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## BOOK REVIEW

*By Jack Newnham and Dr Peter Bell (QUT Faculty of Law, School of Justice)*

**Militarism and International Relations: Political economy, security, theory. Edited by Anna Stavrianakis and Jan Selby, Oxon, Routledge, 2012, 212 pp., AU\$?? (hard-cover), ISBN 978-0-415-61491-7**

An engaging narrative is maintained throughout this edited collection of articles that address the issue of militarism in International Relations. The book seamlessly integrates historical and contemporary perspectives on militarism, with theory and relevant international case studies, resulting in a very informative read.

The work is comprised of three parts. Part One deals with the theorisation of militarism, and includes chapters by Anna Stavrianakis and Jan Selby, Martin Shaw, Simon Dalby, and Nicola Short, as well as an interview with James Der Derian. Part One covers a range of topics relating to historical and contemporary theories of militarism, geopolitical threat construction, political-economy, and the US military's '*cultural turn*'.

Chapter Five is of particular interest, as it includes an interview between the book's editors and Brown University Professor James Der Derian – creator of the award-winning documentary *Human Terrain*. Throughout the interview, they discuss topics ranging from the US military's move towards a '*culture of war*' and the implementation of the 'Human Terrain System' (HTS) in Iraq and Afghanistan, Der Derian's 'MIME-NET' (Media-Industrial-Media-Entertainment Network) interpretation of the military-industrial complex, and the critical theoretical approach towards IR and militarism. The chapter provides valuable insight into the analytical processes of Der Derian and his reasoning and rationale behind his various works, and especially on the developments in militarism in the US. The editors question him on criticisms that have been levelled at HTS by anthropologists in particular, and while he does not defend the system as vigorously as one would have expected, his explanations for why such criticisms are not as strident or exposing as they claim to be, are very informative.

Part Two of the book moves away from theoretical conceptions and towards the issues of the militarism-security nexus, the global arms trade, and the 'Wilsonian' foreign policy approach of the United States. Grounded in case studies from the United States, Latin American, and the Middle East, the section includes chapters by Yoav Peled, Dirk Kruijt and Kees Koonings, David Kinsella, and Andrew Bacevich. This section of the book contains much more in the way on practical context that was lacking in the first section, and would be of particular interest to students of security and strategic studies. Chapter Seven also represents one of only two chapters in the book that attempt to address the arguably positive aspects of militarism such as economic and political development, and stability through military-based security.

In Part Three of the text, the editors focus on the political economy of militarism. With articles by Iraklis Oikonomou, Ramy Aly, and Kerry Brown and Claudia Zanardi, this section of the book utilises case studies from the European Union, Egypt, and China to demonstrate some of the complex positive and negative relationships between political economy and militarism. Chapter 11 provides a particularly interesting and relevant analysis of the historical development of the Egyptian army as the state moved progressively towards militarism, and the apparent interruption of this process during the 'Arab Spring' political protests in 2011. Similarly, Claudia Zanardi in Chapter 12 considers the elaborate interrelationships between the Chinese government and Chinese military through both a historical and contemporary framework. The author analyses and ultimately discredits the ostensibly decreasing role of the military in Chinese political affairs, arguing that the military industrial complex of the nation is too powerful for absolute segregation to occur. Zanardi concludes by suggesting that China could experience similar moves towards militarism that the US experienced in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century if the civilian arm of the government loses influence.

Only a small number of criticisms could be levelled at *Militarism and International Relations*. Firstly, there is no resounding conformity over how 'militarism' should be defined; although this is a problem endemic to many topics, not specifically this book. Secondly, the book suffers from a lack of discussion on the issue of whether or not militarism is a positive or negative force, instead usually opting for inherently assuming that it is implicitly negative. The editors briefly mention this issue in the book's introduction (p16); however, despite stating that the text would not be 'anti-militarist' most of the chapters either subtly or overtly imply that militarism is a detrimental phenomenon. Thirdly, most of the articles are US-centric, even when based on international case studies. This could be interpreted more as a descriptive comment than a criticism; however, given the dominance of the US on a global scale in terms of politics, military, and economics, it is difficult and problematic to ignore its influence when discussing any topic within International Relations.

Overall, despite these minor criticisms, this book would prove very beneficial to students of International Relations in general, as well as those interested more specifically in militarism, strategic studies, and security. It adds to the body of knowledge and is straight forward an easy read.