

Chapter 7 War and Socio-political orders

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7.1. Introduction

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Reader's guide

In this chapter, we explore the relationship between war and society using three key questions: where is war, how is war possible, and what (or who) does war secure? Asking these questions enables a deeper understanding of the choices that societies make about why, when, and where to fight and prepare for war, how the choices of actors and their actions make war possible, and the benefits and costs to people's security that wars can bring about. Such questions can help us to evaluate whether we should continue to prepare and wage war, and for what purposes.

7.1. Introduction

War has undoubtedly played a significant role in human history. This is perhaps why we all intuitively have some sense of what war is. Some thinkers have even suggested that if you were to stop anyone, anywhere, and ask them what war is, they would be able to confidently describe war to you (Nordstrom 1998). Most studies argue that fighting and violence define war (Öberg 2019). However, reducing war to fighting means we risk overlooking practices and experiences central to how wars come about and are conducted. For example, during the 2001-2021 war in Afghanistan, coalition military leaders prioritised ‘winning the hearts and minds’ of Afghan people through non-violent means, alongside fighting.

The tendency to define war as fighting has also led humanity to collectively condemn and attempt to curtail wars horrors through international laws and regulatory practices. Representations of fighting in war, both real and imagined, also saturate global popular culture, making war a source of entertainment (Stahl 2010). Whole libraries of books, museums, and many films and television shows tell stories about war that are primarily told from the perspective of fighting soldiers (Nordstrom 1998). This focus on those who fight wars has given rise to a tendency to see war as something that has always, and therefore always will, play a fundamental role in human existence; to take it for granted (see Chapter 1). War’s prevalence across time and space can lead us to think that we live in a perpetually violent world. Fascination with soldiers, violence, and aggression may lead us to assume that war is the outcome of our brutish and competitive ‘human nature.’ Even among those who see war as a subversion of our usually peaceful human nature – as something that arises over competition for resources – war is often assumed to be an unstoppable force.

When we make such assumptions about war, it perhaps becomes easier to see why states around the world see preparing for war and waging it as vital to their security. Strong warfighting forces, it is assumed, will make states and their populations more secure (Malešević 2010). However, what if we were to question this ‘common consciousness’ (Vitalis 2015, 5) around why we fight wars and adopt a perspective critical of war? What if we asked why states and societies constantly prepare for war and dedicate often considerable resources to it? What if, instead of asking what war is, we asked how has war come to play such an important role in our security, and what it does to our societies?

To these ends, we ask asks four key questions in this chapter. First, we will consider *where* we commonly come to understand war as being located to explore how this might shape our understanding of war as something that provides security (see 5.2.1.3). Second, we will think about which actors and practices make it possible to wage war in the first place. How can actors and their actions normalise war and preparing for it (see 5.2.1.1, 5.3.2.1)? Finally, we will ask what, or who, war actually secures? Depending on the answers, should war play such a significant role in global politics as a result (see 5.2.1.2, 5.3.2)? We concluded by suggesting that these questions highlight that war is the outcome of social and political choices. This means that making other choices – ones that could provide people with greater security – is possible (see 2.4).

7.2. Where is War?

Many people around the world have an especially ‘intimate’ and direct relationship with war (Parashar 2013), but we all in live in societies shaped in one way or another by war’s historical, legal and institutional legacies, by ongoing political decisions about military necessity

(Brighton 2019), and/or by the broader influence of the military and war on societies, or what is often depicted as militarism (see Box 7.1). However, when we begin to look more closely at where war *is* – that is, where war can be seen and where our ideas about war come from – we may begin to think differently about why we wage and prepare for war.

Let me begin with an example. Close to where I live there is a railway line that is surrounded by barbed wire to stop people from getting onto the tracks, injuring themselves and other people, or damaging the railway. Barbed wire is something that the managers of the railway lines have used to secure property and people, just as politicians and militaries have used war to secure territory and people. Barbed wire is part of my local built environment and maybe is where you live too? However, barbed wire is also a globetrotting technology of war.

[Box 7.1 about here]

Barbed wire, first patented in the United States in 1874 by a farmer called Joseph Glidden, was initially designed used to contain livestock (on security design, see Chapter 16). As farmers began to enclose their farms with barbed wire, violent disputes broke out between them. Cattle herders saw previous routes to grazing land and markets blocked by barbed wire fences. Indigenous Americans were especially affected: barbed wire restricted their access to land and resources.

In 1901, barbed wire became widely used by British forces during the Anglo-Boer war both defensively, to secure railway lines as the main means of communication, and offensively, to trap and capture Boer commandos. During these operations, large numbers of families were also trapped by barbed wire. Displaced from their homes, many were interred in concentration

camps around South Africa, also surrounded by barbed wire, where many died from disease, due to insanitary conditions and overcrowding (on camps, see Chapter 20). During World War One, barbed wire was also used to trap enemies as well as to defend trenches. In World War Two, barbed wire became a symbol of the Holocaust through its use at death camps where mass exterminations occurred.

When viewed through its military uses, something as mundane and ubiquitous as barbed wire makes war visible, giving expression to different forms of political violence (see Chapter 4). In the Anglo-Boer War, as in many wars since, barbed wire reconfigured an entire landscape. In doing so, it created displaced civilians and made them insecure. In concentration camps, barbed wire was not merely a material tool physically delimiting and enforcing specific hierarchies by allowing governments to control unarmed masses of civilians deemed hostile or a political threat (Netz 2004). Barbed wire is not just tool or an object, it is an infrastructure (see 3.3). Its use in war, and even beyond the battlefield, has profoundly reconfigured social and political relations (Woodward 2005). To answer the question ‘where is war?’, we therefore need to look at everyday life.

7.2.1. Locating war and what counts as war

Where we think war happens can also shape what counts as war and how we make sense of it (see 2.2, 4.4). Tarak Barkawi (2016, 199) argues that when scholars label something as a ‘war’ what they are usually describing are conflicts ‘fought between nation-states, fought between regular armed forces.’ The concept of war is therefore based largely on the experiences of countries in the global north and Eurocentric ideas of what constitutes ‘proper’ war. In contrast, conflicts primarily involving actors from, and located in, the global south are usually labelled

differently. These are variously ‘small Wars, insurgencies, emergencies, interventions, uprisings, police actions, or something other than war proper’ (Barkawi 2016, 199; see Chapter 8).

Wars in South Asia, for example, are often labelled as ‘communal conflicts’ and wars in Africa as ‘ethnic conflicts’ (Mamdani 2003, 133). Characterising war in these terms – even ones that have occurred within Europe as with ‘ethnic conflict’ in the Yugoslav Wars of the 1990s – can shape how we understand and react to them. These ‘less-than-wars’ can come to be seen simplistically as the inevitable outcome of ‘ancient hatred’ and as intractable problems (Campbell 1998). This can divert our attention from the more concrete economic, social, and political hierarchies within a political-order that may have facilitated wars, making it harder for us to understand them (Baker 2018). It can also conceal the significant role that war has played in anti-colonial struggles and the capacity of war to generate, as well as destroy, social and political communities (see 4.2).

7.2.2. Sites of perpetual war?

How we come to see a country or a region’s relationship with war also matters (see 3.2-3). As Nivi Manchanda (2020, 5) demonstrates, Afghanistan –its people and its culture past, present, and future– has come to be imagined in ways that have made it seem a like place of perpetual war, making it possible, or even common-sensical, to invade and bomb it. Afghanistan has become a place where war *is*. Manchanda (2020) shows, for example, how a selective reading of Afghanistan’s history has led it to be constructed through the *idea* of the ‘Graveyard of Empires.’ Here, Afghanistan is depicted as a land of unassailable terrain and rugged warriors desensitised to hardship, who are always ready for combat. As Manchanda (2020) points out

however, the British ostensibly won at least two of the three Anglo-Afghan wars so the idea that Afghanistan is unconquerable, or that its warriors are undefeatable, is not borne out by the evidence. This myth nonetheless persists and characterises Afghanistan as a warring and chaotic place which, Manchanda (2020) argues, makes it more legitimate to invade and bomb Afghanistan to secure other populations at the cost of Afghans. Similarly, Sherene Razack's (2004) analysis of the shooting of two unarmed Somalis, and the torture and killing of a sixteen-year-old Somali boy by Canadian peacekeepers in 1993, illustrates how Somalia was constructed as a place of chaos and disorder. This idea of Somalia was then used to explain away the violent behaviour of 'traumatised peacekeepers' subjected to the inherent violence of Somalia.

7.2.3. Securing civilisation through war

Where we see war from is also important to how and where we think wars *should* be waged. Kyle Grayson's (2016) analysis of drones and targeted killing questions how it is that this mode of counterinsurgency and policing has made specific people, places and things 'targetable' in order to ensure other people are secure. This idea, that some people in some parts of the world necessarily experience war's violence for other people's security, has a lengthy history. In 1899, for example, the British refused to sign a declaration that explicitly prohibited the use of expanding bullets (known as 'dum-dums'). This was on the grounds that these weapons were necessary to use against African and Asian tribes as wars against them were different from 'civilised war' (on identities, see 3.3). Sir John Charles Ardagh, the British delegate to the conference on the declaration argued:

in civilized war a soldier penetrated by a small projectile is wounded, withdraws to the ambulance, and does not advance any further. It is very different with a savage. Even though pierced two or three times, he does not cease to march forward, does not call upon the hospital attendants, but continues on, and before anyone has time to explain to him that he is flagrantly violating the decision of the Hague Conference, he cuts off your head (quoted in Mégret 2006, 293).

Scholars have also argued that there has been significant resistance, both moral and political, to seeing brutality in war as something that comes from *within* European politics and culture. To take the example of the Holocaust, it is often explained as the outcome of an ahistorical ‘evil’ (Mamdani 2003). Zygmunt Bauman (1989) instead argues that a more credible interpretation of the Holocaust is as an organisational achievement of a bureaucratic society in which practices prized as ‘civilized’ were used to facilitate mass murder. Bauman points to how the Holocaust heavily relied on modern technologies and sensibilities such as the factory system, where instead of producing goods from animals and crops, in death camps like Auschwitz, humans were the raw materials, and the end product was death. Bauman (1989, 18) points to how technological innovations such as the railroads simply shipped other forms of ‘cargo’ – human cargo – and argues that the ‘truth is that every ingredient of the Holocaust – all those many things that rendered it possible was normal’ within European cultures and societies. Bauman (1989, 105; author’s emphasis) also argues that rather than being a culture of civility and peace, modern European culture is one of dehumanisation, wherein soldiers are ‘told to shoot *targets* which *fall* when they are *hit*’ and company employees are ‘encouraged to *destroy* competition’ making it ‘difficult to perceive and remember the humans’ behind these technical terms. The Holocaust, when thought about this way, is not the outcome of an evil that

pervades human nature but of arrangements within a socio-political that were chosen and used for violence.

We can understand war similarly as an outcome of socio-political orders, including the ways in which it is governed. For example, war has been shaped by the development of *institutions* (see 3.3) such as International Humanitarian Law or the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. International laws and conventions provide guidance on the necessary conditions for wars to be legitimate as well as measures, that if undertaken, are to be considered sufficient to divest perpetrators of violence from legal liability for outcomes, including the killing of non-combatants. War is thus embedded into legal regimes (as noted above) and institutional arrangements like the International Criminal Court.

Thus, when we ask where war *is*, we can perhaps better understand how what we have come to know about war depends on how we see war in our own lives, on which conflicts are even defined as war, and on how some parts of the world come to be defined as ‘warlike’ and especially violent, and others more peaceful. If some parts of the world are deemed to be places where war is more likely or even inevitable, this can lead us to overlook why wars have arisen there in the first place. It may mean that some states legitimise war and preparing for war as necessary for their security in the face of the insecurity that they assume that other states pose (see 4.3). It may lead us to think that we have no choice but to make people in other societies less secure by waging war there because we come to believe it is necessary to our own security (see 2.3, Box 4.1).

7.3. How is war possible?

Shaw (2005, 40-41) has argued that most theories of war are defective because they have not considered ‘what people actually do in war.’ One of the most obvious roles that people play in war and preparing for war is as soldiers or combatants but a range of actors engage in practices that make war possible (see 2.3.2). For example, Carol Cohn’s (1987) seminal study of male defence intellectuals explored how, through gendered daily practices, they came to see nuclear weapons as rational, tough, and masculine. This led them to normalise, and prioritise, stockpiling and potentially using nuclear weapons for maintaining global security during the Cold War. Looking more closely at what people actually do in war and when preparing for war highlights how war is made possible by actors and their actions.

7.3.1. Gender, racialisation, and war

Killing and injuring others, which is the main business of soldiering, is often normalised through the idea that war is fought on behalf of one’s country or some other ‘big cause.’ Motivating people to fight and possibly die for a cause is not necessarily straightforward. Contrary to what many people believe, studies have shown that engaging in violence is very difficult (Collins 2008). Killing, after all, is something that people are raised to abhor and that is outlawed across the globe. Militaries and militia groups must therefore invest considerable resources – in the form of training (Grossman 1996) and other forms of socialisation (Bourke 1999) – to convince otherwise law-abiding people that they should fight. This means it is important to pay attention to cultural, racialised, and gendered explanations for why certain people are expected to wage war and prepare for it, and in what ways (see Chapters 9, 10, 11).

Militaries across the world are overwhelmingly populated by men. Men have more often joined or been conscripted into militaries than women. In some countries, such as South Korea, it is

still only men who are conscripted. This does not mean that women do not fight or have not fought. For example, an estimated 40% of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), who are fighting for an independent Kurdish state, are women. Nor does it mean that there are not considerable differences in how different men and women experience soldiering (Henry 2015). However, many scholars have demonstrated that gender norms and racialised logics normalise *expectations* about who makes the best soldiers. They have shown how soldiering and violence have come to be equated with manliness (MacKenzie 2015) and how racialised ‘martial qualities’ have come to be associated with certain ethnic groups (Streets 2004). These ideas have been used to motivate and cajole certain men to be warriors. There is nothing natural about men, or men from specific communities, fighting in war. However, cross-culturally gendered and racialised norms have determined, and continue to determine, the roles that people are *expected to* – and therefore often, but not always – play in war and preparing for war (Goldstein 2001).

The reliance of militaries on certain ideas about men’s and women’s roles in war can also be highlighted through tensions around the conscription of transgender people (see Chapter 10). In South Korea, for example, the government will only conscript people they consider to be ‘able-bodied men’ to serve for two years (due to the formally ongoing war with North Korea). Transgender people who identify as transmen but were assigned female at birth are not considered by the state to be able-bodied men. Therefore, they are exempted from military service. Transgender people who identify as transwomen but were assigned male at birth often find that they are conscripted because the state sees them as ‘able bodied men’ (Yi and Gitzen 2018). For the South Korean state, war continues to be something men should prepare for and perpetrate. Much like someone’s sex at birth, that relationship between men and war is seen as inherent and unchangeable.

Nira Yuval-Davis (1997, 94) has argued that even though men and women have been mobilised in different ways within different militaries and armed groups, one of the most salient ideas surrounding war is of ‘men as warriors and of women as worriers.’ This leads to simplistic associations between men and the public business of war as well as between women and the private sphere of the home. Both can reinforce ideas about how men and women should act to support war. State actors, and not only military officers, are almost always men. More importantly however, security settings are one where masculine traits, whether exhibited by men or women, continue to dominate and are prized over feminised ones (Cohn et al. 2005).

The normalisation of men as warriors also conceals how men and women’s labour can make war possible in different ways. For example, Maria Rashid (2020) points to how the Pakistan Army has over-relied on recruiting men from specific regions of Pakistan. Within these regions, the idea that a person’s masculinity is secured through military service has become prevalent over time. This association motivates more men to enlist. Rashid (2020) shows how the wives of these men are expected to emotionally support their husbands and their military service, even if this is through mourning their deaths. Similarly, Victoria Basham and Sergio Catignani (2018) have highlighted the pivotal role that women are expected to play in the United Kingdom’s defence by freeing up their husbands and male partners to engage in military training and war preparations by taking on increased domestic and caring labour in the home. Katherine Moon (1997) has also shown how significant women’s sexual labour has been to maintaining strong security relations between states such as the United States and South Korea.

In instances where women are involved in armed struggles, even when for survival against state oppression, notions of ‘proper’ masculinity and femininity can still lead to expectations

that they must behave in ways that do not challenge men's authority or the ideas of masculinity that are important to the identity of armed groups (Tambiah 2005). Often women's involvement in these struggles only offers them partial or fleeting experiences of gender equality (Tezcür 2020). However, others have shown the importance of the pleasure that women have taken in gaining power that they would not normally hold outside of war and how this has shaped their identities and their pursuit of violence (Mailänder 2015).

7.3.2. Agents and agency in war

How people's actions in war are remembered and recorded can also enable us to think more deeply about the relationship between war, militarised violence and socio-political orders. Henrique Furtado's (2017) work on the Brazilian Truth Commission demonstrates how the specific ways in which the Commission engaged in 'truth-seeking' resulted in divergent characterisations of the violence that different actors perpetrated during Brazil's 'dirty war.' Whilst the Commission rightly, and importantly, condemned the violence of state military and police actors who perpetrated systemic state terror, they depoliticised and victimised leftist militants, characterising them as 'mere dreamers who fought for liberty and democracy in the past' (Furtado 2017, 316). In doing so, the Commission undermined the political nature of these militants' violence and how they sought to use violence to bring about radical social change (see 3.4, Chapter 4). This matters because such characterisations can reinforce the idea that there is a natural relationship between state actors and violence, and in contrast, non-state violence must be deviant and illegitimate. Whose contributions to war are seen as normal, whose contributions are valued, and whose are overlooked, can therefore tell us something potentially important about what is being secured and how. It can prompt us to think more carefully about how the idea that war is vital to the security of states is reproduced through

social and political practices. This may lead us to ask questions about war's supposed inevitability, and about who is secured by war and its practices.

7.4. Who, or what does war secure?

All societies that maintain armies maintain the belief that some things are more valuable than life itself (Billig 1995, 1).

For Michael Billig (1995) war is something that societies have come to value. In fact, they value it more than the lives of those they expect to die whilst waging it. Pointing to historical examples of wars fought for causes that we would consider absurd – such as defending chivalric honour – as well as to more contemporary rhetoric about the need to defend ‘the nation’, Billig suggests that wars are fought to secure states and the idea of ‘nationhood’, not to secure human life. The assumption that war provides states and populations with security is common though. Militaries and soldiers are often revered in societies in ways that mean that ‘military approaches to political problems gain elite *and* popular acceptance’ (Kuus 2009, 546; my emphasis). Some scholars have argued that the idea that societies should organise themselves ‘for the production of violence’ (Geyer 1989, 79) has become so normal that when a country announces an increase to its military spending, typically it is a ‘no brainer’ because if the country’s war-fighting capacity has increased, so too will that country’s security (Lutz 2014, 184). Although people do not often explicitly articulate that it is necessary to prepare for war or in states must maintain armed forces and weapons systems in ‘any great detail or as a clearly thought through set of rational principles’ (McSorley 2014, 119), the assumption that strong militaries make us safe is common.

7.4.1. Why do we think war makes us secure?

But does war make societies more secure? If not, why do we think it does? After all, we know that war is profoundly destructive. In addition to direct deaths, it leads to the proliferation of sexual violence, disrupts agriculture and food supplies, destroys infrastructure, places of education, cultural heritage, and worship, and disrupts public health and social care provision, policing and legal processes, politics, and much more besides. Why then do so many societies value war and preparing for it?

Scholars from different parts of the world have tried to address this question by asking how societies come to see war and preparing for war as a normal part of their society and politics. Some have focused on how military actors and war are represented in education. In Indonesian schools, for example, children's textbooks celebrate the heroism of Indonesia's soldiers but underplay or critique the role of its civilian politicians (Purwanta 2013). Similarly, Turkish textbooks inform children that all Turks are warriors and that the military is what makes Turkey a strong and competent country (Altınay 2004). Others have explored how across cultures – from Lebanon (Rey-García et al. 2020), Russia (Danilova 2015), Japan (Repo 2008), and Namibia (Öberg 2016), to Zimbabwe (Mpofu 2016), China (Lopes 2020), Pakistan (Rashid 2020), and Denmark and Sweden (Åse and Wendt 2018)– rituals of war commemoration and sacrifice have socialised generations of people into seeing war, and preparing for it, as fundamental to the identity and continuation of their socio-political orders.

War, and preparing for war, as we have already explored, are also represented as 'normal' parts of human existence in many forms of popular culture. Scholars have examined how films glamorise the U.S. military and can legitimize the idea of the United States as the world's

foremost military power (Weber 2006), or how depictions of the military and its soldiers in Sri Lankan advertising, theatre, film, and literature venerates war and those who fight it (de Mel 2007). Others have explored how nationalism and war have been celebrated in pop music in the Yugoslav region (Baker 2020) and through sport in Brazil (de Melo and Drumond 2017), or how nostalgia for war can be found in consumer habits in the United Kingdom (Tidy 2015). In these societies, and many others besides, scholars have explored how the ‘production and circulation of popular culture’ continues to play a significant role in making ‘world politics what it currently is’ (Grayson et al. 2009, 157), which is one where war and preparing for war are seen as normal.

7.4.2. Societal benefits and costs of war

In some societies, militaries, soldiers, and military practices are seen as a means for creating greater security *within* societies as well as protecting them from external threats. In some societies, enlisting in the military gives people access to educational and economic opportunities, and to medical and social services, that they would not otherwise have (Cowen and Gilbert 2008). Enlisting even allows some people to gain citizenship (Ware 2012).

However, in countries such as the United States where joining the military gives people access to some of these opportunities, certain socio-economic and minority ethnic groups are overrepresented in the armed forces. This means that the burdens and dangers of war fall disproportionately on poorer and non-white members of U.S. society than on others. Some migrants also only receive citizenship after being killed during military service. Moreover, the U.S. military’s racial diversity can obscure systemic racism and how it leads to a lack of

opportunities in civilian jobs that drives some people towards military service in the first place (Ray 2018).

In the United Kingdom, military veterans have received extensive government funding to provide activities for children excluded from schools to try to solve the political problems of both veteran unemployment and educating children who are considered to have behavioural problems. Such schemes are based on assumptions that military training and employment gives veterans skills that are useful in teaching. Engaging in military-style activities in educational settings often means young people lose out on formalised education though and some do not take exams. This can limit their future prospects whilst equipping them with skills that would be most valuable to a career in the military, potentially limiting their choices (Basham 2016).

More widely, when a country decides to increase its military spending to secure itself, this can lead to defunding or deprioritising other spending needs (see Table 1 below). These can include services that might provide greater social security such as shelters, support for victims of interpersonal violence, or job training for the homeless. It can also lead to less investment in other initiatives such as tackling climate change, arguably the greatest source of insecurity for humanity.

Table 7.1. A snapshot of UK military spending and costs of the military-industrial sector

SPENDING (2020)	59.2 BILLION USD
WORLD RANK (2020)	5 th

SPENDING AS A % OF GDP (2020)	2.2
SPENDING AS A % OF GDP IN OTHER SECTORS (2020)	0.64 Environmental Protection 0.82 Housing and Community Amenities 1.77 Public Order and Safety
AUSTERITY CUTS TO MILITARY SPENDING 2010-2018)	7%
AUSTERITY CUTS TO OTHER SECTORS (2010-2018)	44% Family and children’s welfare 23% Protection (policing, fire services, courts, prisons, and public order and safety) 17% Education

Sources: Tian et al. 2021; OECD 2021; Human Rights Watch 2019.

In some socio-political orders, fears around conflict or criminal activity have led to popular and elite support for greater military involvement in societal activities. Saul Rodriguez (2018) argues that in Colombia fear generated by internal conflict has led to the embedding of pro-military attitudes in Colombian society, enabling civilian politicians to adopt militaristic approaches to countering a broad range of perceived threats to stability within the country. Cristina Rojas (2009, 229) argues that Colombia’s pro-military socio-political order has undermined democracy and exacerbated economic inequalities by engendering ‘a citizenry less inclined to claim his or her rights politically and more prone to “voluntary obedience” in return for protection.’

Similarly, in Brazil, fear over violent crime, alongside the historic role that the military has played in governing, has normalised the Brazilian military’s involvement in maintaining law

and order. This meant that over time, ‘crimes against public safety were transformed into crimes against national security’ (Zaverucha 2000, 21). This has engendered a common narrative of a security crisis (also found in Mexico) that has justified the internal deployment of military forces to tackle drug trading and trafficking (Passos 2018). Militarised policing has done little however, to address the extreme inequality and poverty that feeds criminality and violence in Brazil, and that makes so many Brazilians insecure (see 3.2-3; 4.2-3). Military forces have instead been deployed to residential areas, particularly socio-economically deprived favelas, where they have routinely used lethal violence against civilians, generating further insecurity (Wacquant 2008). Moreover, non-white Brazilians are disproportionately represented among those killed by armed military and policing forces (Cano 2010).

Thus, whilst Catherine Lutz (2014) suggests that increased military spending and other investments in war, and preparing for it, are often considered ‘no brainers’, scholars have suggested reasons for why it might not be the case that war, and preparing for war, provides security. War and preparing for war often generates *insecurity*, and can exacerbate inequalities, and engender hierarchies between competing ideas of who, or what, should be secured and how (see Chapters 2 and 3).

7.5. Conclusion

We are quick to accept the facile and mendacious ideological veneer that is wrapped like a mantle around the shoulders of those who prosecute [war]...to give this kind of slaughter an historical inevitability it does not have (Hedges 2002, 20).

The war correspondent Chris Hedges has called war a ‘force that gives us meaning.’ Though he is critical of the ways that war is often depicted as an inevitability, he also suggests that its destructiveness can expose the value of life and having a life that has purpose. It is perhaps this human urge to make sense of death on a mass scale, that leads us to think of war as primarily about fighting and as something that has always been, and always will be, part of the human experience. These things may lead us to assume that preparing for war makes our societies more secure.

In contrast, we have considered war, and preparing for war, as outcomes of social and political choices and practices. We have highlighted how important *where* we look for war is to how we understand it, and how socio-political orders can be characterised as spaces of war through the stories we tell about them. It has looked at how people are expected to behave in relation to war and war preparations, and how their actions make war possible. It has highlighted how the choices we make about war, and the ways it is practiced, can unevenly distribute (in)security across socio-political orders.

If we begin to think about war as something that is reliant on our social and political choices, rather than something that is inevitable, we can envision different forms of politics. The imperative to do so is vital. As Jairus Grove (2019, 2) argues, despite repeated warnings from the world’s scientific community that our finite resources mean that humanity has long faced a choice between war and survival, those ‘in a position to make a decision chose war.’ Environmental degradation means that it is perhaps only by making different choices (see Chapter 18), by making sense of war in different ways than we have traditionally done, that we might yet avert the biggest threat to humanity’s security, which may otherwise prove catastrophic for us all.

7.6. Questions for further discussion

1. How useful might it be to reorient our discussions of war away from what it is towards asking where is war?
2. Does war become less 'normal', or 'rational' when we think about it through the lens of socio-political orders and lived experience?
3. What can we learn about war when we ask who fights and supports it?
4. Why might it be important to focus on actors profoundly affected by war but who have received less attention, such as children?
5. What is the biggest threat to the security of humanity? Can war and/or preparing for war address this?

7.7. To explore this theme further

Conway, Daniel. 2012. *Masculinities, militarisation and the end conscription campaign: War resistance in Apartheid South Africa*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Conway's analysis focuses on white men who objected to being drafted for compulsory military service in apartheid South Africa. Drawing on a range of archival materials and

Pre-print version - From Guillaume, Xavier & Grayson, Kyle. Eds. 2023. *Security Studies: Critical Perspectives*. Oxford: OUP: pp.104-120.

interviews, Conway details the relationship between military conscription, conscientious objection, citizenship, and masculinities.

Enloe, Cynthia. 2000. *Manoeuvres: The international politics of militarizing women's lives*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Enloe's accessible global analysis explores how women's lives are shaped by war and the scope and extent of just how much gendered labour it takes to sustain war and war preparations.

Edwards, Louise. 2016. *Women warriors and wartime spies of China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Focusing on the lives of China's most famous women warriors and wartime spies, Edwards explores how these women have been commemorated in popular culture, and how popular and official representations of these women have evolved in line with China's shifting political values to glamorise war historically and in China today.

Oracz, Michał and Jakub Wiśniewski. 2104/2017 [video game/board game]. *This War of Mine*. Krakow: Galakta Games.

This War of Mine, available as a video and a board game, highlights that contrary to most depictions in popular culture, not everyone who experiences war is a soldier. It puts players in the position of civilians trying to survive war. Players have to make and find useful things, and solve various dilemmas and problems faced by real people in warzones.

Spiegelman, Art. 2003. *Maus*. London: Penguin.

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Box 7.1. Militarism

The concept of militarisation is often used by scholars who are interested in how war, and preparing for war, shapes societies. Enloe (2016, 18) argues that although it can take generations for a socio-political order to become 'militarised', militarisation has taken hold once civilians come to see 'military solutions as particularly effective' to the problems that socio-political order faces, for instance policing issues (see Chapter 6). Enloe (2016, 18) argues that in socio-political orders that have come to see the 'world as a dangerous place', military force becomes a logical response to that danger. Exploring militarisation means thinking about how people come to believe in such dangers and solutions, and how civilian life can become arranged in ways that support or normalise military objectives and ideas (Woodward 2005).

In the context of a large-scale conflict like the Second World War, it is easy to see how socio-political orders came to see the world as dangerous and that society should play a part in the ‘war effort.’ In the United Kingdom for example, civilians were encouraged to ‘make do’ with and mend old clothes, so that garment factories could be requisitioned to produce weapons. Supporting the war effort by ‘making do’ became a social virtue though, not just a necessity of war. Some contemporary environmental campaigners have suggested we need to use this same solution borne out of military need, to reduce waste and over-consumption.

It is important to note that the term militarisation has been criticised because it implies a unidirectional process where the military (or state) does the ‘ising’ to socio-political orders (Cowen in Bernazzoli and Flint 2009). Socio-political orders are not simply encroached upon by militaries though. Instead, socio-political orders have come to organise *themselves* in ways that are conducive to preparing for and waging war (Geyer 1989; Howell 2018). It is therefore interesting to explore how socio-political orders have done this, and when and where military and civilian values align and diverge.