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ABSTRACT

This article analyses the recent military 'turn to reflexivity' in relation to current reflexive commitments in critical studies of the military. With reflexivity, military organizations have begun to inquire into its own role as a producer and user of knowledge, and into the constitutive effects of knowledge in and on the world. A reflexive concern with the conditions and effects of knowledge has thus made militaries sensitive to the epistemic dimensions of military force. The broader socio-political implications of the military's attention to epistemics, in terms of how knowledge may constitute and bring into being novel socio-political orderings, make it an urgent task to explore this development in relation to the reflexive state of critical research on the military. The first argument that I make in the article is that existing reflexive commitments in critical military studies are conceptually able to target scholarly-military epistemic interactions and the constitutive effects thereof, but less able to address epistemic distinctions in terms of how knowledge is produced and how different conditions shape the content of knowledge. This, however, is what is needed to critically address the military reflexive development. Based on this, I argue secondly that a fruitful broadening and enriching of the reflexive gaze may be achieved by further taking reflexivity in a Bourdieusian direction – a move that ultimately works complementary to existing reflexive commitments in critical military studies.

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Introduction

Interlinked discourses and knowledge exchanges between academia and militaries have a long history (e.g. Unwin 1992; Weizman 2006; Zweibelson 2011). The recent 'turn' to reflexivity within parts of Western military organizations is another example of such interlinkages, albeit one that is more 'radical'. If the military otherwise uses concepts and perspectives from the social sciences, humanities, and philosophy to make operations more effective and to reach strategic goals, reflexivity turns the attention to the military itself and to the broader social and political implications of military epistemics (Beaulieu-B. and Dufort 2017b).

With reflexivity, military organizations have begun to inquire about their own role as a knowledge producer, and about the social conditions and constitutive effects of military knowledges in and on the world (Paparone 2013; Beaulieu-B. and Dufort 2017a). This

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concern with military epistemics – with how the military produces and uses knowledge in operations (cf. Lezaun 2002, 232) – came about largely due to experiences made during the early 2000s' wars in Afghanistan and Iraq (Strachan 2006; Zweibelson 2015b).[1] Reflexivity, then, has made military organizations recognize the epistemic dimensions of military force and how knowledge may reshape and bring into being 'new worlds' in terms of new socio-political orderings.

The subfield of critical military studies, for its part, has long been concerned with issues pertaining to epistemology, knowledge, and the fluctuating borders between what is strictly 'inside' and 'outside' the military sphere (Basham, Belkin, and Gifkins 2015; Ford 2020). In recent years, this has brought about an increasingly explicit reflexive engagement in studies of military power (Carreiras and Caetano 2016). The linkages, however, between reflexivity in critical military studies and the discourse of 'reflexive military practitioners [has] remain[ed] mostly ignored' (Beaulieu-B. and Dufort 2017b, 275). The bridging of this particular military-scholarly divide underpins this article's rationale and argumentation. Specifically, in the article, I read these two reflexive developments in conjunction. The aim is to explore what the military turn to reflexivity implies for reflexive scholarly research on the military, in terms of where and how reflexivity is located and practised.

In my reading, the military discourse on reflexivity, which I contextualize and unpack in the first and second parts of the article, represents *as such* a reflexive process. The point of such, seemingly tautological, claim is that the discourse is not only produced by (semi-) military professionals. The discourse also produces the potentiality of a reconfigured military subject: a knowledgeable and reflexive military practitioner aware of how her/his knowledge constructions may gain constitutive effects in and on the world through the creation of socio-political orders (cf. Barkawi and Brighton 2011). The potentiality of a reconfigured military subject who (more or less strategically) considers the constitutive function of knowledge makes it an urgent task to inquire into the reflexive state of critical research on the military.

In the article's third part, I decipher various reflexive commitments in critical military studies, with inspiration for instance from Critical Theory, feminist research, and the work by Pierre Bourdieu (e.g. Higate and Cameron 2006; Heinecken 2016). Now, while all of the extant reflexive positions transgress the theory-reality divide and focus on interrelations between the social world and social scientific knowledge of that world, neither position is conceptually equipped to take scholarly-military epistemic interactions, epistemic *distinctions*, and constitutive effects of knowledge on broader reality constructions into account. The notion of epistemic distinctions is crucial. Since militaries produce their own as well as use scholarly forms of knowledge, and given that these knowledges may have constitutive effects, it is imperative to inquire further into the situatedness of knowledge – into how conditions of knowledge production shape the contents of knowledge. Given the potentiality of a military subject who produces and uses (scholarly) knowledge, then, there is a need of a reflexive scholarly posture that targets epistemic interactions as well as *distinctions* between knowledge forms, and the socio-political effects of such interactions-distinctions. My first argument is that extant positions on reflexivity in critical military studies take us some way but not completely in this direction.

The second argument that I make in this article concerns how to *broaden and enrich the reflexive gaze* in critical military studies in order to perform such, let us say, twofold reflexive investigation. In the article's fourth part, I draw on the existing scholarly reflexive position that finds inspiration in Bourdieu. However, I push this position further towards Bourdieu's insistence on intellectualist biases that stem from the particular social conditions under which scholarly knowledge is produced (e.g. Bourdieu 1990a, 2000, 2004). In doing so, the article outlines and contributes with a *complementary* reflexive commitment for critical military studies. This complementary position targets firstly interactions between military knowledge constructions, and the doings and reality constructions of other social agents in conflict environments. Secondly, and simultaneously, it targets the epistemic interface between scholarly and military knowledges with attention to the distinct conditions under which scholarly knowledge is produced, and to the socio-political implications thereof.

Operational experiences and epistemic crises

Debates about military transformation intensified following the end of the Cold War, and particularly after 9/11 (Grissom 2006). Often, changes in the military conceptual arsenal or in mission types (e.g. Dyson 2011; Mukherjee 2016) are explained in relation to various top-down pressures such as domestic politics, transformed civil-military relations, or a shift in organizational 'cultures' (Foley et al. 2011, 253). Traditionally less focused forces for change are experiences made in operational theatres (Grissom 2006, 930).[2]

With the wars in Afghanistan (Operation Enduring Freedom) and Iraq ('Iraqi Freedom') in the early 2000s, however, it was precisely operational experiences that brought about changes within the US military and some of its Western coalition partners (e.g. Fastabend and Simpson 2004). Mikkel Vedby Rasmussen (2008, 18) has likened these processes to 'boomerang effects'. The intervening actors came to experience how their actions (and inactions) turned back on themselves, for example, inflicting a need for counterinsurgency campaigns.

Just as importantly, experiences from Afghanistan and Iraq brought about a questioning of military epistemics. While some commentators explained interventionary problems with reference to faulty politics and/or strategic failures, others focused on operational and planning aspects. Shortcomings were noted especially with regard to the military's ability to 'diagnose' and to 'know' complex problems (Strachan 2006, 63; Collins 2006, 10–12; Byman 2008, 600, 620; Jackson 2017, 65).

This debate took two main turns. Some observers argued the need of improved 'situation awareness' in the sense of 'more' and 'better' knowledge of the operational environment (Farrell 2010, 567–568; Jackson 2017, 65). Others argued that the epistemic problems ran deeper. Discussions about military epistemology in operation planning surfaced. The military's way of knowing conflicts and operational environments was deemed fundamentally flawed (Zweibelson 2015b, 360–361, 2016a, 23; Beaulieu-B. and Dufort 2017a, 5–6). Linear conceptions of causality, reductionist approaches, self-other distinctions, and assumptions about objectivity are some examples of aspects deemed epistemically problematic (Bousquet 2009; Zweibelson 2015b, 2017). This latter strand of the debate further forms around two interrelated novelties in Western military thinking:

the 'design' and 'reflexive' movements (Banach and Ryan 2009; Paparone 2013; Martin 2017; Beaulieu-B. and Dufort 2017a).

While it entails multiple, at times incompatible, perspectives, military design seeks to question and reframe conventional military epistemics and planning procedures (Naveh 1997; Paparone 2013; Zweibelson 2015a). Parts of its origin, alongside the interlinkages that exist between societal and military design discourses, can be traced to the retired General Shimon Naveh. Naveh was instrumental in introducing design thinking into the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF). The US military also has a long tradition of design thinking, with ideas about 'creativity' forming part of military thinking, training, and education since at least the 1990s (Öberg 2018).

Following Afghanistan and Iraq though, proponents of military design have been more vocal in stressing the need to go beyond conventional 'ways of thinking and knowing' (for further reflections on this, see Bousquet 2009; Zweibelson 2012). This, indeed, to some success. Military design has been 'codified into doctrine and manuals' in the United States, Israel, and other Western armed forces (Öberg 2018, 493–494). Nevertheless, some advocates of design lament its lacking epistemic transformational influence (Beaulieu-B. and Dufort 2017a, 14; Martin 2017, 199). Either is military design forcibly standardized and made to fit conventional military epistemologies, and/or faces a more outright resistance (Zweibelson 2016a, 24–27; Jackson 2017, 77; Martin 2017, 200; Beaulieu-B. and Dufort 2017b, 281–282).

The experienced lacking influence has made proponents of military design to also advance a turn to military 'reflexivity' (Beaulieu-B. and Dufort 2017a, 2). Many approaches within the design movement are argued to be in themselves reflexive (Beaulieu-B. and Dufort 2017b, 273). Moreover, the specific concept of reflexivity is advanced as a tool that may condition, reinvigorate, and institutionalize military epistemic changes (Paparone 2013, 4, 77; Zweibelson 2015b, 361; Martin 2017, 204; Beaulieu-B. and Dufort 2017b, 273).

Interlinked discourses and reflexivity's 'radicality'

The concept of reflexivity has a long tradition in the social sciences. It refers to a 'bending' back of knowledge. How this is done, however, differs widely (Lynch 2000, 34). In a most general sense though, reflexivity invites investigations into the conditions of production and the effects of knowledge constructions in and on the world (Cunliffe 2003, 985; Eagleton-Pierce 2011, 806; Amoureux and Steele 2016, 3). Reflexivity requires an exploration of the knowing subject and her/his knowledge constructions in terms of the conditions of the epistemic situation and how these shape the knowledge produced, and this necessarily 'in relation to other subjects and objects' (Eagleton-Pierce 2011, 806). Reflexivity thus transcends the in positivist epistemologies central theory-reality divide and subject-object distinction.

That some Western military organizations have picked up reflexivity may appear merely another instance of circulating discourses between militaries and academia (Zweibelson 2011). These types of knowledge exchanges have a long history. Colonial projects, not least, were conditioned by close connections between the discipline of geography and various uses of military power (e.g. Unwin 1992; Woodward 2005). Examples that are more recent include the much-debated Human Terrain System

(HTS) (Forte 2011) and the IDF's use of the philosophical thinking of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (Weizman 2006, 11).[3]

Nevertheless, the military reflexive turn is a very particular instance of such interlinked discourses. While other military usages of scholarly concepts and perspectives have the goal of gaining, precisely, 'more' and 'better' knowledge of the operational environment, reflexivity is more 'radical'. Reflexivity shifts the military attention to the knowing subject, to the social conditions and constitutions of knowledge, and to the *interactions* between the knowing subject, knowledge constructions, and other objects and subjects in the world. In other words, reflexivity addresses possible *constitutive* effects of knowledge. As the next part demonstrates, attention to productions, interactions, and constitutive effects of knowledge are indeed key to the military reflexivity discourse.

Unpacking the military discourse on reflexivity

This part unpacks the Western military discourse on reflexivity. It zooms in on its different representations of what it means to be a reflexive military. The notion of 'representation' can be understood as that which is 'collected and arranged to stand for something' (Mitchell 1991, 6). Here, a representation may include particular categorizations and textual configurations that provide certain meaning(s) to military reflexivity. Furthermore, 'representations that are put forward time and again become a set of statements and practices through which certain language become institutionalised and "normalized" over time' – forming a discourse that may contain variously positioned representations (Neumann 2008, 61, 70).

In the military discourse, two main representations of reflexivity are noticeable.[4] The first sets reflexivity up as a tool for military practitioners to reflect upon (and transform) their institutionalized knowledge practices, whereas the second represents reflexivity as a disposition to explore the situatedness and constitutive functions of military knowledge. The main difference between the two thus concerns where the reflexive posture is located. Nonetheless, the two representations share enough affinities to constitute one discourse. This discourse, in turn, is *as such* part of a reflexive process.

The military reflexivity discourse is produced by as much as produces the potentiality of a reconfigured military subject: that of the self-consciously knowing and reflexive military practitioner who is aware of how her/his knowledge constructions may gain constitutive effects in and on the world. The emergence and contents of this discourse are thus as such a reflexive development of the military. In turn, this process and the potentiality of a reconstituted military subject make it imperative to inquire into the reflexive state of critical research on the military. As I will argue in the following, the military turn to reflexivity makes it vital to explore whether current scholarly reflexive commitments are equipped to analyse epistemic interactions as well as epistemic distinctions between scholarly and military spheres, and the social realities that such interactions-distinctions may bring into being.

Representing reflexivity

The first representation of reflexivity in the military discourse constitutes it as a *tool for introspective epistemic questioning*. This tool is meant to do two things. First, a reflexive

posture is meant to help militaries reflect on their underlying assumption and 'institutionalized "sensemaking" strategies' (Paparone and Reed 2008, 67, 70; Zweibelson 2015b, 361, 2016b, 27, 2016a, 22; see also Zweibelson 2017; Paparone 2017). Reflexivity is portrayed as a tool that helps to 'expos[e] and explor[e] hypostasized frames of reference' and 'habituated frames of the collective mind' (Paparone 2013, viii). The point is to shed light on the taken for granted knowledges and sense-making strategies of the military – and this prior to knowing 'the Other' (Martin 2017, 200, 204). In doing so, secondly, reflexivity as a tool is represented simultaneously as a way to emancipate military professionals to consider a 'variety of ontological, epistemological, and methodological frames of reference for the design of militaries and their interventions' (Paparone 2013, viii, x; Zweibelson 2016b, 28).

This representation holds a central position in the military discourse on reflexivity. Various texts either explicitly or implicitly portray reflexivity in this manner, albeit at times under the labels of 'reflective practice', 'critical reflection', or 'critical reflexivity' (see, for example, Paparone and Reed 2008; Paparone 2013). The meaning, however, is similar. That is, despite somewhat different labels, reflexivity is portrayed as a tool with which to question and 'creatively replace outdated institutionalisms with novel and unexpected (surprising) adaptations' and new ways of producing knowledge (Zweibelson 2016a, 23; see also Zweibelson 2015b; Paparone and Reed 2008; Banach and Ryan 2009). Being constantly 'on the watch' for outdated and institutionalized military knowledges and ways of knowing, this representation of reflexivity places the issue of professional epistemic change at the centre.

The central position of this representation in the military discourse also shows in how it has entered military education, often in close association with the broader discourse on military design (and not without resistance, see for instance Paparone 2017 on his experiences from the US Army's War College (USAWC)). Paul T. Mitchell (2017), for instance, tells of the introduction of design into the curriculum offered at the Canadian Forces College (CFC). For Mitchell, design comprehends and requires reflexivity understood as 'professional self-reflection' on the ways in which problems are made known, and on potential alternative manners of producing and using knowledge. It requires 'a constant reflexive approach to learning as the problems and issues morph and change in nature' (Mitchell 2017, 98). Likewise, in an edited volume that explores the application of military design by the Australian Defence Force, this type of practitioner reflection/reflectivity features extensively (Jackson 2019).

The largely introspective character of this representation of reflexivity is unsurprising given that a main social scientific source of inspiration comes from the work by Donald A. Schön on 'reflection-in-action' (Schön 1983; see also Paparone and Reed 2008; Paparone 2013; Zweibelson 2016a). Reflective practice, for Schön, is the practice through which professionals gain knowledge of their (tacit) knowledge and of how this guides their actions. Reflection-in-action refers to the ability to reflect on one's action as they are performed in concrete and specific situations, which is a crucial part in professional life and in countering tendencies to rely on epistemologies that favour 'technical rationalism' (Schön 1983, 50, 61). Indeed, for Christopher Paparone, the ability of the military to reflect in and on its actions in a 'Schönian' manner lies at the heart of what reflexivity is about. As he says: 'The ideal of the *military profession* demands one to remain critical about institutionalized science and exercise epistemic reflexivity. *Reflective practice*

should always have relevance and arguably define the profession, no matter what the theory-for-military-action *du jour*' (Paparone 2013, viii [emphases in original]).

The second, less prevalent representation of reflexivity in the military discourse portrays it as a *disposition that conditions attention to the situatedness and constitutive effects of military knowledge(s) in and on the world*. Key to this representation of reflexivity is that '*what to think and how to think are integral parts of the making and unmaking of contemporary conflicts*' (Beaulieu-B. and Dufort 2017a, 2 [emphasis in original]). In other words, this representation of reflexivity centres how military knowledge(s) is a constituent part of wars and violent conflicts. Rather than a tool for institutional introspection and emancipation, then, reflexivity is represented as an inclination to consider and act upon the linkages between knowledge, power, socio-political orders (Dufort 2017, 219, 228, 230–232).

In the current military reflexivity discourse, this representation inhabits a less central position. It has not made the same entry into military curricula as the previous representation, nor is it as focused on professional epistemic transformation. That said, Phillippe Dufort links this conception of reflexivity to classical military theory, which thus provides it with a relatively long military provenance. Dufort considers Carl von Clausewitz to be a 'key representative of a "suppressed reflexive tradition" in military and strategic thinking' (Dufort 2017, 210). For Dufort, such tradition consists of military practitioners that 'used reflexivity to produce powerful knowledge capable of reshaping the social world' (Dufort 2017, 210). More precisely, Dufort tells of how Clausewitz together with other Prussian strategists and officers produced a form of knowledge that conditioned the 1807 Prussian 'conservative revolution' and helped shape a new global ordering. The reflexive posture is thus one that enables military strategists to problematize extant perspectives and 'truths', and from that produce and act upon a knowledge that brings about a desired socio-political order (Dufort 2017, 211, 230).

What has made the re-vitalization (and refinement) of this historical reflexive posture possible are two discursive and conceptual moves. First, it rests on a distinction between reflexivity and 'reflectivity'. Reflectivity, as in the previous representation, is understood as 'taking a step back and thinking about the ongoing action while doing it' (Beaulieu-B. and Dufort 2017a, 9). Reflexivity, on the other hand, involves a focus on 'all potential aspects of the self, the organization, profession and society as a whole that may or may not make possible the specific perspective of defense professionals' (Beaulieu-B. and Dufort 2017a, 10) *and* an attention to how knowledge may have constitutive, productive effects in the social world (Beaulieu-B. and Dufort 2017b).

Furthermore, to make the second representation possible, the work on reflexivity by Pierre Bourdieu has been key. Indeed, Beaulieu-B. and Dufort (2017a) explicitly draw on Bourdieu's more conceptual work in portraying reflexivity as being about the 'objectivation of the objectivating point of view' (e.g. Bourdieu [1980] 1990b, 2000). Objectivating military knowledge here entails taking into account the military's position in society and the many (epistemic) interactions between society and military practitioners. This reflexive posture thus takes us beyond the confines of the military profession. It thereby offers not only a more comprehensive socio-historical exploration of the roots of military knowledges but also one that pays closer attention to the potential constitutive effects of military knowledge constructions on other objects and subjects.

The military reflexivity discourse as a reflexive process

The main difference between the two representations of reflexivity in the military discourse thus concerns where the reflexive commitment is located. In the first representation, reflexivity denotes an introspective questioning that takes the military self as its object. The goals are emancipation and epistemic transformation mainly within the military profession. The second representation shifts the meaning of reflexivity to become more outward-focused. Reflexivity offers a way through which to explore not only the links to social spheres that have shaped military knowledges but also the potential constitutive effects of these knowledges.

That said, if we bring these two representations in conversation with each other, it is clear that they share enough similarities to form distinct positions within one discourse. The first representation can be said to precondition the second. Moreover, people producing this discourse simultaneously describe, categorize, and position themselves and others through the categories and classifications of (mainly) Schön and Bourdieu. With the emergence of the discourse, then, has simultaneously followed the potentiality of a reconfigured (and empowered) military subject in terms of ways in which one may (or not) be, identify, and act as a military practitioner. The potentiality of a particular kind of military subject has come into being at the same time as the reflexivity discourse. This is a military subject characterized by a self-conscious awareness not only of how military knowledges are made possible but also of how military knowledges may gain constitutive effects (whether, indeed, the outcomes are wanted or not). It is a subject who acknowledges the impossibility of studying and knowing the world distantly, through the attainment of objective knowledge.

Such reconfigured military subject may not only identify but also act differently. As Ian Hacking puts it when discussing this process as 'making up people': 'if new modes of description come into being, new possibilities for action come into being in consequence' (Hacking 2004, 108). The making of people conditions the space of possibilities for action, that is, the range of possible actions. The reconfigured military subject may for instance strategically seek to produce knowledge to create certain effects, aware of their potential constitutive function. There are thus political implications here that go beyond the mere use of scholarly knowledge to improve military operations. This makes it vital for scholars to be able to focus and disentangle scholarly military epistemic interactions/distinctions and the socio-political orders that such interactions/distinctions bring into being.

That said, this military subject is necessarily always a potentiality. While the discourse offers certain ways to be, identify, and act as a military practitioner, militaries may react differently to being described and assessed through such scholarly categories and perspectives. How they react, in turn, may 'loop back' and (re)shape the military discourse on reflexivity. Even though such 'looping effects' (Hacking 1999, 31–34) are not yet visible (at least not from a position outside of military circles), the very potentiality of a reconfigured military subject that acknowledges military-society interactions and constitutive effects of knowledge makes it imperative to turn the analytic attention to the reflexive state of critical military studies. The question, to be more precise, is whether current scholarly reflexive engagements in this literature are able to analyse instances of epistemic interactions and epistemic distinctions between scholarly and military spheres,

as well as the broader socio-political orders that such interactions/distinctions may bring into being. The article's next part tackles this question.

Critical military studies and reflexivity

Reflexivity was long absent from critical studies of military force. Surprisingly so, one might say, given many researchers' sociological affinities (Higate and Cameron 2006, 219). Still, there has recently been a greater acknowledgement of how critical research on the military inevitably raises questions about scholarly autonomy and positionality (e.g. Dyvik 2016; Gray 2016; Bulmer and Jackson 2016). The idea of reflexivity has been more resonantly advanced (e.g. Ben-Ari 2014; Carreiras and Caetano 2016; Carreiras, Castro, and Frederic 2016; Dyvik and Greenwood 2016).

In this part, I examine whether the reflexive commitments that currently characterize critical studies of the military are conceptually able to analyse scholarly-military epistemic interactions/distinctions and how such interactions/distinctions may help create socio-political orders. To do so, a starting point is that this literature contains two main reflexive standpoints. According to Carreiras and Caetano (2016), reflexive research on the military focus either on the research process or on the dynamics of a scientific field. As we are to see, these positions link, respectively, to more established reflexive traditions that in different ways transgress the theory-reality divide.

Reflexivity as epistemology and methodology during the research process

A first scholarly reflexive commitment may be labelled *reflexivity as epistemological and methodological intervention*. The reflexive focus is on epistemological and methodological issues in the sense of how the production, constitution, and presentation of scholarly knowledges are socially situated and conditioned. For example, research on the military reflexively explores how factors internal and external to the research process shape the research conducted and the knowledge produced. Inquiries may for instance involve questions about which phenomena are studied and which questions are being asked. Some of the key insights concern how the use of concepts is not neutral, but historical and power-ridden. Concepts come with certain 'baggage' (Ammendola, Farina, and Galantino 2016).

Furthermore, scholars' social trajectories and positionalities matter for the constitution of the knowledge produced. Central themes in reflexive military research concern how the researcher's social background, gender, norms, and values shape the research carried out (Gray 2016, 76–80; Bulmer and Jackson 2016, 27; Carreiras and Caetano 2016, 10–11; Carreiras, Castro, and Frederic 2016, 1; Caddick, Cooper, and Smith 2019, 103–110). Significant is thus that researchers are part of the world that they at the same time set out to study. For Eyal Ben-Ari, for example, reflexivity entails reflecting upon factors such as one's position in relation to the armed forces. Being a veteran turned researcher may bring opportunities other than those of civilian academics. At the same time, such positionality may bring about certain hierarchical and ethical dynamics between the researcher and the research participant (Ben-Ari 2014, 32–33). Likewise, Higate and Cameron (2006) argue the need to write the researcher and her/his positionality into the analysis and into the research findings. They propose the use of auto-

ethnography to grasp how different positionalities as insider/outsider to the military shaped the research process (see also Higate 2003; Carreiras and Castro 2012).

This type of reflexive reasoning links first to Frankfurt School Critical Theory due to how it locates reflexivity mainly at the meta-theoretical and epistemological level. In a self-referential move, reflexivity means taking the scholar and the research process as the object and inquiring into, for instance, the types of values, norms, and interests that shape the production, constitution, and uses of scholarly knowledge (cf. Hamati-Ataya 2013, 674–677; see also Neufeld 1995 for a further example). The insight that researchers are part of the world that they also set out to study makes this type of reflexivity closely related to Robert Cox's call for a 'perspective on perspectives'. For Cox, theory (and knowledge) 'is always *for* someone and *for* some purpose'. Knowledge is thus a carrier of political-normative content (Cox 1981, 128 [emphasis in original]). Reflexivity is a way of unmasking the various, more or less hidden, factors and biases that shape the research in order to gain a knowledge that is simultaneously emancipatory in scholarly and societal spheres (see further in Hamati-Ataya 2013, 676).

This is not all, however. The concern with biases hidden in concepts and methods makes this position closely related also to some strands of feminist reflexive research. In this tradition too, reflexivity is commonly located at the meta-theoretical level, although in ways that clearly transgress the theory-reality divide. For example, feminist reflexive scholarship has highlighted not only how traditional theories, concepts, and approaches may reproduce gendered practices in the social world, but also how the inclusion of gender fundamentally reshapes the constitution of dominant knowledges (e.g. Harding 1986; Peterson 1992; Tickner 1997; Ackerly and True 2008).

Finally, this first type of scholarly reflexive commitment focuses on methodological and ethical dimensions of scholarship. With its concerns about how to write and present the analysis, this commitment links to reflexive works on 'practical reflexivity'. As Hamati-Ataya (2020, 15) puts it in her overview of reflexive literatures, these works are not only concerned with reflexivity as a meta-theoretical issue but 'also as a solution and principle guiding the research process and academics' engagement with the social communities to which they belong'. The use of auto-ethnography and/or other ethnographic (as well as feminist, poststructuralist) approaches and methods are, as mentioned, often argued for in studies of the military (for other examples, see for instance Inayatullah 2011; Alejandro 2018).

Reflexivity as intervention in a scholarly field

A second reflexive commitment in critical military studies may be termed *reflexivity as intervention in the social, political, and ethical dynamics of the scholarly field*. There is no clear watershed between this and the former position's focus on epistemological and methodological aspects. The difference, however, concerns how the second commitment locates reflexivity in relation to a broader scholarly field. Rather than confined to the individual research process, this type of reflexivity is attentive to scholarly epistemic practices as socially situated within and conditioned by the dynamics and power relations of a scientific field (Carreiras and Caetano 2016, 14). Scholars have, for example, investigated how the (sub)field of military sociology developed in relation to military studies, the broader social sciences, and various socio-political configurations (e.g.

Kümmel and Prüfert 2000; Quellet 2005; Heinecken 2016). This reflexive commitment also focuses on how scholarly knowledges, perspectives, and concepts are used by military organizations. Piero C. Leirner, for instance, discusses the long history of connections between anthropology and military projects, for example, the military's reductionist use of the concept of 'culture' (Leirner 2016, 76–82).

Carreiras and Caetano (2016) draw a parallel between this position on reflexivity and Pierre Bourdieu's reflexive sociology (e.g. Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Bourdieu 2004). For Bourdieu, it is important but not enough to reflect on positionality and epistemological matters during the research process. Rather, it is imperative to also inquire deeper into the *where from* scholarly knowledge is produced. Bourdieu talks about this partly in terms of an 'objectivation of the objectivating subject', that is, a sociological study of the observing subject as positioned within the confines of a wider scientific field (Bourdieu [1980] 1990b, 2000, 2004). Alike the military use of Bourdieu's work, this makes reflexivity less of a meta-mediation and more a socio-historical exploration of the scientific field in relation to surrounding forces (cf. Wacquant 1989).

The second commitment, then, locates reflexivity more clearly at the intersection between scholarly knowledge production and the social world. In this way, it moves towards what in International Relations is called a critical constructivist reflexive tradition that is concerned with the social construction of reality by societal as well as scholarly actors (see, for example, Guzzini 2000; Leander 2002). For critical constructivists, both reality and knowledge are constructed. Moreover, processes of knowledge production and of constructing reality interact, which means that such processes need to be reflexively analysed *simultaneously* rather than separately or in sequence. This requires reflexivity to be located 'not within each level of action *separately*, but at their junction, since conceptually and practically it is not possible to separate the processes of knowledge-*construction* from the *constructed* reality within which knowledge is produced' (Hamati-Ataya 2013, 679 [emphases in original]).

Towards a broadening of the reflexive gaze

Both scholarly reflexive commitments transgress the theory-reality divide. Both focus on the interrelations between the social world and social scientific knowledges. Indeed, herein lies significant aspects of the politics of reflexivity – that is, the concern with how scholarly knowledges may further certain interests and/or produce/reproduce/transform societal power relations. In this sense, these positions are able to tackle – in their respective ways – epistemic interactions between scholarly and military knowledges. Moreover, the second commitment (that draws on Bourdieusian thinking) would principally be able to push this further into an investigation of how such interactions shape constructions of reality in the wider world. Indeed, such further reflexive analysis is initially acknowledged by Carreiras and Caetano (2016, 9, 12). Still, most works along these lines locate reflexivity squarely within a scholarly field and downplay such broader constitutive interactions.

More significant though is that neither of the two scholarly reflexive commitments is conceptually equipped to take scholarly-military epistemic interactions, *epistemic distinctions*, and constitutive effects of knowledge into account. Neither of them push to any great length the question of distinct conditions of knowledge production and how this

may affect the knowledge produced and, thereby, the constitutive effects of scholarly-military epistemic interactions. However, as military organizations both produce their own knowledges and use scholarly produced knowledge, and given the potential constitutive effects of such interactions, it is imperative to examine in more detail how different conditions of knowledge production shape the content of knowledge.

While not the isolated ivory tower, it is likely that scholarly conditions of producing knowledge differ from those of other spheres. Indeed, Villumsen Berling and Bueger (2016, 9–10) mention the differences it makes whether academics or security practitioners produce security knowledge. The conditions of knowledge production in the two spheres differ, which shape the knowledge produced. For one thing, the temporalities of knowledge production differ, with the policy/practitioner sphere often characterized by a greater urgency. The types of knowledge products likewise often differ, which concerns not only how knowledge is presented but, again, also its content. Scholarly knowledge production is thus, at least in part, of a different kind.

In sum, current reflexive engagements in critical military studies target to some extent scholarly-military epistemic interactions and their possible constitutive effects on socio-political orders, hierarchies, and power relations. Still, they devote less attention to epistemic distinctions. Against the backdrop of a potential military subject who produces and uses (scholarly) knowledge precisely to create and bring into being certain socio-political effects, reflexive attention also – and simultaneously – to epistemic distinctions and to the constitutive effects of interactions/distinctions is needed.

Enriching reflexivity

In this part, I develop one way to broaden and enrich the reflexive gaze in critical military studies vis-à-vis the military subject who (whether or not strategically succesful) produces and/or uses knowledge to bring into being certain socio-political orders. This reflexive commitment is best understood as complementary to the already existing scholarly ones. Not least as I draw on the existing standpoint that finds inspiration in Bourdieu. However, I also push this commitment further towards Bourdieu's preoccupation with how knowledge is produced under distinct social conditions. In focus is particularly the scholarly condition of the *skholè* and how this shapes the knowledge produced (Bourdieu 1990a, 2000, 2004).

Indeed, Bourdieu offers a comprehensive take on reflexivity that includes but also goes beyond existing reflexive standpoints in critical military studies (cf. Eagleton-Pierce 2011). While admitting the significance of epistemological vigilance and researcher positionality within and outside the scientific field, Bourdieu places further emphasis on distinct conditions of knowledge production – particularly on what it means to observe and theorize practices as they unfold in the world. This aspect of reflexivity may be seen as an extension of the quest to objectivate the objectivating observer. However, it targets more directly hidden biases that pertaining to the scholarly/intellectual position as such and that produce scholarly knowledges as (at least partly) epistemically distinct.

Specifically, the here proposed Bourdieu-inspired broadening of scholarly reflexivity in relation to the military reflexive turn has two interconnected analytical implications (here separated for reasons of clarity). First, this rethought reflexivity targets interactions

between military knowledge constructions, and the practices and reality constructions of people subject to military operations. The reflexive focus is thus located at the junction between the military as an observer and producer of knowledge, and the social world with its processes of reality construction. Second, the rethought reflexivity simultaneously (that is, in conjunction) targets the epistemic interface between scholarly and military knowledges, and this with a focus on the distinct conditions under which scholarly knowledge is produced and the socio-political implications of such distinctiveness in environments subject to military intervention.

Theory-reality interactions amid distinctions

Key to Bourdieu's encompassing take on reflexivity is first a focus on how categories, concepts, and knowledges may stand in a mutually constitutive relationship with reality. For Bourdieu, knowledge-producing practices by scholars and other actors play significant roles in constituting reality, and vice-versa (Villumsen Berling 2013, 67). There is a constant slippage between constructions of knowledge in and of the world and constructions of the world (Bourdieu 2004, 4). It is hence imperative to pay attention to how categories, observations, and knowledge constructions of reality partake in the constitution of this reality, with its power relations and violence (Leander 2002, 604, 2008, 25). This concern with 'constitutive circularity' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 37) enables the first move to broaden and enrich the reflexive gaze in critical military studies. It locates reflexivity at the junction between the military as an observer and producer of knowledge, and processes of reality construction in the social world. The focus lies with what form(s) of knowledge inform military operations and their potential constitutive effects in and on the world.

To illustrate what this may mean in scholarly practice, Bruno Charbonneau's (2012) discussion of the French military's peace intervention in Côte d'Ivoire in the early 2000s serves as an example. In his article, Charbonneau describes how the French troops' establishment of a 'zone of trust' to prevent violence had the unwitting consequence of playing into the power dynamics of the conflict. The zone of trust, and the underlying knowledge that made this particular intervention possible, helped create and constitute the political agency of the rebel forces. It brought them into being as a legitimate political actor in the conflict.

The French military's actions were not accidental but informed and legitimized by certain categorizations, representations, and knowledges that portrayed the conflict as grounded in religious and ethnic differences between the north and south parts of the country (Charbonneau 2012, 513–514). In other words, agencies and power relations that came into being during the conflict were (at least partly) conditioned, made possible, and formed by the French military operation and the knowledge that informed and shaped this operation in the first place. A type of military knowledge that (at least partly) was produced at a distance from the conflict realities thus nevertheless made possible, constituted, and legitimized (rather than observed) the situational conditions of certain political actors and certain forms of political agency.

As implicitly illustrated by Charbonneau's argumentation, then, this is a reflexive gaze directed at the type of knowledge that informed the military operation and what constitutive effects this had in and on wars and conflict situations. In a more complete Bourdieusian vein than exemplified here, however, such analysis would include a more

detailed reconstruction of societal actors' reality constructions 'on the ground' in Côte d'Ivoire.

The aforementioned analysis needs however be conducted simultaneously to an analysis of the potential epistemic interaction between scholarly and military knowledge in this case, as well as of potential epistemic distinctions and how these shape the socio-political implications of the military operation. In other words, reflexivity needs to be simultaneously located at the junction of scholarly and military knowledge production, and focus on the effects of distinct conditions of knowledge production.

Attention not only to the mutually constitutive relation between knowledge and reality and to different types of epistemic interactions but also – and simultaneously – to the distinctiveness of scholarly knowledge constructions is a cornerstone of Bourdieusian reflexivity. Indeed, for Bourdieu, the most insidious – and hence most problematic – bias that shapes the production and constitution of knowledge is the 'intellectualist bias' or the 'scholastic fallacy' (Bourdieu 1990a, 384; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 40). The intellectualist bias, in terms of a 'scholastic point of view' on the social world, follows from *skholè*. It is made possible by the particular condition of scholars and other knowledge producers as partly detached from the world in order to produce knowledge of it. The situation of *skholè*, in other words, makes scholars partly distanced from the immediate necessities, preoccupations, and urgencies of the world, in order to observe, think about, talk about, and theorize social practices as 'an end in and of itself' (Bourdieu 1990a, 381; see also Bourdieu [1980] 1990b, 14, 2000, 12).

The risk of seeking to understand a practice 'with an approach that is intrinsically theoretical' (Bourdieu 1990a, 380) is that scholars produce knowledges that approach reality as a 'spectacle' – as if the world was to be observed and thought, rather than practically navigated and performed (Bourdieu 1990a, 382). The danger, in other words, is that scholarly knowledges 'collaps[e] practical logic into theoretical logic', and thereby fail to understand the conditions and dynamics of everyday practices (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 39–40). The reflexive challenge is hence to take the social conditions of scholarly knowledge production into account, trace how these affect the constitution of knowledge, and ultimately reflect on the fundamental differences between performing and theorizing a practice. Only then, although never completely, can scholars approach an understanding of practices and their particular logics (Bourdieu 1990a, 384–385).

If scholarly knowledges are put to operational use by militaries and gain constitutive effects in and on the world, an often present and embedded intellectualist bias may tacitly shape the socio-political orders that come into being. There are, in other words, potentially very real political implications of the condition of *skholè*. The example given by Charbonneau may further illustrate (at least in part) what this second aspect of a broadened and enriched reflexive gaze would target. As Charbonneau discusses, the French military's knowledge that was put to use during the intervention in Côte d'Ivoire rested on a distanced and, precisely, 'intellectualist' comprehension of conflict agencies. This knowledge with its particular point of view encompassed a failure to see agency and its conditions of possibility as enacted, navigated, and potentially re-enacted or transformed in practice (Charbonneau 2012,

520). A further reflexive investigation of this case would thus focus on revealing the links between scholarly concepts, categorizations, and perspectives, and the knowledge that informed the French military operation, and on revealing the conditions under which this scholarly knowledge was produced and the effects thereof. This involves a reflection on the differences between, on the one hand, observing and theorizing conflict agencies and, on the other hand, how such agencies are performed in practice.

Conclusion

This article has targeted, in conjunction, the recent reflexive developments of some Western armed forces – notably parts of the US, Canadian, Australian, and Israeli militaries – and the reflexive scholarly literature on military power. The article made the initial point that military reflexivity and the potentiality of a reconfigured military subject bring certain socio-political implications that go beyond those of militaries using scholarly concepts and perspectives to enhance the effectiveness of their operations. (Scholarly) knowledge in military operations may help constitute and bring into being socio-political orders. From this followed a need to read the military reflexive turn in relation to existing reflexive commitments in critical military studies. Doing so led me to make two arguments. First, I argued that the existing scholarly reflexive commitments form a basis from which it is possible to broaden and enrich the reflexive gaze so that it may target not only *interactions* but also *distinctions* between scholarly and military knowledges, and the constitutive effects thereof. Second, I argued – accordingly – that this might be achieved by pushing one of the extant scholarly standpoints further towards Bourdieu's reflexive insistence on revealing intellectualist biases that follow from the condition of *skholè*.

It is important to stress, once again, that this partial rethinking of the reflexive gaze in and for critical military studies works best in a complementary fashion to the types of reflexivity that already exist. Indeed, this rethinking does not mean that (purely) epistemological or methodological concerns are any less pressing. In addition, the here proposed enriched reflexivity cannot offer a 'privileged' view on military power in the sense of a 'view from nowhere'. Rather, what it can offer is a way to be critical of the knowledge in and of military operations, and of the constitutive effects of scholarly-military epistemic interactions as well as distinctions – the latter as they often follow from the distinct conditions of scholarly knowledge production with often less noticed and hence more insidious intellectualist biases and non-practical stances.

Notes

1. This concerns mainly Western armed forces, particularly the US, Canada, Australia, and Israel. Moreover, throughout this article, I draw (and traverse) a line between the military discourse on reflexivity and reflexive commitments in critical research on the military. This is to some extent an arbitrary line. Individuals who partake in debates about military reflexivity are often active/formerly active military professionals who straddle the boundary between academia and the military. That said, the line is there to mark the (semi-)

distinction between discourses that mainly focus on reflexivity within the military, and those that focus on reflexivity as a scholarly tool.
2. The operational level of war is constructed in military discourses as the level between the strategic and the tactical, concerned with how to achieve strategic-political goals within specific operations.
3. HTS was put to use by the US Army in Afghanistan and Iraq to gain 'cultural knowledge'. This was to be achieved through the embedding of anthropologists and regional experts within combat brigades.
4. To map and analyse the military discourse on reflexivity, I have used texts published in academic as well as in military professional outlets that more or less explicitly discuss and exemplify how distinct military organizations have adopted and understood the concept of reflexivity. By analysing these texts, it was possible to construct a discourse formed around two main representations. This does not completely rule out the presence of other representations, but no text has been found that cannot be subsumed under either one of the two discussed here.

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