

**Katharine Millar**

## The plural of soldier is not troops: the politics of groups in legitimating militaristic violence

**Article (Accepted version)  
(Refereed)**

**Original citation:**

Millar, Katharine (2019) The plural of soldier is not troops: the politics of groups in legitimating militaristic violence. [Security Dialogue](#). ISSN 0967-0106 (In Press)

© 2019 The Author

This version available at: <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/id/eprint/91772>

Available in LSE Research Online: January 2019

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 final accepted version of the journal article. 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.

# The Plural of Soldier is Not Troops: The Politics of Groups in Legitimizing Militaristic Violence

Katharine Millar

Department of International Relations, London School of Economics

This article identifies “the troops” as a new, radically under-examined figure in the Western canon of war. Utilising discourse analysis of an original corpus of US “support the troops” discourses from 2001-2010, the article argues that “the troops” cannot be read as a simple aggregation of the figurative soldier or literal military personnel. Instead, “the troops” “groupness” shifts the politics of the legitimization of violence – and possibility of meaningful dissent – in two distinct ways. Firstly, “the troops” are figured, counterintuitively, as passive, dependent, and at risk of suffering harm. This enables constructions of militaristic, heroic violence to co-exist with empirical experiences of vulnerability without ideological contradiction. Secondly, though many accounts of militarism rely upon citizens’ aspirational identification with the ostensibly-universal soldier, the “groupness” of the troops enables them to incorporate, rather than elide, substantive differences (e.g. race, gender, sexual orientation, etc.) through an all-encompassing relationship of “support”. Consequently, “the troops” may be a more effective avatar of militarism than “the soldier” – and far more important to the legitimization, depoliticization, and even perpetuation of conflict than previously realised. What would the politics of involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq have looked like absent the ‘escape valve’ of the figurative troops?<sup>1</sup>

Keywords: militarism, civil-military relations, liberalism, troops, critical military studies, United States, armed forces, figuration, groups

Author Bio: Katharine M. Millar is Assistant Professor of International Relations at the London School of Economics. Her research examines gendered cultural narratives underlying the modern collective use of force. Dr Millar’s current work investigates the relationship between ‘support the troops’ discourses and normative citizenship in liberal democracies. She has also published on female combatants, gendered representations of violent death, military masculinity, and critical conceptions of militarism.

## Introduction

Critical analyses of war, the military, and (usually Western) society frequently invoke key cultural figures to analytically identify, and succinctly convey, the “messy” assemblages of discourse, materiality, semiotics, and affect that legitimate state violence (Haraway, 1997: 8-12). Chief amongst these have been the figurative soldier – communicating idealised values

---

<sup>1</sup> I would like to gratefully thank Tarak Barkawi, Ben Schraeder, Julia Costa Lopez, Janina Dill, Elizabeth Frazer, Yuna Han, Tristen Naylor, and James Shires, as well as the Security Dialogue reviewers, for their insightful comments on various iterations of this article.

of individual autonomy, masculinity, and nationalist heroism (Dahl Christensen, 2015) – and the wounded veteran, suggesting themes of victimisation, failure, and, potentially, betrayal (Achter, 2010). Each of these figures conveys a series of metaphorical tropes (Haraway, 1997) that exceed their production within a particular time and place. Instead, they invoke a host of prior meanings and associations – such as existential threat, nationalism, sacrifice, common cause, etc. – that populate a Western social imaginary typified by remembrances of World Wars One and Two – and, at a push, Vietnam.

This article begins from the observation that the wars of Western liberal states have broadly shifted from the mass-participation existential conflicts of these imaginaries, often accompanied by conscription, to distant conflicts fought by professional armed forces (Shaw, 2005). While the nature of war-fighting itself may remain relatively continuous, relying on close combat infantry in addition to newer technologies (King, 2011), this shift has altered the military-society relationship. Few citizens serve in the armed forces or have direct knowledge of conflict (Haltiner, 2006). In this context, an under-examined cultural figure – the “troops” – has become key to the narrative canon of war.

Groups of soldiers have long been constituted as a locus of national affect in war; consider, for instance, the positive representation of US GIs giving candy to children in WWII, or the much-mythologised “betrayal” of German WWI veterans at Versailles (Kimball, 1998). The term “troop/troops” has existed as a term to describe military personnel since the sixteenth century (OED, 2018). Until relatively recently, however, the term existed primarily as an empirical category – a flat description of a group of literal military personnel – rather than a distinct cultural figure, akin to the idealised soldier/veteran, conveying a broader assemblage of meanings, affects and relationships. The public salience and political animation of “the troops”, I argue, derives from their production within social relations of support.

The call to “support the troops” was made by a succession of US administrations during the Vietnam war (Coy et al, 2008: 167-9). To combat the war opposition mounted by the peace protest movement, the US government deployed an astroturf “support the troops” campaign in 1967 (Coy et al, 2008: 167-9). “Supporting the troops” was bound up in the complicated construction of the Vietnam-era protestors as “anti-troop” (Beamish et. al., 1995: 345) and endangering not only the soldiers, but also the war effort. This differed from the existential, total wars of the past, wherein “support for the troops” was, in some ways, redundant as a popular statement. The population broadly *participated* in the wars (Howard, 2002: 34), thus alleviating the political and normative imperative to “support” the military, soldiers, etc. Though practices we today associate with supporting the troops – such as sending care packages overseas and wearing supportive badges/ribbons (Moore, 2008) – have a long history, the Vietnam-era onwards may be read as a qualitative shift in the constitution of the troops as a normative figure of social concern rather than an empirical description of military personnel.

References to the “troops” intensified during the 1991 Gulf War. Bolstered by the idea that US peace activists and general society “betrayed” the troops returning from Vietnam, the Gulf War was met with an unprecedented level of pro-military enthusiasm, often framed as a means of “making amends” (Beamish et. al, 1995: 345). Then-President Bush encouraged the nation to “support our boys and girls”, unambiguously indicating that “support for the troops

also meant support for the war” (Coy et al, 2008: 170). This conflict, characterised by popular support and prosecuted by a professional, volunteer military, was strikingly distinct from Vietnam. Yellow ribbons proliferated as a sign of support for the troops, adorning homes, cars, and public buildings (Mariscal, 1991). Peace groups faced enormous pressure to “support the troops” or risk demonization akin to that of their Vietnam-era predecessors (Beamish et. al., 1995: 355). This articulation of popular support for the mass “troops” continued through the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (Millar, 2016: 10). Professional sporting events, for instance, included tributes to military personnel (Fischer, 2014), “support the troops” (StT) yellow ribbons adorned quotidian consumer items (Stahl, 2009), and the US government launched a massive public relations operation to raise the troops’ public profile (US Inspector General, 2008).

As observed by critical military scholars, “the troops” have come to comprise a key locus for the interpretation of war and the normative relationship between society and the military (Tidy, 2015; Stahl, 2009). The social prevalence of “the troops” is most evident in the US, which is selected here as the paradigmatic case. Though this article brackets potential transnational diffusion, the phenomenon is also apparent in other democracies with professional armed forces, including Australia (News.com.au, 2015), Canada (Wegner, 2017), the UK (Basham, 2013: 23-7), and India (Parashar, 2018:129). Despite this, with a few exceptions (Stahl, 2009; Managhan, 2011; Wegner, 2017), “the troops” have rarely constituted an object of inquiry in their own right, instead appearing as a component of, or footnote to, broader analyses of militarism (see Butterworth and Moskal, 2009: 420; Bacevich, 2005: 23).

It is not the purpose of this article to construct a causal account of the emergence of “support the troops” discourses, which is well-explicated by the works cited above. Nor is it my intention to connect “the troops” to policy positions or preferences, such as casualty sensitivity or support for particular wars. Instead, this article is interested in the distinct politics enabled by “the troops” as a figure of war. It asks: How – and why – does “support for the troops” seem to work politically? I argue that “the troops” are frequently read as a simple aggregation of the figurative soldier, or literal military personnel. This reflects a tendency to analytically reproduce liberal assumptions of individualism, autonomy, and atomism within critiques of (particularly) liberal militarism. Doing so misses the analytical and political import of “the troops” as a corporate (i.e. composed of many constituent parts) entity, and therefore distinctly collective figure. It obscures the politics of “groupness”.

The article identifies two key socio-political effects of this collective figuration. Firstly, “groupness” allows “the troops” to stand-in for a variety of subjects, including the military, civilians, family members, etc. without contradiction. Following from this, in counter-intuitive contrast to the heroic, agential soldier, “the troops” are frequently figured as passive, dependent, and at risk of suffering harm. In doing so, “the troops” enable constructions of militaristic, heroic violence to co-exist with death and the (literal and symbolic) maiming of veterans. Violence is presented as incidental to war, as something that “happens” to the vulnerable troops, rather than active practice of the political community. Secondly, I observe that existing accounts of militarism posit citizens’ aspirational identification with the heroic, idealised figurative soldier as a key means of legitimating violence. The “groupness” of the troops, in contrast to this logic of universalised identification, enables them to include, rather

than elide, substantive differences (e.g. race, gender, sexual orientation, etc.) within the polity. Consequently, potential axes of resistance to militarism – such as a commitment to non-violence, or membership in marginalised/minoritised group – are incorporated (or co-opted) through an all-encompassing relationship of “support”. The article therefore argues that these dimensions of the troops’ groupness enable the figure to shift the politics of force from an issue of legitimating violence against external enemies to the apolitical maintenance of normatively-inflected civil-military relations. In doing so, it illustrates the importance of examining “groupness”, and relations of solidarity/loyalty, in the analysis of security, militarism, and political violence more broadly.

Methodologically, I employ discourse analysis to interpret an original corpus of 2,190 paragraph units from approximately 5,000 pages of text identified by keyword search (i.e. “support the troops” and other contextually-appropriate synonyms). The corpus, covering US discourse from 2001-2010, includes texts from the print media, state authorities, and the public texts of five military and five anti-war NGOs. The print media consists of the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Wall Street Journal*. For the state, I used material from the Congressional Record, White House presidential statements, and the Department of Defense. For the ten NGOs, I employed a typological selection strategy, inspired by that employed by Coy et. al. (2008) in their study of StT discourse by US peace organizations, to select military charities and anti-war groups, respectively. This strategy balanced objective criteria (i.e. organisation size) with importance to the phenomenon (i.e. prominence) with representation of the diversity of StT discourse (i.e. including a range of perspectives).<sup>2</sup>

The anti-war groups are included in order to ensure potential contestation is captured within the analysis. While the inclusion of a different organization in any particular category would slightly alter the findings, I am confident this corpus provides a useful snapshot of the discursive formation. Together, these texts represent the “public culture” of understanding and supporting the troops. Given the tendency of marginal voices and positions to be “reappropriated, ignored, and subverted...the eventual hegemony of particular tropes” within public discourse cannot be attributed to the intentionality of any given actor (Rao, 2014: 202). The specific quotations discussed in the article are therefore exemplars of the socially circulating discourse(s), illustrating patterns of meaning that are often left implicit.

The article proceeds by outlining the role of the idealised soldier in legitimating militaristic violence. This demonstrates the pitfalls in extrapolating from the individuated soldier to collective “troops”. The article goes on to establish the significance of “groupness” for the analysis and politics of militarism by parsing “the troops” from the military, the soldier, and the veteran. I demonstrate that “the troops” may refer to a variety of empirical subjects (e.g. military personnel, family members, etc.), often simultaneously. Consequently, “the troops” disrupt the process of one-to-one individuated, aspirational identification between the citizen and the figurative soldier. Instead, the troops, as a figure without substantive content/identity, exist in complex patterns of association and juxtaposition with “the soldier” and “the veteran”, displacing tensions between the romanticised, militaristic imaginary of war and empirical vulnerabilities. The next section demonstrates the ways in which the troops’

---

<sup>2</sup> Birdies for the Brave, Operation Gratitude, Disabled Veterans of America, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans (military charities); Military Families Speak Out, United for Peace and Justice, Code Pink, Peace Action, and Pax Christi (anti-war groups).

“groupness” facilitates the incorporation of particularistic difference, such as gender, sexuality, and race (and thus, intersectional analysis) within militarism, contrasting it with the individuated, universalised/ising logics of legitimation anchored by the aspirational figurative soldier. The article concludes by discussing the implications of the politics of “the troops” for both the articulation of meaningful anti-militarist dissent and the broader analysis of groups.

### **The Soldier and the Universalised Legitimation of Violence**

Militarism, broadly conceptualised as the “social and international relations of the preparation for, and conduct of, organized political violence” (Stavrianakis and Selby, 2012: 3) is understood to legitimate and normalise the state’s use of force (Stavrianakis and Stern, 2018: 4). As observed by Basham (2018: 33), the mechanisms and dynamics of this normalisation are as various as iterations of the concept of militarism itself. Many scholars understand militarism as akin to propaganda, explicitly promoted by state and societal elites as a means of inculcating respect for, and deference to, the military and war (Bacevich, 2005). Feminist and critical military scholars, in contrast, emphasize the role of militarization, “the qualitative and quantitative expansion and absorption” (Frowd and Sandor, 2018) of militaristic beliefs as implicated in diffuse, banal processes of subject-formation. Militarism is understood as normalised through the “seemingly mundane, apolitical, everyday” – a conceptualisation to which this article largely hews (Khalid in Wibben, 2018: 141).

Central to these accounts, regardless the ontology of militarism/militarization, is the role of the figurative soldier in processes of legitimation and normalisation. It is far from the only anchor of militarism: institutional arrangements (Feaver, 1996), social and political histories (Mabee, 2016: 245-6), capitalist imperatives (Mann, 1984), and the drive for security (Basham, 2018) are also vital to militarism as both a concept and set of empirical practices. As virtually every account of militarism refers to social regard for the armed forces, however, the figurative soldier is “foundational” to understanding its articulation, as “he (for the soldier is most often male) is central to the history, self-image, and identity of the nation” (Hurcombe and Cooper, 2009: 103). The meaning of “figure”, here, is key to the argument. As explicated by Weber, figurations “emerge out of discursive and material semiotic assemblages that condense diffuse imaginaries about the world into specific forms or images that bring specific worlds into being” (2016: 28). They are, in other words, “distillations” of shared meanings, background understandings, normative orientations, etc. into a seemingly-stable “image” (28) that evokes more than it literally represents. Processes of figuration facilitate militarism through two parallel moves: first, the elevation of the soldier as a universalised, normatively-ideal individual, and, second, the attribution of those characteristics to the like-wise universal (nation)state.

These moves are particularly influential within liberal militarism – that variant adapted to liberal economies of war and ideological sensibilities (Mabee, 2016: 246). Generally, the “paradox” of liberal militarism is understood with respect to the use of force: How do we square the pacific self-regard of liberal democracies with their bellicose activities abroad? (Howard, 1978). It also, however, relies upon a further paradox: although the state’s legitimacy is premised upon its ability to protect citizens from violence, this, in turn, is dependent upon the existence of the military. The effective exercise of the state’s monopoly on the use of force is contingent upon its ability to risk the lives of some of the citizenry. As

observed by Basham (2018) and Jahn (2009), this is particularly acute in liberal states, as the requirement to serve contradicts liberalism's ideological investment in freedom (and, in democracies with professionalised armed forces, equality, as well).

The individuation and personification of the figurative soldier ameliorates and displaces this tension. Adapting Butler's notion of performativity, Haraway notes that figures are "images that can be inhabited" (1997: 11). As paraphrased by Weber, figures may be translated into a substantive (i.e. concrete and/or specific) subjectivity into which individuals may read themselves. The process is akin to Althusser's understanding of interpellation, wherein individuals are "hailed" to recognise and understand themselves as a political subject, with concomitant expectations, aspirations, and values (2014: 262). The substantive figuration of the soldier – though contextually contingent and subject to modification – is well established. He is characterised by an "essential ability to fight and defend" (Hale, 2012: 710-1) and possesses the idealised attributes required for military success. These include "aggressiveness and endurance of hardships and physical toughness", as well as "risk-taking, discipline, technological mastery...absence of emotion, and rational calculation" (Hale, 2012; Connell 1995; Barrett, 1996 in Tidy and Millar, 2017). The soldier is autonomous and rational: heroic.

On the basis of these valorised characteristics, "the soldier" functions as a discursively-constituted social ideal. Through "his" strong connection to bodily practices of violence and affects of stoic aggression (Woodward, 1998), the soldier circulates broadly, beyond the institutional military, to hierarchically ground the articulation of masculinities within and without the institutional military. Sasson-Levy argues that "the combat soldier is 'marked' as an idealised figure" connecting a socially-valorised understanding of masculinity with citizenship and the nation-state (2008: 317). In doing so, "the soldier" mirrors and reproduces the universalised masculine (white, cis, heterosexual) public subject of the modern West (Basham, 2013: 13). Butler states this directly, postulating the soldier as a "triumphalist image... that give us the idea of the human with whom we are to identify...the patriotic hero who expands our own ego boundary ecstatically into that of the nation" (2006: 145).

This relationship is encapsulated in the Unknown Soldier, which, though a single body – an actual person – is reconstituted figuratively, through its anonymity (Anderson, 2006: 50-1). Here, the soldier is representative of the sacrifice of a particular citizen, in a particular war, *and* the potential sacrifice of universal citizens for the whole (Ashplant et al, 2004: 8). The militarism literature is characterised by what is, essentially, a common reading of the soldier as metaphor – for universal citizenship, a particular ethos of self-sacrifice, and a particular relationship between the universalised individual and the collective. The positive characterisation of the soldier legitimates the violence of the (nation)state, while the (nation)state fulfils the soldier and renders him (and his potential sacrifice) intelligible/meaningful. Militaristic violence is legitimated through a relationship of universalised interpellation between individual citizens and the idealised soldier.

The efficacy of this legitimation is bolstered by a second, related process of association, wherein the soldier also comes to represent the (nation)state itself. As observed by Hass, the body of the individual soldier frequently stands in for the body politic (1998). In instances of national triumph, the "soldier becomes a proponent for a society's whole set of values", an embodiment of virtue and heroism (Dahl Christensen, 2015: 355). Following collective shame

or loss, the wounded body of the soldier – the veteran – comes to represent the trauma and failure of the nation (Sturken, 1997). The legitimating function of this relationship operates differently to that above, by metaphorically negating the distinction between the nation-state and the soldier. As summarised by MacLeish, when “the soldier stands for the nation, then to question the worthiness of the soldier’s death [or killing]...is to perform a parallel maneuver on the nation itself” (2005: 81). Figuratively mapping the soldier onto the nation obscures the state’s exposure of its citizens to violence by treating their figurative stand-ins as if they were one and the same. As a result, the potential tension and trauma of war is reconstituted into an affective relationship with the figurative soldier, whose death is not only accepted, but lauded, thus securing the social order (Millar, 2015) and legitimating the use of force.

### *Aggregating Legitimation?*

This metaphorical, associative logic of legitimation also informs existing analyses of “the troops”. This work demonstrates an intuitively-resonant yet analytically imprecise tendency to generalise from “the soldier” (particularly enlisted personnel) to “the troops” to the military. Stahl, for instance, suggests that supporting the troops works to “transfer[] guilt from policy makers to an embattled individual soldier in need of forgiveness” and “fuse[s] lower-rank soldiers together with the leadership” (2006: 549). He argues, in essence, that StT aggregates the socially-laudable characteristics of the “soldier” and gives them to the institutional military. The legitimation of violence depends on the relationship between the heroic, individuated soldier and the institutional military, itself a stand-in for the state. Stahl thus reads supporting the troops as a chain of tropic relationships between individuated subjects capable of conveying a fairly static meaning of heroism up the scale of figuration. Managhan, though considering the troops a distinct figure, similarly deduces “the soldier” from the troops. In her analysis of “the troops” and anti-war dissent, she argues that “what was ultimately being protected was the figure of the soldier who had come to embody no less than the promise of the nation” (2011: 449). Here, again, the troops are figured as an aggregation of the soldier, which retains its association with the (nation)state.

Scholars read “the soldier” figuratively, but troops literally, as an aggregation of either figurative soldiers or actual military personnel. This reflects an importation of the empirically-observed individuated, univeralized liberal logic of the legitimation of militarism violence into scholastic analysis as an assumption. This blurring of the logic of critical analysis and the logic of empirical legitimation, through a failure to engage with the politics and power of individuation, represents a “conceptual slippage” that limits the scope of what such analysis can “see” and its subsequent critical purchase (see Millar and Tidy 2017). In both instances, of the soldier-as-troops, and troops-as-state, the political relationship between citizens and the (nation)state is elided through a process of seemingly-individuated interpellation and identification. The frequently empirically-warranted observation of a relationship between the soldier and the state becomes an overdetermined and unexamined conceptual truism. The “groupness” of the troops is neglected through assumption. Analytically, “the troops” is a single concept, but one that is often figured as a corporate – in the sense of being comprised of many distinct parts – entity. The troops, then, in contrast to the individuated soldier, are a *collective* figure, a “distillation of shared meanings” (Weber, 2016: 28) characterised less by a substantive identity, or “content” (such as the heroism, masculinity, and other characteristics of the Western political subject that make up “the soldier”) than a sense of groupness.



Consider the relationship between the worker, class, and labour. Analytically and experientially, we regard class as both a corporate entity composed of workers and as a monolithic subject, such as “the working class”, about which it is possible to generalise. The working class may be understood as made up of individual people, or figurative workers, but it also signifies a particular assemblage of affects, material production, social relations of exploitation, gender, and politics, etc. that cannot be simply inferred from the worker or deduced from labour. “The working class”, as a unique social category, rather than “just” a bunch of workers or sub-component of the structural division of labour, makes a certain form of politics possible. Correspondingly, examining the politics of the “the troops” requires attending to, and taking “groupness” seriously. This is the problem to which the article now turns, through an empirical analysis of the “the troops” within US “support the troops” discourse from 2001-2010.

### **The Troops are not (Just) the Institutional Military**

The previous section outlined the ways in which the figurative soldier, as an aspirational ideal and stand-in for the nation serves to metaphorically legitimate militaristic violence. It further argued, analytically, that the “groupness” of “the troops” challenges a straightforward extrapolation of the characteristics of “the soldier” – and associated logics of legitimation based upon individuated interpellation of citizens – to the collective figure. This section demonstrates the analytical and socio-political implications of the prominence of “the troops”, as a group, within discourses of war, militarism, and violence, parsing them from the military and the soldier. The troops are, as Dean argues of other groups, “irreducible to specific ‘contents’” (2016: 116) or substantive identities, due to their corporate and, consequently, somewhat ephemeral/contingent nature. As a result, I examine the social dynamics within which the figurative troops circulate and are made meaningful, rather than (futilely) attempting to fix “them” to either concrete identity characteristics or a given, “actual” referent group.

For instance, as “the troops” are often intuitively read as military personnel, following the common empirical use of the term, we might expect them, as did the above scholars, to be figured in accordance with the tropes of the agential soldier or “military machine”. An examination of discursive constructions of the troops’ agency, however, suggests this is not the entire story. The troops are occasionally constituted as engaging in activity – as *doing* something – but this is fairly circumscribed. A transcript of US presidential candidate John McCain’s nomination speech provides an illustration of this framing:

“When it came time to support our troops fighting to protect our freedoms and way of life, my opponent said he’d never deprive them of the funds they needed to fight -- and then he did just that. Barack Obama voted against funding the equipment our troops rely on as they fight to protect us. That is not putting the men and women of our military first” (2008).

The troops in this passage are clearly active; they are “fighting to protect our freedoms”. This is an example of a broader pattern within the discourse: when the troops are figured agentially, they engage in combat. This, of course, aligns with the existing tropes of the military/soldier. The troops are also unambiguously linked to “the men and women of our military”, as a sexed, corporate entity, but also, via the military, to the state. The agential, combat-oriented troops are constructed as either synonymous, or primarily identified, with

the formal military institution. When the troops act, the figure refers to the (actual) institutional military, or its constituent personnel.

Significantly, however, the troops are more commonly figured as passive. A White House blog post by Dr. Biden, spouse of Vice-President Biden, for instance, notes: “As a military mom myself, this is personal – but it’s also the duty of all Americans to support our troops. It can be as simple as saying ‘thanks’” (2009). Though the troops are contextualized by the balance of the text, which describes Biden’s visit to on-base military families, the troops are not framed as *doing* anything. A statement by the US anti-war group Military Families Speak Out (MFSO) provides a similar framing from a different perspective. The text notes that “protestors will call attention to US troops and the Iraqi people who continue to be in harm’s way...[Leaders must] speak out to end the war, bring our troops home now, and take care of them when they get here” (2006). As common to the discourse of both anti-war and military charities, the troops are nowhere presented as active; they are neither blamed for the conflict, nor are they constructed as implementing it. As observed by Silvestri, in contrast to the StT rhetoric of the First Gulf War, this passivity facilitates a “dissociation” between the warriors and the war (2013: 109).

In contrast, then, to the individual, embodied figurations of “the soldier”, the troops’ production does not revolve around what they do/are, or the “content” of their identity, but rather their relationship to others. Biden’s call for Americans to show “appreciation for our troops and their families”, for instance, despite its framing within an official White House visit, shifts the primary meaning of “the troops” away from the military towards the so-called private sphere. MFSO’s messaging, similarly, separates the troops from the military by reading the troops, as family members, into a broader loss of predominantly civilian life. This framing is reinforced by the call to bring the troops “home” – as opposed, for example, to “withdrawing the troops”, or “bringing home the military”. It inflects the troops with domestic connotations of private social positioning.

These passages demonstrate that “the troops” are neither wholly synonymous with the implicitly masculine military as the statist instrument of force, nor with frequently femininized “civil” society as family members or citizens (Elshtain, 1995). Instead, “the troops” may refer to many subjects at once. In a 2003 statement to Congress, US Senator Frist, for instance, recognized the “commitment and sacrifice of Tennessee citizen soldiers. One thousand Tennessee National Guard troops and airmen have been deployed to participate in Operation Iraqi Freedom...These men and women leave full-time jobs and their families to serve their country and protect our liberty...” (S4883-4). The troops are identified as members of the military and explicitly placed in the context of the war in Iraq, while simultaneously constructed as employees and, again, family members.

The troops’ “groupness” facilitates a subtle mediation of substantive identity. It enables subjectivities that are ostensibly disparate, potentially contradictory, and aligned with competing collectivities – i.e. the military, (nation)state, citizens, and the family – to be collected in a single, seemingly coherent figure. Politically, this serves to diffuse potential normative (or even ideological) tensions between the groups. “The troops” lack of substantive “content” allows the figure to recognise the social embedding of family members and citizens beyond the military institution without constituting those groups as alternative

sources of belonging, affect, or meaning. In doing so, “the troops” render a multiplicity of public and private subjects amenable to the legitimation of violence, including those, like the family, that might in other guises offer a normative and affective challenge to militarism.

### *The Plural of Soldier is not Troops*

Continuing to pull on the thread of agency, we are similarly able to observe what is at stake in the previously-demonstrated irreducibility of “the troops” to the figurative (or literal) soldier. As established, “the soldier’s” role in legitimating state violence through a metaphorical association between the figure and the (nation)state relies on a (comparative) stability in the meaning of soldier: namely, heroic, normatively-valorised masculine agency.

The decision to risk significant harm by joining the military posits the soldier as freely choosing to renounce the rights to which the democratic citizen is otherwise entitled (McLeish, 2013: 144). In volunteering, the soldier exercises the same autonomy that characterises the universal, rational liberal-democratic political subject (Brown, 1998). In doing so, the soldier evinces a notably future-oriented temporality. Volunteering for military service is a form of war preparation, done in anticipation of securing the polity during a future conflict. The troops, in contrast, are constituted in the context of a present war – absent conflict, there is no need to support the figurative troops – but passively and without directionality. They are figured in something of a naturalized, ahistoric ever-present, a trope which, again, distances “the troops” (and through them, war) from political questions as to the conduct and legitimacy of violence. The soldier’s futurity, furthermore, is oriented towards engagement in combat. The soldier’s violent agency communicates a particular spatialization – the battlefield – and a relationship of antagonism towards the imagined enemy (Basham, 2018). The troops, however, as a consequence of their passivity, do not act violently (for they frequently do not act at all). Together, these factors parse “the ultra-agency of the masculine combat soldier” from the “passive, objectified – almost fetishized – collective subject of the troops” (Millar, 2016: 17).

This conceptual distinction between “the soldier” and “the troops”, however, should not be taken to mean that the two are entirely disconnected. The meaning of the troops is frequently played off of commonalities and contrast with the soldier. The interplay between portrayals of (literal and figurative) individuals within StT discourse and the collective troops provides an effective illustration of this dynamic. A Congressperson’s remembrance of a deceased soldier, for instance, states:

“Mr. Speaker, I have the honor today to recognise the life of Army Spec Colby Farnan...Colby’s service to our country was an extension of his support of the community and a commitment to making a better future for us all...The family and the community...are raising money... to remember the lives of the fine Americans that gave their life for their country. The lives of all our soldiers are remembered everyday...[We] should follow the example that is being set by the people of Weston...and support our troops.” (Graves, 2006: E1232)

The deceased is constructed in accordance with the tropes of hegemonic soldier masculinity; he is honourable, implicitly involved in combat, and, as noted elsewhere in the text, an excellent athlete and leader. He is also, in contrast to the anonymised, collective troops – named. As observed by Parry, the practice of naming individuals creates an important sense of immediacy and identification (2011: 1192). It is an act of recognition compelled by the

sacrifice within the nationalist imaginary. This parallels the process of universalised, militaristic identification between individual citizen and figurative soldier and subsequent described previously.

This recognition, however, is immediately followed by distancing and displacement, as the speaker moves from saluting the deceased to supporting the troops. The positive characteristics of the combat soldier – bravery and sacrifice – are imputed to the figurative troops. The contrast between “the soldier” and “the troops” separates the agency of the combat soldier from the passivity of the troops, while still serving to distance the deceased individual from the actual practice of violence. His social valorisation, in some ways, derives from his association with the troops, rather than warfare. It is also, importantly, unclear which troops are being supported – the dead, in remembrance, or the “remaining” troops. This is another crucial characteristic of the troops; as a *collective* figure, they are not reducible to a group of particular individuals, they cannot be killed. The ever-present troops are oddly immortal. The slide from the deceased individual to the troops preserves the viability of the *figure* of the hegemonic combat soldier, even as the individuals interpellated by it die, through its attachment to a structurally-invincible collective.

This analysis suggests that the legitimization of militaristic violence is not solely attributable to the idealised soldier’s relationship with the (nation)state. The intelligibility and (purported) stability of that relationship is dependent upon its embedding in a series of associations and contrasts with the troops, a collective, ambivalent figure. The figurative troops convey, as described by Scarry, “the fact that the fate of the overall army, or overall population, and not the fate of single individuals, will determine the outcome” (1985: 71). The groupness of the troops is key to their displacement of risk and death. The oscillation between “the troops”, “the soldier”, and the deceased normalises war, as the “authority of soldiers” may be invoked (Tidy, 2015: 226), but in the context of a blurry “massification” that “draw[s] attention away from individual body counts” (Stahl, 2009 in Fischer, 2014: 214). “The troops”, in their passive ever-present, absorb the tension between the future-oriented heroism of the figurative soldier and the empirical consequences of combat – the deaths of real people, for whom time stops. This insulation of the universal soldier with(in) the troops precludes the deaths of individuals from undermining the polity’s ontological security (or the ideological viability of war).

### **Dependence and Vulnerability**

The role of “the troops” in distancing experiences of risk and death from the figurative soldier outlined above, though key to upholding the interpellation of citizens within liberal militarism, does not exhaust the figure’s entanglement with vulnerability. As a further entailment of “the troops” passivity (and, again, lack of substantive “identity” content), the meaning and political effect of the troops are also highly informed by the figure’s production within relations of dependence.

A *Washington Post* article, for example, describes the efforts of an NGO called Soldiers for Truth that advocates for “the best available training, leadership and equipment for our kids” (Shulte, 2006). The organization’s mandate is to “protect” the troops against an unresponsive military brass that endangers soldiers’ lives by failing to provide them with appropriate body

armour (Ibid). Anti-war groups employ similar frames. A “fact sheet” produced by the pacifist NGO Peace Action, for instance, states,

"Ending the US military occupation of Iraq is essential to quelling the violence and truly supporting our troops...Thousands of young men and women in the US military are sustaining permanent physical and mental damage...We can best support the troops by bringing them home now" (2007).

Here, the war – and government – are posited as threatening the lives and well-being of the troops. Substantively, the troops refer to an aggregation of military personnel, or even young citizens, distinct from the military institution. They are not represented as doing anything other than implicitly suffering harm. Their safety is connected to, and dependent upon, the government heeding the desires of anti-war activists to “bring them home”. These constructions allude to a common theme within American militarism, wherein the soldier (particularly post-Vietnam) is regarded as “innocent” – a paragon of youthful virtue whose boyishness serves to underscore both his heroism and the symbolic power of his transformation, via combat, to a man (Boose, 1993; Managhan, 2011: 452). The troops are similarly inflected by this tropic innocence (and implicit sense of victimisation at the hands of the state and/or war). As a passive collective, however, “the troops” are not figured as undergoing a process of normative metamorphosis, from guileless child to righteous man (or citizen). Instead, the impression left by such constructions is that “the troops” are dependent upon external support for their wellbeing (and, potentially, success), through the subtle implication that should support not be forthcoming, they would be worse for it.

The polemical slogan common among more radical pro-military Americans, “If you don’t stand behind our troops, please feel free to stand in front of them” (MacLeish, 2013: 212), takes this logic further. This allusion to violence against “non-supporters” figures the troops as vulnerable to some indeterminate harm at the hands of those who do not support them. The absence of support is construed as a threat. The reception of support is a constitutive condition – at two levels – of the troops’ collective existence. It is essential to the survival of the military personnel read into the troops. It is also the premise of the figuration of the collective entity of the troops itself. Though the various groups represented by “the troops” – the military, service personnel, family members, etc. – would exist independent of support, the intelligibility of the figurative troops is inextricable from this sense of vulnerability. Unlike the boyish soldier, “the troops” cannot help themselves. Consequently, despite the typical representation of both the figurative soldier and veteran, as well as empirical military personnel, as men, “the troops” are *relationally* feminised through their dependence upon civilian society for their protection/survival.

Unsurprisingly, this figuration of the troops as subtly dependent upon support stems from the “discursive legacy” of Vietnam (Coy et. al., 2008: 163). During the First Gulf War, broad-based support for the troops in the US was understood as a redemption of society’s Vietnam-era “betrayal” of the troops (Beamish et. al., 1995, 345 and 351). The subsequent proffering of unqualified support is inflected by the belief that “national unity and citizen support for the troops has a critical operational value” and will “maximize the soldier’s chances of survival” (Huiskamp, 2011: 291). This, of course, is not a new or US specific idea; the military operationalisation of societal support has a long history, stemming from the *levee en masse* and inception of mass democratic armies. Napoleon famously articulated a three-to-one ratio moral to physical factors for military success, while UK Field Marshall Montgomery held that

“morale [is] the greatest and only factor in war” (Scarry, 1985: 105). In the US, the cultural memory of Vietnam is a specific manifestation of a broader sense of forestalled and imminent betrayal of the military – now figured as the vulnerable troops.

Again, however, this does not mean the veteran may be extrapolated, or aggregated, to the troops. The veteran invokes an assemblage of other meanings, such as physical and psychological disintegration, military failure, national impotence, and neglect that do not pertain to the troops (Managhan, 2011: 454-5). As Managhan points out, the elevation of “the troops” as the locus for popular affect, ideology, and myth-making regarding war actually works to efface the veteran, by displacing civil-military relations on to a more amenable subject (454-456). It also, from the perspective of militaristic legitimation, halts the politico-affective engagement with conflict in the present, rather engage with war’s traumatic afterlives. “The troops” and the “veteran” exist in a cautionary juxtaposition. ‘The troops’ are frozen in an unchanging, constant rehearsal of the refusal/redemption of the past. If the troops are (re)produced by support, they cannot be the betrayed veteran, who was/is defined by its absence. There is a tinge of pathos to the figuration of the troops, as it relies on “the massification of a collection of unfortunate who are not”, and could never be, due to their collective nature, “there in person” (Boltanski, 1999: 13). War is presented as something that “happens” to the troops, rather than a practice in which the troops – and with them, the (supportive) polity – are actively engaged. The political relationship between society and the war of the state is severed. Citizens’ engagement with warfare is cast as support, rather than participation in a political process that results in the use of force abroad.

### *The Troops and the Veteran*

Consider the following exchange from a US DoD news story commending “Homes for Troops”, a small NGO, and a partnering developer for building homes for disabled veterans. The developer states, “As a company, we never could have given what Pisey (Tan) did, but we can at least try to make life a little bit easier...We can make sure he knows that this country supports him, and we’ll try to be there for him” (Kruzel, 2007). This quotation invokes several tropes associated with “veteran”: sacrifice followed by dependence and hardship. There is a shade of forestalled betrayal underlying the declaration “try to be there for him”. The story goes on to juxtapose Tan with the troops, noting that while deployed, he wondered about “the level of public support for the troops” (Ibid). Upon his discharge, however, he was “introduced to a lot of the programs and to a lot of support [for the troops]...And it basically showed [him] that life can go on” (Ibid). The troops initially refer to military personnel, with who Tan identified on active service. As Tan reimagines himself as a disabled veteran, the figurative troops travel with him. The troops simultaneously represent serving personnel and veterans, eliding the disjuncture of the switch from an agential, ideally-masculine soldier subjectivity to the dependence and deficit that frequently accompany the veteran. The groupness of the figure facilitates both association and contrast, enabling several subjectivities to be “true” while, again, displacing the threat of ideological contradiction.

As a collective figure that cannot be “injured” per se, the troops naturalize the occurrence of injury. The troops construct injury as an “accidental or unanticipated” consequence of war (Scarry, 1985: 74-81), highlighting its rarity. If Tan is encompassed within the troops, his practice of soldiering is obscured, leaving his subsequent injury to appear to be an accident,

or bad luck, rather than a foreseeable occurrence. The play between the veteran, the troops, and the veteran-troops serves, in Achter's words, to "disrupt the connection between the state and the consequences of war" (2010: 63). Tan acquires a form of symbolic immunity to injury through his association with a broader collective figure. The groupness of the troops, their tropic figuration (as passive, as dependent, as vulnerable etc.), and their ambivalent reference to various collective subjects (i.e. veterans, the military, family members) integrate "the veteran" into the social order, by offering him identification with an entity that both is, and is not, veterans.

### **Groupness and the Mediation of Difference**

Thus far, the article has demonstrated that the collective troops cannot be analytically or empirically generalised from "the soldier" or "the veteran". Instead, "the troops" not only distance heroic militarist imaginaries from empirical experiences of vulnerability, but transform this vulnerability into a source of implicit legitimation, by reconstituting war as a matter of support, rather than violence. This section plays out a final dimension of groupness in legitimating militarism: the ability of a group to accommodate particularistic difference.

To recap, "the soldier" legitimates militaristic violence through a logic of interpellation, "calling" citizens to identify with, and aspire to be, a heroic ideal. Though "the soldier" is, at least implicitly, produced in accordance with the particular, substantive characteristics of the Western political subject (as masculine, heterosexual, cis, white, etc.), the figure is presented as universal, lacking in "identity content". It elides difference within the political community through the production of individuals as always-already (citizen)soldiers. The existence of a collective figure, as a group, disrupts this logic of universal interpellation. Materially and discursively, the existence of a group suggests the need for bounding principles, determinants of inclusion/exclusion, internal differentiation, and, more basically, diversity. "The troops", in contrast to "the soldier", divide the polity into (at least) two groups.

The analytical and political significance of this facet of groupness is illustrated by comparing the sex of the troops with the figure's relational gendering. The previous section suggested that the figurative troops may be read as structurally feminised, due to their passivity and dependence, in a flip of the conventional gendering of the civil-military divide. Empirically, however, when "the troops" refer to specific subjects, such as family members or military personnel, they are overwhelmingly, with 91 per cent of references to sexed bodies, constructed as both men and women (see, for instance, the McCain speech above). As a collective figure whose meaning is produced relationally, the gendering of the troops is distinct from the sex (and gender) of the subjects (e.g. military personnel) frequently understood as making it up.

Why does this matter? It indicates that though "the troops" are not figured (i.e. given metaphorical/tropic meaning) in a way that communicates identity content in a manner similar to "the soldier", "the troops" may be inflected with substantive identity through their association with various collective and individual subjects. With this in mind, the sexing of the troops as male and female should not be dismissed as semantic, descriptive, or political correctness. Instead, it reflects, again, the idea that all who aspire to "good" public personhood are liable to serve. In the US, where citizenship and military service are formally

available to male- and female-identifying persons, the troops *must* be substantively constituted as male and female. In other words, regardless of the sex/gender of the individuals empirically represented by the troops (whom are predominantly men), the *figurative* troops, as a corporate entity, must include male and female persons, to be consistent with its (re)production in a liberal democratic society. In contrast to “the soldier”, which interpellates all citizens in line with Western heteromascularity, “the troops” can accommodate recognition of men and women *as* men and women: sexed/gendered persons expressing socially-meaningful difference. This subtle mediation of formal equality and substantive difference figures the troops, due to their collective nature, as an ideal vessel for popular empathy and identification. If the troops are men and women, they may also be, and encompass, everyone.

The flexibility of the substantive characteristics of “the troops” also pertains to other axes of difference, including race, sexual orientation and gender identity. A 2003 speech by a member of the Congressional Black Caucus, for instance, states: “I want all people to know that the Congressional Black Caucus wholeheartedly supports our troops...I move throughout my district...and hear Americans talk about their sons and daughters and friends that are overseas now fighting for us, my heart definitely goes out” (H2394). The statement begins with a typical declaration of support, and invocation of the passive collective figure of the troops. The explicit framing of supporters as the Black Caucus, however, and references to the speaker’s district and neighbourhood, encourages a “particularistic” reading of the troops. “The troops”, here, are not an aggregation of the universalised white masculine subject, nor a straightforward empirical description of military personnel. The figurative troops, instead, are constituted as explicitly multi-racial, men and women, and embedded in affective social relations. Congressman Cummings transitions from support for the troops to a discussion of social disparities “at home”, observing the differential experiences and outcomes of access to medical treatment for African- and Hispanic-Americans compared to the national average (Ibid). In doing so, he implicitly connects this experience of America with “the troops”, constructing them as representing *both* heroic ideals of service and an inequalitarian, racialized society. Through “the troops” both military service (D’Amico, 2015: 200) and military support work to claim recognition for minoritized groups within the political community – as, crucially, Black Americans, rather than universalised citizens.

Though there are few explicit references to sexuality or gender expression within the corpus (the repeal of Don’t Ask Don’t Tell began just outside this study’s timeframe), the discourse around open service reinforces this analysis. Arguments in favour of repealing Don’t Ask Don’t Tell, for instance, were cast in terms of the need to support all the troops, not “some” of them (Coates, 2011). At time of writing, the consequences of the Trump administration’s cruel move to reanimate a prohibition on military service by trans persons are unclear. Judicial rejection of discrimination against trans persons in US military service, however, combined with the resistance of Department of Defense leadership to the ban (Mitchell, 2018), suggests that the “the troops” incorporation and mediation of particularistic difference pertains to trans servicemembers as well.

Overall, as a collective figure, “the troops” are able to accommodate and incorporate particularistic difference – or intersectional identities – as socially-embedded and meaningful.



Instead of interpellating citizens as soldiers on the basis of universalised identification,<sup>3</sup> “the troops” operate via a universalised social relation of compulsory support (Managhan, 2011: 451). The groupness of the troops enables them to accommodate (or co-opt) particularistic differences. Individuals are constituted as both supporters *and* potential troops simultaneously, as an abstract citizen-soldier and a socially-embedded person existing in diverse relations of power, community, identity, and affection.

“The troops” ability to mediate this complexity has strong implications for anti-militarist dissent. In past conflicts, communities and persons alienated by the universalised white, cis, heteromasculine (citizen)soldier ideal – and gendered, sexualised, and racialised state it represented – often engaged in anti-war and anti-militarist politics. Consider, for instance, Black opposition to the war in Vietnam on anti-imperial and anti-racist grounds (Hall, 2011), queer Americans’ opposition to Gulf War military service on behalf of a heteronormative state (Enloe, 2000: 30), or even suffragettes’ opposition to masculinist wars of aggression. The turn towards collective figuration, however, renders virtually any given identity, affect, orientation towards conflict, etc. commensurate with “the troops” and implicated within relations of “support”. During the First Gulf War, discourses of support for the troops co-opted the affective labour of civilians – particularly women – as sources of potential resistance to aggressive, neo-imperial foreign policy (Enloe, 1993: 163). The troops’ figurative embrace of difference also contextualises the complicated affective politics of US communities of colour whose lives are disproportionately risked by the state in military service – and whom are often deeply committed to support for the troops (Mariscal, 1991). “We” might not all be the normative citizen(soldier), or endorse the militaristic state, but we may all be, or know/love, “the troops”. Through this integration of particularism, “the troops” may be a more effective avatar of militarism than the soldier – and thus far more important to the legitimation, depoliticization, and even perpetuation of conflict than previously realised. What would the politics of military involvement in Afghanistan (and, particularly, Iraq) have looked like absent the “escape valve” of the figurative troops?

## Conclusion

This article has argued for the importance of understanding “the troops” to be a distinct, collective figure of warfare, key to conventional patterns of the legitimation of violence while also supporting a new (a)politics of vulnerability and difference. The troops’ “groupness” enables them to capture, absorb, and accommodate tensions between the romantic Western imaginary of war that “travels” with the figurative soldier and empirical experiences of failure, death, and injury. Indeed, as demonstrated in the discussion of the veteran, the dependence of “the troops” transforms vulnerability from a source of potential opposition to war to itself a justification for the use of force, to *protect* the troops from further harm. The ability of “the troops”, as a collective figure to incorporate and accommodate particularistic difference

---

<sup>3</sup> There are many instances wherein this universalised, white Western male subject-soldier does not hold empirically (Kuntsman 2009). The diplomat-soldier, or migrant-soldier, or queer-soldier, however, continue to refer to a universalised, individuated figure which, in turn, continues to legitimate the state as the purveyor of violence (Ware 2010).

within the polity *as difference* is key to this process. It defuses dissent that might be articulated against the militarism anchored by “the soldier” by rendering all intersectional identities, communities, and political positions etc. commensurate with relations of affective support.

As a passive collective, “the troops” are not the agents of war, but its victims. In this way, the troops may actually take the previous place of society, or the nation – while accommodating varying visions/understandings of that society – as the dependent entity requiring protection from the state. This plays a powerful role in legitimating – or, perhaps, apoliticising – the militaristic violence of the state, as it shifts the politico-ethical calculus of war from conflict legitimacy or responsibilities to distant civilians to a moral investment in the troops’ well-being. Violence recedes in importance, as the politics of war revolve around maintaining appropriate civil-military relations: support. The central political question is revealed to be not the legitimacy of war but rather the polity’s relationship to itself.

From the perspective of anti-militarist/war activism, this suggests that strategic engagements with the troops – “support the troops by ending the war!” – are a failing proposition. They further a discourse wherein both war opposition and war support are justified with reference to “the troops” (Millar, 2016: 25). By reifying “the troops” as the central object of politico-ethical concern, anti-war discourse accepts the discursive “disappearance” of state violence, fatally undermining its ability to contest war. An effective anti-war/militarist politics would place violence front and centre. This requires foregrounding “the troops” participation in combat and demonstrating the complicity of seemingly-banal civilian “support” in killing and maiming. Meaningful dissent would refuse to support the troops.

Following from this, the politics (dis)abled by figurative “troops” suggest that scholars of militarism – and political violence more generally – ought to be more attentive to groups. “Groupness”, as observed by Dean, “exerts a force that is more than the sum of individual expectation” (2016: 90). Yet as this article has shown, analyses of militarism have tended to revolve around processes of individuated interpellation and, at least implicitly, reproduce security problematics of exclusionary Self/Other distinctions (Basham, 2018). This basic insight can be extended beyond “the troops” to (re)consider everything from gangs to terrorist organisations, police organisations, crime families, rebel groups, and militias. What if these groups are not aggregations of the “real” subjects – literal or figurative individuals – but collective figures, communicating a fluid assemblage of materiality, symbolism, power, social relationships, affect, and history? The affective pull of solidarity, political belonging, and potentially “illiberal” loyalty – of meaningful groupness – to the (re)production of militarism, security, and violence is radically understudied. Critical military and/or security studies, in critiquing liberal legitimations of state violence, often analytically reproduce liberal assumptions of individuation, atomisation, and universalisation. In an era characterised by non-liberal politics, from ISIS to American militias to the civilizational discourses of the European far-right, a new research programme that takes “groupness” seriously, and addresses the intuitive importance of loyalty to the perpetration of political violence, is an essential counter-balance.

## References

- Achter P (2010) Unruly bodies: The rhetorical domestication of twenty-first-century veterans of war. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*. 96(1): 46-68.
- Althusser L (2014). *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*. London: Verso Books.
- Anderson B (2006) *Imagined communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso Books.
- Ashplant TG, Dawson G and M Roper, eds. (2004) *Commemorating War: The Politics of Memory*. Transaction Publishers.
- Bacevich A (2005) *The New American Militarism: How Americans Are Seduced by War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Basham V (2013) *War, Identity and the Liberal States: Everyday Experiences of the Geopolitical in the Armed Forces*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Basham V (2018) Liberal militarism as insecurity, desire and ambivalence: Gender, race and the everyday geopolitics of war. *Security Dialogue*. DOI: 0967010617744977.
- Beamish TD. et al. (1995) Who supports the troops? Vietnam, the gulf war, and the making of collective memory. *Social Problems* 42(3): 344-360.
- Biden J (2009) It's as simple as saying "thanks". *Whitehouse.gov*. July 9 Available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2009/07/09/it-can-be-simple-saying-thanks>. Accessed 28 April 2016.
- Boltanski L (1999) *Distant Suffering: Morality, Media, and Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Boose L (1993) Techno-muscularity and "the boy eternal": From the quagmire to the gulf, In *Gendering War Talk*, edited by M Cooke and A Woollacott, New Jersey: Princeton University Press: 67-101.
- Brown W (1988) *Manhood and Politics: A Feminist Reading in Political Theory*. London: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Butler J (2006) *Precarious Life: The Power of Mourning and Violence*. London: Verso.
- Butterworth M and S Moskal (2009) American football, flags, and "fun": The Bell helicopter armed forces bowl and the rhetorical production of militarism. *Communication, Culture & Critique*. 2:411-33.
- Coates T (2011) I Support Some of the Troops... *The Atlantic* (23 September) Available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2011/09/i-support-some-of-the-troops/245561/>. Accessed 13 February 2017.

- Cooper N and M Hurcombe (2009) The figure of the soldier. *Journal of War and Culture Studies* 2(2): 103-04.
- Coy PG. et al. (2008) Discursive Legacies: The US peace movements and 'support the troops'. *Social Problems*. 55(2): 161-189.
- Cummings E (2003) Saluting our troops. (26 March). Congressional Record. H2394. Available at THOMAS.loc.gov.
- Dahl Christensen T (2015) The figure of the soldier: Discourses of indisputability and heroism in a new Danish commemorative practice. *Journal of War and Culture Studies*. 8(4): 347-363.
- D'Amico F (2000) Citizen-soldier? class, race, gender sexuality, and the US military. In *States of Conflict: Gender, Violence and Resistance*, edited by S Jacobs. London: Zed Books: 105-120.
- Dean J (2016) *Crowds and Party*. London: Verso Books.
- Elstain JB (1995) *Women and War*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Enloe C (1993) *The Morning After: Sexual Politics at the End of the Cold War*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Enloe C (2000) *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women's Lives*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Enloe C (2016) *Globalization and militarism: Feminists Make the Link*. London: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Feaver PD (1996) The civil-military problematique: Huntington, Janowitz, and the question of civilian control. *Armed Forces & Society* 23(2): 149-178
- Fischer M (2014) Commemorating 9/11 NFL-style: Insights into America's culture of militarism. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*. 38(3): 199-221.
- Frist W (2003) Supporting Our Troops (7 April) Congressional Record. S4883-4. Available at THOMAS.loc.gov.
- Frowd PM and AJ Sandor (2018) Militarism and its limits: Sociological insights on security assemblages in the Sahel. *Security Dialogue*. DOI: 0967010617739534
- Graves S (2006) Honoring the life of soldier Colby Farnan – extension of remarks (21 June) Congressional Record. E1232. Available at Thomas.gov.

- Hale H (2012) The role of practice in the development of military masculinities. *Gender, Work and Organization*. 19(6): 699-722.
- Hall S (2011) *Peace and Freedom: The Civil Rights and Antiwar Movements in the 1960s*. Pittsburgh: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Haltiner KW (2006) The decline of the European mass armies. *Handbook of the Sociology of the Military*. Boston: Springer: 361-384.
- Haraway D (1997) *Modest Witness @ Second \_ Millennium. FemaleMan \_ Meets \_ OncoMouse*. London: Routledge.
- Hass KA (1998) *Carried to the Wall: American Memory and the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Howard M (1978) *War and the Liberal Conscience*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Howard M (2002) *The First World War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Huiskamp G (2011) "Support the troops!": The social and political currency of patriotism in the United States. *New Political Science*. 33(3): 285-310.
- Jahn B (2009) The tragedy of liberal democracy. *Statebuilding and intervention: policies, practices and paradigms*. Abingdon: Routledge: 210-229.
- Kimball JP (1988) The stab-in-the-back legend and the Vietnam war. *Armed Forces & Society* 14(3): 433-458
- King A (2011) *The Transformation of Europe's Armed Forces: From the Rhine to Afghanistan*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kuntsman A (2009) *Figurations of violence and belonging: Queerness, Migranhood and Nationalism in Cyberspace and Beyond*. London: Peter Lang.
- Kruzel J (2007) America supports you: Pennsylvania vet receives brotherly love. *American Forces Press Service*. (3 January) Available at: <http://archive.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=2587>. Accessed 27 October 2015.
- Mabee B (2016) From 'liberal war' to 'liberal militarism': United States security policy as the promotion of military modernity. *Critical Military Studies* 2(3): 242-261.
- MacLeish (2005) The tense present history of the Second Gulf War: revelation and repression in memorialization. *Text, Practice, Performance*. 6: 69-84.
- MacLeish K (2013) *Making War at Fort Hood: Life and Uncertainty in a Military Community*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Mariscal G (1991) In the wake of the Gulf War: Untying the yellow ribbon. *Cultural Critique*. 19: 97-117.

Managhan T (2011) Grieving dead soldiers, disavowing loss: Cindy Sheehan and the im/possibility of the American anti-war movement. *Geopolitics*. 16(2): 438-66.

Mann M (1984) Capitalism and militarism. *War, State and Society*. London: Palgrave Macmillan: 25-46.

McCain J (2008) Remarks at a campaign event in Ohio. *Washington Post*. (29 September). Available at: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/09/29/AR2008092901431.html>. Accessed 30 April 2016.

Military Families Speak Out (2006) On 3<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary of Iraq War, Military Families and Veterans Tell Politicians: 'It's No Laughing Matter'. (15 March) Available at <http://www.mfso.org/article.php?id=551>. Accessed 13 Jan. 2016, via Wayback Machine.

Millar KM (2015) Death does not become her: An examination of the public representation of the deaths of female American soldiers. *Review of International Studies*. 41(4): 757-779.

Millar KM (2016) 'They need our help': Non-governmental organizations and the subjectifying dynamics of the military as social cause. *Media, War & Conflict*. 9(1): 9-26.

Millar KM and J Tidy (2017) Combat as a moving target: masculinities, the heroic soldier myth, and normative martial violence. *Critical Military Studies* 3(2): 142-160.

Mitchell E (2018) Court rules against Trump administration on transgender military ban. *The Hill* (18 July) Available at: <https://thehill.com/policy/defense/397702-court-rules-against-trump-admin-on-transgender-military-ban>. Accessed 7 November 2018.

Moore S (2008) *Ribbon Culture: Charity, Compassion, and Public Awareness*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.

News.com.au. (2015) Parades to welcome home soldiers who served in Afghanistan to be held around Australia today. *News Corp Australia Network* (21 March). Available at <http://www.news.com.au/national/parades-to-welcome-home-soldiers-who-served-in-afghanistan-to-be-held-around-australia-today/story-fncynjr2-1227272380731>. Accessed 15 August 2015.

Oxford English Dictionary. Troop. Available at <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/troop>. Accessed 4 March 2018.

Parashar S (2018) Discursive (in) securities and postcolonial anxiety: Enabling excessive militarism in India. *Security Dialogue*. DOI: 0967010617746527.

- Parry K (2011) Images of liberation? Visual framing, humanitarianism and British press photography during the 2003 Iraq invasion. *Media, War, and Culture*. 33(8): 1185-1202.
- Peace Action flyer (2007) It's time to end the war in Iraq. Available at [www.peaceaction.org/iraq](http://www.peaceaction.org/iraq). Accessed via Wayback Machine internet archive, 15 November 2014.
- Rao R (2014) Queer questions. *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 16(2): 199-217.
- Sasson-Levy O (2008) Individual bodies, collective state interests: The case of Israeli combat soldiers. *Men and Masculinities* 10(3): 296-321.
- Scarry E (1985) *The Body in Pain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Shaw M (2005) *The New Western Way of War: Risk-transfer War and its Crisis in Iraq*. London: Polity.
- Shulte B (2006) Doing battle for the grunts; Virginia group seeks to protect US troops on the frontline. *Washington Post*. (2 February) Page T03.
- Silvestri L (2013) Surprise homecomings and vicarious sacrifices. *Media, War, & Conflict*. 6(2): 101-115.
- Stahl R (2006) Have you played the war on terror?. *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 23(2): 112-130.
- Stahl R (2009) Why we 'support the troops': Rhetorical evolutions. *Rhetoric & Public Affairs*. 12(4): 553-570.
- Stavrianakis A and J Selby (2012) *Militarism and International Relations: Political Economy, Security and Theory*. London: Routledge.
- Stavrianakis A and M Stern (2018) Militarism and security: Dialogue, possibilities and limits" *Security Dialogue*. DOI: 0967010617748528.
- Sturken M (1997) *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Tidy J (2015) Forces saucers and eggs for soldiers: Food, nostalgia and the rehabilitation of the British military. *Critical Military Studies*. 1(3): 220-32.
- Tidy J (2016) The gender politics of "ground truth" in the military dissent movement: The power and limits of authenticity claims regarding war. *International Political Sociology*. 10(2): 99-114.
- US Inspector General (2008) The America Supports You Program (12 December). Report No. D-2009-032. Available at:

[http://www.wired.com/images\\_blogs/dangerroom/files/asy\\_final\\_report.pdf](http://www.wired.com/images_blogs/dangerroom/files/asy_final_report.pdf). Accessed 9 April 2016.

Ware V (2010) Whiteness in the glare of war: Soldiers, migrants and citizenship. *Ethnicities*. 10(3): 313-33.

Weber C (2016) *Queer International Relations: Sovereignty, Sexuality and the Will to Knowledge*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wegner N (2017) Discursive battlefields: Support (ing) the troops in Canada" *International Journal*. 72(4): 444-462.

Wibben ATR (2018) Why we need to study (US) militarism: A critical feminist lens. *Security Dialogue*. DOI: 0967010617742006.

Woodward R (1998) 'It's a man's life!': Soldiers, masculinity and the countryside. *Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography*. 5(3): 277-300.