

# **A genealogy of military geographies: complicities, entanglements and legacies**

## **Abstract**

This paper argues that historical geography is particularly well positioned to make insightful contributions to military geographies and critical military studies more broadly because of its commitment to critically exploring the genealogies and consequences of military violence, which are too often seen as a given or historically non-contingent. This is demonstrated by a review of existing literature which variously acknowledges the emergence of disciplinary geography in concert with the modern military, traces the contributions of geographers to and their entanglements with the military, and, which accounts for the complicities, consequences and legacies of military activities and violence through an historical lens. The paper reveals how historical geography exposes the knowledges, technologies and lives that produce and are shaped by military activities as being spatially and temporally specific. Further, it suggests future directions for historical geography that would extend and expand the discipline's attempts to more fully acknowledge the place of military geographies in our histories, politics, spatialities, cultures and everyday lives.

## Historical geography and the military

The twenty first century has, so far, been defined by the War on Terror, leading to lengthy and bloody military interventions, fraught global geopolitics, invasive, selective and restrictive forms of securitisation, and, a vicious popular discourse shaping divisive geographical imaginations. The War on Terror is characterised by a particular set of spatialities, which are simultaneously *located* in particular sites (military interventions), *everywhere* (the battlefield loosening to becoming a pervasive battlespace,) and *nowhere* (the use of black spots and stripping of citizenship). Geographers have contributed to highlighting and unpicking the processes and technologies by which contemporary conflicts are being waged (see Gregory 2011a; Shaw 2016), the spatialities they bring into being (see Graham 2004, 2009) and consequences on civilian mobilities, citizenship (Hyndman and Giles 2017) and bodies (Fluri 2011). Although it may seem that the twenty first century is the dawn of a new form of warfare, these geographies are not distinct, inevitable or stable; as Elden (2009) explains, the War on Terror provides an apparently new language to justify a continuous practice. In short, the increased militarisation and securitisation of space, and, the scale and modes of state-sanctioned violence in the twenty first century are made possible and legitimate by longer histories and geographies of military actions, imperialism, technological innovation and knowledge production. In order to account for the nature of state-sanctioned violence, the diverse and varied geographies of the military and the militarism of space must be examined, and further, the historical geographies of these need to be used to situate and hold accountable contemporary geopolitics and violence.

Yet, there are few geographers who claim to study military geography, indeed the term did not appear in the *Dictionary of Human Geography* until its fifth edition in 2009. In the first instance, military geography is defined simply as '[t]he study of geographies of military activities and operations' (Gregory and Graham 2009, 465). This broad definition captures the two distinct and divergent strains of work done under the term military geography. One is the traditional approach to military geography, dominant in North America where geographic knowledge; its appreciation of terrain, climate and people, is applied in aid of military operations in diverse theatres of war and environments (see Galgano and Palka, 2010). The second approach, the one addressed in this paper is critical military geographies, which interrogates the operation of military power and aims to make visible the wide ranging and often taken-for-granted phenomena related to the military. There is, as Woodward has stated, an ethical imperative to do so, as it brings military activities and their consequences home. She argues this is particularly pertinent for academics: '[w]hile much of the subject matter of military geographies may not necessarily be pleasant to teach or think about, it is certainly necessary' (2005, 732). Further, Rech et al (2015) have argued that the sub-discipline

of military geography has a specific contribution to make to the emerging interdisciplinary project of critical military studies, which interrogate the taken-for-granted categories related to the military, militarism and militarisation. They suggest that a geographically informed critical military studies can locate the situated natures of military activities, explore these as socially constituting practices, and account for the diverse range of spaces in which military activities and militarism shape and are shaped by (Rech et al. 2015, 50). This paper builds upon these claims by examining precisely what an historical geography approach brings to both military geographies and critical military studies.

The sub-discipline of historical geography, I suggest, can employ a critical military geographies approach to further enrich and expand the discipline's own historiography and provide a critical genealogy of the military and state-sanctioned violence. The paper, therefore, will first examine how the academic discipline of geography emerged through its use and value to the military and imperialism. Concomitantly, it will explore how geographers have been enrolled in producing military knowledges. Third, it highlights how some historical geographers have already employed a critical military geographies approach to account for and trace the diverse legacies of military activities. Finally, the paper reflects upon the methodology of doing historical critical military geographies and discusses future directions that this work could engage in. Overall, the paper suggests that historical geography in concert with critical military geographies, makes an important contribution because in offering a genealogy of military geography, it historicises, situates and accounts for contemporary forms of militarism and state-sanctioned violence.

### **Complicities: geography and the military**

Geography as a modern academic discipline emerges in the 1870s, and Hudson (1977) has commented that the development of distinct academic geography departments in European universities was in a large part driven by the utility of geographical knowledge to the military for imperial expansion and colonial control. This, in Hudson's words, 'New Geography', was 'vigorously promoted ... to serve the interests of imperialism in its various aspects including territorial acquisition, economic exploitation, militarism and the practice of class and race domination' (Hudson 1977, 12). The realisation that geography (often in the form of cartography) was of particular value to the military arose from a series of wars, conflicts, and a 'bold, brash and uncompromising' style of imperialism in the latter half of the nineteenth century (Driver 2000, 125). For example, the Franco-Prussian War 1870-71 in which Prussian victory was attributed to sound geographical and cartographic knowledge led to the development of geography in France

and further stimulated geographical study in Germany (Hudson, 1977). In brief, it was realised that there was strategic importance in having reliable geographical knowledge in military engagements, and maps, in particular, became an integral tool of war. In Britain, a series of disastrous military engagements in the Afghan Wars (1839-1842, 1878-1880), Burma campaigns (1824-1826, 1852-1853 and 1885) and the Boer War (1899-1902) led to the establishment of geographical teaching in Oxford and Cambridge in 1887-8, and accompanied by the rising prominence of military men in the Royal Geographical Society (RGS) who vigorously promoted incorporation of military and economic geography into Army training. As Stoddart (1992) states, 'New Geography' and the 'New Army' were closely entwined as geographical knowledge became a necessary component of military thinking and training. Thus, the position of geography as an academic discipline was established by its value to the military, in turn shaping the direction and character of disciplinary thinking and research.

It was not just geography's ability to produce reliable topographical knowledge that was of value, but also the discipline's ability to solve political, economic and military issues of imperialism and Empire, such as the settling of border disputes, carving and partitioning regions, identifying and locating valuable natural resources. Thus, geographic knowledge and techniques were drawn upon to render spaces legible for conquest by Western militaries; it helped to order colonial space. In particular, the discipline was an ideological buttress for racism, providing conceptual justification for paternalistic relations between the West and its colonies. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century some European and American geographers, such as Friedrich Ratzel and Ellen C. Semple, developed theories whereby the physical environment was claimed to be the most influential factor acting upon culture and civilisation. Environmental determinism was presented as objective knowledge, quickly becoming a scientific justification for racial hierarchy, the establishing of a paternalistic relationship between the West and its colonies, and thus legitimising empire as a civilising project (Livingstone 1992).

While some like Heffernan (1996, 522) has warned that although the historiography of Geography is one closely tied to the violence of imperialism it is important to avoid making 'excessively dark and simplistic claims' so not to reduce the discipline's history as solely one of 'putative military science... or a university haven for assorted racials and environmental determinists'. Yet, the historiography of Geography is one closely tied to and affiliated with imperialism and military and the discipline's complicities in state-sanctioned violence should be acknowledged and confronted. Geography is not alone here; Anthropology's disciplinary identity was also established through its utility to projects of Empire and Imperialism. However, whereas Anthropology has grappled in a much more engaged way with its military past (see Wainwright 2013) Geography, while critiquing

colonialism, empire and imperialism has not entirely reconciled the work done under its name to status of the discipline now. Thus, a role for historical geography is to explore the mutual production of geography and the military, and to trace the consequences of these entanglements on processes, practices and spatialities of imperialism, empire and the nature of knowledge production. This provides critical military studies with narratives of how histories, legacies and the militarism of science are entangled and shape genealogies of military practices and knowledges.

### **Entanglements: geographers and the military**

If the latter half of the nineteenth century was characterised by a complicity between geography and the military in the pursuit of imperialism, then the twentieth century extended this relationship by entangling geographers in the military-industrial-complex. The twentieth century, overshadowed by industrialised warfare, saw the military draw upon outside experts, including geographers, to innovate and mitigate against new forms of technologically driven conflict. There is a comprehensive range of historical geography addressing the complicity of American and British geographers during the twentieth century. Heffernan (1996) has explored the role of geographical expertise, in particular the use of cartography in WWI British military intelligence led by efforts in the RGS, while the role of British geographers in writing the Naval Intelligence Handbooks published between 1941 and 1946 by Clout and Gosme (2003) details the value of these geographical and military texts as the largest single body of geographical writing ever published. Maddrell (2008) also made an important intervention by addressing the role of women in the production of the Naval Intelligence Handbooks, and in highlighting the little known war work of women she reveals the often overlooked significance of women and gender in war for exploring critical military geographies.

The lasting consequences on the discipline have also been examined by Barnes (2006; 2008) who has traced the contribution of some American geographers in the Research and Analysis Branch at the US Office of Strategic Services during WWII and the ways in which the military did not just utilise existing geographical knowledge but directed new, more formal, instrumental and model driven geographical knowledge that shaped the character of post-war geography. Further, Farish (2005) has looked at how the US in WWII required a systematic study of the world's regions, which enlisted and produced geographical knowledge and military practices, that was then utilised in the Cold War. This period saw particularly intense efforts in the US framed by geopolitical conditions of war and militarism to map and document the world. Barnes and Farish (2006) chart how the emergence of a new regional model was linked to efforts at exerting American power

globally. Farish (2010) also analyses the ways in which the human sciences were militarized in the US and in particular the ways in which spatial knowledge and cartography were of use to the state. This work demonstrates that in war the ‘spatial knowledge on the world’s “life” was thus inextricable from the technology and techniques of death’ (Farish 2005, 663), thus directly connecting the discipline to the consequences of its engagement with the military. Geographers’ enrolment in the military during war shaped military knowledge and practices, and in turn, geographical careers, research, institutes, methodologies and disciplinary thought were influenced through this relationship. One enduring legacy of this has been the sub-discipline of ‘traditional’ military geography where links between geographic knowledge and practice are still closely entwined with military operations and strategies.

Britain and the US were not alone in militarising geographical knowledge during twentieth century conflicts. A 2015 special issue in *Journal of Historical Geography* charts the enrolment of geographers in mainland Europe throughout WWII. The papers detail the entanglement between geography and the military in France (Clout 2015), Germany (Barnes and Abrahamsson 2015), Romania (Bowd and Clayton 2015) and the Soviet Union (Shaw and Oldfield 2015), exploring complicities not just of contributing to military knowledge and practice, but also geographers’ activities including espionage (Heffernan 2015), and as public intellectuals supporting occupation (Larsen 2015). This special issue does not just further expand the scope of geographical complicity with the military to other nations but raises critical questions about how to study biography, geography and the military. As Clayton and Barnes (2015, 15) explain ‘to wage war is to practice geography’ and this enrolls not just the discipline but also the lives of geographers and the wider forces, demands and tensions in which they were operating. In particular, Barnes and Abrahamsson’s work on German political geographers the Haushofer’s, and Larsen’s study on Danish geographer Hatt, reveal the costs and consequences of being on the wrong side of history. Neither seeks to evoke empathy for the individuals who, by applying their knowledge or using their role as academics, were complicit in shaping or supporting the Nazi regime. Rather, the complexities of involvement, the contradictions that run through individual’s lives, the cultures of knowledge and the labour of positioning, negotiating and absolution in order to maintain or cultivate a career are situated in the wider spatio-temporal context. As Larsen explains of Hatt, who at the end of the war was tried for his activities as a public intellectual during the German occupation of Denmark: ‘Hatt lived in a world of often contradictory and – particularly when seen from some distance – more or less compromising shades of grey’ (Larsen 2015, 30).

In order to account for these complexities and their consequences, Barnes and Abrahamsson’s (2015) drawing on the example of the Haushofer’s involvement and contributions to the Nazi

regime utilise scale to narrate the entanglement of geopolitics and the personal in order to account for the tragedies of complicity. Karl Haushofer's instructed Hitler in geopolitics while he was imprisoned at Landsberg in 1924, Haushofer's idea of Lebensraum was used to justify German expansionism, and, his son Albrecht served as a diplomat for Joachim von Ribbentrop in the Nazi Foreign Ministry. Barnes and Abrahmasson argue that 'the history of geographical thought should not only critically interrogate the connivance of geographers and their geographical imagination with the tragedies of the past and present. It should also explore the complicated complicities and moral struggles involved and which form part of the connivance' (2015, 73). The paper continually traverses between the lives of the Haushofer family and the wider geopolitical context in which they were set, contributing to and at times victims of. The violence and tragedy of the Haushofer's is situated within the violence and tragedy of Nazi Germany, they are not enfolded into one another but laid bare and actively remembered, as a political act of historical geography.

Each of the works discussed in this section document the entanglement of geographers with the military and demonstrate how military knowledge and practice was transformed by enrolling geographers, and in turn the discipline was altered by this engagement. By tracing these entanglements between geography and the military two issues can be addressed. First, this approach contributes to historical geography rich disciplinary narratives whereby complicities between the discipline and the military can be exposed, and the contradictions and complexities of personal and disciplinary lives traced. Second, this historical approach to critical military geography helps to draw attention to the ways in which historical geography has an important role in situating and tracing the reverberations of military knowledges and the militarism of knowledge from innovation to contemporary uses. Both work to unsettle any sense of linear, determined or contained military histories.

## **Legacies: historical geography and a military genealogy**

This section explores historical geographies whose work seeks to unsettle the legitimacy or inevitability of military violence. From the 1960s, as academic geography shifted from quantitative methodologies towards a humanist turn, alongside the emergence of Marxist and radical geography in the 1970s, focus in the discipline was concentrated on addressing social struggles (Woodward, 2004). As a result, critical academic engagement with military phenomena went under-explored, except notably for the geopolitical work of Yves Lacoste (1976). This distancing of geography from military issues left military geographies and the militarism of space in the large unscrutinised (although see Pepper and Jenkin 1985; Klot and Waterman 1991; Flint 2004). However, since the

early 2000s there has been burgeoning recognition that the military and its geographies should be made visible and accountable. The work of Rachel Woodward has been key in developing critical military geographies which recognises the significance of armed conflict, and further looks ‘beyond it for what this tells us about the wider geographical imprint of militarism and military activities’ (2005, p.720). The focus is not just on descriptions of military control and authority, but on explanations for its roots and mechanisms of maintenance. To achieve this it is proposed that greater attention should be given to the small and seemingly mundane aspects of military activities, such as supply chains or the deployment of weapons (Woodward, 2005). Investigating the ordinary and prosaic holds the possibility of making militarism more visceral and tangible. As Rech et al. have explained: ‘*locating* militarism amidst the people and places it affects is to realise that these everyday, local and personal sites of militarization are not just reflective, or just a consequence of, militarism “writ large”, but they are *constitutive* of militarism, and are central to not only its effects, but its reproduction’ (2015, p.57, emphasis in original). Therefore, this section examines the four key approaches through which historical geographers have exposed the diverse spatialities and temporalities of military activities and legacies; first by analysing the spatialities of militarisation, second, exploring the cultural geographies of memory and commemoration, third, accounting for the embodied experiences of military conflict and fourth, drawing out the links between critical military geographies and postcolonial histories.

First, historical geography has been key in tracing the spatialities of militarisation and militarism. This work has explored how particular landscapes and environments become imagined as violent, and how such framings legitimise military intervention. As Woodward suggests, the point is ‘not only to describe and explain [these military landscapes], but also to use them to ask more abstract questions about how the categories of military and civilian come to be defined in opposition or conjunction with each other, in different times and places (2014, 53). In particular, the natures and materialities of war have been studied as the media through which tactics and technologies of warfare are legitimised and enabled; from the mud of the trenches in WWI leading to an expansion of warfare from the horizontal to the voluminous via the aerial (Gregory 2015), to the sand of the Desert War in WWII that shifted the ethics of conflict as covert and deceptive warfare were experimented with (Gregory 2015; Forsyth 2014 and 2017b), to the ice of the Arctic leading to scientific and engineering interventions in landscapes and imaginaries (Farish 2006), and finally to the forest of Cold War Vietnam conflating and collapsing understandings of environments and guerrilla tactics of war (Gregory 2015; Clayton 2013). Here physical and human geography legitimise military action in particular places and military action further militarises particular places and peoples.



Historical geographers, have further also revealed how geography has been enrolled in shaping and innovating tactics and new spaces of warfare, for example the use of the aeroplane in producing aerial and national subjectivities (Adey 2011), the development of deceptive technologies and environments (Forsyth 2017a; Robinson 2013), and the area bombing of cities and the framing of civilian populations as targets in WWII (Hewitt 1983; Gregory 2011b). Each of these studies demonstrates not only the history of warfare and its geographies, they also situate these military tactics, technologies, materialities and spatialities within longer trajectories of state-sanctioned violence. This exposes how genealogies of military geographies and militarism are fluid, diverse and shifting with no neat distinctions between borders or boundaries; military geographies bleed across political, social and cultural spaces. Further, a historical approach disrupts the seeming inevitability of the present, which is revealed to be the assemblage and entanglement of a series of processes, phenomena, histories, technologies and discourses.

Second, the sites and landscapes of memory is another area through which historical geographers have revealed the legacies of military violence. Heffernan (1995) has studied the intense debates that took place at the end of WWI over how to commemorate the war dead. By drawing attention to the histories and complexities of memorialisation, he highlights the ways WWI British war cemeteries have influenced not just how subsequent generations have remembered the Great War, but, how these sites continue to shape the ways war is figured and naturalised within contemporary understandings of nationhood. Post-war spaces and landscapes have also been studied in order to understand the politics of memory, and the ways in which victors represent, in material form, their narratives of conflict and enrol these sites into present shapings of national identity and future directions of a country. As Hyndman and Amarasingam explain, in their work on landscapes of memory in post-war Sri Lanka: 'the construction, selection, placement and prominence of these landmark have the potential to reveal much about the victor's nationalist project' (2014, p.562). Further, the sites, monuments and material remnants of war and conflicts as spaces of 'dark tourism' (Muzaini et al 2007) and consumption (Zhang and Crang 2016) have also been examined to reveal what work military histories are put to in the present. Historical geographers, therefore, render visible the ways through which memorials and acts of remembrance are utilised to press history into active service by situating the military as a key aspect of a nation's history, identity and imaginary.

Third, historical geographers have made an important intervention in locating the experiential and embodied elements of state-sanctioned violence. This focus is part of a broader expansion in feminist geography more widely, which has emphasised the importance of experience and emotion. Feminist geopolitics, in particular, focuses on multiple scales and the ways in which these

are entangled, as well as, highlighting the centrality of the emotional, the personal and the embodied in making geopolitics situated, ethical and accountable (Hyndman 2004). Feminist geography has shaped historical geography's engagement with critical military geographies in two ways. First, empirically, by addressing the absence of women and their narratives from military geographies, and second, methodologically, by drawing out the emotional and embodied military experiences in historical accounts. Thus, much of the work on the role of geographers in the military has focused on the contributions of men, yet as Maddrell's (2008) study on the role of British women geographers in the naval intelligence handbooks in WWII demonstrate, women geographers are part of this history too. As such, there is potential to account historically for the place of women in the construction and consequences of military geographies and geographies of militarism, which is, mostly missing, and moving beyond gendered constructions of both understandings of geographical knowledge and practices and military processes and legacies.

Methodologically, historical geographers have been creative in using archival research to attempt to recover and piece together the lived experiences of war. Wilson (2011) uses letters, diaries and memoirs to explore how British soldiers on the Western Front in WWII attempted to make sense of, or locate the war-torn landscapes, poverty and refugees they witnessed. As McGeachan has stated:

'[t]he sheer scale of destruction and devastation of war can never be fully accounted, but the processes of shifting through the human, material, social, political and cultural debris will continue in order to seek understanding into the lives and world that have been lost, altered, or obliterated' (2014, 834).

For the historical geographer to move across scales can be a practical methodology, their archive is replete with official military documents, maps, plans and diaries, as well as memoirs, letters, personal diaries, photographs, poems, it moves through national archives, museums, battlefields, monuments, to family attics, photo albums, heirlooms, oral histories or things never discussed. The debris of the military archive is ripe for resisting neat narratives or contained histories; as war seeps into and bleeds out, so do its traces and narratives, and thus, for the historical geographer moving across scales is also an ethical imperative. Of course, experiences of war or the military can never be fully captured or represented and there are many lives, experiences and events that can never be recovered but there is an ethical and political project in sensitively tracing those that remain.

The fourth approach, through which historical geographers have engaged with the diverse spatialities and temporalities of military activities is and its legacies is an engagement and

commitment to postcolonial theory. As is perhaps clear from the papers cited historical geography engagement with critical military geographies focus on Western and European conflicts and military experiences. There are many practical reasons for such a focus but there is a need to explore the potentials to study other places and peoples' experiences of the military, its activities and state-sanctioned violence, in order to make these geographies and their consequences accountable. Here the work of postcolonial geography has, to some extent, pushed the critiques of historical geography engagement with military phenomena. For example, Tahir (2017) examines the ways in which the juridical institutionalisation of Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) as exceptional enables drone operations in the region. She argues that this is facilitated through a discourse, which draws on explicitly racist tropes with roots in early twentieth century British colonial air policing, and thus, the present configuration of the region is an historical legacy of an imperial frontier imagination. This demonstrates how research rooted in postcolonial studies not only historicises the contemporary legacies of colonial control and the imperial cultural imaginary, but also makes room for diverse spaces and voices in critical military geographies to shape understandings of the ways in which military processes are situated, socially constituted and diverse (Rech et al., 2015). Examples of this work ranges from the ways in which post-independence territorial conceptions and conflicts were framed (Campos-Serrano and Rodriguez-Esteban, 2017), how military science shaped traditions of and challenges to national identity (Capello 2018), how cities were an entangled hybrid of colonial and indigenous planning and use (Bigon and Hart, 2018), and how narratives challenge the occlusions of narrow military histories of liberation history (McGregor, 2017). This diverse, but in no way exhaustive, list of the ways through which postcolonial geographies has challenged critical military studies to extend the temporalities and spatialities of military processes to be included in the natures and legacies of military geographies.

Overall, these historical geographies seek to narrate critical military geographies in order to unsettle the legitimacy or inevitability of military violence by expanding who, what and where is included in critical military studies, to trace the lasting legacies of military phenomena and situate contemporary military activities.

## **Final Remarks**

In this final section, the paper considers the methodological and research practice questions that historical geographers must engage with when conducting military geographies and to reflect upon what historical geography might bring to the critical military geographies project.

Farish (2016, 45) has argued that despite the range of critical work on the making, maintaining and writing of archives and the growing work on critical military geographies there is little reflection on the particular nature of military archives, 'on their origins, mandates, and the experiences of encountering, reproducing and analysing the knowledge they store', in turn highlighting that '[e]xcruciating silences populate military archives' (Farish, 2016, 48). Despite detailed accounts of activities, preparations, plans and action the stories of those wounded, killed, tortured or missing are 'omitted, restrained or romanticized' (Farish, 2016, 48). Thus, the historical researcher of military geographies faces a series of issues, from accessing material (whether it is unclassified, if access is permitted and via what bureaucratic requirements), to sifting through abundant excessive detail and material, locating absences, navigating redacted documents (Gilbert 2016) and extending what counts as the 'military archive' (Forsyth 2016). Biography has been one tool through which to rub against the 'excruciating silences' of the official military archive whether of individuals (Surun, 2011), technologies, (Forsyth 2017a and Robinson 2013), animals (Forsyth 2017c) and sites (Heffernan 1996). These works are imbued with a critical and ethical reflection on whose lives and experiences are attended to with a political commitment to trace legacies and accountabilities. Focus on what constitutes a military archive, how to conduct and use archival research for military geographies highlights an area which historical geography can make a strong contribution to critical military studies. As has been indicated throughout, there is much work to be done to extend the focus of who shapes and are shaped by military geographies, and issues of gender and postcolonial studies highlight many of these absences. Further, this paper has discussed militarism as a tool of the state, yet, there is potential to think about the histories and geographies of non-state militaristic activities and guerrilla warfare, in particular, in a moment defined by asymmetrical warfare and the threat of terrorism.

As this paper has highlighted, historical geography traces the consequences of these spatialities, drawing attention to the echoes that reverberate into the present, forcing uncomfortable complicities to the fore. It has argued that historical geography which attends to the genealogies of the military and military violence can contextualise and historicise contemporary forms of militarism and state-sanctioned violence. This, it is suggested, has much to bring to the critical military studies project. Not only does it further contribute to the geographically situated, socially constituted and spatially diverse practices and phenomena that comprise military activities but also it contextualises the contemporary character of military geographies and disrupts settled notions of inevitability about military violence. Historical geography, therefore, has the potential to make visible the processes that naturalise military phenomena and their consequences, and raise discomfiting questions about complicity regarding the actions done in the name of defence,

security and for whom. This paper argues, in short, that historical geography gives critical military geographies and critical military studies more bite.

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