

Modernities: A Geohistorical Interpretation

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Guest Editorial

From militarization to securitization: Finding a concept that works

While the study of militarization in geography has blossomed recently, one of the results has been confusion and dispute over the meaning of the term. In particular, the question has arisen of whether the current language holds any analytical purchase. We argue that the term securitization more accurately reflects contemporary conditions. After identifying the problem of false binaries that arises from the term militarization we outline the identification of processes of securitization in different 'arenas' of society in varying geographical and historical contexts. The strength of this approach is its ability to analyze different forms of violence without assuming an a priori separation of military and society. At the outset, it seems that the difficulty of studying militarization is akin to the difficulty of studying the state, because it rests on a largely false binary. We agree with Deborah Cowen's comments at the 2009 AAG meeting that the language of militarization problematically implies separate civilian and military spheres. The acceptance of an ontology of militarization, or processes that take the 'civilian' and make it 'militarized,' involves a number of false binaries: inside/outside; foreign/domestic; war/peace; violence/nonviolence; state/society; military/society; as well as military/civilian. The latter two are the most germane to the ongoing discussion in human geography. While they may, at first blush, appear to refer to the same phenomena, there is a scalar difference. At a broad scale, the military does not exist apart from society. At the scale of the individual, analyses attempt to place actors and activities into clear categories of 'military' and 'civilian.' Such distinctions lack utility for understanding how policies that sustain the military and their actions are enacted and gain broad support.

Neither of these binaries, at the society or individual scales, is tenable. Furthermore, they deny a long and complex history of the intertwining of military and civilian activities and cultures (Cowen, 2009). As Jenna Loyel (2009) argued, discussion of militarization need not implicate the formal institution of the military, but instead can be broadened to incorporate multiple forms of state and nonstate violence. 'Violence' here includes a range of activities, from the use of force in an overt, physical sense to the use of institutions, laws, and norms to control behavior. In sum, the study of militarization is difficult because while there is an ontology of a formal military apparatus, there is no clear delineation between militarized and non-militarized spheres at any scale of human activity.

Rethinking militarization requires rethinking what, exactly, the term 'militarism' implies. This concept has evolved from one that once denoted the evolution of a separate, dangerous military ethos to one that, presently, emphasizes the embeddedness of a militaristic mentality in civil society. Alfred Vagts (1959: 15) noted that

nineteenth century militarism produced a narcissistic notion amongst soldiers that they "exist for themselves alone;" and thus sustained peacetime whims, such as anachronistic cavalries maintained for the sake of prestige and pageantry. Similarly, Michael Ceyer (1989: 67) spoke of this past form of militarism as the presence of a "powerful military caste that was set against civil society." More recently, Rachel Woodward (2004, 2005) changes the use of the term by referring to the social geographies of militarism, in which the military apparatus reconfigures social as well as physical space. Hence, Woodward points to the formation of deeply militarized attitudes and behaviors that render any divide between the military and the civilian meaningless. Woodward's research reinforces Cynthia Enloe's definition of militarism as an ideology consisting of a body of core beliefs (re)produced within and by civil society:

- a. that armed force is the ultimate resolver of tensions;
- b. that human nature is prone to conflict;
- c. that having enemies is a natural condition;
- d. that hierarchical relations produce effective action;
- e. that a state without a military is naive, scarcely modern, and barely legitimate;
- f. that in times of crisis those who are feminine need armed protection;
- g. that in times of crisis any man who refuses to engage in armed violent action is jeopardizing his own status as a manly man.

(Enloe, 2004: 219)

We have argued elsewhere (Bernazzoli & Flint, 2009) that the core beliefs Enloe identified address the construction of militarism at the individual and national scales without considering their interconnectedness. Hence, the addition of scale is necessary to show how the core beliefs of militarism become embedded within particular settings. Without such a consideration, the separation of scales in Enloe's framework potentially reinforces the false binaries associated with typical conceptions of militarization, which view the state apparatus as separate from individuals and their daily life experiences.

Although Enloe refers to the ideology of 'militarism,' it may be better characterized as 'securitism.' Significantly, only core belief (e) explicitly mentions the military. Even this reference could refer to a security apparatus that encompasses military, police, and other actors involved in the ongoing processes of securing society by guarding both material and discursive borders. Moreover, references to 'enemies' and 'crisis' need not be taken as inherently outward-looking or linked to distant theaters of war. Indeed, the

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