Valencia, occupied by tanks, was declared to be in a state of emergency—sent shivers down the collective spine, reminding the country that the army remained vigilant and ready to restore order if necessary (fig. S7). As years went by, Spain’s transition, deemed exemplary across the world, was thoroughly studied by political scientists and even became a model to export (Aguilar 2000; Bermeo 1997; Encarnación 2012; Gunther 1992).

Yet troubling turn-of-the-century events—when the grandchildren of those defeated in the war began to revisit the repression of civilians by Franco’s army and paramilitary—threatened to destabilize these consensually sanitized perceptions of the Civil War, dictatorship, and transition to democracy (Labrador 2017; Sánchez León and Izquierdo 2017). In October 2000, sociologist and journalist Emilio Silva opened the latest chapter in Spain’s Civil War unburials when he promoted the exhumation of a Republican mass grave in Priaranza del Bierzo (León) containing the body of his grandfather and 12 others (fig. S8). Led by technical experts, it set off a dizzying wave of excavations and reburials, increasingly linked to the global expansion of human rights protocols to promote truth, justice, and reparation for victims (Ferrándiz 2014; Ferrándiz and Robben 2015; Silva and Macías 2003; Wagner 2008).

A political and media storm regarding the proper handling of these anachronistic and highly disturbing bodies struck Spain in the following years, with international repercussions. The political right wing, in good part heir of the dictatorship’s political elites, loudly resisted this emergent process, arguing that reconciliation from the painful conflict had been satisfactorily achieved during the transition to democracy and that looking back amounted to the unnecessary opening of old wounds. Despite such staunch opposition, exhumations multiplied in the following years, mostly promoted by the grandchildren and later the great-grandchildren of executed Republicans, originating what Rojas-Pérez (2017) has defined as a new and alternative “necro-governmentality of postconflict,” altering “the wartime relationship between the geography of violence and the geography of memory” (259).

The main developments in Spain since the decisive Priaranza unburial can be summarized as follows: the passing in 2007 of a Memory Law to “recognize and increase rights and establish
measures in favor of those who suffered persecution and violence during the Civil War and the Dictatorship” (BOE 2007) by a Socialist government after heated debates in parliament and more generally in the public sphere; the unsuccessful attempt in 2008 by Judge Baltasar Garzón—internationally renowned for issuing an arrest warrant against Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet for genocide, international terrorism, torture, and forced disappearances in 1998 (Golob 2002)—to connect the Spanish case with international human rights law by reframing Francoist repression as crimes against humanity (see fig. S9; Ferrándiz 2014:205–259); the judicial testimony of victims of Francoism in the Supreme Court during Garzón’s trial for malfeasance; the development of memorial institutions in some of Spain’s autonomous communities, with uneven scope and results; a second lawsuit filed in 2010 by a number of Spanish associations for the recovery of historical memory and victims in Argentina regarding crimes against humanity committed during the Civil War and Francoism under international law (known as Querella Argentina; the 2011 appointment by the government of a Commission of Experts, in which I participated, to decide the fate of Francisco Franco’s tomb and the controversial monument housing it; and the uneven and largely disconnected drafting of regional memory policies in certain parts of Spain, affecting the exhumation of mass graves, the recognition of the suffering of diverse types of victims, the removal of physical traces of apology to Francoism, and the memorialization of anti-Francoist resistance, among other controversial topics (Basque Country, Andalusia, Catalonia, Navarra, and others).

In the 2005–2011 period, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero’s Socialist government funneled more than €20 million of state public funding to support exhumations and other commemorative activities related to rescuing the memory of the war’s defeated (see fig. S10), although a tiny part was also assigned to projects pursuing the promotion of the “other” memory, as some authors now refer to the memory of the Francoist winners (García Alonso 2018; Salas 2006). During this period, unburials and reburials, documentaries, commemorative monuments, local research on repression, conferences, and acts of tribute proliferated, as other traces of the Francoist regime started to be called into question. The online initiative Hunt a Fascist Monument, launched by one major memorial association, Foro por la Memoria, is a good example.4 But when the right-wing Partido Popular (PP) came to power in December 2011, state funding for exhumations and related Civil War memorial activities ceased completely. Spain’s prime minister in the period 2011–2018, Mariano Rajoy, publicly stated his disdain for the Memory Law and his intention to starve it to death economically. In all, since 2000, more than 740 mass graves have been opened and over 9,000 bodies have been unearthed (Francisco Etxeberria, personal conversation, December 2018).

Whatever the political leanings of the party in power, the Spanish case became increasingly entangled with transnational human rights processes, a connection promoted by many sectors of the associative movement and skillfully dodged by successive governments. In 2014, two UN reports (by the Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances and the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion of Truth, Justice, Reparation, and Guarantees of Non-recurrence) admonished the Spanish state for refusing to frame these unburials—and the bigger issue of crimes against humanity committed during the war and the dictatorship—within international human rights legislation and transitional justice frameworks. They demanded, to no avail, that the state acknowledge these crimes as forced disappearances, assuming the responsibility to investigate all of them (de Greiff 2014). Although the dominant memorial mode in Spain is connected to this mainstream “cosmopolitan” abstract and apolitical victim-centered human rights culture, there are also traces of what Cento Bull and Lauge (2016) have called “agonistic memory,” a reflexive memorial frame that—departing from standard cosmopolitanism—fosters the contextualization and politicization of memory struggles and aims at building counterhegemonic narratives of the past in a dialogic and controversial public space (Ferrándiz and Hristova 2018).

The history of the bullet-riddled bodies now retrieved began with denunciations, arrests, jails, military trials, tortures and mistreatment, executions, and hasty mass grave burials several decades ago. All of these repressive techniques are to be understood as instruments of a generalized political terror that was an integral part of Franco’s military strategy: to sow fear and eliminate dissidence as his troops took control of the country. Thus, the memory work around mass graves and the exhumation and reburial of the executed skeletons raises the highest stakes, as it necessarily unmakes a systematic form of military sovereign domination that included the intentionally offensive placement of executed cadavers in unnamed ditches.

This process of reclamation required the bodies’ relocation within a legitimate funerary and memorial cartography. Yet initially, for many families and memorial associations, it was not easy to know how to deal with the unexpected homing of 60- or 70-year-old skeletons inscribed with decades-old repressive violence, in a context of full media visibility and in a highly politicized and confrontational social environment. None of the available funerary arrangements provided either by the Church—Spain’s main provider in this respect, albeit one strongly rejected by many associations due to its complicity with the dictatorship and the very crimes unearthed—or by the funeral homes’ service charts could properly accommodate, as a general principle, these unsettling corpses rescued in extremis from oblivion and destruction.5

Most activists and relatives involved in the internally diverse and troubled memorial social movement agree that unburials and reburials make sense only if those executed during the war and postwar and later abandoned and mistreated by the nation for decades are somehow “dignified” in the process. Yet there are crucial disagreements on how to proceed—technically, politically, and symbolically—with the undoing and re-


5. On the development of funerary arrangements for exhumed bodies, see Ferrándiz (2018).
location of this stigmatized space of death (Ferrándiz 2014:191–203). Early initiatives to commemorate and resignify mass graves without unburials or public exposure of the bones were soon sidelined by the success of a body-centric forensic turn in the memory-recovery associative field after 2000, as technical exhumations accumulated, archeologists and forensic doctors became crucial interpreters of the Civil War and postwar repression, and the executed skeletons took center stage in memorial practices, public debates, and the media, including the new digital media (fig. S11; Dziuban 2017; Ferrándiz 2016; Ferrándiz and Baer 2008). Ironically, due to the 1977 Amnesty Law and the statute of limitations in Spanish criminal law (20 years), in the absence of the kind of legal framework for the exhumations that exists in countries such as Argentina or Bosnia (Robben 2015; Wagner 2008), forensic interventions are carried out in an “as if” mode, creating the legal fiction that some justice is being done. That is, although in many cases forensic doctors write internationally approvable scientific reports on the exhumations, they have no legal value as of today—though they could be legally reactivated as evidence if in the future there were some sort of trial of Francoist crimes. That they have no current legal status does not detract from their social and symbolic efficacy for relatives, as they provide powerful scientific evidence that they were large-scale, thus undermining revisionist approaches to the war and the dictatorship.6

In this eye-catching bare-bones forensic scenography, wounded human remains; premortem, perimortem, and postmortem violence traces; coups de grâce; calibers; ammunition shells; tying ropes and wires; blindfolds; quicklime; and personal objects came to express the ground zero of Franco’s militaristic repression, often overshadowing other alternative narratives of the past (Anstett and Dreyfus 2015; Crossland and Joyce 2015; Davis 2017; Dziuban 2017; Ferrándiz 2013; Ferrándiz and Robben 2015; Rosenblatt 2015; Weizman 2012). Transmission of this forensic connection to the past occurs in diverse ways: in the “mobile seminars” where experts give attendees their interpretation of the day’s scientific progress at the exhumations (Bevernage and Colaert 2014), in PowerPoint presentations that have become an integral part of the return ceremonies, or in the flow of scientific data to different types of nonofficial archives, either personal, familial, or managed by memorial associations (Aragüete-Toribio 2017), to name some relevant ones (see fig. 3). In this authoritative evidence-driven interpretative framework where forensic medicine becomes the crucial memory science and the crime scene—in its crimes against humanity version—logics and aesthetics develop into a salient access point to the violent past in public space, and the violent repression inscribed in the executed civilians lying in the graves necessarily colors the memorial culture that attempts to dismantle it (fig. S12; Hacking 1996; Keenan and Weizman 2012).

The (Now Unquiet) Resting Place of the Generalissimo

A 2003 exhumation of a mass grave in the province of Ávila turned the Valley of the Fallen into a very uncomfortable hot

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6. On the different types and epistemologies of evidence at exhumations, see Crossland (2013).
spot, directly connected to the emerging unburial process. When technicians attempted to exhum the grave, they were unable to find more than a few broken, scattered bones, suggesting that a previous and rather careless excavation had actually taken place. Fausto Canales was the driving force behind this 2003 exhumation, when searching for his father and six fellow residents from the village of Pajares de Adaja, all members of the local Socialist Party, killed in 1936 by Falange paramilitary. A retired engineer, he undertook private investigations after the exhumation fiasco, finding evidence that the bodies had been moved to the Valley in 1959. The case was particularly striking because it was the first documented example that a Republican mass grave had been raided without the relatives’ knowledge during Francoism to help fill up the Valley’s crypts. Many local officers had been under pressure to contribute bodies to the Francoist monument and saw this as an opportunity to erase awkward evidence pointing to the embarrassing killing of neighbors during the war (Olmeda 2009). The discovery was a bombshell, bringing Fausto Canales media attention both at home and abroad and transforming him into a symbol of courage and resilience for historical memory recovery associations, ranging from ephemeral local clusters of relatives of victims to full-fledged, legally constituted organizations with national implantation. Yet this was only part of a broader and equally striking public revelation—that the Valley’s crypts actually hosted more than 33,000 Civil War bodies, around 12,000 of them unknowns, an indeterminate number of which were executed Republican civilians.

As research provided more information on the genealogy and magnitude of the crypts, memorial activists, spearheaded by Canales, started filing legal injunctions for their relatives’ immediate exhumation from the Valley and return to their families. So far, these lawsuits have languished in religious, bureaucratic, political, and legal labyrinths and are threatened by counterlitigation for funerary profanation by the main association defending the Francoist essence of the Valley (Ferrándiz 2014:261–303). A firm legal ruling of 2016 authorizing the disinterment of anarchist brothers Manuel and Antonio Ramiro Lapeña from the town of Calatayud, executed in 1936 and transferred to the monument in 1959, initially hailed as historic, has met with “Kafkaesque” judicial, political, and technical obstacles, in the words of Manuel’s granddaughter (Ejerique 2016). By late 2018, its actual implementation seems remote if not impossible.

Keepers of the monument’s most hidden secrets, the Benedictine monks in charge of the monument and the cult of the dead transferred there since its inauguration by Franco in 1959, reacted quickly to preempt any attempt at unmaking the crypts. First, they argued that their own census might be wrong and that the actual number of bodies was probably double the number on file. Second, they conveyed to the press the impossibility of any kind of exhumation or individualized identification of remains, claiming that the leaks and seepage the monument had suffered over the decades had affected the crypts where the corpses were buried to such an extent that the ossuary had dissolved into the rock, making one body indistinguishable from another. An anonymous declaration by Valley sources states verbatim: “The remains were used to fill the internal chambers of the crypts and are now part of the building’s structure. Damp has done the rest.” It reads as a euphemism for the radical melting of biographical and political identities into one complex, contradictory, and indissoluble collective corpse, architecturally consolidated in the cement of the monument’s underground vaults (Junquera 2008). This powerful religious allegory would express, according to these sources, the definitive embrace of the “two Spains” under the welcoming arms of the huge cross: a truly devastating prospect for those opposed to preservation of the monument’s status quo, who are eager to open and clarify this subterranean cemetery.

Let’s rewind a few decades for a better understanding of why relatives of Republican victims are so disturbed by these developments regarding the monument they see as the staunchest and most extravagant stronghold of Francoism—in Canales’ words (personal conversation) a “cavern of horror” inconceivable in a democratic state. The Valley of the Fallen is Spain’s most conspicuous militarist-religious compound. The monument was visualized by Franco during the war to host the bodies of the victors, creating a permanent religious cult to commemorate their martyrdom and sacrifice, as suggested in the foundational decree signed by Franco in April 1, 1940:

The magnitude of our Crusade, the heroic sacrifices that victory entails, and the transcendence of this epopee for the future of Spain, cannot be perpetuated by the unassuming memorials commonly used in towns and villages to commemorate the outstanding deeds of our History and the glorious episodes of its sons.

The stones erected must be endowed with the splendor of ancient monuments, defying time and oblivion, and must constitute a place of meditation and rest where future generations can pay a tribute of admiration to those who left them a better Spain. (BOE 1940; translated by the author)

Parts of the monument imitate the imperial style created by the architect Juan de Herrera and canonized in the nearby monastery of El Escorial, built by Philip II in the sixteenth century, which currently houses the Royal Pantheon. Just 13 km apart, these two architectural power structures are joined by an umbilical cord connecting different imperial utopias. Indeed, Franco always sought to recast his military victory as a continuation of the Crusades and the Spanish Empire. To this day, both monuments are included on an “Imperial Route” in tourist itineraries. Christianity’s tallest cross soars 150 m above the Valley site, hewn into the granite hill. The subterranean Basílica is packed with a blend of Catholic and militaristic symbols, sealing a decades-long alliance (Casanova 2011 [2001]). Welcoming visitors at the entrance are two huge angels holding downward-pointing swords made
out of melted bronze cannons from the Civil War. The six side chapels in the central nave are dedicated to Virgins, each representing a different military force. The impressive tiled dome reviews Spain’s history as a Catholic country, featuring representations of the nation’s martyrs. One section alludes directly to the Civil War and its share of martyrs, where Francoist and Falangist flags are on full display.

Just before its formal inauguration on April 1, 1959, on the 20th anniversary of Franco’s military victory, one of the first bodies to be transferred to the monument, as we have seen, was that of Fascist leader Primo de Rivera, reexhumed from the monastery of El Escorial and placed before the Basilica’s main altar (fig. S13). The next few years saw a large-scale funerary parade of Civil War dead, with thousands of bodies—ranging from senior military officers to rank and file and civilians killed in the war—brought to the monument from different parts of Spain. In 1969, all of the 3,185 soldiers believed to be resting in the military cemetery of Griñón, a town close to Madrid, were transferred to the Valley (Olmeda 2009:281–284).

But the Valley’s militaristic profile was particularly sharpened in 1975. Although it is unclear how the decision to bury the generalissimo in the monument was reached, or if he had even agreed to it, on November 23 he was brought to the Pantheon after a 2-day vigil in the Royal Palace (Alia Fernández 2016). Buried in full dress uniform right behind the altar, he was set in a heroic axis with Primo de Rivera’s tomb. For decades, the Valley became the main site of militaristic nostalgia for bygone times on their shared death date of November 20. Although their numbers faded over time, groups of Francoist supporters and Falange members staged celebratory rituals, including military parades from Madrid to the Valley, Roman salutes, and the singing of Fascist anthems by the tombstones. In their outdated homilies, the Benedictines still pray daily for the salvation of Spain—symbolic elements, and predemocratic tone (BOE 2011). As a result of my on-going research on mass graves and long-standing relationship with memorial associations, I was a member of this body, to participate, to resolve the ongoing contradictions and tensions emanating from both the privileged burial sites in the Basilica and the huge underground cemetery.

In our Crypt Subcommission, we established that any transformation of the monument required radical elimination of the Francoist funerary hierarchy dominating the Valley, as this was the keystone of the broader funerary apartheid being dismantled in statewide exhumations since 2000. First, we argued, if the monument was truly to the Civil War dead, Franco had to be exhumed and handed over to his family for private burial. Next, Primo de Rivera should be moved to a side crypt, away from his privileged burial site. Finally, the cemetery should change its status from a pseudoreligious character into a special public cemetery under the full oversight of the state. This would facilitate exhumations like the ones demanded by the relatives of the Republicans surreptitiously buried there.

The commission’s three most conservative members signed a private vote against Franco’s exhumation from the Valley, warning of the social alarm that this would create in Spain and arguing that no such proposal existed anywhere else in Europe. Furthermore, as both leaders were buried on holy ground (in the Basilica), any removal had to abide by the 1979 agreement between the state and the Vatican, involving permission from the Pope and therefore tricky and delicate international diplomacy. In the extreme case that the unburial eventually occurred, the operation should be performed as befit a head of state. Since then, the inviolability of Franco’s tomb has become a major red line for a political right that shrinks away from claiming explicit ties with his military regime but actively resists every effort to dismantle its legacy. Yet for the first time since his death, Franco’s tomb had come under siege, as the very possibility of his removal entered public debate and periodically gives rise to bold media headlines. Parties on the left will not let the issue go. In May 2017, for example, the Spanish parliament passed a nonlegal proposal (PNL) to disinter Franco. As PNLs are not legally binding, the conservative government simply ignored the vote."


8. On May 11, 2017, the Socialist Party (PSOE), then in the political opposition, won a nonbinding majority vote in parliament calling for new impetus to be given to Spain’s historical memory policies and in particular to Franco’s exhumation from the Valley and the transfer of José Antonio Primo de Rivera to a nonpriority burial site in the monument, both initiatives that had been suggested in our Commission of Experts report of 2011. The PP conservative party, then in power, simply ignored the vote. One year later, on June 1, 2018, the Socialist Party took over the Spanish government after a corruption scandal hit the PP and Prime Minister Rajoy was forced to resign. Petitions to the Socialist Party to abide by its own proposal regarding Franco’s unburial were not long in coming. A powerful example was the opinion piece in El País by prestigious writer and journalist Manuel Vicent, who urged the new Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez to act swiftly on this matter. “If the new Socialist government needed a symbolic action with a high moral impact, this is it,” wrote Vicent, adding, “At this stage, it would be truly scandalous for the reverential fear inspired by the
So the generallissimo continues to cast his shadow from the afterlife, with his unconventional escort of more than 33,000 Civil War bodies. When our commission officially visited the Valley, accompanied by major state authorities, the Benedictines revealed their discomfort by remaining in their monastery to pray against our mission (and, allegedly, for the true soul of Spain; fig. S14). We were allowed to climb to the top of the huge cross and visit the impressive tiled subterranean vault. In the section specifically dedicated to war martyrs, one astounding optical illusion encapsulates the lingering threat of Franco’s military rule, depicting a tank that appears to move along with the observer on whom it seems to keep in its sights.

Yet the circle seems finally to be closing in on Franco’s resting place as his ironfisted militarist inscription of the country progressively comes apart and the fallout spreads from the mass grave exhumations of Republicans that started in 2000. This is directly affecting other senior members of his military entourage, with a rise in public consciousness of their role as the perpetrators of crimes against humanity and sight increasingly restored to the blind eye that political elites agreed to turn to the atrocities of Francoism during the transition to democracy. Late 2016 saw removal of the remains of Generals Emilio Mola—the true mastermind of the 1936 military rebellion—and José Sanjurjo—a recidivist putchist who had already made a previous attempt to overthrow the Republican government in 1932. Both killed in plane crashes during the war, they were reunited in the same mausoleum during the dictatorship and have now been exhumed from a crypt located below the Monument to the Fallen—now an exhibition center—in downtown Pamplona and returned to their relatives, amid heavy controversy. Although Mola’s disinterment on October 24 was more discreet, the conditions imposed by Sanjurjo’s relatives and the Church for disinerring his body on November 16, following tense negotiations and legal skirmishes with the City Council, were strict: the exhumation was to be carried out by religious and municipal personnel—thus excluding any forensic handling; it had to be registered by a notary, and no pictures were to be taken, much less reach the public domain. In a press release, Sanjurjo’s family expressed their “profound pain for the sub-

stance of the case, the form and purpose of the exhumation” (La Gaceta 2016). This major development in conservative Pamplona seemed unthinkable until 2015, when the City Council changed political hands and a Basque proindependence mayor came to power for the first time (Martínez Magdalena 2017; Ojer 2017). As part of the same process, 900 km away, the tomb of another top Francoist commander in a famous Basilica in Seville, General Gonzalo Queipo del Llano, is now also in the process of removal, as the city’s current Socialist mayor has yielded to pressure from the Andalusian historical memory movement that considers him guilty of genocide. General Queipo del Llano is known for his cruelty and incendiary radio broadcasts during the war, in which he openly called for indiscriminate rapes and killings, and had the ultimate responsibility for the ruthless wave of repression in Andalucia that resulted in the execution of thousands of civilians, including the well-known poet Federico García Lorca on August 18, 1936 (fig. S15; Espinosa 2000; Gibson 2005:174–175).

But despite the Pamplona unburials, the game was not over so soon. An unexpected development has revealed how Francoist militarism still persists in the labyrinths of Spain’s four-decade-old democracy. Only 3 months after his exhumation, Sanjurjo was secretly reburied with military honors in a military pantheon in the colonial town of Melilla on the northern coast of Africa, where he had been general commander. After this honorable reburial was leaked to the press, a source in the Spanish Defense Ministry was forced to acknowledge that Melilla’s mayor-president, local chief commander, and “a small commission” from the Ministry had all attended the ceremony (Europa Press 2017).

In the Interstices of Militarism: Warehouse Statuaries

The grandchildren of those defeated in the Civil War saw the exhumations and the prestigious resting places of leading Francoist military rebels as evidence of the lingering militarization of Spain’s public landscapes and urban spaces, and this awakening set off a parallel process designed to further dismantle the symbols, monuments, street names, and cartographies of Franco’s regime, coupled with the archaeological reinterpretation of abandoned Civil War traces linked to the defense of the Republic, such as ruins, trenches, weapon hideouts, or concentration camps (González Ruibal 2016). Some such political and symbolic refashioning had already been undertaken in the 1980s and 1990s during the tenure of certain left-wing mayors. Madrid’s two main arteries, renamed Avenida del Generalísimo and Avenida José Antonio Primo de Rivera after the war in an urban reflection of the funerary setup in El Valle, were themselves renamed Paseo de la Castellana and Gran Vía in 1980 and 1982, respectively. But these early resignifications of urban space, while crucial, did not achieve today’s scale. The political culture emerging from the mass grave unburials has expanded progressively to question all
vestiges of Francoism in public space, and the campaign against the dictatorship’s funerary spaces, territorial landmarks, and symbols is erupting in every corner of the country. Almost every village, town, or city in Spain is now engaged in a political battle to rename its streets, track the biographies of the historical figures represented in its sculptures, or remove plaques with lists of martyrs and the fallen in the Crusade “for God and Spain” from the external walls of churches. In an unintended phantom effect, public debate surrounding this aspect of Spain’s divisive past has also become significantly militarized.

In particular, the controversies around Franco’s equestrian statues, suddenly transformed into heavily contested “pariah heritage” and an explicit symbol of the irremissible decline of the Francoist political body, have been paramount in this struggle for the progressive demilitarization of public space. The Madrid statue was dismantled overnight in March 2005, amid some controversy, and brought by tow truck to a municipal warehouse escorted by the municipal police and covered with a canvas. Statues in Zaragoza, Santander, and Ferrol (Franco’s hometown) left their squares for similar destinations. Some nonequestrian statues were also removed after being vandalized, as in Guadalajara, near Madrid.

Particularly indicative of the predicaments of this statuary demilitarization is the bizarre story of a figure on display for some years in Montjuïc Castle, Barcelona’s seventeenth-century military fortress. The work of Catalonian sculptor Josep Viladomat, a former Republican exile, it was inaugurated by Franco himself in 1963 during an official visit to the city. In 1985, political activists painted it pink. A year later it was moved to Montjuïc’s Military Museum. Franco’s left leg had to be cut off, as the statue would not go through the storehouse door. In 2008, in connection with the broader drive to remove vestiges of Francoism from public spaces and buildings, it was definitively removed from the Montjuïc fortress altogether and transported to a municipal warehouse in the north of the city, where other Francoist objects were already stored away from public view. In 2013, a routine inspection discovered that the statue had been cleanly beheaded and that Franco’s head was—and still is—missing (Sancho 2016).

Finally, in October 2016, Barcelona’s new Historical Memory Commissioner, historian Ricard Vinyes, promoted an exhibition in the city’s emblematic Born Cultural and Memorial Center, where the beheaded statue was brought back to the public arena as part of a broader exhibition on the impunity of Francoism during Spain’s early democratic period. Called Impunity and Urban Space, the installation—conceptualized by its curators as an iconoclastic countermonument (Iniesta 2017; Young 1992)—was placed in the street, close to the center’s entrance, where Franco’s statue featured alongside an allegory of the war victory, which failed to attract as much attention. A significant public argument followed. For the organizers, bringing a beheaded statue of Franco into open public debate had a clear ironic, even iconoclastic twist, and the potential to foster critical reflection on the legacies of the war, on statues as complex processes, and on local complicity with the military dictatorship in Catalonia. Some opponents, many on the pro-independence political left, failed to appreciate the curators’ conceptual proposal, rejected the return to public space in whatever form of a statue that had been withdrawn only after considerable effort, and considered the display offensive to victims of the war and dictatorship, even accusing the organizers of apologia for Francoism.9

The controversy captured headlines around the country and was a trending topic on Twitter but did not last long. The headless statue was soon vandalized: a sex doll was placed on the horse’s back, and its rider was crowned with a pig’s head. When, on the fourth day of exhibition, it was toppled altogether by a group of proindependence political activists, it broke into several pieces. An instant emblem of public hostility to the legacy of Francoism, it was immediately brought back to yet another municipal warehouse in a garbage truck, continuing the dishonorable itinerary on which it had embarked at the outset. Many of the attacks and insults aimed at the statue were filmed by the organizers and incorporated into the Born exhibition (see fig. 4).

9. The Francisco Franco Foundation, on their part, labeled the exhibition a “barbarous witches’ coven” (eldiario.es 2016).
Fernando Sánchez Castillo’s artistic proposal plays on this carnivalesque territory in the interspaces of militarism, opening up new grounds to rethink Franco’s legacy and, beyond the specific history of Spain, the deep impact of military apparatuses and totalitarianism on contemporary consciousness. The exhibition of two of the dictator’s alleged eyelashes at leading art fairs—almost unnoticeable and weightless yet heavily protected, transformed into fetishes of the past (Barenblit 2015)—problematizes the lingering resilience of his legacy. But the most important part of Castillo’s critical art is devoted to questioning the political and emotional afterlives of statues linked to absolutist or dictatorial political power (Verdery 1999). In Spitting Leaders (2013), designed as a fountain, bronze busts of Louis XIV, Stalin, Franco, and Hitler spit water at one another. In National Episodes: Tactic, Sánchez Castillo brought blind people to feel two of the equestrian statues removed from the streets and now stored in municipal warehouses, including the Montjuïc figure, recently revandalized. In Madrid Treaty, presented at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, he placed a fake statue of Franco in what seems to be a mass grave but could equally be read as a bomb crater. The spectator does not know whether the statue is being buried or unburied, whether it is coming up or going down, or ultimately, whether Francoist militarism is fading or reemerging (see fig. 5; Sánchez Castillo 2015).

Military Disassemblage

Unmaking militaristic legacies is a daunting, lengthy, multi-leveled, incomplete, shadowy, and often frustrating task, in Spain or elsewhere. Franco, who fought and won a scorched-earth war and led an ironfisted 36-year-long dictatorship, is still deeply ingrained in Spanish institutional, political, symbolic, and emotional landscapes. After 40 years of democracy, opening abandoned mass graves, relocating generals, erasing the names of perpetrators from street maps, removing statues of a dictator, or dismantling politico-religious cults paying homage to a tyrant or his most prominent comrades still suffuses Spanish society with a surprising uneasiness. When the transition was hailed as a neat example of a clean democratization, none of this belated “warped mourning” process could even have been imagined (Etkind 2013). Yet this is the juncture at which Spain currently stands, caught up in an intense debate about the Civil War, the protracted dictatorship that followed it, and the scope and depth of its legacy of militarism. Opening the mass graves of the defeated and the increasing social and political pressure on the general’s burial sites and monuments are proving decisive tools in the historical, political, and emotional unlearning of Francoism, and yet they are also testimony to the endurance of its foundations and the historical and political depth of its terror machinery, deeply suffusing the me-

Figure 5. Tratado de Madrid (Madrid Treaty). Photograph courtesy of Fernando Sánchez Castillo. A color version of this figure is available online.
morial process as a lingering militaristic phantom. This de-militarization of Spanish society through exhumation practices and the questioning and removal of other Francoist traces or bodies is forcing the country to travel the depths of the physical wounds inscribed on the executed corpses and to detail the military honors invested in the burial arrangements of perpetrators. So too must this process critically decipher the corpses’ afterlives, from deep emotions to cyberspace, from artistic proposals to judicial resolutions, from fleeting biological traces to impregnable monuments, from political laws to grassroots commemorations, from statues to street name signs, from local dynamics within families or villages to transnational processes.

Above all, after 18 years of hectic hereafter, the exhumed bodies of those defeated in the Civil War have become crucial actors in the final dismantling of a political corpse that, though decaying, is still influential. The tensions, fissures, and backlash provoked by their uncontrollable flooding into civil society, the judicial system, political agendas, media circuits, emotional regimes, and the country’s historical consciousness are bound to extinguish the agonic breath of a vanishing military regime that in many senses has outlived its formal conclusion and is only now starting to lose its claim to impunity. Far from a necrophilic anecdote, the comeback of the executed Republicans is not just part of the history of Spain but part of the history of humankind, increasingly claiming a significant slot in the universal catalog of complicity between militarism and extensive human rights violations.

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Drone Warfare in Waziristan and the New Military Humanism

by Hugh Gusterson

US drone warfare in Waziristan has been legitimated through a discourse of military humanism that claims very low rates of civilian casualties and a concern to spare the lives of the innocent. In practice, in concert with the Pakistani government’s counterinsurgency campaign and the tactics of the Taliban, drone strikes in Waziristan have killed substantial numbers of civilians and, in a manner reminiscent of the effects of death squads in Central and Latin America, have torn apart Waziri civil society while creating a culture of terror. “Drone essentialism” (a false conviction that drones are inevitably used in a way that minimizes suffering) has concealed a process of “ethical slippage” through which drone operators relaxed their operational practices. This process of slippage enabled drones to become terror weapons even as they functioned at the level of discourse as alibis—signifiers of discriminate force. One task of anthropological analysis is to prize open the contradictions inherent in this situation.

We see war as a surgical scalpel and not a bloodstained sword. In so doing, we mis-describe ourselves as we mis-describe the instruments of death. (Ignatieff 2000:214–215)

How is it possible to wage an aerial terror campaign against a foreign territory with sufficient intensity to cause considerable civilian casualties and shred its social fabric, all the while claiming that one has acted with great restraint and humanitarian concern? This is what the United States has done in the so-called tribal areas of Pakistan.

US leaders and national security officials have defended drone warfare by arguing that it represents a kinder, gentler way of fighting insurgents in the Middle East and Africa, and a mode of war better aligned with international law, than the alternatives. (In fact, they have presented it as much as a kind of instant law enforcement, meting out execution to guilty “terrorists,” as a modality of warfare.) George W. Bush’s CIA director, Michael Hayden (2016), described drone warfare as “the most targeted and effective application of firepower in the history of armed conflict,” and called the drone “an exquisite weapon when you want to be both effective and moral” (Shane 2015:75). John Brennan (2012), Obama’s CIA director, said, “by targeting an individual terrorist or small numbers of terrorists with ordnance that can be adapted to avoid harming others in the immediate vicinity, it is hard to imagine a tool that can better minimize risk to civilians than remotely piloted aircraft.” In a similar vein, Harold Koh (2010), legal advisor to the State Department during the Obama Administration, said, “because drone technology is highly precise, if properly controlled, it could be more lawful and more consistent with human rights and humanitarian law than the alternatives.”

Such statements by Hayden, Brennan, and Koh are classic examples of American “military humanism”—a broadly liberal discursive formation within which war is represented as an unfortunate obligation thrust upon the exceptional nation, the United States, by a dysfunctional world which the United States has a salvationist responsibility to mend, albeit by force of arms. The best known exponent of the term “military humanism” is Noam Chomsky (1999), who critiqued the United States for waging war in Kosovo in 1998 in the name of democracy and international order while acting outside international law and without a United Nations mandate. Chomsky portrays official US claims of concern for human rights and civilian casualties as a cynical smokescreen that hides a ruthless appetite for geo-strategic advantage and access to markets and materials. Here I use anthropology to theorize and critique military humanism.

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1. For a different, more anthropological, critique of military humanism that focuses on the construction of familial community, see Jauregui (2015).

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civilians nearby and to consult with military lawyers who can decide whether likely civilian casualties would be deemed “proportionate,” and therefore acceptable, within the frame of the laws of war. Drone operators can also use special software (Bugspat) to calculate the probable damage radius (and thus the likelihood of civilian “collateral damage”) depending on the ordnance selected and the placement of the missile. GPS technology along with lasing of the target enables the drone operators to guide a missile quite precisely. Indeed it is claimed that the Reaper drone, which carries a more diverse array of ordnance than the Predator, can destroy one room in a house while sparing the other occupants of the house (Coll 2014; Elish 2017; Martin and Sasser 2010; Whittle 2014; Williams 2013).

In his memoir drone operator Matt Martin (Martin and Sasser 2010:53) describes one drone strike thus:

I began preparations for a shot by scrutinizing the target from all angles in order to choose the best approach to minimize collateral damage. I calculated that if I dropped one right down the middle of the yard on top of the Ford, the brick wall would buffer the explosion and leave adjacent houses relatively undamaged. Nobody else should be hurt, which was an integral element of our rules of engagement. I doubted whether B-17 and B-29 pilots and bombardiers of World War II agonized over dropping bombs over Dresden or Berlin as much as I did over taking out one measly perp in a car.

At one point CIA director John Brennan claimed that, over the preceding year, “there hasn’t been a single collateral death because of the exceptional proficiency, precision of the capabilities we’ve been able to develop” (Shane 2011:1). Two years later, in a speech at National Defense University, President Obama claimed that, for a drone strike to go forward, “there must be near certainty that no civilians will be killed or injured—the highest standard we can set.”4

In fact, it is difficult to say with precision how many civilians have been killed in drone strikes (and in counterinsurgency warfare in general). As law professor Christiane Wilke (2017: 1139–1140) argues, the “considerable disagreement about the number of casualties, especially their status as civilian or non-civilian, might suggest that the line between civilians and combatants is not as clear as supporters of new technologies that allegedly reduce ‘collateral damage’ and civilian casualties would like to suggest.”5 Anthropologist Madiha Tahir (2016:14) points out, writing about Waziristan, “video and photography of the aftermath of a drone strike is rare. The security forces and the opposition fighters don’t allow it, but it’s also rare because, ironically, the social space of the Tribal Areas has been so worked over by spies and informants collecting and surveilling that recording (of whatever kind) has become something of a suspect act. Why are you documenting? For whom?” US commentators often reject reports from journalists or human rights activists in the target country as exaggerated, but official US assessments (done largely by the drone operators themselves) have their own liabilities: drone operators may not know how many civilians lie inside collapsed buildings and, in a war where insurgents do not wear uniforms, they have used a flawed methodology that “counts all military-aged males in a strike zone as combatants . . . unless there is explicit intelligence posthumously proving them innocent” (Becker and Shane 2012:11). But as sociologist Tyler Wall (2016:1128) points out, “military-aged men in the FATA region, not unlike Black men in the United States, are deemed suspicious and frequently killed for simply belonging to a ‘suspect’ population.”6

2. See Stimson (1947) for the classic statement of this argument.
3. Although 40 hours is the record, missions are typically closer to 24 hours (https://fas.org/irp/program/collect/predator.htm, Defense News 2015).
6. Eventually, conceding that claims of no, or very low, civilian casualties lacked credibility, the Obama Administration released an official estimate in 2016 that drone strikes in Somalia, Yemen, Pakistan, and Libya had killed between 64 and 116 civilians, though this was widely seen as
Drawing together perspectives from anthropology, science studies, and security studies, I examine the specific case of drone warfare in Waziristan in this article. A part of the “tribal area” of Pakistan that lies on the border with Afghanistan, Waziristan has probably endured more drone strikes per square mile than any other place on earth. These drone strikes, as well as killing a significant number of civilians, have created a culture of terror that, I want to argue, bears striking similarities to the culture of terror anthropologists described in the context of death squad activities in Central America in the 1980s. At the same time, drone warfare has been portrayed by US officials as the clean, surgical excision of insurgents who were terrorizing the local population. To understand how this might be, we have to first descend into the details of drone targeting protocols.

Drone Essentialism

Politicians, military leaders, and the media tend to speak of drone warfare as if it were a singular consistent phenomenon. In fact, its characteristics vary depending on a number of factors: whether it is managed by the CIA or the US military (which have different rules of engagement), whether or not drone strikes mesh with a ground war and whether strict or loose targeting protocols are employed (Elish 2017; Gusterson 2016).

Yet US government officials and military leaders often speak about drone warfare as if sparing civilians is constitutively inherent to it, collapsing together drones’ technical capability for highly discriminate strikes with the reality of drone strikes as they are actually enacted. This is “drone essentialism”—the assumption that the properties of the technology determine its use in practice and that this use is essentially singular in nature except for occasional accidents (Gusterson 2016:92–93). But as Rappert (2001), making the case for a “post-essentialist” analysis of technology, argues in a discussion of so-called nonlethal weapons, different users can put the same technology to work in different ways. Pointing out that tasers and rubber bullets have killed a number of people when used in particular ways by the police, Rappert (571) says that “the material nature of weapons is not some readily identifiable ultimate constraint that can be identified in a decontextualized manner.” Thus, to understand why drones may have killed so many civilians, we have to look not only at the technology itself but also at the targeting protocols, the operational cultures of the agencies that deploy them, and the enculturated instincts, assumptions, and practices of the operators whose thumbs hover over the red button. These targeting protocols and operational cultures have not received sufficient attention in public debates on drone warfare, and critics of drone warfare have often blamed innocent deaths on a callous “playstation” mentality among drone operators rather than the operational protocols they follow—in other words, blaming military workers following routinized instructions rather than the military managers who craft those instructions. In the case of Waziristan, US civilian and military leaders relaxed drone targeting protocols as the Taliban’s ability to operate across the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan became an increasingly salient tactical problem. This relaxation of targeting protocols drove a process of “ethical slippage” that was analogous to the well-documented slippage in World War II where the US Air Force moved from aerial bombing of military targets to burning down cities—which US leaders had earlier condemned as immoral (Carroll 2006: chap. 1; Lindqvist 2001; Sherry 1987). In both cases, World War II and recent drone warfare, operational practices increasingly diverged from official statements, opening up the kind of space of contradiction that lies at the core of militarism as a lived experience. In the following pages I analyze an interlocking set of tropes and practices at the heart of this process of ethical slippage that facilitated the rise of drone terror bombing in Waziristan.

Signature Strikes versus Personality Strikes

Statements by US government officials have often given the impression that drones are only used to attack people whose identity is known and whose names have already been placed, after a process of adjudication, on the target list of individuals determined to be insurgent leaders or terrorists. Strikes against such people have become known as “personality strikes” because they target personalized individuals who are hunted down. However, most drone strikes are not personality strikes, but “signature strikes” (a term that was classified for many years but became widely known thanks to investigative journalists [Heller 2013]). In signature strikes, people are targeted not because they are identified individuals on an official target list but because they exhibit an appearance or behavior that is associated with insurgents (Klaidman 2012). Their identity is unknown, but they can be killed based on behavioral profiling. Sometimes the behavioral signature is quite clear-cut: they are firing on US troops, for example. But sometimes the behavioral signature is more ambiguous: they are digging, but it is not certain that they are burying an IED rather than digging for some other purpose; or they are armed, but this could be a sign that they are insurgents or that they are traveling to a wedding where guns will be fired in celebration. In one case drone operators attacked a convoy of families in Afghanistan after they stopped to pray at dawn, assuming (wrongly) that such religiosity indicated that they were Taliban (Cloud 2011). The attack killed over a dozen children. The process of watching Muslims on the other side of the world, so as to decide whether they should be executed from the sky, is one that mobilizes suspicions and stereotypes in a process I call “narrative in-
filling”—a process where the silences inherent to grainy video footage are unthinkingly filled (Gusterson 2016).

**Misstaken Identity in Personality Strikes**

One might think that the error rate in personality strikes—attacks on specific insurgent leaders on a named list of targets—would be low. However, the human rights organization Reprieve (2014) tracked official US announcements of successful kills and found 41 cases where the same “high-value” insurgent leader was declared to have been killed in more than one drone strike. The report observes scathingly that these men “seemed to have achieved the impossible: to have ‘died’ in public reporting not just once, not just twice, but again and again. Reports indicate that each assassination target ‘died’ on average more than three times before their actual death.”

This begs the question of how drone operators come to believe that someone on the ground is a match for someone on the ground:

Yet, despite a targeting process that the Administration seems to have achieved the impossible: to have ‘died’ in public reporting not just once, not just twice, but again and again. Reports indicate that each assassination target ‘died’ on average more than three times before their actual death.”

This raises the question of how drone operators come to believe that someone on the ground is a match for someone on their “kill list.” Their determinations are, in Mazzetti’s (2013b:17) words, often based on “shards of intelligence from unreliable sources.” The journalist Jonathan Landay (2013a) gives one example in which drone operators, working with a mix of circumstantial evidence, inference, and rumor, were confident but mistaken in an attack on a presumed insurgent leader in Waziristan:

Information, according to one U.S. intelligence account, indicated that Badruddin Haqqani, the then–No. 2 leader of the Haqqani network, would be at a relative’s funeral that day in North Waziristan. Watching the video feed from a drone high above the mourners, CIA operators in the United States identified a man they believed could be Badruddin Haqqani from the deference and numerous greetings he received. The man also supervised a private family viewing of the body.

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It was his younger brother Mohammad. Friends later told reporters that Mohammad Haqqani was a religious student(120,751),(139,762) — uninvolved in terrorism.

Drone operators also identify insurgent leaders by tracking their cell phones. Indeed, this is how they targeted the insurgent leader Nek Mohammad, killed shortly after giving an interview to the BBC on his cell phone, in the first drone strike in Waziristan (Mazzetti 2013b:109–110). According to journalist Mark Mazzetti, Beechcraft airplanes flying along the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan became “flying cell-phone towers.”

Inside the Beechcraft planes, a device called a “Typhoon Box” housed dozens of phone numbers that military spies suspected were used by Pakistani militants. The device could identify when one of the numbers was being used and pinpoint its location. Even if a phone was turned off, JSOC [the Joint Special Operations Command] had the ability to turn the phone on; it would then give away the precise coordinates of whoever was carrying it. (Mazzetti 2013b:134)

Sarah Holewinski (2015:58) reports that insurgents soon learned that they were tracked through their phones and “can swap SIM cards from one phone to another. As a result, individuals killed based on tracking cell phones may not be the intended targets but may simply be a relative or friend who has been given the device. The accuracy of a strike may also be subject to the quality of the cell phone network and whether the location can be accurately triangulated.”

A former drone operator said, “It’s of course assumed that the phone belongs to a human being who is nefarious and considered an ‘unlawful enemy combatant.’ This is where it gets very shady . . . . People get hung up that there’s a targeted list of people,” he says. “It’s really like we’re targeting a cell phone. We’re not going after people—we’re going after their phones, in the hopes that the person on the other end of that missile is the bad guy” (Scahiil and Greenwald 2014).

**Double Tap Strikes**

“Double tap strikes,” favored more by the CIA than military commanders, pose a particularly obvious risk of killing non-combatants. In a double tap strike, drone operators launch further attacks against those who help the victims of the initial strike on the assumption that these responders must be in league with the original targets. Following the same logic of guilt by association, there have also been double tap strikes against those attending funerals of initial strike victims, even though the Pashtunwali honor code in Waziristan may impel men to attend the funerals of enemies as well as friends (Friedersdorf 2013). The anthropologist Jeff Sluka (2013:182) describes a double tap strike in Waziristan in 2009: “When locals rushed to the scene to rescue survivors, drones then launched more missiles at them, leaving a total of thirteen dead. The next day, when local people were involved in a funeral procession, the drones struck again, killing seventy of the mourners.”

This form of attack, modeled on a tactic practiced by groups such as Hamas, has been condemned by human rights lawyers as a war crime. For example, Clive Stafford-Smith, the lawyer who heads the charity Reprieve, has said that double tap strikes “are like attacking the Red Cross on the battlefield,” and the UN special rapporteur on extrajudicial killings, Cristof Heynes, has pointed out that those pulling survivors out of the rubble are as likely to be civilian Good Samaritans as insurgents (Greenwald 2012a, 2012b).

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7. Mazzetti (2013b:39) suggests that the United States had a database with 1,200 phone numbers believed to belong to insurgents and “foreign fighters” in Waziristan.

8. My thanks to Rukhsana Siddiqui for drawing my attention to the funerary obligations associated with “Pashtunwali.” Siddiqui also points out that the United States would not attack large gatherings if it were genuinely interested in limiting collateral damage.
The Rise of Informant-Directed Strikes

As American military and intelligence officials became increasingly concerned about the Taliban presence in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan, the CIA recruited a network of local paid informants in Waziristan to help identify and locate insurgent leaders (Klaidman 2012:22; Mazzetti 2013b:159–160). It is rumored in Waziristan that targets’ homes and cars have been tagged by informants on the ground who were paid a bounty by the CIA to mark them with GPS tags that guide in a Hellfire missile. Former State Department official Lawrence Wilkerson has claimed that these bounties can go as high as $5,000—several years’ income for many in Waziristan (Associated Press 2009).

In such circumstances it is predictable that local informants tempted by large sums of money may finger innocents as a way to get the bounty, or else use such bounties as an opportunity to settle feuds. The Pakistani anthropologist Akbar S. Ahmed (2013:82–83) says, “amid the confusion about the legitimacy of the targets, tribesmen with agnatic rivalry on their minds seemed to be playing their own devious games with the drones,” sometimes “manipulating drone strikes to settle scores.” Hölewinski (2015) and Gopal (2014) both point out that a number of detainees sent to Guantanamo on the basis of tips from local informants in Afghanistan turned out to be innocent victims of local disputes, and there is every reason to expect that the same has happened with drone strikes.

The Elasticity of Collateral Damage

According to the laws of war, civilians can be intentionally killed as long as their deaths are proportionate in number to the importance of the avowed target and are ancillary to the primary target—in other words, although their deaths are anticipated, the civilians are not the intended target, but have the misfortune to be in the wrong place at the wrong time (Walzer 1977). Drone operators and their commanders may see that civilians will be killed along with targeted insurgents but, weighing the number of expected civilian casualties against the importance of the combatant or combatants they are trying to kill, they proceed anyway, usually under the advice of military lawyers. According to an investigative team from Der Spiegel (2014), drone operators have been pushed by their superiors to stretch definitions to justify a strike: “bodyguards, drivers and male attendants were viewed as enemy combatants, whether or not they actually were. Only women, children and the elderly were treated as civilians.” The journalists add that “if a Taliban fighter was repeatedly involved in deadly attacks, a ‘weighing of interests’ was performed. The military officials would then calculate how many human lives could be saved by the ‘kill,’ and how many civilians would potentially be killed in an air-strike.”

The Pakistani Theater

The first US drone strike in Waziristan, which sits on the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan, took place in 2004. Since then, another 429 drone strikes have been confirmed in Pakistan, and there may have been more. Waziristan is part of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), the poorest region of Pakistan. In 2018 Pakistan’s National Assembly passed a constitutional amendment merging FATA with the neighboring province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, but until then, it was a semiautonomous region administered in ways that bore the strong imprint of British colonial law (Haq 2018; Tahir 2016). It is largely inhabited by ethnic Pashtuns, whose “imagined community” (Anderson 1991) extends into Afghanistan, where Pashtuns are the dominant ethnic group and the ethnic backbone of the Taliban. Denzil Ibbetson, the British lieutenant governor of Punjab, characterized the Pashtuns thus in 1883:

The true Pathan is perhaps the most barbaric of all the races with which we are brought into contact in the Punjab. . . . He is bloodthirsty, cruel and vindictive in the highest degree; he does not know what truth or faith is . . . . As the proverb says, “the Pathan is one moment a saint, and the next a devil.” For centuries he has been, on our frontier at least, subject to no man. He leads a wild, free, active life in the rugged fastnesses of our mountains; and there is an air of masculine independence about him which is refreshing in a country like India. He is a bigot of the most fanatical type, exceedingly proud and extraordinarily suspicious (Tahir 2016:8).

It would be nice to say that such discursive framings of the Pashtuns persisted along with the British Empire in India. However, just as the new Pakistani air force in the 1940s imitated the old British habit of bombing rebellious Pashtuns from the air, so Pakistani elites revitalized British tropes in which Pashtuns were figured as wild, brutal, and irrational. The Pakistani journalist Abubakar Siddique comments that Pakistan’s generals and politicians look at the Pashtuns of Waziristan “as if they were tribes that were living in the Amazon” (Coll 2014).

The United States lost interest in Afghanistan after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, the American, Saudi, and Pakistani governments, working together, used the tribal areas of Pakistan as a base where they could train Islamic guerillas who then launched cross-border raids on Soviet forces in Afghanistan. In these years “the tribal areas became a kind of Western-funded laboratory, in which radical Islam was channeled into violent action. The CIA would ultimately pump over $3 billion into the campaign, even printing holy Qurans in local languages” (Woods 2015: 97–98).

9. For a cinematic recreation of this pressuring of drone operators to recalculate collateral damage, see the Hollywood film Eye in the Sky.
services, however, continued to aid the Taliban, fearing that the Northern Alliance, if victorious, would establish an Indian proxy state along Pakistan’s border (Mazzetti 2013b:27). By September 11, 2001, when al Qaeda killed nearly 3,000 Americans in terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the Pakistani intelligence services and the Taliban were deeply enmeshed with one another organizationally. When bin Laden’s al Qaeda insurgents and Taliban fighters escaped defeat at American hands by fleeing across the border to Pakistan in late 2001, reportedly with the help of the Haqqani Network in Pakistan, the United States insisted that Pakistan dislodge the Taliban and al Qaeda from its territories. However, Pakistan’s national security apparatus is a complex, fractured, semi-autonomous entity, and, with or without assent from the highest levels of government, it seems that Directorate S of Pakistan’s intelligence services continued to support Taliban and al Qaeda insurgents in Waziristan even as other elements in Pakistan’s military and intelligence bureaucracy worked against them with the CIA (Mazzetti 2013b:168; Rohde and Mulvihill 2010:166–169).

David Rohde, a New York Times journalist who was held hostage in Waziristan for several months by the Haqqani Network, writes about the “systematic takeover of the tribal areas” by foreign fighters and the Taliban in the years after 2001. After being driven from Afghanistan by the 2001 American invasion, Uzbek and Arab militants began slowly reorganizing themselves. The foreigners rented compounds from local tribesmen who had fought alongside them in Afghanistan, sympathized with their cause, or were in search of money and security. The foreign fighters paid two to three times the normal rate for rent in the impoverished area. . . . In some ways the Arabs and Uzbeks are returning home. Many of them used the tribal area as a base during the anti-Soviet jihad of the 1980s. Dozens of Arabs and Uzbeks married local women. (Rohde and Mulvihill 2010:162)

In those parts of the FATA controlled by the Taliban, schools were often closed, strict Islamic codes of modesty were enforced, power shifted from tribal elders (many killed by the Taliban) to guerilla leaders and Islamic courts, families were coerced or cajoled into sending their sons to fight in Afghanistan, taxes were levied, and those who resisted or were seen as immodest were beaten or publicly executed (Coll 2008; Craig 2013; Oppel and Shah 2009; Walsh 2006; Yousafzai 2013). Meanwhile, by 2003 the president of Pakistan, General Musharraf, was becoming concerned about growing militancy in the “tribal areas” connected to two assassination attempts against him by militants upset by his tilt toward the United States. Musharraf launched an incursion into Waziristan that ended in an inconclusive truce that left the guerilla strongholds of Waziristan in place and the charismatic young Taliban leader Nek Mohammad strengthened (Woods 2015:100–101). Now the Pakistani government adopted a posture of counterinsurgency and containment toward the FATA, seen as “containment zones” or “filter points” in which Pakistani officials claimed that, in the words of Madiha Tahir (2016:10), “residents of the Tribal Areas can only think and act collectively, as a consequence of which the state punishes them collectively. The Pakistani government, including the security forces, can hold an entire family, khel, or tribe responsible for an individual’s wrongdoing, real or alleged, and punish them all. Collective punishment is the linchpin of the colonial-era laws known as Frontier Crimes Regulations that still govern FATA.” In addition to this collective punishment, in measures somewhat similar to those described in Hammami’s article (2019) in this volume on Israel’s security practices in the West Bank, the Pakistani military enforces flying checkpoints that ring zones of containment and curfews that permit the shooting on sight of any violators.

Steve Coll (2014) quotes one young Waziri who told him, “We are between two extremes. We face regular forces and we also face irregular forces with long hair, beards, and their codes of conduct. They imposed their own brand of Islam. If you did not cooperate, you were kidnapped, you were beheaded.” It was in this context of stalemate that the US government, which had been using drones to attack insurgents in Afghanistan for over 2 years, finally succeeded in 2004 in reversing Pakistan’s refusal to allow drone strikes in Waziristan. Pakistan had resisted such strikes, seeing them “as a violation of sovereignty and worried that they would invite further criticism of Mr. Musharraf as being Washington’s lackey” (Landay 2013b; Mazzetti 2013a). But now Pakistan accepted the CIA’s secret offer to kill the insurgent leader Nek Mohammad, a thorn in the Pakistani government’s side, in exchange for the right to use drones to hunt down its own enemies in Waziristan (Mazzetti 2013a).

This deal with Pakistan came a month after CIA Inspector-General John Helgerson issued a report in which he “raised questions about whether C.I.A. officers might face criminal prosecution for the interrogations carried out in the secret prisons, and he suggested that interrogation methods like waterboarding, sleep deprivation and the exploiting of the phobias of prisoners—like confining them in a small box with live bugs—violated the United Nations Convention Against Torture” (Mazzetti 2013a; see also Mayer 2009; Smith and Warrick 2009).10 Until then, the CIA, scarred by public revelations in the 1970s of past assassination programs, had been ambivalent about drone warfare and targeted killing. Now it embraced them as an alternative to capturing and interrogating insurgents in ways that invited legal liability. The Helgerson Report in conjunction with the deal with Pakistan “paved the way for the C.I.A. to change its focus from capturing terrorists to killing them, and helped transform an agency that began as a cold war espionage service into a paramilitary organization” (Mazzetti 2013a).

Over the course of the Bush and Obama administrations, drones attacked Waziristan, which is about the size of the Ba-

10. Two differently redacted versions of the report can be seen at http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/torture_archive/comparison.htm.
hamas has a population of 800,000, over 400 times in "an undeclared, remotely controlled air war" (Coll 2014). US government officials have refused to discuss these attacks, Pakistani government officials denied they were happening, and the US media largely ignored them. George W. Bush cleared each strike first with Pakistan's government until 2008, when, frustrated by the scale of insurgent movement across the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, the United States began acting unilaterally. The pace of the attacks intensified considerably under Barack Obama, rising to one every 4 days in 2011 and shifting in favor of signature strikes and the targeting of Taliban foot soldiers rather than just their leaders (Bergen and Rowland 2015; Cockburn 2015; Coll 2014; Mazzetti 2013a; Woods 2015:290–292). The 2009 escalation of drone strikes coincided with a major counterinsurgency campaign by the Pakistani military that is estimated to have displaced 3 million Pashtuns in the FATA (Sluka 2013:174). The population of Waziristan was caught between three different forms of brutal assault: from the Pakistani military, US drones, and the insurgents in their midst.

It is hard to say exactly how many people in all, let alone how many civilians, have been killed in Waziristan by US drones. The Pakistani military regulates access to the region with checkpoints and often turns back outsiders, and conditions in Waziristan are unsafe for Westerners and even Pakistani observers. This leaves those seeking reliable casualty figures to pick over the claims of propagandists, politicians, human rights activists, journalists (often working from a distance), intelligence agencies, and the drone operators themselves. (Two reporters whose courage, energy, and integrity stand out are Noor Behram, a Waziri photojournalist who has documented several drone attacks by driving immediately to the scene on his motorbike [Ackerman 2011; Shah and Beaumont 2011], and Mirza Shahzad Akbar [2011], a Pakistani lawyer who represents civilian victims of drone strikes and has gathered their accounts.)

There is also something deeply problematic in technocratic discourses that fetishize body counts, assuming that the suffering of the Pashtun people and the justice of the American bombing campaign can be measured and settled by numbers of bodies, especially civilian bodies. This is to marginalize kinds of suffering that turn people into a kind of living dead, as described below. Nevertheless, for what it is worth, Steven Coll (2014), writing in the New Yorker, puts the total number killed at between 2,000 and 4,000. The New America Foundation, which has a parsimonious protocol for confirming deaths in drone strikes, estimates that between 256 and 303 civilians were killed, with as many as 300 other deaths impossible to classify as combatant or noncombatant. The Bureau of Investigative Journalism, using a different estimation methodology, has a higher estimate: between 424 and 969 civilians killed.

These cold numbers mask horrifying individual incidents. Among those confirmed: the 2006 strike on a seminary that killed 80 people (Imtiaz 2015:93); the 2009 strike that killed as many as 83 people at a funeral, many of them children (Woods 2015:159); and a 2011 strike on a tribal gathering had Datta Khel to resolve a dispute over mineral rights that killed 40 and provoked such public anger that three US consoles had to close (Holewinski 2015:47; Imtiaz 2015:98; Mazzetti 2013b; 291). US policy makers have shown little interest in such tragedies, but on one occasion a member of Congress who opposes drone strikes arranged for Rafi ur Rehman to testify about the death of his 67-year-old mother, Momina Bibi, in Waziristan. This account is excerpted from a story in the Guardian newspaper (US newspapers did not carry the story):

"Nobody has ever told me why my mother was targeted that day," Rehman said. "Some media outlets reported that the attack was on a car, but there is no road alongside my mother's house. Others reported that the attack was on a house. But the missiles hit a nearby field, not a house. All of them reported that three, four, five militants were killed." He said, only one person was killed that day: "Not a militant but my mother." In urdu we have a saying: 'aik lari main pro kay rakha'. Literally translated, it means the string that holds the pearls together. That is what my mother was. She was the string that held our family together. Since her death, the string has been broken and life has not been the same. We feel alone and we feel lost."

Rehman's son, Zubair, described the day of the attack, the day before the Muslim holy day of Eid, as a "magical time filled with joy." He told lawmakers that the drone had appeared out of a bright blue sky, . . . . "When the drone fired the first time, the whole ground shook and black smoke rose up. The air smelled poisonous. We ran, but several minutes later the drone fired again. People from the village came to our aid and took us to hospital. We spent the night in great agony in the hospital and the next morning I was operated on. That is how we spent Eid." . . .

His sister, Nabila, told lawmakers that she had been gathering okra with her brother and grandmother when she saw a drone and "I heard the dum dum noise. Everything was dark and I couldn't see anything. I heard a scream. I think it was my grandmother but I couldn't see her". . . .

In testimony that caused the translator to stop and begin to weep, [Rehman] said: "As a teacher, my job is to educate. But how do I teach something like this? How do I explain
what I myself do not understand? How can I in good faith reassure the children that the drone will not come back and kill them too? 16

Fear as a Way of Life

While think tanks and journalists debate the number of civilian casualties, the terror of drone strikes lies as much in their psychological and cultural effects as in the number of innocents they kill. “Being attacked by a drone is not the same as being bombed by a jet,” says the journalist Steven Coll.

With drones, there is typically a much longer prelude to violence. Above North Waziristan, drones circled for hours, or even days, before striking. People looked up to watch the machines, hovering at about twenty thousand feet, capable of unleashing fire at any moment, like dragon’s breath. “Drones may kill relatively few, but they terrify many more,” Malik Jaalal, a tribal leader in North Waziristan, told me. “They turned the people into psychiatric patients. The F-16s might be less accurate, but they come and go.” (Coll 2014)

Adding to the persistent atmosphere of fear is the incessant buzzing of the drones, which may keep people awake at night. The terror derives, in part, from the fact that Waziris “have no way of knowing what type of behavior might get them killed. A shopkeeper in Waziristan cannot determine whether a strike will come at any moment. David Rohde says “the whir of their propellers announces their arrival. They sound like single-engine Piper Cubs circling overhead for hours . . . . From the ground it is impossible to determine who or what they are tracking as they circle overhead. The buzz of a distant propeller is a constant reminder of imminent death” (Cavallero, Sonnenberg, and Knuckey 2012:94; Rohde and Mulvihill 2010:182). The buzzing can be particularly terrifying to children. Michael Kugelman reports, “I have heard Pakistanis speak about children in the tribal areas who become hysterical when they hear the characteristic buzz of a drone” (Holewinski 2015:52; see also Ahmed 2013:83).

The terror derives, in part, from the fact that Waziris “have no way of knowing what type of behavior might get them killed. A shopkeeper in Waziristan cannot determine whether offering a ride to a customer, who turns out to be a low-ranking militant, might identify him as a target . . . . This danger could extend to a doctor who treats those wounded in combat, a cook who prepares food for militants, or a financier who assists someone linked to an al-Qaeda cell” (Holewinski 2015:45).

Under the rules of hospitality subsumed within Pashtunwali, the Pashtun honor code, Waziris may have no choice but to allow potential targets into the guesthouses, or hujra, that are part of their family compound. “There is always peer pressure, tribal pressure to be hospitable,” said a Pakistani journalist. “If you say no, you look like a coward and you lose face.” You may also be put on trial by the Taliban. “Now a potential target is living in a guest room or a guesthouse on your compound, one wall away from your own house and family” (Coll 2014).

Several commentators have remarked on the state of helplessness the drones induce on those below, reporting that people are often afraid to venture outside, hunkering down in what Chamayou (2014:45) describes as a state of “psychic imprisonment within a perimeter no longer defined by bars, barriers, and walls, but by the endless circling of flying watchtowers up above.” Journalists and human rights activists who have spent time in the region remark upon a sense of powerlessness, anticipatory anxiety, and dread that has fallen upon the region, where many have pulled their children out of school and refuse to attend funerals or other kinds of public gatherings because of a perception that drones are more likely to attack people when they are gathered in groups. Thus suffering is compounded by isolation. Meanwhile doctors and psychiatrists comment that people in Waziristan are increasingly exhibiting classic symptoms of post-traumatic stress: breakdowns, recurrent nightmares, inability to sleep, outbursts of anger and irritability, loss of appetite, general malaise, and unexplained physical pains (Cavallero, Sonnenberg, and Knuckey 2012). Holewinski (2015:52) quotes one man whose sister-in-law lost her husband and two children to a drone strike. “She is mentally upset . . . . She is always screaming and shouting at night and demanding me to take her to their graves.”

Meanwhile, in a form of knock-on secondary violence, rumors that local snitches guide the drone strikes with homing devices and tips to the CIA have unleashed a paranoia, typical of classical witch scares, that has torn the social fabric (cf. Whitehead and Finnstrom 2013). After a drone strike, the surviving insurgents mount a search for a traitor to hold accountable. Whoever has the misfortune to be picked out can expect to be tortured and beheaded with the remains of their body put on display as a warning to others (Rohde 2015). Such theatrics, which visually echo the bodily mutilation effected by the drones, compound the atmosphere of terror and drive people further into social isolation.

This phenomenology will sound painfully familiar to anyone who has read the anthropological literature on US-backed death squads in Central America in the 1980s and the patterned social suffering they left in their wake. We have vivid accounts of the phenomenology of this world in El Salvador, Guatemala, Argentina, and Honduras thanks to the path-breaking work of such anthropologists as Green (1999), Nelson (1999, 2009, 2015), Robben (2005), Sanford (2004), and Sluka (1999). Peasants in the countryside and urban critics of the military regimes in these countries learned to endure what Linda Green called “fear as a way of life”: one heard rumors of the death squads’ attacks elsewhere but never knew when they might strike one’s own family and neighbors. Nor was it known how exactly the lists of names of supposed guerrillas and guerrilla sympathizers—lists that circulated among the death squads—were created. It is clear that the death squads existed not only to kill opponents of the military regimes but also to terrorize entire communities into abject submission. These communities

endured not only the sudden violent death of loved ones—especially young men—but a kind of mass psychological trauma that seeped into all corners of life.

**Closing Thoughts**

US officials, seeking the moral high ground, legitimate drone warfare by saying that drones have an unprecedented ability to kill combatants while sparing civilians. But, in the words of General David Deptula, "the real advantage of unmanned aerial systems is that they allow you to project power without projecting vulnerability" (Chamayou 2014:12). In other words, the United States turned to drones because they offered a way to kill the enemy without having American soldiers come home in body bags.

However, the drone, a new military technology celebrated by US leaders for its unprecedented ability to kill combatants while sparing the innocent, "an exquisite weapon when you want to be both effective and moral," has not worked out as advertised at all. The protocols and practices in which its use is embedded have been such as to produce significant civilian casualties, while the technical capabilities of discrimination built into the technology have been used by government spokespersons to rhetorically camouflage the brute realities of drone warfare in practice. Among those on terrain that is in the crosshairs, this has led to a perception of randomness in drone targeting that, coupled with the incessant lingering of drones waiting to take their shots, has made drones terror weapons. Ironically, they are experienced on the ground as similar to death squads—the most savage instantiation of militarism imaginable. That this may not have been altogether unintentional is suggested by US Airforce General Charles Dunlap, who said that drones are "analogous (on a much larger and more effective scale) to the effect that insurgents try to impose . . . through their use of improvised explosive devices" with the goal of inculcating "a hopelessness that arises from the inevitability of death from a source they cannot fight" (Chamayou 2014:62–63). Nonetheless, US government officials and many drone operators themselves have continued to maintain that drone warfare has been highly discriminate and, insofar as such a thing is possible in war, humane.

The disconnect between the remote view from the control room or the Pentagon press podium and the embodied experience of terror on the ground is amplified by the polarized technical aesthetics of a drone strike. As Nasser Hussain (2013) observes, seen from the drone operator’s point of view, "the lack of synchronic sound renders it a ghostly world in which the figures seem unalive, even before they are killed. The gaze hovers above in silence. The detachment that critics of drone operations worry about comes partially from the silence of the footage." Hussain goes on to point out that the "overhead shot" characteristic of drone strikes is one that denies the reciprocity of a returned gaze; "it is the filmic cognate of asymmetric war."

It is this kind of doubleness that I have been trying to get at here—a doubleness that is an essential characteristic of militarism itself. It is a doubleness that allows US officials to talk about human rights and morality while killing children, a doubleness that uneasily contains the optics of the drone operator and the embodied experience of his or her victim, and a doubleness in which the brutality of insurgency and counterinsurgency on the ground masks and legitimates the added brutality of drone warfare, which gets figured as its antidote rather than its supplement. If we are to move toward a world no longer dominated by militarism as a form of life, and if we are to delegitimize military humanism as a rhetorical strategy, we have to bring this doubleness into clearer view and make visible the suffering of the other and the double standards of the military concealed within these pairings.

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Military checkpoints are inherently unstable technologies of rule due to their contradictory functions of blocking as well as sorting bodies. This paper examines the dynamics of gender, corporeality, and embodiment at Israeli military checkpoints. Since their transmutation into a “checkpoint regime” over the past 15 years, the majority of Israeli military checkpoints in the West Bank remain primarily low-tech with “sorting” dependent on embodied proximate interaction between soldier and Palestinian. Despite attempts to mediate their dynamics through bureaucratic and technical intervention, they remain technologies constituted by the volatile and contradictory dynamics of embodied interactions between those manning them and those attempting to pass through them. This makes them sites of exaggerated corporeality: they are about dividing and excluding bodies according to racial and other categorical rationales and are settings where corporeal assumptions and embodied practices and interactions connect and collide. In this context gendered and sexed bodies can be a force for stabilizing their everyday operations as well as for exacerbating their contradictions. At the level of the everyday, gender simultaneously makes the military checkpoint as well as constantly unmakes it.

Roadblocks and checkpoints are ubiquitous features of militarized spaces and conflict zones. While there is a substantial literature on them in the context of Israel’s occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, only recently have they become a focus for scholars in other contexts such as postinvasion Iraq (Brown 2008; Hills 2010), Sri Lanka (Hyndman and De Alwis 2004; Jeganathan 2004; Pieris 2015), Pakistan (Tahir 2017), the Democratic Republic of Congo (Pottier 2006), and the Central African Republic (Lombard 2013). Taken together, these studies show that military checkpoint meanings and effects are highly variable and context specific. But Pradeep Jeganathan (2004) offers what they may more fundamentally have in common: military checkpoints (as opposed to national borders) are markers of the fluid and shifting internal boundaries of the state. As such, they operate within (and, I would add, work to reproduce) a given national regime of citizenship and subjection. Yet, similar to what Christophe Sohn (2016) notes about borders, checkpoints are also Janus faced but are rarely understood as involving contradictory processes of control and opportunity. In this sense, they are inherently ambivalent technologies of rule, simultaneously encompassing division and exclusion as well as the potentialities of interaction and convergence. This is not to see military checkpoints apart from their constitutive violence but it is to recognize that their everyday operations produce a wide range of dynamics and contradictory effects that make them inherently volatile sites of power and control.

In what follows, I look at the dynamics of embodiment and corporeal interaction over various iterations of Israeli military checkpoint infrastructures. In contrast to most literature written on Israeli checkpoints focused at the corporeal scale (Braverman 2011, 2012; Grassiani 2013, 2015; Kotef 2011; Kotef and Amir 2007; Mansbach 2009), I foreground Palestinian experiences while backgrounding narratives by soldiers who have manned the checkpoints. My contention is that only by centering analysis on Palestinians subject to their power and control is it possible to grasp the constitutive dynamics of checkpoint operations, as well as their gaps and vulnerabilities. My broader aim is to challenge a strand of theorizing about Israel’s system of spatial control that fetishizes its technical sophistication at the expense of recognizing the embodied dirty work at its core. This results in a problematic representation of its power as totalizing while rendering its violence abstract.1 By way of con-

1. It is notable that only Israeli military checkpoints have their own dedicated Wikipedia page.
2. All of the writing I would put in this category is highly critical of Israel’s project in the occupied territories as well as the means used to achieve it. However, the singular focus on parsing the elements of Israeli control through its various technologies (taken at the macro level) casts the embodied experience of both its operators (Israeli soldiers) and its targets (Palestinians) to the sidelines. The resulting portrayal of a smooth, coherent, highly sophisticated, modern apparatus is uncomfortably close to how apologists represent it. Weizman (2007) is the definitive example. For a similar critique, see Harker (2011).
clusion, I suggest ways in which the Israeli military checkpoint as a technology of power might simultaneously represent a late colonial exception as well as a contemporary global template for “social sorting” (Lyon 2003) in the securitization of mobilities.

The research on which the material for this article is based does not follow a conventional ethnographic trajectory. Rather than selecting checkpoints as field sites, they literally imposed themselves on my lifeworld. By 2001, my commute between home (in occupied East Jerusalem) and work (north of Ramallah) suddenly involved daily navigation of up to three checkpoints. By the second year, turning my grueling commute into ethnographic research became my own personal coping method. The Palestinian narratives in the text (including my own) were collected over various periods between 2003 and 2017 at primarily two of these checkpoints. I have taken narratives by Israeli soldiers who have manned checkpoints from an open source, the website of Breaking the Silence, an Israeli protest movement that seeks to expose the excesses of the occupation. Breaking the Silence collects testimonies from current and former soldiers and offers them to the Israeli and broader English-speaking public. Obviously, my ethno-national location within the Israeli checkpoint order profoundly shapes my understanding. It also explains why interviewing Israeli soldiers myself was not a research option.

Israeli Checkpoints: Geographic Scales and Colonizing Logics

Though military checkpoints have long been a central technology of Israeli control over Palestinian mobilities, possibilities, and lifeworlds, it was in the Second (or al Aqsa) Intifada post-2000 that their sheer magnitude turned them into the archetypal symbol of contemporary Palestinian life under Israeli rule. Jumping from approximately 30 checkpoints prior to the Second Intifada to as high as 600 assorted barriers to movement at various periods during the uprising, in 2015 there were approximately 500 barriers to movement, 70 of which were checkpoints (UN OCHA oPt 2015). Israel’s 60-year military occupation has produced a dizzying array of checkpoint forms and structures. Their infrastructures cover the spectrum of primitive (earth mounds or concrete blocks slung across a road) to high-tech (checkpoint terminals). They can be permanent structures or ephemeral “flying” checkpoints (military vehicles with or without the aid of spike strips suddenly blocking a road). They can be vehicle only or pedestrian only, manned by soldiers around the clock or only at certain times. They can be open air, partially enclosed, or fully enclosed. Or they can be (and often are) a number of combinations of these. The most evolved version Israel calls “checkpoint terminals,” which are dealt with in the second part of this article. Palestinians have also contributed their own sardonic category to this panoply: “checkpoints of the mind.”

Checkpoints are a distinct technology within Israel’s wider spatial regime in the occupied territories. Described as “the most territorialized control system ever invented” (Delaney 2005), this wider “matrix of control” (Halper 2006) involves settler colonies and settler-only roads, closed military areas and buffer zones, more than 700 kilometers of concrete wall and electronic fence, and a crushing bureaucratic regime of mobility permits. While the immediate built-up space of Israeli settlements comprises only 2% of the land of the West Bank, this supporting matrix turns another 43% over to their control, in the process making almost half of the entire territory unavailable for Palestinian mobility and life. As such, the rationale of this larger spatial apparatus is not simply control but the radical reterritorialization of Palestinian space in line with Israeli settler colonial desires. It shatters Palestinian territory into an archipelago of discrete Bantustans surrounded and submerged in an Israeli-controlled sea.

At this scale, checkpoints represent the specific nodes of permeability within this colonizing spatial regime (Azoulay and Ophir 2005). By controlling the circulation of Palestinian movement between these fragments while separating them from settler space, they both routinize the spatial configuration of the current Israeli colonial project as well as actively work toward its ongoing expansion. Zones controlled by low degrees of permeability to Palestinian communities locked within or excluded from them are made spaces of eviction—unlivable space to be opened up for colonization while disciplining Palestinian circulation through territory congruent with larger colonizing plans.

Importantly, even if it does channel Palestinians through specific routes, this network of permeability does not function to routinize Palestinian movement but operates in ways that make the experience of everyday mobility arbitrary and chaotic. Indeed, the logic of power materialized through the checkpoint regime creates a constant state of uncertainty and anxiety (Is it open or closed? Does this permit work or not? What’s the mood of the soldiers?). Rather than an effect, this constant state of uncertainty is the very logic of Israeli sovereign violence that checkpoints instantiate and produce.

At the median geographic scale is the “place” created by the checkpoint. What was once a banal stretch of road suddenly becomes remade into a site dense with infrastructures of state violence aimed at blocking movement of an entire population. This turns the immediate area surrounding the checkpoint, its “footprint,” into a liminal zone—the margin where the space of everyday life and its attendant mobilities enters into confrontation with the space and apparatus for its undoing. As an array of ethnographic studies (all by Palestinians) have shown, this zone is where sustained forms of Palestinian agency, operating through a range of everyday spatial tactics (de Certeau 1984), were able to create human infrastructures that helped sustain what

3. “The Anthropologist” is how I cite my own narratives in the text.
4. These were Surda checkpoint (subsequently dismantled in 2004) and Qalandiya checkpoint. For systematic periods of research at both checkpoints, I am grateful for the research support of Hussein Mughmas and Lena Meari.
5. These can be found at http://www.breakingthesilence.org.il. When using these anonymous soldiers’ narratives, I cite the number that the organization has assigned to each soldier’s testimony.
the checkpoints aimed to destroy: mobility, livelihoods, and social life as such. It is at this scale that one is able to see checkpoints as shaped as much by resistant Palestinian human infrastructures as by Israeli military and technological power (Abourahme 2011; Hammami 2004, 2006, 2010, 2015; Tawil-Souri 2009).

Finally, at the immediate corporeal scale, checkpoints are where the order of violence and power between Israeli soldier and Palestinian civilian, occupier and occupied, colonizer and colonized are acted out. As Sherene Razack (2010) points out, the checkpoint is an asymmetrical, intimate encounter whose asymmetries must be performed. The face-to-face encounter between the armed Israeli soldier manning the checkpoint and the Palestinian civilian trying to cross is the time and place where the colonizer and colonized repeatedly enact their places in the order of things: sovereign and subject, subjugator and subjugated. While Razack’s analysis aptly captures the main binary order of sovereign power underpinning the very existence of the checkpoints, her analysis overlooks a dimension crucial to their operation.

As Judith Butler’s (1990, 1993) work argues, bodily identities are never fixed, nor are they as self-evident as they often seem. Instead, bodies are bearers of fluid, polyvalent meanings and subjectivities. In this framework, bodies and the identities that they presume are inherently social, unstable, and never under the full control of the subjects who are assumed to inhabit them. Thus, bodily identities are always open to being misread or appropriated by others, while the meaning attached to bodily performances is never foreclosed.

This theorization of gender, embodiment, and the subject has set the ground for wider (feminist) theorizations of the body as a central site for the production of war, political violence, and racism (Sylvester 2012; Wilcox 2015). The relevance of Butler’s work to understanding war and political violence is the centrality it gives to power and perception in the production of bodies as bearers of differential value and meaning (Butler 2009). Both the “reading” of bodies and their performances of gender and other identities are governed by operations of power—norms that impose rigid perceptual schemas that constitute the “normal” from the abject, thus rendering bodies socially and politically legible while inscribing them with differential social value. That the subject is repeatedly constituted through attempts (and/or failure) to embody the norm through the practices of everyday bodily life is politically meaningful not only in relation to gender but in terms of other social categories of difference (such as race and ethnicity).

In this context, if all of the bodies that come into confrontation at Israeli military checkpoints are reducible to only the binary categories of Israeli sovereign versus Palestinian subject, it would seem that rather than a checkpoint, we would actually have a wall. But checkpoints are technologies constituted by their function of soldiers sorting through categories of Palestinian bodies along some spectrum of permissibility/impermissibility. As such, they must rely on some other grid of legibility beyond these binaries; these are materialized as an array of corporeal difference. In less abstract terms, while Palestinians can be men and women, old and young, sick and fit, and workers versus doctors, Israeli soldiers can be male and female, young and old, Russian, Ethiopian, Ashkenazi, and Druze, to name just a few obvious possibilities.

Gender offers itself as a secondary grid of legibility that can crosscut the sovereign binary order of Israeli soldier or Palestinian subject. However, it does so in multiple and complex ways according to who is embodying it, as well as who is assigning it to what particular body. Gendered corporeality and performance can both solidify the sovereign order of power at the checkpoint as well as clear a momentary opening through it. As well, it is these very instabilities of gender as a signifier that simultaneously can make it a resource for Palestinian agency as well as a site of vulnerability for Israeli soldiers.

The Sorting Function: Instabilities and Excess

No, it’s all very much up to individual interpretation. The briefing didn’t go into detail. They tell you, “Okay, if there are humanitarian cases, they can go through.” What exactly are humanitarian cases? It’s very much up to the interpretation of the person in charge of the checkpoint at that moment. . . . It could be based on what’s going on with the guy in charge of the checkpoint, with his girlfriend back home, or how long he’s been on the base. (Soldier 178486)

And all of this stress with the Palestinians—until you see it for yourself, you can’t understand it, it fucks you up. I really understand the soldiers who went crazy at the checkpoint. It fucks you up. It’s hard to explain. . . . And you don’t really understand the orders. So, people can cross? They can’t cross? If they have a passport, then they can? I don’t know. (Soldier 56815)

The checkpoint regime that is currently in place has evolved over 15 years from its crucible in the Palestinian Second Uprising in 2000. Since then it has been constantly transforming from its beginning as a series of ad hoc counterinsurgency measures into ever-evolving attempts to rationalize, institutionalize, and normalize checkpoints as a technology of population control.

In the first phase, checkpoints were primarily aimed at creating blockage, or what the IDF (Israel Defense Forces) calls “segregation”: making lines of siege around individual or groups of Palestinian communities while cutting their access to main urban centers. Checkpoint infrastructures were primitive (initially bulldozed road rubble made into mounds and later a few concrete blocks and some razor wire slung across the road). “Sorting” of Palestinians was a proximate embodied interaction with no infrastructural mediation between soldier and civilian, while the sorting “process” was a clear exercise in arbitrary sovereign violence. Power to decide which Palestinian could pass completely devolved to the soldier on the ground, who for all intents and purposes was “the little sovereign.”
This “anything goes” approach inevitably led to soldiers producing a level of violence and engaging in “deviant” behaviors perceived as corrupting to the military’s ethical self-imaginary (and the Zionist national imaginary of which it is a central arbiter). Too many iconic “humanitarian mishaps” (e.g., Palestinian women giving birth at checkpoints) made it into representational outlets (international media and human rights networks) on which this self-imaginary depends. Also significant to the architects of the checkpoints were the corrupting effects of soldiers’ nonviolent entanglements with Palestinians in the form of bribery and petty looting of Palestinians attempting to pass.

In the recalibration of checkpoint infrastructures in the second phase (post-2003), the attempt to address these negative effects produced by their first iteration is apparent. A clear signal that the focus shifted toward “taming” the sorting process at this stage was in the IDF’s discursive distinction that now marked off checkpoints from other forms of barriers to Palestinian movement. Once a checkpoint became named as one, a main focus was on rationalizing its physical infrastructure through demarcating its boundaries with concrete blocks and primitive signage, as well as adding humanitarian flourishes such as zinc roofs over the soldiers that transitioned into the queuing areas. The addition of clear channels made with concrete barriers and primitive turnstiles to funnel Palestinians was supposed to replace the soldiers’ direct use of violence to herd them into orderly queues. All of these interventions seem premised on the logic that cleaning and ordering the site of the checkpoint would contribute to taming their lawless Wild West excess into a civilized, routinized, and rationalized military bureaucratic procedure.

Crucial in this was the introduction of objective categorical distinctions of Palestinians in order to “protect” soldiers from the vagaries and “corrupting effects” of sorting. As is evident in the soldiers’ narratives above, the lack of categorical clarity had encouraged soldier excess (sometimes to the dismay of their immediate brothers-in-arms) but was also perceived as debilitating soldiers’ capacity to believe in the ethical rationale of their “mission.” However, the development of copious categories in an attempt to sort through an entire complex society became an exercise in futility:

6. Another main tactic to keep the excess violence down was the army’s bringing in or incorporation of “friendly watchful gazes” at the checkpoints. In practice this meant bringing in older, retired reservists as a taming presence on the younger soldiers at many of the checkpoints (Ben-Ari 2010; Gazit 2005). At approximately the same time, the military hierarchy not only accepted the presence of Machsom (or checkpoint) Watch women (an oppositional Israeli women’s movement formed in 2003 whose activists appeared at checkpoints with the aim of becoming direct witnesses to soldier misbehavior), but practically adopted them as part of the checkpoint regime (Kotef and Amir 2007). Machsom Watch members themselves have bemoaned the fact that embodying “mothers of the soldiers” was performatively the most effective tactic Israeli women activists could use in subduing soldier violence meted out on Palestinians (Kotef 2011; Kotef and Amir 2007).

The Israeli army divides the Palestinian population into no less than four general classes and over forty sub-categories, each of which entails different regulations regarding movement through checkpoints. Each of these categories, or a combination thereof, is governed by different regulations allowing various kinds of passage between differentially defined areas.

Time and again the categories refused to produce the desired effects. The main problem was the sheer numbers of Palestinians needing to pass and the ever-changing deployment of categories based on time and place (today, at this particular checkpoint these categories are allowed to pass, and tomorrow some are dropped and others added). This was exacerbated by the minimal category distinctions made by the low-tech Israeli-issued identity cards (Tawil-Souri 2012). Visually, only one (red) unequivocally marked its holder as denied passage under any circumstances due to being a “security risk,” while another, the East Jerusalem blue card, marked its holder as, in most cases, allowed to pass. But the vast majority of the population soldiers had to sort through were holders of green West Bank cards, where the determinant categories were based on constantly changing risk assessments of various demographic profiles and communities of residence. Added to this was a slew of possible humanitarian exceptions that may or may not be in force that could include school teachers and students, medical personnel or patients, and persons seeking treatment and/or those assisting them. Given the gap between the minimal data contained in the cards and the unwieldy, vague, and ever-changing matrix of “objective” sorting categories, soldiers were forced to use intersubjective means of verification. In turn, this opened the possibility for Palestinians to attempt to negotiate out of whatever categorical rationale was being used to deny them passage. A report by IDF officers on the functioning of the Qalandiya checkpoint during this phase points out that the system of bureaucratic categories “breaks down or at least is not applicable many times because in accordance with existing criteria almost every Palestinian is a special case and does not belong to any of the existing categories in accordance with the method of classification” (Vainer and Shatzberg 2004:4). They go on to state that soldiers’ attempts to operate the categories “Brings about the unavoidable creation of interpersonal contacts with the Palestinians . . . that are friction points that are openings to various problems or charged and problematical encounters” (Vainer and Shatzberg 2004:4). In sum, the reconfiguration of checkpoints and attempt at bureaucratization in phase 2 completely failed in solving the core volatility and vulnerabilities of the sorting process.

The First Order of the Sort

Regardless of the checkpoint period or checkpoint configuration, the embodied sorting process is composed of two stages. In the first stage, Palestinians must perform the correct ritual order of power and acknowledge the soldier’s complete mastery in the opening of the interaction (Razack 2010).
My phone rings—it’s my sister. I usually wouldn’t answer, but I’m pissed off, not in the mood to play the game. I answer and keep chatting, she’s making me laugh. As I reach the soldiers I veer away from them a little, but one starts shouting at me with an outraged look on his face, “Hey! Hey!” I look at him and start screeching, “What? What? I’m talking on the phone! What’s the problem? The phone, it’s a problem for you?” He’s momentarily confused and then bats me away like a fly. (The Anthropologist, Surda checkpoint)

And a similar story told by a soldier but with a more brutal outcome:

You have the weapon, so you set the rules. So he [the soldier] said to the people: “No speaking on cellular phones.” One of the Arabs in the car was on the phone and signaled that he was just finishing up the call and would be off in a second. And the guy who was telling me the story paused, and asked me, “Do you understand?! Do you understand that the Arab signaled with his hand and told me to wait a second?! So of course I put the gun barrel to his ribs.” (Soldier BSZ2902)

I’m with my buddy and the soldier calls us forward so we give him our ID cards, and we keep chatting and making jokes, and we start laughing—so he [the soldier] starts shouting at us—“What are you laughing at?” He made us sit there for 6 hours. (Mahir, sociology student, Dahlia checkpoint)

When Palestinians behave as if they are operating in a “normal context” of equals, the soldiers react with rage: total priority should be given to their presence. A number of soldier testimonies on Breaking the Silence mention another version of failure to acknowledge the order of power; when Palestinians cast them “the wrong look.”

Some of them make a face at you and show you that they hate you, and fuck you, why are you ruling them now. You say to them: “Take off your shirt, show me what you have under that shirt.” (Soldier BS78158)

Here it is not hatred that is the issue but its outright exhibition. Soldiers read the open look of hatred as a lack of fear. And lack of fear translates into defiance of the order of power. The soldier’s immediate reaction is to punish the insolent Palestinian, in an almost comic book (though brutal) rendition of the order of power. The soldiers react with rage: total priority is in confrontation with the Palestinian becomes vulnerable to being shorn of its sovereign mastery. It appears as a power that depends on its constant ritual acknowledgement by its victims.

Body Sorting: Unperforming Masculinity

During the height of the first phase of the checkpoint regime, a colleague at Birzeit University, a middle-aged male professor, was “asked” by soldiers manning the checkpoint blocking the way to the campus to identify who he was and where he was going. When he replied he was a professor of chemistry on the way to class, the soldier demanded he recite the elements of the periodic table. Soldiers manning the checkpoint gave other middle-aged male professors similar academic “tests.” This could be taken as an example of soldiers “having fun” by lording over those who in their own social taxonomy would be figures of respect. But reading the story through the prism of embodiment and power in this specific context, underlines the fact that in the sorting interaction with soldiers, a Palestinian male cannot simply present himself as himself (here as a mundane social status). Given that the Palestinian male body is the archetype of the terrorist-other of the Israeli military and the larger Zionist national imaginary, this masculine corporeality is almost always already the paradigmatic threat. It materializes for the soldier the very rationale for why he and the checkpoint are here. Even the middle-aged chemistry professor is forced to perform out of the threatening corporeal status he has been reduced to. But given the perceptual enclosure these masculine bodies are locked in, escaping them through performance has an extremely high chance of failure. This is all the more so because performance involves exhibiting exactly what makes these bodies so threatening: their agency.

I worried about the boys more than the girls, of course, because they were faced with a really hard situation. Sometimes they’d [the soldiers] stop them under the sun for hours and let the girls pass, or they’d cover the guys’ eyes or tie them up with that thing from the street, wire, and make them stand there for hours. Sometimes we’d go and come back and the same guy is still standing there, and the guys they could take them away, imprison them. There was a lot of hammering on the guys, a lot, not a little. (Heba, university student, Surda checkpoint)

The “boys” Heba refers to are her male student colleagues at the university, and her narrative states what is a doxa in Palestinian society: young men and their bodies are always the most hunted and brutalized by the Israeli military. It is specifically on their bodies that the rites of Israeli manhood and soldiering are constantly and ritually played out—so much so that in dominant Palestinian nationalist norms of masculinity, the very vulnerability and inevitability of these bodies to Israeli violence results in their being coded as resistant bodies (Nashif 2008; Peteet 1991).

The boys get beaten. [So what] they get beaten? . . . The boy of course we feel with him in our hearts, but the boy’s not affected. He gets beaten, he gets beaten, he goes to prison, he gets out—it’s normal for him. (Nidal, coffee vendor, Surda checkpoint)

As Nidal’s comments suggest, young men and the society they are part of expect they will be physically brutalized. Here the marks of Israeli violence on the body are a routine ritual of being a man or of becoming one. In his description, rather than this being a moment of pain, suffering, or humiliation, the cycle of Israeli violence enacted on the body is what has become the normal cycle of life for young men in this context: he gets beaten, it does not affect him, he goes to prison, and he gets out.
The next line over, a young man, the same age as the soldier, keeps holding up his permit and the soldier keeps saying it’s canceled and to turn back. He keeps saying he has to go to the eye hospital to see his father, and the soldier keeps dully saying his permit is cancelled. . . . The next soldier waves forward the next in line but [the young man] won’t give up—another soldier comes over and violently grabs him by the arm—Khlas! Roweh! [soldier Arabic for “enough, go back!”] and drags him out the exit where another soldier will either hold him or just make sure he crosses back. . . . Outside they’re holding the young guy who wanted to go to the eye hospital on the bench in the corrections sun, and as I pass him I lower my eyes. (The Anthropologist, Qalandiya checkpoint)

Young men have very little chance of undoing the highly charged signification of their bodies. The young man above presents himself as a concerned son trying to see his father in hospital, but his show of agency—his persistence despite the rejection—leads immediately to his punishment by the soldier. As a young man, almost any performance simply reaffirms him in the body he has already been reduced to: the threat that needs to be controlled and punished. And through his inevitable “failure,” what is reconfirmed is not just his status but the norms of power and rule of the checkpoint.

Buying Out

They run deals, letting a guy through because he gave them some food, bread from the village, stuff like that. One of our commanders, a real idiot, would only let them through this way. Soldiers would buy, or rather take, cigarettes from them. Ask them for cigarettes—people with whom you’re not supposed to relate at all, and there you go demanding a gift from them as a condition for letting them through the checkpoint. (Soldier 35859)

So there was a taxi driver there called Nidal, and he’d often bring us hummus from Tal. We’d let him through pretty freely. (Soldier 349793)

One of the only tactics available for many men was to simply buy out of their status with soldiers. From reading the soldier narratives of Breaking the Silence, forms of everyday petty looting, especially from passing Palestinian merchants, has been a recurrent practice at checkpoints—so much so that “looting” is a major category of soldier misbehavior in the Breaking the Silence testimonies. Just as common was petty bribery in a form resembling a “normal” market exchange between soldiers and civilian. The currency of cola, cigarettes, and telephone cards was a well-known means of getting through Qalandiya checkpoint in its second phase, especially among workers. But the soldier narratives constantly mention items that are saturated with Palestinian cultural meaning: worry beads and local foods (especially pita and hummus). These “trade” items link into the larger Israeli colonial semiotics of desirable “authentic Arab” commodities whose consumption by Israelis (Stein 2008) enables a number of political erasures and resignifications. Within the practices of colonial consumption of the products of the other, they lose their located political meaning by being elided into orientalized, decontextualized commodities whose consumption is reframed as an experience of genuine “Arab hospitality.” Through the mediation of these objects of desire at the checkpoint, the Palestinian male momentarily escapes his status as threat by performing a different order of the colonial relationship: the hospitable Arab native offering his exotic wares to the soldier who becomes simply a gratified Israeli consumer.

Gendered Visibilities

Given the gender order of the master binary, female corporeality and performativity have a greater chance of success in passing through the sort. In the checkpoint narratives of soldiers collected by Breaking the Silence, Palestinian women rarely appear. Women and children are sometimes encoded as the humanitarian exception that is the norm of the entire checkpoint regime: “Of course we always let women and children through.” But they also appear as the normative exception soldiers personally make and, in doing so, break the operational norms of the checkpoint.

Isra was a 13-year-old schoolgirl who daily crossed Qalandiya checkpoint in her uniform, along with hundreds of other kids who needed to get to their schools on the other side.

We got stuck a bunch of times when they closed it—the worst was during exams, and I’m stuck and I stay with my friend but my books are at home—that’s the worst. And my mom and dad are so scared because I don’t come home. I can’t say anything to the soldiers—I’m a kid and they can see it—so why should I tell them I’m a kid, when it’s obvious? (Isra, schoolgirl, Qalandiya checkpoint)

As a child, she narrates herself in relation to a world ordered by adults. For her, the soldiers are adults who do not acknowledge the obvious: that she is a child. In these instances, in the soldiers’ perceptual grid, it is not that they cannot see she is a child but, more likely, that she is de-realized altogether. Her particular corporeality is of a quality that represents human and female vulnerability marked out for care and protection within any normative system. At the checkpoint she and other females constitute “bodies out of place” (Puwar 2004) and thus become either highly visible or totally invisible. In the above instance, invisibility is negative; Isra is not granted an “exception” to pass through the closed checkpoint despite her being a schoolchild. But in other cases, it is their invisibility that is actually the main corporeal resource of women and children that enables them to get through the checkpoint.

We got to the checkpoint and I couldn’t get out of the van, it was too hard. They wouldn’t let the ambulance cross to come and get me. . . . The ambulance driver begs them [the soldiers]: “There’s a woman giving birth, I’ve got to get her.” They wouldn’t let him cross. They weren’t letting anyone cross. Then something happened, they were changing the pla-
toon, they weren’t convinced by the ambulance driver, they were just leaving anyway, so the ambulance passed. . . . When the ambulance got to me, when they put me in the ambulance, that’s it, I gave birth. Three minutes I’m in the ambulance and I give birth. (Naila, housewife, Surda checkpoint)

Naila ended up giving birth to her daughter at the Surda checkpoint. In her narrative of those events, she was caught on the other side of the checkpoint and thus it was the ambulance driver trying to collect her who interacted with the soldiers. One would imagine that the extraordinary life-affirming event of a birth might momentarily break through the whole epistemic logic of the checkpoints. But between 2000 and 2006, 68 Palestinian women ended up giving birth at checkpoints. Even more telling is that epistemically break through the whole epistemic logic of the checkpoints. By 2000 and 2006, 68 Palestinian women ended up giving birth at checkpoints. Even more telling is that the extraordinary life-affirming event of a birth might momentarily break through the whole epistemic logic of the checkpoints. But between 2000 and 2006, 68 Palestinian women ended up giving birth at checkpoints. Even more telling is

The officer comes over and starts talking to me and says, “Who didn’t let you pass, who stopped you? Who made you give birth?” I said, “I don’t know, you soldiers didn’t let me pass, how would I know which one?” . . . And the officer is saying, “I was here yesterday morning, I didn’t see anything.” . . . My husband is telling me not to answer, but I don’t care. And the officer turns to the other soldiers and says, “Who stopped this woman from going to deliver a baby?” He’s making it like a joke. And he turns back and says, “No one here stopped you.” (Naila, Surda checkpoint)

The officer’s response evades culpability through multiple erasures. The newborn baby Naila is carrying in her arms is not alluded to at all—its well-being or existence is completely absent. Instead, the focus is displaced to Naila’s body and the event as a bodily state: Naila in childbirth, “Who made you give birth? Who stopped you from delivering?” That epistemically impossible event is simply denied. Rather than denying their presence at the event, the soldier denies the event itself: “I was here yesterday and I didn’t see anything.” The corporeal value of a baby and of a birthing mother are so uncontrollable within the limits of the checkpoints’ normative order, and indeed are so transgressive, that their very existence can only be denied.

Sexed Bodies

While the soldier testimonies collected by Breaking the Silence are rife with the immorality and corruption of soldiers engaged in looting or bribery, they are strangely silent about another mode of soldiers’ transgression of the IDF’s “purity of arms”: the sexual harassment of young Palestinian women.

I don’t think they [male soldiers] are stopping the girls looking for someone wanted. No, it’s just like one of them wants to have a chat with a girl. Once a soldier stopped me and started asking questions, “Who’s your father? What’s your phone number?” So I started correcting him, and he of course reacts, “Who are you to correct me!” And he tells me that I should respect him, so I said how can I respect you and you’re making me angry? So he told me to wait on the side. I ignored him and kept walking. I was terrified but I kept walking. It’s like that—he just wants to flirt, what’s your name? What’s your phone number? (Nora, university student, Surda checkpoint)

I get bothered by the soldiers . . . a bunch of times when we’re a group of girls going, “Come make a line on the side, open your bags.” Then they sit and start trying to chat us up . . . and they comment about our clothes. Me, I’ve only been stopped a few times because of the way I dress [she wears a headscarf], but there’s lots of girls because of the way they dress they got stopped a lot. (Rania, university student, Surda checkpoint)

Nubile bodies always carry the danger of being “misread” as sexual and sexually available by the soldiers. At the same time, in contrast to other forms of female corporeality, these bodies become overvisible at the checkpoint. Despite a Palestinian popular discourse at the time that assumed some young women were instrumentalizing their sexuality to get past soldiers, the young women above express the salient attitude among the young women themselves. The only reason Nora and Rania had to pass through Surda checkpoint was in order to reach their university. In that context, they had a heightened sense of their personhood and the corporeal journey to the university as one of resisting students struggling along with the entire university body to get to campus. A main way that young women in this context attempted to elude their sexualization was through dress—with most of the girls I interviewed very aware that they “dressed for the checkpoint”—usually by wearing “sports” clothes and comfortable shoes. Rania alludes to this strategy when she says that because of how she dressed (wearing a headscarf) she was less often “pulled over” by soldiers.

The girls’ negotiation of these encounters contrasts sharply with the strategy of men who “buy” their way through the checkpoint. Young women attempt to “remind” the soldier of his status, who he is supposed to be in the sovereign-subject order. Once reminded, the response of the soldiers is to punish sexual rejection as if it is political defiance.

The Repulsions of Homophily

After phase 1 of the checkpoint regime, the IDF added young women soldiers to the platoons manning checkpoints, perhaps under the assumption that they might perform a “civilizing” function on male recruits. One of the major tactics that Palestinians employ at checkpoints is attempting to choose the soldier who will sort them. Category assumptions are operating across the two opposing sides of the perceptual field of the checkpoint. For Palestinians, whom you try to select to sort you (by moving between different lines or recalculating your turn in line) is all about finding the type of soldier who might let you pass and with the least trouble and indignity. Palestinians carefully read soldier corporeality for ethnic and other markers, and over time learn what particular corporeality of soldier is likely to be most averse to their own. But regardless of age or gender, again and again Palestinians will tell you that the worst sort is by Druze soldiers, while the easiest is by
Ethiopian ones. However, for most women, it is female soldiers they try and avoid.

The women soldiers are the most vile . . . they give you that look that says you are nothing . . . whether they talk with me or don’t. (Beisan, university student, Qalandiya checkpoint)

It’s the women soldiers who are the worst, the guys are easy, they let you go, but the women are aggressive and shout, they’re all worked up, they give you this nasty look and they open your bag in this way [holding her nose] as if they’re disgusted—with their finger like I don’t know and they’re all dressed up, makeup and long nails and their hair done. They’re much more aggressive than the guys. (Isra, 13-year-old schoolgirl, Qalandiya checkpoint)

She [the military policewoman] conducted the body search while we stood there . . . . The moment when she finished searching the [Palestinian] woman, she simply took a whole container of dishwashing soap and, right in front of the Arab woman, poured a huge amount of it over her hands and said, “Yuck, yuck, I can’t believe I touched her, she’s so gross,” right in front of that woman. (Soldier 341968)

As mentioned earlier, at checkpoints female bodies are “bodies out of place.” They do not belong in this militarized border-space whose racial order and operations of violence are based on masculinist norms laying claim to bodies primarily conceived as masculine on both sides of the checkpoint. In order to instantiate themselves as master vis à vis Palestinians, female soldiers therefore have to overcome the limits of what their gendered body represents: although soldiers, they are still subordinated women. As the above narratives suggest, they are perceived by Palestinian women and girls as making an exaggerated performance of soldierly mastery as if attempting to gain recognition of the power that more “naturally” attends to a male soldier’s body. One might be generous and argue that any performance by women soldiers of this power appears excessive since the wrong body exercises it. But the narratives above also note a specific register of disgust displayed by female soldiers when dealing with Palestinian female bodies. This suggests that though female soldiers attempt to outperform the diminished authority of their corporeal status in front of Palestinians as a whole, another layer of performance is required to distinguish themselves from their similar-bodied others. That the interaction is not just physically but ontologically too close for comfort is underlined by the sensory revulsion theatrically displayed by the two women soldiers in the interactions narrated above.

The Crossing Terminal

The third iteration of the checkpoint infrastructure was in the post-2006 reincarnation of those located at what Israel deems its temporary boundaries into “checkpoint terminals.” Currently, 12 checkpoints in the West Bank have been transmogriﬁed into what are touted as high-tech crossings into Israel for Palestinians.

The new system includes a labyrinth of iron fences that channels passengers [sic] via a series of turnstiles. All passengers must go through ﬁve stages: the ﬁrst set of turnstiles, the x-ray gates, the second set of turnstiles, the inspection booth and an x-ray machine for the bags. This entire process is captured by a dense network of cameras and the passenger is given instructions via loudspeakers. From their protected booths, Israeli security personnel operate the revolving gates remotely, regulating the rate of passenger ﬂow. (Weizman 2007:150)

The fundamental aim of this labyrinthine technological architecture is to eliminate the possibility for embodied interaction between soldier and Palestinian at any phase of the checkpoint “passage” and to preempt instabilities caused by Palestinian agency. This starts from the narrow tunnel of fencing and ﬁrst set of one-way turnstiles used to funnel Palestinians into an orderly queue, dispensing with the need for soldiers to use force. Then there is the lack of visibility created by the second round of turnstiles and added fencing marking the space between the soldiers in booths and the “waiting area,” meant to both protect the soldiers’ eyes from the mob of civilians waiting for the sort as well as to diminish Palestinians’ ability to choose a soldier. Next, soldiers press a button to operate the second set of remote-controlled turnstile spindles that control the movement of the Palestinians toward the sort—again mitigating soldiers’ need to directly control their forward advance. The X-ray machine for bodies and bags is now disembodied: the soldier in the bulletproof glass booth monitors the outcome according to whether the machine rings or fails to ring. Finally, the thick glass of the booths now mediates the proximate interaction with the soldier. Documents are pressed against the glass, and the soldier’s voice is transmitted by loudspeaker.

The terminal’s sorting operation also depends to a much higher degree than the previous ones on the surveillance power of documents, displacing the need for soldiers to use their own judgment in sorting. The low-tech identity cards issued by Israel have since 2006 been supplemented by a magnetic card, proof of passing security clearance by the Israeli secret police, Shin Bet. For most Palestinians wanting to cross on “non-extraordinary days” (i.e., other than Christian and Muslim holidays, when security plus age categories become the only criteria), a range of temporary permits marks most West Bank Palestinians as able to cross these terminals. By the end of the first decade of the millennium, another surveillance technology layer, smart cards based on hand recognition technology, increasingly replaced magnetic cards (Braverman 2011).7

Critical Israeli writers on the terminals (Braverman 2011; Grassiani 2015; Mansbach 2009) tend to see them primarily as a public relations exercise aimed at allaying international crit-

7. However, as Braverman (2011) learned in her discussion with a military “architect” of the terminals, these so-called smart cards are the cheapest form of digital technology and are not as reliable as (costlier) biometric cards.
icism of the checkpoint regime by attempting to normalize Israeli checkpoints as ordinary border crossings. But, as Braverman argues, they also serve to distance soldiers from the vagaries of embodied interaction with Palestinians (Braverman 2011). Despite political sympathies (or perhaps because of them), critical Israeli writers on the checkpoints are unable to recognize Palestinian agency, particularly in relation to the technical sophistication of the terminal checkpoint configuration, too easily accepting the technology’s total mastery and control.

I had a fight with one of the women soldiers . . . [laugh] it was about her eyebrows! . . . She had plucked her eyebrows in the shape of . . . [two upside-down V’s]. When I saw her . . . I couldn’t help it. I giggled and she caught my reaction and got pissed off . . . She kept making me pass my things through the machine, okay it was ringing but she and I knew there was nothing—it’s always ringing for no reason . . . So she made me go into the search room . . . She didn’t search me or anything. She was just pissed off and wanted to punish me. . . . A few days later my friend and I were going through and there was she was again so I pointed her eyebrows out to my friend. . . . We were killing ourselves laughing. She [the soldier] saw us laughing at her and went mad and started cursing us over the intercom . . . there wasn’t a swear word in Hebrew, Arabic, or English that she didn’t use. We decided that if we see her again, though I never did see her again, that we’re going to do the same thing! What can she do? She’s not capable of doing anything sitting there. (Noora, university student, Qalandiya terminal checkpoint)

Noora’s narrative of the series of encounters she had with a specific woman soldier at the terminal may seem trite and irrelevant in the context of the immense violence that terminal checkpoints produce for Palestinians’ everyday life. But it challenges the dominant assumption that placing the soldier behind thick glass leads to an “impersonal” and disembodied encounter between sovereign soldier and Palestinian subject. Noora is privileged by the category of papers she holds (East Jerusalem identity card), which means she has a right (no matter how unstable) to ultimately pass through the checkpoint compared to other Palestinians. As such, she has space to passively and then actively mock the female soldier sitting behind the glass. In her narrative, rather than the interaction being disembodied and distant, we find the opposite: even when the female soldier is behind glass, she is intimately provoked and outraged over a smirk. In the second interaction, Noora and her friend turn the tables of power (if only fleetingly), and the soldier appears not as the master but as a mocked figure locked in her glass booth, helpless in front of the public ridicule she is subjected to by the larger audience of Palestinians waiting to pass through.

Now with the system, if you want to go to a different soldier you have to go back to the end of the line. . . . For a period, there was a woman soldier, an Ethiopian, everyone knew she was good. Everyone would try and go to her post because she was good, she barely looked at your ID, she’d pass you, almost everyone without checking. (Bassima, Qalandiya terminal checkpoint)

Clearly, the possibility for Palestinians to choose their soldier has been narrowed with terminals’ configuration, but it has not been undercut altogether. Human agency cannot be completely automated out of the system.

You don’t [control such large numbers of people at the terminals]. In the middle there are gates that lock, but sometimes for everyone to cross, there were times when the gates beeped and someone was able to cross even though he hadn’t been checked. We saw that the IDF didn’t provide enough people to do the mission, and there was a lack of communication between you and your commanders, and in the end people [soldiers] would sleep in the booth, out of indifference they’d leave the gates open and let people cross. (Soldier 669824)

Out of boredom, we came up with a contest to see who could let more Palestinians into Israel so that the shift would go by more quickly. There it was really 5 hours without rest, maybe some rest the last half hour, but you worked and pushed people through. (Soldier 8150630)

For the last week when I’d put my hand on the machine and it wouldn’t do anything. The soldier just ignores it and waves me through. I asked myself why did I put myself through the hell of getting this card when the machine doesn’t work? (Salim, academic, Qalandiya terminal checkpoint)

As writers on surveillance have noted elsewhere, technological mediation remains fallible in a multitude of ways, primarily because machines do not operate independently of human intervention. In the examples above, soldier boredom with the monotony that has been produced by the very achievement of distancing them from embodied interaction with Palestinians actually undermines the mastery of the technology. The dense material infrastructure of the terminal communicates to various audiences that the soldiers’ role is almost obsolete. The implicit recognition of this by the soldier results in behaviors that actually make the technology obsolete (if only intermittently).

The soldier narratives above also refer to something that all Palestinians who pass through the terminals know: elements of the checkpoint technology often break down but are left in disrepair for long periods of time. How might we understand the immense investments in the latest surveillance technology alongside this carelessness toward maintaining its functioning? Similarly, Noora mentions that soldiers and Palestinians all know the X-ray machine often beeps even when “there’s nothing.” Thus, being made to repeat the malfunctioning X-ray over and over again is what soldiers do when they want to punish Palestinians. Here the machine, rather than being an impersonal instrument of surveillance, becomes the soldier’s personalized weapon.

Bornstein (2002:215) has argued that Israeli checkpoints are primarily a performance of security whose main function
is to assuage the anxieties of the Israeli public (and settlers in particular) through a symbolic action that is largely devoid of real security content. This reading is problematic. It accepts “security” in its own terms as having some measurable and stable status. In contrast, I argue that security is a powerful though fluid concept underlying a range of practices that, through everyday enactment, accomplish multiple material and ideological effects that may have little to do with protecting the physical integrity of the populations in whose name security is invoked.

The larger problem is that by constraining the checkpoint terminals (and military checkpoints more generally) as a symbolic exercise aimed at reducing Israeli anxieties, Palestinians are once again expunged from the analytic frame. At most they are the passive backdrop to this playing out of Israeli strategies for dealing with Israeli anxieties and concerns. But as this paper has argued, what checkpoints may intend to do versus what they actually accomplish can only be grasped through a close reading of their operations of power in the everyday dynamics of embodied confrontation and interaction between Israeli soldier and Palestinian subject. As this paper has argued, given that military checkpoints cannot function apart from these proximate embodied interactions, human agency inevitably emerges as an uncontrollable force within their everyday dynamics and ultimately, as the messy ground on which their very operation depends.

Conclusion

Placing Palestinians at the center of this analysis exposes two larger paradoxes in the operations of power and domination of Israel’s checkpoints. The first is that despite the reiterations of original Israeli checkpoint infrastructures in an attempt to disembody the brutal and messy substance of their work, all three configurations of Israeli checkpoint infrastructures continue to materially coexist across the West Bank until now. The second is that despite the seeming technological mastery of the crossing terminal, their everyday operations expose carelessness and disregard toward the very tools on which technical mastery is built. Both paradoxes ultimately beg the question, Is rationalizing and removing the soldier from the vagaries of embodied interaction with those they dominate really what is being sought at all? Or if it is, why does it seem to inevitably fail?

If we look at one remove from checkpoints to their global mirror in the form of airport security checks, we might see what is particular about the Israeli military checkpoints in the occupied West Bank. As is often noted, Israel is the global gold standard for airport security regimes. A slew of experts, employees of Israel’s Ben Gurion airport security administration, are selling their expertise globally. As the promotional literature on these experts underlines, they are all high-level military graduates with “specialist skills in detection and interrogation” (Wagner 2014). In her analysis of the SPOT system being put in place at 12 US airports, Rachel Hall (2011) notes the conflict between the approach of Israeli security experts and their American counterparts in using “behavioral tools” to identify suspicious travelers. The Americans prefer that security staff only use observation from a distance to identify suspicious travelers, while Israeli experts insist on interviewing all passengers—an approach the Americans deem inefficient and too invasive. The Israeli expert solution to the problem of invasiveness and inefficiency is to propose the two-tier system in place at Ben Gurion: the “trusted traveler system” in which preapproved, low-risk passengers are presorted and can be expedited (Julian 2010). Israeli experts are also highly critical of full-body scanners, again insisting that only low tech “human factors” of embodied security interviews can ascertain threats.

The Israeli checkpoint regime in the West Bank is a hybrid form of control and domination. Fundamentally an infrastructure for undertaking the everyday embodied brutality necessary for colonial domination, it simultaneously enfolds itself into the global border control regimes that are markers of the contemporary neoliberal state. The sophisticated two-tier system of high- and low-risk travelers touted by Israeli expertise for airport security is thus nothing more than the colonial binary of the Israeli checkpoint upgraded to the global level. Additionally, the inevitable use of embodied violence in everyday colonial policing plays itself out as the need for the proximate, embodied security interview at the airport. We therefore might understand the carelessness toward the broken-down machines at the checkpoint terminal as an outcome of this hybridity rather than being a paradox. And ultimately, Israel may try to protect its soldiers from the vagaries of Palestinian interaction through checkpoint architecture, but these cannot overcome the essence of their fundamental mission at the checkpoint: colonial policing.

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Geometry after the Circle

Security Interventions in the Urban Gray Zone

by Danny Hoffman

In August 2014, at the height of the Ebola outbreak in West Africa, Liberian health and security forces instituted an emergency armed quarantine around West Point, one of Monrovia’s poorest neighborhoods. When West Point residents protested, security forces fought back, killing one person and injuring many more. The West Point quarantine is one of a number of recent notable cases of urban “gray zone” security operations. That amorphous term has been used to describe both tactics and territories that do not look like conventional urban theaters of war. Disease outbreaks such as Ebola, natural disasters such as the Haiti earthquake, or law enforcement operations like the arrest of Dudus Coke in Kingston, Jamaica, all seem to require extraordinary new capabilities for security forces. But actual gray zone operations are primarily carried out not by gray zone strategists but by “partner” forces, agents assumed to be more naturally capable of operating in the impossible environment of Global South cities. These surrogate war machines are, however, no less bound by the basic geometry of urban space and no less likely to produce the violent consequences of urban war.

We are careful not to replace our partners’ will with our capability or capacity. We want them to own the problem, fight or solution. In Africa, we are not the kinetic solution. If required, our partner should conduct those types of actions. (Brigadier General Donald C. Bolduc, commander of US Special Forces, Africa)

The State has no war machine of its own; it can only appropriate one in the form of a military institution, one that will continually cause it problems. (Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus)

Early on the morning of August 20, 2014, Liberian security forces began a seemingly anachronistic operation in that West African nation’s capital. A combined force of armed personnel surrounded West Point, the city’s oldest slum. Stretching razor wire across the quarter’s unpaved streets, positioning coast guard boats along the abutting shoreline, and placing squads of riot gear–clad officers around the perimeter, the Liberian government erected a classic cordon sanitaire. Ebola had reached Monrovia. Just days before, West Point residents sacked an Ebola patient receiving center in the heart of the neighborhood. Against the advice of the Liberian health ministry and virtually every international observer, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf followed the counsel of her army chief of staff and retaliated by threatening violence in the name of public health. The result was an armed circle, an exercise in martial geometry intended to clearly mark the boundary between West Point and the rest of the city. The security forces of the state were arrayed to create an impregnable barrier that bodies, material and disease could not cross.

The Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), the lead agency in the Ebola Task Force that instituted the cordon, was largely a US military creation. At the end of the war in Liberia in 2003, a peace agreement disbanded the state army and led to a series of US programs to reconstitute and retrain the Liberian armed forces. Along with the basic education required for professional soldiering in a modern army, this training included crowd control techniques and lessons in civil-military relations designed to make the AFL an all-around “force for good” (Simpson 2016:6) in postwar Liberia.

The West Point cordon sanitaire was, by any measure, a disaster. Soldiers and police officers responded to rioting West Point residents with beatings and with shots fired, wounding a teenage boy who bled to death before he could receive medical care. Security personnel were easily bribed and allowed West Point residents to move back and forth across the line. Other West Pointers sneaked through the many holes in the ineffectively placed barricades. Ten days after it was announced, the West Point cordon was called off, and President Johnson-Sirleaf admitted to having made a terrible mistake.

There are, of course, a number of ways to read the cordon sanitaire imposed around West Point. It undoubtedly represents, for example, a consequence of the systematic gutting of Liberia’s public health sector. The structural violence that

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decimated Liberia’s health care infrastructure enabled the rapid spread of the disease (see Abramowitz 2014; Wilkinson and Leach 2014), transforming a public health emergency into a full-blown regional crisis that seemed to require the most draconian of measures.1 The West Point blockade also strongly supports the argument that global health in general has become “militarized” (de Waal 2014) and “securitized” (Burci 2014; Hood 2015). Armed forces are increasingly deployed as first responders when disease is cast as one front in a multilayered threat environment of natural disasters, terrorism, civil unrest, and widespread criminality. For their part, many Monrovia residents read the cordon as a thinly veiled effort to use the crisis to accelerate the city’s slum clearance program and as reprisal for the neighborhood’s largely oppositional politics. And in the global popular imaginary, the quarantine has served as a kind of morality tale, further evidence of the breakdown of West African governance and sociality (see Hoffman 2016).

Here I read the West Point cordon somewhat differently. I read the events at West Point as a problem of geometry—or, perhaps more accurately, as an inevitable consequence of the failure or unwillingness to imagine what replaces the circle in the security imaginary when geometry itself appears to be obsolete as an urban military dynamic. Abstract though this sounds, it points to a concrete problem. As the global writ for military operations continues to expand ever further into the realms of crime fighting, public health, counterterrorism, stability operations, and responding to or preparing for climate crises, the vision of the urban theater is also changing. In the aftermath of the US invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, and of spectacular attacks and disease outbreaks across Africa, there have been strong calls from various sectors of the global security apparatus to rethink both the nature of urban space and the ways in which armed forces operate within them. Employing language that is eerily reminiscent of the poststructuralist philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, strategic military thinkers have pushed for urban security operations that are not bound by conventional geometric thinking but that employ innovative postgeometric spatial logics. A growing chorus of voices is employing the dematerialized and deterritorialized vocabulary of nodes, swarms, and punctures to describe the operational demands of the urban environment. West Point’s cordon sanitaire thus appeared anachronistic because it seemed to run counter to so much of that emergent wisdom. In the age of new urban military logics, the circle is grossly out of date.

And yet as out of step as it might seem, the events at West Point may in fact be less a derivation from than a consequence of the new postgeometry of urban security. Along with other stab-ops (stability operations) around West Africa and the Caribbean such as the 2010 arrest of Christopher “Dudus” Coke in Kingston, Jamaica; the 2004 UN peacekeeping mission in Haiti; and the 2014 Brazilian World Cup and 2016 Rio Olympic Games—the Ebola quarantine suggests a strange and subtle reality stemming from the way the urban security imaginary is actualized. The discourses of urban chaos that prompt contemporary urban security interventions like the Ebola response—discourses that call for new tactics of engagement within that dystopian space—have obscured their own failings. The twin processes of misreading the urban environment and outsourcing the actual labor of security has allowed for a certain erasure or misrecognition that seems increasingly central to the militarization of urban crises. In other words, the current push to grapple with the perceived formlessness of urban theaters seems, ironically, to render invisible the reproduction of the most rigid and draconian forms on the ground. In the very act of thinking beyond geometry, the new urban security logic has reinvented the circle.

Military stories, as Keller Easterling puts it, tend to be told in simple binaries (2016:139–149), stark contrasts that conceal more than they reveal. For a project of thinking through contemporary cultures of militarism, this erasure is an important ethnographic object. What is new about the current moment of militarization across Africa and around the globe is not its kinetic formations. It is the way the discourses and fantasies of contemporary urban space and urban threats render familiar formations largely invisible. That is the lesson of West Point.

West Point

From the perspective of Monrovia’s governing institutions, the West Point neighborhood has long been a problem. The Monrovia City Corporation estimated in 2012 that the population of West Point, one of the poorest and most densely crowded sectors of the city, was somewhere close to 60,000 people—a rough estimate at best. A sand spit at the junction of the Msurado River and the sea, West Point’s proximity to the city center and the port made it a convenient site for informal settlement by fisherman, stevedores, and mariners as Monrovia rapidly expanded after the Second World War (see Fraenkel 1964). As a physical space, West Point is invariably referred to as chaotic and dystopian, an incomprehensible urban morass of disease, violence, and urban dysfunction. Multiethnic, poor, and itinerant, West Pointers have been regarded by successive governments as both a criminal and a political threat to the stability of the city, a reputation that was exacerbated by the influx of excombatants following the 2003 cease-fire that ended the war (see INCHR 2014; MacDougall 2016).

Given its history and reputation, it is no surprise that West Point figures prominently in the story of Ebola’s spread into Liberia’s urban fabric. A report by the Independent National Commission on Human Rights (INCHR) describes the chaotic days leading up to the quarantine. West Point residents were given no warning that an Ebola patient holding facil-

1. As is true across much of the African continent, Liberia’s basic health care system began to crumble even before the war began in 1989. Corruption, neglect, and, most devastatingly, the structural adjustment reforms that were a condition of foreign loans eroded what was once a reasonably functioning system. For more on the effects of structural adjustment on African health systems, see Pfeiffer and Chapman (2010).
ity was to be located in the neighborhood, nor were they told in advance that a quarantine would be put into effect. What West Point residents did see was a stream of infectious patients from around the city being brought to West Point and, later, an armed circle to keep them there as well. When West Point residents first sacked the Ebola holding center and then fought back against the quarantine, these catalysts were largely absent from official pronouncements and from media coverage of the events (see Hoffman 2016). Instead, Liberian officials suggested that West Point was, by definition, a threat to the city. Lewis Brown, Liberia’s minister of information, justified the armed cordon sanitaire to a journalist at the time by stating that “We’re not claiming to be experts on Ebola. We’ve never had to deal with this kind of thing, but we’ve always had to deal with our people. We understand our people more than we understand this disease” (quoted in Onishi 2014).

It was a sentiment shared across Monrovia. Mohammed, himself an excombatant, narrated the West Point catastrophe to me in much the same way. When I asked him about events there, he argued that the very nature of the slum made violence inevitable: “This is a community that lives hand to mouth. If you shut them down, you can expect a rebellion.” For Mohammed, as for many Monrovians, that was sufficient to turn what was ostensibly an emergency health measure into an act of urban war:

When you as security forces see potential threats to your own life, you are authorized to use force. You have the right to deploy lethal force to save yourself. It’s not a physical war you are shooting guns in, but it’s another form of war. That’s a disease spreading widely. . . . once you deploy the military, they have to adopt a military code. When you say war, war is a situation where two forces are marching against each other. . . . How do we stop that? We have to use drastic measures. People moving from house to house, they could be carrying the disease, and you will not know. So it was a kind of warfare.

Though more critical of the security forces, the INCHR report draws much the same conclusion: deploying the military to West Point turned what the report calls “a civilian disorder conduct problem” (2014:6.7) into a lethal confrontation. The combination of urban chaos and the deployment of the armed forces of the Liberian state turned a health emergency into an act of urban war.

Certainly there are few, if any, voices arguing that West Point was a success. What is troubling is that the emerging discourses of urban security obfuscate the inevitability of West Point–like outcomes in other African cities—whether the perceived threat is an insurgency, terrorist organization, criminal gang, or rampaging disease. The current moment seems to be one of an emergent “culture of militarism” with very particular fantasies about the city and its threats, very particular fantasies of what it takes to operate in that environment and who is capable of doing so, and very particular fantasies about what is new and what is old in the formations of urban security.

Gray Zones and Megacities

“The Gray Zone, or the spectrum of conflict between war and peace, is where we operate every day in Africa.” Brigadier General Donald C. Bolduc, the head of US Special Operations Command Africa (SOCAFRICA), succinctly captured what has become a truism both inside and outside military circles: Africa represents ambiguous space in every sense. Its threats are diverse, its logics are difficult to follow and define, and it demands of both African “partners” and foreign “special operators” unconventional responses that do not map neatly onto the existing categories for understanding contemporary conflicts.

This environment is volatile, uncertain and complex—it’s an immense challenge for government, military, law enforcement and development efforts. . . . These threats facing our African partners are typically non-state actors, operating in a trans-regional and trans-national, decentralized and dispersed construct. . . . Our operating environment is the very definition of the Gray Zone . . . we are not at war in Africa—but our African partners certainly are.7

As a concept, the gray zone is as ambiguous as the forces it is meant to explain. Circulating primarily in the special operations world, the gray zone gained currency in the 2010s as a way to characterize a range of activities designed to achieve the traditional objectives of warfare “without the overt use of military force” (Mazarr 2015:2; see also Brands 2016). Applied to the actions of states, the gray zone attempts to capture, for example, a suite of tactics for claiming territory through actions just short of outright invasion and occupation. (Russia’s activities in Crimea and Ukraine, or China’s in the South China Sea, are frequently referenced “gray zone” actions.) Applied to physical places, the gray zone is more expansive and murkier. It implies the concatenation of actors, activities, and spatial locations that pose security risks other than war, a hazy variation on Thomas Barnett’s “non-integrating gap” (2004; see Besteman 2019).4 To refer to Africa in its entirety as a gray zone is to invoke in fashionable strategic terms the very old idea that the “dark continent” is ultimately unknowable and threatening by definition, a space defined as the inverse of safety, stability, and civilization.

Ultimately, the concern within US security circles today is that Boko Haram, Al-Qaeda, Islamic State, and other VEOs (violent extremist organizations) can operate with relative im-

3. Ibid.
4. In the simplest terms, Barnett (2004) argued that the US military is faced with a world divided in two: a “core” of regions and states integrated through all manner of networks, and “gap” regions excluded from that connective, stabilizing tissue. These two domains are, in Barnett’s framing, mirror opposites; where the core is “functioning,” the gaps are dystopic spaces of violence, lawlessness, and social breakdown.
punity within this uncategorizable African landscape. But the enemy in the gray zone has metastasized into a diffuse array of overlapping and mutually reinforcing forces: domestic terrorists, international networks, widespread poverty and failing infrastructure, climate change and resource scarcity, unemployment, disease, corruption. These are, in security parlance, threat multipliers and hybrid threats. And everything that multiples the threat becomes the enemy, anthropomorphized into a physical battlefield opponent.

For example, in his foreword to a 2015 report on the Ebola response effort, US Army-Africa commander Major General Darryl A. Williams writes that “even more impressive than the empirical accomplishments [of the US military in Liberia] are [sic] the resiliency demonstrated by the people of Liberia in taking the fight to the enemy. . . . I truly believe our assistance helped them quickly contain and control this enemy so Liberians can, once again, confidently work toward their national potential.” Yet the Army’s “lessons-learned” reports make clear that the enemy in the fight against Ebola included virtually everything about Liberia, from chaotic, potholed roads to poor communications infrastructure to a lack of education to the heat of the tropical climate. To return to SOCAFRICA’s Brigadier General Bolduc, the enemy is the volatility, uncertainty, and complexity of the theater of operations, all encompassed by the deliberately ambiguous moniker “the gray zone.”

Though it is formless, the African gray zone is not exactly placeless. Increasingly, the battle space in which this multi-dimensional enemy threat is thought to emerge is the most multifaceted of contemporary spaces: the city. Urbanization is an uneven and still emerging discourse vis-à-vis the African continent. When I asked an Africa Command (AFRICOM) staff member in late 2014 about the military command’s internal thinking on African cities, he responded with a telling anecdote. Charged with producing position papers on how urbanization would affect their mission in the future, 10 of 12 internal divisions in AFRICOM refused, saying that such an undertaking was “a waste of time.” Then a series of bombings of luxury hotels in Ougadougou, Bamako, and Abidjan in late 2015 and 2016, along with continued counterinsurgency operations in urban centers in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the distinctly urban nature of wars in Libya and Syria gave a new urgency to the perceived urban problem in security thinking. As SOCAFRICA’s Bolduc puts it, there is now “no doubt” within the US military that Africa’s future is urban and that cities are the new operational field. In a few short years, the notion that African cities do not matter has gone from the majority opinion to one that seems dangerously naive and out of touch.

At the extreme, Africa’s urban spaces are portrayed as “feral cities.” This is US Naval War College professor Richard J. Norton’s widely repeated characterization of an urban space that “is now a vast collection of blighted buildings, an immense petri dish of both ancient and new diseases, a territory where the rule of law has long been replaced by near anarchy in which the only security available is that which is attained through brute power” (Norton 2003:97). The challenges assumed to exist in every city in the global south (“explosive growth rates, vast and growing income disparity and a security environment that is increasingly attractive to the politically dispossessed”) (Harris et al. 2014:3; see also Manwaring 2005; Martins 2012) are portrayed as developments that make the city itself a threat.

More moderately, the continent’s urban spaces loom large in a nascent security scholarship on the threats posed by the “megacity” or the “megalopolis.” Loosely defined as cities or city clusters of more than 10 million inhabitants, the megacity has become a signifier of out-of-control urbanism. Despite the fact that the African continent will not reach the hallmark of a 50% urban population until decades after the rest of the planet, and that most of that growth is predicted to be in moderate-sized towns and small cities of up to 1 million people, the African megacity has captured the imagination of military thinkers. What little writing there is on African urbanism in military spheres is dominated by the megacities problem. As a US Army Strategic Studies Group report puts it, after documenting the many horrors associated with fast-growing cities in the global south: “To ignore megacities is to ignore the future” (Harris et al. 2014:4). The report goes on to suggest that future US intervention in Africa’s megacities is a distinct possibility, primarily because (in the report’s typologies) they are “loosely integrated”—and hence ungovernable.

If Lagos experienced a major natural disaster, or significant social unrest because of Lagos’ glaring wealth disparity, it’s unlikely that the extant security forces would be able to deal with the situation. This increases the likelihood that foreign assistance would be required, and, considering America’s significant economic stake in Nigeria, some US military assistance might be offered. (Harris et al. 2014:19)

Elsewhere in the report the conclusion is even less equivocal. Lagos, like most major cities in the “underdeveloped” world, is a city under threat from itself. It is beset by a host of problems with which it simply cannot cope. Because these are land power problems (in the parlance of the US Army), they must be addressed by human labor in situ. “Solutions,” the report concludes, “therefore will require boots on the ground” (Harris et al. 2014:3). This is, the report goes on to argue, a sit-


8. This is true across the constellation that makes up the broad field of risk futurists. See, e.g., the Africa blog site of the financial conglomerate KPMG: http://www.blog.kpmgafrica.com/africas-7-megacities-the-catalysts/.
Spaces, Smooth and Striated

There is a truism running through the urban warfare literature that not enough thought and preparation have been devoted to the particularities of the new urban terrain. "It is questionable," as Norton summarizes it, "whether the tools, resources, and strategies that would be required to deal with the [urban] threats exist at the present" (2003:105; see also Beckhusen 2014:2).

Historically, operational commanders preferred not to dwell on the complexities of fighting in urban space ("'Don't go there' is the best advice for urban combat" [Grau and Kipp 1999]) or imagined the city as simply a dense landscape of concrete forests and asphalt canyons (see Spiller 2001). When forced to engage in urban operations, however, security forces have confronted the reality that cities are a distinctive milieu. In a 2009 review of "the urban military imperative," Michael Evans of the Australian Defence College describes in geometric vocabulary an operating environment that fragments conventional forces. Evans contrasts the stasis of rural battlefields with a dynamic and nonlinear urban operational environment (Evans 2009:519).

Both the US Army field manual on urban operations and the interdepartmental Doctrine for Joint Urban Operations (JUO) make the same point. The JUO field manual, for example, advises commanders to be aware that "manmade terrain in urban areas degrades communications capabilities, particularly line of sight, over-the-horizon, long haul, and air-to-ground capabilities" and that the city "degrades navigation and precise position and location information" (CJCS 2013:III-4). All the basic calculations and mappings on which classic battlefield maneuvers (and classical doctrine) rely come undone in the urban milieu.

The result is a growing sense that US operators must find or invent new ways to operate in the gray zone of the city, an operational approach independent of the constraints of conventional geometry. What works in the liquid urbanism of gray zones and megacities is decentralization, networking, and rhizomatic maneuvers. Unified Quest 2014, a US Army war game set in a future megacity, generated the official conclusion that "smaller, dispersed units conducting operations across domains" would be required for success in urban operations (Kaune 2016:15). Holding territory by controlling a perimeter may not be, indeed, likely would not be, the principal military objective. Instead, Army strategists have struggled to develop a vocabulary of "nodes," "segments," and "precision strikes" (Wahlman, Bean, and Anderson 2003:S2–4) that will mirror the formlessness of the new urban battle space.

Parts of the US military have, of course, made efforts to become gray zone postspatial forces—not least through the radical expansion of its special operations programs (see Brooks 2016; Turse 2015). The very fact that AFRICOM and each of the attendant service commands charged with Africa operations are based off the African continent suggests that the military logic of place is, at least, no longer linear.9 Drone missions and cyber warfare, sleeper cells and homegrown, radicalized terrorists have all lent credibility to the argument that both topography and geography are outdated, if not obsolete, security concepts. More amorphous terms that circulate through the security literature (environment, climate, ecology, system) imply materiality and connectivity, but they do so in ways that are largely ungrounded. The hyperspecificity of other military logics produces the same effect. The pinpoint accuracy of GPS-guided munitions and the perception of terrorist attacks that can materialize seemingly from nowhere make coordinates, rather than terrain, the principal concern of military geography.

Both in the abstract and in actual kinetic operations, shifting decenteritization in urban military strategy maps surprisingly well onto the philosophical constructs of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s writing on nomadism and the distinction between smooth and striated space (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:351–423). Deleuze and Guattari posit a difference between two spatial registers, captured in the contrast between "smooth" and "striated" space. What smooth and striated spaces refer to are opposed organizations of power and force. Striated space is space marked by the logics of the state; it is space categorized and mapped, enclosed and measured by the dominant logics of sovereign authorities. Striated space is "a space drawn and riddled with lines of divide and demarcation that name, measure, appropriate and distribute space according to inherited political designs, history or economic conflict" (Conley 2005:258). The corresponding smooth space is not exactly the opposite. It is, more accurately, the undoing of striation—the undoing, in other words, of state logics and the way it plays out across three dimensions. Smooth space is a space of events rather than of lines, "space that is without border or distinction that would privilege one site or place over another" (Conley 2005:258).

Eyal Weizman (2007) has shown, for example, that when confronting the intractable problem of containing urban uprisings in Nablus in 2002, the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) drew explicitly on Deleuze and like-minded philosophers. The IDF developed an urban counterinsurgency strategy predicated on forgoing the "striated" space of the street in favor of up-ending the dominant urban logic and "smoothing" out the space of the city, sending small commando teams to burrow through party walls.10 A few years later US trainers, having studied IDF tactics, taught a similarly rhizomatic approach to Ethiopian forces deployed in Mogadishu as they fought the "nomadic"
al-Shabab. Among the most influential US voices in theorizing the nature of asymmetric warfare have been the RAND Corporation analysts John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, whose thinking in works like *Networks and Netwars* (2001) draws directly (but without attribution) from Deleuze and Guattari’s writing. Arquilla and Ronfeldt argue that in the future, networked enemies will move less like regulated chess pieces and more like the unrestricted, nonlinear pieces in the game of Go (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 2001:2; see also Easterling 2016:145–147; as well as Hoffman 2011:7–12). To combat them, conventional forces must learn to do the same. Or, as Bickford (2019) and Gusterson (2016, 2019) show, they must invent the techniques that make such unbounded movement possible. There is, in short, a powerful appeal to the fantasy of martial authority exercised through Deleuzian dematerialization and deterritorialization.

Nevertheless, despite being one of the world’s largest bureaucratic institutions with innumerable constituent parts, the US military is a surprisingly self-critical organization on certain points. Among the most consistent of these is that this more flexible, nimble, and rhizomatic mode of operating may simply be impossible for it to achieve. As US Army War College Fellow Colonel Patrick Kaune puts it baldly, “The US Army is incapable of operating within the megacity” (2016:2), largely because it cannot effectively move through what is, in essence, smooth space. The world that US military strategists face is divided in two: on the one hand are the legible rules and realities of warfare that have determined the structure and operating logics of the conventional armed forces. On the other is an amorphous world of multivalent threats it is ill equipped to understand, let alone operate within. The challenge, then, is identifying those surrogate forces that can bridge these worlds.

This desire for the ability to master the modalities of the gray zone is disturbingly anticipated in Deleuze and Guattari’s formulation of the war machine. In Deleuzian terms, there is a fantasy inherent in state thinking that it can capture or produce nomads and war machines of its own. Reducing the threat to sovereign authority requires the ability to appropriate, somehow, the skills that make space smooth, the capacity to undermine the nomad’s tactics by employing them preemptively.

This basic Deleuzian proposition is indeed a significant piece in current US engagements with African states. Military-to-military relationships have become a major vector for the flow of foreign assistance to the continent and is widely regarded (at least in the United States) as both a more cost effective and mutually beneficial way to engage with African partners than dealing with the corrupt and unsupported bureaucracies of other branches of government. A recent Council on Foreign Relations report (McBride 2017) noted that even before the Trump administration proposed deep budget cuts in foreign aid, the percentage of direct assistance devoted to long-term development and the percentage devoted to military assistance were closely matched (38% and 35%, respectively.) What is more, beginning in the early years of the Obama administration, the Pentagon has taken over from the US diplomatic corps considerable control of foreign aid to countries on the continent (see Bender 2016).

While the goal of these relationships has been to overcome the limits on the US ability to act directly in the perceived gray zones of Africa—especially African cities—the results have tended toward events like the West Point siege. Though they are imagined to be better equipped to operate within Africa’s urban gray zones, Africa’s armed forces have deployed the same repertoire of actions with which any security force actually operates in an urban environment. Surrogacy has not, as it happens, automatically overcome the basic problem that confronting amorphous enemies in supposedly formless urban space requires concrete, formal security interventions. The state, Deleuze and Guattari wrote, can only look to existent military institutions for the capabilities to operate effectively in smooth space, institutions “that will continually cause it problems” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:355). By behaving like militaries anywhere, the (US) state’s captured African war machines prove the theorem and stubbornly continue to cause problems.

**Partners and Surrogates**

Initially the project of rebuilding the Liberian army after the war ended in 2003 was outsourced to the private security contractors DynCorps and Pacific Architects and Engineers. It was then picked up by the US Marine Corps-Africa and the Michigan National Guard under a program code-named Operation Onward Liberty. While the training and restructuring process was plagued by a series of internal conflicts, directional shifts, and resource shortages, observers both sympathetic to and generally more critical of US military activities in Africa agreed that the overall impact on the AFL was at least a “provisional success” (International Crisis Group 2009; see also Blaney, Klein, and McFate 2010; Lipsky 2015; McNerney et al. 2016). Indeed, when I asked a friend in Monrovia why the AFL had been involved at all in the West Point cordon, his reply was typical of Monrovians in general: “It was a health operation, but you need discipline on the ground. And if you need discipline, you need the security forces. They have been trained by you guys, by the US, so they had that stamp on it. The government trusted them.”

The mandate for training Liberia’s military, like the mandate that created AFRICOM as a hybrid command linking the US departments of State and Defense, was expansive. The new AFL was never intended to be limited to war-fighting capabilities. The architects of the DynCorps plan tacitly acknowledged the reality that as an African army, the new AFL was likely to be one of the state’s most powerful and most widely deployed domestic institutions (see Edgerton 2002; Herbst 2000). It would inevitably play an important role in postwar state reconstruction, internal security, and “respond[ing] to natural

11. This history is summarized in McNerney et al. (2016) and Simpson (2016).
through the literature on the new urban battlefields, whether they are characterized as gray zones or megacities. The lesson of a 2003 joint operations exercise in a fictional megacity of 17 million people was, according to Colonel William Adamson writing in the US Army War College journal, that US forces could never operate alone in the urban battle space: "indigenous allies will be invaluable" for urban operations in future cities (Adamson 2015:48). The Army’s Strategic Study Group report on megacities similarly argues that partnerships, including “non-standard partnerships” with “formal, informal and illicit” security services, will be a key component of future urban operations (Harris et al. 2014:17). “In one sense,” writes political theorist Hal Brands (2016) in characterizing gray zones: “The prerequisite is to develop precisely the sort of ambiguous tactics and tools that revisionist actors might themselves use. . . . Indeed, to the extent that the United States, its allies, and its partners possess the same tools as their gray zone adversaries, they may be better placed to frustrate coercive gradualism, and impose reciprocal costs” (3).

There is in this language a thinly veiled consensus on a point briefly debated in the run-up to the 2003 US invasion of Iraq. Neoconservative hawks in the George W. Bush administration, such as Richard Perle, and their intellectual allies, such as Arquilla and the journalist Robert Kaplan, argued that surrogate “local forces” were the most effective in the War on Terrorism precisely because, unlike US forces, they were not bound by the Geneva Conventions or other laws of war. With frequent reference to British colonial strategies, most notably the cultivation of loyalist proxies against the Mau Mau insurgency in Kenya, Perle and others suggested that no state force could operate with sufficient flexibility, situational awareness, or brutality to achieve a battlefield victory. The best they could do is forge creative alliances with those who might wage war on their own terms but on the occupier’s behalf (see Hoffman 2011:9–13).

Whether because they can act outside the existing legal framework or simply because they better understand the social and physical terrain of the theater of operations, the conceit that local surrogates can somehow “mirror the enemy’s capability” (in the words of the much-debated US Army and Marine Corps Counter-Insurgency Field Manual [US Army and Marine Corps 2007:298–299]), African partner forces have become the mythical war machine in the eyes of US security services. What host nation or partner forces might lack in professionalism or advanced technique they make up for in the ways that they can navigate the primary objective of gray zone operations: operating in the African city “without escalating to overt warfare, without crossing established red-lines, and thus without exposing the practitioner to the penalties and risks that such escalation might bring” (Brands 2016:1).

**A Willing Blindness**

It is through this outsourcing of security to partner forces—the state’s attempt to appropriate war machines of its own—

12. Among the elements of the postwar AFL training program under Operation Onward Liberty were crowd control techniques, most notably as part of readiness preparation for possible peacekeeping duties in Mali. Ironically, one of the hypothetical scenarios that US military trainers have employed in urban crowd control exercises is a mass panic induced by the rapid spread of lethal disease and the possibility of “weaponized civilians” infected with contagious biological or chemical agents (see, for general discussion, Center for Army Lessons Learned 2004, 2014)—a scenario, in other words, that would unfold very much the way the 2014–2015 Ebola epidemic unfolded in Monrovia.

13. The Trump administration has made it clear that this military-first policy will continue to dominate Africa policy for the foreseeable future. See, e.g., Cooper (2017).
that militarism becomes synonymous with the fantasy of a postgeometric urban world. Imagining that local actors, be they partners, indigenous forces, or host nation security personnel, can somehow operate according to different spatial logics masks the reality that urban “kinetic” security operations depend on the blunt instruments of instituting lines and violently carving shapes in urban space.

The fact is that African, Caribbean, and Latin American militaries are no more adept at operating outside the basic principles of geometry than is the US military itself. Despite the fact that it was ostensibly a human security mission and not an instance of urban combat, the AFL was no more capable than any other force of stopping an enemy disease without recourse to the standard repertoire of urban military tactics. And yet that fact remains largely invisible in the postmortems of the AFL actions in Monrovia during the Ebola crisis, just as it has during similar combat and noncombat situations around Africa, the Middle East, and across the Atlantic in Haiti, Jamaica, and Brazil.

Immediately after arguing that the urban milieu requires decentralized command and tactics, the JUO field manual states that “isolation of the urban area is nearly always a prerequisite for success” (CJCS 2013:III-16). The US Army, historically the loudest voice in land operations, still promotes the principle that urban operators ideally should view the city, if forced to operate within it, as an object to be surrounded. “Isolate an urban area and approach it incrementally from the periphery of the city” (Adamson 2015:51; see also US Army 2006:6–3–6–4; Harris et al. 2014:8) remains the core of Army doctrine. A RAND Corporation analysis of the 2008 operations against Sadr City in Baghdad (Johnson, Markel, and Shannon 2013) argued that US forces successfully “reimagined” urban warfare by successfully coordinating with local forces—and then constructing a wall around the neighborhood that housed the Jaish al-Mahdi militia’s leadership. In other words, the doctrinal approach to urban operations remains the basic geometry of the circle. Even as critics both inside and outside the military structure argue that such spatial forms are wholly inappropriate to the nature of contemporary urban warfare in general and to global south cities in particular, they are constantly reproduced on the ground.

David Kilcullen’s analysis of the 2010 Jamaican Defense Force (JDF) operation in Kingston’s Tivoli Garden is another case in point (2013). (Kilcullen was an influential voice within General David Petraeus’s inner circle and one of the chief architects of contemporary counterinsurgency strategy.) In what has become one of the more celebrated examples this decade of human security operations in an urban gray zone, the JDF was tasked with arresting Christopher “Dudus” Coke, a local don indicted by the US government and wanted for extradition to the United States (see Schwartz 2011). US security personnel assisted in the planning of the operation and, allegedly, also in its execution. What resulted was a siege of Tivoli Garden.

When Tivoli residents resisted Coke’s arrest, JDF personnel surrounded the neighborhood and penetrated its interior in a series of lethal operations that resulted in at least 75 deaths. In Kilcullen’s analysis, Tivoli Gardens serves as an object lesson in the future of military operations in urban space. The deaths at Tivoli were not a reflection on JDF tactics but “the connectedness of Tivoli Gardens with the rest of Kingston, as well as with national and international financial, political, business, and criminal networks” (2013:33). The particulars of the JDF operation disappear in the focus on what Kilcullen calls the “nested networks” nature of Coke’s Shower Posse, making JDF violence (much like that of the AFL in Monrovia) appear not as a consequence of their own maneuvers but as a natural consequence of the messy, gray urban terrain.

There is a similar inevitability, and a similar invisibility, across the global south. The urban warfare tactics employed to pacify poor neighborhoods in Rio in advance of the 2014 World Cup and 2016 Olympic Games can, for example, be traced to training the Brazilian military received as part of its participation in the UN peacekeeping mission in Haiti beginning in 2004 (see Hoelscher and Norheim-Martinsen 2014). Both Captain Amadou Haya Sanogo, who led the 2012 coup against Mali’s democratically elected government, and Lieutenant Colonel Issac Zida, who led the 2014 coup in Burkina Faso, were graduates of multiple US training programs, mostly programs geared toward special antiterrorism operations. (Both officers presumably also received some training in civil-military relations, a standard, though generally undersupported, part of the US training package of African soldiers.) As one former contractor working on Africa training missions put it in an interview I conducted in 2016, a significant problem with the current US approach to training African militaries is the emphasis on highly specialized elite units. Such special forces might be most effective in unconventional warfare against Al-Qaeda or Boko Haram but are also the least accountable and most likely to brutally exercise their own authority domestically.

What is at work here is a willing blindness that is always the lynchpin to fantasy (Žižek 1999:3–7). Like other case studies in this volume (see, e.g., Lutz [2019] on “strategic ignorance” and Gusterson [2019] on “slippage”), the contemporary culture of militarism in the United States is predicated on an institutional incapacity to recognize the consequences of its own actions. In the discourse of gray zone operations, this amounts to a misrecognition of the fact that surrogate or partner forces, the state’s purported war machines, replicate that state’s own basic logics of operation. As Easterling puts it (2016:148), the very things that supposedly distinguish the war machine’s smooth approach to space often come, in the final analysis, to look very much like the striating operations of the state itself. Kilcullen, for example, claims that what makes the city such a multiplied threat is the fact that it works like a well-connected single system—threats can therefore be calculated with all the predictability and measurability of the law of supply and demand, and the enemy is creative only to the extent that it has learned to efficiently navigate city infrastructure like cellphone net-

works and ports (2013:26–28). What the state perceives as the war machine’s qualitatively different mode of operation turns out to simply be a variation of the state’s own practices.

Conclusion

“African solutions to African problems,” as a US trainer working with African forces put it to me, “is code for ‘containment.’” The pithy comment captured the hardening of a line of thought that extends back to the end of the Cold War. Robert Kaplan’s (1994) “coming anarchy” thesis, which so dominated both official and popular understandings of Africa throughout the 1990s, portrayed a continent reverting to timeless, irrational tribal hatreds and endless conflicts. The challenge for the United States, according to Kaplan, was how to keep the African disease from spreading.

The current security establishment approach to Africa’s urban gray zones advances Kaplan’s thesis a step further. Through communications technologies, air travel, transnational trade relationships, and dark networks of human trafficking and drug and weapon smuggling, African cities are already inextricably woven into the global connective tissue. It is too late to simply police borders and build walls to keep Africa and Africans in place. What is called for is a postspatial regime of containment, a rhizomatic and precise way to arrest African threats the moment they emerge, wherever they emerge—and whatever form they might take. Yet unlike the colonial construct of the frontier zone, or even the hypersplintering and enclavization that characterizes contemporary occupations like Gaza and the West Bank (see Mbembe 2003; Peteet 2017; Weizman 2007; as well as Besteman 2019), there is no territorial claim whatsoever exercised in this expression of sovereignty. The goal is a formless sovereignty, a dematerialized militarism that makes inscriptions rather than inscriptions on the battlefield.

For critics of US military policy, the failure to recognize this postgeometric, postspatial fantasy results in a misplaced critique. The simple presence of uniformed soldiers as labor in an unfolding crisis is no longer surprising or, by itself, particularly meaningful. Critiquing the deployment of US troops in Liberia during the Ebola crisis as a subtle form of colonial occupation, for example, misses the larger and more disturbing point. What matters a good deal more, and ultimately suggests more about the nature of contemporary militarism and militarization, are those events like the West Point siege that happen at one step of remove from the actions of US personnel. These are events that emerge from longer-term and harder to trace engagements in which military fantasy masks and enables very conventional, familiar forms of repressive state violence.

Achille Mbembe has argued that the end of the twentieth century in Africa was characterized by the emergence of Deleuzian war machines across the continent. African states’ monopoly on violence and the means of coercion have largely given way to a proliferating landscape of militias, paramilitaries, entrepreneurial warlords, and private corporations that claimed equal authority over life and death on the continent. Such war machines were as likely to work alongside the state and at its behest as to be opposed to it. Both the colonial and the post-colonial commandement of sovereignty, dependent on the ability to define space and the kinds of relations that would take place within it, were thus superceded by a novel and more fluid kind of authority. The age of the African war machine was the age of post–“state of siege” militarism, the age in which wars are no longer about territorial control but become “hit-and-run affairs” (Mbembe 2003:30).

What we see now in the US military approach to Africa and to African cities in particular has all the markings of the maturity of this evolution. The instability and unsustainability of the state project of capturing war machines is becoming clear. Yet, contradictorily, so too is the inevitability of the state’s fantasy that it can and must continue to do so. Only through subcontracting violence to local partners can US security services contain the threat posed by Africa’s urban gray zones. Only Africans can solve their own problems. But once outsourced, the same spatial limits and inadequacies that strategists hope to overcome as they navigate African urban gray zones are reinscribed. The gap between high-level visions of human security enacted through war machines and rhizomatic surrogate forces, a vision in which the entire urban terrain is a battle space and everything is the enemy, and the concrete reality of material space in the modern city is unbridgeable. Instead, the forces of the state, in this case the constellation of public and private bodies that make up the US military establishment, have cultivated a kind of willing blindness. Subcontracting the work of violence to local surrogate forces allows the continuation of the fantasy that urban security operations can somehow be undertaken without formal dimensions, without shape and without geometry. And yet when actually deployed on the ground, Liberia’s Ebola Task Force did exactly what any interventionist form does: it discovered geometry and drew a circle, making everything within it the enemy.

Acknowledgments

Grateful thanks to Catherine Besteman and Hugh Gusterson for their thoughtful stewardship of this volume and the entire “Cultures of Militarism” project. This essay benefited tremendously from conversations with all of the participants of the symposium and from the feedback of the anonymous peer reviewers. Thanks, finally, to Laurie Obbink and to everyone at the Wenner-Gren Foundation for their support and commitment to this endeavor.

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Bureaucratic Weaponry and the Production of Ignorance in Military Operations on Guam

by Catherine Lutz

Militarism is a form of life accomplished in the contemporary world through large institutions organized bureaucratically around the preparation for, and production of, violence. Bureaucracies most famously produce a diffusion of responsibility among their members, but additionally they produce both knowledge and ignorance at both the institutional and the more compartmentalized scales. This article examines the political and cultural uses of ignorance claims and performances by military bureaucracy, taking the example of the US Navy’s environmental impact statement documents produced in the process of building up its presence in the nonsovereign island of Guåhan/Guam. While the documents produced in militarized bureaucratic contexts like this one appear to be claims to expertise, they are striking for how they navigate between knowledge and ignorance, that is, for how they seek some kinds of information and avoid others, how they use bureaucratic rules to set boundaries on what knowledge they will seek and quietly perform, not knowing what they at some level in fact know but do not wish to know. The goal is to understand the ignorance of militarism here not as an obstacle to knowing but as a related phenomenon with its own social shapes and effects.

Militarism, Bureaucratic Paper, and the Will to Ignorance

The work of bureaucracy is at the center of modern military practice, alongside violence itself and the labor of soldiers, contractors, and other civilians. While scholars and the general public typically pay more attention to the spectacular manifestations of the militarism that undergrads that practice—F-16 flyovers of a football game, images of an armada steaming in formation through war games, or the fiery display of missiles hitting targets in war itself—we ought to draw more attention to the quieter face work, organizational meetings, policy discussions, and document preparation and circulation involved in making war, in making wars of particular types, and in developing commitments to the idea of the primacy of force. Why? Because in both public and private arenas, the work of war preparation and of war is administered in ways that provide crucial insight into the impact and tenacity of militarism or the affective and capital investments in the use of military force, including its coexistence with both democracy and neocolonialism.

Where bureaucracy has been examined in relation to militarism is mainly in regard to the production of either genocide or violence (Arendt 1970; Bauman 1989) or the production of strategic incompetence in war fighting (Komer 1972). Bauman, for example, explains the scale and nature of the Holocaust with significant reference to the bureaucratic mode of production of violence: this includes such things as bureaucracy’s division of labor into minute aspects of a task that makes the overall character of the larger work more difficult to see, the use of procedural rather than substantive rationality as the proper route to problem-solving, and the moral hypervalorization of rules and rule following. This allowed horrendous collective behavior that appeared to individual functionaries as more innocuous work like ordering supplies or organizing train schedules.

Arendt saw a central problem of bureaucracy as its dilution of moral responsibility. The larger impact of bureaucracy, she argued, however, is that “In a fully developed bureaucracy there is nobody left with whom one could argue, to whom one could present grievances, on whom the pressures of power could be exerted. Bureaucracy is the form of government in which everybody is deprived of political freedom, of the power to act; for the rule by Nobody is not no-rule, and where all are equally powerless we have a tyranny without a tyrant” (1970: 82). This perspective allows us to see how individuals can at best get a glimpse of their contribution to militarism and can understand their piece as morally upstanding, particularly when defined as supportive of people in uniform: so it might be, for example, for those creating or filling in documents that manage the employment of human resources for a corporation whose contract involves providing the bottled water for the soldiers in Kuwait who managed the logistics for shipping air conditioning units to the forces occupying Iraq.

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This article asks about the political and cultural uses of claims to, or performances of, ignorance by military bureaucracy. It takes the example of the US Navy’s documents produced in the process of building up its presence in Guam. The documents produced in militarized bureaucratic contexts like the one to be examined here are striking for how they navigate between knowledge and ignorance, that is, for how they seek some kinds of information and avoid others, how they use bureaucratic rules to set boundaries on what knowledge they will seek and quietly perform, not knowing what officials at some level in fact know but do not wish to know. While the documents and the behavior of military officials in Guam can be viewed as performances of expertise in environmental assessment and military operations or logistics, those documents also continually declare the irrelevance of certain kinds of knowledge or the acceptability of certain forms of their own ignorance or uncertainty. As performances, the documents require some collaboration between, and evidence different tactical struggles by, performer and audience (Matthews 2011). They are also examples of what Feldman (2008) sees as the daily practices in governing bureaucracies like the military that create, constitute, and legitimate the institution and its power themselves rather than simply being behavioral evidence that the military exists and performs certain functions.

The goal is to understand ignorance in each of these forms “as a social fact, not as a precursor or an impediment to more knowledge, but as a productive force in itself, as the twin and not the opposite of knowledge” (McGoey 2012:3). The politically motivated production of ignorance and ambiguity can be strategic, as when oil and gas industry officials and their allies in government deny climate change or its anthropogenesis, or when tobacco companies claimed to know that smoking does not cause cancer while nonetheless knowing that not to be the case, or it can be a motivated looking away from knowing. In either case, ignorance and ignorance via uncertainty are generated in the public at large, and this allows the avoidance of an institution’s accountability for its actions’ consequences and the establishment of the moral rectitude of the state’s military actors.

Eve Sedgwick’s Epistemology of the Closet (2008) identified the roots and the social productivity of ignorance, demonstrating not only the evacuation of responsibility it entailed but how, bizarrely from Enlightenment perspectives, it enhanced the authority of the ignorant. She also identified the multiplicity of types of ignorance and their relationship to particular regimes of truth.

If ignorance is not—as it evidently is not—a single Manichaean, aboriginal maw of darkness from which the heroics of human cognition can occasionally wrestle facts, insights, freedoms, progress, perhaps there exists instead a plethora of ignorances, and we may begin to ask questions about the labor, erotics, and economics of their human production and distribution. Insofar as ignorance is ignorance of a knowledge . . . these ignorances, far from being pieces of the original dark, are produced by and correspond to particular knowledges and circulate as part of particular regimes of truth. (Sedgwick 2008:8)

Militarism bears a long and special relationship with this production process. It amplifies ignorance in several ways: (1) since the canonization of von Clausewitz, the hypervalorization of the idea that wars are more uncertain than other human activities and that the ignorance associated with that is inevitable (“War is the province of uncertainty; three-fourths of those things upon which action in war must be calculated, or hidden more or less in the clouds of great uncertainty” [von Clausewitz 1997:42]; see also Barkawi and Brighton [2011] for a fuller explication of what that uncertainty entails); (2) the violent spectacle at militarism’s heart that absorbs thought and deflects attention from larger contextual matters of what comes before and after; (3) the centrality of secrecy as a bureaucratic technique in the interest of protecting one’s own assets or plans from the enemy, with disclosure sometimes intentionally used “to mask what is not disclosed” (Rappert 2012:5); and (4) the authoritarianism and masculine privilege on which military institutions rest and the associated deficit in the ability to understand others’ intentions or ideas. Finally, (5) contemporary militarism often develops in concert with an arms industry that, like the military organization itself, benefits from inflating threats (Kaufmann 2004), from projecting a world of “known unknowns” of threat and danger, and assuming unpreparedness (Lakoff 2008). Military planners spend much effort in constructing the idea of such unknown threats and ill preparedness that builds a positive sense of what their ignorance, which can be called strategic ignorance, requires in the way of resources: an ever larger military, expansive presence around a region or the globe, and an immense and baroque arsenal (Kaldor 1981). Militarism, when successfully reproducing itself, reaps the political, cultural, and economic value of trafficking in “unlimited risks and indeterminable threats . . . [and] from failing to identify solutions to problems they purport are unsolvable” (McGoey 2012:7) except by preparation for war.

This article asks how the politics of ignorance and knowledge plays out in the special case of militarism and in the pressing case of Guam. How might militarism, particularly militarism in a colonial setting such as that one, create a distinctive politics of ignorance and knowledge? What aspects of the social relations of the United States as a military colonial power with the people of Guam are visible in the bureaucratic process, and how is that ignorance reframed by those whose resources are being captured as military resources?

1. This intentional spreading of ignorance is what Proctor labels “agnostotology” and which Proctor and Schiebinger (2008) discuss as those ignorances or confusions that are culturally and politically and often purposefully induced.

2. Kaldor’s explanation for the complexity of modern arsenals is institutional as well, but with emphasis on the divergent approaches of the military and of the industry that sells arms to it.
Militarism and the Condition of Guam

The island of Guam is one of the most militarized places on Earth by the measure of military equipment and toxic residue, historical levels of investment, and personnel per acre. The United States acquired the island in the Western Pacific in 1898 from Spain, which had itself used the island as a crucial naval refueling site to facilitate the projection of its military and commercial power into Asia, from the era of Magellan to the dawn of the twentieth century. Winning the Spanish-American War allowed the United States to expand its military ambitions—most forcefully articulated in Mahan’s still-celebrated 1890 strategic manuscript, “The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660–1783,” which called for such territorial acquisitions. A short Japanese occupation of Guam from 1941 to 1944 entailed further intense militarization of the island and opened the door to a US reinvasion. That reinversion scorched the landscape of much of the island, displaced the entire population, and reduced its capital to rubble. That mountain of debris was bulldozed into the sea and now forms an (in)visible peninsula jutting improbably into the sea from the modern capital’s coastline.

At that point, the United States confiscated approximately 50% of the island from its landowners, including much of its farmland and its most significant water resources, for military bases.3 However, decolonization movements well underway around the world at World War II’s end (which led to the ouster of the US military presence from a number of places it had established itself), prompted fear in Washington that Guam’s rich military resources might be lost.4 This led the United States to declare Guam’s residents US citizens via the Organic Act of 1950. This move was in violation of United Nations protocols that identified the specific steps that needed to be taken in the decolonization process. Then and now, US military construction and military use of the island and its residents’ labor were in violation of UN stipulations that military buildups were prohibited as making self-determination more tenuous or even impossible. What also made that self-determination more difficult was that the United States brought numerous workers to the island from elsewhere, particularly the

3. A map of the original military plan shows the military’s intention to take nearly the entire island and remove the Chamoru residents to a small “reservation” in the southeastern corner of Guam. This map circulates today among those campaigning for Chamorou sovereignty and against racism. Chamoru protests eventually led to the reclaiming of some land by its owners, and a Base Realignment and Closure process in the brief “peace dividend” days of the mid-1990s brought some additional land returns, but the military currently claims control of nearly one-third of the island (Natividad and Kirk 2010).

4. This fear of political curtailment of US foreign basing also prompted the Pentagon to adopt an “island strategy” (Vine 2009). First enunciated in the early 1960s, it called for siting military bases in locations with small or sparse population, power, and global public visibility. Islands like Guam, Diego Garcia, and Puerto Rico were environments assumed to present the least restrictions on military land use of the land, sea, and air.

Philippines, to facilitate the buildup. This, and the influx of US mainland workers and soldiers deployed to Guam who sometimes stayed or returned to set up businesses, inexorably minoritized the indigenous Chamoru people. They now (as of the 2010 census) constitute just 37% of island residents. Many of them join the US military, in such numbers that they suffered more deaths per capita in Vietnam and now the Global War on Terrorism than any other ethnic group (fig. 1).

The end of World War II saw the United States pursue a similar strategy on Okinawa. The United States invaded and ejected the Japanese from that island in 1945 and maintained full political control for almost 30 more years. Returning the island to Japanese sovereignty in 1972, the United States retained 20% of the island’s land for military basing. As on Guam, the United States has also made claim on use of large additional swathes of adjacent seas for military exercises and training. The social, political, and physical impact of the Marines who are stationed there, in particular, has produced an unrelenting and decades-long mass social movement (Inoue 2004), which eventually led the Japanese government to push the US government to move thousands of Marines off the island and slave them to head to Guam beginning in the mid-2000s. President Obama’s “pivot to Asia” (from Europe and the Middle East) added political impetus not only to move the Marines while nonetheless acquiring a new base in Okinawa but to a more general buildup of US military forces, equipment, and activity in both Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands. This buildup was also a build-out in which the United States claimed the need for additional territory on Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

These base expansions occurred alongside a continued vigorous interventionist and imperial policy stance in the United States. The language military planners use to describe the need for overseas basing and for expanded basing on Guam is phrased in terms of providing global security goods to the United States and its allies (Lutz 2009), including defending shipping lanes through Asia, being able to deploy troops and equipment more quickly to defend US and allied interests in potential conflict zones, deterring North Korea and other adversaries, and preventing China and any other ascendant power from asserting more influence in the region. Despite these specific historical and political goals, a naturalizing and generalizing (and euphemistic) set of terms is used to describe the need for expansion of Guam’s military footprint, including “forward presence” and training “readiness,” a quality of competence for war fighting that is always degrading or becoming deficient. It is not this Pentagon planning rhetoric alone at work here; there has also been extensive lobbying by those who stand to profit—off island and on—from the buildup.

Military Expansion and US Environmental Law and Bureaucracy

The 1969 National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires any federal agency embarking on a major construction project
Figure 1. US military bases on Guam (A) and Okinawa (B). A color version of this figure is available online.
to assess the likelihood of environmental impacts from each of a variety of alternative courses of action. It also requires that the agency gather public opinion on the document, “affirmatively soliciting comments from those persons or organizations who may be interested or affected,” and it requires the agency to respond in writing to each comment.

The Federal environmental laws that apply to Guam (unlike other overseas US military installations) created the necessity for an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for each major construction project for Guam as well as the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the latter also already home to a significant number of US military facilities and uses (Naval Facilities Engineering Command Pacific 2015; US Marine Corps Forces Pacific 2015). Many reports, whose pages number in the tens of thousands, were produced in relation to each of these projects, but here I examine two sets of documents. The first is the most recent, the Navy’s Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS), also called the Guam and CNMI Military Relocation (2012 Roadmap Adjustments) SEIS which was released in July 2015; the second is the 2010 Draft EIS (Naval Facilities Engineering Command 2010). When the environmental impact statement of 2010 was rejected after intense public protests and a lawsuit and turned back to the Navy as inadequate by the EPA, the Navy scaled back its plans by thousands of soldiers and dependents. Current and future plans are for the new facilities to accommodate the transfer and activities of 5,000 Marines (adding to the 6,000 military personnel already on Guam) and over 1,000 dependents from Okinawa to those islands, dredging of Apra Harbor to allow berthing of aircraft carriers, new missile defense systems to be operated by the US Army, and live-fire training areas as well as expanded training facilities throughout the Northern Marianas. The latter moves are being contested with a lawsuit against the US Navy by a group of civic organizations including the Alternative Zero Coalition and the Tinian Women’s Association.

The NEPA EIS process examined here was led by the Department of the Navy, but it was also conducted in a large number of other contexts. These included government offices such as the Department of the Air Force, the Federal Aviation Administration, the Federal Highway Administration, the Departments of Agriculture and the Interior, the Office of Insular Affairs, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the US Environmental Protection Agency. The process also engaged island offices such as the Guam Supreme Court, the Guam Waterworks Authority, and the Guam Memorial Hospital Authority, as well as the offices of the companies that conducted the planning and impact documents for the EIS. Those include primarily the Australian conglomerate Cardno (contracted as TEC, Inc.) who received two $50 million contracts to produce the documents, and an international organization, the US-Japan Security Consultative Committee. People and dollars from each of the organizations just mentioned worked on the process of document construction even as ultimately no organization but the US Navy was allowed the role of author, with the exception of public comment on the document, to be examined below.

The Documents and Public Response

Both of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) documents examined in this article are psychedelically detailed. They include a swarming throng of multicolor maps, rectilinear and thickly matrixed charts, aesthetically attractive figures, and (much less attractive but still significant) text illustrating and describing the impact of buildup activities across numerous alternative sites new construction (figs. 2, 3). One example and an overview can be found in the Executive Summary of the 2015 document (see fig. 4). That review includes a multipage chart that evaluates the impact of the construction of cantonment (military housing and other facilities) and life fire training ranges, in five different possible locations for each. The resulting giant matrix, much larger than this section, contains 1,089 cells, each cell with a summary judgment of impact in one of the following cryptic forms: B1 = beneficial impact; N1 = no impact; LSI = less than significant impact; SI = significant impact; SI-M = significant impact-mitigable.

An initial chart summarizes the impact in each of the 10 locations on a wide range of aspects of the physical and social environment. The length of the list suggests comprehensiveness as it ranges from their topography, soils, sinkholes, and geological hazards to water supplies and noise levels, changes in land use values and public access, flora and fauna, sightlines and cultural "resources" as well as a dozen aspects of infrastructure. It claims to have examined the consequences of the buildup in terms of hazardous or toxic materials, hazardous waste, and contaminated sites, population levels, need for government services, and economic activity, as well as a catch-all category of "sociocultural issues." It covers how each alternative

5. The law specifies how officials should respond to each comment received: "(a) An agency preparing a final environmental impact statement shall assess and consider comments both individually and collectively, and shall respond by one or more of the means listed below, stating its response in the final statement. Possible responses are to: (1) Modify alternatives including the proposed action. (2) Develop and evaluate alternatives not previously given serious consideration by the agency. (3) Supplement, improve, or modify its analyses. (4) Make factual corrections. (5) Explain why the comments do not warrant further agency response, citing the sources, authorities, or reasons which support the agency’s position and, if appropriate, indicate those circumstances which would trigger agency reappraisal or further response."

6. Elsewhere I have analyzed the documents and their maps in particular as "technologies of rule" (Stoler 2002) that facilitate the pursuit of military projects or potential projects (Lutz 2018).

7. Note that the assessment SI has a marked and an unmarked form: there is no SI-SOL listed.
Figure 2. Figure 5.1-8-2, special status species observations—route 15 LFTRC alternative. A color version of this figure is available online.
Figure 3.2-1, volume 2 Marine Corps relocation alternatives (Guam). A color version of this figure is available online.
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Cantonment/Family Housing Alternatives</th>
<th>LFTRC Alternatives</th>
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Figure 4. Summary of impact determinations for cantonment/family housing alternatives and LFTRC alternatives. A color version of this figure is available online.
will affect public health and safety from toxic exposure to vehicle crashes and the impact on environmental (in)justice and the welfare of children.

These EIS documents were created in the style of high modernist planning and science (Hull 2012). They theoretically emerge from an enormous range of scientific sources of data, baseline and projected. They also, pace Hull and Feldman 2008, can be seen as deeply consequential for bringing the state, and in this case, the military arm of the state, into both view and reality. They are also evidence of what Greenhouse notes is the tendency, historically specific to the case of the contemporary US move to invade Iraq that she examines, for war discourse to occupy “the field so totally, without any evident sense of necessity to defend itself against its most vigorous opponents” (Greenhouse 2008:195). This is in part, she argues, because we imagine the state and its citizens as ideally engaged in dialogue about policy including war making or, in the case of Guam, war preparation on island soil, when in fact those conversations are missing (and despite the EIS process’s claim to be engaged in just that kind of exchange with the citizens of Guam). Instead, temporal depth and political contestation are evacuated from these discourses. Greenhouse draws our attention to how ignorance may be a less apt concept for the source and outcome of these discourses than indifference; that latter concept “mark[s] the locations where the sovereign is exempt from the obligation to converse and therefore from the constraints of substantive social exchange” (2008:208).

Nonetheless, the detailed documents of the EIS suggest to readers that they are being provided with knowledge, that ignorance of the impact of the buildup can be eliminated by reading them, and that they are meant to be read by the general public rather than being expert and exclusionary discourse. One example of how this is accomplished is that each chapter of the 2010 report includes elaborate reader’s guides. An extensive glossary in chapter 5, for example, runs from “Access—the right to transit to and from and to make use of an area” to “Wholly Inert—ordinance with no explosive, propellant, or pyrotechnic component (non-reactive); example: BDU-50, BDU-56 (both are non-reactive heavy-weights with no explosive charges).” A separate “Acronym and Abbreviation List” runs from “AAV Amphibious Assault Vehicle” and “AADT Average Annual Daily Traffic” to “WL wetlands” and “ZID zone of initial dilution.”

However, there is not likely to be a single individual reader of the document capable of understanding or evaluating it properly, including its authors. The activities whose impact it purports to measure will cost billions of dollars and take years to complete and involve the remaking of Guam’s landscape. The documents’ scientism and high polish symbolize that expertise is at work, however, and by implication, that those not able or willing to read the document in its totality remain ignorant. Many of the people making public comment on the document broke frame with it by contesting how the massive scale of the document itself made it illegible or created further social ignorance. One commentator aptly requested an environmental impact statement for the EIS itself:

Over the past 5 years, the DoD has overwhelmed our small community with over 20,000 pages of paperwork (EIS’s, supplements, comments, programmatic agreements, etc.). The DoD has not addressed the economic, health or social impacts as a result of the community having to allocate time and resources to research, read and respond to these EIS’s, specifically the most recent SEIS, especially as a mostly low-income community as stated in the SEIS. The time and resources required by both government offices and private parties should be studied and quantified.

Both of the EIS documents described here include at the end a compilation of public responses to the document as well as an official response to those public voices. The general public as well as government agencies and civic organizations were given 75 days to respond to the document (the comment period was originally much shorter at 45 days but was lengthened after public protest). They could do so in one of several contexts: in oral or written form at three public meetings held to discuss the document, in written form on a comment page on a public website, and via mail or hand delivery of written comments (about half came in the latter form). Volume 10 of the 2010 document includes 3,517 “comment items,” and appendix G.2 of the 2015 document includes 906 comments that were received by the Department of the Navy. One of those latter comments is in fact a petition signed by 1,178 individuals, including several hundred comments explaining why they signed the petition. The number of comments was quite large given the population of the island and was, according to one high Navy official, “unprecedented.”

Most of the comments in each of the two years were critical of one or more aspects of the military buildup, in particular the building of a set of firing ranges that would require closing or disturbing an important Chamoru spiritual and cultural heritage site or a long stretch of beach, wildlife preserve, and fishing area. Concerns were also expressed about the past and current military presence and actions (prior to any of the planned changes) including land lost to existing military bases, environmental damage/health threats from past military activities, cultural and social threats to the Chamoru people and culture as a result of minoritization, increased crime, and the

8. Graeber’s (2012) analysis of bureaucratic documents suggests that they often have the consequence of making the people who must read and use them “stupid,” by which he means that they make people feel incapable or unable to even begin to respond in a sensible way. This was not a feature of the comments in response to the Guam EIS.

9. The public meetings had uniformed US military personnel doing extensive promotion of the military buildup and of the preferred alternative sites for the construction of housing, firing ranges, and other facilities. While the public oral comments are an important potential source of ethnographic insight into the production of relations of knowledge and ignorance around this issue, I did not have the opportunity to observe them.
island’s political status/lack of sovereignty. There were also a
significant number of supportive comments, most of which
focused on the purported economic benefits of a military
buildup and some of which focused on the necessity for the
islanders as “Americans” to support military activity either
because it was a sacrifice required of citizens or because it was
intended to, and would, provide them and the island physical
security.

In each case, a functionary at the Department of the Navy
(or, rather, the Navy contractor under guise of speaking for the
Navy) responded to the comments in writing, and that
response is printed in a right-hand column opposite the com-
ment itself. That format, as well as the content of the responses,
suggests not dialogue but Q and A, with the public as petitioner
and the Navy having the final word. The responses represent
themselves as answers of a sort to the complaint or query. In
most cases, they explain that the action outlined is necessary
and sometimes why, referring the commenter to a particular
section of one of the thousands of pages of text, or explaining
that the comment will not be responded to because it is out of
bounds. Several types of responses were “templated” and re-
used regularly in response to different comments.10

The relational character of the politics of knowledge and
ignorance is vividly illustrated in this format. Those relations
are of gross inequality, and that is evident in language choices.
Many of the public comments express gratitude, even when
going on to a critique, for example, “I for one too appreciate all
the U.S. has done. But, before this buildup can possibly go through . . . ” Many of the official responses, on the other hand,
assume the power of the sovereign, for example, “The DoD has
kept the public informed as required by NEPA, which includes . . .
allowing the public to comment on the DEIS” (emphasis added),
or “Should DoD determine that additional land is necessary
to meet its requirements. . . . ” Where a public com-
ment rejects the premise of inequality, it is ignored or receives
one of the following kinds of boilerplate responses that reassert
the position of the sovereign US military, detailed below.

In the remainder of this article, I identify several types of
community comment and official response pairs that reflect on
this ignoring and ignorance of the sovereign.

1. Comments that question the basic premises of militarism
and of the NEPA process are treated as valuable noise. They
often deftly navigate between treating the discourse as a form
of ignorance (noise) and a form of knowledge (their “value”) by
failing to specify for whom the comment has value or counts
as knowledge. The most fundamentally critical comments take
on militarism itself, as in this impassioned plea for the military
to cease all activity on the island.

2. Comments that detail the suffering endured as a result of
the past and present US military presence were ruled the re-
ponsibility of another unspecified bureaucracy, not the De-

10. This is evocative of the kind of treatment that Bevacqua (2010)
described receiving when he was invited to attend the Democratic Na-
tional Convention as a press representative from Guam. He was in the
room, a theoretical interlocutor, but no one was willing to speak with
him about his questions. He was a “ghost,” on the flag but without a star.
part of the Navy, which is portrayed as acting solely as security provider and environmental steward and as disconnected from that Navy that buried or spilled toxins or despoiled the environment or injured the community otherwise in the past.

The US military uses a variety of highly toxic substances. Particularly in the over 70 years of military activity on Guam since World War II, those toxics have been buried in the soil of areas in and around its military bases, including its airfields, naval ports, and residential areas and the surrounding civilian communities, and seeped into its aquifer and soil. Those chemicals include the components of the extremely high volumes of petroleum fuels used; herbicides extensively used to create perimeters around bases and training areas; pesticides; strong solvents used to wash down military equipment, including trichloroethylene (TCE) and perchloroethylene (Perc); heavy metals with high toxicity (including such things as the arsenic and lead used in millions of rounds of ammunition a year); and radioactive materials.

Comments on the problem of this long historical chemical assault were joined by other comments that attempted to put the current military buildup in the context of a history of other cumulative and unmitigated harms, including the trauma of their World War II experiences; the failure to make war reparations to those harmed by US and Japanese military activity during and just after the war; the taking of Guam’s main water resources by the DoD and the need to return ownership to Guam authorities; the political status of Guam; and the decision by the military several years ago to create two separate and now very unequal educational systems for military and civilian children.

Public comment. I am a native Chamoru. My grandmother is originally from the village of Hagatna and resided in Chalan Pago until her death about 2 years ago. My grandfather’s family owned land in Ritidian and it was confiscated and never to be returned by the military before his death this year. Both were World War II survivors and never saw any reparations for the atrocities they suffered, because the US government did not see it as their “problem.”

Official boilerplate response. Thank you for your comment. Topics such as [this] are important issues but they are outside the scope of NEPA and this SEIS. The SEIS public engagement forums and the public comment period provided an indirect avenue for concerned citizens to inform local and federal policy-makers about their views on such issues but no specific changes to the text of the SEIS have been made in response to this comment. However, this comment is an important contribution to the NEPA process and will be considered in the decision-making process.

A number of commenters focused on the long-term inadequate care for residents who joined the military and were hurt as a result of their service (proportionally more men and women of Guam have died in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as Vietnam than any other group of people).

Twenty-seven years ago, I became a disabled veteran when Navy doctors refused me medical care. . . . A glaring problem with the SEIS is that it contains mitigation for negative impacts on the environment, animals, plants, and insects. But there is no mitigation for future negative impacts on human beings. Insects are protected more than people.

While the “outside the scope” template was mainly used to set aside critical comments, it was also occasionally used for those comments that understood those prior losses as justly suffered, and praised the military presence in general, such as the following:

Some ask, “Do we have to give up our land for our freedom?” Sometimes we have to. Imagine if the United States. decided not to reclaim the islands during World War II. There might not be any Chamorus around and we’d all be speaking Japanese. The United States paid the original landowners a fair price at the time and we should be grateful for that too.

3. Comments that question why Guam and not another location altogether should take the expansion receive the reply that their concern is not irrelevant but is based on ignorance of the fact that it has been judged by military experts to be a military necessity.

Public comment. To be quite frank: No firing range at Ritidian or anywhere else on Guam. The best option, although logistically challenging but quite plausible, would be to put the firing range on the continental United States, where its impact would be less significant. Thank you and Si Yu’os Ma’ase! [God have mercy.]

Official boilerplate response. Volume 1, chapter 1, section 1.4 of the 2010 Final EIS provided a Global Perspective Background, and explained the various international and military capability requirements that were considered for the relocation of military forces. . . . This background discussion describes
how several locations were considered throughout the Pacific region for the military relocation based on (1) response times, (2) freedom of action (the ability of the United States to use bases and training facilities freely and without restriction at a particular locale), and (3) international treaties and agreements with Japan and other Western Pacific allies. . . . After analyzing the international and military capability requirements, . . . Guam was the only location for the relocation that met all the criteria.

Here the militarized regime of truth is intended to silence or "make ignorant" the public on Guam.12

4. Most comments that mention the Chamoru people and their concerns evoke the following types of response: You say Chamoru, I say cultural awareness training.

The Navy engaged in an intense public relations campaign to press for acceptance of its preferred location for its various activities. These efforts included the deployment of Chamoru "cultural advisors" to the Navy to help manage Guam’s human terrain, especially the Chamoru residents whose objections (but also strong military enlistment rates and forms of American nationalism) have been significant. Their response to criticisms of the military’s treatment of the Chamoru resembles that identified in the US military counterinsurgency strategy developed in the midst of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (Network of Concerned Anthropologists 2009).

One young woman’s vivid objection to the placement of firing ranges over spiritually significant places on the island was articulated as follows:

Public comment. When you say "culture," that’s our whole heart. And one of the ways of colonization is to take away language. So, the fact that my father felt that his own native language was secondary was something that he imbibed from the American mentality because that’s one of the ways for a person to lose his identity, to lose his language. So, how can we know what we’re fighting for? . . . What if we went around with paintball guns, [or] with actual rifles, and we shot up, made a firing range behind the Arlington National Cemetery? That’s something of what it feels like but much more powerful; because if you took away our language with this strategy, all we have left is our land, and you’ve taken one-third of that, how do you think we’re going to feel?

Official boilerplate response. Thank you for your comment. Through the process of public involvement associated with this SEIS, the Chamoru people of Guam have voiced clearly and concisely their concerns associated with the proposed military relocation. Concerns identified include potential impacts on traditional Chamoru culture and the island’s sensitive resources, among others.

They go on, in a striking move, to rename this problem as one of cultural difference and cultural misunderstanding.

While population increases can highlight cultural differences, they also present unique opportunities for cultural learning and sharing. . . . Cultural sensitivity orientation and awareness programs will focus on mutual respect and understanding, and strive to educate all incoming and currently present military personnel on the rich and varied cultural history of Guam. Finally, the DoN plans to increase military and civilian joint activities in order to foster strong and mutually beneficial relationships that include the sharing and understanding of culture.

Here, the military reformulates Chamoru concerns about contemporary racism and historic land theft as a fear of not being understood by the new arrivals (Marine or civilian) to the island. This constructed fear is treated as easily manageable with cultural awareness training and understanding that requires mutual efforts; it is silent on the power differential involved. Questions of identity threat are erased and replaced with the notion of desire to retain property in the form of "island resources." This putative goal of mutual intelligibility is belied, among other things, by the fact that only one of the many documents produced by the US military has been published in Chamoru, Carolinian, or Tagalog.

This type of templated response occurs in many cases when the word "Chamoru" itself is used, even when the issue being raised by the commenter is not social or political harm but environmental harm, as in the following case:

The people of Guam were not included in any discussions between our government officials and the military. My concern besides the lack of input as a native Chamoru is what will become of my island once the US and the military are done utilizing our lands for "national security." I feel as though our affiliation with the United States brings more risk than anything else . . . All of the invasive species brought here are because of the military, it seems. When the military is done exploiting areas, they never take ownership for the mess they create—look at Puerto Rico and Bikini Atoll.

The bureaucratic response here as well is that cultural awareness training will solve the problem.

5. We cannot respond to your question because we do not have the data required.

The number of questions involved with the massive proposed changes to the island as well as pressing questions remaining about past impacts are legion. Many comments demand to know

12. The longer history of Chamoru resistance to land takings by the military has been told in rich detail by Hattori (2001). It makes clear how US military claims to be engaged in the protection of Chamoru people and land were phrased in terms of shared interests between Navy and the people in soldier morale and, hence, island law and order but in fact "were subordinate to the concerns for the well-being of [its] military personnel" (191).
not just about the new changes but the cumulative impact of the full history of military presence. Here, however, as with the four types of comments and response just outlined, people without history receive documents without history.

**Public comment.** Cumulative impacts are not shown; they’re [not] delineated with quantifiable data. Rather we’ve got a vague rating chart. What are the cumulative impacts? . . . We simply don’t know; it’s their responsibility to tell us this.

**Official boilerplate response.** The intent of the cumulative impact analysis was to adequately and consistently support the conclusions based on best available data. There was no National Environmental Policy Act (or similar) document disclosing project impacts for most of the nonfederal cumulative projects listed; therefore, there was insufficient existing data on most cumulative projects listed to conduct a quantitative impact analysis.

This response came in reply to criticisms of the document for failing to add past impacts with new impacts to assess overall harm of a military activity. This includes criticism of the military’s dividing up of the many projects on Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands into separate EIS assessments when environmental law requires activity that is “connected, cumulative, and similar” to be reviewed in the same analysis. This approach by the Navy takes the ignorance of baseline data as a given and sees it as an inevitability rather than as a scientific (and political) problem to be solved. The irony of an environmental impact document that ignores much of the environment is amplified here by the nonsystemic or nonecological thinking engaged in via this template.

**Conclusion**

This sea of documents, like many everyday bureaucratic documents of militarism and colonialism, constitutes a mundane but powerful collection: without them, Guam is not talkable or usable. The documents are more than legal levers, however: they also enact the military’s regime of truth and ignorance, a regime that, in being relational, must include indigenous voices and an indigenous audience for the performance of the documents. Despite their excruciating detail and precision and the presence of those local voices, the documents fail to understand what is at stake in the military buildup. It is not simply that they collate massive amounts of information but that they keep it divorced from the context that would allow for understanding. And it is not just because they make knowledge claims but maintain a functional ignorance or because the local voices are relegated to appendixes.

In an important sense, the documents’ content is irrelevant when their very existence is based on the structural violence of colonialism—on their claim that Guam falls under US law and US control and that its environment is the United States’ to take and “protect” as it sees fit (Na’puti and Bevacqua 2015). It is a colonial irony that US environmental law is being used to protect the environment from harm when there is so much past and current military contamination on the island. People remain unsure where there are more buried chemical weapons or unexploded ordnance from the World War II era or toxic waste bulldozed into pits over the period since then. They know they live in a dioxin-tainted landscape from the storage and use of Agent Orange as an herbicide and have a contaminated aquifer as a result of decades of US military operations. It is the colonial situation in which many public comments—from in-migrants from the United States as well as from the Guam born—thank the United States for what it has done for the island and add “but” in keeping with a long, complicated colonial history that rehearses again and again what US military power means and what people are grateful for or should be only somewhat grateful for, or must by dint of the original land takings respond to (Aguon 2006; Diaz 2001; Na’puti and Bevacqua 2015). It is a history and a political status that Chamoru scholars and activists are writing in a new/old language that rejects the choice between colonial victim/tragic residue of the colonial era and American citizen/American weapon (Bevacqua 2010; Camacho 2012; Hattori 2001; Na’puti and Bevacqua 2015). The documents themselves have been translated into eloquent and resistant poetry by Craig Santos Perez (2014) and the sentiments embodied in a vigorous campaign to protect the cultural and physical sites that the military has targeted.

For the colonial United States, the EIS documents provide a comfortable illusion of honorable care for the colonized.13 But while the initial 2015 document responds to criticism of the 2010 document—and to budget-cinching politics in Washington—with a scaling back of the project, and while millions were spent to produce them, both versions of the EIS represent what are ultimately ritual forms of compliance to the legal injunction to protect Guam’s environment. They create the illusion that something is known and revealed while deflecting questions and “keeping important facts inert” (Heimer 2012), making clear what it is unnecessary to think about altogether, defining certain forms of indigenous knowledge as not worth the name, and rendering the colonizer, therefore, as not ignorant. Colonial powers in the past have concentrated on gaining the very limited kind of knowledge that would allow them to gain military supremacy over local rivals or opposition (Dilley 2010). The knowledge required within that militarized context was quite limited, the scope of ignorance breathtaking. Decolonization of much confiscated land.

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13. The US dispossession of Chamoru land via these military and environmental knowledge claims and will to ignorance can be usefully compared with the Hawaiian case in which dispossession and claims to caregiving was scaffolded by biological knowledge claims about Hawaiian blood quantum and the need to rescue the Hawaiian race from extinction by attaching individuals with appropriate blood quantum to plots of land in the early twentieth century (Kauanui 2008), as well as by militarization of much confiscated land.
zation is a process by which the burden of ignorance and the identity of the ignorant party shifts from the colonized to the colonizer. Colonial ethnography was one early result, and one of the most recent instantiations is the cultural turn in counterinsurgency strategies in the US military. In Guam, the EIS process, its public questions, and its military answers are evidence of the struggle between decolonization and militarism and of the militarists’ will to ignorance.

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Low Intensities

by Diane M. Nelson

This essay opens with one of hundreds of massacres carried out in the early 1980s in Guatemala by agents of the military state. The killing was meant to depopulate the Rio Negro valley to make way for a hydroelectric dam. Like much of the violence of the 36-year conflict, it was low-tech and carried out by civil patrollers, which is perhaps why the Guatemalan civil war was considered a “low intensity conflict” by US Army definitions: “below conventional war . . . employing political, economic, informational, and military instruments.” I suggest that these instruments encompass what many anthropologists call culture. While beginning with a moment of spectacular violence, the essay then traces the mundane, everyday political and economic embeddings of militarism into Guatemalan social institutions, life, conditions of possibility, meaning systems, and abilities to affect and be affected. A history of the present, it traces the paramilitarization of the army/government in the 1960s and 1970s via the development of death squads and other clandestine bodies and illicit networks that shape state functioning today. Yet it also explores the intensities of countercultures of militarism, the networks that have forced perpetrator accountability, reparations, and state recognition of Mayan peoples and their rights to defend their territories from accumulation by dispossession.

Preamble

Low-Intensity Conflict: A political-military confrontation between contending states or groups below conventional war and above the routine, peaceful competition . . . frequently involves protracted struggles of competing principles and ideologies. . . . It is waged by a combination of means, employing political, economic, informational, and military instruments. Low-intensity conflicts are often localized, generally in the Third World, but contain regional and global security implications. (US Army 1990:1–1)

I draw on the US Army field manual because of the scope of US responsibility for the Guatemalan genocide, and I do so a bit ironically. It might have looked like low intensity from afar, but the on-the-ground experience of the Guatemalan war was often of unbearably high intensity amid ebbs and flows of violence over 36 years (1960–1996). The manual’s definition also reverberates with the issue’s theme. While militarism may erupt into spectacular episodes, I am interested in the lower intensities of the ongoing, regenerative, everyday cultures of militarism, the strength and duration of their effect—what it takes to cultivate them and perhaps counter them. Low-intensity war unfolds in a weird space between the routines of peace and the excess of conventional war. If such war is protracted and characterized by a combination of political, economic, informational, and military means—to which we might add communal, raced, gendered, and spiritual dimensions—then are postcolonial, Cold War-affected, increasingly neoliberal places like Guatemala always at war? If so, low-intensity war may not be a temporal experience with a beginning and an end (and is certainly not localized in the Third World) but something more akin to culture—the rule, not the exception, the media (like a cell culture) in which life processes unfold or, more accurately for most people, are truncated, stymied, and at times obliterated.

In this essay I move back and forth through the past 70 years and from individual experiences of genocidal war to histories of war-pervaded statemaking to explore how militarism became part of the texture of life in Guatemala. How it is densely emmeshed and embedded in the political system, economic functions, and everyday give and take of social relations as well as moments of horrible brutality and destruction. Taking up the editors’ challenge to think “cultures of militarism”—that powerful fetish word for anthropology—is a challenge. There are many associative series that radiate from it (de Saussure 1966), such as hegemony, ideology, power/knowledge, practice, ontology, and so on, and I also take up the older meanings of tending and tilling. In the West, culture—here as nurture—often functions as the opposite of nature. Yet Amy Ross (personal communication) reminds me that a “culture of” can, oddly, naturalize. It suggests that—rather than resulting from planning, interests, a structure—a culture of poverty or of militarism is planted so deeply that it is part of who people are; it is unchangeable. This is not my aim. Instead, I seek to show how militarism is tended, produced, and maintained—and challenged—by humans in social and worldly relationships. And I think the army field manual authors are right. Guatemala’s low-intensity war has global implications.
The Path of Souls

A Joke: How was the Guatemalan civil war like a Western movie?

Only the Indians died.

The sky was bright with stars. The great unfurling starry band, the Milky Way, called Saq B’e by the Maya—the path of souls journeying to the land of the dead—arced brilliantly over us. I was on the terrace of a guesthouse with my nephew Quinn as the night sky wheeled overhead, illuminating the steep drop to the dark lake below. Earlier we skimed across those waters with Juan and his 5-year-old daughter Alma, who are Maya-Achi’ (one of 22 Mayan ethnolinguistic communities in Guatemala) to get to New Rio Negro, a community tourism project. There we watched the documentary Discovering Dominga (Flynn and McConahay 2003) about a little girl from the original Rio Negro who had fled the violence and been adopted by a US family. In her midtwenties, she realized she was a survivor of one of the worst massacres of the war (fig. 1). As was Juan.

And the next day he walked us up the mountain behind the town. He explained how in 1982, one month after all the men were ordered to the proarmy village of Xococ and summarily executed, women and children (he was 9) were rounded up by the army and civil patrollers from Xococ and forced to climb to the top, along the very trail we were walking. At a place called Pak’oxom women were raped and everyone was killed. Only 18 children, including Juan, were spared and taken to Xococ where they were adopted by their families’ assassins and forced to work.

Rio Negro was targeted for scorched-earth destruction because the residents refused to make way for the military government’s pet project: the Chixoy hydroelectric dam. The stars were so awesome because there is no electricity in Rio Negro. Afterward, Quinn said of the people of Xococ, “I hate them! I hate them!” And I did too. But rereading the UN’s Truth Commission report (CEH 1999), I found that Xococ was also subjected to military repression, with the army assassinating 18 people in fall 1981. “In February 1982 a group of armed men, possibly guerrillas, burned the market of Xococ, killing five persons . . . the Army identified Río Negro with the guerrillas, [so] residents of Xococ . . . declared them their enemies.” The Catholic priest from the town of Rabinal said, “There was a pact so that the people of Xococ were to cooperate fully, in exchange for not being killed” (Annex 1, Chap. 10:7). Fear and hatred, instead of trade goods and friendship, now ran back and forth across the mountain as the dam polarized once-cordial relations. It now produces about 15% of Guatemala’s electricity. In 1998, 2 years after the peace accords were signed, three Xococ patrollers were sentenced to 50 years in prison for crimes committed “in exchange for not being killed.”

Juan lost almost everything that day. Home, mother, town. His father was already dead, killed with 54 other men and women. In all, 10 communities in the river basin were destroyed by massacre with more than 5,000 people killed in the surrounding Rabinal area. For several years Juan was enslaved by the man who legally adopted him. At 16 he was forcibly recruited into the army. Terrified they would kill him when they learned where he was from, they were mostly incredulous: “But we finished everyone off there!” He was sent to the Ixčán—like Rabinal, a place where terrible things happened.

Rabinal is one of the four areas that the UN Truth Commission determined had suffered acts of genocide. Yet Juan’s experience highlights one of the great and horrible oddities of Guatemala’s low-intensity culture of militarism. Unlike most genocides, it was poor Maya killing other poor Maya. En masse but one by one. Unlike conventional war, it might take a day or two to finish people off. The Civil Patrol organized every male over the age of 14 throughout the majority indigenous highlands into a vast security apparatus. Not professional soldiers, they were mobilized through threats or subterfuge (now many suspect that the market was burned by soldiers dressed as guerrillas) or through skilful manipulation of older inter and intracommunity tensions. The patrols surveilled and punished their own communities and were deployed as frontline killers against neighbors. While soldiers, many of them also forcibly recruited indigenous kids like Juan, carried out many of the more than 600 massacres of the war; a great deal of the violence was “forci-voluntarily” perpetrated by civilians (McAllister and Nelson 2013; Schirmer 1998). It was also extremely low-tech and messy—done with machetes, smashing children’s heads against trees, and burning people alive in community buildings. Matilde González said, “The army sought to dirty everyone, mancharlos de vergüenza, stain them all with shame, this way no one was free, no one had the moral solvency to judge, much less denounce what had happened” (2002:415).

I’ve spent the last 30 years trying to understand the ruinous effects of this low-intensity strategy on Mayan existence and

1. I deploy jokes as epigraphs for several reasons, which I have explored elsewhere (Nelson 1999, 2009), but primarily because they are condensed and everyday forms of understanding militarism, part of its culture. This one circulated long before there was official recognition of genocide.

2. Frantz Fanon could be describing the effects of the culture of militarism: “The settler’s town . . . is a brightly lit town . . . a well-fed town, an easygoing town . . . The native town is a hungry town, starved of bread, of meat, of shoes, of coal, of light” (1968:39). In New Rio Negro we watched the film off a generator. All gas has to be trucked across the dam (requiring army permission) and brought in by boat. In a turn of fate that is almost too painful to write about, a spark ignited gas stored near Juan’s small home in summer 2016 and killed Alma and his wife Isabel, severely injuring Juan.

3. To be accurate, this was called the Commission for Historical Clarification, since during the peace treaty negotiations the regnant military seemed unable to handle the truth. The commission could not name names, subpoena witnesses, or initiate court cases.
community solidarity and on Guatemala more generally. Here I consider the “combination of means . . . the political, economic, informational, and military instruments,” by which militarism wraps and warps through institutions, life forms, conditions of possibility, meaning systems, and abilities to affect and be affected (US Army 1990:1–1). Perhaps in other words, culture. The militarized state put in place by the US-backed coup in 1954 deftly played on existing rifts within Mayan communities and repaid loyalty with material rewards. Patrollers, especially commanders, were often allowed to keep animals, land, and even family members of the people they killed or displaced. The army played on homophobia, the need for Mayan men to man up, and other internalized fears of indigenous backwardness, as well as providing Mayan women in rape houses as inducements for Mayan men and boys to cooperate fully. Shame, guilt, horror, alcoholism, rage, macho bravado, resentment, fear, domestic violence, and suicide, along with the trauma of surviving—yet also participating in—rape and mass murder haunt many of the people I know who were victimized, often by becoming perpetrators (González 2002; McAllister 2013; Nelson 2009). Along with, for some, satisfaction that they saved the country from communism or from modernizers who threatened indigenous spiritual life in the name of revolutionary rationality. And there is also righteous indignation, ongoing revolutionary ardor, and carefully husbanded struggles for justice—both for perpetrators of wartime atrocities and in ongoing fights over land, water, and sustainable lifeways in the face of deepening extractivism (Gudynas 2009).

Postwar?
A peace treaty was signed in December 1996 with provisions for resettling more than 1 million refugees and displaced people, reincorporating guerrilla fighters, reducing the size of the army, and commissioning a UN-backed historical clarification report. Agreements also addressed the historic exclusion of the majority indigenous population and proposed socioeconomic reforms to tackle entrenched poverty and exploitation: the causes of the war. Although the army complained it had been forced to the negotiating table by international forces after its

Figure 1. Maps showing indigenous population and massacre sites. Used with permission of Michael K. Steinberg et al.

4. The macabre joke I began with is not quite true. The CEH estimated that 83% of those killed during the war were indigenous, meaning quite a large number of nonindigenous, called “ladino” or “mestizo” people were also killed, but usually more selectively.

5. This was part of the tension between the more traditional Xococ and Rio Negro where everyone had converted to a purifying Catholicism.
decisive victories in the field (mostly, as in Rio Negro, against unarmed villagers), it gave up very little (Jonas 2000). Even that was abrogated in the 1999 national referendum on the treaties, which was defeated by nonindigenous voters. Some ladinos (nonindigenous), in all seriousness, told me it would have forced them to learn all 22 Mayan languages, would have allowed Indians to claim that their swimming pool was a sacred space in order to steal it, and would have encouraged indigenous men to rape white women. These more low-intensity, everyday formations of landholding, understandings of difference, and gendered and sexualized relations across race and class lines undergirded the war and undermined the peace.6

Efforts to demilitarize Guatemala, a country mostly run by army officers since its founding in the 1820s, have been, not surprisingly, agonizingly slow. But soldiers did return to their barracks, the annual Army Day parade through downtown Guatemala City was discontinued,7 and many military outposts (often sited in Catholic churches and convents) were closed.8 For example, in Zacualpa, El Quiché, which, like Rabinal, was one of the four areas where genocide took place, the church and surrounding buildings were used by the army for torture and executions. One room was left as found, and I got a tour from the local priest. There were ropes hanging from the beams, dried blood on the walls, and what looked like claw marks in the adobe. The army had hacked up an image of Christ on the cross. “One of our catechists was tortured here,” said the priest. He gestured to his side. “He has scars all along here, almost exactly like this statue. We think there were 1,000 people killed here and dumped behind the church.” They were trying to organize an exhumation.

The UN Truth Commission estimated that 200,000 people were killed during the war, including 45,000 disappeared (CEH 1999:17). The most apocalyptic period, when acts of genocide occurred, was from 1979 to 1983, when the violence targeted the Mayan western highlands. In 2018 people are still trying to find and identify the remains of their loved ones, some in army bases like the one in Cobán, near Rio Negro, where 558 bodies, including 90 children, have been uncovered. Yet over time the Guatemalan army managed to go from being a pariah, monitored by UN peacekeepers, to being a peacekeeper itself, assigned to missions in Haiti and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Creepily enough, its training base is in the same Cobán military installation, now renamed CREOMPAZ, or Regional Peacekeeping Operations Command.

What I’m trying to evoke here is the way that decades after the worst of the army’s scorched earth counterinsurgency and 20 years after the peace accords, every place the army touched seeps and shudders in resonance with those years, and every person lives in an on-going way, that crawls through and across generations, the reverberations of these high and low intensities of the culture of militarism.

But these are the low-level folks, victims, survivors, foot soldiers, mostly poor, mostly Maya, mostly—until recently—those found guilty of war crimes. What about the decision makers, the upper levels of the chain of command? Here I offer a brief genealogy of the “combination of means” that converged on Rio Negro and Zacualpa in the 1980s.

A Political Economy of a Culture of Militarism

A Joke: A tourist traveling through the Franja del Norte, a region in northern Guatemala, is astounded at passing mile after mile of fields filled with cattle (ganado). He stops to talk to a man by the side of road and learns he’s a retired army general. The tourist asks, ”Is all this ganado (also meaning something won or worked for)?” “Ganado!?” says the general. “No way! It’s all robado (stolen).”

I cannot do justice to what it means for the military to have mostly been the state for so long.9 What we now think of as rights or basic freedoms were in short supply for the vast majority of the population, although some indigenous communities leveraged military service into access to land or being excused from forced labor. Over the decades, complex alliances formed and violently broke apart between factions of the military and portions of the elite, especially as different regions of the country and their local powerful families became attached to the global economy through exporting dessert: sugar, coffee, bananas. It is useful to remember that many elite families had sons or daughters married to men in each of the country’s power centers: politics, business, the church, and the army.10 Some dictators struggled to manage the greed of the elites and of El Pulpo (the Octopus), the nickname for the United Fruit Company, enough to create some basic in-

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6. I am not arguing that it is the same as it ever was. People look back on the dark times of the early 1980s with relief that things are not like that anymore. But the fear that those days can return at any moment is widespread and strong, if low intensity. When human rights trials re- vivify memories or the army rolls into town to suppress a demonstration, people take a tiger’s leap into that living past as it once again becomes high intensity (Batz 2017).
7. But not before performance artist Aníbal López commemorated the hundreds of Mayan villages burned to the ground by covering an entire block of the route in ashes.
8. Catholic Liberation Theology had a powerful impact on the revolutionary projects in Central America, and priests, nuns, catechists, and laypeople were all targeted, both individually and massively (a number of massacres were carried out by herding people into their chapel and burning it). A case could be made that the war was as much a genocide of Catholics as of Maya.
9. While a civilian, Manuel Estrada (1896–1920) was a brutal dictator, as Miguel Ángel Asturias terrifyingly evoked in El Señor Presidente (1997). Until 1985, there were only two other civilian rulers in the twentieth century: Juan José Arévalo (1945–1951) and Julio César Méndez Montenegro, whose government was a front for the military regime in the first decade of war (1966–1970).
10. Even as the army was also a way for poor, rural, but focused and brutal young men to work their way up, as in the famous cases of the Lucas García brothers of Cobán and Ríos Montt of Huehuetenango.
frustration, but through the twentieth century there was a constant and growing tension between the military serving elite interests and seeking to become the elite themselves.

Yet there was also a faction, represented by Colonel Jacobo Arbenz, a leader of the 1945–1954 democratic spring, who sought to democratize politics and create a basic welfare state including workers’ rights, social security, education, nationally controlled renewable energy production, and, more structurally (and oriented to the indigenous majority), land reform. Paying United Fruit its reported tax value, Arbenz’s government expropriated unused land and distributed it to peasants, leading El Pulpo to pressure the US government to overthrow him. Similarly, nationalist soldiers started the first guerrilla organization a few years later.

Guatemalan sociologist Matilde González shows how, for all factions, the twentieth century’s militarized means and relations of production ended up producing and increasingly depending on a simultaneous geographic and racial division. The indigenous western highlands would provide free or very cheap labor through debt peonage, through becoming colonos—live-in workers on plantations—or through fincas de mozos—where people farm what was previously their land, usurped through the nineteenth-century Liberal Reforms, (which privatized communally held land) in return for providing labor during harvest season. The mostly ladino eastern lowlands, famed for their machismo, would provide the soldiers to maintain labor docility. It was out of this east that a perverse new military political economic culture emerged, heralded by Colonel Carlos Arana Osorio.

Arana, also known as the Butcher of Zacapa, was in charge of antiguerrilla counterinsurgency in the 1960s and nontransparently became president in 1970. His terror campaign drew on strong US support for the police and military that had been flowing since the 1954 coup against Arbenz (Klare and Arnson 1981; McClintock 1985). With heightened anti-communism and an actual insurgency, US military aid increased exponentially to the tune of about US$20 million between 1964 and 1975.11 Guatemalan officers received training at the School of the Americas (then in Panama), and Green Berets and CIA advisers were shuttled between Vietnam and Guatemala to both learn and share tactics of nonconventional low-intensity warfare. These included promoting death squads, which tortured and killed thousands of unarmed citizens. This paramilitarization of the war combined rationally right-wing civilians and army specialists with intelligence and weapons support—and full impunity—from the army and state and funding from wealthy landowners, while providing plausible deniability. While plantations had had their own security forces, this US-backed paramilitarization was a new development, spreading the state’s monopoly on physical force further out and deeper in to everyday life. And it inaugurated the use of forced disappearances in Latin America. An estimated 20,000 people were killed or disappeared during the decade of Arana’s pacification and presidency. People remember bodies floating down the Motagua River, and how peasants, terrified of being implicated, would gently disentangle those snagged near their land to let them pass on with the current.

By the 1960s the military, especially the Zacapa base run by Arana, was a central part of provincial life. The hearts and minds, or civil-military portions of the counterinsurgency, mixed indiscriminate bombing, disappearances, and some massacres with building roads, schools, irrigation projects, distribution of land, and the army’s presence in every sphere of life, from the church, the Lions Club and school festivals, to all civic celebrations. González says that anti-communism went hand in glove with defending “the values of a provincial, Catholic, and patriarchal society” (2014:231). Political parties closely associated with the military, especially the National Liberation Movement, which spearheaded the overthrow of Arbenz, won mayoral posts and Congressional seats. They could then draw on state resources for patronage that ensured reelection. To become a teacher, nurse, judge, or any public employee, you needed a connection to the army. Loyalty was expected in return. Supportive ranchers and farmers, as well as officers who proved themselves in the counterinsurgency, were rewarded with vast tracts of land supplied with state-built roads and water projects, transforming the ecology—both social and natural—of the area. Now fertile lowlands are dedicated to huge ranches and farms producing ganado and agroexports, while former residents are pushed up and out into what has become known as the corredor seco, or dry zone of famine and drought. This accumulation by dispossession (Luxemburg 1951 [1913]) enabled other forms of capital accumulation among army officers and paramilitaries, based in commercial enterprises, transportation, finance (the army has its own bank), oil drilling and mining, hydroelectric, and later construction, especially taking advantage of the boom in postwar international funding. Arana was also an exuberant collector of looted Mayan artifacts.

Increasingly, that low-intensity zone between routine peace and conventional war, and that weird gray space of the paramilitary were combining the means of war—political, economic, informational, and military—into a paramarket, as skills developed in the death squads were turned to lucrative ends, including kidnapping for ransom,12 selling protection, and

11. While shoehorned into Cold War anti-communism, the Guatemalan insurgency was what we would today call decolonial, with the intention of continuing the kinds of modernizing reforms, including distribution of purchased land, which had been overturned with the 1954 coup. Disaffected army officers attempted a coup in 1960 and in 1962 founded the first guerrilla organization. The war waxed and waned over the next three decades, with renewed popular and militant organizing in the mid-1970s, scorched-earth genocide in the early 1980s, and a slow return to civilian rule and peace negotiations from 1985—1996.

12. Kidnapping victims included the country’s archbishop in 1968, who was released after a couple of days. The leader of the band responsible was murdered outside a Guatemala City army base a month later.
working as sicarios, or paid killers. This reinforced the consolidation of wealth given the way sicarios often helped settle disagreements about land ownership. Guatemalan anthropologist Joaquin Noval described this ecology of violence in 1971 as a chaotic bundle of official army violence, bandits under state control, death squads that were tolerated if not controlled by regional army bases, and fully independent operators, all with contradictory interests (in González 2014:247). 

Aranas loyalists uninterested in the bucolic charms of cattle ranching or the adrenaline highs of kidnapping and murder were repaid with positions in border control and customs. And this is how Guatemalas evolving culture of militarism became a narco-culture.

Eastern Guatemala borders El Salvador and Honduras, with a port to the Caribbean. Controlling terrestrial and maritime ports of entry, military intelligence and spy networks, much of the local judiciary and national legislature, as well as military bases and huge farms and ranches with their attendant airstrips, made for a pretty perfect setup for smuggling all sorts of items, from arms and other duty-free items to drugs. González said local people started to report UFOs around the Zacapa army base, which were actually small planes bringing loads in by night. What became known as the Zacapa Cartel made lucrative links to Cali, Colombia, and the Gulf Cartel in Mexico. By the 1990s, 50% of the cocaine that entered the United States was passing through this part of Guatemala.

González explores the story of one Arnoldo Vargas. In the early 1960s, Vargas joined the guerrillas. But after army massacres, he switched sides, becoming a military commissioner, death squad member, and Arana confidant. He was one of the savvy ones who asked for a customs job when Arana was handing out favors and transformed himself into a cacique, developing patron/client relations throughout Zacapa. He became a mayor in the 1980s, and his brother was a congresso. By the 1990s, 50% of the cocaine that entered the United States was passing through this part of Guatemala.

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A woman told González that her father always said that Vargas was suertudo, that is, blessed or lucky, and it was his destiny to aid those who did not enjoy his same facility with money. There was always so much money! And he would just give it away! "He was touched by God, that’s why he’s rich and he protects the rest of us." Displaying the ostentation of the macho, providing rodeos and cockfights and parades of finely bred horses, he was both loved and feared (2014:290–292). Anyone who might stand in his way faced the option of plata o plomo (silver/money or lead/a bullet).

In the early 1990s he was captured by the US Drug Enforcement Administration and extradited to the United States, where he served time until his release in 2017, but his brothers and cousins continued to run Zacapa as mayors, governors, and congressmen.

The narcocultures of militarism set in place by Arana and his minions and maintained by the families of traditional drug lords in eastern Guatemala were transformed in the 1990s and 2000s by young soldiers coming out of the crucible of the 1980s genocide. Kaibiles, or army elite commandos, were developed in the late 1970s as counterinsurgency specialists (Vela 2013). Similar to the 1960s, when the second phase of the war wound down in the early 1990s, many parlayed their particular skill sets into working security for the Gulf Cartel in Mexico. In the late 2000s they went independent, calling themselves Los Zetas, and moved back into Guatemala, bringing with them the infamous narcotranzado (drug massacres) that quickly displaced the older, more genteel patronas. For the first time, one cartel, combining all the low-intensity warfare instruments and encompassing current and former officers as well as thousands of workers and admirers and victims, now controls the entire terrain from Honduras to the Mexican border with the United States. An estimated 1,400 metric tons of cocaine crossed Guatemala in 2016 (US Department of State 2018:170). Profits fund all successful political campaigns and have bought judges and much of the police. Drugs and all their capillary effects dissolve already porous divisions between legal and illegal, civilian and army, clean and stained. This culture of narcomilitarism has filtered throughout everyday life, and like the civil war, may look low intensity from afar. But the violence is not.

González said, “in the late 2000s we can still see these same old counterinsurgency actors moving effortlessly among the legal structures of the state, the illegal networks of illicit commerce, and organized crime. This versatility and mobility between the legal and illegal, military and paramilitary, state and para-state, is the great legacy of counterinsurgency policies and the prolonged state of exception Guatemala endured through the latter half of the twentieth century” (2014:251).

What I am trying to evoke here is the way that decades after the worst of the army’s scorched-earth counterinsurgency and 20 years after the peace accords, every family threatened with extortion, every household with an addict, every gang member killed over a tiny bit of territory, every unaccompanied minor trying to cross the US border to avoid that fate, and thereby trafficked by some of the same clandestine apparatuses, are people and places the army has touched. They shudder in resonance with the war years, as people continue to endure these
intergenerational reverberations of the high and low intensities of the culture of militarism.

Counterculture

A Joke. Mexico’s President Enrique Peña Nieto invited Guatemalan President, former General Otto Pérez Molina, for a state visit where he proudly showed off his accomplishments. At a school, Pérez Molina oohed and aahed at the computer labs and recreational facilities. Peña Nieto smiled and patted his pocket. “Fifteen percent,” he said. At a new hospital with high-tech wards and miles of gleaming instruments, Pérez Molina was duly impressed. Peña Nieto patted his pocket again. “Twenty percent,” he said. At a police station with all the latest surveillance technology and garages full of Hummers, Pérez Molina could barely contain his amazement. Peña Nieto patted his pocket once more. “Twenty-five percent,” he said, smiling. Pérez Molina returned to Guatemala trying to figure out how to similarly impress his friend. He thought and thought. Finally, he invited Peña Nieto to Guatemala and took him to the highest building in Guatemala City. “I’d like to show you the highway bypass system we’ve put around the city!” Peña Nieto looked and looked, took out binoculars, and looked again, but he couldn’t see this huge public works project. “I’m sorry, Señor Presidente, I don’t see it.” And Pérez Molina patted his pocket. “One hundred percent,” he said.

Meanwhile Guatemalan activists were organizing countercultures to the political economic cultures of militarism. As a contesting group in low-intensity warfare, they combine various instruments in protracted struggles. In Rio Negro, survivors and their allies carried out one of the first exhumations at Pak’oxom, even before the war was over (EAFG 1995), and in 2005 they commissioned the Chixoy Dam Legacy Issues Study. They brought cases against the state in national courts and the Inter-American Court for Human Rights, where they won a powerful victory in 2012 that included a required public apology from the state, a program to rescue Maya-Achi’ culture, and significant monetary compensation, totaling close to US$154 million (IACHR 2012). They continue to press for a state visit where he proudly showed off his accomplishments. At a school, Pérez Molina oohed and aahed at the computer labs and recreational facilities. Peña Nieto smiled and patted his pocket. “Fifteen percent,” he said. At a new hospital with high-tech wards and miles of gleaming instruments, Pérez Molina was duly impressed. Peña Nieto patted his pocket again. “Twenty percent,” he said. At a police station with all the latest surveillance technology and garages full of Hummers, Pérez Molina could barely contain his amazement. Peña Nieto patted his pocket once more. “Twenty-five percent,” he said, smiling. Pérez Molina returned to Guatemala trying to figure out how to similarly impress his friend. He thought and thought. Finally, he invited Peña Nieto to Guatemala and took him to the highest building in Guatemala City. “I’d like to show you the highway bypass system we’ve put around the city!” Peña Nieto looked and looked, took out binoculars, and looked again, but he couldn’t see this huge public works project. “I’m sorry, Señor Presidente, I don’t see it.” And Pérez Molina patted his pocket. “One hundred percent,” he said.

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16. I mean for this to resonate with war resisters in the United States who connected the destruction in Southeast Asia with racism and misogyny at home and with myriad forms of dress, hygiene, gender relations, desire, ethos, and aspirations that sustained such cultures of militarism (Rousak 1969).

17. It also instructs US directors of the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank to pressure for implementation. While activists had hoped for the banks themselves to pay survivors out of profits from the loans, this stipulation pressures them to attend to human rights when funding future infrastructure (Tran 2014).
structures able to carry out justice. It required nurturing human rights organizations such as the Center for Legal Action on Human Rights and the Association for Justice and Reconciliation. And years of grassroots organizing by and among survivors in different parts of the country to overcome the terror of reprisals and the horror and shame at what occurred. By 2013 they could count on a relatively clean set of judges, and the Public Ministry had a well-prepared legal team under Attorney General Claudia Paz y Paz Bailey, a human rights activist and scholar appointed in 2010 by President Colom. Also essential was the support of international legal teams and solidarity networks (Oglesby and Nelson 2016; Ross 2016).

The Ríos Montt trial was historic in setting important international precedents but also because it was built, piece by piece, upon the decades of struggle and stubborn endurance it takes to create a counterculture. The Peace Accord on indigenous rights had laid the groundwork for court translators for the Ixil survivors, ensuring that they could speak for themselves. Decades of feminist struggle focusing attention on the rape and sexual abuse that was such a crucial part of the cultures of militarism made this a central part of the trial. The years of people overcoming fear enough to petition for an exhumation, then the brutal and delicate labors of wielding shovels, tiny brushes, microscopes, and PCR machines to uncover, analyze, and identify human remains, offered powerful material support for the testimonies. A major break in the case came from an anonymous leaker within the military. “Operation Sofia,” a 350-page cache of military communiqués dating from September 1982, clearly showed that the army’s actions were not excesses but a careful strategy targeting “100%” of some rural, indigenous populations as “internal enemies” of the state. The trial was also historic because, as Marcie Mersky from the International Center for Transitional Justice, notes, “It is the first time that a former head of state is being tried for genocide in a credible national court, by the national authorities, in a country where the alleged crimes took place” (2013).

Through widespread media coverage, including real-time broadcast of the testimonies and verdict and large public demonstrations both for and against the trial itself—as well as the very idea that there was genocide—the trial returned the war and the accompanying savagery of state violence to a sort of exceptional factualness that had remained latent, just part of a culture of militarism, for many Guatemalans.18 It articulated history, memory, struggle, and justice in new, unavoidable formations, drawing from and tending new articulations of countercultures.

On May 10, 2013, the three-judge panel delivered its verdict to a packed courtroom, finding Ríos Montt guilty of genocide and crimes against humanity and sentencing him to 80 years in prison. This was based in part on the scorched-earth mass murder of Maya-Ixil of every age (100% in some areas) and total destruction of the means of life: corn, animals, houses. But the very civil-military project of security mixed with development that is a central plank in low-intensity conflict—new houses, reeducation, psychological services, emphasizing crops for export—was also identified as genocidal. Along with the endemic sexual violence, it was part of the “intent to destroy” the Maya-Ixil ethnic group. The hall erupted in cheers, tears, and embraces. Slowly, a song written by the revolutionary poet Otto René Castillo began to swell from the crowd, “We only want to be human.” Before leaving the courtroom, dozens of Ixil survivors and family members stood up, and, in unison, crossed their arms over their chests and bowed in thanks to the judges. Tantox. Thank you (Oglesby and Nelson 2016x).

Alas, this countercultural island of an apparently functioning justice system is still surrounded by the sea of militarized corruption. Ríos Montt’s lawyers made no attempt to defend him on the merits of the case. Instead, they skillfully attacked the proceedings with appeals, a key piece of what Ross and Oglesby call “the impunity machine” (forthcoming). They managed to get the Constitutional Court, in a controversial 3–2 ruling, to roll back the trial to an earlier, preverdict date, claiming the judges should not have gone forward while an appeal was considered in another court. This basically annulled the verdict on a technicality. Amy Ross describes the sentence as “disappeared.” Not dead, because not overturned on its merits, but not alive either, a classic culture of militarism tactic (Ross and Oglesby, forthcoming). Five years later in 2018, Ríos Montt was on trial again but he escaped justice by dying on April 1.

Many analysts suggest that despite their rage at the charge of genocide, most of the military personnel currently in power were comfortable with throwing the aging dictator under the bus. That was until an expert witness testified on the chain of command, suggesting many others (like President and ex-General Pérez Molina) might be candidates for trial. That’s when serious threats began to affect the international witnesses and more intense counterstrategies were put into motion.

Returning to where I began, with the role of the United States, it was not as overt in this second phase of the low-intensity war (post 1978) as in the 1960s. In fact, when Jimmy Carter19 raised questions about human rights, the army said it did not need his help. US money, arms, and training continued to flow to Guatemala during the genocide although never as openly as to the Salvadoran government or Nicaraguan contras and often through second-party anti-communist states like Israel, Argentina, and Taiwan. The UN’s CEH report did castigate the United States—which led to US President Bill Clinton’s apology in July 1999—and military aid remained somewhat restricted until the recent panic about drugs and the mass human exodus pouring out of the Northern Triangle of Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras. Despite the fact that almost all of the Guatemalan army officers indicted or convicted of war crimes received some training at the School of the Americas, the School remains open. And as long as the US

18. Sometimes, war looks low intensity from inside a country as well.
supplies the noses, veins, weapons, and punitive laws that make narcocultures so lucrative and violent, this is everyone’s culture of militarism.

Yet the disappearing of the Ríos Montt verdict did not stop other important trials, like the Sepur Zarco wartime sexual slavery case, which the indigenous women defendants won in March 2016, and the indictment of a dozen high-ranking officers for crimes committed at the Coban army base throughout the early 1980s (including many victims from Rio Negro). We await war crimes indictments of the financial and ideological backers among the elite—and the gringos.

While Pérez Molina seemed to fear indictment on war crimes, it was CICIG’s revelations about his corruption (the different “100%” of the joke) that led to an exhilarating mass social movement, the largest and most sustained since the late 1970s, that brought down his government in September 2015.

What I am trying to evoke here is the way that decades after the worst of the army’s scorched-earth counterinsurgency and 20 years after the peace accords, every place the army touched also resonates with countercultures, refusals, and rebellions against the strangled imaginary the military tried to impose. Many people, indigenous, ladino, and in transnational solidarities, live in ongoing ways that inspire and incite new generations to insist that another world is possible beyond the reverberations of these high and low intensities of the cultures of militarism.

Provoking, Respond, Criminalize, Organize

In 1996, the same year the peace accords were signed, the Guatemalan government began to sign other accords opening the country to transnational extractive regimes, a process accelerated by the 2005 passage of the Central America Free Trade Agreement. This included licenses for strip mining and hydroelectric plants, circling Guatemala (and this essay) back to projects like the Chixoy dam on the Rio Negro. Historic military projects for hydroelectric power, now connected to regional—including US—energy use, began to rev up in the same areas where the war was most ferocious (Illescas Arita 2012; Solano 2008). People just barely recovering from the violence found entire mountains leveled and water sources contaminated and rivers threatened with damming or being sluiced away. Rivers not only provide drinking water for people, other animals, and plants but are where many rural people wash dishes, clothes, and bodies; where they fish and play; and

where they court each other. They are central features of an ecosystem that feeds the forest, keeps the rain falling, and helps cultivate the sacred corn.

People, most of them Maya, started organizing. They began to create actas, which are a centuries-old form of collective memory in which events or community analysis and decisions are described and then everyone signs. The documents denounce the companies as “multinational and multimillionaire, repressive and insensitive to poverty and human suffering . . . flouting all legal norms from national laws to community and family organization. Regardless of anomalies, damages and abuse of power (the companies) only seek unmeasured and enormous profit, with no thought given to the fundamental rights they ignore, thanks to the indifference or complicity of national actors (unpublished acta, San Marcos, October 8, 2010). And they organized consultas, community-wide referenda asking whether local residents want a megaproject, mine, or hydroelectric plant in their area. In every case an overwhelming majority (always between 90% and 98%) has voted no to destructive extractive projects. The first were held in the province of San Marcos in 2005, and then spread to nearby Huehuetenango where 28 of the 30 municipalities have said no, and then on throughout the country, even into the ladino east, collecting more than a million people under their banner (Nelson 2015).

20. Michael Taussig describes “the effervescence of what I call ‘the breakthrough economy’ which is the economy of prohibition and transgression—first you make the rule, then you make a lot of money by breaking it” (2004:144). Or, as Sergio González Rodríguez says, “The crisis within the rule of law reveals the dark outlines of the global order—the underground economy, whose politics is violence. Blood, death, threats, exploitation, weapons, unlimited profits; this is the big business created by the illegality of drugs” (2002:50).
Actas and consultas are considered binding by communities, so when heavy machinery and pale-skinned foreigners show up, community leaders are expected to confront them and regular folks mobilize in support. This is understood as defense of territory, a struggle for land—but also water, forests, and sustainable lifeways. In a number of areas, these have turned into protracted battles accreting national and international solidarities around community resistance. But of course, as the acta suggests, the companies have plenty of allies too and are well funded and often heavily armed.

In the last section I indulged in some optimism of the will as, after decades of impunity, the law seemed to be transforming into a potent tool in struggles for justice. Despite their historic impact, war crimes trials comprise a tiny percentage of the work of the CICIG and high-risk courts. Even less attention is focused on the issues like landholding and environmental destruction that most affect the Mayan and rural majorities. More ominously, the legal system has also become a powerful mechanism for remilitarizing the countryside by criminalizing people who repudiate megaprojects and insist their consultas be taken seriously by the state. Starting in 2005, supposedly in response to the increasing illicit traffic in drugs, humans, and possible terrorists, the Guatemalan army began opening new outposts in frontier zones—the same places where extractive licenses were being granted. The rubric of the 2008 Central America Regional Security Initiative has meant increased US involvement in the region, accelerating with the election of Pérez Molina in 2012. In 2013 the US began setting up interagency task forces, investing close to US$30 million, and deploying troops in the region for “training and humanitarian purposes” (Abbott 2015; Meyer and Seelke 2015). It has also pushed alternative development strategies like hydroelectricity.

A troubling ritual has begun to unfold. A company, often promising a nondestructive development project—an orchid or some other kind of farm—begins making overtures in a community, holding parties, hiring people. Slowly it becomes clear that it is something else, but it is hard to know what. Fences go up, outside security is brought in, machinery starts to rumble by at night. People get worried. They meet with company representatives to express their concerns. If there is no response, they might block roads, confront local people who are working there, hold more meetings. The company plows ahead, corn fields get trampled, security forces are arrogant and disrespectful to women and men. Tension grows.

Now the stage is set, as in Barillas, Huehuetenango, a Maya-Q’eqchi’ community where a hydroelectric project was underway.21 On the morning of May 1, 2012, the happy and exciting first day of the patronal fiesta, three local leaders were shot from a luxury pickup truck. One was killed and two were wounded. The shooters were known members of the Spanish company Hidro Santa Cruz’s security detail. Villagers called in authorities, including the police and army. In the late afternoon when the Public Ministry arrived, locals obliged them to sign an acta calling for the Company (as it is known) to leave the area and pay reparations for the death and to replace the local Justice of the Peace who openly favored the Company. Meanwhile, news of the murder spread and several hundred people coalesced in town and began to seek out the killers.

Many had been drinking because of the fiesta. Reports also speak of unknown people with covered faces joining the crowd and instigating violence, including causing damages at the hotel housing Company employees and burning the house of a man who had sold his land to the Company. They even went to the army outpost where the assassins had apparently taken refuge. That night, President Pérez Molina declared a State of Exception, moving in more than 500 soldiers and police, who arrested dozens of community leaders. Nine men were taken to a notorious jail in Guatemala City and house-to-house searches for a long list of community leaders were carried out by Kaibiles. As during the war, many fled to the mountains and even to Mexico. No attempt was made to capture the killers. Press reports focused on the mob of drunk “Indians,” and the Minister of the Interior said it was drug traffickers trying to shut down the army installation. Little to no mention was made of the ongoing struggles or the actions and impact of the Company (de León and Bastos 2014; El Observador 2016).

Over and over the scenario plays out, a (usually foreign) company moves in, people organize, there is an attack, sometimes an assassination. Frightened and angry neighbors seek justice and accountability, the police and military move in with overwhelming force, more leaders are locked up, families and communities are disrupted, already meager resources are siphoned off to defend them. While lack of evidence and the occasional sympathetic judge have freed people, there are often dozens of arrest warrants awaiting those freed. Leaders have been rearrested leaving the court where they were found innocent. Armed with government decrees and legal arrest orders, this lawful culture of militarism increasingly settles into the economic entails of extractivism, even masking itself as the “green revolution” in renewable energy.

Yet in July 2016, at the combined trial of seven Mayan community leaders from Huehuetenango, all with charges stemming from defending territory,22 something different happened. The trial was held in the high-risk court with the same presiding judge, Yassmin Barrios, who heard the Ríos Montt case. As with the genocide trial, many cultures and countercultures were involved in this historic event. Some defendants were represented by a Mayan legal center, including lawyers born in Mexican refugee camps in the mid-1980s. Gladys Tzul Tzul, a Mayan woman and recent PhD in anthropology, was an expert witness. Mayan ceremonies were held outside the courthouse, and...
people said that keeping the candles burning all day made the
prosecution witnesses contradict themselves. In her verdict the
judge admitted she had understood very little about Mayan
culture but now knew the vital importance of ancestral au-
thorities and their duty to work for their communities. She
criticized the justice system for abetting companies and na-
tional elites. “We judges cannot be instruments that criminalize
actions that are not crimes.” She sided firmly with the argu-
ment that the consultas are the voice of the people and should
be legally binding, and therefore the actions of leaders and
community members to defend the decisions are also legal.
She reiterated defense arguments that foreign companies are
engaged in “accumulation by dispossession,” a model that de-
stroys local lifeways for the benefits of a few, most not even
Guatemalans.23

It took a week to clear up the paperwork so that the men,
their families, and supporters could embark on a several-days
victory tour through the highlands, welcomed by huge crowds
in numerous towns before finally reaching their homes. I could
not accompany them because I was supposed to be a foreign
observer for a consulta in Alta Verapaz. At the last minute,
however, it was called off because the hydroelectric company
had filed a court order and the government was sending in
police and military to enforce its wishes.

Conclusion

What I have tried to evoke here is the way that decades after
the worst of the army’s scorched-earth counterinsurgency
and 20 years after the peace accords, cultures and counter-
cultures of militarism are engaged in ongoing, violent, and—
every once in a while—hopeful struggles. The war in Guatemala
may count as only low intensity for US military planners, but
they have used its lessons in their manuals for occupying the
Middle East and elsewhere. The planet seeps and shudders
in resonance with deadly accumulations by dispossession, and
every person lives in an ongoing way that crawls through and
across generations—the reverberations of these high and low
intensities of the cultures of militarism.

To culture is to care, tend, guard. The cultures of militarism
I have explored draw on seedlines planted a long time ago,
that set in place still resilient formations of landholding, un-
derstandings of difference, and gendered and sexualized rela-
tions across race and class lines—the low-intensity warfare of
everyday colonized Capitalocenic life.24 Some seeds are GMOs,
more recently hybridized through the global Cold War and what
Giovanni Batz, citing Mayan activists, calls the “fourth inva-
sion” of the megaprojects (see fig. 2, which became an internet
meme in Latin America).25 These guard the economic interests
of a few powerful families. And these cultures are not “localized
in the Third World”—they have global implications.

But to culture also means to honor. When folks in Rio Negro
demand support to rescue Maya-Achi culture, and when peo-
ple draw on indigenous and hybridized community organiz-
ing practices like actas, consultas, and traditions of defense
of territory, they are honoring an older (perhaps discredited
among anthropologists) notion of culture but one that also
tends and guards countercultures of militarism. And as low-
intensity reverberations resonate through these struggles with
those for buen vivir and the good life in South America and with
Standing Rock and Idle No More in North America, they also
have global implications.

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23. As Jason Moore (2013) and Donna Haraway (2016) argue, the in-
creasingly extinction-oriented transformations in the earth’s atmosphere
caused by human activity are caused less by all people as “anthros” than by a
particular historic organization, making “Capitalecne” a more precise
term. Just as it was easier for some Guatemalans to imagine the end of the
Maya than of the country’s plantation-based economic model, so too some
find it easier to imagine the end of the world than of capital.

25. “The three previous invasions consisted of Spanish Colonization,
the creation of plantations at the end of the 19th Century and early 20th cen-
tury; and the Guatemalan civil war (1960–1996)” (Batz 2017:x–x).
Nelson  Low Intensities

Ross, Amy, and Elizabeth Oglesby. Forthcoming. Guatemala’s genocide trial and the nexus of racism and counterinsurgency.
Militarism on the Colombian Periphery in the Context of Illegality, Counterinsurgency, and the Postconflict

by María Clemencia Ramírez

The confluence of illegality, counterinsurgency, and marginality in Colombia has led to the militarization of social life, national politics, policy making, and state practices in peripheral areas. The state has sought not only to conquer and recover territories from the guerrillas but also to reunify the nation, designating the army to achieve this goal. The Plan for Territorial Consolidation promoted a civil-military governance model to bring the state and provide security to these recovered territories by any means necessary, including the use of clowns. I argue that the peace agreement signed in November 2016—after 53 years of armed conflict—is challenging the long-term militarization policy subsumed under a counterinsurgency strategy. Instead, it provides a context for seeing the inhabitants of areas in conflict as citizens rather than guerrilla auxiliaries and makes marginal territories and their populations central to achieving peace. Former guerrilla combatants in Transitory Rural Normalization Zones established in these peripheral areas seek to work with government officials to implement social, political, and economic projects for both demobilized fighters and the communities with which they have shared territory for decades. Nevertheless, the specters of the Cold War and the dirty war haunt these areas as community leaders continue to be assassinated.

After 5 decades of conflict between Marxist guerrillas, the Colombian state, and government-allied paramilitary forces, Colombia has entered a new political moment following a peace agreement signed with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and approved by Congress in 2016. Since colonial times, when peripheral regions of the country, including the Amazon area, proved to be difficult to conquer and “civilize,” Colombian territory has been portrayed as including central areas under state control and marginal areas inhabited then by “untamable savages” and, since the 1980s, under the control of guerilla groups and harboring “criminal” coca growers and guerrilla sympathizers. Thus, a master narrative of two Colombias has dominated the imaginary of the nation-state (Ramírez 2015), indicating the existence of a developed and “civilized” Colombia on the one hand and, on the other, a backward and barbarous or “savage” Colombia dominated by illegality (understood to mean coca cultivation and nonstate armed groups including guerrillas, paramilitaries, and drug-trafficking mafias). Moreover, academics (González 1999; Pécaut 1988; Roldán 1998) have pointed out that the Colombian state is virtually absent from these “savage” or peripheral areas where it has lost control or lost its monopoly on the legitimate use of force. Colombian anthropologist Margarita Serje (2005) argues that these territories constitute “the other side of the nation.” That is to say, they form an integral part of the national territory with a particular social, economic, and political function historically assigned to them by the nation-state. The authority formerly exercised by the guerrillas in these regions demonstrated the acceptance of marginality by local and national governments as a constituent aspect of the existing Colombian nation, making clear that it is “a narrative central to its nationhood” (Serje 2005) and that “the frontier has been incorporated into the state’s political and spatial order through a relation of inclusive exclusion” (Uribe 2017: 179), a long-term structural relation constructed historically and spatially that became normalized. This “state absence” trope has legitimized the militarization of the peripheral territories that constitute the “backward” Colombia, in an effort to fight the guerrillas and recover territory for inclusion in the national order. Thus, although it can be argued that guerrilla control of Colombian territory has in fact been normalized, the recovery of territory from the guerrillas has been the stated goal of the military for decades. The state’s policy of militarization of “backward” areas has been framed by counterinsurgency rhetoric reminiscent of the Cold War that legitimizes the dirty war carried out by the state’s military forces—at times with paramilitary proxies or in alliance with paramilitaries (Kirk 2003; Tate 2015)—portraying civilians as leftists or guerrilla auxiliaries.

1. The emergence of paramilitary groups in Colombia can be traced to the 1980s, when the military in regions outside of direct state control...
This master narrative of two Colombias has been translated into policy in the peace agreement signed with a 53-year-old guerrilla group, the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia). Peace talks between the government of Juan Manuel Santos (2010–2018) and the FARC began in 2012. A first “Final Agreement” was inked in August 2016 in Havana and formally signed in September of that year in Cartagena. But the agreement was rejected in an October 2 plebiscite by a margin of 0.45% (49.77% to 50.22%) and was subsequently renegotiated to reach understandings with the FARC on the objections and proposals of the “No” campaign. A new agreement was reached and formally signed on November 24 before being approved by Congress. The agreement’s initial rejection in the plebiscite demonstrated the dramatic political differences between peripheral territories where the violent armed conflict had taken place and the central regions, as described by the government’s peace commissioner:

The results of the plebiscite showed the rightness of the peace process. The “No” vote won in the somewhat prosperous center of the country, where the conflict has not been directly present for some time, while the “Yes” vote won in peripheral regions that continue to be immersed in poverty and where the conflict is ever-present (think of the Pacific region or of Putumayo). We have always said that the goal of this process is not simply that FARC guerrillas lay down their arms, but to unify the country and reduce regional inequality. The plebiscite showed that we are a deeply divided country.2

Implementation of the agreement began in January 2017, with the concentration of former guerrillas in 26 Transitory Rural Normalization Zones and Sites, or demobilization camps (see map, fig. 1). In late June of that year, former fighters turned over more than 7,000 firearms at these sites, observed by representatives of the United Nations Verification Mission. Nevertheless, rightists in Congress introduced procedural obstacles to the agreement’s implementation, successfully impeding the process. And the candidate of the right-wing forces that had opposed the agreement in the plebiscite won the June 2018 presidential runoff election, defeating the leftist candidate by 54% to 42% (4% of the ballots were blank), confirming the country’s stark division. This political reality could hamper or derail the implementation of the peace agreement. How does the peace agreement conceptualize peripheral territories? What is behind the strategies that the government has promoted to unify the country? What has been the role of the military in attempting integration, and of counterinsurgency and Cold War rhetoric in legitimizing repression, dirty war tactics, and militarization? These are the questions that I seek to address in this article.

I argue that a confluence of illegality, counterinsurgency, and regional marginality led to the militarization of social life, national politics, policy making, and state practices in peripheral areas and that this militarization is now challenged under the peace agreement, which provides an opportunity to reverse processes of militarization in marginal territories, making them and their populations not only visible but central to achieving peace. Thus, the implementation of the Havana Agreement provides a context for seeing the inhabitants of areas in conflict as citizens rather than guerrilla auxiliaries. The following analysis will illustrate, however, that militarization continues in other guises and registers.3

This article begins by tracing the process of militarization by the Colombian government to gain control of peripheral regions, a process that took place during the first phase of Plan Colombia (1999–2008) and was enhanced under the two terms of President Álvaro Uribe (2002–2010) and his program of Democratic Security. Second, it examines the consolidation plan launched in January 2007 by minister of defense (later president) Juan Manuel Santos, constituting the second phase of Plan Colombia. The consolidation plan promoted state presence in marginal territories recovered through military action, using a military model of governance, aimed primarily at winning the hearts and minds of inhabitants. President Santos maintained the consolidation plan during his first term (2010–2014), but it began to be reconceptualized after 5 years of negotiations with the FARC. The article then considers the establishment of 26 Transitory Rural Normalization Zones and Sites or demobilization camps, analyzing how the demobilization of FARC combatants has affected the territories that they left in order to concentrate their forces in the indicated zones, those latter zones, and their

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3. I want to thank one of the reviewers of this article, who mentioned this phrase to underline the other face of my central argument, which I make apparent by the examples I give.
surrounding communities. Finally, it calls attention to continuing forms of militarism in response to the ongoing peace process: on the one hand, the military continues to seek civilian collaboration to guarantee security in areas where armed conflict has taken place, to the extent that army clowns are used to win hearts and minds. On the other hand, opponents of the agreement continue to engage in dirty war activities and other political practices associated with the Cold War, such as the assassination of social and political leaders accused of being communists or representing the FARC.

First Phase of Plan Colombia: Strengthening the Armed Forces

After the September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States, Plan Colombia was subsumed into the anti-terrorist campaign of President George W. Bush. Bush’s secretary of state Colin Powell declared that the Colombian government should confront the FARC militarily and that the assistance appropriated exclusively for the war on drugs (90% of the total) in the Andean Regional Initiative and in Plan Colombia (July 2000) should largely be redirected to the war on terrorism, stating

4. Plan Colombia was a US$1.3 billion package of military aid for the war on drugs whose implementation was begun in 2000, making Colombia the third-largest recipient of US military aid after Israel and Egypt. The 6-year budget for Plan Colombia was set at US$7.5 billion.

5. President George W. Bush launched the Andean Counterdrug Initiative (ACI) as an extension of Plan Colombia in Peru, Ecuador, Venezuela, Panama, and Brazil. Today the ACI is the American program that finances most of Plan Colombia and other counter-narcotics activities in Latin America.
that “terrorism threatens Colombia’s stability,” and consequently “it threatens the stability of our part of the world.” In February 2002, President Pastrana (1998–2002) ended a peace process with FARC guerrillas that had begun in January 1999, and in August 2002, the US Congress authorized that resources dedicated to the war on drugs be used for the war on terrorism. This change coincided with the accession to power of President Álvaro Uribe (2002–2010), who consolidated the use of Plan Colombia resources in the counterinsurgency at the same time that paramilitarism was on the rise. Because his stated goal was to use military means to break up the alliance between drug trafficking and insurgents and thereby undermine the guerrillas’ goal of destabilizing the state, social investment projects were deemphasized, and winning the counterinsurgency war was seen as a precondition for their success. Thus, the association of leftist guerrillas with drug trafficking represents the continuity of the Cold War anti-communist discourse in Colombia that has been used since the 1960s, legitimizing not only repressive anti-drug policies on the part of the state and the armed forces but paramilitarism in order to eliminate the guerrillas regarded as the “internal enemy.” The paramilitaries expanded under this counterinsurgency doctrine, supplanting the central state in regions where its presence was weak. Nevertheless, many campesinos and human rights organizations (Human Rights Watch 2001) report that paramilitaries worked in alliance or with the implicit consent of the military in committing many massacres of civilians referred to as “guerrilla auxiliaries.” Fifty-five percent of these massacres were committed in 1996–2002 (CNMHI 2013). In the words of one resident of El Placer, Putumayo: “The law isn’t legal. The Police, Army, and paramilitaries fight on the same side.”

Under President Uribe, the counter-drug initiative of Plan Colombia began to be referred to as a fight against the world drug problem and organized crime, focusing primarily on reducing the cultivation of drug-related crops in Colombia, strengthening the security forces’ capacity to fight drug trafficking and terrorism, and modernizing the security and defense sectors (DPN and DJS 2006:9). In 1999–2005, 57.45% of Plan Colombia resources were invested in this component, compared to 26.57% in strengthening democratic institutions and 16% in economic and social revitalization (DPN and DJS 2006:9–10). Accordingly, the percentage of GDP directed to defense and security rose from 3.5% to 4.6% in 1999–2005 (DPN and DJS 2006:17) and rose to 6.5% in 2007 (Isaza and Campos 2007:1). When the first phase of Plan Colombia was implemented in fiscal years 2000–2007, annual US assistance routinely exceeded $600 million, with over 80% of this total going to the security forces; counterinsurgency and/or counterterrorist objectives had become ever more explicit in both US and Colombian policy. General John F. Kelly of the US Southern Command testified in the US Senate that “Colombia is perhaps the best example of the inherent value of security assistance to the region. Once on the brink of falling to a powerful insurgency, Colombia is now a leader in counterinsurgency tactics and provides training to West African and Central American counterparts” (SOUTCOM 2013:21). He confirmed the success of the Colombian armed forces’ modernization, which entailed professionalizing active troops and establishing a system to increase mobility, support, and logistics (DPN and DJS 2006:20). In addition, the Joint Operations Doctrine (joint operations involving two or more elements of air, land, and sea forces) was introduced, and the Central Command, the Caribbean Joint Command, and the Southern Joint Task Force were created. “ Likewise, mobility and an offensive posture have become key factors in the doctrine of security forces with the formation of the Rapid Deployment Force (FUDRA), twelve Mobile Brigades, and more than fourteen mobile police squads” (DPN and DJS 2006:10). The government stated that the number of personnel in the security forces grew from 249,833 to 380,069 in 1998–2005, an increase of 52.1% (DPN and DJS 2006:16). By June 2007, there were 390,356 (Ministry of Defense 2006–2007: 17), and by January 2014, 470,988. It is clear that the state’s increased military capacity is a tangible result of the first phase of Plan Colombia.

Territories of Plan Colombia

Since its beginnings, Plan Colombia has focused on the southern departments of Caquetá, Putumayo, Guaviare, and the south of Meta, where a large proportion of the country’s illegal crops are grown and where the FARC have long had a presence, leading to the militarization of these regions and the criminalization of their inhabitants. The central strategy of Plan Colombia in 2000, called “the Push to the South,” solidified the involvement of the army in the war on drugs with the formation of the first Anti-narcotics Brigade in Larandia, Caquetá, and the 27th Brigade in Putumayo, together with new barracks and training facilities. The aerial spraying of coca crops with glyphosate in Putumayo, Caquetá, and Guaviare became central to Plan Colombia. Spraying was conducted by the anti-narcotics police with the close collaboration of the army’s Anti-narcotics Brigade.12

9. A Joint Command is a permanent military body in any military branch under the command of a general or admiral, with the participation of components from other branches and a permanent base on the ground (Valencia Tovar 2005). A Joint Task Force differs from a Joint Command in that its structure is established to carry out a specific mission with a predetermined goal. It does not occupy any permanent base of its own, may have flexible boundaries to meet the needs of a specific operation, and may involve only one of the three military branches (Valencia Tovar 2005).


11. Colombia is divided into 32 subnational divisions called departments.

12. For an analysis of Plan Colombia, see Ramirez, Stanton, and Walsh (2005).
The Joint Task Force of the South was formed in 2004 to carry out a counterinsurgent military campaign known as Plan Patriota, also in the departments of Caquetá, Guaviare, and Putumayo. Its purpose was to take aggressive action in wiping out the FARC, or in the words of the government, “to drag them out of their holes.” This plan was essential to the struggle against the FARC as conceived by President Uribe, who had opened negotiations 1 year earlier with the paramilitary United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) for their demobilization. But it also meant the displacement of the population from these territories. The very name of Plan Patriota stresses the need to “conquer” or recover guerrilla territory, as was attempted 10 years earlier in Operation Conquest (Ramírez 2011).

In general, the government sees Colombian territory as divided into two contrasting areas, legitimizing differentiated policies as described by Luis Alfonso Hoyos, director of the Social Action agency for former president Uribe:

While in certain parts of the country, institutions, community work, the international presence, entrepreneurship, business development, academic research, etc. are being strengthened. In other areas people are condemned to live by the law of the jungle . . . subjected to all sorts of arbitrary measures by guerrillas, paramilitaries, and drug traffickers. (Hoyos 2008:8)

Hoyos reiterates the existence of “civilized” areas and other areas where “savagery and illegality” reign. The latter were to be wrenched from the control of nonstate armed groups.

In her work on the triple frontier of Uruguay, Paraguay, and Argentina, Ieva Jusioyte (2015:64) describes how domestic and international journalists represent it as a place where illegality and lawlessness are rampant, a “savage frontier,” legitimizing securitization and militarization policies. Similarly, Ben Penglase (2014:12) in his work on Brazilian favelas looks at the state’s use of the rhetoric of warfare when implementing policies for their pacification. Favelas are represented as “enemy territory, to be retaken by military means.” In the Colombian case, the state seeks not only to conquer and recover territories from the guerrillas but also to reunify the nation. This can be seen in the statements of armed forces Commander Carlos Alberto Ospina to the country’s leading daily, El Tiempo of Bogotá, in evaluating the first year of Plan Patriota: “In late 2003 we learned that the focus of FARC’s Central Command, ‘Another Colombia is Possible,’ was making great strides in isolated hamlets of Meta, Guaviare, and Caquetá. For over five years the FARC have tried to impose their own system of government.” Some 20,000 soldiers participated in Plan Patriota, and resources were approved by the U.S. Congress for that mission (Gómez Maseri 2004), pointing to the open involvement in the counterinsurgency of the United States, which, with the consent of successive Colombian governments, “[had] become a kind of parallel governing authority in the country” (Rojas 2013:134). It should be emphasized that as the counterinsurgency war was effectively conflated with the Global War on Terror declared by Bush after September 11, 2001, guerrillas came to be known as “narco-terrorists,” peasant coca growers were criminalized, and the US view of Colombia exclusively through a national security lens was reinforced. In this context, the results of Plan Colombia made it clear that the US government fostered and financed militarization of Colombia’s peripheral regions, and with increased financial assistance, the Colombian government has been able to utilize militarism rather than other forms of engagement as a pathway to nation building, reaffirming that substantial social and economic investment can take place only after the state wins control of the territory through military action.

Second Phase of Plan Colombia: The Territorial Consolidation Plan

At the beginning of Uribe’s second term in 2007, then defense minister (and 2010–2018 president) Juan Manuel Santos declared that the military had a presence in every municipio of the country and that Plan Patriota was a success,17 to be followed by a new Plan for the Consolidation of Democratic Security.18 Government agencies assessed the application of Democratic Security during Uribe’s first term as having “generated the necessary security conditions for the recovery of domestic and international confidence in Colombian institutions and in the economy, so the country now enjoys a favorable environment for local and foreign investment” (DNP and DJS 2007:9). This statement speaks to the connection of counterinsurgency with the expansion of corporate penetration (Network of Concerned Anthropologists 2009:15), in the sense that the territories where the consolidation plan was to take place (see map, fig. 1) had been recovered militarily and coincided with areas of interest for agribusiness and the extraction of minerals and fossil fuels for export.

13. This highly mobile Joint Task Force of the South entailed the coordination of air and riverine units in carrying out its mission in the Western Amazon Theater of Operations.


16. By choosing the name Operation Conquest, the Colombian government and military elicited an image of the original Spanish Conquest, reviving colonial visions of Amazonian marginality.

17. A municipio is an administrative subdivision of a Colombian department similar to the county as an administrative subdivision of a US state.

18. Security was considered “democratic” as defined by the Uribe government because it involved an expanded participation of the citizenry in achieving domestic and therefore international security. For an analysis of Democratic Security during Uribe’s presidency, see Ramirez (2010). See also El Tiempo (Bogotá). En el segundo tiempo de la guerra de Uribe, el reto es algo más que hacer retroceder a las FARC. October 28, 2006.
The consolidation plan establishes a regional typology based on the military necessity to secure the recovery of territories: first, areas undergoing institutional recovery, where the state assigns military control to the National Police to “allow for the normalization of community life”; second, areas where paramilitaries have demobilized, requiring the state “to occupy the spaces that had been held by self-defense groups”; third, border areas, to preclude their use as rearguards or safe corridors for traffickers in arms, drugs, or precursor chemicals; and fourth, rearguard territories of illegal armed groups: “areas that should be attacked, mounting robust military operations.” This plan recognizes, in practice, that the presence of the state apparatus in Colombia is uneven, asymmetrical, and in some places challenged by the de facto authority of nonstate armed actors (González, Bolívar, and Vásquez 2002). This recognition implies the necessity to integrate such territories through differentiated war strategies, among them social action conceived as armed forces–led social assistance, seeking “normalization” where the state of exception is the norm (Agamben 2005) and the civilian population is subordinated to armed actors including the armed forces. In its 2006–2007 report, the ministry of defense describes the objective of the consolidation plan for the following 3 years as “using the resources of the defense sector in projects for community well-being in areas where the rest of the state has still not arrived, but the Armed Forces have a presence” (Ministry of Defense 2006–2007:2). This presaged an emergent civil-military governance model to be implemented in these territories.

Toward a Model of Civil-Military Governance

As part of the consolidation plan, Defense Minister Santos announced the full implementation of the Integrated Action doctrine. As described by then-President Uribe, “we are carrying out social policies together with military and police action” (Uribe 2005).

Uribe’s statement points to the implication of development and security practices in the production of sovereignty and political community (Buur, Jensen, and Stepputat 2007). In writing about postindependence Namibia, Lamb argues that in a counterinsurgency context, governments claim that a militaristic approach is the most effective and efficient way of achieving nation building and that “militarization has entailed increased importance being attached to military ideologies, beliefs and values about development and nation-building” (Lamb 2007:152).

In Colombia, the civil-military governance model is applied only in areas where armed conflict has taken place, and it is associated with military counterinsurgency ideology. Conceived in 2004, this model was institutionalized with the establishment of the Center for Coordination of Integrated Action (CCAI), which began to receive funding from the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the US Department of Defense in 2007, in a new conception of war fighting where the state is not sovereign and social action is a strategy for territorial control. This application of “social action” means implementing development as a security mechanism (Duffield 2001) under the direction of the armed forces charged with uniting the nation and embodying the state in marginal areas.

With the participation of civilian government structures, the state complements and assists the military recovery of territory with social and economic programs, while it reestablishes governability in recovered territories (GAO 2008:58). While in 2005, CCAI worked in seven regions of the country covering 60 municipios, by 2011 it was in 15 regions covering 86 municipios (Asociación Minga 2011) among the 100 considered critical due to the armed conflict. Two military actions are central to this policy: the 1- to 2-day civil-military community events (jornadas) and the construction of tertiary roads, usually situated in regions that are marginal to the central state and difficult to reach due to mountainous topography. Both are considered urgent for the recovery of territory and for penetration by capital.

With the peace agreement, the public has become more aware of the isolation of areas where the FARC has been active and the difficulty of reaching them. Colombian military engineers intend to provide infrastructure for access to very remote regions to allow their recovery or “settlement” by the state. Thus, the Army Mobile Engineering Companies were established to “[accompany] advancing troops, offering communities rapid solutions as we recover them” (DNP and DJS 2007:51). At the end of 2008, the vice-minister of defense announced that four of these companies and three engineering battalions were activated for road construction. Army spokespeople point out that companies that normally bid for infrastructure construction contracts could not do so in conflict zones due to security conditions, so the armed forces should take on this role (UNDP 2008:7). Referring to the early days of the US Army when it built roads and forts in support of frontier settlement, Lutz (2004:324) evokes the impossibility of distinguishing soldiering from pioneering.

19. The paramilitaries’ demobilization process had ended by 2006, after the groups displaced many campesinos and dispossessed them of their land. “Official figures state that 4,744,046 people were displaced while 8.3 million hectares on 350,000 properties were abandoned or seized. In 1996–2002, the worst years of the conflict, 300,000 people were displaced per year” (CNMH 2013:28).

20. Academics have described these spaces as “diffuse, discontinuous [and] peripheral . . . distinguished by exclusion or fragmentary inclusion,” in contrast to “central spaces effectively integrated into the political and economic dynamics of the nation” (González, Bolívar, and Vásquez 2002:264).


22. Colombia has a total of 1,100 municipios.

Civil-Military Action for the Social Recovery of Territory

Through 2-day-long civil-military community events (jornadas) sponsored by the CCAI and the army in rural areas, the armed forces seek to establish new and better relations with communities in areas of conflict and build trust with those previously repressed as guerrilla auxiliaries. General César Augusto Parra describes the changed approach of the military after the signing of the peace agreement:

I was at the command post conducting operations in San Vicente del Caguán [Caquetá] on the day that the peace was signed; I was commanding the Joint Task Force. You feel inside that there is going to be a change, that your mission as commander will have to change. . . . We can’t stigmatize anybody like in the past, thinking maybe they are all guerrillas. No, we must understand that people went through a difficult situation due to the violence. That’s why we must rescue them. We have to tell them that we’re soldiers and we’re with you. (Emphasis added; Las2Orillas [Bogotá] 2017)

During these jornadas, state institutions provide health services and access to social assistance (fig. 2).

In Putumayo, where I had the opportunity to participate in a 1-day jornada on October 16, 2009, the army considers these community days to be interinstitutional humanitarian events that “guarantee basic conditions of security” and carry out “important social work to attend to the most urgent needs of the population, in cooperation with civilian institutions” (Press Office of the 27th Jungle Brigade, Sixth Division-National Army 2008). The government appears “at once military and humanitarian” (Fassin and Pandolfi 2010:15). For the governor of Putumayo, on the other hand, this “humanitarian intervention in the zones of the department that need it most” seeks to “bring development and progress to the whole department” (Gobernación de Putumayo 2008). These evaluations of the jornadas recall the idea of human security as “a technology of governance” that “embodies security and development inflections” (Duffield 2007:112, 121). In the context of the internal conflict that the central government seeks to end, government and military forces have prioritized the recovery of territory and the imposition of the rule of law over the provision of economic and social services to communities that have directly suffered the effects of the conflict. These events are organized from the human security perspective, carrying out immediate actions for the well-being of the population, such as on-site medical consultations, but also registering them for health care and nutrition programs, thus inscribing them as subjects of the “Protective State” in the longer term. In the same vein, community members register to obtain their national IDs and other personal documents where no civil registry has existed. Of course, the goals of inscribing the population in official registers may be ambiguous. It can be argued that people are being recognized as citizens, having previously lacked state protection and been stigmatized in the context of counterinsurgency war. On the other hand, it can be argued that military intelligence agencies have their own reasons for wanting to identify inhabitants of territories formerly under guerrilla control. It is also important to take into account that campesinos do not trust civil affairs projects sponsored by the army in...
regions where the armed forces supported paramilitaries and established alliances with them. This necessarily obstructs the process of institution building and the establishment of a trusted state presence in these territories, a factor that deserves additional consideration.

Winning Hearts and Minds

After 53 years of internal armed conflict, “winning hearts and minds” is a central objective of civil-military activities. General Padilla de León, commander of the Colombian armed forces in 2006–2010, has said that “the Armed Forces have established their legitimacy” through integrated action associated with the consolidation plan, thereby “gaining the confidence” of the Colombian people (UNDP 2008). Army clowns are a central part of this endeavor and participate in jornadas as such (fig. 3).

The use of clowns to accompany military forces arriving in communities seeks to strengthen “the ties of friendship with soldiers and support for them” (Press Office of the 27th Jungle Brigade, Sixth Division–National Army 2008) through shared entertainment and laughter. This is particularly important for relations with the population since the army is known for human rights violations and is not always welcome in the communities. As one inhabitant of El Placer, Putumayo, put it, “We don’t trust the Armed Forces here.”

Some soldiers who have participated in community events have commented that “the laughter of all present was mixed with the hopes and dreams of those who want to see this part of the country continue to develop, far from the presence of narco-terrorist groups,” and that at the end of the day “we said goodbye with thanks for letting us be here” (Press Office of the 27th Jungle Brigade, Sixth Division–National Army 2008). But beyond the army’s show of a friendly face, I am interested in exploring why the armed forces use clowns to help fulfill their principal goal, which is to win civilian allies in recovering territories previously held by the FARC and used for illegal activities.

Army clowns are brought to isolated communities by the 27th Brigade’s Special Psychological Operations Group. In the specialized field of security policy, psychological operations can be defined as “the planned or programmed use of the total spectrum of human actions to influence attitudes and actions of friendly, neutral, and enemy populations important to national objectives” (McLaurin 1982:275). In this context, communication includes speech, written material, music, drama, visual arts, and other forms of behavior (Narula 2004:188). Clowns play a role in this communication strategy. Their subtle power of persuasion is recognized by Barnaby King in his book Clowning as Social Performance in Colombia, in which he analyzes the reasons for the clowning practices that he observed in Colombia. King states that “some local economies and forms of social and political communications have become dependent upon [the clowns’] subtle powers of persuasion” (King 2017:6). The tasks carried out by clowns for the armed forces in the postconflict context seem to fill this need.

After the signing of the peace agreement in November 2016, news came out that in the department of Caquetá, where “the cruelest battles of the war had been fought,” General Parra “asked that the 5,000-plus soldiers of Task Force Jupiter [formed in 2013

to fight the FARC’s Teófilo Forero Column, personify two approaches: that of the war, and that of the joy of life that they bring to remote parts of Caquetá, Amazonas, and Putumayo with the Amazon Circus.” Thus, bringing happiness to people is itself an important goal in the context of violence, and this role is particularly salient in peripheral regions where the armed conflict has been most intense. In addition, providing a positive emotional experience is considered a humanitarian act in the context of disheartening or traumatic events (King 2017:17). The United Nations Development Program in Colombia also includes clowning in its communicative repertoire and has, in fact, employed clowns in its reconciliation initiative (King 2017:198–199).

In a June 2017 interview, General Parra said more about the role of clowns in establishing security in the postconflict period:

Our approach is integrated action . . . a soldier with certain qualities and capacities can approach a community of say 30, 40, or 100 people with their special abilities for expressing themselves, their gestures, and their joy. This is an important weapon and it is their specialty. We have soldiers that are dedicated to that, to psychological action. Their weapons are their clown suits, their clown noses, and their clown wigs. Those are the best tools, and with them we can attract more people, more communities, and of course generate integrated security. (Las2Orillas [Bogotá] 2017)

In his chapter “Clown Politics,” Jon Davison provides European examples from the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, when “clowns have been allied or appropriated to political ends” (Davison 2013:234). He points out that their ideological use can be ambivalent: they can be used either to maintain the status quo or to subvert it. But with respect to the role of laughter as the other face of violence in the Colombian conflict, King (2017:42) found that clowns “are deeply rooted in assumptions about the culture of violence that pervades the everyday life of Colombians.” Indeed, some famous Colombian clowns have been recognized as symbols of popular resistance to long-term violence in Colombia, exhibiting “the potential of innocent fun to overcome the country’s inner turmoil” (King 2017:69).

It can be argued that clowns have proven to be efficient in bringing official messages to peripheral communities given the importance of clowns in Colombian popular culture. As King suggests, it is the very “playfulness of clowning that in some cases activates the utilitarian possibilities of clowning.” Moreover, “playfulness can unlock intimacy and connection across social and cultural boundaries” (King 2017:248). In the words of one clown interviewed by King, clowning is a strategy for ensuring that a message be “transmitted and received in an easy, energetic, fun and most of all lively way” (King 2017:156) with the additional benefit that “if you can get people laughing you can teach them almost anything” (King 2017:154).

To illustrate the relationship between laughter and violence in Colombia, we can refer to cases of clowns laughing about death, massacres, and disappearances for an audience of people accustomed to depression and tears over these events. One clown from Caquetá remembers witnessing piles of dead bodies and includes such topics in his repertoire, indicating that “the more violence we put in the shows, the more laughter we get” (quoted in King 2017:121). It appears that people are better able to tolerate acts of violence to which they have been subjected if they are able to mock them.

In sum, in these marginal regions considered to be not only “out of the way” but “outside the law” (Ramírez 2011:23) and considered off-limits to the central government due to the reigning illegality, the army is considered “the sine qua non of both state and nation” (Lutz 2004:323) and is given the responsibility for bringing development and/or security to the region and for recovering the trust of the region’s inhabitants in state institutions after having been subjected to military and state repression. In this context, clowning is a technique to attract people’s attention and to gain their hearts and minds, before as allies in war and now as active participants in the implementation of the peace accord.26

From Territorial Consolidation to Territorial Institutionalization

In the framework of the peace agreement, a new narrative has arisen within the armed forces, without, however, retreating from their position that the goal of working with the communities is to gain allies and/or informants. This entails a tension between seemingly incompatible positions. In their present discourse, they appear to have begun to move away from counterinsurgency doctrine and to recognize the people’s agency and their regional identity, for example, among caqueteños (citizens of Caquetá):

This [conflict] began to change when the government established its policies for the peace process . . . it was a cultural change; we had to generate the new culture and leadership among all the soldiers. . . . The role of officers in the Department of Caquetá was to encourage a feeling of belonging, to integrate everyone, to say we all love Caquetá.

26. In an article in this issue, Alex Fattal describes another social warfare persuasion strategy used by the government, in this case to win the hearts and minds of the guerrillas’ social base, induce individual guerrilla fighters to demobilize, and gradually dismantle the insurgents’ military fronts. The government contracted a private advertising company to carry out several publicity campaigns designed to instrumentalize the emotions of guerrilla fighters. They sought to exploit the insurgents’ nostalgia and affection for their families and even their love for their mothers. In his article, Fattal states that “from a counterinsurgency perspective, the militarization of intimacy has proven effective” (Fattal 2019).

and we will help each other out. In the Armed Forces, that made us see this reality of Caquetá, where there is no state participation, where the state had to come in to the department, and this joy of seeing what the people were saying, that’s what motivates you as a soldier. I always felt that working with the community produces the security that you will have increasingly more important allies because the most important allies in any part of the country are always among the civilian population, and I’ve always understood that if we were alone we weren’t going to win. (Las2Orillas [Bogotá] 2017)

However, when the FARC began to demobilize at the end of 2016, the urgency for the army and the national police to occupy the vacuum in the regions came to be central in the public sphere, just as after the demobilization of the AUC. The current army commander explains: "Territorial control can’t entail stationing a soldier every few feet, because it’s impossible; Colombia is immense. We need to cover it with intelligence, with a network of collaborators, with drones."27 We need a combination of methods to maintain effective military control.28 The general referred to the military intelligence capacity gained through Plan Colombia, but he also reiterated the idea of winning back the trust of the population so that it would once again provide information, enabling the military to regain territorial control, thus echoing Cold War-era military strategy.

In addition to the idea of militarization as a means to territorial integration into the institutionalized state, another concept emerged from the peace negotiations, as explained by Sergio Jaramillo, the high commissioner for peace. Filling the vacuum thus created meant “institutionalizing the territory” (Jaramillo 2014:6), guaranteeing constitutional rights “with a special emphasis on those who have lived on the periphery and have been directly affected by the conflict” (3). Jaramillo specified that institutions must be understood as “all those practices and norms that regulate public life and are indispensable to creating conditions for cooperation and social harmony” and “bringing about well-being.” (1, 5). Institutions in these territories have failed to provide services or satisfy the rights of all citizens equally, said Jaramillo, or to “maintain the conditions necessary for members of society to seek to satisfy their political demands” and thereby avoid resorting to the violence that has characterized Colombia’s political culture. It should be noted that Jaramillo refers to the inhabitants of these territories as citizens with rights, not merely as people who need to be won over as allies and army informants, the priority of the civil-military model and/or the human security technology of governance.

The commissioner of peace maintains that it is necessary to “complement the focus on rights with a territorial focus,” since the conflict has affected some territories more than others. Along these lines, peace is defined as territorial, always involving sub-national authorities and organizations as well as the church and civil society. Territorial inclusion and integration would no longer be promoted through military action but through an alliance established between the state and communities “to build institutionality in the region together” (Jaramillo 2014:5), recognizing that institutions are “at the heart of the State” (Fassin 2015) and, as such, are indispensable to consolidation in those territories.

The FARC has had a presence in 242 of Colombia’s 1,100 municipalities, clustered in 14 regions that contain 12% of the country’s population (Valencia and Avila 2016:45), in many cases exercising authority and establishing a kind of “indirect private government” as described by Mbembe (2001:80) in the African context. The government has blamed the FARC for its own inability to reoccupy areas under insurgent control, thereby producing a “geography of blame” (Farmer 1992) within the country, used to justify not only the militarization of certain territories but also the lack of services and deficient institutionality due to the armed guerrilla presence. Now, government representatives such as the high commissioner for peace and the high counselor for the postconflict frequently emphasize that with the guerrilla demobilization, not only will the state reach into territories previously “off-limits” to its armed presence but there will also be collaboration by former guerrillas in the postconflict period for implementing programs such as coca crop substitution.29 The peace agreement established 19 Transitory Rural Normalization Zones (ZVTN; areas including several camps), and seven Transitory Normalization Sites (PTN; individual camps), where FARC fighters gathered to initiate the process of laying down their weapons prior to reincorporation into civilian society. These zones are in territories where the FARC has long had a presence. As can be seen on the map (fig. 1), they coincide almost entirely with regions covered by the Plan for Territorial Consolidation and the marginal territories where the Territorial Peace Project has been implemented.

These areas are “very remote places in the national geography,” in the words of an official responsible for the system of Zones and Sites. “Establishing 26 camps simultaneously is

27. The ministry of defense defines its network of collaborators as “a preventive instrument that links Colombians to state security bodies and makes it possible for citizens to voluntarily provide appropriate information to authorities for the good of public safety” (Ministry of Defense 2007). See Castaño (2010) for the rationale behind this policy and Ramirez (2010) for an analysis of how the network of collaborators works on the ground.


29. On January 27, 2017, the government and the FARC launched the Comprehensive National Program for the Substitution of Illicit Crops (PNIS) to begin the implementation of the fourth point of the peace agreement: “Solutions to the problem of illicit drugs.” It establishes that “the FARC will be responsible for accompanying and facilitating the arrival of the voluntary coca substitution fight back and on the program in the territories most affected, to do outreach among the population with respect to the program, and to strengthen their commitments to a definitive solution to the problem of the illegal drugs” (Office of the Presidency 2017).
What inhabitants of these regions call their “abandonment” (Ramírez 2011) is corroborated. To be clear, though, they have been abandoned by the provider state, not by the repressive state, which is the source of militarization and the toxic aerial spraying of coca crops. Regions abandoned by the state that were stigmatized for their illegality and mapped as outside the nation because they were beyond the rule of law have now become particularly important to the newly defined postconflict nation. As these areas are redefined as within the nation, their people now hope for the state to bring humanitarian aid or development programs instead of military occupation as guerrillas demobilize and the peace agreement is implemented.

Forms of Militarism in Response to the Ongoing Peace Process

In 2016, neo-paramilitaries, or as the government calls them, “organized armed groups” or “criminal groups” (BACRIM)34 made incursions into some formerly FARC-dominated territories seeking to take control of illegal economies such as coca trafficking and illegal mining. In Putumayo, members of the criminal group La Constru have stated that once the FARC is gone, “We will be in charge” (Ávila 2016). Hence, a FARC commander stated that a lot of people told me that they were voting NO [against the peace agreement], not because they were Uribistas [followers of former president Uribe, who opposed the agreement] but because they didn’t want us to leave. In some sense, they felt protected by us. This is understandable because of the State’s absence.”35

The militarization of daily life in these regions is a given: after living for decades under the authority of armed groups, the civilian population is accustomed to being subject to imposed authority. In addition, the substitution of one armed group for another always leads to accusations of collaboration with the previous group and fears of persecution.

In the north, the Urabeños and/or Autodefensas Gaitanistas have been killing social leaders who promote the reparation of victims through land restitution, constituting the principal challenge to providing citizen security (Ávila 2016). Local and regional elites also fear the peace process as a concrete step toward the imposition of “communism” resulting in the loss of their own privileges. In some cases, they have orchestrated the murder of social leaders. Goldstein (2010:494) has commented that Latin American governments are “unable to reconcile the security demands of transnational corporations

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33. Ibid.

34. Bacrím is the acronym commonly used to refer to crime organizations known as bandas criminales, i.e., criminal gangs distinguished from the paramilitaries of the AUC because they have no recognized political motivation.

35. La Silla Vacía [Bogotá]. La Vigilia de las FARC. November 2, 2016.
and lenders with the demand for rights from national citizens.” In peripheral regions, transnational mining and agribusiness companies are faced with operating in the context of illegal economies and armed conflict, and as was mentioned, a main factor in Uribe’s Democratic Security program was promoting investor confidence as a motivation for improving security in conflict regions, a goal that was largely accomplished after 10 years of Plan Colombia (Rojas 2013). The difficulty discussed by Goldstein is compounded in the context of armed conflict leading to the appearance of paramilitaries acting as government proxies to carry out the dirty war activities that have characterized Colombian democracy (Civicó 2016; Ramirez 2011; Tate 2015). But just as corporations have demanded security for their operations in these marginal regions, inhabitants demand that the state provide security for social and political leaders.

Between September 2015 and May 2016, 15 regional leaders, many of them with political aspirations, were reported assassinated (Ávila 2016), and 32 others were assassinated between the bilateral cease-fire of August 29 and November 22, 2016, recalling the killing of over 3,000 members of the Patriotic Union in the 1980s and 1990s, and leading the FARC delegation in Havana to talk of “the return of the dirty war” (La Jornada 2016). The wave of killings reflected the dirty war that has long characterized Colombian political culture, focused on the extermination of the opposition, and in particular of leftist leaders accused of being guerrilla allies. The majority of these assassinations in 2015 were committed by unknown perpetrators, but most killings in 2016 were attributed to regional neo-paramilitaries (Verdadabierta.com 2017). These assassinations have gone largely unpunished. As for the new wave of victims, “a little more than half are social leaders in their regions, members of social organizations such as Community Action Committees, or leaders of displaced people’s organizations and human rights associations.” These leaders are also eliminated because they constitute an obstacle to the economic activities carried out by corporations in these regions. Between January and May 2017—following the November 2016 ratification of the peace accord—the ombudsman reported the assassination of 46 leaders and human rights defenders (CMI La Noticia Bogotá 2017b). Another 102 leaders had been killed as of February 2018, bringing the total up to that date to 148 (Defensoría del Pueblo 2018). It was also noted that between January 2017 and February 2018, most of the victims were social leaders working on the implementation of the peace accords (Caracol Radio 2018), promoting either the agreement’s first point on comprehensive rural reform or the fourth point on the substitution of other crops for coca. In each of these cases, the implementation of the agreement would be contrary to the interests of landholders and drug traffickers, explaining the murders of 36 coca growers between January 2017 and June 2018.

The specter of Cold War and dirty war rhetoric haunts the regions, legitimizing abusive practices by the police, the armed forces, and neo-paramilitaries targeting the civilian population and social movements in regions where the guerrillas have had a longstanding and hegemonic presence. Militarist culture shines through with concrete acts such as assassinations but also through the ghostly memory of selective assassinations that characterized the dirty war and that imply an alliance between state agents, the political class, and paramilitaries for the purpose of killing social leaders and impeding the legal political option that the FARC sought in the 1980s and seeks again today. Asked about his hopes and fears for 2017, sociologist and journalist Alfredo Molano replied, “I hope to see former [FARC] commanders in a public role; to hear a new voice in political life; to see what role they are going to play and how they will play it. . . . My fear is that they will be killed.” The Havana Agreement has opened the door to a redefinition of the political culture: rather than promoting the liquidation of enemies, it prioritizes dialogue and unarmed political representation. The nation-state now acknowledges the inclusion of new political subjects who were once stigmatized as criminals and subject to state repression. These subjects now call for the protection of the state as they confront threats to their lives for participating in the implementation of the peace accord. It remains to be seen whether the predominantly military means used to impose state authority and the rule of law in the country’s peripheral regions will be displaced as its inhabitants are recognized as citizens with rights and an integral part of the nation-state.

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36. See Aparicio (2017) for an analysis of increased foreign investment in regions previously affected by the armed conflict and now experiencing the peace process. Hylton and Taus (2016:254) sustain that the peace agreement will “also open new paths for the accumulation of capital and deepen existing ones.”

37. The Patriotic Union was the legal political party founded in 1985 as a result of a FARC cease-fire with the government of President Belisario Betancur.


39. A recently released report demonstrates the systematic nature of rural leaders’ assassinations (Gutiérrez, Marin, and Carranza 2017).


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Leaky Revelations

Commitments in Exposing Militarism

by Brian Rappert

Contests over the control of information are central to the perpetuation and critique of militarism. This article examines one of the most prominent sets of state document leaks in recent political history: the online posting of hundreds of thousands of US war logs and diplomatic cables by WikiLeaks. Bold statements were advanced in 2010 and afterward regarding what these releases made visible. In contrast, this article considers how disclosure and nondisclosure came bundled together. With reference to the tensions of keeping secrets and producing transparency, I suggest that the promise attached to the released documents did not just derive from the argument that they revealed modern statecraft, nor that such knowledge was tantalizingly out of reach, but from the manner in which what had been rendered knowable could be revisited over time. Through this argument I want to explore the affective knots, conceptual tangles, and problematic story lines associated with exposing militarism.

The control of information is often regarded as central to the continuance of militarism. As a result, much potential is typically invested in breaches of military and diplomatic secrecy, and much allure can surround the exposure of military and diplomatic activities. For those seeking to reveal the machinations of militarism, the disclosure of once sequestered information is often regarded as a vital basis for critique, whereas for those working to defend military maneuvers from scrutiny, information is often treated as a stockpile that needs to be secluded. Given such investments, when breaches take place, their meaning and relevance are often disputed.

This article examines the rhetoric and tensions of such contests. It does so through considering one of the most prominent instances of the unauthorized disclosure of information in recent political history: the online posting of US war logs and diplomatic cables by WikiLeaks. The intrigues of conflict have long been a matter of dread, fascination, and enigma. As an organization dedicated to the anonymous online posting of corporate and state documents, since its founding WikiLeaks has sought to bring to the global population materials that were previously only accessible to a limited coterie. As part of the series of releases in 2010 examined in this article, WikiLeaks collaborated with prominent newspapers to raise attention to topics that could hardly be more significant for understanding aspects of modern militarism centered on the United States: thousands upon thousands of civilian deaths from conflict, a new “Great Game” afoot, intelligence gathering on friend and foe alike, and government participation in torture.

These leaks were widely billed as enabling a clear and sometimes unprecedented view into the workings of dimly lit corridors of power. The documents released provided not only the building blocks for popular media accounts at the time about how warfighting gets done but also subsequent academic scholarship setting out the nature of US information-gathering networks (e.g., Bicakci et al. 2014; Frampton and Rosen 2013) and the inability of the US executive branch to maintain the kinds of tight information controls it sought (e.g., Fenster 2014).

If moving from the leaked documents to the truth was sometimes presented as a short step by members and supporters of WikiLeaks, so too sometimes was moving from truth to power. The “radical transparency” philosophy underpinning WikiLeaks developed by its founder Julian Assange was premised on the idea that freely disclosing material on the web in a manner not controlled by entrenched institutions would challenge hierarchies of authority and therefore further democratic relations (Sánchez Estop 2014). As many have argued, the leaked material has been marshaled as part of efforts to create new relations of democratic accountability (e.g., BBC Two 2012b; Sifry 2011).

Rather than using the leaks as an empirical resource for grounding arguments about the realities of contemporary statecraft, I take as my topic the issue of how the material was positioned. Stated differently, the focus is not so much on what the leaks tell us but, rather, the preliminary matter of how the logs and cables were made to tell. Questions for consideration include: How were the logs and cables put forward as (non-)revelatory insights into US militarism? How did those organizations collaborating in the leaks attempt to advance themselves as authoritative interpreters of the logs and cables? How were claims to truth reformulated over time? By examining these questions, we will be able to explore the assumptions and commitments that often inform (critical) analyses of militarism.

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In making this argument, I take inspiration from anthropological approaches that conceptualize keeping secrets as a matter of analyzing how they get told—that is, who tells what, when, to whom, and how (e.g., Bellmen 1981; De Jong 2007; Taussig 1999). In other words, the focus is with the process of secrecy rather than the content of secrets.

The structure is as follows: with a focus on Iraqi civilian deaths, the next section elaborates how, as leaked secrets, the logs and cables were often treated as possessing a readily accessible, self-evident, and definite meaning. Importantly, though, these were not the only orientations within news analyses by those organizations under study in this article. As the third section (“Stories behind the Stories”) details, treatments of the logs and cables as accessible, evident, and definite in meaning mixed and melded with reference to that which was not known, to what was inaccessible and not publicly appreciated, etc. These evocations challenged the status of the logs and cables and unsettled who could speak for them. A further notable feature about the WikiLeaks revelations developed in the fourth section (“Openings”) was that they were not just the topic of news stories in 2010, but they have been subject to a series of “stories behind the stories” by individuals central to the online postings. Through books, films, and documentaries, these behind-the-scenes accounts included commentary on what was missing in the 2010 coverage of the leaks. Yet, this revisiting was not done in such a way as to undermine the previous claims made by the same commentators. Moving into more general analytical considerations associated with the intertwining of concealment and disclosure, the discussion section considers how the revelatory potential of the logs and cables was renewed over time by collaborators.

The Presence ofLeaks

In the years that followed WikiLeaks becoming a household name, the composition, rationale, and history of the organization would become contested between those (formerly) within and those outside of it. As basic background, though, WikiLeaks was established in 2006 under the direction of Julian Assange. While initially seeking to post hacked materials online, it developed into an organization dedicated to publishing materials sourced from other parties (Beckett and Ball 2012). WikiLeaks posted its first document in the year of its foundation. This article, though, examines releases in 2010. During that year, WikiLeaks released arguably its three most significant batches of documents. The US National Security Advisor at the time of the writing of this article previously characterized the material released as incomparable in all of “human history” (Bolton 2012)—at least human history up to that point in time. This is a summary of the documents:

Afghan War Logs. In July, WikiLeaks posted some 91,000 US military reports dated between 2004 and 2009. These field reports were composed by soldiers and intelligence officers and pertained to topics such as the civilian casualties from NATO forces and attacks against the Coalition by the Taliban. WikiLeaks initially collaborated with the newspaper the Guardian, which then led to further collaborations with the New York Times and Der Spiegel in both analyzing and publicizing the material.

Iraq War Logs. In October 2010, some 400,000 US documents related to the war in Iraq were released, consisting of daily Significant Activity Reports detailing the outcome of use of force incidents. Again, this was done in collaboration with the Guardian, the New York Times, and Der Spiegel.


In this article, I sketch the ways claims were constructed on the basis of these releases, through content reference to news stories including the term “WikiLeaks” in the Guardian and the New York Times, published during the period of July 2010–June 2011; official US statements on the 2010 leaks; and a small number of other major investigative analyses.1 The method employed was as follows: all of the news reports and US official government statements pertaining to WikiLeaks during these time periods were read to understand them as a whole without preconceived categories. Through this qualitative review, the contrasting orientations to the definitiveness and the accessibility of the meaning of the logs and cables was determined to be a noteworthy theme. I then identified key concepts and phrasing in the texts reviewed, associated with the definitiveness of claims made about US statecraft. Through an inductive process of reasoning, the examples of these contrasting wordings were organized into two general patterns of discourse that are elaborated in this section and the next one.

In reading these news stories, one notable theme was how participating media outlets repeatedly insisted that the leaked documents opened up hidden areas of diplomacy and national security. The Guardian newspaper made fairly assured arguments along these lines. The article “Iraq War Logs: 15,000 Previously Unlisted Civilian Deaths” began by stating:

Leaked Pentagon files obtained by the Guardian contain details of more than 100,000 people killed in Iraq following the US-led invasion, including more than 15,000 deaths that were previously unrecorded . . . The mass of leaked documents provides the first detailed tally by the US military of Iraqi fatalities. Troops on the ground filed secret field reports over six years of the occupation, purporting to tot up every casualty, military and civilian. (Leigh 2010b)

The 15,000 unrecorded-deaths number in this quote referred to civilian deaths not previously identified through the individual-by-individual tally of civilian deaths by Iraq Body Count (2010)—a total largely derived through tallying up deaths specified in English-language news accounts. Another

1. For wider analysis of media coverage of WikiLeaks, see Hindman and Thomas (2014) and Mabon (2013).
article titled “WikiLeaks Iraq: Data Journalism Maps Every Death” included these figures for deaths between 2004 and 2009:

Total deaths
- The database [of Significant Activity Reports] records 109,032 deaths in total for the period
- The database records the following death counts: 66,081 civilians, 23,984 insurgents and 15,196 Iraqi security forces. (Rogers 2010b).

As part of the online version of the articles, readers could download spreadsheet log details on “every death in Iraq.” On the back of the quoted figures, in his book WikiLeaks and the Age of Transparency, Micah Sifry (2011:34) contended that the Iraq War Logs “revealed that the Pentagon had lied about not keeping accurate records of the Iraqi death toll from the war and that the casualty total was perhaps 15,000 persons larger than the numbers previously made public.”

Likewise, at times, the diplomatic cables were said to enable an “unvarnished picture” of the decisions, motivations, and duplicities of the government (New York Times 2010). In contrast to such definitive critical condemnations of US policy and practice, some political pundits and officials—such as former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton—contended that the cables clearly illustrated how little there was by way of misdeeds or a split between the public face and backroom dealings of diplomats (e.g., Rachman 2010; Zakaria 2010).

Whatever the evaluation, the leaked material was repeatedly attached with the qualities of sufficiency and literalness. The thinking of officials and the deeds of security personnel were recorded in the logs and cables, and these had come into view. Treating them as such then enabled commentators to debate questions such as, Did the logs and cables provide a damning indictment of US activities or not? Did they say anything new or not? It also set the stage for some of those involved to represent the publication of the leaked material as another round of the “eternal battle between those in power, with an interest in controlling information, and the journalist and citizen who wants it to be free” (Beckett and Ball 2012:91). In the manner that comprehension followed from disclosure, one way we can characterize the logs and cables is as “transparent” data: this in the sense of “transparent” referring to what is manifest, in plain sight, and easy to perceive. In the language of the field of information theory (Floridi 2014), the releases were depicted as having the status of “information,” that is, as well-formed, meaningful, and truthful data. Commentators advanced positions (albeit ones offering opposing conclusions) in which the leaks were portrayed as speaking for themselves rather than any supplementary explanations and evidence being required.

With such a factual status, the leaked material could enable seeing through the obfuscations of officiadom. For instance, the record of a private diplomatic meeting given through the cables (e.g., notes of meeting with the Kazakh ambassador to Washington) was treated as a way to get “beyond the public statements and official platitudes” (BBC Two 2012b). What was said in private (as revealed by the leaked material) served as a basis for establishing what diplomats “really say behind closed doors.” At times, then, an exceptional status was granted to the leaked material, as if it provided a definitive view into diplomats’ or others’ inner thoughts. Such an orientation also came with assumptions about how statecraft works in practice. To maintain a distinction between commonplace public appearances and private realities as revealed by the leaks assumes that the kinds of “strategic interaction” (Goffman 1970) associated with statecraft—the moves (and counter-moves and counter-counter-moves) by individuals to influence each other and manage self-images—effectively end in certain situations. Whereas the public persona of an official can assume multiple faces, the presumption made was that once office doors are shut, the real one emerges. Instead of understanding the cables as records of conversations influenced by (i) the fears, priorities, and perspectives of officials within a state, (ii) the demands of the setting in which they were made, or (iii) the differential power relations between states, they were taken as uncontrived.

In this way it might be said, then, that in the stories, on occasion, the leaked material was treated as more than just transparent. Instead, we can characterize their treatment as one of being pristine; that is to say that the information given could stand alone, did not require other information to account for its meaning, and could directly speak to what took place.

Beyond the Leaks

Contentions that the logs and cables put the facts out there for all to view granted them a self-sufficiency, but such attributions stood somewhat uncomfortably with the human voice that presented them. Unless reports, investigators, and commentators simply mouthed the words written in the logs and cables in their reporting, then human agency—skill, judgment, interpretation—mattered in how the leaks were assessed.

Scholars of discourse have long indicated how the place of expertise is negotiated in relation to the immediacy, obviousness, and accessibility of information (e.g., Cole 1998). For instance, Gilbert and Mulkay (1984) examined how scientists characterized claims to knowledge through the use of contrasting repertoires. In a so-called empiricist repertoire, scientists’ claims were presented as natural, self-evident outcomes of careful study. Yet, this way of portraying science common in professional publications mixed with a contingent repertoire more prevalent in informal settings. In the contingent repertoire, “scientists presented their actions and beliefs as heavily dependent on speculative insights, prior intellectual commitments, personal characteristics, indescribable skills, social ties and group membership” (Gilbert and Mulkay 1984:56). Gilbert and Mulkay argued that understanding how debates over truth develop and eventually get settled (or not) required mind- ing how such repertoires interrelate.

2. For a consideration of how changes of duplicity generate attempts to resolve identity into a single face, see Nelson (2009).
In a similar vein, it is readily possible to propose varied discursive orientations within the analysis of the logs and cables. For example, a two-part television series, *WikiLeaks: The Secret Life of a Superpower* (BBC Two 2012a, 2012b)—self-dubbed “the first in-depth television analysis of the secret cables”—included repeated and explicit claims proposing that the cables spoke for themselves in the revelatory spirit of the previous section. Thus it was said that “The cables reveal what American diplomats say when they think the world will never know who they trust and who they mock, what they want and how they get it.” Over three dozen assertions were made that “The cables showed,” “The cables revealed,” or “The cables allow us to see.” In only a few instances were explicit qualifications of any sort inserted, such as that “The cables seemed to suggest.”

And yet, despite the many references to the face-value meaning of the cables in *WikiLeaks: The Secret Life of a Superpower*, at times it also spoke to a not readily apparent meaning alongside the apparent one. While much ground for criticism of US foreign policy was said to be evidenced by what the cables revealed, the presenter also spoke of reasons for praise in the work of officials:

The cables reveal aspects of US diplomacy that America did not want us to see. But the real story of the cables is more complicated. These secret documents show US diplomats apparently trying to do good. In country after country, even behind closed doors, they are raising issues like freedom, democracy and human rights . . . And yet, the cables show a real tension in US diplomacy. The US wants to spread its ideals across the world, but struggles to reconcile this with its other interests, like protecting some of its unsavory alliances. (BBC Two 2012a; emphasis in delivery)

This third layer, the real story of struggle, was only made evident in the documentary through the in-depth analysis of the cables, enabled by interviews and other forms of supplementary evidence. Within programs such as *WikiLeaks: The Secret Life of a Superpower*, then, the leaked material both spoke the truth and needed to be spoken for (see, as well, Khalili and Smith 2010).

Relatedly, within the reports by the *Guardian* and the *New York Times* as well as by members of WikiLeaks itself, the need for “context” was sometimes said to be necessary to make sense of the logs and cables. 3 While an individual cable—indicating, for instance, the shipment of missiles by North Korea to Iran—might seem to have a definite significance at first sight, the situation could prove otherwise through the “wider window” enabled by further journalistic investigation and expertise (Mazzetti and Broad 2010). Of course, verifying, identifying, contextualizing, and otherwise analyzing information are often regarded as the hallmarks of journalism and the source of its authority. What is noteworthy in the case of WikiLeaks is that attention to such tradecraft rested uneasily with the frequent emphasis on how the once-secret documents clearly told their own story.

In the ways the logs and cables had to be set aside in order to get to what really took place, we can characterize them as transparent in another (and opposing) sense of the term than the one outlined in the second section. This sense of “transparent” refers to what is to be “seen through.” In line with Teurlings and Stauff’s (2014) analysis of the making of transparency, rather than providing some unmediated access to what really took place, what the logs showed had to be made sense of by intermediaries, individuals whose representations were open to question.

As an additional dimension of the varied ways of making sense of the leaked material, it is possible to identify two different senses of the leaks as raw data within the examined media coverage, approaches that mirror longstanding cultural categorical oppositions. They were treated as raw in the sense of providing a graphic, unspun, and unadulterated (and thus providing a highly insightful “raw look at US diplomacy” [e.g., Shane and Lehren 2010]). Here the cables could be drawn on in a literal way for what they showed, since they were endowed with authenticity by virtue of their status as leaked documents. In contrast, though, they were also treated as raw in the sense of being crude, rough, and unprocessed. On the day of the Afghan War Diary release, for instance, the *Guardian* ran a front-page story titled “Massive Leak of Secret Files Exposes True Afghan War.” This took the war logs as detailing “a blow-by-blow account of the fighting.” Other stories by that newspaper on that same day used the logs to provide an “unvarnished picture” of the conflict, yet also noted that the log entries were poor quality, uncorroborated, incomplete, written in a cryptic language, simply false, or subject to other caveats (Guardian 2010; Leigh 2010a). Such deficiencies were not said to render the logs completely useless. However, they did demand additional skilled journalistic reporting to uncover which facts they supported.

In the case of WikiLeaks, the tension over whether the leaked material spoke the truth on its own also stemmed from there being so much of it. The 2010 releases encompassed hundreds of thousands of documents. There were data “in spades. With bells on” (Rogers 2010a). As such, not only did the content of the logs make the news in 2010, but sometimes so did the production of the news stories from them. Processing this amount of material was said by *Guardian* reporters to require nonconventional skills associated with the then-emerging field of data journalism (the acquisition, analysis, and presentation of large data sets to support journalism), lest the sheer volume of it confound sense making.

The manner in which treatments of the logs and cables as accessible, evident, and definite mixed with treatments of them as involving what was inaccessible, unappreciated, and indefinite tied in with contentions about the distribution of epistemic competencies. At times, for instance, the negotiation of expertise in relation to data analysis moved between devolution and deference. In the case of the Afghan War Diary, for instance, the

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3. For instance, in Baker (2010) and in comments made by Julian Assange in Mediastan (at 14:00). For analyses suggesting the importance of context in WikiLeaks reporting, see Roberts (2012) and Coddington (2014).
Guardian created two web-based data journalism resources: a set of 300 significant incidents and a set of the logs related to improvised explosive devices. For both, a graphic interface was produced to enable readers to call up individual logs. For those that wanted to go a step further—“to download this data to play with it yourself” (Rogers 2010a)—Excel spreadsheets were compiled. Thus, not only could readers see how the numbers of improvised explosive device attacks per year and by location have fluctuated, but they could conduct their own analysis. Indeed, one report appealed to readers in asking, “Can you help us make more sense of the raw info?” (Rogers 2010a).

Offering a response to this question would seem tricky in relation to the very terms in which it was reported. One reason for this is that cross-checks done by reporters at the Guardian and others on the Afghan logs were said (albeit in another article) to indicate the wounded in action (WIA) and killed in action (KIA) entries in the reports were “highly unreliable” (Leigh 2010c). Such appraisals, especially without further details, frustrated knowing how to make sense of the logs as “raw info.” In addition, as explicitly acknowledged, the logs that were included within the data journalism resources at the Guardian only represented a small portion of the overall leaked documents. This made it problematic to situate specific incidents within the “overall context” or “wider window” provided by the totality of the releases. Thus while readers were asked to make more sense of the “raw info,” they were also directed back to reporters and data journalists who had been able to check, identify, contextualize, and otherwise analyze the logs.

Other examples can be identified whereby what was presented as made available through the leaked material was simultaneously bound up with what was missing from it in ways that seemingly unsettled what could be known. For instance, the sense that the leaked material was “out there” and visible for all to see took on a graphic form. The Guardian used the Iraq military logs as a data set for geographically pinpointing the location of fatalities in an online map as part of a news story titled “WikiLeaks Iraq Logs: Every Death Mapped” (Rogers 2010b). Two days after the initial publication of the leaks, an American academic with existing access to log data pointed to various practical limitations with how and when the logs were filled in—considerations that were said by the Guardian to lead to the underreporting of deaths (Rogers 2010c).

Much more was at stake in the reporting of the figures than the possibility of poor completion of the logs, though. Notably, the logs only related to deaths directly resulting from violence associated with armed intervention by the Multinational Force. Indirectly, though, conflicts kill through denying or disturbing access to health care, food, and clean water; by fueling criminal activity; and by undermining individuals’ psychological and physical well-being. In terms of the total burden of armed conflict, direct deaths typically only represent a fraction of indirect ones (Geneva Declaration Secretariat 2008).

No mention was made of this distinction as part of the Guardian Iraq War Logs coverage. The only allusion at the time to the question of which deaths count as part of mapping “every death” was made through a brief reference in one Guardian article. The total figure derived from the logs was said to be “far lower than another widely quoted estimate of more than 650,000 ‘excess deaths’ extrapolated on a different basis and published in a 2006 study in the Lancet” (Leigh 2010b). No elaboration was given to the meaning of “excess deaths.” What is noteworthy, though, is that this term refers not to direct combat deaths but to the far more expansive notion of how many more Iraqis in total had died (for whatever reason) than would have done so in the absence of the 2003 invasion.

After the launch of the Iraqi War Logs, the initial reports from the newspapers collaborating with WikiLeaks would be picked up elsewhere and translated into arguments about who knew what and said what, the legitimacy of the invasion, and total casualty figures (e.g., Burchell 2012; Hider 2012; White 2010). While some reports of the WikiLeaks Iraq War Logs investigated in detail the methodological basis for disputes (e.g., Reynolds 2010), most gave such matters very little or no elaboration. Instead, glosses of the issues at hand were given using (in this context) ambiguous terms such as “civilian deaths” or “Iraqis.”

In noting the considerations of the previous three paragraphs, it is possible to suggest how the terms used in accounts of what was revealed through the logs set their own trap door regarding what omissions lay within them—or at least for those people able to bring forth a sense of what was missing. Unless what is disclosed at any one point in time can be taken as providing a (for all purposes) complete disclosure, then questions can be asked about what is being left out and how that affects the understanding of what was divulged. In relation to the topic of civilian deaths in Iraq, it is difficult to imagine what an “adequate” or “complete” disclosure could be in light of the lack of shared or even specified purposes for the death figures. Depending on whether they are meant to memorialize suffering of innocents, judge the morality of force, establish assistance and reconstruction requirements, assess the effectiveness of operations, or simply acknowledge loss, then determinations about what should be said and with what detail can easily diverge. Yet recognition of this purpose dependency was not often aired in the 2010 news coverage of the WikiLeaks Iraq War Logs (or, for that matter, in wider political disputes about Iraqi deaths [Rappert 2012]).

4. Despite such caveats, this data set has been treated as a “detailed insider’s description of the military machinery of the world’s largest power,” one taken as “a reliable description of the Afghan war” based on said “systematic verification efforts” at the New York Times. See Zammit-Mangion et al. (2012:12416).

5. Underreporting was also noted elsewhere, as in Leigh (2010b).

6. As opposed to the Iraq Body Count that tallied individual reports of deaths, the Lancet study employed cluster statistical sampling techniques coupled with a baseline morality rate to estimate how many more Iraqis died than would have died in the absence of the war.
Stories behind the Stories

The manner in which disclosure can create a sense of what has been undisclosed as yet is underscored by the “stories behind the stories” about WikiLeaks. Starting from 2011, these were produced by those central to the 2010 revelations in books, documentaries, and films. For instance, Daniel Domscheit-Berg’s *Inside WikiLeaks* invited readers into the “explosive exposé of the inner workings of the whistle-blowing phenomenon.” Individuals at the collaborating newspapers examined in this article also came out with book-length volumes (*WikiLeaks: Inside Julian Assange’s War on Secrecy* by David Leigh and Luke Harding at the *Guardian*—hereafter, “WikiLeaks”—as well as *Open Secrets* by the *New York Times*). A story behind the story was then also presented in the documentary *Mediastan* as well as the feature film *Fifth Estate* that drew on the books by Domscheit-Berg as well as Leigh and Harding. These narratives were in addition to other outputs with more or less direct collaboration with WikiLeaks members. This includes Laura Poitras’s film *Risk*. Another set of notable collaborative publications included “Julian Assange’s” *Julian Assange: The Unauthorised Autobiography* (2011) as well as its ghostwriters’ version of the story behind this quasi-autobiography behind the story (O’Hagan 2014).

In seeking to make previously undisclosed considerations known, each story behind the story intertextually traded on there having been something absent from previous coverage. Much of this novelty related to the “texture, nuance, and drama” (Keller 2011:18)—definitely drama—of personalities and events. This included the cloak-and-dagger intrigue of the dealings between newspaper organizations and Julian Assange, the perception of power and paranoia that developed with the handling of thousands upon thousands of classified documents, the manner in which WikiLeaks as a fledgling organization projected an inflated image of itself to the world, the practices by which journalists both hoard and share data, the manner in which WikiLeaks internally descended into a personality cult, and so forth.

More relevant to the themes of this article, the inside stories also unsettled the factual status of what had been claimed in 2010 by organizations collaborating in the release of the logs and cables. For instance, accounts of the story of the leaks by staff from the *Guardian* and the *New York Times* cited numerous limitations to the logs and cables, arguably in a starker and more extended manner than in their 2010 news reports. The cables, for instance, were said not only to be subject to qualification about their reliability but also to be restricted in the overall picture they painted because “top secret” or higher-classified cables were not in the set of documents WikiLeaks obtained (Keller 2011:14). In addition, the cables’ authors were deemed to have agendas—to impress others, to promote their views, and to ensure their jobs—so that what was written should not be taken at face value (Leigh and Harding 2011:143–144). And yet, such failings mixed in a seemingly tension ridden way with the refrain also given in these stories behind the stories that the cables themselves provided “an unprecedented look at back-room bargaining by embassies around the world, brutally candid views of foreign leaders and frank assessments of nuclear and terrorist threats” (Shane and Lehren 2010:54).

Such problems also sat seemingly uneasily with the inclusion of numerous reproduced cables for readers to pour over without instruction, qualification, or context in *WikiLeaks* and *Open Secrets*.

As another instance of how the inside stories unsettled what had been made known previously, one of the *Guardian*’s reporters (Simon Rogers) was quoted by colleagues in *WikiLeaks* as stating in relation to the Afghan War Diary that, “In future, data journalism may not seem amazing and new; for now it is. The world has changed and it is data that has changed it” (Leigh and Harding 2011:107). As the authors of *WikiLeaks* went on, “One obvious opportunity was to obtain genuine statistics of casualties for the first time. But to do so Rogers and his reporter colleagues had to grapple with realities on the military ground: those realities made apparently enticing datasets into dirty and unreliable statistics” (107). This unreliability was the result of realities such as the filling in of the logs by units to varying degrees and manners; the difficulties of counting deaths in combat situations; and the belief that combatant death counts were sometimes exaggerated and civilian ones intentionally undercounted. As a result, the authors of *WikiLeaks* then contended:

So it was a tricky task to produce statistics that could be claimed to have real value. That highlighted once again the inescapable limitations of the purist WikiLeaks ideology. The material that resided in leaked documents, no matter how voluminous, was not “the truth.” It was just often a signpost pointing to some truth, requiring careful attention. (Leigh and Harding 2011:108)

Just how statistics with real value could be produced from unreliable statistics by reporters was not elaborated in *WikiLeaks*, though. What *WikiLeaks* made even less certain was how readers of the *Guardian* invited by Simon Rogers to download Excel spreadsheets back in 2010 (as noted above) could have advanced the state of knowledge given the limitations said to be recognized at the time of the Afghan War Diary releases by those at the newspaper.

In certain respects, the stories behind the stories queried expertise in a way missing in 2010 news reports by the collaborating organizations under scrutiny in this article. The prominence in places attached to the journalistic role in making sense of the leaked material—of what otherwise would be an “incomprehensible mass data dump” (Leigh and Harding 2011:143–144) 

8. For another instance of how the leaks were said to only signal truth, including by Julian Assange, see Hermann and Moreira (2011).
9. For a later analysis by a collaborating partner, see Iraq Body Count (2010).
be rendered both visible and invisible. Central to this has been of disclosure and expertise. Kuntsman and Stein (2015) criti
cased together in and between news reports, documentaries,
opposite poles against which the leaks should be measured, I
tence, immediacy and mediacy, or disclosure and concealment as
different appreciation. Rather than treating absence and pres-
back of the releases over time, this article has offered a

While such comments queried others’ reporting, largely
absent from the stories behind the stories were self-directed
concerns. This was perhaps most vivid in relation to Wiki
Leaks. This book chronicled the newspaper’s initial engage-
ments, strained collaborations, and eventual estrangement from
Julian Assange and WikiLeaks. In addition to being the au-
thors of WikiLeaks, both David Leigh and Luke Harding
played significant but ambiguous roles in the unfolding events
retold. The book was written in a narrative third person format
where actions by these two reporter-authors were discussed in
just the same way as others in the “Cast of Characters” list
provided at the start of the book (Leigh and Harding 2011:vi).n
The authors were even quoted (by themselves) in a journalistic
third person fashion as offering eyewitness accounts of what
happened. This narrative format was employed without atten-
tion to what this “self-reporting reporting” implied for the status
and bounds of what was written in this story behind the stories.

Thus, while the stories behind the stories provided occa-
sions for reconsidering what the leaks made available, this
was done in circumscribed ways in relation to previous news
reports. This meant claims about the logs and cables could be
made anew without being encumbered by the need to square
them with what was written back in 2010 by the same indi-
viduals.

Openings

With its roots in Enlightenment ideals about the power of
information and the corrosiveness of secrecy, the leaking of
documents is one common strategy for exposing the maneu-
verings of statecraft. In this spirit, the 2010 releases by Wiki
Leaks have been praised by some scholars for realizing the
virtuous goals of transparency (e.g., Pieterse 2012; Springer
et al. 2012). In contrast, by attending the varied claims made
on the back of the releases over time, this article has offered a
different appreciation. Rather than treating absence and pres-
ence, immediacy and mediacy, or disclosure and concealment as
opposite poles against which the leaks should be measured, I
have asked how claims to both aspects of the pairings got
packaged together in and between news reports, documentaries,
and biographies.

Related themes have been prevalent in other examinations
of disclosure and expertise. Kuntsman and Stein (2015) crit-
ically examined how social media have enabled militarism to
be rendered both visible and invisible. Central to this has been

the manner in which new media forms help make militarism
instantly available and yet banal. Wider than militarism itself,
Coopmans’s (2014) notion of “artful revelation” signaled the
manner in which the promotion of data visualization software
situationally traded on both the contention that this tool enabled
patterns in data to be brought into sight while also making
germane the need for skills, experience, and understanding to
interpret visual analytics which, in turn, put the realization of
real benefits of the software just out of the purview of would-be
users.

In a similar vein of elaborating how expectations, belief,
and skepticism come bundled together in what gets seen,
Smith (2015) charted the rise of “modern” forms of conjuring
entertainment magic in the nineteenth and twentieth centu-
ries. Central to this type of magic was the shift away from elab-
orate stage props, dim lighting, and other devices that signaled
the likely basis for deceptive effects—a move demanded by the
increasing scientific sophistication of audiences. In its place,
a naturalistic and realistic pretense emerged in which the appa-
ratuses, props, and costumes for magic were presented as simple,
ordinary, and minimalistic. Through this, audiences to acts un-
understood as deceptive became engrossed, but not only because
the methods and mechanisms of trickery were concealed from
their sight. A second-order concealment took place whereby
spectators were made “confident that they had seen all they
needed to see” (Smith 2015:325) about the apparatuses, props,
and costumes being used due to their simplicity. Thus, what was
striven for by magicians was the production of “empty boxes” in
which secret mechanisms were both rendered absent and seen
to be absent.

Such studies suggest the importance of attending to the pat-
tern of discursive and other movements that constitute efforts
to make matters known as well as the basis for the affective pull
of what is (not) shown. By way of undertaking this exercise in
the case of WikiLeak—and thereby informing a more general
understanding of how secrecy, revelation, and openness can be
bound together in understanding militarism—I will offer an
alternative box analogy. This one speaks to how the promise of
what the logs and cables might offer was able to be reconsti-
tuted through prior claims made about what they revealed.

At one level, collaborating organizations widely presented
the leaking of the logs and cables as efforts to open the lid on
a hidden world. With such a container metaphor for the truth
(as in Lakoff and Johnson 1980), revealing is a matter of trying
to pry open what was previously locked away. As suggested in
the third and fourth sections, though, in important respects the
cables and logs on their own were also treated as varyingly
insufficient—at least at times. This insufficiency demanded
something further—additional skill, investigation, context,
etc.—and this meant that finding out the truth was presented
as more or less possible, more or less successfully accom-
plished, and so on.

Overall, then, the logs and cables were treated in multiple
and seemingly tension-ridden ways vis-à-vis what their dis-

This article has attended to a prior set of issues than those centered on the usefulness of leaked documents, namely, how leaks get positioned as making understanding available. More than just a debate about what should be on display, this analysis has entailed posing questions about what had been put on display. I have suggested how the standing of the documents was subject to much negotiation in practice, even sometimes within accounts that otherwise prominently contended that they provided a graphic, unspun, and insightful window into statecraft. In making sense of the logs and cables, commentators forwarded notions of what was missing from our understanding of the world, what was missing or lacking from the leaked material, and what was missing or lacking from the coverage of it.

In contrast to settling what the logs and cables really told us, this article has asked how appeals to varieties of expertise accompanied and accomplished the interpretations of the leaks. While thereby calling into question the relatively narrow matter of the potential of these specific leaked documents to speak the truth, the argument has opened the far more expansive concern of how expertise and authority are constituted as part of making claims about statecraft. This recognition of contingency therefore offers the prospect that expertise can be remade. This is important because claims about what the leaked material showed laid the foundations for arguments about what modern statecraft is like and thereby the prospects for change. Claims about what the leaked material could show likewise posited who could define those realities and possibilities.

Another related implication of the analysis is to draw attention to how the mystique surrounding knowledge of statecraft is perpetuated through leaking. The Latin root for the English word “secret,” secretus, means “to separate” or “set apart.” Those in positions of authority in the state and elsewhere often seek to set themselves apart from others through noting their access to information, and so effect a form of mystification (see the article by Lutz in this issue [2019]). As a supplement to such lessons, this argument has suggested how mystification can be reproduced by those striving to expose militarism.

Thus, when seeking to reckon with militarism, it is important not only to attend to the assumptions guiding its practices but the assumptions guiding scholarly, professional, and popular analyses of it. Stated in general terms, a pitfall is how what is revealed—often by virtue of having been revealed—can take on solidity. When gripped too tightly, though, the potential for learning and insight can turn into a stultifying fixation. The treatment of certain information as unassailable goes hand in hand with the refutation of other possibilities, the closing down of inquiry, the carpeting over of inconsistencies, and the formation of hegemonic thinking. In short, seeking to grab hold can result in a slipping away.

The fixations I am alluding to relate not only to what has been grasped but also to the compulsion to grasp. As noted above, and echoing themes from elsewhere (Daston and Galison 2007; Hadot 2008), attempts at revealing the truth of statecraft often
presuppose or advance distinctions between surface and depth (see, as well, Nelson [2009]). The need to open a closed box, to get beneath the surface, or to “bring out into the light” hidden workings of the state are infused with expectations, investments, and affects. We pull toward what has been, or is being, revealed. That pull can make us insensitive to the assumptions that drive our seeking. As a result, just as militarism comes with gross and subtle commitments that need to be scrutinized, so too do attempts to reveal its inner workings. In attending to the dynamics of how leaked material gets positioned, this article supports the case that contending with the colonizing aspects of militarism requires not only investigation of the premises of militaristic projects but also inquiry into the premises guiding our endeavors.

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Militarism and militarization have inspired opposition for millennia. In the post–World War II era, dozens of social movements challenging the existence and operation of US and other foreign (extraterritorial) military bases have provided a prominent example of antimilitarization activism. Movements from Okinawa, Japan, and Jeju, South Korea, to Vieques, Puerto Rico, and Vicenza, Italy, have struggled to close existing bases, stop the construction of new bases, and reduce or eliminate the harms that bases frequently inflict on local communities. This article reviews the history and effects of antibase movements, including recent efforts to create a global “No Bases” movement. While these movements have achieved varying degrees of success and had complicated impacts at individual, local, national, and global scales, this article shows that antibase movements collectively have been important actors in international geopolitics, with significant global influence. Specifically, movements have disrupted everyday military operations and reshaped the global deployment of US bases abroad. Antibase movements thus provide an example of how antimilitarization movements can check, slow, and in some cases reverse militarization—although militarization can continue after base closures. The article concludes with seven tentative hypotheses explaining why some antibase movements are more successful than others in achieving their stated aims.

In 1991 and 1992, the people of the Philippines forced the military of their former colonial ruler and the world’s only remaining superpower, the United States, to leave the two largest overseas US military bases. The US military had made Subic Bay Naval Base and Clark Air Base into the hub of its power in East Asia in the years following the seizure of the Philippines in the 1898 war with Spain. After granting independence to the Philippines in 1946, the United States kept the country in a state of neocolonial subordination by pressuring the former colony into granting a 99-year rent-free lease on 23 bases and military installations. At Subic Bay, Clark, and elsewhere, the United States effectively continued formal colonial rule, maintaining sovereignty as well as control over Filipino workers, criminal prosecutions, taxation, and the city of Olongapo, adjacent to Subic Bay.

After a people’s movement overthrew the United States’ authoritarian client President Ferdinand Marcos in 1986, an antibase movement pressured the Philippines Senate into refusing to renew a US base agreement expiring in 1991. The country’s newly drafted constitution banned foreign military bases. Less than 18 months after the June 1991 volcanic eruption of Mount Pinatubo badly damaged Clark Air Base, US bases and thousands of US troops were gone (Apostol 2012; Yeo 2011).

Since World War II, the United States has had a historically unprecedented collection of military bases on other countries’ soil. These extraterritorial bases have been a key, if oft overlooked, part of the world’s most powerful military force, along with the US nuclear arsenal and conventional forces. Still, the power of the US military has never been unchallengeable. The movement to remove the US military from the Philippines is just one of many social movements worldwide that have “shown that a protest campaign focusing on stopping military activities can force the US military to leave a place they wanted to stay” (Davis 2011:219). Austria, Morocco, Trinidad, Libya, France, Ethiopia, Iran, Spain, Saudi Arabia, Ecuador, and Vieques, Puerto Rico, are a few of the more than 30 countries and territories in the post–World War II era where social movements led by ordinary citizens and, in some cases, politicians have forced the US military to close a base, blocked the construction or expansion of an installation, or won significant restrictions on base operations. (An extensive list of antibase movements, including basic information about movement composition, dates active, notable tactics, degree of success, and other outcomes, is available at https://bit.ly/2CUMcUg. I compiled the list for this article and have opened it to crowdsourced editing online [cf. Pettyjohn and Kavanagh 2016].)
Figure 1. Map of US military bases outside the 50 US states and Washington, DC, as of 2015 (Vine 2015).
Antibase movements have generally faced long odds because of the gaping power imbalances between most movements and the government, corporate, and elite actors arrayed in support of a foreign base presence (see fig. 3). Unsurprisingly, movements have achieved varying degrees of success. Some have struggled for decades with mixed results. For example, perhaps the world’s best-known antibase movement, in Okinawa, Japan, has failed to remove the most controversial US base there, almost 25 years after three US military personnel horrifically raped a 12-year-old, catapulting a decades-old movement into the international spotlight.

Scholars disagree about the relative significance of antibase movements and how much power they have to close, block, or otherwise constrain foreign bases. There is clear agreement that since the last years of the Cold War, US and other foreign bases have become increasingly embattled (Calder 2007), the subject of contentious debate in countries where foreign bases are found (Calder 2007; Harkavy 1989, 2007). However, some scholars suggest that movements have rarely shaped policy makers’ basing decisions (e.g., Cooley 2008; Kawato 2015; Yeo 2011). Others find that antibase movements have caused serious local challenges for military officials (Calder 2007), shaped the policy decisions of host nation and US elites, altered the geography of US military deployments, and “handcuffed American freedom of military action” (e.g., Bitar 2016; Davis 2011: 215, 223; Holmes 2014).

This article tries to contribute to this discussion while taking a broader view than most to consider the wide-ranging effects of antibase movements—beyond the question of whether a base is closed or other movement demands are met. The article draws on 17 years of research about foreign military bases and their global impacts (e.g., Vine 2009, 2015), including participant observation and archival and interview-based research in 14 countries and territories. Here, I focus on my research with antibase and some probase movements, as well as research about military strategists’ reactions to antibase opposition since the 1950s. I focus on antibase movements challenging US bases abroad because the vast majority of foreign base social movements have emerged in the post–World War II era and challenged US bases, which have accounted for the vast majority of the world’s extraterritorial bases.

Examining the history of antibase movements below, I conclude that such movements have had significant political-economic, military, and sociocultural impact at different scales ranging from the individual to the global. While different antibase movements have had different kinds of effects, with differing degrees of depth and breadth, movements have impacted:

1. people living in communities affected by foreign bases, including movement members;
2. other antibase movements internationally;
3. local, national, and international political-economic relations; and
4. US basing strategy and military operations.

Because military bases are a powerful material and symbolic manifestation of militarization, antibase movements are a useful example of an antimilitarization movement—a social movement that in some way challenges everyday military operations, the political-economic and sociocultural process of militarization, and/or ideologies of militarism. As the history of military bases has demonstrated, foreign bases have been and continue to be a matter of concern for people in host countries and around the world.

1. I conducted research in Ecuador, El Salvador, Germany, Guam (Guåhan), Guantánamo Bay, Honduras, Italy, Japan, Mauritius, Northern Mariana Islands, Seychelles, South Korea, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Like all scholars, I am not unbiased. I began my work around military bases in August 2001, after lawyers representing the Chagossian people, exiled during the creation of the US base on Diego Garcia, asked me to document the effects of the Chagossians’ expulsion on their lives. After completing additional research about the history of Diego Garcia (Vine 2009), I began ethnographic research about the broad impacts of US bases abroad (e.g., Vine 2015). Antibase movements and some probase groups have been the source of interviewees, research data, and broader access to communities in most of my research sites. Like other scholars, I have spoken about my research to social movement organizations, including when invited to speak at antibase events. I have participated in and, at times, helped organize networks of scholars, activists, and others critical of foreign bases. This work has included helping to organize speaking tours for antibase activists, a 2009 national conference on US bases abroad, two online conferences linking movements globally, a US Chagossian support group, and a bipartisan group of US analysts concerned about bases abroad.

2. This article focuses on social movements that challenge foreign rather than domestic bases. The article does not completely exclude domestic base movements but adopts this common distinction because: (1) movements challenging foreign bases have defined themselves by their opposition to a foreign military presence, (2) these movements have built distinct connections and networks, with implications for other social movements and militarization, and (3) extraterritorial bases raise questions about sovereignty and imperialism that domestic bases generally do not.

3. Following Catherine Lutz (2002), I define militarization as a process through which the military, war, and preparations for war become increasingly important in a society, especially through increased societal spending on the military and war making. As Lutz says, militarization is a “process involving an intensification of the labor and resources allocated to military purposes . . . [and] a shift in general societal beliefs and values in ways necessary to legitimate the use of force, the organization of large standing armies and their leaders” (2002:723). Lutz shows how militarization has two central dimensions: (1) the material economic and political dimension, involving increased spending and labor allocation for the military and war making, and (2) the social, cultural, and ideological dimension, involving transformations in values, feelings, and societal ideas about the military and war.

4. Antimilitarization movements include, but are not synonymous with, movements for peace or nonviolence. Indeed some antimilitarization movements are narrowly opposed to some but not all kinds of military activities, warfare, or weaponry (e.g., chemical warfare, torture, cluster munitions, nuclear weapons). The range of antimilitarization movements across time and place is immense. They include movements over millennia to stop wars; anticonscription movements; feminist movements against militarization; movements against military recruiting of youth or the use of child soldiers; movements against war crimes targeting women and other vulnerable groups; movements demanding reductions in military spending or the conversion of weapons manufacturing into civilian pro-
below will show, antibase movements have, at times, slowed, checked, and in some cases rolled back militarization at national, regional, and global levels. While military and civilian leaders have found ways to circumvent antibase movements, these movements, like other antimilitarization movements, have challenged militarization materially and ideologically.

Antibase Movements

It is important to explain what antibase movements are and what they are not: contrary to some popular portrayals, most movements challenging US bases overseas are not anti-American in the sense of being opposed to US citizens and all things from the United States. When the iconic phrase “Yankee go home” is used at protests, it almost always refers to US military personnel and not to all US citizens. In Vicenza, Italy, and elsewhere, for example, protesters often emphasize that their opposition is not motivated by anti-Americanism (e.g., Benjamin 2007).

Generally speaking, most antibase movements are also not antimilitary in the sense of being opposed to soldiers, armies, and all things military. While some movements and parts of movements self-identify as pacifist, nonviolent, or philosophically opposed to militaries, antibase movements often have a structural critique that views rank-and-file military personnel as victims of the same system that subjects people living near foreign bases to their negative effects (Davis 2011).

Antibase movements are not synonymous with antiwar movements, although the lines between the two often “become blurred” (Holmes 2014:26). In some cases, the term “antibase movement” is something of a misnomer when movements are not opposed to a base’s existence or calling for its closure. Many are asking for greater environmental protections, the reduction of aircraft noise, the return of land, or the accountability for crimes committed by troops. I use the term “antibase movement” because it is widely used by movement members and scholars and because such movements, strictly speaking, are “anti-” in the sense that they are opposed to some aspect of the life of a base or its personnel.5

Most movements have primarily employed forms of nonviolent protest. Some have employed violent tactics or force. These fall along a spectrum including breaching base fences, tampering with utilities and other base infrastructure, destruction of military property, rock throwing, pushing and low-level scuffles with local police, kidnappings, bombings, and other armed attacks.

Some explicitly militant movements, such as al-Qaeda and al-Shabaab, have declared the removal of a foreign military presence as a primary goal. The presence of US bases in the Muslim holy lands of Saudi Arabia was a major recruiting tool for al-Qaeda and part of Osama bin Laden’s professed motivation for the September 11, 2001, attacks (Glain 2011). In 2003, US forces officially withdrew from Saudi Arabia in the aftermath of the 2001 attacks and the prior attacks dating to 1996. In Iraq, the removal of US and other occupation forces was the primary aim of the Islamic State’s predecessor organizations, Jama’at al-Tawhid wa’al-Jihad and al-Qaeda in Iraq (Mapping Militant Organizations 2017). In Somalia, al-Shabaab has grown into a major militant force in large part because it has organized opposition to Ethiopian, UN, African Union, and other occupying foreign forces (Mapping Militant Organizations 2016).

A Short History of Foreign Bases

Today, a small group of countries have foreign military bases: in addition to the United States, Russia, Britain, France, and Turkey each have a handful of extraterritorial bases. China, Japan, and a few other countries each have one. The United States currently maintains around 800 military bases6 outside the 50 states and Washington, DC, which means that the United States possesses around 90%–95% of the world’s foreign bases (Vine 2015). According to Pentagon figures (US Department of Defense 2018), most “base sites” are in Germany (194), Japan (121), South Korea (83), and Italy (44). Other bases for air, ground, and naval forces, as well as missile deployments, drones, communications, and other functions, are scattered around the globe in places such as Ascension Island, Australia, Bahrain, Bulgaria, Colombia, Kyrgyzstan, and Qatar, among others. In total, the US military now has bases in approximately 80 countries and territories (Vine 2015).

From the ancient empires of China, Egypt, and Rome to the European empires of Britain, France, and Spain, military bases have been a foundation for the control of foreign lands and foreign peoples (Gillem 2007:3; Harkavy 1989, 2007; Lutz 2009:7–8). The United States is no exception. While many scholars date the creation of the first US bases abroad to the...
seizure of Guantánamo Bay during the 1898 Spanish-American War, more than 250 frontier forts helped enable the seizure of foreign, Native American territory across North America (Lutz 2009:10). After 1898, the United States built bases beyond its shores in the Philippines, Puerto Rico, Guam, Cuba, and Hawaii. In the early twentieth century, the US military established scores more bases during frequent interventions in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as in Europe during World War I. After temporary occupations, almost all these bases closed.

During World War II, the United States developed history’s first truly global network of bases. By war’s end, US bases were found from Trinidad and Brazil to Burma and India, Portugal, Iceland, Greenland, and the Northern Marianas. By 1945, the United States occupied more than 30,000 installations at more than 2,000 base sites globally (Blaker 1990:9, 23; Monthly Review editors 2002).

After the war, the military left about half these bases but maintained a “permanent institution” of bases abroad (Stambuk 1963:9). Never before were so many US troops stationed permanently overseas. Never before had a power built so many bases of such a size that they soon resembled fully fledged US towns on other people’s lands.

During the Cold War, the number of US bases abroad fluctuated. The base network expanded significantly to facilitate US-led wars in Korea and Southeast Asia and contracted after active combat ended. Regional base networks developed in Central America and the Middle East in the 1980s (Blaker 1990:32; Stambuk 1963:9).

The Soviet Union had a much smaller collection of foreign bases during the Cold War, along with the United Kingdom and France, which retained bases in their remaining colonies. Other than bases in Cuba and Syria, most Soviet installations were in Eastern Europe (Birchard 1991:48; Harkavy 1989, 2007). Like its US counterpart, the Soviet military was forced to close some foreign bases during the Cold War, including in Somalia and Egypt (Gerson 1991). As the Soviet Union dissolved, Soviet troops left foreign bases in Eastern Europe and Asia (although the Russian military remained in, or soon returned to, a small number of foreign bases in Syria and some former Soviet republics).

For its part, following the Cold War’s end, the US military vacated around 60% of its foreign bases (US Department of Defense 2004:5). Despite the quantitative reductions, the same basic basing infrastructure remained in place and soon began to expand again. After the start of the US wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the military significantly expanded its base presence in the greater Middle East. It has also closed significant numbers of bases in Europe and consolidated forces at a smaller number of increasingly large bases in Japan and South Korea. Dozens of relatively small, secretive “lily pad” bases—implying a frog jumping toward its prey and used for special forces, drones, and training local troops—have appeared across parts of Africa, in central and eastern Europe, and in other regions that previously had little or no US military presence.

A History of Antibase Movements

There is good reason to believe that nearly everywhere across history where foreign bases have existed, they have generated anger, opposition, and protest of some kind. Foreign bases, by definition, “involve the presence of one nation’s military on another nation’s soil,” writes bases expert Kent Calder, and they “are almost invariably unpopular for that reason” (2007:9).

Other sources of antibase opposition are similarly unsurprising around the globe and across time: the displacement of locals from their lands; crimes committed by military personnel; traffic and training accidents causing death, injury, and property damage; sex work and red-light district bars aimed at military personnel outside bases’ gates; the support bases provide for dictators and undemocratic regimes; and environmental damage caused by everyday military operations (e.g., Enloe 2014; Gerson and Birchard 1991; Gillem 2007; Lutz 2009; Vine 2015; Yeo 2011).

Much as Okinawan activists do today, locals in Boston kept a running list of the robberies, murders, and rapes committed by British redcoats before the American Revolution (Rae 2012). The stationing of foreign troops in the 13 colonies was one of the abuses listed in the US Declaration of Independence: “He has kept among us, in times of peace, standing armies without the consent of our legislatures,” and “quarter[ed] large bodies of armed troops.”

For decades following independence, US Army forts occupying Native Americans’ lands provoked anger and violent resistance across the continent. The US military faced opposition and an insurgency seeking independence almost immediately after seizing the Philippines in 1898 (Lutz 2009:34). Soon, Cuban leaders were protesting the terms of the 1903 lease that the US government imposed on its de facto colony for “complete jurisdiction and control” over 45 square miles of Guantánamo Bay (Lipman 2008:23–24; Schwab 2009). Throughout the early twentieth century, Latin American governments and peoples developed lasting antagonisms toward the United States as a result of US soldiers and marines occupying Latin American countries’ soil, often for years, following invasions in Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Costa Rica, El Salvador, and the Dominican Republic.

Other anticolonial movements worldwide have often been antibase movements of a kind, with the presence of foreign troops and abuses committed by those troops frequently

7. Like any history, this one is partial. I focus on particularly influential and illustrative antibase movements. I have surely neglected many other important movements for reasons of space or my own oversight.
8. Tellingly, the “lease” had no termination date and prevented the Cuban government from evicting its tenant. It effectively meant the cession of Cuban territory. The United States agreed to pay a yearly fee of US$2,000. Under Fidel Castro, Cuba’s government stopped cashing checks that now total around US$4,000; for years, they apparently went directly into Castro’s desk (see Lipman 2008:23–24; Schwab 2009).
Figure 2. Map of major bases closed or blocked and selected contemporary antibase movements, as of 2015 (Vine 2015).
inspiring anticolonial struggles. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the military occupation of colonized lands generated opposition and rebellion from Britain India (Gillem 2007:5) and French Indochina to Soviet-controlled Afghanistan. After World War I, French bases and the deliberate deployment of French African colonial soldiers in occupied Germany generated resentments that helped fuel the Nazi rise (Höhn 2002:89).

The Emergence of Contemporary Antibase Movements

Facing the conquest and occupation of foreign lands by Germany, Japan, and Italy, the United States framed World War II as an anticolonial struggle, pledging to assist with decolonization upon war’s end. The creation of the United Nations (UN) enshrined the decolonization process and rights to self-determination and self-government. Although many allied countries welcomed US troops to bases on their soil during the war, some, such as Iceland, began requesting the return of bases and the removal of US forces soon after the war’s conclusion (Holmes 2014). Many labor unions and left-wing political parties, especially in Europe and Latin America, generally opposed any foreign bases. For its part, the US military was eager to keep as many bases as possible worldwide and worked with mixed success to secure basing rights from Greenland to the Portuguese Azores to Ecuador’s Galápagos.

In 1955, US troops, along with Soviet and other foreign forces, were forced to withdraw from bases in Austria as part of the declaration of Austrian neutrality, which included a constitutional ban on foreign bases. As the decolonization movement gained momentum in the 1950s and 1960s, newly independent nations evicted the United States from a string of bases in former British and French colonies including Trinidad, Morocco, and later Libya. France, Britain, and other declining European empires were also forced to give up most of their overseas bases as a result of anticolonial wars, peaceful opposition, and no longer being able to afford bases and troops far from home (see Calder 2007:100–101). In 1966, the French government of Charles de Gaulle ended the occupation of French soil when de Gaulle ordered all US and other North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces to withdraw from at least 12 significant bases in France within a year, as part of the country’s withdrawal from the NATO command structure.

Where US bases remained during the Cold War, the relationship between the installations and citizens of countries where the bases were located was, as base expert Amy Holmes says, “inherently contradictory” (2014:6). Until World War II, foreign bases “existed almost exclusively in the context of formal empire,” imposed through the occupation of others’ lands (Calder 2007:8). Although the United States has been an empire occupying Native American lands with military bases since independence, its post–World War II collection of foreign bases has been distinguished by the fact that most national governments have, to one degree or another, consented to the country’s presence. With the exception of the occupation of Germany, Japan, Italy, and Austria, Cuba’s Guantánamo Bay, and US colonies and UN “trust territories” (i.e., temporary colonies), most foreign governments had effectively forfeited a state’s “monopoly on the legitimate use of force” by allowing US bases and troops on their territory (citing Weber, Holmes 2014:6). After US bases remained in Germany, Japan, and Italy following the end of their formal occupation, their governments also technically forfeited the monopoly on the use of violence. Importantly, however, this consent has come in a context of often gaping power disparities, where US officials have used US dominance, forms of political-economic coercion, and fears of the Soviet Union (at times, intentionally inflated) to ensure national governments consented to a US base presence.

Despite the popular reputation of the United States as the liberator in World War II and the protector in the Cold War, “opposition to the US military presence arose both when and where it was least expected” (Holmes 2014:11). Despite economic opportunities for locals in the form of on-base employment, contracting opportunities, and customers for local businesses,” opposition broadened over time as the contradiction of US bases abroad became impossible to ignore: even in the best of situations, in democratically ruled host countries, where “the host population may be fully enfranchised citizens,” says Holmes, “they are at the same time disenfranchised by the US presence. They have virtually no say in what the United States does on their territory, U.S. officials are not elected, and only rarely are U.S. personnel tried in local courts for any crimes they may commit.” In other words, locals were “being subjected to a foreign military presence that operated outside the realm of democracy” (Holmes 2014:6).

In the nations conquered during the war, relations between the occupiers and the occupied were mixed. While the early years of occupation created fond memories for many Germans of GIs, Hershey bars, jazz, and big US cars (Höhn 2002), tensions and complaints quickly multiplied, especially around crimes and soldiers’ romantic and sexual relations with German women (Willoughby 2001). Although attitudes about US troops grew worse in the Vietnam War era, organized antibase movements have remained relatively small in Germany.

In Japan, two similar images of the United States predominated after the war: on the one hand, jazz, fashion, and other status items; on the other, GI crime, environmental pollution, and people dispossessed by bases (Wright 2017:134). In Okinawa, scattered protests broke out against land seizures and US occupation within months of the war’s end (Cooley 2008:147). Tensions burst into public consciousness across the whole of Japan in 1956 at Tachikawa Air Base in the Tokyo suburb of Sunagawa. The announcement that the Japanese government...
would be expropriating local land to expand Tachikawa Air Base on behalf of the US Air Force led to years of large protests featuring “pitched battles” between protestors and Japanese police in “bloody Sunagawa” (Wright 2017:136). The protests “very nearly upended the US-Japan military relationship” and “threatened the heart of American military policy in East Asia” (Wright 2017:137, 136). US officials ultimately decided the expansion was more trouble than it was worth. After two decades of protest, the US Air Force moved its operations to nearby Yokota Air Base and transferred Tachikawa to the Japanese Self-Defense Forces (Wright 2017:136–137).

Inspired in part by Sunagawa, antibase sentiment intensified in Okinawa in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s amid a series of deadly accidents and crimes committed by GIs, the war in Vietnam, and missteps by heavy-handed US occupation officials (Cooley 2008:147–149; Vine 2015:261–268). In 1970, a spontaneous uprising broke out in Okinawa in response to two late-night traffic accidents involving US military personnel. On an island where protests are usually formal, orderly, and relatively quiet, the burning of around 80 military vehicles and three buildings on base reflected long-simmering tensions.

When the United States finally returned Okinawa to Japanese sovereignty in 1972, the military shifted more of its base presence from Japan’s main islands to what remains its poorest and most marginalized prefecture. US officials hoped to shield the military from the kinds of protests seen in places like Tokyo’s Sunagawa and in other big host cities. In Turkey, for example, US bases were the source of intense national controversy throughout the 1960s and 1970s, prompting protests that drew thousands, strikes by base employees, extremist bombings and kidnappings, and the withdrawal of US troops from all but two bases in 1975 (Cooley 2008; Holmes 2014). Elsewhere in these turbulent decades, the US military was forced to vacate bases in Taiwan, Ethiopia, and Iran, after the fall of the US-backed Shah.

Transnational Connections

During the 1980s, the deployment of US–nuclear-tipped cruise missiles in Europe gave birth to some of the Cold War’s largest and broadest antimilitary movements. Many of the movements were simultaneously antibase movements calling for the removal of nuclear weapons and base closure. (Antinuclear movements in the Pacific and Indian Oceans were likewise sparked by the use of island nuclear test sites in the former and the development of the nuclear-capable US base on British-controlled Diego Garcia in the latter.)

The most prominent movement in Europe and internationally was likely the permanent “Women’s Peace Camp” at the US base in Greenham Common, England. Starting in 1981, women regularly blocked the base’s gates, slowed military operations, and cut through the fence line to interrupt military exercises. In December 1982, approximately 30,000 women came to Greenham Common to link hands around the base’s perimeter (Laware 2004). The following spring, 70,000 people created a 14-mile human chain linking the base to British nuclear weapons labs in Burghfield and Aldermaston. In late 1983, 50,000 women brought down part of the fence (Lortie 2000).

The women’s camp survived numerous eviction efforts by British officials and outlived both the removal of the cruise missiles near the Cold War’s end and the departure of US forces in 1993. The peace camp closed in September 2000 amid preparations to transform the base into a public park, business center, and arts complex (Laware 2004).16 The Greenham women’s occupation became a model and icon for feminists and other peace and antibase activists worldwide. The camp inspired similar protests and occupations at Comiso, Italy; Pine Gap, Australia; and outside the Seneca Falls army depot in New York17 (Krasniewicz 1992). Antibase movements have continued to employ permanent occupation encampments as a central protest tactic from Okinawa to Jeju to Vicenza.

Antibase Movements after the Cold War

As the Cold War was coming to an end, other bases started coming under pressure: for example, movements in Madrid, Rota, and Zaragoza helped push Spain’s government to negotiate for the withdrawal of US forces from the Torrejón suburb of Madrid and Zaragoza (Yeo 2011:186). The removal of Soviet bases and troops from Afghanistan, Mongolia, the former East Germany, and Eastern Europe inspired activists (Gerson 1991:27) and “provided an open door” to call for the closure of US bases in their countries (Yeo 2009:573).

Within a few months of the official dissolution of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991, US troops had withdrawn from the Philippines. By 1999, the military was forced to vacate its bases in Panama as part of the termination of the Panama Canal Zone Treaty. In 2003, movements in both Hawai‘i and Vieques, which have also had colonial or neocolonial relationships with the United States since the late nineteenth century, succeeded in removing US bases after decades of struggle. Hawai‘ian activists, backed by powerful Senator Daniel Inouye, convinced the US Navy to leave Koho‘olawe Island, home to important sacred sites for indigenous Hawaiians. On Puerto Rico’s Vieques island, a decades-old movement of peaceful civil disobedience gained unprecedented national attention after the death of a security guard in a bombing range accident. Longtime activists and powerful New York City-based politicians willing to be arrested together pressured the US Navy to leave a bombing range that had decimated Vieques’s environment since World War II (McCaffrey 2002, 2006).

Since 1995, Okinawa has been home to the most controversial US base presence and the antibase movement that has


consistently generated the most international attention. Despite the power of the movement, the results of the protests in Okinawa have been mixed: the most controversial base, Futenma, which the overwhelming majority of Okinawans want removed, remains operational. The replacement base that the Japanese government has promised to build has spawned its own antibase movement. The US military’s promise to move around 9,000 marines off Okinawa to Guam and other Pacific bases by 2014 has been put off by at least a decade. Between the 1995 rape and 2011, alone, there were reports of at least 23 more rapes and sexual assaults committed by US personnel (Okinawa Women Act against Military Violence 2011:23–25).

Despite years of protest, the status quo has changed little since 1995. In contrast, the US military has returned thousands of acres of land from other bases in Okinawa since 1995, while years of around-the-clock protest has blocked construction of the Futenma replacement base. Maintaining the status quo has also required a great deal of work and financial capital by the Japanese government: to try to appease Okinawans, Tokyo officials have spent billions paying rent to base landowners and building often-unnecessary infrastructure projects, which generally benefit large Tokyo-based construction companies (Cooley 2008:143, 158–159). The Japanese government has also started paying for a significant part of the multibillion-dollar bill to move the marines and build up bases in Guam. As Okinawa illustrates, assessing the success or failure of movements is rarely simple.

Iraq War–Era Movements

Following the 2003 US-led war in Iraq, antibase movements grew in size and strength. Global support for the United States following the attacks of September 11, 2001, had eroded rapidly as millions protested worldwide in 2002 and 2003 to stop the war of US President George W. Bush’s administration. Internationally, tens of thousands of people joined major international human rights organizations, such as Amnesty International, in a campaign to close the prison at the Guantánamo Bay Naval Base, while condemning torture there and at Iraq’s Abu Ghraib military prison (a kind of base).

Meanwhile, vibrant movements against US bases emerged in places where antibase protest was little known. Guam, for example, is known for having some of the highest military enlistment rates in the United States. And yet a movement led mostly by young indigenous Chamorro activists has succeeded in forcing the Pentagon to revise its multibillion dollar buildup plans to move marines from Okinawa. Despite promises about the economic benefits of the buildup, We Are Guåhan (the indigenous Chamorro name for the island) pointed out the dangers of the planned population boom on an island with an already strained infrastructure (Harden 2010:A1, A7; Natividad and Kirk 2010). Collaborating in a lawsuit with the National Trust for Historic Preservation, We Are Guåhan forced the Marines to move the location of a planned shooting range that would have sat atop the remains of a sacred indigenous village and burial ground dating to at least 900 CE. In 2017, Guam’s governor announced his opposition to the buildup.

The city of Vicenza has long been another supportive base host in Italy’s wealthy and strongly conservative northeast. Plans to build a new base at Vicenza’s Dal Molin Airport unexpectedly provoked a surge of protest. Opposition came from an unusually diverse mix of self-identified housewives and businessmen, former 1960s radicals and young anarchists, university students, religious organizations, and pacifists, and disaffected members of the racist, anti-immigrant Northern League party.

The “No Dal Molin” movement gained national and international attention, drawing 50,000–120,000 people to the largest of its protests in a city of just 115,000. Despite the optimism, the base opened in 2013. Still, the movement saved about half of the land originally slated for the base. The mayor declared it a peace park. Many activists were pained by the irony of the name. They are divided about whether this should be considered a partial victory (Vine 2015:292–293).

In South Korea, members of a similar type of movement blocked traffic, put their bodies in front of construction trucks, endured violent treatment by police, and created a years-long permanent encampment to stop the creation of a Korean naval installation on the island of Jeju. Locals, other Korean activists, and international supporters including Gloria Steinem and Noam Chomsky feared the base would destroy a delicate and rare volcanic beachfront, damage farmland and the local community, and contribute to rising military tensions with China. Many suspect the new base is really a US installation (Müller 2011; Ahn 2011). Like Vicenza, the movement ultimately failed to stop the base, which recently became operational.

Elsewhere in South Korea, support for US troops, long credited with protecting the South from communist invasion, had been shaken since an armored vehicle killed two teenage girls during a training exercise in 2002. The country’s largest ever antibase protests followed.

Before the decade was out, hundreds of local villagers and Korean and some international supporters tried and failed to stop the South Korean government from seizing 2,851 acres of farmers’ land as part of the Bush administration’s US$11 billion expansion of Camp Humphreys. The South Korean government used riot police and soldiers to enforce the evictions.

A Global “No Bases” Movement

An international antibases movement was born in the wake of the US-led invasion and occupation of Iraq. In response to the perceived “defeat” of the global antiwar movement due to its inability to stop the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, a group of antibase activists in the antiwar movement started highlighting the connections between bases and war, while connecting anti-

While activists and movements had periodic cross-national contact in the past, there was no unified global antibases movement before 2003. After the end of the Cold War, antibase activists increasingly had begun to share tactics and ideas (Yeo 2009:576), especially given the success in the Philippines. The growing global justice movement, following feminist and anti-nuclear movements, helped antibase activists realize the value of building a unified global movement (Yeo 2009:177, 181).

Two months after the 2003 Iraq invasion, activists created a global campaign to “map, expose, and counter the global military presence of the United States and others who enabled this and other invasions” (van der Zeijden 2010:107). Over the next several years, activists built an international network, mostly through online relationships and a series of World Social Forums and other meetings and conferences from India to Brazil. According to the network’s coordinator, the movement came to include more than 400 organizations (van der Zeijden 2010:106).13


Around 2010, the international network ceased operating formally after funding for the international coordinator’s salary expired (van der Zeijden 2010:109).15 Many activists have since maintained their transnational connections, while focusing on regional subnetworks of movements (Davis 2017b:164; van der Zeijden 2010:109).

Despite its disappearance, the international network appears to have “played an important role” in encouraging Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa to fulfill his promise not to renew the lease on the US base in Manta (Yeo 2011:180). In explaining his decision, President Correa told reporters he would renew the lease on one condition: “They let us put a base in Miami—an Ecuadorian base” (Stewart 2007).

The combination of three broad antibase critiques helped unify activists internationally: activists coalesced around combatting foreign bases because of (1) their role in enabling wars, (2) their antidemocratic violation of local sovereignty, and (3) the damage and harm they inflict on neighboring locals (Davis 2017b; Yeo 2009:573–575, 2011:199). The network also proved flexible enough to include movements and activists who would not or could not publicly subscribe to all three critiques. Far from the not-in-my-backyard (NIMBY) caricature imposed on many antibase movements by some base supporters, the No Bases network sought to build “a transnational ‘not in anyone’s backyard’ movement” (Yeo 2011:200).

The No Bases movement likely deserves at least some credit for at least two other successes: first, when every government in Africa refused to host the headquarters for the newly created US Africa Command in 2007, and second, the Iraqi Parliament’s 2011 decision to reject a Pentagon request to maintain as many as 58 enduring bases in Iraq after the end of the official US occupation.

The Significance of Antibase Movements

Assessing the significance of the global No Bases movement or any individual movement is difficult. Numerous cases show that foreign bases can become major national political issues and shape domestic politics, as in the Philippines, Japan, Italy, Germany, South Korea, Ecuador, Colombia, and Turkey. In some cases, such as in Okinawa (Davis 2011; McCormack and Norimatsu 2012; Vine 2015:277–297; Yeo 2011) and Vicenza (Lanaro 2010; Vine 2015:255–275; Yeo 2011), national governments have fallen in no small part because of their stances on basing issues. Generally, foreign bases only enter into domestic political debate because of social movement activism.

The antibase movement in Sunagawa, Japan, is an example of how a movement can also have “fantastically wide ripples” of social and ideological impact across generations (Wright 2017:137). According to Wright, the “Sunagawa Struggle” became “central to the social history of a nation.” The thinking of lawyers, scholars, activists, and others has been shaped to this day by the iconic protests and a related lawsuit challenging the legality of hosting US bases given the Japanese constitution’s commitment to peace and a nonoffensive military (Wright 2017).

Movements have also clearly influenced one another through the international network and regional and movement-to-movement relationships (e.g., Davis 2017b; Yeo 2009). Visits by members of antibase movements to other anti-base movements, in particular, have helped disseminate tactics, educate international audiences about local struggles, and protect local protesters from police (Davis 2017b:166–168; Lanaro 2010; Wright 2017).

Visits to other movements, according to activists in South Korea, Okinawa, Puerto Rico, Hawai‘i, and Guam, also led to “personal transformations” based on “lasting bonds of solidarity” and the development of a new “critical consciousness” involving an ability to “put their own militarization in context” (Davis 2017b:165–166, 2017a:114–115). As a result of visits, Davis writes (and as I heard in my research), activists “felt less alone in their struggles and more likely to take part in bolder protest actions” (Davis 2017a:114).

Movements have also shaped activists’ identities, provided an outlet for creativity and self- and group-expression, and

13. The combination of three broad antibase critiques helped unify activists internationally: activists coalesced around combatting foreign bases because of (1) their role in enabling wars, (2) their antidemocratic violation of local sovereignty, and (3) the damage and harm they inflict on neighboring locals (Davis 2017b; Yeo 2009:573–575, 2011:199). The network also proved flexible enough to include movements and activists who would not or could not publicly subscribe to all three critiques. Far from the not-in-my-backyard (NIMBY) caricature imposed on many antibase movements by some base supporters, the No Bases network sought to build “a transnational ‘not in anyone’s backyard’ movement” (Yeo 2011:200).

14. The Quito Declaration continued, “Foreign military bases and all other infrastructure used for wars of aggression violate human rights. . . . are instruments of war that entrench militarization, colonialism, imperial policy, patriarchy, and racism.”

15. Funding came from the Transnational Institute, a Netherlands-based leftist think tank.
improved daily life (e.g., Davis 2011:223, 2017b:163–164; Yeo 2009:575, 2011:198–199). Antibase movements are important if for no other reason than that they “give voice to local residents who would otherwise suffer in silence” (Yeo 2011:198–199). Resistance “makes everyday life more tolerable,” Davis notes, while also having “repercussions at other scales” (Davis 2011:223).

Impacts on Basing Strategy and Military Operations

While the effects of antibase movements on national, local, and individual scales are important, movements’ ability to achieve their stated aims—of closing or blocking a base or restricting base operations—is the fundamental question. Scholars have reached no clear consensus about the relative power of movements in basing debates, although scholars’ findings are not necessarily inconsistent. Cooley (2008) generally treats movements as marginal players in “base politics.” Instead, Cooley argues, the most important factors determining whether US bases abroad close or not are the type of regime controlling a host nation government and shifts from one regime to another. Kawato likewise concludes that movements “have limited influence on policy-makers.” On the other hand, Kawato acknowledges that protesters must be part of any analysis, given findings that antibase movements were able to sway policy-makers’ basing decisions in five of 12 cases from Okinawa, the Philippines, and South Korea (2015:6).

Like Kawato, others take something of a middle ground: Calder (2007) argues that antibase protest plays a significant role in basing politics but that national politics, government regime shifts, and historical, demographic, and geographic factors are more important in determining outcomes. Yeo (2011, 2017) finds that antibase movements are but one factor in basing politics, “although, at times, they exert a powerful impact on base policy decisions” (2011:196). According to Yeo, host nation elites and their existing security consensus about national security policy are the most important factor determining the outcome of debates about US bases. On the other hand, when powerful antibase movements have created national debates over basing policy, “host governments occasionally provided limited concessions in an effort to quell protests.” However, Yeo writes, concessions tend to be superficial and come most often when there is a weak elite security consensus. In most cases “a dominant elite consensus favoring a U.S. force presence and strong ties to the United States functioned as a powerful ideological barrier against antibase movements” (Yeo 2011:179).

By contrast, Sebastian Bitar found that movements in Latin America had more power to influence basing decisions. Since the late 1990s, when increased democratization spread through the region, “Latin American domestic opposition groups,” as well as the courts and national constitutions, have become “important mechanisms to block the establishment [and maintenance] of formal US bases” (Bitar 2016:176).

Like Bitar, Amy Holmes (2014) found that antibase movements in Turkey and Germany posed a significant challenge to the US military, increasing civilian oversight and decreasing the military’s autonomy. Challenging Yeo’s conclusions, Holmes writes that on the one hand, “protest activities were catalysts for changing the level of elite consensus within the host government,” thus influencing basing outcomes. On the other hand, host nation elites were not always determinate: “certain protest activities had a direct impact on the U.S. military presence, and essentially circumvented host-nation elites. . . . At times, U.S. military officials were forced to respond to certain types of unrest and accept restrictions on their ability to operate” (Holmes 2014:14, emphasis in original).

Rather than defining success as whether a base stays or goes, Holmes usefully counters that a base remaining in place “does not necessarily represent a complete failure” (Holmes 2014:28; see also Yeo 2011:198–199). Holmes identifies at least six other kinds of movement success, defined as the ability to “limit the autonomy of the military” or otherwise disrupt its regular operations (Holmes 2014:29, 30). Success includes:

(1) “creating access restrictions or temporary access denials to either territory, airspace, or certain [military] facilities”;
(2) “disrupting access to infrastructure [e.g., utilities]”;
(3) “implementing or enforcing environmental standards that make certain military activities too costly or difficult to conduct, [thus] preventing military expansion or construction projects”;
(4) “shutting down base operations through strikes of civilian base employees”;
(5) “creating shortages by refusing to supply the base with goods and services”; and
(6) “making the U.S. military accountable for its actions” (Holmes 2014:29).

Yeo’s findings echo Holmes’ sixth form of success and identify another:

(7) forcing the United States and a host government “to modify existing base plans” (2011:198–199).

Clear Impact: Changing Military Geography

The clearest indication of the impact of antibase movements is found in the US military’s reaction to antibase opposition. Since early in the post–World War II era, US military and civilian planners have shaped the geography of the global base network because of their fears of the kinds of protest that have led to losing access to bases abroad (Vine 2009). This has resulted in a marked preference for bases in countries ruled by dictators and other undemocratic regimes. From the perspective of US policy makers, Calder explains, dictatorships are preferable to democracies because “base politics operate most smoothly when the mass public is not involved” (2007:116–117). For decades, the fear of antibase protest has also resulted
in a geographic shift: the general movement of bases from populated urban areas to isolated sites insulated from any significant opposition.

This shift has come to fruition most visibly in the lily pad basing strategy, which emerged around the turn of the century. Under this strategy, the Pentagon has been creating small, secretive bases far from population centers and potentially antagonistic locals. The military’s aim has been to acquire a collection of dozens of easily expandable lily pad bases in places with little or no US military presence (Vine 2015:299–319).

“The presence and activities of our forces grate on local populations and have become an irritant for host governments,” former George W. Bush administration Pentagon Secretary Donald Rumsfeld acknowledged (Brown 2006:28). “Wherever possible,” the administration aimed to move bases and troops to “lessen the real and perceived burdens of such situations” (US Department of Defense 2004:7).

In other words, the military is well aware of what officials see as the “problem” of antibase movements and is “taking measures to address it” (Davis 2011:219). In addition to creating lily pads, US officials have responded to antibase organizing by further segregating US forces from locals at a consolidated number of very large, increasingly insular bases to avoid the crimes, accidents, and other tensions that have fueled protest movements.

The motivation for these changes is not generally protecting the well-being of locals; instead, it is “the quest for operational unilaterism.” Military leaders want to be able “to strike quickly without any need for consultation with anyone, even the government of the territory from which they are launching the strike” (Davis 2011:220). The military has been particularly focused on overcoming antibase resistance by moving operations to locations where inhabitants possess fewer democratic rights, offering the military “greater freedom to operate” (Davis 2011:216). Major buildups have taken place in two of the remaining US and UK colonies, Guam and Diego Garcia; in Africa and Central and Eastern Europe there are now dozens of “lily pads” (Vine 2015:299–313).

Amid a major buildup on Guam, Major General Dennis Larsen told a reporter, “This is not Okinawa,” clearly referencing its antibase opposition. “This is American soil in the midst of the Pacific. Guam is a US territory. We can do what we want here, and make huge investments without fear of being thrown out” (Kaplan 2008:60–61). In the shift of bases and forces to locations like Guam, one sees how the geography of the US military base network has been “shaped not only by global military priorities, but also by an increasingly globalized network of local social movements resisting militarization” (Davis 2011:215).

Why Are Some Antibase Movements More Successful than Others?

Examining the history of antibase movements around the globe in the post–World War II era, it is difficult to offer a general theory about why some movements are more successful than others in achieving their stated aims. The context surrounding each movement involves hundreds of variables that shape a movement’s outcome. Even in a single case, understanding causality and what factors or actors were most influential is difficult because of the secrecy surrounding foreign bases and foreign base negotiations. It is especially difficult because foreign bases are embedded in larger national, regional, and global political-economic and military relations, and in government, corporate, and elite interests. Far from just a debate about security or military strategy, movements face situations in which bases are linked to broad nation-to-nation trade relations, specific nation-to-nation economic deals, military weapons sales, and diplomatic relationships including support at the UN and other international forums, among other geopolitical-economic relations (Vine 2015:195–251). To cite just one example, some suspect that successive Italian governments supported the creation of a new base in Vicenza, Italy, owing to the US government’s inclusion of Italian weapons manufacturers in lucrative weapons contracts, such as for the F–35 joint strike fighter.

Bases scholars have theorized on the basis of a restricted number of antibase cases. To theorize across anything approaching the full universe of cases would require at least a book-length work and a level of detailed knowledge about each case, which suggests a team of researchers might best advance such a theory.17

Acknowledging the challenges—and perhaps folly—of theorizing across so many cases, over so much time, and in so many contexts around the globe, I offer the following tentative conclusions:

1. Antibase movements face a complex and heavily imbalanced power struggle involving an array of local, national, and international actors; the interactions among these actors determine movement outcomes. Although local dynamics vary, movements have often been opposed by forces including the foreign basing power; a movement’s own national government; local and regional governments; transnational, national, and local corporations and elites; base employees; and others benefiting from or otherwise supportive of a base presence (fig. 3).

2. Decisions about bases are rarely, if ever, made strictly on the basis of military strategy or security considerations alone. Economic and political interests connected to bases—domestically, regionally, internationally—figure prominently in the decisions of national policy makers (e.g., Calder 2007; Cooley 2008; Kawato 2015). Yeo’s thesis (2011) that the “security consensus” among na-
tional elites usually determines the outcome of basing debates raises the question of why such security consensuses exist, how they are created, and what economic and political interests shape them.

3. That basing decisions are tied to so many government, corporate, and elite economic and political interests makes the challenge of closing or blocking bases especially difficult for movements.

4. Closing or blocking bases almost always requires an antibase movement’s national government or powerful politicians to demand such an outcome of the US government. Movements rarely convince or force the US military to succumb to their demands without such support. Prominent exceptions include Guam and Colombia, where lawsuits helped movements achieve at least some of their aims.

5. Because antibase movements almost always need national politicians on their side to achieve their stated goals, the primary target of antibase activism is usually best a national government rather than the US military. Secondarily targeting the US military can be helpful in restricting usage, inflicting greater operating costs, and putting indirect pressure on a national government when the US military expresses dissatisfaction about operational constraints inflicted by a movement.

6. The central challenge for movements seeking to close bases is generally one of convincing national politicians and decision-makers that the cost of maintaining the base status quo is greater than any benefits received from the status quo, or that the political and at times economic benefits of closing or blocking a base outweigh the political and economic benefits of the status quo and any costs potentially inflicted by the US government or local corporate and elite actors as punishment for closure.

7. Dedicated antibase movements almost always win at least some concessions from the US military, even if the concessions are just restrictions on daily military operations that lessen a base’s impact on locals. This is because of the military’s desire to avoid and quickly quell protest and because national governments, in most cases, have at least some power to demand changes from the US military. Indeed, the ability of a government such as Djibouti’s to extract greater rent from the US government for basing rights suggests that some host governments may have more power than their officials realize.

Conclusion

This article has shown that, despite significant power differentials between movements and the foreign basing power,
social movements, as well as host nation governments, have restricted the operation of foreign bases, blocked new base construction, and evicted bases—and that they can do so again. While militarization often seems to be an unstoppable, self-perpetuating force, antibase movements are an example of an antimilitarization movement that has, at times, slowed, stopped, and reversed militarization as a material and ideological process. Specifically, antibase movements have disrupted militarization materially not just by closing and blocking bases but also by forcing military personnel to spend more time, energy, and resources responding to movements—time, energy, and resources that would otherwise go to war fighting and preparations for war. In this way, antibase movements are also a sign of centuries-long democratizing trends that have made bases and empires like the United States subject to greater opposition and democratic control. Like anticolonial movements, antibase movements are, in various ways, challenging the loss of sovereignty and demanding the restoration of democratic decision-making over occupied land. At a broader level, antibase movements have disrupted militarization ideologically by challenging the belief that military officials hold a monopoly on knowledge about military policy and that they should control all military decisions (Davis 2011:223).

This is not to say that challenging foreign bases is easy. After 50 years, the Chagossian people exiled during construction of the US military base on Diego Garcia are still living in exile and struggling to return home. Despite nearly a decade of unprecedented social movement struggle and international attention in both Vicenza, Italy, and Jeju, South Korea, new bases were built, leaving locals with few tangible victories to show for their efforts.

Even when movements have won clear victories, the results are not always as unambiguously positive as they may seem. In Vieques, the environmental clean-up of the former Navy testing area is still not complete 15 years after the Navy’s departure. One year after being pushed out of Vieques, the Navy closed its major base in Puerto Rico, Roosevelt Roads. Many interpreted this as a way to punish Puerto Ricans, and the closure has surely inflicted economic and social pain on base employees and others whose livelihoods depended on the base. After Ecuador evicted the United States, the US government maintained some military ties in the country and created a “quasi base” there (Bitar 2016). Across Latin America, the military has responded to evictions in Panama, Ecuador, and Colombia by circumventing social movement protest and democratic oversight with informal government-to-government agreements for quasi bases throughout the region (Bitar 2016:43).

The return of US troops and bases to the Philippines is the most powerful cautionary tale. Within a few years of the military’s departure, US negotiators in 1996 signed a “visiting forces agreement” with the Philippines that allowed US troops back into the country for military exercises and training. By 2003, the US military was participating in 18 exercises a year. Soon, there were more than 30 annually. By 2008, there were 6,000 US troops involved in a single exercise—three times the number of Filipinos (Docena 2012; Jane’s Security Sentinel 2009). The exercises had become a way to hide the near-permanent deployment of large numbers of US troops involved in counterinsurgency operations in the Philippines’ south (Kaplan 2008:315). As many as 600 US Special Forces troops were operating from as many as seven lily pad bases despite the Philippines’ constitutional ban on foreign bases (Kaplan 2005:131–184). US troops now have access to Filipino airspace, airfields, sea lanes, harbors, and even the former US bases at Subic Bay and Clark. A 2014 agreement allows an even larger US presence. Both governments insist the agreement will respect Filipino sovereignty and create no US “bases” (Fonbuena 2014).

The US military now has “everything—and arguably more—than it had” before 1992, according to Herbert Docena. Only now, it has this presence “without the economic and political costs of maintaining large garrison-like bases that can serve as visible symbols for the opposition” (Docena 2012).

Despite these trends, in the Philippines and elsewhere, it is often too soon to determine a movement’s success or failure. Around the world, it is surely too early, and simplistic, to determine the success or failure of a movement by its ability or inability to remove or block a base alone. Many antibase movements that removed or blocked bases took decades to win those victories, with years of apparent failure.

“The US military can have its operations limited anywhere,” Davis points out. “There was a time when it was difficult to imagine that protest movements in Vieques, Hawaii and Okinawa would become effective at altering military operations” (Davis 2011:223). But even after movements achieve victories, the Philippines and other cases show that the work of demilitarization is far from done.

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19. Democracy Now, “Punishing Vieques: Puerto Rico struggles with contamination 10 years after activists expel US Navy; https://www.democracynow.org/2013/5/2/punishing_vieques_puerto_rico_struggles_with. It is important to note that most communities worldwide bounce back quickly from base closures and in many cases become stronger economically with the military gone (see Vine 2015:284–286).
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**Struggling with Complicity**

**Anti-militarist Activism in Israel**

by Erica Weiss

Most Jewish Israeli anti-militarist activists frame their critiques within the boundaries of explicit loyalty to Israeli society and allegiance to Zionism, a stance that contributes to their mainstream appeal. They often frame their dissent as an attempt to rescue Israeli society from military abuses, but in doing so are often unwittingly co-opted as “internal affairs” officers for the military, exposing misconduct but also strengthening the military’s claims to moral propriety. As a result, we see the persistent seepage of militarism and militarist values into anti-militarist activism. Thus, Jewish Israeli activists face a number of ethical and political dilemmas as a result of their “insider” position, including whether to abandon their activist practices or renounce their national allegiance.

“Insider” activism is fraught with strategic and ethical pitfalls. This is due to the fact that insider activism is conducted by people who benefit in various ways from the very laws and policies they are opposing and who often feel a particular ethical responsibility to the society against which they bring their accusations. Jewish Israeli anti-militarist activists experience challenging entanglements, contradictions, and dilemmas on a daily basis. One of the most challenging is the constant seepage of military values and even military personnel into their activism, a process that often causes them to feel that their attempts at dissent have morphed into complicity.

After years of debate regarding the perils of engagement, today some Israeli anti-militarist organizations are examining some of the unintended effects of their activism and reevaluating their approach. Some in this community have concluded, paradoxically, that their activism has at times served to bolster the Israeli military and its reputation. Critics from within the left have begun to argue that Israeli anti-military and human rights organizations are effectively serving as ombudsmen, or internal affairs officers, for the military (Rotem 2015). Consequently, instead of achieving their explicit goal of protecting Palestinians from Israeli state violence, they have unintentionally allowed the military to assure the public that they are held to the highest ethical standards due to critical civilian oversight (Levy 2010).

This article seeks to consider the process by which militarism perpetually seeps into anti-militarist activism in Israel. I present this process not as one of intentional co-optation but, rather, as a gradual process of slippage from both sides of the activist-military divide. “Insider activism” allows entitled members of society to trade on their privileged inclusion in the body politic and presumed loyalty to further their activism. The “insiders” of insider activism are recognized as such by themselves and also the broader society. In the Israeli case, insiders are Jewish Zionists, often with military bona fides. Non-Jews, anti-Zionists, and especially Palestinians are not able to engage in this type of activism even if they hold Israeli citizenship because they are not considered real insiders. Insider activism is not monolithic and includes a variety of approaches that reflect differences in ethical vision as well as political strategy. Yet, collectively, insider activism can be contrasted with activism that positions itself as an outside intervention, in this case with Palestinian or international critiques of Israeli policy. Because of its explicit declaration of community allegiance and the “in the family” stance of insider activism, insider activists often claim that they have greater potential to change hearts and minds. Claims made from a position that maintains national allegiance and consents to hegemonic divisions between “us” and “them,” claims that “we” should do the “right” thing for the ethical benefit of “our own” society’s conscience or soul, are often experienced as tough love rather than an external attack. In Israel, this stance can be expressed by the popular “pro-Israel, anti-occupation” sentiment, which claims that loyalty to the state is maintained even when military policies are challenged.

However, we will see that this approach often entails significant political and ethical entanglements that make it difficult for insider activists to maintain their intended balance between loyalty and dissent. The persistent reentry of militarism into dissent activism often is not the result of nefarious forces or state conspiracy but, rather, is due to the mainstream militarist values circulating in society that influence the mainstream population and insider activists alike. Insider activists are very aware of this seepage of militarism into their activism, often bearing witness to their own co-optation in real time, and they experience a great deal of consternation in the process. As we will see, sometimes this seepage reaches a breaking point, and
activists decide to call an end to their compromised practices. The decision to stop or shift activist practices is fraught with ethical dilemmas, both theoretical and practical. In this paper, “co-option” is an emic concept used by my interlocutors in the field rather than an analytic category. I am not accusing anti-militarist organizations of being co-opted by the military and the state, but, rather, I am describing their emic experience of co-option as described to me and as the impetus for recent policy changes among activist organizations. My interlocutors employed “co-option” (a Hebraicized version of the English word), as well as similar concepts such as being used as a fig leaf, being used as a subcontractor, and being used for legitimacy.

I will first contextualize one of the most prominent dilemmas of anti-militarist insider activism, the negotiation between nationalism and militarism, in Israel and elsewhere. The tight historical and ideological connection between these two social forces is one of the main enablers for the seepage of militarism into the politics of dissent. I will then describe the most common approach of activist organizations against the military. This approach attempts to wrench apart nationalism and militarism and seeks to oppose the latter in the name of the former. I will discuss the organizations Courage to Refuse, B’Tselem, and Breaking the Silence in comparative perspective. These examples demonstrate that while this nationalist approach is effective in generating widespread and even institutional support, it also results in unintended entanglements that some activists come to experience as co-option by the military. I argue that what is experienced as co-option can, in etic terms, be more accurately described as a disturbingly banal process often accomplished through well-intentioned slippages on both sides rather than a Machiavellian plot by the military or the state, as a few of my interlocutors perceived it. I suggest that this dilemma faced by activists is not only a manifestation of the classic political choice between working inside the system or outside of it. It is not only a matter of ideology and strategy, but it also concerns the ways in which group membership defines political horizons and the ways in which national hierarchies of “us” and “them” are difficult to escape even when activists explicitly seek to undermine these hierarchies.

The Nation, Nationalism, and Defining the “Us” through the Military

Nationalist sentiment is very strong in Israel and is widely considered a positive force among its Jewish population (Handelman 2004; Zenbavel 1995). Most Israeli Jews are proud of the state, defensive of its leadership, and intolerant of public or international criticism of both. In some political environments, explicit ideologies—“isms”—are viewed as the enemy of independent thought and moral accountability. But Israel’s official ideology, Zionism, is widely accepted as a reliable ethical guide. Furthermore, the explicit inculcation and socialization into the principles and values of Zionism are considered good and upright education rather than brainwashing.

This situation defines the domestic conditions in which Israeli anti-militarist activists operate. In many countries, including Israel, the forces of militarism use nationalism as their main ideological engine and propaganda tool. Military activities, interventions, and conquests are legitimized to citizens in terms of the good of the country (rather than, e.g., the interests of private enterprise, which is often the reality [Ferguson 2005]).

The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) is the military of the Israeli state. Part of its deep penetration into Israeli society and culture is related to its policy of universal conscription, practiced since the beginning of the state. Theoretically, all citizens, men and women, must perform service, but a number of groups are exempted, significantly including ultra-Orthodox Jews and many of Israel’s Palestinian citizens. Most of the activists I describe in this article served in the military prior to their activism, and they describe the difficulty, both strategic and emotional, of publicly going against an organization they once revered and in which they served. I describe their activism here as anti-militarist. Though most of them do not call for the complete elimination of the military, I refer to it in this way because of their systematic challenges to Israeli policies they themselves often deem militarist, including the occupation of Palestinian territories, hawkish military interventions and rhetorical bluster in lieu of diplomatic efforts, the application of military legal framework to civilian situations, and the military's legal and social shielding of soldiers who commit human rights violations.

Nationalism and modern militarism are linked historically in their emergence as well as in their political doctrine. In fact, mass conscription of the citizenry was created during the French Revolution, a watershed moment for modern nationalism. In modern militaries, individuals are conscripted into the military as ordinary citizens (in contrast with prenataional professionalized or mercenary models or earlier levy or military slavery systems [Pipes 1979]). Though it is well known that nationalism legitimates militarism, the inverse is also true. The military has often served a central role in the generating of national sentiment (Mosse 1975). Charles Tilly (1985) describes the formative role of state violence and war making in the establishment of the nation-state and national unification, defining the sense of “us” that modern citizens often feel.

In Israel, nationalism and militarism are entwined by additional resonances. The principle of Jewish self-defense is central to Zionism. It is widely believed that, whereas in exile, Jews, lacking an army, were vulnerable to attacks and pogroms that culminated in the European Holocaust, the Israeli state returned Jewish security to Jewish hands (Almog 2000). With the establishment of the state, the military claimed a role at the center of Israeli collective consciousness: symbolically, the military embodied the state and Zionism, and military leaders effectively became influential political figures in determining state policy. The military has largely sustained this prominent position by politically manufacturing an ongoing existential crisis in which citizens perpetually believe that the state’s very existence, and
by extension their own existence, is at risk (Ben-Eliezer 1998; Kimmerling 2005).

The centrality of the military extends to cultural values and social realities. Sara Helman (2000) has demonstrated the way that the militarism constructs the "life-world" of Israeli men by creating an imagined community of fellow soldiers, a social system that extends far into civil society. Orna Sasson-Levy and others have shown how militarism shapes Israeli notions of femininity, masculinity, and gender roles (Sasson-Levy 2002, 2003). Mirta Furman describes how soldiers and soldiering are brought into children’s lives with positive connotations from an extremely young age, socializing them into future service from the time they can speak (1999). Positive images of the military are apparent in children’s school workbooks, in street names, in advertising, and in civic discourse. The veneration of the military in Israel is uncontested except in tiny circles of the radical left and the fringes of the ultra-Orthodox community. Baruch Kimmerling (1993) described the situation as one of "civil militarism."

The Slow Creep of Militarism into Israel’s Anti-military Activism

Most of the groups seeking to combat the military and state violence in Israel emphasize their insider status by declaring their national allegiance and describing their activism as trying to save Israel from the destructive influence of the military’s activities. Courage to Refuse was one such organization of elite combat soldiers turned conscientious objectors who objected to the military’s aggressive policies during the Second Intifada and to the Israeli occupation more generally. The refusal of these soldiers, especially by the pilots and commandos who held enormous prestige, shocked Israeli society and made many reconsider the military’s policies (Weiss 2014b). Consider, for example, the language of a letter written to this organization in 2002:

We, reserve combat officers and soldiers of the Israel Defense Forces, who were raised upon the principles of Zionism, self-sacrifice and giving to the people of Israel and to the State of Israel, who have always served in the front lines, and who were the first to carry out any mission in order to protect the State of Israel and strengthen it.

We, combat officers and soldiers who have served the State of Israel for long weeks every year, in spite of the dear cost to our personal lives, have been on reserve duty in the Occupied Territories, and were issued commands and directives that had nothing to do with the security of our country, and that had the sole purpose of perpetuating our control over the Palestinian people.

We, whose eyes have seen the bloody toll this Occupation exacts from both sides,

We, who sensed how the commands issued to us in the Occupied Territories destroy all the values that we were raised upon,

We, who understand now that the price of Occupation is the loss of IDF’s human character and the corruption of the entire Israeli society,

We, who know that the Territories are not a part of Israel, and that all settlements are bound to be evacuated,

We hereby declare that we shall not continue to fight this War of the Settlements.

We shall not continue to fight beyond the 1967 borders in order to dominate, expel, starve and humiliate an entire people.

We hereby declare that we shall continue serving the Israel Defense Force in any mission that serves Israel’s defense.

The missions of occupation and oppression do not serve this purpose—and we shall take no part in them.

The letter is as much an affirmation of allegiance to Zionism and the signatories’ loyalty to Israeli society as it is a condemnation of the Israeli military. It uses the common insider rhetoric of seeking the redemption of Israeli society through its critique of military policy.

This approach varies from “strategic” to “sincere” across groups and individual activists and should not be broadly characterized as one or the other. In speaking with conscientious objectors (between 2007 and 2009) and other anti-militarist activists (2007–2009, 2012–2016), sometimes the adherence to rhetoric of solidarity was discussed as a strategic approach to appeal to the Israeli mainstream, to make their message more palatable for the audience they are trying to convert (Weiss 2014a). At the same time, many of the conscientious objectors I know saw their anti-military stance as a patriotic act of love for the country. A significant number continued to consider themselves Zionists. They were aware that their combination of nationalism with an anti-military stance was perceived as a contradiction by many, but they insisted that this did not have to be so. Many Palestinian activists have long claimed that a just peace is not possible within the Zionist framework (Salaime 2016), but Jewish Israeli activists feel accountable not only to Palestinians but also, or even primarily, to other Jewish Israelis. Some believe Zionism is compatible with justice, while others, believing that change lies in Israeli hands, are reluctant to abandon the rhetorical and symbolic force that Zionism holds with the mainstream as a resource for persuasion and a tool of self-defense against the hostilities of the right wing. This inward orientation is the fundamental appeal of insider activism. These activists are not trying to convince Europeans, Americans, or Palestinians but, rather, only their “own” community. This distinction points to the political power of insider activism as well as the paradox activists face.

During my fieldwork with conscientious objectors from the Israeli military, many of whom had been part of Courage to Refuse, this tension between using the prestige of the military and challenging it was a constant source of low-level tension. Conscientious objectors drew on their Zionist credentials and
prestigious military careers for moral authority that they then traded in to justify their subsequent refusal of military service. This simultaneously served to convince the public of the truth and legitimacy of their anti-militarist claims as well as to cement Zionism and military service as the proper sources of moral authority. These dual contradictory effects caused tension within the conscientious objector community, as well as with activists who did not have access to these sources of authority, such as women and Palestinians.

Breaking the Silence and the General

Breaking the Silence was founded in 2004 by soldiers serving in Hebron. Hebron is an occupied Palestinian city in the West Bank with a small number of Israeli settlers accompanied by a large number of soldiers. It has become a symbol for the political left of the evils of the occupation. Breaking the Silence is composed of combat soldiers who have served in the Occupied Territories, and their goal is to expose Israeli society to the realities of the occupation, including the abuse of Palestinian civilians, looting, beatings, destruction of property, and more. They collect the testimonies of active combat soldiers regarding the abuses they have seen and participated in. Their explicit goal is to end the Israeli occupation.

This organization also emphasizes that it acts out of a sense of moral and ethical responsibility to Israel and Israeli society. It expresses the belief that the military occupation of Palestinian territories is a stain on Israeli society and suggests that Israel would be a healthier, more vibrant democracy without the occupation. Further, it claims that ending the occupation would also be a step toward a more moral army and a more moral country (Schatz 2016). It argues that the Israeli military is not living up to its code of ethics, especially the military’s code of Purity of Arms: “IDF soldiers will not use their weapons and force to harm human beings who are not combatants or prisoners of war, and will do all in their power to avoid causing harm to their lives, bodies, dignity and property.” The implication is that the military is currently failing to live up to the worthy ideal of its national ideology. For example, Breaking the Silence’s Dana Golan (2015) says in an opinion piece in an English language news outlet widely read in Israel and abroad:

As opposed to other places in the world where you can live an entire lifetime without meeting soldiers, the Israeli army is a microcosm of our society. Soldiers are our brothers, sisters and children. The IDF is the face of the Israeli people, and its values are our values. For years we have been hearing from commanders and politicians that the IDF is the most moral army in the world. But its policy of massive fire killed hundreds of innocent Palestinians last summer and destroyed entire neighborhoods. Humanistic words, public declarations and official documents like the Code of Ethics are meaningless when you hear the soldiers’ testimonies and see the results in the field.

This statement accomplishes a number of things. It demonstrates loyalty to Jewish Israeli society with words like “our” and references to civic metaphors of extended family. It also expresses faith in national values and reaffirms their potential to establish a just society. It does not challenge national solidarity but, rather, military practice. The statement attempts to pry apart the nation, often ethically romanticized among the people in its “pre-occupation” form as not involved in a colonial or imperial project (Dalsheim 2014), and the current military occupation.

Since 2015, several right-wing politicians have launched a sustained campaign against Breaking the Silence. The government has sought to ban the organization from military activities and to keep them out of Israeli schools. There have also been attacks on their sources of funding (Sales 2015). Israel passed a law forcing nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to reveal foreign funding in all official reports, as well as in all dealings with officials and on TV, newspapers, billboards, and online. This law was transparently targeted at Israeli anti-military and human rights organizations (Harkov 2016). In March of 2016 Defense Minister Moshe Ya’alon accused Breaking the Silence of treason, a dramatic allegation that severely damaged the organization’s relationships with the soldiers they rely on for their testimonies regarding military abuses. These attacks are part of a sustained and ongoing effort to smear the organization and raise public antipathy toward it, which was at least partially successful, as the group was disinvited from speaking events, and a prestigious award, the Berelson Prize from Ben Gurion University, was revoked after intervention from the university’s president.

However, while many right-wing politicians attacked the group, many from within the military spoke out in support of the organization, claiming that the organization’s activities strengthen the military, preserve its morality, and ultimately protect the IDF. When Breaking the Silence was put under investigation for collecting classified information, the chief military censor, Col. Ariella Ben-Avraham, took the unusual step of publicly condemning the organization with the IDF’s legal division. Others within the military argued that the organization served as a watchdog for abuses and that the Israeli military requires such criticism in order to maintain high moral standards (Yanai 2015). A number of high-profile security figures have emerged in favor of Breaking the Silence.

General Amiram Levin, former commander of the IDF Northern Command and a household name among many Jewish Israelis, was the first to step forward, arguing that Breaking the Silence strengthens the IDF and its morality and that silencing it is harmful to the army. “The IDF is sent by the state to the front to rule and manage the occupation,” said Levin. “This is a difficult and complex assignment that naturally tends to morally corrupt. In order to preserve its morality, the IDF, which is a moral army, needs the criticism and the openness to correct itself, to learn, and to warn both itself...
and the political echelon” (Yanai 2015). He also personally took out a half-page advertisement in the newspaper Haaretz under the headline “I Am Also Breaking My Silence,” defending the group and arguing that the IDF should support Breaking the Silence. He argued that whistle-blowers will ultimately benefit the Israeli military by helping it correct its misdeeds and informing Israeli society of the conditions of the occupation.

Others followed suit. Israeli police Maj. Gen. (ret.) Alik Ron and General Ami Ayalon argued that the new political attacks and guidelines meant to silence the group are what truly damages and weakens the army. Yuvak Diskin, the former head of Shin Bet (Israeli FBI), discussed the group on Facebook, writing that while he opposes the activities of NGOs and journalists “who don’t love their country,” he supports Breaking the Silence, “even if they are aggravating, even if they are often inaccurate and don’t always do their work properly from a professional perspective—their contribution is very important and helps us maintain the required vigilance about the most sensitive human issues” (Cohen 2015). Later two additional former heads of Shin Bet, Ami Ayalon and Carmi Gillon, threw their support behind the organization. These statements of support from such well-known military and security figures were considered a major coup for the group. After this, Breaking the Silence received an influx of monetary donations from the Israeli public. They also began to receive offers from a number of high-level military brass to host house meetings at which they could present their group.

Critics on the left have argued that this type of support is in fact a form of co-optation by which the military seeks to use civil oversight as a propaganda tool to demonstrate its dedication to high moral standards. Co-optation has a connotation of manipulation and conspiracy—a stratagem in the service of power. Such ideas are fueled by populist notions of government and military conspiracies, featuring military elites or public relations specialists plotting how they can most efficiently neutralize the civilian threat against them. I think this case demonstrates a very different process. It starts with an organization criticizing the military, which, partially in order to secure mainstream support, frames their stance as one of national solidarity. They are attacked by far-right politicians for their activities. Important military figures hear not only the attacks but also the activists’ message and are convinced by the anti-militarist organization’s claims that they are acting in the interests of Israel. These military figures are offended by the undemocratic and repressive acts of right-wing politicians and decide to throw their support behind these activists. For these generals and high-ranking security figures, the support for Breaking the Silence is not an overt attempt at co-optation but a sincere support of their critique, and it reflects a realistic awareness that their own reputation, status, and social capital in Israel—accrued through revered military service—can lend significant prestige and authority to Breaking the Silence in their struggle.

The military brass in question are trying to help counter the most oppressive autocratic political forces. The support of these generals, from the perspective of public legitimacy and acceptance, is a major boon for the activists and makes their movement much more mainstream. As Yorai, a leader from Breaking the Silence, told me, “When Amiram Levin says something, people listen.” At the same time, this is a somewhat ironic endorsement. This mainstream appeal to some extent trades on the public authority of the military generals, reproducing the validity of their social clout, which they have gained through the very practices of state violence that the organization seeks to criticize. Yorai told me that, after they started getting military support, many in the organization began to ask, “Do we really need these generals? We don’t need them to confirm what we already know.” Ben, a Breaking the Silence witness, told me:

I think it is a good thing, but obviously it is complicated. Breaking the Silence shouldn’t be dependent on the approval of generals because that will take the truth out of our hands—the regular soldiers who were there and saw what is happening—and put it in their hands. But at the same time, everyone knows him [Levin] and he has so much credibility. Part of you wants to say: “See, he says we are right. We told you so!” as though he [Levin] is the one above us all who can say what is true or not.

It is only because of Israel’s civil militarism that the names and reputations of high-ranking military and security personnel are widely known among ordinary citizens. On the one hand, this support gave Breaking the Silence credibility and also access to the upper echelons of the military establishment. On the other hand, this support can pull anti-military activism under the military’s protective wing in a way that makes some activists uncomfortable. Though the organization does not oppose the military per se, and its members continue to think of themselves as ordinary rank and file, they do fiercely fight the military’s current activities and the Israeli occupation more generally, which has earned them the honor of becoming the most publicly vilified NGO in Israel.

The Breaking Point: A “Fig Leaf” for the Occupation?

In the spring of 2016, the human rights organization B’Tselem took an unprecedented step and announced that they would no longer be cooperating with the Israeli military in investigations of infractions, violations, and abuses conducted by Israeli soldiers. Collecting evidence of such infractions and representing Palestinians legally in their complaints against the military had been a central part of their activism since the organization was created in 1989. This decision was the result of a long discussion within the organization and within the anti-militarist activist community generally, regarding whether the political effects of their activism might be quite different from their intentions. Concerns had been raised that the organization was serving as a “fig leaf” for the military, specifically, that the military’s inves-
tigative division was using up the organization’s resources in sisyphean exercises that almost never led to disciplinary consequences for the soldiers or commanders who were violent or abusive. In their decision to end cooperation, B’Tselem reported that they had lodged 739 cases on behalf of Palestinians since 1989, and only 25 of these had resulted in charges being brought against the implicated soldiers (B’Tselem 2016).

The infractions at issue include the killing or injuring of Palestinians by Israeli soldiers, the beating of Palestinians, the use of Palestinians as human shields, and the destruction of Palestinian property. In cases such as these, Palestinians are theoretically entitled to lodge an official complaint with the military. However, this is extremely difficult to do without assistance. Palestinians theoretically can file complaints with military police directly; however, this is unlikely because there are no military police investigative units based in the West Bank, and Palestinians are not granted authorization to enter Israel for the purpose of filing a complaint against the military. Palestinians may also file complaints with military police officers in the West Bank; however, this also is often exceedingly difficult. The schedules of police officers are often either not publicly available or not adhered to. Often Palestinians are kept waiting for hours or are turned away because they have no one to translate from Arabic into Hebrew. From this point, the process only gets more Kafkaesque. Investigations are marred by frequent delays, stalling techniques, misplaced paperwork, highly suspicious claims regarding the inability to locate accused soldiers and witnesses, postponements, and more. Paperwork often vanishes, and there is almost no transparency regarding the progress of the investigation or, more often, the lack of progress. Often each step of the investigation procedure would only be performed after repeated inquiries and demands for progress and information by B’Tselem.

B’Tselem, as an organization with dedicated full-time workers, extensive legal expertise, long-term experience working with the military system, native and high-level Hebrew, and access to Israeli bases and relevant bureaucrats, often found such investigations to be extremely time consuming, unresponsive, and frustrating. It is hard to imagine that a Palestinian layperson would be able to force an investigation to proceed. While other Israeli civil rights lawyers can pursue complaints for Palestinians outside of B’Tselem’s purview, the organization was the most prominent and systematic access point for aggrieved Palestinians. For this reason, the decision to end cooperation with the military greatly hinders the ability of Palestinians to lodge complaints with the Israeli military, and in many cases there is virtually no redress for crimes committed by soldiers against Palestinian civilians unless the military decides to initiate an investigation on their own. As such, walking away from their practice of representing Palestinians was a difficult decision, especially for an organization whose raison d’être is fighting human rights violations.

However, many in B’Tselem felt that their involvement and assumption of responsibility for investigations was being co-opted by the military. Often the military would delegate respon-

sibility for the investigation to B’Tselem. The military expected B’Tselem to be the intermediary between the army and Palestinians on all matters, for example, to coordinate with Palestinians to set up interview appointments rather than being in direct contact themselves. They expected B’Tselem to provide medical records and to file paperwork, despite the fact that the military has access to these items. B’Tselem complied with military requests with the knowledge that, if they did not, the investigation would not proceed. Sometimes, the failure of progress in investigations was blamed on B’Tselem’s supposed failure to provide enough information to the military, as though it were the organization’s responsibility to prove its case and not the military’s responsibility to investigate in good faith. But B’Tselem’s efforts disappeared into a void. Today, activists at B’Tselem express confidence and pride in their decision to discontinue cooperation with the military.

Here we see another case of slippery entanglements resulting in unintentional complicity. The intention of B’Tselem has been to advocate for redress of the abuse of Palestinians by Israeli soldiers. In the process, they were dragged into the role of being responsible for pushing investigations forward through constant nagging, collecting evidence, and other administrative tasks. All the initiative to pursue cases fell on the organization and its resources, outsourcing the military’s official responsibility. Again, this analysis is not entirely conspiratorial. The Israeli military is a large and inefficient bureaucracy, something that is evident in many areas beyond the military police investigative unit. In encountering Israeli bureaucracies generally, the onus typically falls on the “client” to push and advance his or her own interests. Military bureaucrats followed classic bureaucratic practices of shifting the burden of labor onto an external party, a tendency as much about work avoidance practices among government employees as about indifference to human rights violations, in a process previously described by Michael Herzfeld (1992). Udi, a human rights lawyer representing Palestinian clients, told me he thought laziness was as much to blame as ideology or political motivations when army bureaucrats stonewall and try to outsource their jobs.

They don’t speak any Arabic, they don’t know who to talk to, they . . . basically if something is not 100% obvious or needs to be figured out, they are just going to ignore it because they don’t want to deal with it. It’s a hassle for them, so they will put it aside and wait for you to come back and solve the issue for them.

B’Tselem came to see “cooperation” as a slippery slope to complicity, but, as with Breaking the Silence, some of this slipperiness originated on the side of the organization itself. In an effort to reassure visitors to their website that B’Tselem is not working against Israeli interests, they advertised:

While B’Tselem reports on some of the least attractive aspects of Israeli policy, in doing so we highlight some of the best aspects of Israeli society. B’Tselem is part of Israel’s vibrant, civil society, working in spite of the difficult security situation to improve our society from within. We are proud
to represent this part of Israel to a world which is all too often unaware of it. (B’Tselem website, ca. 2016)

Before their decision to end their cooperation with the military, they also appealed to mainstream audiences by emphasizing their close and productive relationship with the Israeli military:

B’Tselem maintains an extensive and multi-faceted relationship with the Israeli authorities. Every year we send hundreds of individual cases to the relevant authorities asking them to investigate allegations of wrongdoing. In turn, these authorities request B’Tselem’s assistance in conducting investigations, . . . B’Tselem is also invited to participate in Knesset hearings and meets regularly with military and government officials to voice our concerns. (B’Tselem website, ca. 2016)

These public reassurances are important for the reputation and appeal of such an organization, but the struggle to demonstrate national allegiance while criticizing state violence is difficult to maintain.

Israeli activist and blogger Noam Rotem wrote a stinging op-ed in the decidedly left-wing news outlet +972, in which he claimed that organizations like B’Tselem “serve as the humanitarian arm of the IDF. They give the Palestinian population assurances, or hope, of a non-violent, bureaucratic resolution—in the name of the occupier.” He further claimed:

There must be solutions for the civilian population—it’s just that those solutions shouldn’t come from Israeli organizations as a part of Israeli colonialism. The occupier “solving problems” for the occupied people is not healthy, and it even helps perpetuate dependence on systems of oppression. (2015)

Sociologist Yagil Levy (2010) presents a related critique. He argues that civilian oversight generally benefits the military’s public relations efforts. He shows that increased civilian oversight over the Israeli military has actually produced increased legitimacy for the military and military actions. In other words, Levy shows that critical civilian attention casts the military in a good light and gives the impression that the Israeli military is meticulously monitored and highly controlled. (This despite evidence of judicial rubber-stamping of military actions.) As evidence, he draws attention to an interview with Israel’s military advocate general Avichai Mendelblit’s statements about those organizations in an interview with Haaretz in 2009, which I offer in an expanded version below:

These organizations are a pipeline for transmitting information about very important things, so that the IDF’s activity will be normative. My aim is not, heaven forbid, to put a scalp on commanders’ belts. It is to arrive at the truth and they really do help us in this. The cooperation with B’Tselem is the most outstanding example. They help to arrange meetings so we can speak with witnesses, clarify complaints. They do their job and I do mine. The interests aren’t the same, but with all the organizations’ criticism of us, their objective is an investigation of the truth. (Harel 2009, my emphasis, quoted in part in Levy 2011)

The reference to normalizing the IDF activity is a red flag for leftist activists in Israel. They are very aware of the anti-normalization initiative in Palestinian civil society, which seeks to disrupt and resist interactions that would allow the status quo to be understood as an acceptable political situation. This initiative seeks to avoid the normalization of even quotidian interactions between Israeli and Palestinians under the conditions of occupation, so the idea of normalizing Israeli military activities is far beyond the pale.

This idea that activism only bolsters militarism is by no means the consensus among anti-military and human rights activists, but it is a position that is becoming increasingly heard. This is clearly a pessimistic outlook on activism, and many have pointed out that, even if true, the ends (allowing the human rights situation to deteriorate to end the occupation sooner) do not justify the means (leaving Palestinians entirely defenseless in the hands of the Israeli military; Mohar 2016). For example, Rema Hammami has described the ways that Israeli and international activists use their physical presence to preempt state violence against Palestinians in the West Bank (2016). These activities have been accused of creating a more “humane” occupation, thus serving state propaganda efforts and promoting the occupation’s legitimacy, yet Hammami’s account also calls attention to the Palestinian lives and bodies that would be put at risk in any abandonment of such activities in an effort to avoid complicity.

Recently, B’Tselem experienced this dilemma in a particularly acute way. After their decision to stop filing complaints on behalf of Palestinians, they restricted their activities to documenting incidents and releasing them publicly. This approach seemed to bear fruit after they released footage of an Israeli soldier, Elor Azaria, executing a disarmed Palestinian assailant in the occupied West Bank city of Hebron. This video caused an uproar, and the soldier was eventually convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to prison, a very rare prosecution of IDF personnel. This experience would seem to suggest that the shift in strategy had been successful. But shortly afterward, the Palestinian B’Tselem volunteer who had shot the damning footage, Imad Abu Shamsiyeh, began to receive death threats. When he tried to file a complaint, he was prevented from doing so by the Israeli police, who tried to send him away and threatened him with arrest. At this point, B’Tselem found their hands tied, having decided to no longer file such complaints on behalf of Palestinians such as Abu Shamsiyeh. Instead, B’Tselem has made public statements “complaining”1 to the police regarding their refusal to accept Abu Shamsiyeh’s

complaint and “encouraging” them to provide protection for him and his family, neither of which has happened.

The Pitfalls of Insider Activism

Most Israeli insider activists present themselves as Zionists who seek the best for Israeli society by challenging militarism. An exception to this rule can be found in Anarchists against the Fence. This group has never claimed allegiance to Israeli society, or sought to better it, but, rather, defines its purpose as solidarity with the Palestinian struggle. This group not only criticizes militarism but also opposes nationalism, rejecting the allegiance required by “insider” activism explicitly. This anarchist group emerged in 2003 as a protest to the separation/apartheid wall that divides Israel from the Palestinian West Bank (often cutting deep into Palestinian territory). Since this time, participants in the group have returned again and again to West Bank towns like Mas’ha, Budrus, and Bil’in to protest the wall. The realities of this type of activism, dedicated to “direct action” and not ideology, is striking. Protestors are often subjected to violent attack, including tear gas and rubber bullets, by the Israeli military.

This group does not struggle with the feeling of co-optation or complicity in the same way as do the other groups discussed. Military and security officials do not praise the anarchists or suggest that their presence strengthens the military or Israeli society. At the same time the question of relevance looms large. The movement is considered fringe and extremely radical in the eyes of mainstream Israelis. The group is widely considered a “deligitimization organization,” meaning that it acts against Israel and the legitimacy of the Israeli state and not against certain specific policies. Very few Israelis, even proclaimed leftists, would be able to identify with these activists and their movement, often because of their insufficient demonstrations of patriotism. Those within the organization have struggled with their failure to attract a mainstream audience as much as their mainstream counterparts. They have felt, at the same time, dedicated to their radical stance and also very frustrated at their inability to bring their critiques of the Zionist peace movement to ordinary Israelis who might be politically sympathetic. While most organizations have rejected this approach, we can see above that some are reconsidering the political costs of their choices.

Anti-militarist activists face a trade-off between relevance and complicity. They find themselves threatened with irrelevance if they are not able to attract the attention and sympathies of a mainstream Israeli public audience. This fear of being perceived as irrelevant or marginal is not unfounded. The left in Israel is increasingly perceived as elitist and out of touch with the values and beliefs of average Israelis. Nissim Mizrachi (2016) has shown that human rights organizations have largely alienated major sectors of Israeli society and are perceived very negatively, often with visceral disgust.

Co-optation is generally understood as a trade-off in which activists trade in social capital for access, institutional resources, power, and privilege, but here the anti-militarists do not start from a position of great social capital—of which the military holds much more. Their rhetorical moves toward the national collective and their institutional moves toward the military in the form of cooperation are not a trade-off of their social credibility but, rather, an attempt to gain it. Part of the challenge they face is that they are not simply trying to change public opinion, or to advance a minority stance, because the inherent moral goodness of the military is not a matter of partisan opinion to most Jewish Israelis; rather, it is tacit knowledge. A radical critique of Israeli nationalism is beyond the interpretive possibilities of most citizens and is interpreted as an attempt to delegitimize the natural collective.

Examining the maneuvers from the military side yields yet more interesting insights. In the scholarly literature, the co-opting institution, state, or corporation is tacitly assumed to have a clear and unified intention of disarming critics through co-option (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Jaffee 2012). This motivation for the co-option process is taken for granted, and the operational question falls on the mechanism. But this case shows a very different situation, as the “co-opting agents” are actually those institutional elements that are most sympathetic to the activists and their message and seek to lend them legitimacy and social capital. Indeed, the military leadership that speaks out on behalf of these critics are people who see themselves as public servants and understand themselves as protectors of the public good. They do not see themselves as spokesmen for an ideological position or as loyal to the military as an institution above their own ethical principles. They are not adopting an adversarial position as a matter of professional ethics, but rather understand their professional and personal stance as unified. They understand themselves to be engaged in a moral enterprise, and they are loyal to the greater good as they understand it. They are not cynical, which contrasts with our basic assumptions about state co-option. In other words, in this case, co-option is a processual effect rather than a deliberate strategy or goal.

This is a challenge not only for Israeli anti-militarist activists. Erin Fitz-Henry (2011) found that most of the residents of Manta, Ecuador, support the large American military base there. Even though antibase activists articulate their ideology as defending local people from American imperialism, often these activists are perceived as more imperialist than the US military. Indeed, in many places, leftist activism is charged with accusations of elitism and cosmopolitan indifference to local concerns (Song 2011; Hochschild 2016). One can compare and contrast this case with the “support the/our troops” phenomenon in the US and Canada. “Support the troops” is a moral norm that claims that proper patriotism requires the explicit support of military personnel, whether or not one agrees with the government’s foreign

policy. Despite this theoretical separation, politicians and private individuals who criticized wars such as those in Iraq and Afghanistan were often accused of undermining the troops. The mainstream consensus imposed a very rigid framework within which criticism, especially of human rights abuses committed by troops themselves, was difficult to express (Coy, Woehrle, and Maney 2008).

Conclusion

Jewish Israeli activists challenge the violence perpetrated by their state and in their name. But we see that this very identification with the state, which establishes a footing from which to resist state violence, is in fact the first step down a slippery slope to entanglement and the perpetual reentry of militarism into the politics of dissent. Efforts at subversion, nevertheless, in some ways remain inevitably tied to hegemonic militarist politics. Israeli activists are not ignorant of this tension but experience it and struggle with it, unable to transcend the local political realities and norms. This is not only a question of whether to work within the political system or outside of it. It is also about the inevitable complicity of the fact of citizenship and national belonging. It is about the limitations on individual choice of self-definition and self-authorization in the public sphere. Activism is ultimately about influencing the ethical direction of the community at large, and as such is contingent upon community values, standards, understandings, and conceptual horizons. “Pro-Israel, anti-occupation” gets caught in webs of meaning that often frustrate activists.

This case demonstrates the complications entailed in insider activism. The accommodation to mainstream values and ideologies in an effort to contest Israeli militarism makes this form of activism particularly effective. But at the same time it reinforces existing social hierarchies and exclusions by confirming the hegemonic status of the “insiders.” We can also see that the emphasis on belonging and loyalty activates certain slippages and replicates dominant ideologies in a way that would not be possible through outsider activism. The insights on insider activism developed here are relevant to other contexts in which “insideness” would be defined differently, but similarly in which members of a dominant group advocate and speak for the oppressed. For example, the processes described here could be very relevant to a consideration of the tensions around white participation in the Black Lives Matter movement.

Activists against militarism in particular run the risk of accusations of unpatriotic behavior and are pressured to demonstrate a stance of national solidarity. Furthermore, in a society that sees the military as a moral good, it is difficult to offer an appealing vision without reference to these shared values. In this, activists face a trade-off between relevance and complicity. Often activists experience this pattern as co-optation. But the unfolding of this process is far from simple. The commonly held ideas about co-optation usually involve power brokers commandeering and redeploying either the message of its critics or the critics themselves. And sometimes the process of co-optation takes this expected form. Adi Kuntsman and Rebecca Stein (2015) demonstrate that this type of co-optation is a central object in the Israeli propaganda toolbox—as, for example, in the reinterpretation and redeployment of social media videos criticizing Israeli actions. The cynical recruitment of Palestinian citizens of Israel into the military (Kanaaneh 2008) and of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories into collaborative relationships with Israeli intelligence services (Kelly 2010) also qualifies under this category of co-optation. But in its interactions with Jewish anti-militarist activists we see another dynamic that is startling in its banality. Rather than a nefarious process of exploitation, we see slippage from both sides. We can see mutual attraction and even solidarity between the state and the activists based on national allegiance. This entanglement is unique to insider activism because the activists are benefiting from the structures of domination that they seek to challenge. Their unique access and automatic authority based on ethno-national belonging is also the Achilles heel of their activism. Their awareness of this paradox only mitigates its effects to a certain extent.

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