

Bleeding boundaries: Gendered analyses of militarism in the Western Pacific

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Abstract: *This introduction to an Asia Pacific Viewpoint special section on militarism and gender in the Pacific argues that gendered analyses are crucial to understanding processes of militarization, and that multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches are integral in that effort. The introduction also provides background to the articles, outlining their origin in a workshop on militarism and gender in the Pacific held in Wellington, New Zealand in 2009, and its subsequent iteration in sessions at the Oceanic Conference of International Studies in 2010. The special section constitutes the first publication of a permanent working group on militarism and gender in the Pacific with an international, multidisciplinary membership.*

Keywords: *gender, interdisciplinary approaches, militarism, multidisciplinary, Pacific Islands*

This special section of *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* (APV) was made possible by a grant I received from the Royal Society of New Zealand's Marsden Fund for research I have been doing on Fiji women serving in the British Army and Fiji Military Forces. While conducting my research into this previously unexamined topic, it became apparent that there was a dearth of literature and analysis that combined attention to militarisation in Fiji with attention to gender. The papers in this special section are thus the product of my attempts to have explicit discussions and exchanges over a period of a year and a half with colleagues from a range of disciplinary backgrounds about the need for and the effects of gendering our analyses of militarism in the Pacific.

In October 2009, I convened an international and interdisciplinary workshop in Wellington, New Zealand on militarism and gender in the Pacific. Some of the participants in the workshop had been studying militarism for a while, but were new to gender analysis; others had been working on gender for some time, but were new to the area of militarism; yet other participants were adept at analysing both simultaneously, but were not so familiar with the Pacific Islands region. The group comprised of

a mixture of indigenous and non-indigenous Pacific participants, academics, activists, feminists and scholars engaged in masculinity studies. We were most fortunate to have pioneering feminist analyst of international relations Cynthia Enloe; and leading analyst of development in the Pacific, founding member of the Fiji Anti-Nuclear Group and pro-democracy activist Vijay Naidu lending their expertise in this workshop. Papers were presented by myself, Beth Greener, David Capie and Torika Bolatagici.

At the end of the workshop, participants agreed to form a permanent working group on militarism and gender in the Pacific. The membership of the working group has since expanded to include academic and NGO researchers as well as postgraduate students in six countries and over a dozen institutions and its membership is still growing. This special section of APV thus constitutes the working group's first publication. Of course, the articles contained here have very limited geographical coverage of the western Pacific, and even then are not able to address some of the most intensive areas of American militarisation in Micronesia and Hawai'i, Indonesian militarisation in West Papua, and French militarisation in French Polynesia and New

Caledonia. There is clearly an unevenness in the extent to which gendered analyses of militarism have begun to emerge in studies of particular sub-regions of the Pacific (see Dvorak, 2008; Shigematsu and Camacho, 2010 for exemplars from Micronesia especially). The working group aims to stimulate and support other current and future research which will help to make gender analyses integral to the study of militarism across the Pacific Islands region.

Subsequent to the Wellington workshop, the presenters met again to present revised versions of our papers at the Oceanic Conference on International Studies (OCIS) in Auckland in June 2010. On this round, additional presentations were made by Carol Harrington and Edwina Hughes, who had been participants in the 2009 workshop, and were sufficiently inspired to develop papers to contribute as part of our OCIS session. Beth Greener also brought on board two co-authors, Will Fish and Karlyn Tekulu, for her OCIS presentation. Since the 2009 workshop and OCIS 2010, the contributors have continued to refine their writing and analyses in the midst of ever-increasing workloads and ever-present personal and community obligations and responsibilities. The simultaneously rigorous and generous reviews by peer referees for APV have been much appreciated in this context.

As guest editor for this special section, I have excluded my own research from the collection. My paper from the 2009 workshop theorising a 'military cultural complex' in the Pacific will be developed for publication as an article elsewhere, and my co-authored paper with Edwina Hughes on mapping the militarised Pacific that was presented at OCIS laid the ground work for a longer-term collaborative research project. After this special section for APV is done, I will be focusing my energies on completing the sole-authored manuscript on Fiji women serving in the British Army and Fiji Military Forces for which I was awarded the Marsden funding. Rather than being tangential to my own work, however, the papers in this special section have been crucial to helping me understand better the broader imperatives and challenges for advancing gendered analyses of militarism in the Pacific.

Because of its variegations, 'militarism' is not the most commonly used key term for describ-

ing the phenomena we are interested in here. Anyone wanting to understand the historical dimensions of militarism in the Pacific Islands will be forced to search through terms such as 'savagery', 'resistance', 'pacification', 'discipline', 'war', 'nationalist' and even 'social mobility'. Enquiries with more contemporary concerns will be rewarded by utilising terms such as 'nuclear', 'conflict', 'crises', 'coups' and 'security.'

For the purposes of this special issue of APV, distinction must be made between military studies and studies of militarism. Military studies inevitably focus on formal institutions of war and defence, while a study of militarism is able to extend beyond the boundaries of formal institutions such as the army, navy, air force and marines. The term 'militarism' has both specific and general connotations. The narrowest definitions limit militarism to functions of the army, as distinguished from functions of the navy. The broadest definitions extend to general displays of aggression and bellicosity. In reference to this collection of articles, the term militarism is used as a gloss that covers both the narrowest and broadest definitions, building on what Cynthia Enloe has described as 'a step-by-step process by which a person or a thing comes to be controlled by the military or comes to depend for its well-being on militaristic ideas' (Enloe, 2000: 3).

What we are describing therefore is a phenomenon that distressingly 'bleeds' across formal boundaries: militarism is a force that is not contained by military institutions, but one which seeps into much more fundamental aspects of social and cultural life. The articles in this special section, then, are studies of militarism which occasionally refer to, or rely on military studies; however, they are aimed not just at institutions of war and defence or security, but at cultural complexes: those shared values and ideals of militarism that intersect across areas of social life including art and media (Boltagici), policing (Greener, Fish and Tekulu), small arms (Capie), peacekeeping and sex work (Harrington). To varying extents, inasmuch as these articles are investigating gendered dimensions of militarism in the Pacific, they are thus necessarily engaging with culturally and historically specific ideas about race and culture as well.

Differences in disciplinary background and emphasis allow the contributors to shed light on the diverse points at which militarism's boundaries 'bleed'. Bolatagici's work emerges out of the fine arts and photography, with crucial engagements with visual and media studies; Greener, Fish and Tekulu form a multidisciplinary team that pools together their respective training in politics and strategic studies, philosophy and Pacific Studies; Capie comes out of international relations; and Harrington provides her analysis from a sociological base. As Capie discovered through his examination of the gendered impacts of small arms trafficking in Papua New Guinea, anthropological and ethnographic literature cannot be ignored. Paying attention to gender thus inevitably leads to a productive kind of bleeding across disciplinary boundaries. If militarism itself is a process of bleeding across social and political boundaries, and gendered analyses lead to bleeding across disciplinary boundaries, then gendered analyses of militarism create unique opportunities for comprehending militarism and its effects.

The most significant body of literature built around a similar focus to that of this special section would have to be 'security and conflict studies' but very little of it explicitly addresses the gendered significance of processes of militarisation (e.g. Reilly, 2000; Finin and Wesley-Smith, 2001; Duncan and Chand, 2002; Henderson and Watson, 2005; Rumley, Forbes and Griffin, 2006). One of the unfortunate effects of the security and conflict discourse is a kind of pathologising of problems in parts of the Pacific that can too easily re-inscribe metropolitan foreign policy approaches that border on racism and cultural imperialism. As Greg Fry has observed in his excellent commentary on convergences of Australian media, scholarship and policy portrayals of the Pacific, problems that resonate with metropolitan fears and prejudices can come to obscure the understanding of specific countries and sub-regions, dominate the frames of analysis and prevent us from obtaining a fuller picture of the societies we are supposedly interested in (Fry, 2000).

What can be gained by closer attention to gender in the security and conflict literature is such an expanded picture of Pacific societies. Feminist analysis, for example, is able to critique of both the colonial and indigenous

gender structures, dynamics and values that underpin many if not all of the contemporary social and political conflicts that attract the attention of security scholars and commentators. At present feminist and gender analyses are still marginal to security and conflict studies in the Pacific, in spite of there being a significant body of work which articulates Pacific women's perspectives on militarisation and militarised conflicts in their societies (e.g. WinFIP, 1987; Foerstel, 1991; Emberson-Bain, 1994; de Ishtar, 1994, 1999; Sirivi and Havini, 2004). Predictably, masculinity studies have been even less integrated into security studies in the Pacific – with the numerical dominance of males and the hegemony of androcentric discourse as givens in the field, masculinity has been allowed to go largely unexamined rather than interrogated as it needs to be.

The papers in this special section illustrate a variety of approaches to accounting for gender: Bolatagici focuses on a racialised male body and constructions of masculinity in militarised Fiji; Harrington highlights the sexualised bodies of female sex workers in the context of international peacekeeping in Timor Leste; while Greener, Fish and Tekulu, and Capie seek to inventory a range of gendered effects in their respective case studies from Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea. The combined efforts of the contributors produce a gendered analysis that acknowledges the ways that militarism may both victimise and empower men and women at different points and in particular circumstances. It is my hope that this special section will not only convince readers of the value of gendering analyses of militarism, but will also lend credibility to multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches to investigating and analysing militarism in the Pacific. After all, a phenomenon that bleeds across boundaries requires critical responses that pay vigilant attention to the patterns of its bleeding.

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