LSE Research Online

Katharine M. Millar

Mutually implicated myths: the democratic control of the armed forces and militarism

Book section

Original citation:
Originally published in Millar, Katharine M. (2016) *Mutually implicated myths: the democratic control of the armed forces and militarism.* In: Bliesemann de Guevara, Berit, (ed.) Myth and Narrative in International Politics: Interpretive Approaches to the Study of IR. Palgrave Macmillan UK, London, UK, pp. 173-191. ISBN 9781137537515

© 2016 The Author

This version available at: http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/84595/

Available in LSE Research Online: October 2017

LSE has developed LSE Research Online so that users may access research output of the School. Copyright © and Moral Rights for the papers on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. Users may download and/or print one copy of any article(s) in LSE Research Online to facilitate their private study or for non-commercial research. You may not engage in further distribution of the material or use it for any profit-making activities or any commercial gain. You may freely distribute the URL (http://eprints.lse.ac.uk) of the LSE Research Online website.

This document is the author's submitted version of the book section. There may be differences between this version and the published version. You are advised to consult the publisher's version if you wish to cite from it.

Mutually Implicated Myths: The Democratic Control of the Armed Forces and Militarism

Katharine M. Millar

(This piece is a chapter in the forthcoming volume *Myths and International Politics: A Mythographical Approach to the Study of IR*, Bliesemann DeGuevara, B., ed. (Abingdon: Routledge, anticipated 2016).

[6,959 words, abstract excluded]

Abstract:

In the post-war era, international organizations have increasingly promoted the democratic control of the armed forces (DCAF) in new and transitional states. As DCAF employs the language of accountability, rationality, and peace, the principle has an explicitly normative character. Utilizing Foucauldian theory, this chapter argues that the purportedly pacific nature of DCAF, however, is a potent policy myth which is subtly dependent upon a secondary myth – militarism. The chapter examines the implication of academics and policymakers in the construction and reification of these mutually-reinforcing myths. Overall, it is argued that the discourse of militarism identifies the valorization of violence by democratic societies as 'deviant' exceptions to the generally pacific nature of DCAF, normalizing the quotidian reliance of democracies upon the (potential) for political violence.

Introduction

Clausewitz's aphorism – 'War is a continuation of politics by other means' – may be read as a policy prescription identifying the appropriate relationship between state authorities and institutions of violence. The construction of war as a form of policy, subject, as any other, to the will of the political authorities, thus presents an instrumental understanding of the use of force that represents and informs a long intellectual tradition extolling the benefits of the political/civilian control of the military. The transition from generally civilian to specifically democratic control of the armed forces has been halting, as 'historically, the two have been neither inseparable nor interdependent' (Szemerkényi 1996, 3). Militaries retained a great deal of institutional power and political influence across Europe well into the twentieth century, while elsewhere newly-independent revolutionary and/or authoritarian regimes in the Global South frequently fused political and military authority as, to an extent, did the communist states of the Cold War.

Currently, major organisations actively promote the democratic control of the armed forces, often referred to as 'DCAF' or, as is increasingly common, 'security sector reform', as an explicit policy aim in the context of new and transitional states. As DCAF typically employs the exhortative language of transparency, accountability, morality, and, often, peace, rather than formal argumentation, this chapter suggests that DCAF may be understood as a particularly powerful, even 'meta', international policy myth. The chapter proceeds by outlining the constituent practical components and normative convictions of contemporary DCAF-as-policy, placing it in the context of Dvora Yanow's understanding of the characteristics and functions of policy myths.

The balance of the chapter, utilising the Foucauldian concepts of discipline and normalisation, argues that not only is the popular understanding of the purportedly pacific nature of DCAF a potent policy myth, it itself is subtly dependent upon a *secondary, academic* myth – militarism. In doing so, the chapter maps and unpacks the implication of policymakers and, primarily, academics in the construction and reification of these mutually-reinforcing myths. Overall, it is argued that the discourse of militarism identifies the valorisation of, and participation in, violence by democratic societies as 'deviant' exceptions to the generally constraining, rational tendencies of DCAF, thus normalising the quotidian reliance of democracies upon the (potential for) political violence.

DCAF as international policy

The contemporary status of DCAF as a major policy goal of a range of international organizations stems from the twin post-Cold War desires of Western powers to a) ensure European security following the break-up of the Soviet Union and b) maintaining the trans-Atlantic NATO alliance despite the demise of the Warsaw Pact (de Santis 1994, 61-81). To this end, NATO created the 1994 ‘Partnership for Peace’ program, intended to support the democratization of aspiring NATO members through a variety of measures (NATO 2012), including the promotion of DCAF (Rose 1994, 13-19). Given its perceived utility in the promotion of democracy and regional stability – and in the absence of an ideologically-acceptable alternative – DCAF became a preferred policy of the ‘international community’ (see Kaczmarska, this volume) promoted by the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, and the African Union, among others (see OSCE 2005; DCAF 2013; UNGA 2008; OECD 2006). Perhaps the best expression of the growing international consensus as to the importance of the promotion of DCAF policies is the creation of the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of the Armed Forces in 2000 (DCAF 2013), which works with virtually every major international organization in the furtherance of DCAF. It is supported by sixty-one member states, reflecting the extent to which DCAF has become a common policy (goal) of the ‘international community’.

While a great deal of DCAF literature was developed in the 1960s and 1970s in relation to the ‘new’ post-colonial states in Africa and Latin America, this chapter highlights the extent to which, following the decline of the Soviet Union, it has become possible to promote the Western, liberal policy of DCAF as that of the ‘international community’ as a whole. In other words, while DCAF is not a recent development, its promulgation as the commonsense consensus of a range of international institutions is. Correspondingly, the iteration of DCAF of interest here is not its context-specific meso-/micro-practice within a particular organization, but rather its broader construction and dissemination as an overarching policy goal throughout the 'international community'.

At this general level, DCAF is articulated as a policy regarding the formal structure of institutional arrangements, consisting of: a) a clear constitutional/legal division of authority between military and civilian authorities; b) the dependence of defense budgets and military deployment upon parliamentary approval; c) the cultivation of military professionalism; and d) building the capacity and expertise of civilian ministries of defense (Simon cited in Szemerkényi 1996, 67). In many instances, such structural arrangements are supplemented by a parallel emphasis on the role of civil society in maintaining DCAF, through a removal of military-related media censorship, consultation with non-governmental 'watchdog' organizations, and the formation of military labour unions (Encuţescu 2002, 87-94).

The overall policy goal of DCAF is to address both the 'functional imperative stemming from the threats to the society's security and [the] societal imperative arising from the social forces, ideologies and institutions dominant within society' (Volten 2002, 315-6; Huntington 1972, 2). DCAF thus may be understood as reflecting the division of the modern (liberal) world into separate 'spheres' of social activity (generally understood as public and private, but, in this case, comprising the state, the military, and society – the 'Clausewitzian trinity') (Clausewitz 1989, 89). The goal of isolating the military from the 'public' life of politics represents a normative commitment to 'detaching and freeing the other sectors from the use of force, and so eventually reducing and marginalizing the military sector itself' (Buzan 1997, 23). Despite its technical emphasis on structural and institutional reform, DCAF is very much aimed at 'containing' the military/violence in order to promote peace and ‘protect’ democracy – a project embedded in the broader Western cultural and ideological heritage of liberalism.

DCAF as policy myth

DCAF may be understood as a particularly potent policy myth, or ‘narrative created and believed by a group of people that diverts attention away from a puzzling part of their reality’ (Yanow 1992, 401). Drawing on Dvora Yanow’s understanding of the four elements of myth as narration, social construction and context, belief, and incommensurability (401), this section examines the cultural foundation and social function of DCAF beyond its superficial, technical manifestation as international policy. The most salient characteristic of DCAF as a policy myth is its social construction within the context of a particular time and place (401) – the West in the immediate aftermath of the post-Cold War era. The perceived ‘victory’ of liberal democracy following the fall of the Soviet Union ushered in an era of ‘liberal triumphalism’, wherein politicians, policymakers, and, to an extent, academics, attributed to ‘liberal democracies’ an inherent peacefulness in their mutual interactions, a greater ‘moral reliability’ in their international relations, and an unmatched record in the protection of citizens rights (Reus-Smit 2005, 75). DCAF is both firmly embedded within (and a purposive extension of) broader Western cultural and ideological liberalism. Its explicit commitment to universal civil and political rights, the rule of law, democracy, rationality, and, ostensibly, non-violent conflict resolution (Howard 1989, 11 and 137) thus provides DCAF with a universalized normative foundation while obscuring the value-conflict inherent to its assumptions.

Liberalism ‘regards war as an unnecessary aberration from normal international intercourse and believes that in a rational, orderly world wars would not exist: that they can be abolished' (Howard 1989, 137). It is this belief, and the impulse to act upon it – the 'liberal conscience' (11) – that informs the narrative aspect of DCAF as meta-policy. The liberal understanding of history as progressive, moving towards the constant improvement of the human condition through the universalization of liberal values, situates DCAF firmly within a long, imagined, and teleological historical trajectory moving away from the rule of kings towards the ultimate quelling of violence through the will of the people. More concretely, DCAF may be understood as a specific manifestation of liberal democratic peace theory, which holds that due to popular sovereignty and human rationality, liberal democracies are the most pacific collectivity (Doyle 1983). The promotion of DCAF, therefore, furthers the on-going liberal project of world peace through the transformation of otherwise threatening societies into conformity with the liberal norm. While democratic peace theory does engage in logical argumentation, which is not in and of itself 'myth-like', both it and DCAF (re)produce the liberal meta-narrative of progress As this secular faith 'transcends a specific historical time' (Skonieczny 2001, 439) and, in its broadest form, is largely 'immune to factual attack' (Cutherbertson qtd in Yanow 1992, 401), DCAF is imbued with the implicit narrative qualities of a potent policy myth.

That the utility of DCAF as a means of protecting rights and reducing violence meets Yanow's third criterion of myth – belief – hardly bears stating. While Fukuyama's 'end of history' may not have come to pass, it is difficult to imagine a policymaker intelligibly arguing for any other approach to the management of the armed forces. This explicit promotion of DCAF by the 'international community', however, highlights a contradiction between the *domestic* understanding of DCAF – as containing the violent capacities of the military in order to safeguard external defense and internal liberty (Akkoyunlo 2007, 7) – and its apparent utility for the 'international community' as a means of preventing conflict. The contrast between DCAF as a policy of individual states and as a policy goal of the ‘international community’ highlights the final aspect of Yanow’s myth – ‘incommensurable values – two or more equally valued but incompatible principles embodied within a single policy issue’ (1992, 402).

These values are democracy and security. Despite the denial of violence in the daily life of liberal democracy, the possibility of such a society, which depoliticizes violence, relied upon force for its inception, and continues to depend upon at least the potential for future violence for its maintenance (Jabri 2006, 55). As Adam Smith observed, the ‘invention of firearms, an invention which at first sight appears to be so pernicious, is certainly favourable, both to the permanency and to the extension of civilization’ (qtd. in Bowden 2009, 45). DCAF’s attribution of violent activities of the state to the excesses of the military is something of a sleight of hand, obscuring the fact that while the military might be tamed by politics, ‘politics’ might yet find functional value in the use of force.

The active promotion of DCAF by the ‘international community’, however, belies the limits of its pacific nature, as it contains an implicit acknowledgement that non-liberal democratic states are potential enemies. After all, the (liberal) state monopolization of violence necessarily entails its exercise against those whose liberal credentials are lacking or suspect (van Kreieken qtd. in Bowden 2009, 147). The proselytizing impulse inherent to the liberal historical narrative driving the West to help Others become ‘like us’ is driven as much by a self-interested desire for survival, and perception of difference as threat, as it is an altruistic attempt to raise all peoples to a universal standard of civilization. Accession to DCAF thus becomes the logical means of insulating a particular state from the force of the liberal West. While liberalism may be couched in the language of universalism and progress, it has a profoundly exclusivist logic, differentiating amongst the enlightened and political, and the retrograde, violent Others, so as to rationalize (and facilitate) the use of force against them.

Despite what might be understood as the ‘defense’ exception, therefore, the myth of DCAF-as-taming military/violence, on its own, is not capable of completely reconciling this tension between the pacific liberal self-understanding with the war-making activities of democracies. There many examples of democratic states – in full control of their armed forces – undertaking aggressive foreign policy, from the promotion of democracy-by-force by the US in Iraq to the eagerness with which the French and British greeted the First World War (see Doyle 1983). While DCAF’s normative narrative allows it to justify the co-existence of a defensive military with a democratic society, the myth struggles to account for instances in which democracies demonstrate the aggressive use of military force paired with an apparent societal approval of (or eagerness for) war.. For this, DCAF relies upon a second myth, premised upon the same normative convictions and structural understanding of military-state-society relations: militarism.

Myth and normalization

Drawing on the Foucauldian concepts of productive power and normalization, this chapter argues that in order to account for the powerful regulative effects of myth, rather than relying upon the vague notion of ‘belief’, it may be more useful to understand myths as involved in the construction of ‘truth’. Foucauldian theory understands ‘truth’ to be the product of a particular notion of power, which is diffuse, de-centralized, and ‘productive of meanings, subject identities, their interrelationships, and a range of imaginable conduct’ (Doty 1996, 229). It is ‘implicated in all knowledge systems’, to the extent that ‘we are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth’ (Foucault 1980, 93). DCAF benefits from a host of epistemological commitments bound up with liberal modernity, particularly the purportedly-objective character of social science, attendant fact-value distinction, and instrumental nature of policy. This constitution of truth makes it possible to present DCAF as a neutral policy that, while normatively-informed, is not a normative value itself, but the means to an end.

Yanow's statement that myth is 'presented as a matter of fact' (1992, 415) may be read as the expression of a complex process wherein DCAF, rather than being understood as a powerful, political manifestation of the broader discourse of liberal modernity, is, instead, considered objectively true in its instrumental utility and effectiveness. The construction of DCAF as a social fact thus obscures its historic contingency, facilitating its universalistic claims to constituting not only the best, but the sole successful policy of 'controlling' the military. Myths, therefore, are not simply 'believed', but believed in a particular way that elides their own implication in relations of power, and instead constitutes them not only as 'true', but as *natural*. Crucially, however, most myths cannot, in their discrete form, completely support this process. While myths are generally effective in mediating the 'incommensurate values' inherent to policy, discrepancies, such as the aforementioned eagerness of much of British society for war in 1914, do occur. Such incidents thus have the potential to imperil the authority of policy myths. Maintenance of a myth's 'truth', therefore, relies on the ability to convincingly account for – or normalize – the many situations in which it is not.

DCAF's 'success' is subtly dependent upon what may be understood as a secondary, myth – militarism. The argument follows, analogically, from Foucault's understanding of depoliticization and normalization in the penal system (Edkins 1999, 51). According to Foucault, prisons produce a subject (the criminal), a system of knowledge (criminology), and an institutional means of addressing the 'problem' (prisons) (12). Through the process of criminalization, and the correspondent normalization of 'crime' as an expected aspect of sociality, the ‘political force of certain acts’ related to such practices is neutralized. As such, ‘the failure of prisons in their (apparent) aim of rehabilitation is in actuality a success’, in so far as they reaffirm the inevitability and ‘naturalness’ of crime (12). In this reading, the concept of militarism supports DCAF (as practically effective and normatively valid) by constructing the occasional outbursts of aggression as normal, rather than a sign of systemic flaw.

Militarism as Myth

Conventional historical accounts of militarism attribute its origins to Prussia, which is often considered militaristic virtually from its inception, characterized by highly nationalistic public education, universal conscription, and the isolation of the military elites from broader society (Posen 1993, 80-124). Following the success of the Prussian military in the Franco-Prussian War, so the narrative goes, other European states strove to emulate the Prussian system, bringing the social elevation of the military (McNeill 1984, 253-5), mass experience of military service, and bureaucratization of military organization to bear across the continent. Though, due to differing empirical manifestations of the same general process across Europe, there is a tendency to portray militarism as synonymous with ‘Prussianism’, rather than a broader social phenomenon (Summers 1976, 105), considerable consensus exists as to its role in promoting aggressive foreign policy (Howard 2002; Miller 1997; Bond 1998; Vagts 1959).

There are two significant elements to this account of the origins of militarism. In terms of narrative, it functions less as a ‘policy’ myth than a myth in the classical sense, containing ‘heroes or villains, and discernible plot lines’ (Yanow 1992, 401). Militarism, or the pan-societal saturation of military values or glorification of war, is attributed to early

Prussia which, given the presentist knowledge of the outbreak of WWI, is cast as a villain. The 'spread' of 'Prussianism' across Europe approximates a typical 'fall from grace' myth, as societies are presented as implicitly 'corrupted' by the institutional and normative pathologies that accompany militarism. As with policy myths, this construction of militarism, though it has an understanding of causality, does not engage so much in the language of logic or argumentation than the assertive language of description, a structure not unlike narrative.

This highlights the, second 'mythic' function of the academic militarism literature – its implication in the construction of militarism as a 'real' phenemonon. The majority of work on the origins of militarism is, unsurprisingly, performed by historians (e.g. Vagts, Howard, Berghahn). According to academic convention – an important regime of power/knowledge production – historians are considered to work inductively from empirical evidence to reach factually accurate classifications, thus benefitting from cultural epistemological assumptions as to what 'counts' as knowledge and how it should be acquired, the conclusions drawn by historians (and social scientists) are commonly regarded as 'truth' (Milliken 1999, 236-7). In purporting to 'describe' or 'study' militarism, therefore, the academic community also participates in *creating* it.

In doing so, the academic literature not only constructs militarism as an historic 'truth', but also as a form of social pathology. For instance, much of the literature is devoted to identifing the *specific* origins and nature of militarism. One group of scholars, such as McNeill and Posen, for instance, considers militarism to derive from an array of institutional arrangements which enabled military 'cliques' to make policy decisions independent of political authorities and the 'nation in arms' policies of military organization and mass recruitment (Bond 1998, 58 and 65). Another school, in contrast, considers militarism to be a social and political phenomenon, characterized by a 'vast array of customs, interests, prestige, actors, and thought associated with armies and wars and yet transcending true military purposes' (Vagts 1959, 13), highlighting 'ideational' factors – such as the ability of democracy to create personal identification between 'the people' and the state (Howard 2009, 110-2) – as significant to militarism's development.

The impression left by both schools is one of diagnosis. Due to the association of militarism with the outbreak of WWI, scholarly interest in its historical origins and various manifestations stems from a desire to understand 'what went wrong' – thus reifying an absence of conflict as normal. As such, despite its mythic narrative, the specifics of militarism are understood in a highly evaluative way, through the lens of ostensibly objective social scientific language of characteristics, causes, and effects. Correspondingly, perhaps the greatest legacy of the historic militarism literature is the indelibly negative normative character of, if not the concept itself, certainly any situation to which it is applied.[1]

Similar to the way in which the prison system – and its attendant academic discipline of criminology – are understood to (re)produce the social category of 'delinquency' as a social pathology through a process of scientific labeling, study, and evaluation (Foucault 1995, 276-7; Edkins 1999, 50), so too does the academic treatment of militarism present it as a problem to be solved. In doing so, the academic construction of militarism suggests that it is 'possible to supervise it', and to channel the social pathology into 'forms of illegality [or violence] that are less dangerous: maintained by pressures of control on the fringes of society' (Foucault 1995, 278). Identifying militarism as a transgressive social practice thus renders it amenable to intervention, and provides the impetus for isolation, mitigation, and/or control. The academic 'creation' of militarism thus renders a complex social phenomenon 'knowable' and, like crime, theoretically amenable to eradication.

---

[1] For a notable exception to this point, see Shaw 1991, 12.

DCAF and militarism

The policy intervention(s) intended to forestall militarism both reflect and inform the prescriptive logics and normative assumptions of DCAF. The mainstream academic militarism literature may be divided into two broad schools of thought roughly reflecting the institutional vs. sociological/cultural diagnoses of pathology evident in the previous historical analysis, which, despite their differing emphases, demonstrate striking similarity in their ‘treatment’ of militarism.

As a means of framing the discussion, it should be clarified that it is not the intention of this chapter to suggest that militarism scholarship either purposively works in concert with DCAF or has been directly drafted into service as a means of explicit justification/validation of liberalism’s occasional violent lapses. Militarism, while important, is not the sole source of DCAF’s policy authority, nor was it created as an active excuse for its failures. The point made here is rather more subtle, and rests on demonstrating the degree to which militarism scholarship – much of which was consciously written against the violent tendencies and cultural valorization of the military in liberal democracies – is, in essence, drawing from the same ideological well and foundational assumptions as DCAF, thus limiting the bounds of effective critique. What is at stake is not the way in which particular academics or specific definitions of militarism construct the relationship between violence and politics in liberal democracies, as all presented here are necessarily archetypes, but rather the way in which the *creation* of militarism as real (and pathological) inadvertently serves to normalize the violence of liberal democracies, preserving the normative validity and technical efficacy of DCAF.

Institutions and civil-military relations

The first such approach to the phenomenon of militarism, the civil-military relations (CMR) school, is typified by a strict focus on the military *institution*. It emphasizes 'institutional and formal' factors in examining the structural relationship between distinct civil, political, and military spheres (Barak and Sheffer 2010, 15). It is primarily framed by a central concern: the separation of the military from other spheres of social life through the delineation of an appropriate relationship between the military and the civilian government. Virtually every scholars supports the 'common-sense' assertion, explicit to the DCAF policy literature, that the military ought to be subject to the civilian government, and apolitical in nature. Political neutrality is understood as the abstention from formal partisan politics or seeking civilian governmental authority. When this arrangement fails, and the military becomes involved in national politics, it is as a result of the 'political institutional structure of society', rather than a characteristic of the military itself (Huntington 2006, 192-4). Other scholars argue that that a professional military ought to be educated so as to actively generate a deep commitment not to neutrality per se, but 'the rules of the [democratic] political process' (Janowitz 1977, 22 and 78). CMR scholars agree, however, that a professional military is crucial to avoiding institutionally-generated militarism, or a military regime (78).

With respect to DCAF, this portrayal of militarism illustrates two important findings. The first is that, in its unambiguous diagnosis of militarism as the result of a structural/institutional pathology that enables the military to participate in politics, this literature, akin to the prescriptive, outcome-oriented nature of DCAF, and its persistent promotion by the West as a means of coping with developing and transitional states, is clearly 'problem-solving' in nature. Not only does this reify militarism as a social pathology, but, due to the historical entanglement of such scholarship with the development of policy towards the Cold War 'Third World', it mirrors the normative tenets and policy assumptions of DCAF; the bodies of work were co-produced. The presentation of the military by CMR scholars as ‘less a source of influence on society at large, than a sphere which has been profoundly circumscribed by the wider society’ (Shaw 1991, 74-5) (re)produces DCAF’s cultural embeddedness in the modern liberal understanding of human sociality as divided into discrete realms of activity (74-5). By presentating DCAF as the only logical solution to a dangerous social pathology, the literature elevates the strict separation between civilian authorities, the military, and society to a normative imperative. As such, the social scientific designation of DCAF as a bulwark against militarism furthers the policy’s authority, and bolsters its status as ‘common-sense’, naturalized truth.

Perhaps more significant, however, is the second, subtler way in which structural approaches to militarism legitimate DCAF. CMR scholars take great pains to differentiate between what are considered to be normal, acceptable, activities of the military, such as defensively preparing for war, and the development of militarism. In endorsing the foundational assumptions of the normative validity and functional efficacy of an idealized model of DCAF, the militarism literature implicitly naturalizes the ‘regular’ use of force by the military. As argued by Foucault with respect to crime, the penal system is concerned, despite its rhetoric, less with the eradication of crime than with ‘handling illegalities…differentiat[ing] them…and provid[ing] them with a general “economy”’ (Foucault 1995, 272). The labeling and policy ‘treatment’ of deviant social behavior is not about abolishing objectively ‘bad’ acts, but about creating an implicit ordering in which some acts are considered pathological while others are not. The militarism literature constructs an ordering of violence wherein militarism is carved out from the broader ambit of military-related force as a ‘deviant’ case, thus rendering the state-authorized use of force normatively unremarkable. Through this process of naturalization, this particular conception of militarism helps resolve a tension within DCAF between the obvious use of force by liberal democracies and its apparent ‘success’ in promoting peace, as the habitual use of force by democracies, when conducted in accordance with legal oversight processes (and, therefore, is not militaristic), literally does not count.

Critical Militarism Scholarship

The critical school of militarism scholarship, while still concerned with the military as a socially-embedded institution, emphasizes primarily sociological, but also cultural, material, and ideological/ideational factors in its analysis of the military as ‘a major arena for social exchanges’ (Barak and Sheffer 2010, 19 (fn3)). Associated scholars focus on broad patterns of social interaction, examining the military as a banal, pervasive, and everyday influence upon liberal society. Correspondingly, critical militarism scholars aim to problematize the taken-for-granted state of liberal affairs.[2]

For the purposes of this discussion, this diverse work is parsed by the degree to which the criticism challenges the normativity of liberalism. At one end of the spectrum is a literature which employs ‘militarism’ explicitly diagnostically, to suggest something is ‘off’ in the typical/desirable ordering of liberal society. In contrast to the institutional anxiety exhibited by CMR scholars, the normative concern of these narrowly critical scholars lies in their perception of an excessive military influence upon society. The many studies, polemics, and popular commentaries in this category indicate an underlying anxiety that military values, symbols, or attitudes are ‘leaking’ from their institutional container into a broader society which, without militarism, would be fully democratic and liberal (see Dixon 2012 and Bacevich 2005).

---

[2] It must be noted that this criticality operates at differing degrees and, crucially, that not all critical studies of the military are necessarily studies of *militarism.* Many works that fall under the ambit of broader critical war/military studies, which conceptualize politics and violence as continuous, constitutive aspects of sociality, largely avoid the issues raised here. For this approach, see Barkawi 2011.

Though, like the CMR scholars, this work demonstrates a DCAF-inflected desire to detach the military from politics, it is distinguished by its understanding of politics as either a) all activities taking place within the public sphere or b) pervasive to broader social life, rather than simply formal democratic processes. The military is not just to be institutionally constrained, but also isolated from society. This is in keeping with the recent iterations of DCAF, which hold that 'demilitarization must transcend the idea of the formal withdrawal of the military from the political arena' and emphasizes a form of 'deeper' democracy, wherein civil society and the media also over-see and moderate the military (Houngnikpo 2010, 26; Encuţescu 2002, 87-94). Due to their common implication in liberal modernity, therefore, both schools (re)produce, almost as a normative imperative, the distinction between the 'spheres' of society inherent to DCAF. Given this understanding of the appropriate structure of society, DCAF is once again reified as the only logical 'treatment' for combatting incipient militarism.

The majority of critical militarism scholarship, however, works to problematize this 'spherical' conceptualization, suggesting that militarism is not antithetical to the workings of liberalism (Stavrianakis and Selby 2012, 6). Examples of this perspective include analyses which, generally, consider militarism to be diffuse throughout various cultural productions, such as film and video-games, which promote military values, masculinities, and rationales as both normatively exemplar and geopolitically exigent (Stahl 2010, 48; see also Ó Tuathail 2005; Dalby 2008). From a more sociological perspective, the many studies investigating specific institutional-cultural-ideational configurations of militarism – militarism with adjectives – ranging from British 'nostalgia militarism' (Shaw 1991, 118), to 'militarized socialism', (Mann 1987, 46) to even civilian-targeting 'terror-militarism' (Shaw 2005, 132) fall within this rubric. This school also encompasses the many feminist investigations of the relationship between militarism and patriarchy – a process of militarization deeply implicated in subject-formation (Enloe 2004, 2007; Stavrianakis and Selby 2012, 14).

Despite this school's explicitly critical engagement with liberalism, however – as well as its exposition of the arbitrariness of state violence – from the meta-perspective of myth-making and truth production, it subtly reproduces the distinction between liberalism and militarism, and violence and politics. Stavrianakis and Selby, for instance, construct militarism as 'either a concept or object of analysis' (2012, 5), further affirming militarism as 'real'. Similarly, though the distinction is fine, it is worth noting that while recognizing that militarism and liberalism may co-exist, or that liberalism is prone to militarism (Edgerton 1991; Wood 2007), is an important critical move, it is not the same as suggesting that the violent phenomenon associated with militarism are, in fact, *necessary* to liberalism. This is illustrated by the literature's frequent call for the 'demilitarization' of certain aspects of social life, exemplified by Enloe's intriguing suggestion that it ought, hypothetically, be possible to conceive of a 'less militarized' military (2007, 78-80). The notion that militarism may 'wax and wane', or be ameliorated through 'demilitarization', suggests that as its severity/intensity is subject to change, it ought, at least theoretically, be possible to excise militarism from liberalism. Though the point is somewhat semantic, it is non-trivial: liberalism might support, manifest, or even actively encourage militarism, but it is not *necessarily* militaristic, not necessarily violent.[3]

---

[3] Such a move also tends to naturalize the militarized yet (superficially and formally) *non-military* quotidian coercive practices of liberal democracies – such as the use of riot police, the detention of illegal migrants, or torture – through the construction of militarism as a powerful, emotionally resonant social pathology explicitly defined in terms of its association with the institutional military. Critical scholarship may inadvertently naturalize non-military violence either through elision, or, somewhat paradoxically, through its characterization *as military*, and thus subsumed within the original pathology.

Overall, in contrast to CMR scholars who maintain the social prestige of the military, the critical/sociological school, in its general concern regarding the undue influence of the military over society, implicitly constructs association with the military as a normative ill. As a result, though not exhibited in each piece by each associated scholar, in the aggregate, the school tends to conceptually collapse violence more generally with the military, implying that the 'containment' of violence to the military will succeed in protecting democracy and pacific civil life. This has the effect of suggesting that in the absence of contamination by 'military values', liberal society would be, for the narrowly critical scholars generally pacific, or, for the others, at least significantly improved. Militaristic outbursts may be understood as inherently pathological and 'blamed' on either the military directly, or the entanglement and mutual-reinforcement of aggressive and patriarchal military values and ideals with liberalism itself. While militarism may co-occur, is not constructed as a normal, constitutive aspect of liberal democracy. This thus, at a deeper level than the simple reification of the 'spherical' understanding of society, bolsters DCAF's normative claims by preserving the ideological coherency of its underlying liberalism through the conceptual exclusion of instances of liberalism's failure to adhere to its own principles from constituting liberalism at all.

Conclusion

In the aggregate, the myth of militarism supports the policy authority of DCAF as 'true' in a variety of ways. The first is to naturalize the 'regular' military violence of liberal states through the creation of an illiberal economy which, through the distinction of 'militaristic' violence as an inherent social pathology, renders other forms, in simple contrast, normal and unremarkable. In this way, the habitual use of force by liberal democracies undertaken in accordance with democratic checks and balances fails to constitute militarism, and thus, often fails to garner active politico-normative concern. Correspondingly, the use of force by DCAF states is presented as continuous with, rather than opposed to, the policy's general principles. The potential tension between the pursuit of security and liberal values is thus resolved through the naturalization of the use of military force as a normal aspect of democratic governance.

The second function of militarism in supporting DCAF relates to the role of historians and social scientists in its construction as a 'true' academic myth. The majority of the highlighted scholarship conceptualizes militarism as a social phenomenon that 'breaks out' when something is 'off' in institutional arrangements, political ideologies, or cultural representations of the military within society. Militarism, like crime, is presented as an intermittent, cyclical, social force. Its construction as 'deviant' therefore, does not normalize militarism itself, but rather its *occurrence* as an inevitability to be managed. The academic study of militarism, akin to Foucault's understanding of criminology, and the creation of a policy and institutional structure to control it (analogous to the prison) simultaneously create, combat, and, in doing so, reproduce the social ill they are forged to eradicate. In a similar fashion, then, to the way the 'reality' of delinquency legitimates the power to punish, militarism naturalizes DCAF as *the* means of governing the use of force while simultaneously obscuring 'any element of excess or abuse it may entail' (302).

Correspondingly, the myth of militarism 'effac[es] what may be violent in one and arbitrary in the other', understood here as liberality and democracy, and, in doing so, 'attenuat[es] the effects of revolt they may arouse' (303). Through the construction of militarism in such a way as to inadvertently yet significantly, implicitly elevate DCAF as the logical 'solution' to terrible social pathology, the policy comes to constitute a normative imperative in of itself. As a result, the 'other' violence of democratic societies is, to varying degrees, naturalized and depoliticized. Militarism, therefore, as crime to the carceral system, rather than constituting what at first might be understood as a definitive policy failure, actually *supports* the myth of DCAF's normativity and efficacy. The construction of militarism as pathological yet inevitable simultaneously 'explains away' DCAF's failures to eradicate aggressive foreign policy, naturalizes the system's 'other' coercive 'excesses', and justifies the policy's continued existence. The academic myth of militarism as an 'actual' collective social transgression, due to a common intellectual and historical heritage, is a perfect foil to the tenets and assumptions inherent to the DCAF policy myth.

This mutually-reinforcing construction of DCAF and militarism thus raises the question as to whether they actually constitute two separate myths, or whether policymakers and academics are reproducing the same *savoir*, or regulative body of knowledge, albeit in the distinctive idioms of their respective practice. The intertwining of the two logics raised here should not be taken as a condemnation of militarism scholarship – or, indeed, even DCAF itself, which, though problematic, contributes to the everyday security of many individuals, peoples, and societies – but rather a reflection of the limitations of critique (and failure of language) within a context of ideological, cultural, and normative hegemony. What this argument suggests, therefore, is that we should perhaps strive, as do many of the critical scholars referenced here, for a greater recognition of and attentiveness to the role of academics as myth-makers, even (or particularly) when the connection between scholarship and policy seems remote.

Bibliography

Akkoyunlo, Karabekir. 2007. “Military Reform and Democratization: Turkish and Indonesian Experiences at the Turn of the Millennium.” Adelphi Paper Series, *International Institute for Strategic Studies*, no. 392. Abingdon: Routledge.

Bacevich, Andrew. 2005. *The New American Militarism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Barak, Oren and Gabriel Sheffer. 2010. *Militarism and Israeli Society*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Barkawi, Tarak. 2011. “From War to Security: Security Studies, the Wider Agenda, and the Fate of the Study of War”. *Millennium* 29:701-16.

Berghahn, Volker. 1984. *Militarism: The History of an International Debate, 1861–1979*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Bond, Brian. 1998. *War and Society in Europe 1870-1970*. Guernsey: McGill-Queen’s Press.

Bowden, Brett. 2009. *The Empire of Civilization*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Buzan, Barry. 1997. “Rethinking Security After the Cold War.” *Cooperation and Conflict* 32:5-28.

von Clausewitz, Carl. 1989. *On War*. Edited and translated by Peter Paret and Michael Howard. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Dalby, Simon. 2008. "Warrior Geopolitics: Gladiator, Black Hawk Down and The Kingdom of Heaven*." Political Geography* 27:439-455.

Dixon, Paul. 2012. *The British Approach to Counterinsurgency*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Downing, Brian. 1992. *The Military Revolution and Political Change*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Doyle, Michael. 1983. "Kant, Liberal Legacies and Foreign Affairs." *Philosophy & Public Affairs*. 12:205-235.

Edgerton, David. 1991. "Liberal Militarism and the British State." *New Left Review* 185:138-169.

Edkins, Jenny. 1999. *Poststructuralism and International Relations*. Boulder CO: Lynne Reiner Publishers, Inc.

Encuţescu, Aurel Sorin. 2002. "Aspects of Democratic Control Over the Armed Forces." In *Globalization of Civil-Military Relations: Democratization, Reform and Security*. Conference Proceedings. 87-94. Bucharest: Enciclopedica Publishing House.

Enloe, Cynthia. 2004. *The Curious Feminist*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

---. 2007. *Globalization and Militarism*. New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Foucault, Michel. 1980. *Power/Knowledge*. Edited by Colin Gordon. Hempstead: The Harvester Press Limited.

- - -. 1995. *Disciple and Punish*. 2nd ed. Translated by Alan Sheridan. New York; Random House, Inc.

Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of the Armed Forces (DCAF). 2013. “United Nations.” http://www.dcaf.ch/Partner/United-Nations. Accessed 22 March 2013.

- - -. 2013. “About Us.” http://www.dcaf.ch/About-Us. Accessed 22 March 2013.

Ghébali, Victor-Yves and Alexander Lambert. 2005. “General Introduction” in *OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security,* 1-4. Leiden: Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe.

Howard, Michael. 1989. *War and the Liberal Conscience*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

---. 2002. *The First World War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- - -. 2009. *War in European History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Huntington, Samuel. 1972. *The Soldier and the State*. Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press.

- - -. 2006. *Political Order in Changing Societies*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Houngnikpo, Mathurin. 2010. *Guarding the Guardians*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited.

Jabri, Vivienne. 2006. “War, Security and the Liberal State.” *Security Dialogue* 37:47-64.

Janowitz, Morris. 1977. *Military Institutions and Coercion in Developing Nations*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Mann, Michael. 1987. “The Roots and Contradictions of Modern Militarism.” In *New Left Review* 162:35-50.

McNeill, William. 1984. *The Pursuit of Power.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Miller, Stuart. 1997. *Mastering Modern European History*. 2nd ed. Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan.

Milliken, Jennifer. 1999. “The Study of Discourse in International Relations.” *European Journal of International Relations* 5:225-54.

NATO. 2012. “Partnership for Peace Program.” Accessed 22 March 2013. http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_50349.htm.

Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. 2006. “Policy and Good Practice.” In *Security System Reform and Governance*. Paris: OECD Publishing.

Posen, Barry. 1993. ‘Nationalism, the Mass Army, and Military Power.’*International Security* 18:80-124.

Reus-Smit, Christian. 2005. “Liberal Hierarchy and the License to Use Force.” *Review of International Studies* 31:71-92.

Rose, Charlies. 1994. “Democratic Control of the Armed Forces: A Parliamentary Role in the Partnership for Peace.” *NATO Review* 42:13-9.

de Santis, Hugh. 1994. “Romancing NATO: Partnership for Peace and Eastern European Stability.” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 17: 61-81.

Shaw, Martin. 1991. *Post-Military Society*. Padstow: Polity Press.

- - -. 2005. *The New Western Way of Warfare*. Cornwall: Polity.

Skonieczny, Amy. 2001. “Constructing NAFTA: Myth, Representation, and the Discursive Construction of US Foreign Policy.” *International Studies Quarterly* 45:433-54.

Stahl, Roger. 2010. *Militainment.* London: Routledge.

Stavrianakis, Anna and Jan Selby. 2012. *Militarism and International Relations*. Abingdom: Routledge.

Summers, Anne. 1976. ‘Essay: Militarism in Britain Before the Great War.’ *History*

Workshop 2:104-123.

Szemerkényi, Réka. 1996. “Central European Civil-Military Reforms at Risk.” Adelphi Paper Series, *International Institute for Strategic Studies*, no. 306. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ó Tuathail, Gearóid. 2005. “The Frustrations of Geopolitics and the Pleasures of War: Behind Enemy Lines and American Geopolitical Culture.” *Geopolitics* 10:356–37.

United Nations General Assembly. 23 January 2008. 62nd session. *The Role of the United Nations in Supporting Security Sector Reform*. (A/62/659).

Vagts, Alfred. 1959. *A History of Militarism*. New York: Meridian Books, Inc.

Volten, Peter. 2002. “New Approaches to Security Studies: Implications for Civil-Military Relations in Theory and Practice.” In *Globalization of Civil-Military Relations: Democratization, Reform and Security*, Conference Proceedings coordinated by George Christian Maior and Larry Watts, PGS. Bucharest: Enciclopedica Publishing House.

Wood, James. 2007. “Anglo-American Liberal Militarism and the Idea of the Citizen Soldier.” *International Journal* 62:403-22.

Yanow, Dvora. 1992. “Silences in Public Policy Discourse: Organizational and Policy Myths.” *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 2:399-423.