GUEST EDITORIAL

Introduction: militarization and international business

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to introduce a special issue which looks into how militarization can be seen as an entity from which international business, management and organization can or cannot glean potentially useful lessons.

Design/methodology/approach – Five papers have been used to give a suitable basis for the reconceptualisation and recontextualisation of the military and militarization in relation to international business.

Findings – Several key tasks are achieved in rephrasing the issues of militarization in relation to international business. A wide national and cultural span is covered.

Originality/value – In developing and assembling this collection of papers claim cannot be laid to have answered issues on militarization, ground has been laid and reference points provided for a much needed wider critical debate.

Keywords Military actions, International business, Organizations

Paper type General review

In the contemporary moment, and particularly post-Vietnam, attitudes within academic enquiry regarding military and "militarily infused" events and affairs are in most instances subject to variable and, on occasion, even reticent engagement and an almost reactionary and automatic invocation of certain commonly perceived representations. On the one hand, military and militarised contexts and environments are seen as an entity from which international business, management and organization can glean potentially useful and important lessons. Typically, these lessons have been envisaged as capable of being derived from comparative analysis of leadership in battle or generalship in military campaigns made applicable to business operations. Similarly, military – business exchanges across the international sphere have centred on mutual emulation or sharing best practice for the achievement of efficient and effective functions.

On the other hand, in contrast to these alleged symbiotically useful exchanges, military may be perceived in a more negative or pejorative sense. Here, the military is categorically rejected as useful for business. A systematic marginalisation of the more profound effects of militarization on business and wider society typically conjures up and reverts to several kinds of popular cultural representations in terms of a set of

stereotypical images (e.g. harsh disciplinary regimes and fascist figures embedded in archaic hierarchical power structures) (Hassard and Holliday, 1998). Thus from this perspective, the military is circumscribed as remote and irrelevant, even dangerous and threatening, for international business. The propensity for such perspectives and representations, whenever they find expression at all, is predominantly within the critical management and organization realm.

Representations of the military (whether positive or negative) present it as being an organisational form and experience distant and remote from other organizations and other modes of being in the world, thus neatly cleaving military and civic spheres. These academic inquiries and cultural representations not only overlook and eclipse many potentially fruitful opportunities for analysis and comment but also lead to a generalized perception that the military is largely a self-contained body that has little, and at best passing, influence on business and organizations as well as their nexus with national and international social, political and cultural formations. In those instances where militarised contextualisation *is* invoked in texts, these accounts tend to examine (in an ossified manner) military events, histories and discourses in order to transport and graft these experiences onto alleged non-military or quasi-military settings. In a similar fashion, militarized representations are commonly used as lenses for cultural interpretation in which certain aspects of society, for example, business and warfare become analogues for understanding international business interactions, especially between North American/European Countries and Asian Countries, with the latter being delineated as markedly martial.

In the treatment of the military, and processes of militarization, there has been a tendency for enquiry habitually to take place within particular well-delineated disciplinary boundaries and in disciplinarily constrained ways, e.g. strategic studies, international studies, war studies, peace studies, history and so on and so forth. There exists, therefore, scope to develop materials which diffuse or blur such partitions in order to create a valuable trans- and inter-disciplinary commentary capable of examining the extent to which militarization has influenced vast portions of the civic, quotidian domains. The effects of such examinations will shed important critical light on international business and organizational practices and this contribution from militarization is timely. Critical management, having established "itself as an enduring domain management sub-discipline only a relatively short period of time after the publication of Alvesson and Willmott's (1992) eponymous collection" (Murphy, 2004) now finds itself negotiating a period of debates, confrontations and resistances surrounding emergent tensions over neo-formalisation and solidification of Critical Management Studies subject boundaries. Set against this context, it is increasingly important that the recognition of militarization as a hegemonic, omnipresent and pervasive international influence on business management and organizations be addressed, rather than marginalized and excluded by the operation of embedded and tacit parochial and quasi-reactionary tendencies.

Our ambition with this special issue is to provide the catalyst for such a project and endeavour. We aim to engender a process whereby a range of alternative critical insights and perspectives on military and militarization can be brought to bear on international business. To this end this edition has assembled papers that are intended to provoke ongoing and wider debate. Self-evidently, the length of a special issue can only really seek to "announce" a field rather than provide full coverage or in-depth

analysis across a wide span. With this common constraint in mind we have carefully chosen five papers that we believe will provide a suitable basis for the reconceptualisation and recontextualisation of the military and militarization in relation to international business. The assembled papers critically explore, address and challenge petrified conceptual and contextual notions of the militarization of international business as well as organizational cultural and political sociologies while gesturing toward the multifarious internal ways in which military ideas, experiences, technologies and technicities and organizations, historically and contemporaneously, infuse and affect cultural theory and practice. Consequently, a perception of a hermetic separation between military and non-military (traditionally termed "civilian") appreciations, understandings or effects may be somewhat artificial and overplayed. As exemplified by the following articles, there are many possibilities to reflect on what may be broadly represented as military, quasi-military and non-military in relation to critical international business, management and organization approaches embracing, for example, identity, resistance, oppression, alienation, collaboration, complicity, emotion, gender, politics, ethics, art and literature.

The structure of this special edition of *Critical Perspectives on International Business* dealing with *Militarization and International Business* is composed of five papers in total. Stokes, followed by Bishop and Phillips, aim to set the scene for the ensuing discussion. They reappraise and challenge the value and validity of extant delineations and representations of military and militarised literature as they are played out in international business management and organization. They work to renegotiate and reformulate the contemporary and diachronic rules of engagement with militarization in relation to international business. These two initial papers seek to accomplish this in distinct ways. In so doing they develop paradoxes and dialectics that will encourage the exploration of militarization in relation to international business management and organization. Our intention is not to create and promulgate a neo-hegemonic set of representations to replace or replicate the present dominating conditions of the debate. This would merely be to induce and install one stasis as a replacement for another that is currently resident. Rather we intend to show what this debate can be. Here we aim to demonstrate the potential(s) within these critical perspectives of international business.

The first paper of the special edition "The Militarizing of Organization and Management Studies: Reconnoitring the Tensions – Problems and Possibilities for Reshaping the Terrain?" constitutes the first half of this overture. The paper takes the form of a broad literature review and the argument sponsors the position that military and militarized effects are omnipresent, insidious and longitudinally important in acting on not only economic but also wider social and political life and activity. Thus the *status quo* in relation to this situation is identified as truncated, perplexing and frustrating. The discussion develops arguments which show almost inevitable roles for the (re-)production and influence of militarization on and in everyday life. In so doing it seeks to critically show that apparently solid divisions of experiential domains are more likely to blur than to delineate distinctions – even stark ones such as those concerning the role of the military as an organization that, on occasion, has the objective of killing.

In tandem, but equally with deliberate disharmony and the object of generating tensions and identifying the potential terrain for debate, the second paper of the initial arguments engages with the notion of "the disavowal of the military". It seeks to move

beyond an approach concerned with debating the merits of adoption of military modes of organization and engagement in apparent "non-military" settings through an understanding that militarization implies deep historical tendencies that are not easy to simply avoid, especially where one wishes to observe or to analyze phenomena systematically. Rather, drawing on psycho-analytical, critical theoretical and poetic influences, it pursues a deeper historical understanding of meaning of militarization in international contexts. Militarization, thus, means more than the simple adoption of military modes of organization and engagement in supposedly non-military environments. At a deeper level, which is evident in both a developing technology and an increasingly technological attitude, it implies the repetition of basic attitudes to others and to life.

The following three papers of the edition intentionally illustrate the diversity and particularity of the subject matter under scrutiny. Subsequent to the initial impact of renegotiating the field brought on by the first two papers the next three papers begin the process of developing arguments that explore such possibilities. Thus, the third paper by Cummings picks up a renegotiation of the field of strategy – one of the traditional and classic domains that has attempted to exploit military-civilian linkages. Here the special edition directly confronts one of the hitherto unquestioned areas of apparent "co-operation" between notional "military" and "non-military" spheres. The paper "Shifting Foundations: Redrawing Strategic Management's Military Heritage" draws on Foucauldian analyses to render problematic the presumed military heritage of strategy. This article explicitly takes up the challenge provided by the two opening position papers and provides an essential extension of the radical and critical spirit they provide by immediately turning our attentions to this apparently "well-established" military/non-military nexus. The result is an important engagement with petrified received knowledge within a sector of Business Studies.

The fourth paper considers gendered social bonds in everyday organizational practices and discourses. This is an important and imperative consideration given the popular cultural representational issues considered previously. Herein the clichéd and rhetorical stereotypes of the military and militarised experience are considered in a critical fashion. It is similarly apposite that this examination takes place in that most contemporary of military experiences the peacekeeping organization – surely one of the potentially most valuable but complex and potentially tragic post-modernistic organizational contexts. Through the analyses of Tallberg's paper entitled: "Bonds of Burden and Bliss: The Management of Social Relations in a Peacekeeping Organisation" we gain the opportunity to see the interplay of militarization in intra-national and inter-national contexts while also exploring the paradoxical but essential role of the military as a fighting organization meant to keep the peace.

In the fifth and final paper: "The Glass Beads of Global War: Dealing, Death and the Policy Analysis Market" Lilley and Lighfoot explore the inter-connectivity of technicity of markets, policy analysis and the "war on terror" in relation to geo-political contexts of international business. Such aspects of technical innovation and prowess, globalisation in connection with political progress and stability are central strands of normative international business debate. Yet, everywhere, these international business analyses and strategic projections appear to be conducted with little genuine or profound acknowledgement for their inherent fragility and vulnerability. The paper eloquently expounds the demise of the Policy Analysis Market (PAM) and in so doing

points up the very poignant tensions between representation and simulation that prevail in the international business arena.

Thus, as an ensemble, the papers of this special edition achieve several key tasks in rephrasing the issues of militarization in relation to international business. Primarily, the opening positioning papers call for a provocation to debate across the span of international business management and organization studies. A consideration of militarization within the area identifies and opens up a number fault-lines in prevailing representations and underpinning premises and assumptions are brought into question. The collection of papers anticipates a number of potential retorts and shows that the apparently "sure" heartland grounds in normative international business of strategic management, cross-cultural management and technicalised globalisation are, in fact, highly problematic and can derive substantial benefit from analysis through critical perspectives.

We also feel it valuable to indicate that the authors of this collection on militarization in relation to critical perspectives in international business cover a wide national and cultural span. In addition to an intra-diversity of United Kingdom critical communities this edition embraces: Asian contexts centring on Singapore, North American perspectives, Nordic contexts sourced from Finland, and Australasian inputs from New Zealand. In this way, while the collection is not so foolish or insensitive as to claim replete coverage, the assembled papers bring together a rich grouping of international critical perspective communities. Furthermore, this special edition grouping engages a range of paper types with which to tackle the questions and issues. The opening mapping papers espouse the form of literature review paper and conceptual paper respectively. The developmental papers following reveal the impact of the roles of case study papers, research papers and further conceptual explorations in furthering the enterprise of rethinking critical management studies posed by militarization. By employing a range of academic genres we consider this as offering additional depth and perspective to the project.

As we draw this introductory section to a close we have to return to where we began. In developing and assembling this collection of papers we cannot claim to have answered issues on militarization, rather we have laid the ground or provided reference points for a much needed wider critical debate. We look forward to its evolution.

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