

Brad West
Thomas Crosbie *Editors*

Militarization and the Global Rise of Paramilitary Culture

Post-Heroic Reimaginings of the Warrior

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Chapter 1

Militarization and the Paramilitarization of Culture: Accounting for New Civil–Military Complexity



Brad West and Thomas Crosbie

Abstract After what was historically a relatively peaceful end to the twentieth century, the first two decades of the new millennium has seen prolonged conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, rising military tensions in East Asia, and Russia aggressively deploying its military as well as paramilitary groups in support of an expansionist foreign policy. At the same time, the role of the military in the social memory of nations is increasingly being challenged and reimagined as a consequence of generational change, consumer capitalism and the rise of desecularisation. In order to comprehend how sociologists can grapple with such developments, this chapter evaluates the dominant ways that social scientists and cultural scholars have charted the intersections between culture, war and the military. It is argued that a more multidimensional understanding of militarisation is required, one that can appreciate the diverse consequences of cultural engagement with military traditions and the changing status and role of the institutional military. Distinguishing between the processes of militarisation and paramilitarisation of culture is proposed as an important step in this direction.

After what was historically a relatively peaceful end to the twentieth century, the first two decades of the new millennium have seen prolonged conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, rising military tensions in East Asia, and Russia aggressively deploying its military as well as paramilitary groups in support of an expansionist foreign policy. At the same time, the role of the military in the social memory of nations is increasingly being challenged and reimagined as a consequence of generational change, consumer capitalism and the rise of desecularization. In order to comprehend how sociologists can grapple with such developments, this chapter evaluates the dominant ways that social scientists and cultural scholars have charted the intersections between culture, war and the military. It is argued that a more multidimensional

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understanding of militarization is required, one that can appreciate the diverse consequences of cultural engagement with military traditions and the changing status and role of the institutional military. Distinguishing between the processes of militarization and paramilitarization of culture is proposed as an important step in this direction and one that can provide important insights into new trends in the social construction of the warrior within and outside of military institutions.

1.1 De-Militarized Cultural Analysis

There is a fundamental contradiction in the way contemporary scholars have analytically approached the relationship between culture, the military and war. The horrors of the First and Second World War underpin the mission of contemporary sociology to better understand the power, dynamics and direction of society. Yet analysis of war and the military is relatively neglected. This is not to say that sociologists and other social science scholars have not made important contributions in the area. Rather, we contend that the empirical attention given to war and the military is largely inadequate and analytically narrow, with work on the topic being concentrated within marginal academic subfields rather than being at the forefront of disciplinary thought (Joas, 2003; Malešević, 2010; West & Matthewman, 2016).

This peripheral position of war and the military is most clearly reflected in the minor role it plays in contemporary social theory. Not since Mills' (1956) *The Power Elite* has a leading social theory placed the military and armed conflict prominently in their account of social and political change. This is despite empirical studies of social and political developments frequently highlighting the significance of war and the military, particularly in non-Western contexts (Altınordu, 2017; Barany, 2016; Lutterbeck, 2013). As modern and classical social theory also had relatively little to say about war and the military in conceiving of the dramatic social and political transformations of modernity, this contemporary neglect is perhaps not surprising. However, even where we do find empirical and theoretical attention to war and the military in the work of prominent thinkers of the past, including amongst those that remain influential today, this scholarship is typically under appreciated.

The classical sociologist Max Weber's (1981, 1994) thesis on the origins of modern democratic citizenship in relationship to the First World War illustrates this lack of appreciation (Barbalet, 2010). While Weber's writings remain influential for comprehending contemporary socio-political change, ranging from shifts in capitalism (Gane, 2012) to the dynamics of political Islam (Schluchter, 2019), there has been little attention paid to the way in which Weber saw the rise of modern citizenship ideals as being intimately connected to the rise of modern total warfare. As Barbalet (2010) highlights, Weber argues that shifts in military organization and the changing nature of warfare was a central part of social and political transformation at the beginning of the twentieth century. In a thesis consistent with his other work that revolves around essential paradoxes (Symonds & Pudsey, 2008), Weber saw the modern democratic imaginary being an unanticipated consequence of the

circumstances whereby the 'modern state offers all its citizens ... the battlefield on which to die' (Weber, 1994: 105). Specifically, Weber theorized that the origins of modern European democracy were related to the militaristic competition between heroic forms, the 'battle between heroes' (Weber, 1981: 325), one being focused on bourgeois commanders, the other concerning the commoner. For Weber, the rise of the latter had a significant influence in advancing new conceptions of citizenship, arguing that the 'basis of democratization is everywhere purely military in character' (1981: 324).

What is significant in Weber's account is that war and the associated shifts in the structure of military organization are a kind of independent variable for broader socio-political change. For example, Weber sees the European welfare state itself based on the ideas of citizenship that emerged as a consequence of egalitarian military heroism, with the modern welfare model being first debated, justified and applied to military veterans. In this regard, we can contrast Weber's account with the typical but ultimately reductionist historical and cultural analysis of heroic narratives of the First World War in which the conflict is seen as a mere stage for new imperial and nationalistic masculinities to be played out (Fussell, 1975; Mangan, 2010). Weber's account of heroism also differs from other scholarly accounts in that he not only details how the romanticization of the strength and bravery of the working class in the war challenged the established trope of the aristocratic military leader but argues that class relations were transformed by the war allowing for the commoner to be seen exhibiting discipline and an ability to be part of a modern bureaucratic unit (Weber, 1981: 325). In doing so, Weber has set the stage for many of the analyses that follow in subsequent chapters, where new heroic (and post-heroic) warrior forms are pitted against one another in a slow-moving process shaping (in no small part) the meaning and the character of the state.

Skocpol (1992) provides a related, albeit slightly better known, formulation on the military origins of the social welfare model in the USA, pointing to the social significance of generous pensions to Union Army soldiers, spouses and children following the American Civil War. Civil War pensions would initially see the USA leads the world in 'distributive' social policies. While the USA would later move away from a paternalist welfare state model, Skocpol highlights the ways in which this shift was intimately tied to the memory of Civil War pensions in the early decades of the twentieth century, a period in which they became a symbol of party-political corruption and seen as counter to a masculine national identity (1992: 533–534). As such Skocpol (1992) points to the ways in which the narration of armed conflict and veterans is intimately tied to social outcomes.

Norbert Elias' work on the origins of the naval profession (1950) also provides an interesting case of selective scholarly recognition. Largely focusing on the case of the British navy between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, Elias examines how a new form of professional identity emerged to accommodate both skilled lower classes and traditional gentlemen elites, a model which would be later replicated with other professions. To the extent that the allocation of status and incorporation of lower classes did not occur in the navy of comparative European countries such as France or Spain, this occupational transformation helps explain Britain's naval dominance

between the eighteenth century and the First World War. For Elias, the military and war are sites for comprehending not only social tensions between adversaries and combatants but the outcomes of social conflict within individual societies. In Elias's own words, the emergence of the naval officer illustrates the way in which modern institutions are:

the outcome of past struggles, rivalries, and dissensions; they are all embodying either the defeat of one of the contending groups and factions or a compromise between them. They are nothing more and nothing less than fixed forms of relationships between various groups of people and, in a narrower senses . . . between individuals (2007: 121)

Elias' work on the naval profession (1950) was not well received at the time it was first published in the *British Journal of Sociology* (Moelker, 2003), and more recently, it has failed to be significantly recognized amongst the growing appreciation of Elias' scholarship in contemporary sociology. This is despite this analysis embodying key aspects of Elias' influential and celebrated 'civilizing process' thesis that connect imaginings of the self-identity and individual aspiration with state development and transformation. The later publishing in English of Elias' broader writing on the transformation of naval command also had little effect on its status (Elias, 2007).

One reason for the ongoing lack of engagement with such 'classical' works is that while their epistemologies are widely adopted in contemporary cultural analysis, when utilized to account for the way in which war and the military prompts social and political change they become seen through a political prism. And scholars are rightly wary, with the social sciences having a troubled history in the study of war and the military (Calhoun, 2010). Scholars working in the modernization theory tradition, for example, have been at times complicit in causing harm by normalizing the Western model of development and reifying the modern nation-state as it relates to the military industrial complex (Nefes, 2013). The influence of Samuel Huntington's 'Clash of Civilizations' thesis on US foreign policy and the mobilization associated with the US 'war on terror' has more recently served as a warning to scholars that research in this area can have unintended consequences (Bonney, 2008). Critical War Studies scholarship has been at the vanguard in sensitizing the field to the unintended consequences that may compromise scholars' best efforts in engaging with political and military policymakers (Barkawi, 2011; Barkawi & Brighton, 2011).

Against this background, the very study of war and the military is often seen as potentially legitimizing or romanticizing militarism (Howell, 2018). We suggest that this often results in a certain stigma, something that accounts for scholarly neglect in the area but also the ways in which cultural scholars who do study these topics go about their analysis. For example, we typically find that war is often sociologically accounted for more directly in terms of instrumentalist understandings of power. As Smith (2005) argues, cultural factors are greatly underappreciated in comprehending the causes of war, with conflict typically accounted for in a reductionist way as being about mere domination or competition for economic resources. Where culture comes into explanations of war, it is typically reduced to ideology, something used by elites to attain power. Alternatively, appreciation of meaning-making is found in the analysis of war and the military when it is restricted to the historical context. This

includes influential studies on the foundation of the modern state (Giddens, 1987; Mann, 1988; Tilly, 1992), the application of military technology to consumerism (Hambling, 2005; Sheller & Urry, 2006: 219), the role of the military in the birth of global humanitarianism (Dromi, 2020) and the influence of war remembrance in establishing civil mourning genres (Winter, 2006). In contrast, sociological studies of contemporary war and militaries seldom use methodologies that comprehend the social world from the point of view of social actors or emphasize the performative nature of social life. In the final section of this chapter, we summarize the chapters that constitute this edited book and discuss the ways in which they highlight new ways to conceptualize the relationship between war, the military and civil society and ways in which the nexus is central to contemporary socio-political change.

1.2 Militarization

The principal exception to the failure of cultural scholars to appreciate the ongoing cultural significance of war and the military in shaping contemporary culture and society is the militarization of culture thesis. The feminist scholar Cynthia Enloe has done more than anyone in popularizing the militarization term (1983; 2000), using it to advance a perspective that appreciates the military's profound influence on everyday social practices and in the shaping global society. For Enloe, militarization is not just about the direct influence of the military on society, something which she particularly focuses on in relation to the lives of women, but also includes examining how masculinity and militaristic ideals influence broad social structures. This includes how military logics and worldviews feed into notions of patriotism and national identity, courage and honour, gender, family structure and other connections that are made between military values, histories and collective identities (Enloe, 2000: 2–3).

Scholars working in this tradition note that it is important to differentiate militarization from militarism, analysis of the latter having a more direct focus on support for the institutional military and its role in international relations. This difference can be seen in Geyer's definition of militarization as the 'contradictory and tense social process in which civil society organizes itself for the production of violence' (Geyer, 1989: 9). This analytic breadth is evident in the range of empirical studies to which militarization is applied, being as diverse as the political rhetoric around the COVID-19 pandemic (Giroux & Filippakou, 2020); Congressional oversight (Parker & Dull, 2013), the gaze (Stahl, 2009), language (Rafael, 2012), life (Bargu, 2009), pathogens (Zubay, 2005) and space (Mowthorpe, 2004).

As militarization is a process, it has a relative autonomy from armed conflict, so importantly avoids event and era bound analysis of culture as it relates to war (West & Matthewman, 2016). As such it can allow for an identification of the way and the extent to which the military and militaristic consciousness enter the civil sphere. By not reducing militarization to direct militaristic influence, it has also been able to identify complex interconnections between the military and other institutions and

spheres. However, these potential strong suits are often undermined by a lack of desire to empirically document fluctuations in the influence of the military in the civil sphere and to appreciate ways in which the military itself is influenced by other societal spheres. While scholars such as Enloe (2000) and Lutz (2002) engage in such fine grain empirical work that accounts for the organization of the institutional military and the ways these shape ‘other institutions in synchrony with military goals’ (Lutz, 2002: 723), in many other cases the militarization thesis get deployed without any detailed account of the military with the focus being on other societal spheres (Giroux & Filippakou, 2020; Wacquant, 2008).

The lack of empirical focus by militarization scholars on the military itself is not surprising as it makes little analytic sense to talk about a militarization of the military. However, without an account of the military as a changing institution, militarization is often assumed to be a *fait accompli* rather than being empirically evidenced (McKay, 2013). From this perspective, we find an exploration of cases that illustrate militarization rather than testing it or providing a clear account of the rates and types of militarization other than it being portrayed as an expanding and ever accelerating feature of contemporary society. As such there is no room to evaluate the potential for demilitarization or what Shaw (1991) refers to as the post-militarization of culture, where military influence in the civil sphere declines, whether through socio-political developments or as a consequence of social movements. As Woodwood et al. (2017) argues, for militarization to be conceptually productive it requires a greater appreciation of agency, with studies providing more detail about how it works and its effects, including a focus on the experiences of people. Focusing on the militarization thesis as it relates to social memory and national identity, McKay (2013) makes the related point that as a theory militarization must be able to account for the potential of social actors to creatively use and interpreted military symbols in ways in which the dominant meaning is either resisted or over-coded.

As Bernazzoli and Flint (2009: 449) argue, much of the problem with the militarization concept is that at its heart is a false binary comprehension of the military and the civil sphere being independent of each other. This notion that the civil sphere is naturally removed from the military is evident in Jauregui’s (2015: 457) well-known description of militarization being ‘a mostly unilinear vector of militaristic violence [infiltrates] what would otherwise be a more peaceful or critical populace.’ Yet as outlined above, modern society has its very origins in military experience and logics. As such in classifying something as being subject to militarization, it is significant to detail the nature and consequences of that process as it occurs in cultural contexts. While it is important that scholarship does not naturalize militarism, it is critical that we also do not conceive of militarization in universalistic ways that denies that the military not only shapes but is shaped by the civil sphere and industry.

Howell (2018) notably dissents on this point, arguing that the term effaces the conflictual character of non-military domains, and suggests instead ‘martial politics’ be used in place of ‘militarization’ in order to shed the direct military link (and discuss more directly the coercive character of institutions that pursue martial politics). Our preference is to maintain the ‘militarization’ language in order to make quite a separate pivot: back to war, back to militaries, back to the archipelago of

security institutions, guarding our engagement so that rather than simply adopting the logics of these institutions, we can better account for the ways in which these institutions inevitably betray a creative struggle with their civilian environments. At a practical level, this might involve acknowledging how the military as an institution may be able to engage in reform, accounting for the diversity of institutional military cultures, including those within and between services, and how industry is now having an unprecedented influence and role within the military in ways that are disrupting established conceptions of military service and its connection to traditional patriotic masculine notions of duty and sacrifice.

1.3 Paramilitarization

One way to develop a more multidimensional understanding of the relationship between war, the military and civil society is to differentiate between the militarization and the increasing influence of paramilitary culture, what we can refer to as the process of paramilitarization. Paramilitary is a broad term that has multiple meanings (Lund & Mahler, 2018: 6). Existing research on the idea of paramilitary has largely focused on armed military-like groups that are either autonomous or having an ambiguous relationship to the state, either as mercenaries or those organized around civilian defence or orientated to insurgency (Golkar, 2012; Hristov, 2009). The literature is marked by several attempts at establishing definitions and typologies (Aliyev, 2016; Carey et al., 2013; Scobell & Hammitt, 1998), with a particular focus on differentiating groups according to their connection to the state and whether they have a recognized legal status or are aligned with the government. For example, paramilitary groups are typically understood in relation to the US Department of Defence (2016) definition as ‘forces or groups distinct from the regular armed forces of any country, but resembling them in organization, equipment, training, or mission’. A problem with this conceptualization is that it sees paramilitary groups as either connected to states, for example as supplementary to traditional forces, or a variant of the traditional military model. This draws our attention away from the ways in which the formation and increasing use of paramilitary groups is aligned with shifts away from traditional military ideals and the rise of a paramilitary culture that exists relatively independent from paramilitary groups.

Like militarization, we can think about paramilitarization as a process, one in which the realm of militaristic violence becomes celebrated but in ways that are in tension with the central principals and ideals of modern military organization. This definition of paramilitarization is connected to but also distinctive to paramilitarism. While paramilitarism is most commonly understood in relation to the number and influence of paramilitary groups, we can also think about it in a broader way in relation to the extent to which civil society sees paramilitary groups and violent tactics as an appropriate way to solve political issues (Haynes and McAllister 2001). In contrast, the analysis of paramilitarization has a broader scope that revolves around the way

in which quasi-military symbols, themes and tropes are used to romantically project heroic qualities.

Paramilitary culture, we argue, reflects major shifts away from the central tenants of modernity and classical militarism by advancing a new reimagining of the state, masculinity and violence. Most significantly, where militarization typically relates to triumphalism, victory culture and a faith in just and righteous war, paramilitary culture is connected to defeat and suspicion of the state. It tends to have a populist character by positioning itself in opposition to convention and institutional authority, and as such commonly involves a celebration of charismatic individualism over the establishment. A key aspect of this is a focus on the agency of the individual and groups to challenge the state's perceived monopoly on violence.

These key characteristics of paramilitary culture are commonly associated with Gibson's (1994) account of new forms of heroic masculinity in post-Vietnam America. For Gibson, the late twentieth century saw the emergence of a New War culture, one that was more paramilitary than military. At the centre of this culture was the idolization of a new heroic warrior in popular culture. While this hero often had a history of military service, this was often a source of unresolved conflict, something they would seek to resolve through now fighting alone or in a group of fellow warriors unencumbered by formal ties to the armed services. The fight could either be in a foreign battlefield or equally it could concern the civilian sphere with the enemy being the state itself or an internal domestic enemy. Along these lines, the paramilitary hero differs from the modern ideal that Weber discussed symbolizing citizenry patriotism and organizational discipline. Rather the paramilitary hero that Gibson describes is a variant of the classic anti-hero, they are a victim of injustice and they respond through engaging in a kind of higher justice, actions that while deemed deviant by the state are seen as moral and honourable by the community (Kooistra, 1990: 219).

Gibson argues that a paramilitary culture that emerged in the 1980s in the USA can 'be understood only when it is placed in relation to the Vietnam War' (1994: 10), seeing it as a reaction to the way this military defeat challenged American identity based on a sense of national exceptionalism and a militaristic victory culture. For this reason, paramilitary culture is commonly based on a nostalgia for a lost past, one without technological progress, the feminist challenge to male hegemony and disruption to the labour market. As Gibson notes, paramilitary culture is 'to dream, to fantasize about the powers and features of another kind of man who could retake and reorder the world' (1994: 11). Gibson illustrated the way these fantasies get played out through the emergence of a paramilitary genre that first appeared in films such as *Rambo*, magazines like *Soldier of Fortune* and leisure activities such as paintball and recreational shooting. An underappreciated aspect of Gibson's (1994) analysis was the way that this new warrior culture fed into US foreign policy, with the Iran–Contra affair being a case where the state drew on the notion that the good guys must now fight outside the constraints of the system. While generational change has seen defeat in the Vietnam War become a less prominent influence on popular culture in the USA, paramilitary culture is now more powerful than ever, and a feature of the global system.

While paramilitary culture is not reducible to paramilitary groups, both can be contextualized in relation to the emergence of post-heroic conceptions of war. With the end of the Cold War, various scholars argued that warfare had now become post-heroic, being characterized by Western nations having a reduced appetite to suffer casualties in military operations (Luttwak, 1995; Scheipers, 2014). As the war on terror has evidenced, while post-heroism has not seen any marked reduction in the willingness of the West to resort to violent conflict, it has changed the nature of that violence. This includes the dominance of hybrid warfare (Hoffman, 2007) that involves grey zone aggression relating to disinformation, economic manipulation and the use of proxies and insurgencies; the outsourcing of combat as well as a large quantity of administrative support service to paramilitary defence contractors (Swed & Crosbie, 2019) and the extensive use of drones as part of a broader development of telewarfare in which networked technologies are used to undertake killing from places geographically remote from actual sites of conflict (Pugliese, 2016).

Such developments have widely been understood in relation to the process of militarization, but they can equally be able to be understood as part of the influence of the civil sphere on the military with the consequence being that military affairs have become increasingly isolated from other areas of social life (Rahbek-Clemmensen et al. 2012). According to Scheipers (2014), the tactical restraints and inhibitions by the state that characterize post-heroic warfare are intimately connected to a broader post-heroic culture in which there has been a loss of faith in the type of grand narrative associated with the willingness of citizens to sacrifice their lives on behalf of the nation (Anderson 1983). As King (2010) notes, it is not that the established discourses of sacrifice are now completely absent but that they are reimagined in new ways that reflect the waning of the social contract regarding citizenship and military service. Studying how British soldiers in Helmand were remembered in the public sphere, King (2010) illustrates how in contrast to the remembrance genres of the World Wars, the death of these soldiers involved remembrance acts where the soldiers are personalized and domesticated, remembered in relation to their civil identities, for example as fathers, husbands, wives, sons and daughters, rather than their role as warriors and as military personnel.

1.4 Militarization and Paramilitarization in Context

As illustrated in the other chapters within this edited volume for which this entry provides an introduction, militarization and paramilitarization can manifest itself in various ways. The book is arranged in several parts. In Part 1, the book highlights ways in which cultural analysis can be undertaken on militarization and paramilitarization in ways that can more directly account for the multiple and changing culture of the institutional military. This is first illustrated in Chap. 2 where Thomas Crosbie provides a compelling account of the under explored ways sociologists can go about the study of civil–military relations. Expanding upon West and Matthewman’s (2016) argument about the need for a ‘strong program’ approach in the area, Crosbie

goes beyond a general advocating for the discipline to take more serious the reciprocal interactions between interactions between the military, public and government, providing a model for the different options available. Most significantly, Crosbie provides an alternative reading of Clausewitz (1984 [1832]) who has been little used by sociologists. Here Crosbie provides an analytic frame for cultural scholars to study the performing of violence as it is enacted in war while simultaneously conceiving of the strategic and tactical level of war as sociologically significant.

The exploration of new avenues for comprehending the complex dialogical relationship between the civil sphere and the military is also undertaken in Chap. 3 by Cate Carter who analyses public sphere discourses around the recipients of the Victoria Cross for Australia medals awarded between 2009 and 2014. As outlined above in relation to discussions of Weber (1994) and King (2010), heroic genres of military personnel not only reveal levels of support and military consciousness in society but can provide a basis for how we conceive of citizenship more broadly. Carter provides a nuanced analysis in which the projection of the contemporary warrior not only reflects civil society's comprehension of armed violence and those who enact it, but the agency of the recipients themselves who perform both their military as well as civilian identities. The approach that Carter uses is significant as it provides a possible way in which to understand how paramilitarization and militarization combine, this includes through the institutional military drawing on paramilitary symbolism.

Part 2 of the volume is concerned with the role of paramilitarization as it relates to the remembering of past wars. In Chap. 4, Marcus Maloney and Scott Dodge examine the narrative portrayal of war in the military in the various iterations of the 'first person shooter' video game franchise, *Call of Duty*. While originally released in the post-9/11 cultural context, *Call of Duty* illustrates key characteristics of contemporary paramilitary culture while providing a digital interactionist platform that allows a kind of paramilitarization not possible in the popular culture modes of the 1980s and 1990s detailed by Gibson (1994). In relation to social memory, what is also significant about *Call of Duty* is that its paramilitary themes are projected on various geographical and temporal contexts, with the first game being set in the Second World War, providing a particular framework for the paramilitary sense of moral righteousness, with the genre later being used for recent conflict settings in the Middle East.

In Chap. 5, Brad West and Ayhan Aktar analyse the changing projections and understanding of the First World War Gallipoli campaign in Turkey in the context of the rise of new Islamic conceptions of national identity. As will be also highlighted in later chapters, the Gallipoli cases illustrate ways in which paramilitary culture is not only a Western phenomenon. However, the case of Gallipoli also demonstrates how the idea of paramilitarization can account for the ways in which new collective memories of the military have arisen as a consequence of Islamic desecularization. In the context of Gallipoli, this involves contemporary Islamic politics challenging well-established secular militaristic narratives that celebrate victory and grand narratives of individual heroic leadership. As explored in the chapter, new remembrance forms

at Gallipoli promote Islamic sensibilities and draw attention to the meagre pious Muslim soldier and their suffering at the hands of the infidel.

Part 3 of the book explores the relationship between paramilitary organizations and paramilitary cultural frames. In Chap. 6, Murni Wan Mohd Nor and Ahmad El-Muhammady examine this nexus in the context of the discursive techniques and process utilized by the terrorist organization ISIS to undertake online recruitment and radicalization in Malaysia. The study shows how romantic notions of paramilitarism is an important part of the progressive steps used to influence the participants to accept extremism and legitimize violence. The authors highlight how only by identifying this process can we develop more effective measures to prevent radicalization and reduce the threat of terrorism from such paramilitary groups.

In Chap. 7, Luke Hynes-Bishop expands our understanding of the possible different narrations of paramilitary organizations by examining memory initiatives around the civil war in Colombia. With fighting in Colombia occurring between the government, right-wing paramilitaries and Marxist guerrillas since 1964, the Colombian Civil War constitutes the longest armed conflict in the western hemisphere. Hynes-Bishop analyses the ways in which a new narration of the war and its paramilitary actors helped facilitate peace-making, activity that contributed to the signing of a peace agreement in 2016 between the government and country's principal Marxist insurgency, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). The chapter empirically focuses on ethnographic research at the museum *Casa de la Memoria* (House of Memory) in Medellin and its permanent exhibit *Medellin: Violence and Resistance Memories*. While there is a myriad of studies on museums curating war memories, this typically involves the portrayal of past wars where in this instance Hynes-Bishop is able to explore how memory work can narrative a current conflict in ways that can influence the concluding of hostilities. As outlined in the chapter, the museum exhibit challenges the dominant militant heroic understandings of the Colombian conflict by re-narrating the war in a way which the focus turns to victims on both sides of the conflict. While the presence of armed violence in Colombia has been traditionally explained in relation to material and economic factors such as the nation's illegal narcotics trade, government corruption, the lack of a strong state or foreign interests, the chapter points to the importance of cultural and identity variables as they feed into militarism and peace building.

In Part 4, the book examines the ability of individuals and groups to recode military events and experiences. As outlined above, a key critique of the militarization thesis has been the extent to which it appreciates how cultural engagement with military themes can have a multitude of cultural outcomes. This is illustrated in Chap. 8 where Brad West and Russell Fewster detail their design of a two-week-long university-based performing arts programme for soldiers in the Australian Army recovering from physical injuries and how it encouraged the participants to develop a stronger sense of self. Breaking with the tradition of arts therapy approaches for veterans who are suffering from combat-related post-traumatic stress, West and Fewster highlight the significant mental health and identity challenges associated with injury recovery and the process of medical discharge from the military. The chapter points to the relevance of the arts for addressing these wellbeing challenges in which the soldiers

greatly welcomed their engagement with performing arts related creativity, an experience that resulted in allowing the military personnel to positively develop an identity outside of their association with the military.

In Chap. 9, the final entry of the volume, Todd Madigan explores Vietnamese-American literature on the Vietnam War. Largely overlooked in discussion of popular culture representations of this highly narrated war, the chapter highlights the way in which these alternative projections challenge dominant paramilitary American culture. In what he describes as epimilitary culture, Madigan highlights the potential of alternative war narratives to those that centre on traditional portrayals of the warrior. Using a range of examples of Vietnamese-American literature, the chapter contrasts the differences in traditional American paramilitary culture with these epimilitary cultural representations, particularly the differing nature of how violence depicted in each, and their contrasting manner of narrative resolution. This includes a fuller appreciation of the political, economic, environmental and humanitarian devastation of war.

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