

## Introduction

The growth and proliferation of historical and social science research since the Second World War has made it increasingly difficult to survey a particular area of academic work and to gauge how much ground has been covered in the evolution of a scholarly argument. This certainly appears to be true of a wide and important field which for a long time has attracted writers from very different backgrounds and disciplines and which is concerned with the role and position of the military in state and society. Large numbers of historians, sociologists, political scientists, peace researchers and psychologists have been preoccupied with what, after 1945, came to be known as civil-military relations and have grappled with the applicability or otherwise of the concept of militarism. There are numerous professional journals in the field.<sup>1\*</sup> Several attempts have been made to compile comprehensive bibliographies of writings on the topic of militarism.<sup>2</sup> Not surprisingly, the volumes ran into thousands of titles.

These quantitative developments have not made it easier for all involved to see the wood for the trees. However, the fragmentation of social science research has also contributed to the growing difficulty of scholars to remain aware of what is going on across the fence on another academic patch. This also applies to information about the work of earlier generations. In these circumstances, it makes sense to pause from time to time in order to take stock of research in a particular field and to look back upon the meandering evolution of an argument. This at least is the idea behind the present volume which proposes to examine the history of the notion of militarism as a key concept of modern social science research — a concept which, to our knowledge, has never been treated comprehensively in this way.<sup>3</sup>

The subsequent chapters will therefore try to give a survey of the debate on militarism among historians, sociologists and other writers. It is a debate which has engaged a considerable number of powerful minds now for over a century. Some of them have approached the problem from the perspective of civil-military relations; others have been more interested in the mentalities and value systems of the

*\*The notes for this chapter begin on page 6.*

military. Yet another group has been trying to interpret the role and function of the military against the background of a particular country's political economy. All these and other areas have attracted the theoretician, the social critic or the man of the broad sweep. At the other end of the spectrum, there have been those who prefer to take a magnifying-glass to the primary sources. The 1960s and 1970s especially saw the publication of a good deal of solid empirical work, and the history of a large variety of countries has been researched from at least one of the above-mentioned angles.<sup>4</sup> Of course, upon closer inspection, few of the empiricists have been satisfied with the mere collation and presentation of their material. Many of them have, explicitly or implicitly, attempted to give their findings a more general relevance or even to assign them a place in the wider theoretical debate on the concept of militarism. As will be seen, few people hesitate to apply the term.

However, although the widespread usage of a concept may be seen to reflect its importance, there is no general agreement on its meaning. Worse, like imperialism, militarism is and always has been a word of political propaganda and polemic. Today East European countries accuse the West of being militaristic. Conversely, frequent warnings have been heard against a Red militarism. Up to the late 1940s, East and West were publicly united in their determination to prevent a rebirth of a German militarism. Two-thirds of the countries of Africa and more than half of the population of Latin America are governed today by regimes which many people would call militaristic. It might be argued that its frequent use in political propaganda has made the concept of militarism unsuitable for scholarship. Yet, if this were accepted, a good many other key words, including imperialism and fascism, would have to be excised from our vocabulary. Fortunately, there are many important works which evidently regard militarism as a meaningful analytical tool and merely wrestle with making it more meaningful and precise.

That we are very far from discarding the notion of militarism is also demonstrated by the fact that it appears in many established dictionaries and encyclopedias, even if definitions are far from uniform. Thus *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, in taking over, almost verbatim, the version of the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), defines militarism as:<sup>5</sup> 'The spirit and tendencies of the professional soldier; the prevalence of military sentiment and ideals among a people; the tendency to regard military efficiency as the paramount interest of the state.' The OED of 1933 had included the following sentence which was taken out 40 years later:<sup>6</sup> 'The political conditions characterised by

the predominance of the military class in government or administration.' *The Encyclopedia Americana* defines the term as being 'applied to the policy of giving exceptional emphasis to military preparedness, exalting military virtues and relying on force in international relations'.<sup>7</sup> The French *Grand Larousse* circumscribes militarism as the 'exaggerated preponderance of the military element in a nation; a political system which bases itself upon the army; sentiment, doctrine of those who favour this preponderance of the army.'<sup>8</sup> The *Dizionario Enciclopedico Italiano* speaks of the 'prevalence, in a state or class, of a military spirit: [e.g.] Prussian militarism.'<sup>9</sup> A shorter Spanish encyclopedia writes that militarism represents the 'predominance of the military element in the government of the State',<sup>10</sup> whereas the widely used West German *Brockhaus* speaks of the 'predominance of military forms, thought patterns and objectives in state, politics and society'.<sup>11</sup> The East German *Marxistisch-Leninistisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, on the other hand, sees it as a 'reactionary and aggressive system of domination and organization in social orders based on exploitation' in which 'economic, social and cultural life is subjected to a military clique which views military force and war in particular as the main instrument for the realization of an aggressive policy'.<sup>12</sup> The *Sovietskaia istoricheskaia enciklopedia* finally describes militarism as a 'closed system of economics, politics and ideology' resulting in a 'policy of military expansion of the exploiter state with the aim of preparing wars of conquest and of repressing the resistance of the exploited masses within that state'.<sup>13</sup>

In different ways, all these definitions will re-emerge in subsequent chapters. However, this book is not intended to provide fresh empirical material in support of any of these definitions. It is therefore not to be compared with the *History of Militarism* written by Alfred Vagts some forty years ago.<sup>14</sup> Nor is it concerned with the problem of war in human society as it has been studied from divergent perspectives, but again by reference to historical material by such authors as Quincy Wright, John U. Nef or David Singer.<sup>15</sup> The aim of this volume is rather to examine the debate surrounding the concept of militarism since it made its first appearance in the nineteenth century. It is concerned with other authors' arguments, many of whom — it should be pointed out — presented their evidence from a critical and anti-militarist, though not necessarily anti-military position. Nevertheless, this study tries to go beyond simply recounting what these authors have been saying on the subject. It is also concerned with the genesis and development of militarism as an analytical tool in relation to discussions about the evolution of modern society.

Consequently, the following chapters range not only across divergent disciplines, but also across a variety of countries and ideological frontiers. No claim is made that the analysis is all-inclusive, although it is hoped that the main currents and turning-points have been identified. Nor was it possible for the author to be equally at home in widely differing fields and national histories. Yet if the analysis is not always finely balanced, this is primarily due to the fact that its foci were inevitably determined by the territory on which the debate on militarism happened to be moving. As the German historian Hans Herzfeld observed in 1956, the pre-1945 discussion of the concept 'was almost exclusively fought out in the arena of German history'.<sup>16</sup>

It will be seen that this was an exaggeration resulting from the narrow perspective of the generation of German historians to which Herzfeld belonged. Nevertheless, the German case did assume a prominent place in the debate and this will unavoidably be reflected in the first chapters of this study. In fact, Germany's militarism came to be seen by many as a paradigm and hence caused considerable argument among scholars both inside and outside Central Europe. And even when people wrote on other cases of militarism, the German example was, in one way or another, often at the back of their minds. It was only after 1945 that a marked shift of emphasis took place in this respect, at least among non-historians. There were first of all those Anglo-Saxon sociologists and political scientists who began to turn their attention to the position of the military in the so-called New Nations of the Third World. Almost simultaneously, other scholars in the West started to raise the question of whether an 'advanced' industrial nation like the United States ought to be called militaristic. These were interesting developments not only in themselves, but also because the contrast between developing and developed countries has in effect provided the framework in which the entire debate has implicitly always been conducted.

It is important to emphasize these unspoken assumptions, as not all of the writers whose views will be examined below have been conscious of this broader societal context. This is true in particular of those who were either concerned to describe the outward features of militarism or who saw the problem primarily as one of the role of the military in political decision-making. Nevertheless, most authors have made certain assumptions about the societies with reference to which they raised the problem of militarism. The question which we shall therefore have to ask is: what are the socio-economic and political structures which an author presumes to exist in his or her case study and, relatedly, what is the contemporary ideological context in which these

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presuppositions are rooted?

The approach of the following chapters should now be clear: it is not to do a demolition job on previous writings in order to erect a new theory of militarism upon the rubble of earlier work. The method is rather to try to identify the 'thread' which has run through the debate of the past 100 or so years and to see if it is possible to construct from this material a typology of militarism which may form the explicit framework of future investigations into the subject. It was therefore also sensible to adhere to a broadly chronological approach which starts from the first appearance of the concept in the nineteenth century and takes the story up to the First World War in Chapter I. The interwar period saw the growth of military apparatuses and paramilitary organisations which led to much argument among academics and non-academics to be recounted in Chapter II. Since Prussia-Germany and Japan appeared to be the prime examples of militaristic systems prior to 1945, a lively discussion restarted after the Second World War concerning the nature and origins of these particular militarisms which will be examined in Chapter III. The next chapter then deals with studies of the role of the military in Third World countries which became a major industry from the 1950s onwards, especially in the United States. It was overshadowed only from the late 1960s onwards by a preoccupation with the apparent militarization of different spheres of life in the developed industrial countries; accordingly, Chapter V will try to throw some light on the significance of the debate surrounding the so-called Military-Industrial Complex in the United States and its Soviet equivalent. Finally, Chapter VI represents an attempt to differentiate between types of militarism. This typology is partly derived from the previous chapters, but also from a case study which looks at Nazi Germany as a militaristic system.

The book arose from an anthology on militarism which I edited several years ago for a West German publisher and which contained contributions to the debate by such authors as Herbert Spencer, Otto Hintze, Karl Liebknecht, Harold Lasswell and others.<sup>17</sup> I discovered at the time that there was nothing comparable in English to the longer introduction which I wrote for this anthology. The expansion of the theme into a monograph made it necessary for me to venture into areas of research, such as Japanese history or the massive work on the Military-Industrial Complex, in which I could never claim to be a specialist. I am therefore grateful to a number of colleagues who drew my attention to various inaccuracies and misinterpretations in the draft manuscript. I particularly benefited from the criticisms of Professor Morris Janowitz, Dr. Tim Mason, Professor Eiji Ohno, Mr. Richard

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Storry and Dr. Jay Winter. Any remaining omissions and errors of substance or judgement are, of course, entirely my own responsibility.

### Notes

- 1 Thus the 1979 issue of the *War and Society Newsletter*, a bibliographical reference periodical edited by Geoffrey Best, Wilhelm Deist, Andrew Wheatcroft and Samuel Williamson, now monitors some forty-six professional journals in the field.
- 2 See, e.g., M. Thompson, 'Militarism 1969. A Survey of World Trends.' *Peace Research News* 5 (1968), pp. 1-96.
- 3 Major reference works such as the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* or the *Lexikon Historischer Grundbegriffe* have an entry under 'militarism', but they are either rather brief or focus on the development of the concept in one country during a limited period.
- 4 The debate on Latin American militarism has been particularly extensive and detailed. See below pp. 74ff.
- 5 *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford 1973, p.1323.
- 6 *The Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford 1933, p.438.
- 7 *The Encyclopedia Americana*, Vol. 19, New York 1968, p.59.
- 8 *Grand Larousse*, Vol. 7, Paris 1963, p.361.
- 9 *Dizionario Enciclopedico Italiano*, Vol. 7, Rome 1957, p.759.
- 10 *Diccionario Enciclopédico Abreviado*, Vol. 5, Madrid 1957, p.891.
- 11 *Brockhaus Enzyklopädie*, Vol. 12, Wiesbaden 1971, p.560.
- 12 *Marxistisch-Leninistisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Vol. 2, Leipzig 1969, p.724f.
- 13 *Sovietskaia istoricheskaia enciklopedia*, Vol. 9, Moscow 1966, p.436.
- 14 A. Vagts, *A History of Militarism*, London 1938.
- 15 Q. Wright, *A Study of War*, 2 vols., Chicago 1942; J. U. Nef, *War and Human Progress*, New York 1963; D. Singer, ed., *Quantitative International Politics. Insights and Evidence*, New York 1968. Singer's Michigan Project was, in the first instance, concerned with the collection of statistical data on wars and military conflicts in the modern period. Nef's focus is on Western Industrial Civilization and modern warfare since the fifteenth century. Wright deals with the nature, conditions of and controls on, war. He mentions the problem of 'militarization' briefly and is inclined, in a Liberal tradition, to associate militarism with feudal societies.
- 16 H. Herzfeld, 'Zur neueren Literatur über das Heeresproblem in der deutschen Geschichte.' *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 4 (1956), p.370.
- 17 V. R. Berghahn, ed., *Militarismus*, Cologne 1975.

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## I The Debate Prior to 1914

According to the German historian Werner Conze the term ‘militarism’ first appeared in the *Memoirs* of Madame de Chastenay in 1816/18.<sup>1\*</sup> But the date is uncertain and the word does not appear to have been used during the next 45 years until 1861 when it was mentioned in Pierre Proudhon’s *La guerre et la paix*.<sup>2</sup> In 1864, he applied it again in his essay *De la capacité politique des classes ouvrières*.<sup>3</sup> During the same year the term also emerges in the Central European journal *Deutsche Jahrbücher für Politik und Literatur*,<sup>4</sup> as well as in English. By 1869, ‘militarism’ had found its way into a French encyclopedia, a year later into a German one.<sup>5</sup> It was thus established as a neologism in France and Central Europe and spread to other countries from there.

It is more difficult to decide what those who first coined the term actually meant by it. De Chastenay apparently thought of it in the context of the regime of Napoleon I. Proudhon, by contrast, linked it with military conflict and intended to describe by it an interpretation of history which favoured the idea of war as an activator of man’s best moral energies. To him — that fighter for a just and civilized society — such a view was of course utterly repulsive. Nevertheless, it is interesting how he saw militarism as belonging to an autocratic phase of human history which, following a complete transformation of society, would eventually be replaced by a regime of liberty and economic equality. Three years later, in 1864, he used the term in a more restrictive sense to describe the military aspect of the centralized Belgian monarchy. At the same time he saw it in the context of the financial burdens imposed on the population by large modern armies.

Still, whether Proudhon saw militarism as a system antagonistic to a socialist-pacifist society or, alternatively, to his world without oppressive government, it is clear that he was in effect writing about a problem which had preoccupied philosophers and political commentators for the previous 200 years or more. We may have had militaristic regimes in the ancient world<sup>6</sup> or in the Middle Ages;<sup>7</sup> but it was not until the seventeenth century that people began to show a political or academic interest in the position of the military in the

\*The notes for this chapter begin on page 28.

emergent nation states of the modern period. Hans Herzfeld, one of the foremost historians of this problem, discovered the origins of the debate on militarism in England and linked it to the Glorious Revolution of 1688 when, as he put it, 'the modern English state was born with its fundamental predominance of the civilian element over the military one in public affairs'.<sup>8</sup> He continued that, although the Bill of Rights of 1689 was more 'the product of a fear of tyranny than of a conscious opposition to militarism', it was nevertheless at this moment that a basic principle of modern liberalism and democracy began to assert itself. That the decision of the late seventeenth century was not quite so clear-cut and that, with the experience of Cromwell behind them, the relationship between the civilian government and the military continued to agitate contemporaries in England is evidenced by the publication, in 1697, of two books whose titles give the story away: John Trenchard's *An Argument Showing That A Standing Army Is Inconsistent With A Free Government And Absolutely Destructive To The Constitution Of The English Monarchy* and Andrew Fletcher's *A Discourse Concerning Militias And Standing Armies With Relation To The Past And Present Governments of Europe And of England In Particular*.

Trenchard would have found it difficult, if not impossible, to win his 'Argument' in the countries of the European Continent where absolutism had been gaining the upper hand over representative assemblies. The rise of absolutism was accompanied by the growth of large-scale military organisations which buttressed princely power. Across the Atlantic, the problem of the relationship between 'free government' and military power was also perceived by the authors of the American Declaration of Independence. They accused the King of militaristic tendencies because he had maintained 'among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the consent of our legislatures' and had tried 'to render the Military independent of, and superior to, the Civil power'.<sup>9</sup> The outcome of the War of Independence established the 'civilian principle' to which these words allude also in the United States of America. France and Central Europe were less fortunate and it is from there that the most persistent criticism of the military system of absolutism can be heard. Charles de Montesquieu was worried both by the mounting financial burdens as well as the size of armaments and by the isolation of the military from the citizens. His famous concept of the separation of powers is also reflected in his demand that, under a monarchical system, civilian and military offices should not be held by one and the same person.<sup>10</sup> Only under a Republican regime whose citizens are, in an external emergency, at the same time the defenders

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of the Fatherland would the dangers inherent in a combination of such offices disappear. Jean Jacques Rousseau, above all, idealized the notion of a militia of free citizens who would ultimately be deployed in the struggle against the mercenary forces of absolutist tyrants. In Germany, Immanuel Kant and Johann Gottlieb Fichte became outspoken critics of standing armies as threats to peace and economic prosperity, whereas Carl von Clausewitz, in his famous study, was more inclined to view the problems in terms of the proper subordination of military demands to political considerations. Overwhelmingly the problem of the military organization of society was seen at this time against the background of two competing political systems among which representative government would eventually overcome and supersede princely absolutism.

When the American historian Alfred Vagts later argued that militarism is 'not the opposite of pacifism; its true counterpart is civilianism',<sup>11</sup> he was in fact referring to a view which had established itself in the Anglo-Saxon world well before the twentieth century. Militarism was seen to obtain wherever and whenever military considerations exerted a decisive influence on civilian government. It was perceived as obstructing the development of representative institutions. It was the negative image of the political system that had taken root in England and the United States in the eighteenth century. We emphasize this particular tradition of thought not only because of its relevance to the debate in the present century, but also because it focuses so prominently on political institutions. On the other hand, it does adopt an evolutionist view of history in so far as militarism was widely held to be doomed and to be replaced by a civilian order. Thus 'Progress' — that all-pervasive idea of the early nineteenth century — was believed to be at work also in the field of civil-military relations and the realm of military politics. There are very few references to the socio-economic framework within which the transition was supposed to occur. To the extent that economic arguments were advanced by Kant and others, they tended to criticize large military establishments as wasteful and parasitic. But rarely did they go beyond a general statement of this kind.

It was Claude Henri de Rouvroy Comte de Saint-Simon and his followers who began to transcend the confines of politics and constitutions.<sup>12</sup> Their vision was that of a harmonious society of industrial producers in which military power would be superfluous. Saint-Simon, in his famous *Political Parable*, classified France's 'marshals' among those whom he regarded as dispensable relics of the ancien regime. Above all, the Saint-Simoneans developed the notion, in different

versions soon to be found in other contemporary writings, that the advent of a society based on industry and commerce would once and for all also remove the problem which the existence of the military had been causing in earlier generations. In Victorian Britain, Free Trade and economic development were seen as the best antidote to war and heavy armaments expenditure, with Richard Cobden being one of the most ardent advocates of this idea. In Central Europe Wilhelm Schulz-Bodmer, a constitutional lawyer, similarly saw economic reform rather than constitutional change as an alternative to what he called '*Militärherrschaft*'.<sup>13</sup>

By the time 'militarism' became established in political language, two major strands can be discerned within the critique of military organization and its effect upon civilian society, i.e. those analysts who saw it in a political and constitutional framework and those who examined it as a socio-economic problem. Both approaches shared a common vision of a progressive movement towards an age in which armies would at least be closely controlled, if not abolished altogether.

When Proudhon first used the term 'militarism' in the 1860s, he applied it, as we have seen, in both senses, thus contributing to a definitional muddle which was to last for the next 100 years and which will be traced in subsequent chapters. On the one hand, he identified it with a centralized type of political system; on the other hand, he regarded it as an obstacle to the achievement of a social order which was pacific and economically just. This confusion was compounded in the late 1860s when the concept of militarism was picked up by Catholic particularists in Central Europe as a polemical weapon against the hegemonic aspirations of Protestant Prussia. It was through this propaganda in the German South and in the Rhineland that the term was popularised. But almost inevitably it lost what little precision it had by then acquired in the process.

A good example of this use of the concept is a pamphlet by Georg Pachtler, a Jesuit monk, which he published under the pseudonym Annarius Osseg.<sup>14</sup> His 'European Militarism' was identical with systems whose *raison d'être* was organization for war. To him the centralizing tendencies of his time, rearmament to the utmost and the mobilization of all national resources for the purposes of maintaining a large army were essential features of a type of modern militarism to be observed in the 1860s in both Bismarckian Prussia and in Napoleonic France. Pachtler even went so far as to predict a time when, because of the spreading of the militarist principle, Europe would become 'one huge garrison' geared to the application of force against opponents at home and neighbours abroad. It was a pessimistic argument which was