MILITARISM

Militarism is a dynamic and multi-faceted concept which enables many disciplines across the social sciences to analyse a range of social phenomena that arise from the complex interplay between society, the military and politics (Ben-Eliezer, 1998). As such, militarism is drawn upon to make sense of a number of different ideological, behavioural, institutional, political, economic and structural practices that prepare society for war and perhaps more importantly to support war. When concepts are used in a variety of ways they inevitably become fragmented and difficult to define. Enloe (2007) reminds us however that militarism is not a singular idea but a *package of ideas*, which taken together, situate military values in civilian affairs. Once military values are firmly positioned into a society, so too are military priorities. Central to militarism is organised violence, yet its effects are far more wide-reaching than the physical violence enacted and experienced by people - it is also a discursive process which shapes cultural and economic landscapes – militarism then is a transformative process (Enloe, 2000). It is important to note that the nature of the society that is studied and its relations to its military and politics is always significant to how militarism functions in that context. Therefore, whilst militarism is a universal concept, the specificities of the geo-political context being studied is always dominant in each analysis.

When thinking about state power, rights and liberties, as is the case in this volume, the ideology which legitimates militarism is important, as are the effects that it has upon the hierarchies of people (e.g. gender, race and class). The ideological facets of militarism are also specific to the context in which they are functioning. For instance,

contemporary studies of militarism in the global north tend to focus on a militarised popular culture, from (mis)representations of war by media outlets and commemorative events onto the governance of speech in recent years (see Kelly, 2012). In the global south, analyses often look to victimisation of civilians, organised violence in the name of security and/or values and the oppression of certain groups (namely women) (see Enloe, 2000). Nonetheless, any focus on militarism addresses an imaginary that naturalises military presence where physical force is considered progressive and the acts of the military are celebrated whilst militaristic ideas of order, regime, sacrifice, and discipline (Ben-Eliezer, 1998), blur boundaries between civil and military affairs (Adelman, 2003).

Trajectories of militarism and all of its facets can be traced throughout history, however, new media technologies of the 21st century in particular, have markedly changed relations between society, politics and militaries as mediated 'realties' of war and the welfare or security of soldiers and citizens permeate societies. In the United Kingdom, at least, some of this is purposefully visible such as police forces adopting military characteristics, the use of military personnel to support domestic security systems, recruitment strategies, and increased taxes for defence all sitting alongside discourses of what it means to be British. Militarism also has a less visible effects, such as the governing of speech, restrictions on educators, vilification of religious practices, narratives of hate and extremism (see Kelly, 2012) and in what Stahl (2010) referred to as 'militainment' reality TV and interactive gaming now mean that the public can interact with militarism as virtual citizen soldiers. All of which explain why (in the global north at least) societies continue to accept state-sanctioned violence and war in

the pursuit of political goal (i.e. militarism legitimises the military and its functions). It should be noted that not all countries are wedded to the values of militarism, for example, Costa Rica and Iceland do not have a military. Moreover, it is often found that not all members of society experience or contribute to militarism in the same way. Enloe (2007, p 11), explains that as a result, 'observers have crafted a second, complementary concept 'militarisation'. The militarisation of a society is a consequence of the normalisation of militarism in that society.

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See also:

Readings

Ben-Eliezer, U. (1998) *The making of Israeli militarism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press

Enloe, C. (2000) *Maneuvers: the international politics of militarism women's lives* Berkeley: University California Press.

Enloe, C. (2007) *Globalization and militarism: feminists make the link* (2nd edn). Rowman & Littlefield.

Kelly, J. (2012) 'Popular culture, sport and the 'hero'-fication of British militarism' *Sociology* 47(4): 722-738.

Stahl, R. (2010) *Militainment Inc: war, media and popular culture*. New York. Routledge.