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# Militarization matters: rhetorical resonances and market militarism

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## ABSTRACT

“Militarization is not the problem” was the title of a recent conference contribution by Mark Neocleous. Many scholars in critical security studies share its message. Researchers on their account should shun a concept that does more harm than good. They should ‘forget militarization’ as Alison Howell puts it. While sharing the concern that the term might direct attention away from police-violence and epistemic racism underpinning such conclusions, this article argues that the term militarization may be worth preserving in spite of this because it *also* does important political and analytical work that needs to be preserved if not strengthened. Recovering what Frazer and Hutchings term ‘rhetorical resonance’, I suggest that the term ‘militarization’ resonates with debates, discursive classifications and atmospheres, giving us a better grasp of contemporary, capillary, market militarism in its many morphing guises. Jettisoning militarization is to relinquish analytical openings and political attunement. I unpack this argument focusing on the resonances of militarization with market processes diffusing and deepening the grip of military concerns and de-mobilizing resistance. The resonances of militarization make managing, marketing, and materializing security into infrastructures less innocuous and hence trouble the de-mobilizing of resistance that ease them. The resonances of ‘militarization’ break the silence surrounding market militarism, the processes generating it and the imbrication of knowledge practices (including the academic and scholarly) with them. Militarization therefore matters even when it stands in tension with epistemic racism and police violence. Therefore, deepening the engagement *with* militarization, to transform it, is important analytically and politically.

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“This serious and fundamental relation between struggle and truth, the dimension in which philosophy has developed for centuries and centuries, only dramatizes itself, becomes emaciated, and loses its meaning and effectiveness in polemics within theoretical discourse. So in all of this I will therefore propose only one imperative, but it will be categorical and unconditional: Never engage in polemics” (Foucault 2007, 4).

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It is easy to share Foucault's indictment of polemics. Provocations by contrast should perhaps be welcomed? They put things on edge. They provoke reactions that help us sharpen arguments and ideas. Provocations can trigger the kind of 'no' that is 'the germ of consciousness' (Stengers 2008, 106). They push us to sharpen our arguments. It is in this spirit that I will respond to the recent provocative dismissals of militarization. The provocation that triggered this article (and the issue of which it is part) was a keynote by Mark Neocleous at a workshop in Rio de Janeiro on the 'everyday modalities of war'. The call for papers for the event placed militarization at the core of the discussion (Herz, Tabak, and Trinidad 2019). Neocleous' responded to this call with a keynote entitled 'militarization is not the problem' (Neocleous 2019). This keynote was made in a context where many prefer to replace a focus on war, military, militarization, and militarism with a focus on policing, security professionals, and securitization. For various, contradictory and often well argued, reasons militarization is deemed old-fashioned, inept or counter-productive, and harmful. According to its critics, it reifies conceptual and institutional arrangements separating security and war, misses core contemporary transformations, and perpetuates our ignorance of violence and warlike experiences that exceed it. The best option is therefore to 'forget militarization' (Howell 2018).

In terms as unambiguous as these, I beg to differ. Even if the critique of militarization is directing attention to issues that are important and need to be addressed, dismissing the concept is unhelpful. In many contexts, militarization needs to be remembered and does matter. Naming it draws attention to processes that make 'militarising politics a stake of the political game' (Huysmans 2014, 49). More strongly, naming it also generates 'rhetorical resonances' that play into these processes in ways that potentially disturb them. The necessarily partial perspective on politics militarization affords is therefore significant both analytically and politically in some contexts. This was what motivated the Brazilian organizers of the Rio workshop to locate it at the core of the call of their workshop. In their context, naming militarization was to direct attention to and disturb the troubling the processes underpinning the 'everyday modalities of war' in Bolsonaro's Brazil. It is also the case in the military markets that I will discuss in the second part of this article. As I show there, the three kinds of (situated and therefore morphing) rhetorical resonances of militarization introduced in the first chapter direct attention to and disturb what I term 'market militarism'. Working *with* the concept of militarization is therefore important. However, to do so requires accepting the significance of 'partial perspectives' (Haraway 1988). Just as physicists do not 'forget' particles – or argue that they are 'not the problem' – because there are also waves and because observing waves and particles simultaneously is impossible (Barad, 2007), scholars in the social sciences might also do well to tread more carefully before condemning concepts – such as militarization – because the partial perspectives they open differ from those they wish to privilege.<sup>1</sup> Alliances, companionship and solidarity – not dismissal or collective amnesia – are called for as Cynthia Enloe (echoing feminist scholarship generally) has insisted throughout her career and reiterated in the Rio workshop as she was responding to the provocation this article is also discussing.

To develop this argument, I first discuss the notion of 'rhetorical resonances' of militarization. Extending an argument Frazer and Hutchings make about the feminist politics of naming violence to the politics of naming of militarization, I suggest that namings generate resonances in three directions: resonances with situated connotations

in a specific debate, with general classification schemes and with embodied material-aesthetic practices. More than this, rhetorical resonances are *with* and therefore analytically and politically transformative. They open spaces for observing and for disturbing the politics of debates, classificatory schemes, and embodied practices. The way they do this is necessarily situated and morphing as I show drawing on the rhetorical resonance of militarization in the Rio workshop and the evolving capillary forms of contemporary militarism (or everyday modalities of war as the workshop call-text put it). In the second part of the article, I mobilize this understanding of rhetorical resonance to direct attention to the effects of naming militarization in the context of contemporary military markets. I show that the rhetorical resonances generated by naming ‘militarization’ draw attention to and disturb processes underpinning what I term ‘market militarism’. More specifically, naming militarization directs attention to and disturbs the *managing* that spreads the presence of military concerns, the *marketing* that deepens it, the *materializing* that fixes it in infrastructures and the *demobilization* of resistance that eases it. In the conclusion, I return to the original, welcome, provocations by Neocleous, Howell, and others, underlining their import as an opportunity to recover and revise ‘militarization’ in manner that makes it resonate more forcefully and effectively.

### **Rhetorical resonances: naming militarization to trouble it**

‘*Nomen est Omen*. The name is destiny, a blessing or a curse that conditions a life’s or project’s trajectory . . . Nomination is an imaginative political act indicating more than specific policies and projects’ Douzinas (2012, 35) argues in his engagement with ‘types of resistance’. But why insist on the importance of names and naming? The answer I develop in this section is that names have ‘rhetorical resonances’. Names resonate in ways that amplify certain things and devalue other. They thus attune observers but also the observed *with* which they resonate to some things rather than other and so affect their practices. In that sense, resonances linger and live on both within and beyond the observed and the observer. They become a destiny, a blessing, or a curse as Douzinas puts it. This is deeply political. Attuning to and amplifying some things at the expense of others is to hierarchize and prioritize. This section unpacks how rhetorical resonances operate by pointing to three kinds of rhetorical resonances that are necessarily situated and so shifting. It does so with references to Rio the workshop and the discussion about militarization and everyday modalities of war there. The argument shows that naming militarization in that context generates rhetorical resonances that are fundamentally important for troubling the militarism. As the section concludes, in contexts such as the Rio workshop it is therefore essential to open for such naming – rather than striving to close it – even if in other contexts and from other perspectives the politics of such naming is problematic.

### ***Three kinds of ‘rhetorical resonances’ of naming***

A discussion of the ‘feminist politics of naming violence’ suggests that the reason the disagreement over how to conceptualize violence is so intense is that namings ‘of violence have persuasive force in political discourse. They have power, in particular, because of the rhetorical resonances of “violence” as a term’ (Frazer and Hutchings

2019, 18). This argument directs attention to a first significant way in which namings matter: they resonate with *arguments* in debates. Such debates take place across many contexts. But debates are necessarily situated. Naming ‘violence’ is therefore to generate and mobilize resonances that are bound to vary depending on the context and the speaker. The same pertains to the naming of ‘militarization’. Militarization is a charged term with a wide variety of contextual connotations. As such, it resonates in debates and is often mobilized in them to reshuffle positions. In addition to this, extending Frazer and Hutchings’ argument in two further ways helps highlight both how rhetorical resonances matter and necessarily does so situated and partial ways.

Picking up Frazer and Hutchings’ reference to ‘political discourse’, a first extension of their argument is in direction of *classificatory schemes*. Namings and their resonances in specific situated debates re-state and re-enact equally connected but also contextual classification schemes. Resonating with the ‘classification effects’ of these schemes is to play into who and what is constituted as a subject and in what kind of subject position (Bourdieu 1994: 95; Star 2009). It is to affect the subjectivation processes that constitute those who can speak and delimit what can be discussed. Resonances contribute to ‘the making up’ of the people, organizations, issues, and problems that can legitimately be considered part of a debate. For Frazer and Hutchings the concern is who and what is included and excluded by classifications of gender-based violence and what kind of subjectivation processes are associated with this. These ‘classificatory effects’ clearly matter beyond any specific discussion, such as the UN OHCHR special procedures debating how to define gender-based violence Frazer and Hutchings are referring to. The special procedures on gender and their definition of gendered-based violence will scale as it resonates *with* a web of practices and institutions. The UN OHCHR is connected to the UN institutions, to activist groups, experts, and legal texts and beyond. The resonances echo into these contexts and the debates about gender-based violence there and from there into yet other contexts. This process is neither linear nor even or continuous but – as resonances and echoes – variable, shifting, often returning to surprise those who thought the process had faded away and ended. Most significantly, precisely because classification schemes play out differently, the analytical and political significance of this scaling is bound to vary. Analogously, the classificatory schemes naming militarization plays into are connected but also contextually situated.

Shifting the emphasis from the classification schemes of discourses to their imbrication with *embodied, material and aesthetic practices*, highlights a third way in which rhetorical resonances have a partial significance beyond the naming that generated them. Namings resonate *with* the embodied and affective, that is beyond language and indeed therefore, in excess of the classifications language operates and specific debates in which it is used. Rhetorical resonances have a ‘haptic’ quality. They work through the traces they leave in the ‘milieu’ or ‘atmosphere’ of practices (Foucault 2007, 21; Sloterdijk 2005 respectively). They resonate in the ‘affective spaces’ at the core of ‘practice theory’ (Reckwitz 2012). The linguistic rhetorical resonates with the material and embodied that direct and orientate. The resonances affect ‘moods’ and therefore the way ‘the world appears’ to us (Ahmed 2014, 14). They mark the ‘social flesh’ (Beasley and Bacchi 2012). The rhetorical resonance of extending gendered based violence to include violence against men for example resonates with how ‘rape’ as a ‘weapon of war’ is translated

not only into classificatory schemes but into embodied material and aesthetic practices. In the process, the resonances are also altering the atmospheres that fashion connections between gendered bodies, sexual organs and weapons. As the resonances of including violence against men under the term ‘rape’ cross contexts it opens up new, necessarily situated, ‘pathways’ orientating the engagement with gendered violence. The same is true of militarization. Naming it will generate resonances that are fundamentally situated but also connected.

The ‘rhetorical resonances’ of names – *with* arguments, *with* classifications and *with* material and aesthetic embodied practices – makes naming matter not only, for mobilizing, delimiting, and fashioning a specific political argument but well beyond. Through their rhetorical resonances, namings do protracted political ‘work’. This work is necessarily partial, both in that it plays into a politics making hierarchies and distinctions and in that this politics is contextual and specific. *Nomen est Omen*. The Latin proverb recalls both the significance of naming and the import of modesty in the face of its necessarily situated, uncertain, and open implications. Who knows destiny except the Delphic oracle, the Sibyl, Cassandra, or their likes? By implication, while the partial politics of rhetorical resonances (for example of militarization) makes it centrally important to engage with naming, the situated openness and uncertainty of that partiality calls for careful engagements and modesty. It underscores the import of seriously considering the prospect that the politics of naming is necessarily situated and the perspectives and politics it opens for therefore partial with the implication is that preserving, protecting, and promoting naming practices in one context even if they are problematic in another may matter. A prospect, I will now unpack specifically with reference to the debate about militarization in the Rio workshop.

### ***Situated rhetorical resonances***

Naming militarization can be highly problematic in some situations. This was the point Neocleous wished to convey when he was invited to give the keynote in a seminar at the Institute of International Relations, PUC Rio de Janeiro. The seminar focussed on ‘Everyday Modalities of War’ locating militarization at its core. In line with arguments put forward in earlier work (2008, 2014, 2016), Neocleous argued that focusing on the *military* distracts from *police* and hence from the violence pervasive in contemporary society. It reinstates the inside/outside divide and the connotations of a peaceful inside associated with it. In so doing, it obfuscates the centrality of the police for a long and continuing history of violence. Therefore, so Neocleous:

“a more general ‘militarization thesis’ is ‘intellectually sterile, politically debilitating and a blockage on ‘critical thinking’ ... it perpetuates a beautiful fiction that ... panders to the mythology of the liberal state ... and poses misguided questions that become part of the myth itself” (Neocleous 2019).

Neocleous’ indictment of militarization is shared by others. In a forcefully articulated critique of ‘militarization’ that shifts the weight of the critique from the military/police distinction that is embedded in the expression to the processual, temporal connotations of militarization, Alison Howell concludes that we therefore must ‘forget militarization’. According to her

“the concept of ‘militarization’ is pallid and half-hearted in its ignorance of the war-like relations that permeate ‘peaceful’ domestic civil order . . . [and] cannot take stock of these [violent] histories because it assumes a peaceful order that has been breached by militarism” (Howell 2018, 7).

Again, the conclusion could not be clearer. For Howell, militarization obscures and indeed perpetuates pernicious liberal politics. Naming militarization prevents us from focussing on *the problem* (as Bonditti argued in the Rio seminar), whether we take that to be police violence (Neocleous) or racial, gendered, and colonial violence (Howell). From this perspective, not naming militarization to muffle or even better mute its problematic resonances is both warranted and politically necessary. Many critical scholars writing about militarism have therefore recoiled from the term militarization. In his book, *Resisting Militarism*, Rosedale inserts a footnote declaring ‘I am sympathetic to the critique of militarisation, but feel that the concept of militarism (rather than militarisation) is well able to respond to such a challenge’ (2019, 63).<sup>2</sup> Some critical scholars even prefer to avoid references to the ‘military’ altogether. The option of replacing it with ‘martial’ is an expression of this (e.g. Highgate 2012; Millar and Tidy 2017).<sup>3</sup> This recoiling from the term ‘militarization’ has been particularly influential as it dovetails with a wider tendency to privilege a terminology of security over military. The most commonly used umbrella term for critical work focused on security/military matters is ‘critical security studies’. The pertinent section of the International Studies Association is ‘*Security Studies*’. The leading mainstream journal in the field is *Security Studies*. Security has tended to become the umbrella the term under which references to war and the military are subsumed. Military concerns are ‘recoded in security terms’ (Stavrianakis and Stern 2017, 6).

By contrast, the organizers of the workshop in Rio de Janeiro were clearly keen to name militarization. As already underscored, the call for papers had everyday militarism and militarization at its core. The term was in the original title. However, as the call for papers (Herz, Tabak, and Trinidad 2019) was drafted, one of the organizers informed me that, contrary to her original intentions, the title of the conference would not feature militarism or militarization. That would be ‘too provocative’ in Bolsonaro’s Brazil. The more abstract ‘everyday modalities of war’ replaced it. At the time, the military was moving into all spheres of public life, to ‘pacify’ communities but also to control the institutional machinery regulating higher education and its funding. For the Brazilian participants, militarization directed attention to these developments. Speaking of militarization in their context is not to ignore police violence or of the warlike conditions in which much of Rio’s population lives. It is to evoke it and disturb it. It is to draw attention to the class, racial, and gendered inflections of this violence. To suggest that these scholars assume that what preceded militarization was a peaceful non-racist, non-gendered equitable state of liberal bliss or that they ignore the deep connections to neoliberal forms of government is not credible. They have all written about various aspects of this from a range of angles. It is also their everyday lived experience. The workshop was held five minutes’ walk from Rochina, one of Rio’s largest or ‘favelas’ – or ‘communities’ as those living there prefer to call them – with an estimated population of 150,000–300,000. Shootings are heard daily on a university campus where certain buildings collect stray bullets and closure is necessary when major operations take place. The 23<sup>rd</sup> battalion of the Military Police of Rio de Janeiro is headquartered around the corner in



the other direction. More generally, everyday life in Rio is replete with debates, classificatory schemes, and embodied experiences recalling the imbrication of the police in the dynamics of violence. The class, racial, and gendered stakes in this violence are publicly debated and an everyday embodied experience. Naming it militarization has been a way of generating resonances that draw attention to and disturb precisely the racial, neo-liberal, pervasive violence by the police and the military and their hybrids military police units at the core of this lived. Research on violence in Rio is therefore often framed around militarization, including by the participants in the workshop discussed here (e.g. Leite et al. 2018; Cardoso 2019),

This jarring of partial perspectives on what naming militarization does underscores the extent to which rhetorical resonances of such naming differ in Rio and London. Context and scaling matters. This may be trivial. The practical and political implications are less so. At the very least, it signals the import of remaining attuned to the situated and power laden characteristic of academic debates and to possibility that persuasively argued and intended partial perspectives – such as that advanced by Neocleous and other UK participants in the workshop – might quell partial perspectives that are analytically and politically important elsewhere. Referencing the Rio workshop is again a way to clarify the point. The academic, gendered, and racialized hierarchies at work when a senior UK-based professor, invited as an international academic authority, skyping in to a meeting asserts his authority to posit that the focus of the workshop misses 'the problem' are damning, however well-intentioned the statement and elegant the reasoning. The three workshop organizers were women; two of them in precarious junior positions. Many Brazilian participants publish mainly in Portuguese. Several interventions were in Portuguese with the consequence that the arguments became marginal to the 'conversation' that took place in English. Moreover, for these Brazilian scholars (as for any academic subjected to contemporary knowledge management) publishing in international peer reviewed journals is crucial. Remaining attuned to 'international' authorities and debates is of essence. In this workshop, these were incarnated by the Neocleous and the other UK participants. The debate about the organizers' naming of 'militarization', and Neocleous critique of it, was not just an argument in an unencumbered conversation among equals. Not surprisingly, the relegation of militarization to a non-problem, the dismissal of the call for papers, the focus of the workshop and the research agendas of most of the Brazilian participants met with few objections. This silence muted the analytical and political resonances the workshop was intended to generate; resonances the organizers had hoped would direct attention to and disturb militarization in Brazil. Something significant was lost. The privileging of one set of rhetorical resonances closed the opening related to another set of rhetorical references.

### ***Morphing rhetorical resonances***

The story of situated rhetorical resonances of militarization that jar is not limited to London and Rio or the workshop just discussed. Quite on the contrary. Because namings always resonate *with* something they are as multiple as the situated debates, classificatory schemes, and embodied practices they resonate through. These differ as we cross spaces (between academic discussions in Rio and London or within Rio and London e.g.) but more than this, they are constantly evolving and so shape shifting. Academic debates in



Rio and London are no more constant and fixed than are the varying and shifting capillary processes through which military concerns are ‘diffusing’, ‘colonizing social and imaginative life’ and ‘deforming human potential’ (Henry and Natanel 2016; Gusterson and Besteman 2019, 4). The situated resonances of naming, including of naming militarization, are constantly shifting. As I will proceed to argue with reference to militarization specifically, acknowledging this morphing of rhetorical resonances is to call for care when addressing the tensions and contradictions of rhetorical resonances. It also, more affirmatively, underscores the value working with these tensions and contradictions.

To insist on the varying and shapeshifting characteristic of contemporary militarization spreading militarism is to echo fundamental widely shared insights in scholarship on the topic. Militarization is not a simple unidirectional process starting from the military institution and leading to the rest of society. It is not reducible to the ‘extension of military practices into civilian life’ but is better approached as the ‘the blurring or erasure of distinctions between war and peace, military and civilian’ (Sjoberg and Via 2010, 7). The ‘preparation for war’ may be an important part of militarization and the generation of militarism (as argued, e.g., by Mann 1987; Stravianakis and Selby 2012). However, it does not exhaust the repertoire of processes generating militarism. Therefore, any fixed and firm ‘definition’ of militarism is ‘too static’ as Enloe put it when she relinquished her earlier reliance on a list of values identifying it in favour of the image of ‘a flashlight’ generated by asking questions about situated and shapeshifting forms of militarism and the militarization generating it (Enloe 2007, 54 and 55, respectively).

Exchanging Enloe’s image of a flashlight generated by questions for ‘rhetorical resonances’ generated by naming, shifts the emphasis on how to capture the situated and morphing in two ways. First, by shifting the image from one of shedding light to one of resonating, it moves in the direction of what Thrift (2008) terms the non-representational; to the ways in also the non-represented is part of debates. Classificatory schemes and affects are not explicated and yet fundamental. It in other words deepens and extends the kinds of processes that come into consideration to processes that operate beyond language and thought, as well as within them of course. Second, by placing the emphasis on resonance, it stresses the involvement of the observer in these processes. Instead of simply shedding light on militarization processes from the outside as if they existed independently of the observation, the researcher is affecting and affected by the processes. The rhetorical resonances generated by the observer reverberate *with* the debates, classificatory and embodied processes observed. Researchers are in other words no longer merely outside observers of how militarization operates in relation to and through, e.g., race, gender, and class can (Brown 1995; Rossdale 2019; Caltekin 2020). The resonances naming generate are part of these operations. They are insiders. On one level, this underlines the import of careful engagement with the situated morphings of these operations already underlined with reference to the Rio workshop. On another more general level, it underscores the role and responsibility of researchers for working with the transformative potential of situated morphing registers of resonances – including with their contradictions – in this careful engagement.

The morphing multiplicity of situated and jarring rhetorical resonances generated by naming militarization is bound to generate a cacophony of dissonances – such as those between Rio and London – are generated in each and every naming amplifying and

complicating the overall rhetorical resonance generated by naming. However, refraining from the urge of ordering this cacophony and instead working with it, matters fundamentally. It is the *sine qua non* for remaining attuned precisely to capillary and constantly shifting processes and so for troubling and intervening with them. More imaginatively, the cacophony invites engagement across situated and morphing process militarization processes by keeping them present. I can think of no better way of illustrating this than by an analogy to the way Kara Walker's *Sugar Baby* (Figure 1). Walker engages with the processes sustaining gendered and racial histories, subjectivities, and hierarchies by working across the morphing and situated. Sugar baby is not generating a singular resonance, rather she disturbs the taken-for-grantedness of race by resonating with the many, shifting

“... invisible building blocks of our social reality, ‘scripting’ for us, informing and affecting our behaviour and posing the greatest risk not when they are made explicit but rather when they are allowed to sink into invisibility, to appear ‘natural’ or ‘inevitable’” (Smith 2019, 46).

*Sugar Baby* shifts our relation to the ‘building blocks of our social reality’, not by making us reason about racism or by describing the Althusserian ‘ideological apparatuses’ that underpins it (Eastwood 2018). Rather, she is aestheticizing, eroticizing, fetishizing, and dramatizing in provocative ways that operate across contexts and implicates the public



**Figure 1.** Kara Walker, *A Subtlety, or the Marvelous Sugar Baby, an Homage to the unpaid and overworked Artisans who have refined our Sweet tastes from the cane fields to the Kitchens of the New World*. Installation in the Domino Sugar Refinery, Brooklyn (2014). Courtesy of Kara Walker.

observing her (Smith 2019, 41). Sugar Baby caricatures and stereotypes, to erode representations and histories reframing their relation to the surrounding society. By sculpting sugar, Kara Walker exploits not only the connections between slaves and sugar plantations and the resonances of these connections into embodied practices of the present. She also directs attention to fragility of the building blocks on race, gender, and class rest. The sugar may crumble, melt, or flake. The care of the public is necessary for Sugar Baby to remain intact just as it is necessary for the building blocks of race, gender, and class more generally to remain in place.

Sugar Baby shows what can be achieved by not only allowing for tensions and contradictions but working with them. Sugar Baby stands as a monument to what can be achieved if instead of streamlining and disciplining the rhetorical resonances of naming, we work with them, that is, if we make the most of their affective connections to debates, classificatory schemes, and embodied practices, of their situated morphing multiplicity. In the context of how to handle the dissonant resonances generated by naming militarization, we in clear need to Sugar Baby not as a singular giant sugar sculpture, but as the infinite possibilities of working with contradictory resonances, across contexts to preserve existing and generating novel political openings she epitomizes. Such an approach to naming and the resonances it generates makes the tensions between different, partial, perspectives on the resonances of militarization a trouble we should be staying and working with. Adopting it in the Rio workshop would have made the discussion more politically productive as it would have opened a space for looking at the cracks and openings generated by the contradictions and tensions and working with them, rather than focusing on dissolving them and so pasting over the contradictions. Adopting such an approach matters beyond the specific Rio workshop, of course. It is important for all contexts where the rhetorical resonances generated by naming militarization help us grapple with situated and morphing process and so generate significant political openings. To make this argument less abstract, I will proceed to anchor it in one context: that of commercial military markets. I show that the manifold, often contradictory, rhetorical resonances generated by naming militarization generate important political openings as they help us grapple with the militarization processes generating 'market militarism'.

### **Naming militarization, generating rhetorical resonances troubling Market militarism**

Commercial processes are core to contemporary security, to how it is practiced, how it is understood, embodied, and inscribed materially and aesthetically in contemporary life. A multifaceted and increasingly specialized and sophisticated scholarship has emerged tackling a wide range of different questions that these developments give rise to (for an overview, e.g., Abrahamsen and Leander 2016). One of the issues it raises is how to understand the broader politics of these processes and most centrally the shape-shifting forms of 'market militarism' associated with commercial processes inscribing an ever wider range of security concerns ever more deeply in our lives. To grapple with these processes we have to move beyond images that focus on the manipulations and machinations of Mill's power elite or Eisenhower's military-industrial complex. The markets we are talking have long since moved out of the control of a small and neatly defined elite.

They are highly diversified and segmented spanning into the widest range of activities in an unwieldy and steadily expanding manner enrolling the imagination of clients (Leander 2013, 2018). We therefore need tools to grapple with – both understanding and disturbing – commercial processes. The rhetorical resonances generated by naming militarization are exceedingly helpful in this respect. I would go as far as contending that working with them, including with the tensions and contradictions among them, is one of our best bets in what is an extremely uneven and uphill struggle. Rhetorical resonances focus attention on the constantly morphing, situated ways in which commercial processes inscribe militarism affectively in debates, classificatory schemes, and socio-material practices and recall the role and responsibility of our own naming in this process. I develop this argument by focussing on how the rhetorical resonance generated by naming militarization can help us grapple with four mundane, seemingly trivial, and innocuous commercial processes located at the core of market militarism: the managing, marketing, materializing of security and the demobilizing of resistance.

### **Managing**

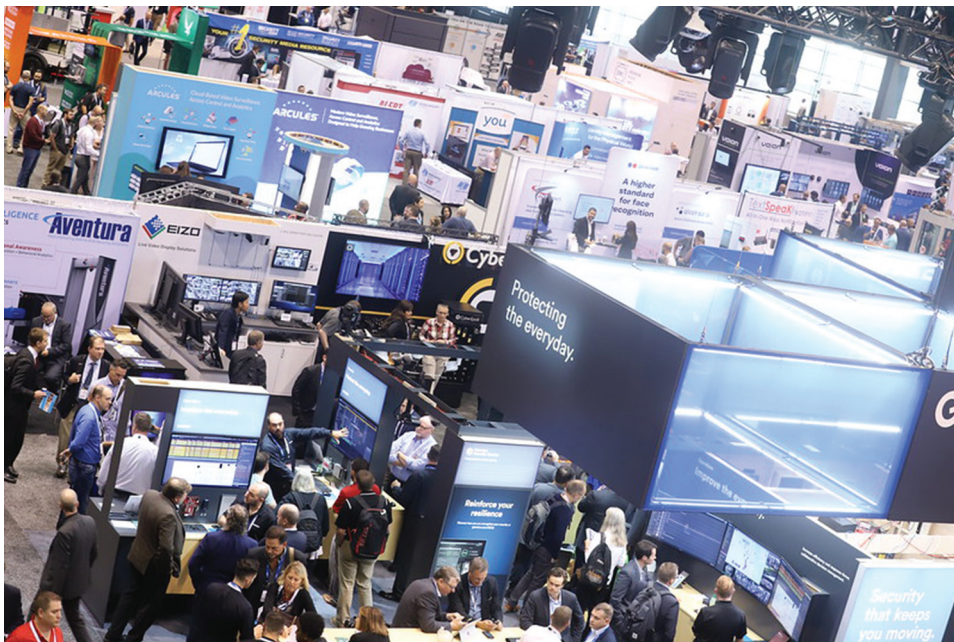
Adding the prefix ‘quasi-’ to market, is more than quirky style. Commercial security is not reducible to ‘private markets’. It is pervasive also in ‘public governing’. Markets encompass the military, ministry officials, soldiers, and public regulation as much as companies, managers, contractors, and advertising. Since the end of the Cold War, there has been a rapid commercialization of military/security matters. Security (public and private) is now ‘managed’. This commercialization is partly a matter of outsourcing public tasks to market actors. However, at least as important is the transformation of public institutions – including ministries of defence, the armed forces, and police – from within (Du Gay and Vikkelsø 2016). Even in matters of war and security, ‘the king’s head has been cut’ – to borrow the image Foucault used to say that sovereignty is distributed – and bureaucracy has become ‘red-tape’ and contracted employees work within. It is not to imply that the sovereign or the bureaucrat have vanished. They are omni-present. Stretching Foucault’s image, stains of blood from the beheaded sovereign and traces of bureaucratic red-tape mix and mark quasi-market governance technologies. Particularly so in military and security governance. Bureaucracies and sovereigns support, sustain, and drive the partly disconnected processes that disperse, decentralize, and extend (quasi-)market governance. These processes are centrifugal. They push out governance authority, relating an expanding range of actors, objects, processes, and technologies to the core of military/security activities and to their governance.

One way of capturing the centrality of managing for contemporary security is to pay attention to the steadily growing centrality of trade fairs (Hojtink 2014; Larsson 2020; Leander 2019, 2021). Such fairs are proliferating across areas. They attract companies but also public armed forces and police, NGOs, universities, think tanks, international institutions, certification boards/agencies, crafty individuals, and beyond in increasing numbers. Exhibitors that are not in any straightforward way directly related to military/security affairs find their way in. Travel agents, film companies, education providers, construction companies, analytics companies, etc., also exhibit at military/security fairs and contribute to the steadily expanding, diversifying, and deepening grip of security on our lives. Trade fairs have become central sites for exchanging ideas, developing projects,



and determining hierarchies, also for the public. They are ‘tournament’ rituals of sorts (Moeran 2010) where participants (and not everyone can participate in all fairs) establish security hierarchies and priorities. The trade fair format associated with managed security has become so central that it is adopted also for ostensibly public security governance events – such as the yearly *AI for Good Summit* of the ITU or the *Business and Human Rights* of the UNHCR (Leander 2021). The trade fair format is adopted also by professional security industry organizations such as ASIS.<sup>4</sup> Its US chapter refers to its yearly convention as the ‘Global Security Exchange’. The stands and crowd at the ASIS ‘Global Security Exchange’ provides a condensed image of the mundane, uncontroversial character of managed security (see Figure 2). The shift to managing security has been smooth and uncontroversial. It is unexciting and trivial. Participants wear suits, not uniforms. No security clearances are requested at the entrance. Harrowing war-images rarely dominate the stands. Managed security and the commercially driven proliferation and deepening of security inscriptions in everyday life is banal.

Naming militarization is to disturb this image of banality. It is to generate a resonance with the military aspect of the fair and so to echo a diverse, widely shared and deeply anchored suspicion towards military markets. If security is a ‘tainted trade’ (as Thumala, Gould, and Loader 2011 put it), military trade is plainly dark. This suspicion of markets does not imply an ignorance of state violence – colonial, genocidal, racial, and beyond. Rather, Machiavelli’s ghost conspires with modernist anxieties and the leftovers of a Weberian ‘monopoly over the legitimate use of force’ to haunt the military markets like a Derridean ghost of sorts. The resonances of militarization calls forth this ghost and so threatens the image of banal, innocent managerialized security by connecting it back to



**Figure 2.** The ASIS Global Security Exchange, Chicago 2019. Courtesy of ASIS.

understanding of what should be public. To mute such resonances no contemporary state acknowledges relying on commercial actors or technologies for their ‘core’ military activities that they often refer to as ‘inherently governmental’ (e.g. Wodarg 2008; Clanahan 2013). All, excluding North Korea, acknowledge doing so for non-core functions. States ‘govern’ the military/war but ‘manage’ the police/security. The distinction is uneasy and fraught with tensions and contradictions. For example, public and contracted security professionals at Arlanda Airport (Sweden) oscillate between presenting themselves as innovative entrepreneurs struggling with the inefficiencies of public bureaucracies and as deeply respectful of public authority in security matters (Berndtsson and Stern 2011). In different ways and obviously with contextual variations, such oscillation between market and political repertoires of justification – and their respective ‘economies of worth’ (Boltanski and Thevenot 2006) – pervades contemporary security governance.

Naming ‘militarization’ generates resonances with these oscillations and the managing of security/governing of war rendering them necessary. In so doing, it directs attention to them, ends academic complicity with them, and so renders them less smooth. The resonances recall that the crowd at the *Global Security Exchange* and other similar fora is *also* involved in managing ‘military’ matters and that there is a reason for the oscillation between contradictory repertoires of security professionals such as those at Arlanda. The resonances attune us to the bias and affective politics of silencing the military aspects of managing security, in scholarship and beyond. The apolitical atmosphere necessary for the ‘managing’ security to appear innocuous is disturbed. Ethical and political questions about the implications of ‘managing security’ when security encompasses the military – that reference to ‘security’ neatly foreclose – can be posed and therefore require answers. And, once we start wondering, there is no reason to stop at the ASIS Global Security Exchange or Arlanda Airport. Rather, naming militarization opens up the ‘managing’ of security more generally, pushing us to grapple with the violence connected to it.

## **Marketing**

Marketing goes in pair with managing. Marketing is another mundane expected process core to commercialized security. Companies do it. Obviously. However, so do states, armed forces, universities, charities, and other exhibitors in security/military trade fairs as just underlined. They do not only do it there but also when they are promoting their ‘projects’, exchanging ideas around them, and courting potential clients and partners to develop new projects with. The political salience of this marketing is difficult to overstate.

The marketing of security rests on an ‘exceptional creativity’. What could possibly justify not prioritizing security and adopting *exceptional* measures to this end? This is a question implicit or explicit in all military/security marketing. Security marketing is ‘securitizing’ even if it also works with other registers that tend to ‘unbind’ security including by e.g., diffusing of insecurities, assembling suspicion, or by developing security technologies as explored by Huysmans (2014). Securitizations are not always ‘successful’. Nor does security marketing always succeed in imposing an exceptional register. However, just evoking security is a powerful way of instilling urgency and demanding attention that other forms of marketing cannot mobilize. This is a good reason to frame marketing as relating to ‘security’ and no doubt one of the core reasons

for the steady expansion of the range of participants in the military markets and for the budgets devoted to them. The military and the market are fusing with far reaching political implications. The SUV was not only marketed for the military in Iraq but ‘the Iraq war became an extended commercial for the SUV’ (Mirzoeff 2012, 36–38).

In addition to the exceptional, security marketing mobilizes *creativity*. As in all markets, innovation is essential. The ever-expanding range of exhibitors in the trade fairs epitomize the creative connections to security and war. Importantly, this marketing often enrolls the clients and potential partners in this expansive creative process. They ‘co-create’. Precisely, because of the ‘tainted’ character of the trade, security-providers seldom impose their view on security. They invite clients to imagine what threats they face and discuss this with them. The invitation is explicit. Puzzles, question marks, and the flexibility to customize figure prominently. The scope of the threats to which solutions are marketed is restrained only by the limits of imagination that are notoriously expansive. They are made even more so by the abstract and so entirely open invitation to imagine security extended (Leander 2013, 2018). Abstraction also helpfully distracts from and obfuscates the discomfiting connection between the open creative and the exceptional that makes this marketing so effective in extending military concerns.

Security marketing also deepens the grip of military concerns. As all marketing, it operates affectively, through the ‘unthought’, emotional, and embodied. Meaning and values are affectively generated through branding in contemporary media culture as Arvidsson’s seminal work on the topic demonstrates (2006; also Arvidsson and Caliandro 2016). Marketing is at the core of the ‘resonance machine’ ‘composing’ contemporary lives (Connolly 2005). Marketing operates ‘atmospherically’ (Feigenbaum and Weissmann 2016). It feeds into the atmosphere of commercial normality that make it easy to trivialize the violence connected to military concerns. Affectively and atmospherically, marketing inscribes these concerns ever more deeply in our practices and ourselves. The poster that made up the background wall of Oracle’s stand at the Swiss Cybersecurity Days (12–13 February 2020) is an explicit reflection of and about these practices by the industry itself (see Figure 3). The wall of the stand was covered by the head of a woman with a security network inscribed inside her head. Next to the system are the lock, the setting, and the forward symbols. The AI system affords the woman the poised calm she emanates. The symbols that feature on it also remind us that she is locked into it. Her present ‘settings’ and forward paths are tied to it. This at least was the interpretation suggested by the Oracle representative in the stand. The ad had been controversial precisely because the way it aspired to merge the woman and the security system. ‘And, now we can’t escape her. She is everywhere’. The Oracle advertising is an interesting example of marketing that is reflexive about how it ‘brand subjects’. They can no more rid themselves of the branding that can the branded subject or the branded slaves that the term branding recalls (Introna 2017). Marketing deepens the grip of security within.

Marketing in clear is not only horizontally expanding the grip of military concerns but also vertically deepening it. It operates both from above at a distance and from below within. The resonances of ‘militarization’ has the potential of helping us grapple with this expansionary and deepening presence of military concerns. Precisely because they





**Figure 3.** Poster used on the background wall of Oracle's stand at the *Swiss Cybersecurity Days* (Freiburg 12-13 2020). Courtesy of Oracle.

resonate with the contradictory and shifting processes of security formation, they break the habit (and temptation) to 'reify' subjects, values, and processes as (non-)military and instead direct attention problematize the process of their creation and shifting relation to the military. This is necessary if we are to grapple with militarism (Davies and Philpott 2012, 57). The resonances of militarization attune us to shifting violent connections of the SUV, of Automated Security System and of the subjectivities associated with them. More than this, precisely because they resonate with the 'military' (understood as situated and shifting) in these transformations, they remove the aura of innocence 'security' affords. The rhetorical resonances of militarization therefore disturb the diffuse, decentralized, and generalized market militarism generated in the micro-politics of commercial marketing.

### **Materializing**

Commercial processes are also materializing military concerns and the infrastructures of our everyday life. For example, CCTV cameras have fundamentally reshaped the presence security concerns in daily life in most places. 'Smile, you're on camera' is just as common in London as 'sorria voce ta sendo filmado' is in Rio de Janeiro. These stickers recall the ongoing surveillance, playing with the unease or comfort it generates depending on what the viewer associates with it. The stickers refer to the many cameras filming the readers and their surroundings. The cameras locate security professionals in our midst. They distribute their presence across multiple spaces, in turn connecting these spaces and the sticker-readers in them to themselves. The data collected by the cameras

may in turn be connected to similar data, registered by CCTV cameras elsewhere and perhaps to databases and data management programs. The camera connects the sticker-readers and their spaces to a layer of experts and technologies specializing in the analysis of videos. Perhaps these include companies, labs and research institutes specialized tools – for example, commercially developed facial recognition software. Finally, the camera, the data, professionals, the analysts, and the researchers connect us to a variety of regulations, standards, and policies covering things like the installation of the cameras, how they may be used, by whom, and how the information they produce may be shared (depending on the context). At the beginning was the camera. The commercially designed, marketed, produced, sold, and acquired CCTV camera built onto an elevator in Rio or a bus in London is at one end of this web of connections spanning from the sticker to the regulation.

The CCTV camera is just one example of how commercial processes are redesigning infrastructures – including elevators, public transport, walls, databases, labs, and regulatory systems – inscribing military concerns in them. Commercial processes are giving militarism material shape in our infrastructures. This matters fundamentally as infrastructures underpin our daily lives. We stand in the elevator and travel in public transport. In general terms, infrastructures:

... constitute *the* discreet conduit of conduct by determining the gestures, behaviors, opinions, and discourses of living beings which would certainly help explain why all those services —those on which our increasingly urbanized way of life depends and is controlled — appear as given (Angélil and Siress 2018, 887).

Duffield has helpfully analysed the consequences of building security concerns centrally into infrastructures in the humanitarian context. On his account, the result is an ‘archipelago of international spaces’ that perpetuates ‘urban pathologies’ and violence associated with ‘a new form of aid subjectivity ... based upon the militarization of therapeutic self-governance’ (Duffield 2010, 464). As the concerns become digitized, the militarization deepens as it ‘folds downwards into the existing human terrain infrastructures’ (Duffield 2016, 159).

The political significance infrastructures is readily overlooked which makes it easy to miss the significance of the commercial processes that redesign infrastructures make room for the security technologies they develop, materializing militarism into them in the process. It is a common trope that the centrality of infrastructures only becomes clear when they break down. So, the militarization that is built into them with security technologies including the CCTV and beyond, on this account, is mostly is escaping us. This is an exaggeration no doubt. The endemic ‘snarls’ are as integral to infrastructures as is their smooth silence (Miller 2015). This said, the ‘discreetness’ Angelil and Siress evoke will need to be disturbed for us to take note. This is precisely the intent of Eva Grubinger’s installation ‘Crowd’ (Figure 4). It displaces security and surveillance infrastructures – the tensa barriers – into exhibition realms. As the curators of the exhibition *Invisible Violence* — one of the locations the installation was shown — explain:

“Grubinger encourages us to think about forms of coercion, employed by institutions and corporations especially, that herd and direct people, and ultimately place them under scrutiny and control, often without their direct consent, but always with absolute participation” (De la Torre, Eric, and Kealy 2014, 41).



**Figure 4.** Eva Grubinger, *Crowd*. Installation view Berlinische Galerie / Museum of Modern Art, Berlin (2007). Available at <https://www.evagrubinger.com/home/crowd#image-9> Courtesy of Eva Grubinger.

The resonances of militarization with the materializing effects of markets can play an analogous role. They ‘encourage us to rethink’. They resound in the dull casting infrastructures as a dull background a backdrop for the important things. The (commercially developed and promoted) CCTV, the boulders for checkpoints, the tensa barriers may be annoying and slow circulation, but most people accept and adjust to them, just as Duffield’s humanitarians accept and adjust to their bunkered up digitally controlled existence. It is the price of being secured. The resonance of militarization with these processes recalls that violence and war are part of that security. They disturb the normative bias inherent in glossing over this by consistently referring only to safety and security. The rhetorical resonances trouble the smoothness and ease with which the (potentially endlessly expanding) commercial fabricated and marketed military concerns are materialized into the infrastructures of managed security.

### ***De-Mobilizing***

A core reason the managing, marketing, and materializing of security can be so smooth is that it meets little opposition. As already amply underscored, commercial processes are overwhelmingly presented as mundane and innocuous routes to more efficient and cost-effective security (in the public and in the private). To this comes the effects of a knowledge economy that discourages ‘critique’, particularly of commercial processes. Agencies funding research undermine it subtly through their choice of funding priorities and their interpretation of ‘impact’ and ‘relevance’. Leading scholars focussing on private security therefore advocate ‘pragmatic’ approaches dismissing ‘uncompromising stances calling for hard decisions and binding rules’ as ‘counterproductive’ (Avant 2016, 340).<sup>5</sup> Activists and NGOs

also depend on external funding. They are therefore surprisingly ‘friendly’ towards companies and uncritical of the commercialization of security (Joachim and Schneiker 2012, 2015). Voicing critique often amounts to opting out of having a voice, not only in official political and regulatory fora but generally. These powerful de-politicizing and de-mobilizing tendencies and the lack of resistance that accompany them is crucial for the steady expansion commercial markets and the market militarisms associated with them.

Naming militarization is to interfere with this demobilization of resistance to the market militarism. The resonances generated reconnect to a long and varied history of resistance against militarization and militarism (Tickner and True 2018; Ruddick 2016; Rossdale 2019). The press release published by *CodePink* in the wake of the Nisour square incident in which Blackwater contractors shot and killed 17 civilians in Baghdad operates precisely such a re-connection (Figure 5). In it, *CodePink* subverts commercial jargon by exaggerating it, using ‘caricatures and stereotypes, eroding standard representations and histories, reframing our relations to’ it as does Kara Walker’s *Sugar Baby* to the invisible building blocks of racism. The press release reconnects to military concerns by connecting Blackwater and ‘mercenary’ and mockingly presenting its ‘new department of corporate integrity’. The press release straddles the fictional/absurd and the actual/real. Max Boot *did* make the statements cited in it in the plenary. Blackwater *did* have an ethics code and a range of corporate social responsibility initiatives. The proximity to the real made the CBS newsnetwork mistake the press release as one stemming from Blackwater and comment it as such, hence giving it a wider audience than it would else have been the case.

In countering the political deafness associated with commercially inflected security jargon, the rhetorical resonances of militarization also attune listeners to the connections (and tensions) between different forms of anti-militarist resistance. They make it clear that protests such as that by *CodePink* take place in same



**Figure 5.** Blackwater’s corporate integrity department.

tonality as to those of other anti-militarism in queer, racial, environmental, or indigenous politics (Esparza 2017; Ray 2018). The harmonies but also the dissonances of resulting anti-militarist polyphony become audible. While the resonances may pave the way for alliances, they cannot generate a unified, singular anti-militarist movement. This said, the noise of disagreement and dissent breaks the silence that de-politicizes markets and hence demobilizes resistance against them and the market militarism they generate.

## Conclusion

In Macedonia, ‘The postponing of a resolution of the name issue’ became ‘a strange alibi for not telling the whole truth or even a quarter of the truth’ (Milevska 2014, 120–121). The argument here has focussed on how the urge to resolve a name issue can also work as an ‘alibi for not telling the truth, or even a quarter of it’. More precisely, I used a provocation by Neocleous as an invitation to engage with the more general urge to resolve the very real problems of naming ‘militarization’ by ‘forgetting it’ or relegating it to the status of a non-problem. I have done so by showing the analytical and political import of the ‘rhetorical resonances’ of militarization. After introducing the notion of rhetorical resonances as helpfully shifting attention towards the affective dimensions through which namings relate to debates, classificatory schemes and embodied practices, I insisted that resonances are multiple, situated and morphing. The consequence is that focussing exclusively on one kind of resonance, is to overlook other resonances that may offer important analytical and political openings and even more fundamentally to forego the possibility of working with tensions and contradictions the cacophonous multiplicity of resonances affords. I made this general argument with reference to the Rio workshop on the *Everyday Modalities of War* from which this special issue grew. I proceeded to elaborate, deepen, and anchor this argument specifically with reference to analytical and political import of the rhetorical resonance of militarization for analysing and troubling the commercial processes inscribing militarism ever more deeply in contemporary lives. I suggested that rhetorical resonances help us grapple with and disturb the *managing* that contributes to diffuse military concerns, the *marketing* that contributes to deepen their grip, the *materializing* that builds them into infrastructures and the *demobilizing* of resistance that hampers both critique and political resistance. I could use Neocleous’ words for my conclusion, except in reverse. *Not working with militarization* – rather than working with it, as he argues – would be ‘intellectually sterile, politically debilitating and a blockage on critical thinking’ (Neocleous 2019).

The reader will have noted that I arrive at this conclusion not by arguing that Neocleous, or any of the other critics of militarization that I cite above are ‘wrong’ in their critique of militarization. This is intended. Their critique has merits. My unambiguous disagreement is with the sweeping conclusions they derive from it. Their arguments direct justified attention to ways in which a focus on ‘militarization’ may distract from forms and histories of violence. This is obviously an important observation. However, militarization does many other things as well some of which are fundamentally important. The bulk of this article has been devoted to detailing some of these other things: namely the analytical and political openings with respect to market militarism. Cultivating such openings is important. Working *with* the critiques of ‘militarization’ –

including those of Neocleous and Howell – may be a way of doing this. It attunes us to problematic aspects of the rhetorical resonances of militarization. It sensitizes us to the closures the rhetorical resonances bring about in some contexts. In so doing it paves the way for working with the contradictions and tensions between situated and morphing resonances; that is with the transformation of the rhetorical resonances themselves. This, however, merely reinforces the point made above: it signals the import of working *with* militarization by integrating critique of it. This is rather different from dismissing it as irrelevant or practicing self-induced amnesia.

This (return) provocation is not a polemic of the kind Foucault cautions against. Rather, as most provocations, it is intended to trigger reflection, and specifically reflection of two kinds: First, regarding the possibility of working *with* militarization to striate the smoothness of militarism and the ‘everyday modalities of war’. Second, regarding the significance of working *with* – with concepts, their resonances, and critics – and so of the ‘feminist art’ of building alliances to borrow from Enloe.

## Notes

1. Behera et al. (2021) make an analogous argument is made with respect to ‘securitization’ published after this article was drafted. I thank a reviewer for insisting that I direct attention to it.
2. Basham, this issue makes a similar argument.
3. Since the original version of this article was sent out for review (in 2019) both militarization and militarism have regained some of their clout in critical publications as sifting through the pages of this journal will show. But see also among many Flores-Macias et al. (2021), Go (2020), or Ziadah (2019).
4. ASIS is an acronym for American Society for Industrial Security. However, today it is a global society with ‘chapters’ across the world and therefore only refers to itself by the acronym.
5. See also discussion in (<http://www.isanet.org/Publications/ISQ/Posts/ID/5353/categoryId/102/Can-Networks-Govern>).

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