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THE FORUM

FORUM: MILITARIZATION 2.0: COMMUNICATION AND THE NORMALIZATION OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN THE DIGITAL AGE

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Scholars of international relations frequently explore how states normalize the use of military force through processes of militarization, yet few

have analyzed how new information and communication technologies impact on these processes. The essays in this forum address this gap, and consider the political significance of new technologies, new actors, and new practices that shape "Militarization 2.0" and normalize political violence in the digital age. The authors in this forum rely, to varying degrees, on common militarized tropes and dichotomies (such as authenticity, belonging, and (de)humanizing framings) that are key to militarization, including those devices that rest on gender, race/ethnicity, and heteronormativity. Moving beyond a military-centered approach to militarization, the authors' questions cover ministries of foreign affairs; the embodied performances of celebrity leaders and insurgency groups; arms producers, the military video game industry, and private military and security companies; and violence entrepreneurs. The forum closes with reflections from Cynthia Enloe.

Keywords: militarization, social media, intersectionality

Militarization 2.0: Introduction

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In 2020, more than 4.5 billion people around the world have access to the internet, and more than 3.8 billion access social media platforms every month (Kemp 2020). The internet and associated new information and communication technologies (ICTs) are now part of the fabric of daily life for billions of people (Castells 2013), with implications for who communicates to whom, what they communicate, and how. This shifting media ecology is disrupting "how international relations is done, by whom, and what it involves" (Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, and Roselle 2015, 1). Although states and non-state actors now incorporate new ICTs into their uses and abuses of political violence, the social, communicative, and participatory aspects of new ICTs often are overlooked in international relations (IR) scholarship (Hamilton 2016).

Undoubtedly, ICTs have important ramifications for issues at the heart of the discipline, including political economy, security, and, of course, war and militarization. While scholars explore how states and other actors normalize their use of force through practices of militarization (Enloe 2000; Cockburn 2010; Welland 2017; Basham 2018; Baker 2020), there remains little attention given to how militarization works in and through new ICTs in the digital age. This is a significant gap given that militarization is a communicative process whereby political violence is normalized (Lutz 2007, 320), and new ICTs have reconfigured global communications over recent decades. In light of this, this forum sets out to explore the relationship(s) between new ICTs and militarization, drawing together and building upon research that highlights how militarization is changing in the digital age

and why this is important for the discipline of IR. In doing so, it provides a detailed exploration of issues arising at the intersections of security, militarization, and ICTs—in particular, in regard to contemporary Web 2.0 technologies. We now situate the forum within the broader study of militarization, and offer conceptual clarifications regarding the need for an appreciation of "Militarization 2.0."

Militarism has to do with both being disposed toward and having the social purpose to use military force, while militarization is an embedded sociological process—underpinned by communication (Stavrianakis and Selby 2012; Mabee and Vucetic 2018). Because this process has implications for how militarism manifests in and across societies (Abrahamsen 2018), we focus in this forum on how ICTs intersect with and facilitate a wide variety of actors and practices in militarization as a communicative process that normalizes political violence. While individual authors in this forum vary in their subject and method of analysis, as a group we agree that militarization involves the process of communication to prepare for, normalize, and legitimize war (Stavrianakis and Stern 2018). This process includes any means by which societies come to "imagine military needs and militaristic presumptions to be not only valuable but also normal" (Enloe 2000, 3) and is underpinned by political actors communicating that war and the use of force are "good, natural and necessary" (Jackson 2012). Subsequently, militarization cannot be understood only by measuring military strength and capability (Bowman 2002), but instead requires an attention to a diverse range of media, communication, and everyday sites and practices that are crucial spaces for understanding how various actors normalize war and political violence (Eichler 2012; Tidy 2015; Basham 2016a; Teaiwa 2017; Dyvik and Welland 2018; Chisholm and Ketola 2020; Partis-Jennings 2020).

In recent years, scholars have drawn attention to myriad ways in which militarization functions and can be analyzed (Stavrianakis and Selby 2012; Howell 2018; Stavrianakis and Stern 2018; MacKenzie et al. 2019). However, scholars have yet to comprehensively account for how militarization is changing in the digital age and what impact these changes have on practices of IR and the discipline of IR (with some exceptions, e.g., Deibert 2003; Feigenbaum 2011; O'Hagan 2013; Kuntsman and Stein 2015). If militarization involves the normalization of war and political violence through communication, and new ICTs have become a fundamental aspect of everyday life, then it is vital that the study of IR takes into account the roles these new technologies play in normalizing war. As Ronald Deibert notes, given the speed at which ICTs develop and proliferate, it is imperative to analyze how new ICTs shape "the circulation of ideas, the framing role of discourses, and processes of legitimation" (2003, 530). The purpose and focus of the essays collected in this forum are to therefore explore how new ICTs are having a militarizing function and impacting how political actors communicate and normalize their uses of political violence.

The rise of Web 2.0 technologies has led to several changes in contemporary communication that stand out as part of the shift from a one-way, broadcast media ecology to a hybrid media system (Chadwick 2013; Jackson 2019a). Because of new ICTs, information now circulates the globe in real time, in larger volumes and at higher speeds than ever before. The growth of ICTs has contributed significantly to visual media becoming ever more important in communication (Weber 2008; Bleiker 2018), and digital ICTs have collapsed the distinctions between producers and audiences of media content, as social media platforms are reliant on the active participation of users in producing and sharing content (Rosen 2006). Finally, ICTs enable publics and political actors alike to bypass traditional media gatekeepers. Subsequently, political actors no longer simply work with media actors to communicate their messages, they have now become media actors themselves (Simmons 2011). Following this, we define militarization 2.0 broadly as digitally mediated discourses and practices concerned with the use of Web 2.0 technologies to

communicate that war and political violence are a commonsense, normal, and, at times, necessary solution to political problems.

In response to such developments, we ask: how do new ICT's impact militarization? The contributions below suggest that the changes identified above combine in ways that are significant for militarization. The first factor involves the content and structural changes that new ICTs offer: volume, speed, and visuality (including moving images and sound). Political actors can utilize ICTs to support militaristic endeavors in ways that they could not do so before, e.g., through creating social media pages to spread their messaging and for recruitment, fundraising, and other organizational purposes that contribute to maintaining militarism. These practices enable both traditional and new actors involved in processes of militarization to communicate their messages in novel ways, in real time, and to potentially larger audiences at a lower cost than was previously possible.

The second major shift concerns how new ICTs enable users to bypass the traditional communications gatekeepers—the media—to reach out directly to those they seek to influence domestically and globally (O'Hagan 2013). Whether it is state actors such as ministries of foreign affairs (MFAs) or prime ministers, or non-state actors such as corporations, insurgents, or entrepreneurs, new ICTs facilitate direct communication, which, in turn, impacts the type of content these actors generate and circulate. The tailoring of content for specific audiences has implications for IR, as militarization becomes diffused through new actors and new platforms in new ways that go beyond traditional accounts of war and the broadcast media (Hoskins and O'Loughlin 2010; Merrin 2018).

How audiences themselves participate in militarization is changing as a result of these structural and content changes. In particular, social media encourage new modes of expression for audience involvement in militarization processes—whether through liking, sharing, commenting on, and/or producing content (Crilley 2016). Social media draw in users to experiences so that they themselves become prominent in not only sharing militarized social media content, but also producing such content, and repurposing ICTs in novel ways that serve militarization processes.

These developments are an essential part of understanding militarization and contemporary IR. Not least, this is because of the role they can play in normalizing war and political violence through the spread of norms and values that implicitly and explicitly convey that war and violence are legitimate. As such, we now call for attention to militarization 2.0 and how ICTs are today a key part of how militarization functions in contemporary global politics. In addition, these developments influence how we research militarization in the digital age. They prompt us to move militarization 2.0 research beyond a narrow focus on militaries while adopting an interdisciplinary approach: attuned to the collection of Big Data, visual analysis, network analysis, and more. Finally, it requires us to be flexible, experimental, and innovative in our study of militarization.

Focusing on how political actors use ICTs to claim legitimacy for military force and normalize this kind of violence, each essay builds upon current research on how these actors contribute to and reify the "natural" role of the military, prompting us to ask how militarization 2.0 differs depending on the actors involved? This forum challenges IR to widen the scope of which actors, practices, and spaces are considered in studies of militarization. We aim to contribute to conceptual discussions on militarization by focusing on understudied actors and practices, and what the digital age means for militarization, particularly in regard to how new ICTs facilitate "creative processes that produce destruction" (Shah in MacKenzie et al. 2019, 822) by normalizing the use of force.

The authors here rely, to varying degrees, on common militarized tropes and dichotomies (such as authenticity, belonging, and (de)humanizing framings) that are key to militarization, including those devices that rest on gender, race/ethnicity, and heteronormativity. Beginning with MFAs, Rhys Crilley and Ilan Manor consider how

social media encourage MFAs to shift from a traditional diplomatic role to one that supports militaristic endeavors through linguistic and visual dichotomies that dehumanize others. Catherine Baker examines celebrity leader personas and embodied militarism in the digital age, focusing on the fashioned, embodied, gendered, and racialized performances of state leaders and the use of "celebrity techniques" that reify the idea that military force is natural. Modupe Oshikoya discusses the challenges posed to state militaries by insurgency groups and issues around the digital "militarization of terrorism," in particular how the Boko Haram counter-insurgency campaign uses embodied performances online to challenge the gendered military order in Nigeria. The forum then shifts from state actors and their challengers to the role of quasi-state actors, where Susan T. Jackson, Jutta Joachim, Nick Robinson, and Andrea Schneiker explore how arms producers, the military video game industry, and private military and security companies (PMSCs) rely on a set of militarized tropes and online marketing techniques to "sell" the public ideas about national security and militarism. Next, Nicole S Grove examines the relationship between the warfighter (here, the "violence entrepreneur"), public support, and the impact of new digital crowdfunding platforms, and encourages us to analyze militarization creatively rather than through a narrow checklist of state-centric indicators. The forum concludes with a set of reflections on militarization 2.0 from Cynthia Enloe.

Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Militarization 2.0

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The role of the military in processes of militarization has been well documented by scholars of IR (Enloe 2000; Stavrianakis and Selby 2012). While the military has been a prominent actor in driving forward the normalization of the preparation for war in society (Åhäll 2016), the mass adoption of ICTs has fostered other actors being involved in processes of militarization (Stahl 2010; O'Hagan 2013; Kuntsman and Stein 2015; Crilley 2016). We ask here how has the emergence of social media impacted the involvement of MFAs in militarization processes? We suggest that the advent of social media has important ramifications for the process and study of militarization in contemporary IR scholarship, not least because they mark a significant change whereby actors previously viewed as being concerned with the negotiation of peace now contribute to the normalization of conflict through the communication of simplified, propagandistic messages to both international and domestic audiences on social media.

   Communication underpins how militarization functions, and within IR, research has focused on how militaries work with other actors—e.g., private companies, journalists, Hollywood directors, and video game designers—in order to communicate their messages to audiences (Enloe 2000; Stahl 2010). Der Derian (2009) refers to this military collaboration as the military-industrial-media-entertainment-network, where the military uses and works with various actors to create diverse forms of media communications that serve military interests and contribute to militarization. In this context, research focuses on militaries as a driving factor of militarization, at the expense of analyzing other state actors such as diplomats and MFAs. This division

reflects a general understanding that diplomats and MFAs are the arm of the state that is concerned with finding diplomatic, peaceful solutions to international disagreements. Indeed, the definitive text for diplomats and scholars of diplomacy—*Satow's Diplomatic Practice* (Roberts 2011)—defines diplomacy as the peaceful conduct of business between states. This distinction between violent militaries and peaceful diplomats is somewhat reductive, but with the rise of Web 2.0 technologies greater attention needs to be paid to how diplomats and MFAs now contribute to the normalization of war through their use of social media (see also Baker and Oshikoya in this forum).

The rise of digital diplomacy, whereby MFAs and diplomats use social media to engage directly with foreign and domestic audiences, leads to MFAs playing a key role in normalizing the use of force as a solution to political problems. This militarization is driven by social media, which facilitates and encourages MFAs to produce media in easy to view and share formats and in real time. Subsequently, MFAs produce textual and visual media that serve to reduce complex issues into simple dichotomies while also dehumanizing belligerents (Manor and Crilley 2018). In turn, this serves to make diplomatic solutions to political disagreements more difficult as conflict and the use of force become normalized. To date, few studies have explored whether, and how, MFAs contribute to militarization. This gap is substantial given that during conflicts in the digital age, MFAs are tasked with creating an online environment that enables a country to obtain its foreign policy goals, including real-time justifications of state-sanctioned political violence through social media. In this context, MFAs seek to use social media to legitimize the use of force and ward off attempts by other actors to end hostilities before such goals can be obtained. We explore how MFAs contribute to militarization 2.0 here by focusing on the case of the Israeli MFA during the Gaza War of 2014, and we demonstrate how MFAs now use social media in propagandistic ways that reduce complex political conflicts into simple dichotomies for global and local audiences, thereby contributing to militarization.

The Israeli MFA's use of Twitter during the 2014 Gaza War constitutes a process of militarization as the MFA's tweets served to normalize the use of armed force and frame it as a "good, natural and necessary" (Jackson 2016) solution to a political crisis. Work in IR has identified linguistic dichotomies as being fundamental to the construction of identity and the legitimation of foreign policy (Campbell 1998; Hansen 2006), and we suggest that through the use of linguistic and visual dichotomies published on Twitter, the Israeli MFA normalized Israel's use of force during the Gaza War of 2014.

Throughout the Gaza War, the Israeli MFA communicated three representative dichotomies on Twitter (Manor and Crilley 2018). The first contrasted a "good Israel" with an "evil Hamas." This construction of identity was evident in visual media that depicted Israeli women and children as victims, while Palestinian children were only depicted as cartoons and, often, as Hamas combatants. Such images suggest that Palestinian children are potential combatants or future terrorists; this dichotomy also was manifest in images stating that "Hamas is ISIS and ISIS is Hamas." These images frame Israel's use of military force as legitimate in response to an evil terrorist other. Furthermore, these images serve to make the Israeli self-inclusive of a broader notion of the West, united in the global fight against ISIS.

The second dichotomy, which portrayed Israel's use of force as a "natural" response to an unnatural enemy that targets civilians, was evident in videos that ask the viewer "what would you do?" if you only had fifteen seconds to find shelter from rockets. Such videos depicted Israeli children as white, Western, and engaged in everyday activities such as attending school or playing soccer. These activities were then disrupted by the sound of sirens. Hamas was thus depicted as an unnatural enemy that targets children. Furthermore, the MFA employed aerial footage that showed Palestinians as blurry gray dots on a screen. Such imagery is constitutive

of a visuality of "clean war" (Stahl 2010, 25) where the effects of military force are sanitized and war is made to appear bloodless.

The third dichotomy suggested that Israel's military force was necessary, as citizens were being targeted, while Hamas attacks were unnecessary. The Israeli MFA argued that large civilian casualties in Gaza were a natural outcome of Hamas' use of civilians as human shields. Here, the whole of Gaza was visually represented as being a military base of Hamas. Such images imply that it is necessary to kill Palestinian civilians as they are all potential Hamas combatants. These three dichotomies were prevalent across more than 700 Israeli MFA tweets published during the Gaza War and they contribute to processes of militarization as they normalize the use of force.

Ultimately, the Israeli MFA's representation of the Gaza War on Twitter sought to dehumanize Palestinians and make social media users relate to and feel emotions for Israeli civilians. Such a framing of the conflict limits the critique of Israel because "when we get emotionally involved, questioning becomes difficult, and in the process we risk forgetting the politics of what we are watching" (Åhäll 2016, 165). Notably, Israel's "what would you do?" messaging on social media during the Gaza War generated more audience engagement—in terms of likes, shares, comments, and reach—than other social media content disseminated by the Israeli state (Yarchi et al. 2017). The militarized social media content created and shared by the Israeli MFA permeates everyday social media spaces, and leads to social media users "aligning themselves with Israeli military violence" (Kuntsman and Stein 2015, 86). Importantly, the MFA's Twitter content reaches multiple audiences both at home and abroad. This highlights how militarization 2.0 spreads across transnational borders and is not limited to making a domestic audience feel that war is legitimate but is also targeted at gaining the support of international audiences. In militarization 2.0, the lines between external propaganda and internal messaging for domestic audiences therefore become blurred, as actors such as MFAs seek to use social media to convince their own citizens and foreign audiences that their use of force is legitimate.

While it is not surprising that MFAs will seek to legitimize the state's use of military force during wars, the Israeli MFA shared militarized representations based on problematic dichotomies that oversimplify the political, social, and cultural reality at hand. In the MFA's tweets, Israelis were humanized and victimized while Palestinians were dehumanized and visually framed as threats. By portraying Palestinians as addicted to terror, and dehumanizing them, the MFA contributed to making any future solution harder to achieve as its audiences—at home and abroad—are unlikely to view Hamas as a credible partner for peace or to acknowledge the pain and suffering of Palestinians (Head 2016, 113). This tension highlights the militarized form of diplomacy projected by the Israeli MFA on social media, and is worrying as it limits the possibilities for diplomacy to be used to solve crises and conflicts.

The daily use of social media has transformed how state actors can communicate with audiences (see Baker and Oshikoya in this forum). This interaction is altering militarization and its affects, as MFAs can now bypass the media to communicate directly with domestic and global audiences simultaneously in real time. These audiences then also contribute to the circulation of militarized content as they share it within their social networks. MFAs learn from these practices, collecting data from social media sites and tailoring their content to reach specific audiences.

All of this is changing who is involved in processes of militarization, as new actors such as MFAs and individuals become involved in the normalization of war on social media (see Grove in this forum). If we are to continue to understand, challenge, and contest militarization in its various guises, it is imperative that we study militarization 2.0 beyond the realm of the military and explore "war's covert

presence in our putatively civil institutions" (Barkawi in MacKenzie et al. 2019, 823) such as MFAS and other diplomatic institutions (Haastrup in MacKenzie et al. 2019, 825). In the digital age, this requires that we consider the myriad ways in which social media technologies are transforming how war, and the use of armed force, is communicated as a commonsense solution to political problems by actors we would hope to be more concerned with diplomacy, negotiation, and peace.

Celebrity Leader Personas and Embodied Militarism

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This essay examines how new ICTs can contribute to the everyday militarism of political leaders' embodied performances. In particular, it considers the example of online images of Croatia's first female president, Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, that have associated her public persona with the nation's military—a public persona constructed around an "embodied militarism." Although leaders' embodied performances are not new, digital ICTs do create some notable new affordances for leaders' persona construction, through the mutually reinforcing effects of social media's inherent visuality—in particular, digital image banks and the capacity to use visual social media to bypass traditional media in reaching the public. These affordances might sometimes provide the capacity for leaders' viral images and videos to distract users' talk *away* from state violence—such as Benjamin Netanyahu performing the "chicken dance" with Israel's Eurovision 2018 winner Netta Barzilai days after the killing of 52 unarmed Palestinian protestors in Gaza (Reuters 2018), or Melania Trump wearing a chain-store parka with a dismissive slogan while authorities were separating migrant children at the United States–Mexico border (Butchart 2018). They also have the potential to quietly normalize everyday militarism, an important part of normalizing state violence. Although the harnessing of celebrity techniques by political leaders is a phenomenon with long historical roots, leaders such as Grabar-Kitarović have perhaps never been so well equipped as now to harness techniques of celebrity in normalizing the forms of militarism on which this forum reflects. If world leaders are the international political figures whose communicative practices might have needed *least* change in adapting to today's "global culture of mobile capture and viral circulation" (Kuntsman and Stein 2015, 7), this essay asks whether the embodied aesthetics of militarism they can now perform have any *new* implications because they operate through digital ICTs.

After Grabar-Kitarović's election in 2015, images of her visiting bases in uniform and pointing rifles during arms fairs became reference points in public debates about Croatian civil–military relations throughout her 2015–2020 presidency. Embodied performances of militarism quickly became a recognizable aspect of her digital public communication, and did so at a time when new ICTs allow their users to bypass traditional gatekeepers when communicating with the public, and when social media platforms' architecture makes images extra significant in news dissemination. While aesthetic techniques of constructing celebrity personas have long been resources in political and diplomatic communication, social media platforms and the interplay between digital spaces for disseminating and sharing news have projected many more leader images into the public sphere, often produced and captured by leaders themselves and their own publicity teams. This thickens, and ascribes extra authenticity to, their personas. Underlined by the "immediacy" (Hansen 2011, 55–56) of the visual image when attached to news articles or posted on Grabar-Kitarović's own social media channels, images of Grabar-Kitarović's

frequent wearing of camouflage uniform and posing with weapons and equipment visualize an unusually direct military association and create a sense of authenticity, especially when posted on channels that purport to be direct communication between leader and user—a novelty that digital media have added to what our introduction calls "militarization as a communicative process" (see Jackson et al. in this forum for authenticity). Posted in a format that enhances the links between the everyday and the authentic, these images align her both with the 1991–1995 Croatian war of independence (termed the "Homeland War" in Croatia, and enshrined as a national origin myth by Croatia's wartime president Franjo Tuđman (Jović 2017))—which has naturalized the military as heroic defenders of national independence—and with Grabar-Kitarović's own discourse of rearmament as economic and symbolic regeneration, enabling Croatia to support its Western allies in defending Europe against shared security threats.

What contribute particular salience to such performances and personas, past and present, are "visual logics of gender" (Åhäll 2018, 150) in world politics, which intersect with visual logics of "race" and other power structures to construct orders of how differently gendered bodies should appear and act. Female leaders draw particular attention for exercising power in what were until the late twentieth century almost always male-occupied roles, from which "constituencies [still] expect not only maleness but (more importantly) masculinity" (Sjoberg 2013, 162) because they deal with the politics of security and defense. Indeed, a sole female leader in summit photographs of otherwise all-male groups of *statesmen* makes viewers notice how male they are (Enloe 2014, 28). The visuality of leaders' public appearances, moreover, extends beyond relative ratios of gendered bodies in material spaces of statecraft into the gendered visuality of clothing, fashioning, and moving the body itself.

Two ideas from celebrity studies offer added insights into militarization 2.0 and the added role that social media and other new ICTs have enabled leaders' embodied performances to play in communicating that political violence is normal. The first is the idea that star personas are produced through meta-"texts," built from what spectators already know about stars from other representations when they see their images or performances (Dyer 1998, 63; see also Jackson et al. in this forum on intertextuality); the second is how fashioned and embodied performances operate in constructing those personas. Entertainment celebrities and sporting competitors *can* symbolize their nations, when media frame them that way; being a head of state, however, inherently frames holders as personifying their states and nations, especially those who hold office because of what is thought to be the people's will. Political figures' embodied performances, circulating as visual images, have often been how fashion makes its international political significance known: Margaret Thatcher crafted "dressed performances" including test-driving a Challenger tank during a NATO exercise in West Germany in a Queen-like headscarf and flying in for her 1987 Moscow visit wearing a fur hat and coat (D. Conway 2017, 182). The sartorial conventions Thatcher helped to establish, offering professional women a mode of dress that contained the female body's "potential eroticism" while still "look[ing] like a woman" (Entwistle 2015, 189), indeed created the power-dressed "Iron Lady" as an archetypal (white) femininity of contemporary international politics (see Laher 2014, 108–10; van Zoonen 2006). In the digital age, Grabar-Kitarović provides an illustrative insight into how star personas, alongside fashioned and embodied performances, are now prominently produced, circulated, and interpreted through digital visuality on social media sites.

Grabar-Kitarović, who was NATO's assistant secretary-general for public diplomacy in 2011–2014 while NATO was promoting its adoption of the Women, Peace and Security agenda (see Wright 2016), has constructed her public persona through strategically crafted dressed performances similar to Thatcher's—including some

that reveal how the aesthetics of celebrity can make leaders' own embodied performances a vehicle for militarization in ways that social media amplifies. These performances can have "digital diplomacy" functions (see Crilley and Manor in this forum) and/or be aimed at public and political audiences in leaders' home contexts. The persona Grabar-Kitarović constructed through social media during her 2014–2015 presidential election campaign, harnessing the authenticity of her NATO experience, was that of a leader promising to restore national dignity during protracted financial crisis, and appealing to the hegemonic public narrative of the "Homeland War" as a model for national unity and regeneration. Through images shared online, Grabar-Kitarović appeared to take the role of Tuđman's symbolic daughter, personifying Croatia's integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions (NATO in 2009, the EU in 2013) and thus realizing Tuđman's dream. Association with the Croatian military—that is, militarization—was a characteristic theme in her public performances, as indeed was association with another masculine social institution constructed as a repository of national heroism, the Croatian men's football team.

Both news images and personal photos circulated through social media reinforced the association of Grabar-Kitarović with military themes. Soon after taking office, Grabar-Kitarović started wearing Croatian camouflage uniforms or jackets to visit troops at several army and naval bases in Croatia, and on her May 2015 visit to Croatian forces in Afghanistan she embodied a distinctive "militarized femininity" (Sjoberg 2007) of nation and command. Grabar-Kitarović's careful matching of uniform to task and branch even equipped editors illustrating future stories with photographs of her in three different colorways of uniform: one image from Camp Marmal in Afghanistan showed her in aviator sunglasses standing casually and smiling with her hand on a drone—almost too perfectly updating the gender politics of Carol Cohn's "pat the missile" (see Cohn 1987, 695) for the era of unmanned digital aerial surveillance and UNSCR 1325. The theme even extended into her personal photography: for example, one of the most popular images shared on Facebook by Grabar-Kitarović (from the first year of her presidency until November 2019) displayed herself during the August holidays painting her house while wearing a desert-colored T-shirt and camouflage trousers (with the caption "([thumbs-up emoji] TO WORK) I also like working so it's not beneath me, even today, to 'roll up my sleeves' and decorate my apartment. Whatever some people think about it. . .") (Grabar-Kitarović 2015). This off-duty image might seem more casual than typical media coverage of state leaders, yet it is precisely the kind of banal, everyday, domestic image users expect to see and share on social media, interwoven with entertainment content and glimpses into friends' lives. Facebook comments accompanying this image show that the audience that viewed it identified with the activity in the image and the camouflage pattern choice of her clothing. The publication of the image and the engagement it engenders is a clear example of embodied militarism in the everyday and is, importantly, facilitated through social media.

Grabar-Kitarović's performances of embodied militarism were significant enough in her public persona that Croatian journalists, comedians, and opposition politicians referred to them in debates about her presidency or civil–military relations (Jambrešić Kirin 2017). Digital images abound of Grabar-Kitarović posing with rifles or military equipment at other sites connected to the military or the arms trade (including the ASDA arms fair in Split), and they placed her presidential authority behind Croatia's status as a buyer/seller of weapons, materiel, and expertise. While her speeches in settings such as ASDA reminded the Croatian public that military technology also leads to civilian innovation, the rifle photographs were much "stickier" in news and social media, thanks to the potential virality of an armed female president's image amplified by the image-bank effect. This affordance is a novel consequence of new ICTs. These and other photographs entered media—and military (see Roderick 2016)—digital image banks, which contain an even greater volume

of images than traditional press photography and link existing pictures to fresh stories when they remediate archived photographs as new featured images: a picture of Grabar-Kitarović in uniform atop an article about her taking a strong position on an apparently unrelated issue is a visual signal to read her actions as a militarized president's—one who is deemed to be strong and authoritative.

Using the leader's gendered body for national and international public communication is not new to the social media moment, but arguably is as old as state leadership. The same goes for leaders' harnessing of fashion, and of the same persona-construction practices that create celebrities as star persona "meta-texts." New ICTs might not thus substantially change the part celebrity leaders could already play in militarization even though they have facilitated new types of visual artifact such as memes (Särmä 2016) and viral videos. They seem to remediate established visualized logics of race and gender in world politics even though, as Oshikoya argues, they also have the potential to change them. The most significant new affordance of one new ICT, social media, might even be the capacity for leaders' viral images and videos to *distract* audiences from state violence. However, the volume of still and moving images transmitted through social media, their interwovenness with personal and entertainment content, and the degree of embeddedness this can facilitate arguably help leaders create thicker celebrity personas than ever before, making the "*everydayness* of militarized projects" (Kuntsman and Stein 2015, 11; original emphasis) that much more everyday and making the authenticity of their militarism seem all the more natural.

The Role of Social Media in Changing the Gendered Military Order in the Counter-insurgency Campaign in Nigeria

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My contribution discusses how the use of ICTs by Jamā'at Ahl as-Sunnah lid-Da'wah wa'l-Jihād, otherwise known as Boko Haram, has recontextualized the normalization of violence within Nigerian society that the military has fundamentally possessed and maintained since independence. Previously, the Nigerian military used traditional forms of media to engage, assert, and reassure both the domestic and international communities about the military's successful counter-insurgency campaign. However, Boko Haram has actively undermined these claims through Twitter and professional-looking Facebook videos of successful raids on the civilian population and state security forces. Their use of these new technologies, which has become more apparent and sophisticated since their amalgamation with ISIS, has enabled them not only to communicate with their followers, but also to spread their propaganda messages both nationally and internationally. Furthermore, the videos featuring Boko Haram's leader Abubakar Shekau dressed in military fatigues holding a Kalashnikov rifle, standing amidst fleets of armored SUVs and sophisticated weaponry, mimics similar militaristic visuals used by leaders of state security forces (see Baker in this forum). This embodiment of militaristic practices used in order to spread terror has shifted the underlying dynamics of militarization within Nigerian society that was reinforced with the kidnapping of the 276 Chibok school girls in 2014 and subsequent video posted online showing the girls dressed in Islamic hijabs, reciting the Qur'an. By directly streaming their conflict arena to domestic and international audiences, Boko Haram has actively challenged traditional notions of militarization within Nigerian society.

So how has the rise of ICTs facilitated these competing notions of militarization? Here, it is important to note that militarization involves the process of communication that legitimizes and normalizes the use of force within society as "good, natural and necessary" (Jackson 2016). Since independence, the Nigerian military has shaped societal politics through a distinctive regime of violence, which has left an enduring legacy of militarization (Agbese 1990; Peters 1997; Kew 2010; Ehwarieme 2011). Ensuing military regimes dramatically escalated the practices of human rights abuses and gender-based violence to such an extent that they became automatic and intrinsic behavioral mechanisms representing a hegemonic form of masculinity (Mama 1998). Their behavior reveals "dominant, salient constructions of gender in militaries. . .[that focus] in particular on ways in which certain ideas about masculinity are fostered in military environments" (Basham 2016b, 29). As such, these specific performances of power and authority have been used to pursue, entrench, and normalize militarized values within Nigerian society.

Historically, the Nigerian military released statements through traditional state-friendly media outlets declaring that Boko Haram was a small criminal gang and not a viable security threat, a media strategy closely adhered to in the early days of their counter-insurgency campaign. This, however, provoked widespread ridicule as Boko Haram was able to emphatically contradict the military by posting videos directly onto social media platforms. For instance, in August 2013 the Nigerian military stated they fatally wounded Abubakar Shekau in a gun battle. Yet, less than two months later, Shekau appeared in a video posted on Facebook mocking the Nigerian military, contradicting their claims about his death. He declared the political class was part of a corrupt system deceiving the civilian population to stay in power and encouraged people to mobilize against the government and join Boko Haram. Another prominent case was the kidnapping of the Chibok schoolgirls in April 2014. The military declared their rescue days following their abduction. However, these claims were soon discredited. In response to such events, the Nigerian military began to engage with the civilian population through social media as well as through traditional forms of media to assert their successful counter-insurgency campaign while also reclaiming their hegemonic status within society. They regularly post photos and videos of "successful" raids in previously Boko Haram held areas, riding in military tanks, and giving aid to internally displaced persons and rebuilding infrastructure. When over one hundred of the Chibok schoolgirls were released in 2016, the news broke on social media platforms, demonstrating a change in their strategy against Boko Haram.

The Boko Haram insurgency has challenged the dominant norms of militarization embodied by the Nigerian military on two fronts. Boko Haram's violent performance of power has been clearly highlighted through the use of social media platforms, demonstrating the castration of the hegemonic power of the Nigerian military, making them appear fragile and vulnerable. The Nigerian military was initially caught unaware in April 2014 by how swiftly the Twitter campaign of #BringBackOurGirls generated national and international headlines, leaving them defensive and scrabbling to demonstrate their continued authority in the face of public embarrassment at their incompetence. As a result, the military continue to actively use social media platforms to demonstrate reported gains against Boko Haram in an effort to continue the process of militarization onto a new generation too young to remember the days of previous military dictatorships. Using a platform that many people in the country constantly engage with normalizes the military's continued engagement in the internal security operations of the state.

Fundamentally, the rise of ICTs has empowered Boko Haram to embody the imagery, language, and symbolism that have normalized the Nigerian military's predominance of everyday violence within society. In a country rife with corruption, human rights abuses, and stolen elections, political associations and civil rights groups have taken to ICT platforms to increase political participation and

association by facilitating and empowering those often ignored or silenced by the state (Chiluwa 2012). Eighty percent of Nigerians own a mobile phone and 34 percent access social networking sites (Silver and Johnson 2018). In early 2020, 42 percent of Nigerians have access to the internet—an increase of 2 million people in just one year (Kemp 2020), and the latest data available from Facebook state that 7.1 million users access Facebook on a daily basis via a mobile phone in Nigeria, with the largest group of users between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five years in the major cities (Shapshak 2015). Bypassing the traditional media gatekeepers has strengthened the influence of civil society by bolstering the credibility of their communications and multiplying their audience reach in under-represented and inaccessible areas. This has loosened the authoritative grip of the military elites within society and inspired and facilitated citizen engagement in a legitimate democratic authority (Kew 2016).

Yet, digital technology has enabled one form of militarism to be replaced with another. Since its transformation in 2009 into a violent jihadi group, Boko Haram have skillfully exploited social media as a propaganda tool to indoctrinate citizens through pervasive imagery and language familiar to them in a society where militarization processes are already the norm. However, their tactics shifted from attacking state and military targets to seizing villages and towns, targeting civilians, and imposing a violently harsh version of Islamic law to set up and declare an Islamic caliphate (Sampson 2016). This change in tactics used social media and not only capitalized on the existing "militarization of terror" in society, but also transformed and widened their sphere of influence by directly targeting individuals through their mobile phones.

Mahmood (2017) has identified three key stages in how Boko Haram communicate their messages, which demonstrates the shift in their use of social media. During the first phase (March 2010–September 2012), Boko Haram disseminated flyers written in the local Hausa language after attacking communities and military and state targets, briefed local media outlets, and sent videos to journalists at Agence France-Presse. However, most videos were played for only a few minutes, leading Shekau to record short videos to publicly voice the group's grievances against the federal government. In this time period, Boko Haram made seventy-nine recorded messages and videos, which they disseminated via YouTube and showcased Shekau as the public face of the insurgency.

During the second phase (September 2012–March 2015), Shekau dominated much of the media messages of the insurgency group. He recorded longer video messages, some lasting up to an hour, filmed in Kanuri or Hausa. Boko Haram posted forty-nine video messages on YouTube and Facebook, and between January and March 2015 created several Twitter accounts showing ongoing battles, photos from the frontline, and tweets in Arabic and English (Mahmood 2017). Shekau dressed in military fatigues and stood in front of or on top of a military tank, sometimes firing a machine gun. It was during this phase that Boko Haram kidnapped 276 schoolgirls in Chibok area in Borno state in April 2014. They paraded them on video that was played around the world and inspired a national social media campaign #BringBackOurGirls. The campaign went viral and led to the likes of former US First Lady Michelle Obama and Hollywood celebrities highlighting the girls' plight.

Phase 3 (March 2015–August 2016) coincided with Boko Haram's pledge of allegiance to Islamic State (IS) on March 7, 2015. Following Shekau's pledge to IS, the quality of their videos drastically improved. All the videos were high-definition with advanced graphics showing live action attacks and prison breaks, stoning and beheading victims, and displays of the spoils of war.

What does this shift tell us about the relationship between social media and militarization? One might argue that the shift in different phases in messaging content from Phases 1 to 3 could be seen as the "militarization of terror," as they

highlight an internal shift in tactics and strategy by Boko Haram: from initially taunting the Nigerian state and military to actively undermining their claims, to then imitating militaristic visuals in order to gain credibility and gravitas from a wider societal audience. Their use of social media has allowed the transformation of a new type of militarization of terror, a calculated tactic to undermine the hegemony of the Nigerian military, as well as to highlight to a wider audience that they are now the real power brokers within Nigerian society, a form of "targeted militarism" (Jackson et al. 2017). They have co-opted political spaces traditionally used by the Nigerian military and distorted the dynamics of violence threshold in order to further normalize acts of extreme violence. As such, they have transformed from normalizing military violence to normalizing terror. Furthermore, in order for Boko Haram to fulfill this self-assigned role, they have embodied and mimicked similar militaristic visuals that the Nigerian military have utilized in order to distort the traditional understanding of militarization. At the same time, Boko Haram has added to the meaning of how a society can be further terrorized with violence via ICTs. Not only have these new forms of ICTs enabled this change to occur, they have actively facilitated this shift. Non-state actors have hijacked the normalization of violence and terror, thus further demonstrating that militarization is beyond the preserve of state armed forces and institutions.

It is this juxtaposition that poses further questions regarding the tension between non-state groups and state armed forces in the militarization of terror. Recent scholarship that examines the growing role of ICTs by violent extremists and insurgency and terrorist groups highlights a new form of engagement (Klausen 2015; M. Conway 2017; Semati and Szpunar 2018). Is this shift of insurgent uses of social media platforms a new form of "militarization of terror"? Has this type of violence become "normal"? What does this tell us about the relationship between terror and militarization? These questions underscore tensions within IR scholarship and demonstrate that this relationship is not just a "Nigerian problem" or a "blight within Africa," but a serious question that needs further analysis to understand how different agents of violence can impact and transform the process of militarization within society. That terrorist and insurgency groups are mirroring similar militaristic practices of state armed forces demonstrates that we need to consider a broader meaning of militarization, one that has transformed to include new actors beyond the preserve of the state. In practice, the Boko Haram insurgency has created an environment of terror where the Nigerian military has become victimized and is threatened with similar amounts of violence as the civilian population. This pressure has weakened the traditional dynamics of militarization within Nigerian society in ways that elevate the insurgency group as the more authoritative violent entity.

Arms Producers, Military Video Game Industry, and PMSCs as Militarized Digital Political Actors

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Arms producers, the military video game industry, and PMSCs share marketing/branding approaches that make them powerful actors in IR in part because of their ties to the everyday and their ubiquitous presence on social media. In 2017, eighty-eight of the world's top hundred conventional arms producers had at least one official corporate YouTube channel; *Call of Duty*, a sales leader in the combat video game industry, had combined sales of more than 250 million copies and generated US$15 billion in revenue; and of the 584 PMSCs surveyed in 2014, 252 had at least one social media account (Jackson et al. 2017, 6). These figures are not insignificant. These corporations all use their corporate promotional materials to "sell" national security as military security in ways that normalize (state-sanctioned) militarized political violence, whether by promoting the necessity of preparedness via producing war materiel (Jackson 2012), by presenting war games for leisure and pleasure (Robinson 2016), or by self-representing themselves as quasi-military (Joachim and Schneiker 2018). They position themselves as one of *the* legitimate voices in national security discourses, something integral to the construction and maintenance of militarism and the processes of militarization. The intertextual way in which these industries reference one another both supports and maintains the legitimacy these companies seek. Especially important is that each of these seemingly disparate industries frame militarism through an interrelated focus on national security as military security by assuming the necessity of the military, and, through their online messaging, normalizing war and violence.

We explore the significance of how these corporations frame themselves on social media using "authenticity," "belonging," and "real-ness," which we argue are used to generate a positive emotional connection with the military. These three tropes are threaded throughout the online corporate promotional materials generated, and originally circulated, by the arms and military video game industries and PMSCs. In addition to online portrayals of embodied militarism (Baker), insurgencies (Oshikoya), and violence entrepreneurs (Grove), the message that the military is a "natural" part of society and of people's everyday lives is conveyed through the celebration of military values, the wide distribution of this content, and the active encouragement of user distribution and engagement with that content.

Popular culture is both a site for militarization and a place where "contentious subjectivities" are formed; and, as with other forms of media, social media—as a key space for popular culture—plays an important role in "memory, perception, resonance and the creation of emotion" (Davies and Philpott 2012, 42, 46). Thus, engaging with these industries' social media campaigns challenges researchers to *see with precision* as to how to categorize "visual phenomena and [be] explicit in articulating how one should look at the media being investigated" (Robinson and Schulzke 2016, 1000).

Corporations are a significant part of "banal," "everyday" world politics, with crucial implications for militarism and militarization. Through their advertising, corporations are important to how people construct meaning and identities. In the same way as consumer industries create their messaging to reflect or construct values that are related to their respective products, they indicate how we *should* act and what we *should* value (Crane, Matten, and Moon 2013, our emphasis; see also Jackson 2019b; Schneiker et al. 2018). What the arms and military video game industries and PMSCs are selling, though, is something fundamentally different insofar as it is tied to modern state structures and specific types of policy responses that justify and legitimate certain kinds of political violence. As part of their branding, they construct

the "good" citizen who supports the military including the material and ideational fabric required to maintain it.

As with the other actors discussed here, social media has impacted outreach both quantitatively (volume and speed) and qualitatively (visuality). Corporations can bypass traditional information gatekeepers to communicate directly with people in more personalized ways with the potential to "sell" war in people's personal spaces. Intended for a more widespread audience than in the past, their sophisticated marketing techniques make it increasingly difficult to distinguish lines of authority between state/military and non-state, in this case corporations, nation branding (White and Kolesnicov 2015). As with other industries active on social media, the outreach includes encouraging users to comment on and redistribute this corporate social media content. This facilitation and encouragement are possible because of how pervasive and established these actors are on YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter, in particular.[1]

According to Weber (2008), popular visual language is integral to being able to claim contemporary literacy, a notion applicable to the arms and military video game industries and PMSCs. Making use of visuality on social media, these industry actors elicit emotions (which themselves are based on audience intertextual literacy) in support of militarism (similar to Baker's discussion on "meta-texts" in this forum), by making national security seem exciting and relatable to everyday experiences. For example, in their YouTube promotions, arms producers equate the military with "everyday rugged life and superior performance" in ways that tie the perception of the soldier as hero to perceptions about everyday life and what makes good citizens (Jackson 2019b, 269). Similarly, branding themselves as "defender of the nation's safety with patriotic dedication" (Joachim et al. 2018, 306), PMSCs appeal to prospective employees and emphasize the benefits they can gain when working for PMSCs.

Conveying a sense of authenticity with respect to the experiences of the seller, the depiction of the product or services and the viewer is an important element for harnessing legitimacy. Marketers accomplish authenticity through the sincerity of the stories they tell (Beverland 2005). In the case of arms producers, military video game producers/developers, and PMSCs, both individually and as a group, they strive to elicit a sense that they are among *the* real makers of the official/authoritative national security narrative. To underscore the authenticity of this claim, they rely on imagery of former soldiers and real(istic) weaponry. Furthermore, taking advantage of their close connections to the military, arms producers use first-hand testimonials of former military personnel to demonstrate the effectiveness of the weapons systems they are marketing (Jackson 2016), while the producers of the *Battlefield* and *Call of Duty* series and the game *Medal of Honor Warfighter* rely, respectively, on military advisers and formal partnerships with weapons companies (Robinson 2016, 261–63). Leading US-based PMSCs try to appear as authentic military actors by emphasizing that they serve their nation and national security or when priding themselves that they are accredited top military-friendly employers (Joachim et al. 2018). Regardless of the differences between them, these companies have in common that they try to instill a further sense of realness to their online messages through the glorification of technology of weapons systems and the clean war they are assumed to produce, a type of "techno-fetishism" (Stahl 2010). This finds expression in the ads of the arms industry through sound effects and images, e.g., the roar of a combat aircraft as it flies by, the displaying of an enemy aircraft on a radar screen, or on-screen technology-related acronyms that the casual viewer might overlook (Jackson 2019b). Military video games, by comparison,

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[1] Our research has analyzed over 200 arms-related videos, produced by both industry and "fans," that have been watched over 570 million times alongside more than 500 videos produced by the video game industry and hosted on their official YouTube channels that have been watched over 660 million times

allow players quite frequently to simulate the use of modern hi-tech weaponry such as drones, remote and aerial weapon systems, tanks, or attack helicopters, and in so doing not only convey the allied forces' overwhelming technological superiority, but also frame combat in theatrical and spectacular terms (see McInnes 1999).

In addition to authenticity and realness, "belonging" is a key trope of marketers. It quite often rests on the us/them dichotomy with a depiction of Western military alliances against a "rogue brown" (and thus "foreign") enemy (Jackson 2019b; Joachim and Schneiker 2015, 2016)—a feeling of belonging that helps to legitimize Western military interventions and reinforce the importance of family and community ties. Furthermore, the trope is based on the assumed split between, and subsequent privileging of, the protector (often a hetero white male) and the protected. Arms producers, for example, promise pre-emptive intervention technology to protect the vulnerable (Jackson 2019b), while PMSCs offer "humanitarian protection" (Joachim and Schneiker 2018) and video games are frequently based on a plot involving the protection of US state/citizens against irrational actors who are beyond reason (Robinson 2015, 459–62).

Next to these observations with respect to the marketing practices, we conclude that exploring the social media presence of arms producers, the video game industry, and PMSCs offers knowledge about the social construction of hegemonic military masculinities. Corporations belonging to these industries appear to reinforce, albeit in varying degrees, traditional conceptions of the combat soldier and the "hero-warrior" as authoritative constructions and based on the "ground truth" these (former) soldiers embody (Wilkes 2015; Tidy 2016). Yet, the corporations belonging to these industries add gentling aspects to these masculinities that paradoxically work to reinforce them. For example, although families and communities as a whole are depicted as upholding military values, it is the combat aircraft pilot who simultaneously is responsible for/to the state while carrying the vulnerability of being a family man. In the context of military video games, narratives often are similarly framed. However, in these cases, families and communities are normally only inferred rather than explicitly represented, while the player is engaged in military combat for "the West" to protect/secure vulnerabilities at home. The same can be said about PMSCs, which turn the weaknesses and vulnerabilities of veterans into strength when they incorporate them into their corporate structure and claim to transform wounded former soldiers into valued civilians who are essential for national security.

IR scholars would do well in exploring these industries and their use of modern forms of communication further—not least because they are becoming increasingly prevalent in the everyday via their social media presence, and thus matter as political actors in many, rarely explored ways. From bypassing traditional gatekeepers to utilizing the fast, broader reach of modern ICTs while playing off the increased use of visuality, the online presence of these industry actors calls for a more prominent place in IR scholarship.

Militarization, the Gig Economy, and the Indiscernibility of the Violence Entrepreneur

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This essay reflects on a new kind of internationalized combatant, one I have elsewhere referred to as the *violence entrepreneur.*[2] Here I am interested in what this par-

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[2] The term is adapted from Jairus Grove (2016) and further developed in an article I published on the subject titled "Weapons of Mass Participation: Social Media, Violence Entrepreneurs, and the Politics of Crowdfunding for War"

ticular fighter reveals about emerging relations between ICTs and militarization, while challenging how the discipline of IR has understood questions of sovereignty, violence, and war. The concept was originally developed out of a desire to understand North American and European civilians traveling overseas to engage in combat operations against the Islamic State, their use of crowdfunding platforms to finance self-crafted missions abroad, and what I found to be the limits of the literature on private security and partisan violence to explain this phenomenon (Grove 2019). Whereas literature on private security tends to situate private military contractors and other battlefield laborers within an economy of violence linked to monetary and other forms of exchange, the voluntary and (usually) uncompensated character of these acts of killing made it difficult to locate these self-identified "ISIS hunters" within such an understanding of market relations. The difference, for me, seemed to turn on the use of violence as an end unto itself in the innovation, enjoyment, and redemptive quality of violence, rather than its instrumental use in the pursuit of, for instance, money or survival (Grove 2019). Further, these combatants' use of peer-to-peer lending platforms was organizing and circulating information and resources in ways that were altering the exercise of state power in determining sovereign decisions over life and death, where individuals and small groups of supporters were shaping the contours of enmity in ways that were significant to geopolitics.

How can we understand the casual processes of militarization as they relate to new forms of social action that coalesce around this type of combatant, and corresponding collective desires for violence and intervention? Often when we speak of militarization as a process, it is to suggest that an object or person undergoes a transformation where something or someone either is or is not militarized, and can also potentially be demilitarized. For example, one could pose such an inquiry in terms of how violence entrepreneurs' engagements on social media militarize those platforms. This question also could be inverted to consider how new collectivities on social media militarize those combatants who might have otherwise *not* felt empowered or capable of acting in more extreme capacities, for instance, where expressions of support mutate into decisions to engage directly in armed conflict. Depending on how one understands the causal drivers and the directionality of militarization as a process—that is, who or what is doing the militarization and to what or whom—shapes how we understand the sites and excitations of new forms of global violence.

It is, however, at the interstices of these two questions that the problem of this research, and of the violence entrepreneur, is considered. As a term of explanation, militarization is not often taken up to identify tenser inflection points where phase shifts are happening in the making of something new. Is the violence entrepreneur a soldier, an anarchist, a hero, a mercenary, an adventurer, or a murderer? Further, should we think of crowdfunding platforms as community building resources for funding creative works and helping individuals in need, or as a resource for funding and organizing non-state combatants in international conflict zones? There is no clear answer here insofar as one could definitively say that the violence entrepreneur inhabits one or all of these identities, or that crowdfunding platforms are or are not militarized. They can just as easily be used to pay someone to "kill terrorists" in northern Iraq as they can to help a friend pay for new furniture or a medical procedure. Thus, the violence entrepreneur engages us in thinking of militarization as a *problématique*, or a creative encounter with the world rather than an a priori checklist of identifiers or a set of conditions against which we can measure if and to what extent something is or is not militarized. In other words, it suggests that the value of militarization as a question may not always produce codable categories,

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(2017). I later came across another use of the term in Vadim Volkov (2002), whose definition of violence entrepreneurship differs from mine in that Volkov is referencing the conversion of organized force into money or other material assets (27).

as this would treat militarization as something with boundaries already confirmed. Instead, the violence entrepreneur begs the question of precisely what counts as militarization, and also whether or not the category itself fully captures new forms of collective and atomistic violence.

Violence entrepreneurs also demonstrate that militaries do not have a monopoly on militarization any more than they have a monopoly on violence. New modes of data capture, information sharing, and digital finance prompt us to reflect on who or what the prime actors and processes of militarization may be. This does not mean that militaries cannot benefit from the actions of violence entrepreneurs, but it does mean that militaries are not planning, organizing, or defining their agendas. In actuality, militaries are often undecided about and vacillate over the value of these atomistic combatants, who may sometimes be seen as disruptive or a liability. Consider, for example, a recent *Marine Corps Times* report about two American civilians who traveled to Syria voluntarily to fight with the Syriac Military Council and were turned away as an "inconvenience" by US Special Forces after seeking help to return to the United States (Snow 2017). At other times, these combatants provide necessary supplements to narratives of "freedom," or even actual outcomes, for instance, when *Rolling Stone* magazine credited a "ragtag crew of leftist revolutionaries" and "soldiers of fortune" with defeating ISIS (Harp 2018). These examples are not about simple reversals, for example, of government positions on the presence of these fighters on the battlefield. Neither do they represent simple inversions of victory narratives that shift their focus from the veteran hero to Antifa. Rather they suggest outright ambivalences in terms of the position of formal institutions in relation to the individualization of combat.

These ambivalences not only constitute states' relationships to singular sovereigns, but also can be found in the antagonistic positions said fighters have to their own governments, who in many cases justify their interventions as responses to state failure, while also being intensely jingoistic. Consider here how contemporary American vigilantes known as Minutemen suggest a blurring of military and citizen authority at the location of border walls (Brown 2010). Violence entrepreneurs often inhabit an anti-statist and anti-government ethos at the same time that they claim to be fighting wars in the name of the United States (or Canada, or Europe, or Australia, or the Netherlands), thus acting in the "spirit" of the sovereign while not directly in its service. Here, militarization is also a problem of inquiry and a challenge of research insofar as we cannot say that it always has rational state ends. Historicizing these ambivalent relations is important for tracking connections and shifts between violence entrepreneurs as a mutation of the so-called war on terror, and their earlier antecedents. Related modes of violence legitimated after the fact have been an integral component of American settler colonialism, for example, as seen in organized settler massacres in the mid-nineteenth century in what was then considered "Indian Country," which paved the way for the western expansion of the US rail system and the actualization of America's homestead policy (Weigley 1973, 156; cited in Grove 2019).

To think about how so-called democratizing technologies authorize exceptional forms of violence, and to engage analytically and politically with how the publicness of these virtually enhanced communities contributes to the creation of new political zones that escape state capture is not to say that information generated via these platforms cannot also be appropriated by government or military apparatuses. It is to say, however, that contemporary forms of communication and mobile finance are functioning as the drivers and symptoms of mutating fields of security, militarization, and war. Thus, it is necessary to identify how social media and crowdfunding platforms play a significant role in transformations in the way violence is organized, as new interests, forms of enmity, and new actors engage these platforms to facilitate that violence. As is often articulated within media theory, we are always already *in media res* in relation to these processes, and thus should

attempt to theorize them from the inside rather than beginning or ending with categories that presume to know or describe what we find in systems previous to investigation.

Peer-to-peer lending platforms are altering the conditions of the battlefield and the exercise of state power in determining who the "enemies" are, as are new "non-profit" security firms that have recently emerged as part of a drive to organize violence entrepreneurs in the form of the firm. These crowdfunding initiatives parallel the adoption of civic crowdfunding models to provide public goods and other public service provisions, where "security" is framed as a public good, for example, when individuals can "fight terrorists abroad" so they do not have to be fought "at home" (see also Manor and Crilley in this forum). These social platforms provide the infrastructure for planning, funding, and implementing individual missions, and raise comparable questions to those centering on the commodification and multiplicity of providers of security, which have displaced this provision from the jurisdiction of states. Still, there is something about the organization of security around what Ashton, Weber, and Zook (2017) call "market-like bidding mechanisms" that, I think, mark a phase shift in new economies of violence, one that looks more like the so-called gig economy than it does the outsourcing of security by states through private contracts with for-profit corporations.

Both individual fighters and these new "non-profit" security providers employ entrepreneurial logics and collaborative logics of platform participation to reorganize how security is desired, experienced, and organized within interstitial spaces of what is considered permissible and impermissible violence (Grove 2019). By positioning themselves and their supporters relative to imaginaries of state and economic failure in the provision of security, crowdfunding platforms allow combatants and donors to imagine and create new kinds of national communities around the provision of atomistic forms of violence within what Çalışkan and Callon (2010) call market encounters in digital space. These encounters demonstrate an empirical mutation in the sovereign decision over enmity. Otherwise, it would not be possible to make the claims that "having an adventure (i.e., killing 'terrorists')" is one's "own business" (Bofetta and Philipps 2015). Such combatants would be considered mere criminals, rather than celebrated on daytime talk shows, or given military-style funerals on Canada's "Highway of Heroes" (Miller 2015). Of course, violence entrepreneurs often rely on certain tropes and narratives distributed and valorized by states and popular forces of militarization. However, each claim to nationalism or national freedom is also a reinvention of that claim through the process of claim-making itself. Crowdfunding platforms thus also play an effective role in the creation of value between users, in the curation of communication and connectivity, and in the formation of new publics within which these types of claims are (re)articulated. The relationship between the fighter, the supporter, and the platform becomes recursive—it is a self-amplifying system.

If militarization, as a theory or an approach, is to have explanatory power rather than merely marking polemical or political differences in the justificatory logic of violence, then we need to do more to trace these processes in their formative stages, where something crosses a threshold between militarization and something else. What does it mean to say that violence entrepreneurs are simply murderers? Or heroes? Or young men and women having an adventure? What is just on the other side of each of these categories? It is important to mark conceptually what tips ever so slightly into something on the other side of the soldier or adventurer into more complicated terrain. We may never find the real lines between these things, as concepts will only merely ever approximate them in the world, but it is worth trying to identify the thresholds where something is or is not quite militarized. For me, violence entrepreneurs inhabit this threshold of indiscernibility between private murder, economic gain, adventurism, and new forms of security and militarization.

Unlike legally or politically more determinant actors, violence entrepreneurs thrive on this indiscernibility.

Reflections on Militarization 2.0

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Here on a small shelf just above my left shoulder stands a tiny Australian toy soldier attired in his distinctive hat with its upturned wide brim. Next to him stands an Indian Sikh soldier in his handsome red tunic and turban. These are classic lead soldiers. They both hold rifles, but their arms or legs never move, and their weapons remain silent. They seem an eon distant from the action-packed, in-perpetual-motion, explosive world of today's digital warriors.

As these innovative research-based essays reveal, the digital militarization we are experiencing today is a process marked by distinctive features: its speed, its seductive pull on individuals in private spaces, its defiance of political boundaries, and its vast array of state and non-state actors (many of whom cannot be easily traced). Those distinctive features of militarization are barely being taken into explicit account by most analysts of international politics. They (well, us too, most of the time) may not be back in the era of toy lead soldiers, but they/we have yet to recraft our curiosities and our methodologies so that they can accurately capture the causes and consequences of digital militarization.

Despite these distinctive and under-researched features of digital militarization, however, there are significant continuities between pre-digital and digital processes of militarization that are underscored here in these fascinating essays of "Militarization 2.0."

First, paying serious attention to both the toy soldiers and the digital warriors reminds us that militarizing processes have always insinuated themselves into the daily lives of civilians. Militarization never has been confined simply to transforming civilians into uniformed soldiers. Militarizing processes have long relied on strategies that normalized war waging for women and men, girls and boys living lives apparently distant from either state or insurgent military forces.

Second, paying serious analytical attention to the games created to propel both the stiff little toy soldiers and the superhuman digital warriors into fictive action underscores the importance of imagination and narratives in fueling militarization's insinuating process. We will never fully comprehend the allure of militarization across cultures if we stay focused just on strategic actors and strategic doctrines. The designers and propagators of digital militarizing processes may have speed and spatial reach on their side, yet they stand on the shoulders of creative storytellers from the Greeks to MGM.

Third, taking seriously the international politics of both digital and pre-digital militarizing processes can nudge us to ask broadly about who in any setting at any time are the militarizers: not just public civilian state officials, not just uniformed military officers, not just weapons corporate CEOs and engineers, but also perhaps toymakers, animators, scriptwriters, advertisers, marketers, entertainment corporations' software engineers, insurgent movements' recruiters, fashion designers, teachers, mothers, and fathers.

Fourth, as I cast one eye toward the carefully painted toy soldiers and with the other watch the animated digital characters, I am reminded that every militarizing process, dramatic or subtle, needs to be interrogated with a feminist curiosity. A conscious feminist investigatory approach to any militarizing process prompts us to question how and when the processes by which militarization insinuates itself into

anyone's life are shaped significantly by the workings of masculinities and femininities. Digital militarization has not made masculinities passé. Digital militarization is not immune to wielding femininities. Sped-up storylines are fraught with gendered narratives. Boundary-defying messaging does not make gender inquiries obsolete. The hip software engineers are not genderless; nor are the people who employ them, nor are the viewers who find their products tantalizing.

Recognizing these four continuities between pre-digital and digital militarizations, of course, does not mean that nothing in the ways militarizing processes operate has changed over the generations. Reading these articles definitely banished any tendency to slide into ho-hum smugness.

These researchers have opened my eyes to what is new, what I need to be more aware of. Each of these authors reveals how the current digital militarizing processes are distinguished from past militarizing processes especially by their high speed, their vast volume, their multiple authors, their geographic reach, and their graphic visibility. Each attribute is making it harder for us to track the routes of today's militarization. They make it harder to monitor how exactly militarizing images and narratives insinuate their nightmares and their reassurances into diversely gendered people's emotional and intellectual lives.

What is harder to track and harder to monitor is tougher to challenge.

The engaging articles featured here—describing digitally militarizing processes in Sweden, the United States, Nigeria, Israel, and Croatia—have made me sit up and take notice of the growing cast of militarizers. They may be competitors, yet they share a stake in persuading not just civilian legislators and potential government procurers, but also civilians that the world is a dangerous place.

Likewise, as we learn here, it is not only officials in ministries of defense, but also officials in MFAs who can amplify a state's warning chorus depicting enemies on the borders and global threats looming. Similarly, today, sophisticated digital militarizers include both a state's counter-terrorist security forces and the insurgent forces they are mandated to combat.

Joining in this already-crowded field of militarizers is every civilian internet user—at breakfast, on the subway, and sitting up in bed—who spreads their messages of danger, fear, power, excitement, or pride by clicking on "like" or "share."

Arms-producing corporations, private security companies, digital gaming producers, MFAs, leaders, states' counter-terrorist forces, insurgent militias, and entrepreneurs—each of them is gendered. So too are those girls and boys, women and men who consume and respond to these militarizers' seductive high-speed messages. I have some clues as to how ideas about omnipresent dangers and about force as a solution rely on gendered values and presumptions in some of these settings. Still, I am acutely limited by huge gaps in my knowledge and understanding of precisely how any particular wielding of diverse masculinities and femininities operates in each of these digital militarizing sites. Those gaps certainly curtail my capacity to track and monitor, not to mention contribute to any challenges to those digital militarizing processes.

Together, we have so much more to learn about today's digitalized militarizing dynamics. The keen observers who created this forum have set us off on a collective analytical journey. It is, I think, a journey fueled by urgency.

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