

(Re)Designing Security and War? Reflections on Transgressive Creativity and International Relations

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In the discipline of IR, a growing number of academics work with artists, designers, architects, and filmmakers to explore a range of global political, economic, and security challenges. At the same time, there has been a concern—made powerfully by Dan Öberg—that there is a danger of what he terms “transgressive creativity” in the way that new approaches and methods are being used to respond to security challenges, especially in a military context. In this essay, I explore how the problem of this “transgressive creativity” is a concern shared by two groups working on the problems of security, war, technology, economy, and politics: critical designers and military designers (or the group that is becoming known as the Archipelago of Design). While the objectives of both communities are different, they both share a view that a sense of openness to collaboration is essential to go beyond traditional institutional approaches in order to make sense of complex and uncertain futures in a time of technological acceleration and geopolitical change. The essay concludes that we should be vigilant to the problems of transgressive creativity that Öberg alerts us to, but we also need to broaden the research agenda to understand how creative techniques are being used by a variety of actors and organizations to address the problems of international politics; academics in IR also need to see whether the “openness” to collaboration has broader disciplinary and methodological implications for researchers.

Dans le domaine des RI, de plus en plus de chercheurs collaborent avec des artistes, des créateurs, des architectes et des cinéastes pour analyser un éventail de problématiques mondiales en matière de politique, d'économie et de sécurité. Cependant, on s'est inquiété, grâce à Dan Öberg, du danger de ce qu'il appelle la « créativité transgressive », et en particulier de la manière dont de nouvelles approches et méthodes sont utilisées pour répondre aux défis de sécurité, notamment dans un contexte militaire. Dans cet article, j'analyse comment le problème de cette « créativité transgressive » constitue une inquiétude partagée par deux groupes travaillant sur les problématiques de la sécurité, de la guerre, de la technologie, de l'économie et de la politique : les créateurs critiques et les créateurs militaires (ou le groupe que l'on connaît de plus en plus sous le nom Archipelago of Design). Bien que les objectifs des deux communautés soient différents, elles se retrouvent autour de la conviction qu'une certaine ouverture à la collaboration est essentielle lorsqu'il s'agit de dépasser les approches institutionnelles traditionnelles afin de comprendre nos avenir complexes et incertains à une époque d'accélération technologique et de changement géopolitique. L'article conclut que nous devons faire preuve de vigilance concernant les problèmes de créativité transgressive contre lesquels Dan Öberg nous met en garde. Néanmoins, nous devons aussi élargir les programmes de recherche pour comprendre comment les techniques créatives sont utilisées par divers acteurs et organisations pour répondre aux problèmes de politique internationale. Par ailleurs, les chercheurs en RI doivent également vérifier si cette « ouverture » à la collaboration n'a pas d'autres implications disciplinaires et méthodologiques pour eux.

Dentro del campo de las RRII, existe un número creciente de académicos que trabajan con artistas, diseñadores, arquitectos y cineastas con el fin de explorar una serie de desafíos políticos, económicos y de seguridad globales. Al mismo tiempo, existe también cierta preocupación, expresada de manera clara por Dan Öberg, de que existe el peligro de lo que él llama «creatividad transgresora» en la forma en la que se utilizan nuevos enfoques y métodos para responder a los desafíos de seguridad, especialmente en un contexto militar. En este artículo analizamos cómo el problema que plantea esta «creatividad transgresora» es una preocupación compartida por dos de los grupos que trabajan en los problemas de seguridad, guerra, tecnología, economía y política: diseñadores críticos y diseñadores militares (o el grupo que se está dando a conocer como el Archipiélago del diseño). Si bien los objetivos de ambas comunidades son diferentes, ambas comparten la opinión de que es esencial tener un sentido de apertura en materia de colaboración para poder ir más allá de los enfoques institucionales tradicionales con el fin de poder dar sentido a unos futuros que resultan complejos e inciertos en un momento de aceleración tecnológica y cambio geopolítico. El artículo concluye que debemos estar atentos a los problemas de creatividad transgresora sobre los que nos alerta Öberg, pero también necesitamos ampliar la agenda de investigación para comprender cómo las técnicas creativas están siendo utilizadas por una variedad de agentes y organizaciones con el fin de abordar los problemas de la política internacional. Además, los académicos en el campo de las RRII también necesitan observar si la «apertura» a la colaboración tiene implicaciones disciplinarias y metodológicas más amplias para los investigadores.

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Introduction

Research in anthropology or sociology often deals with the difficult and troubling aspects of security, violence, war and the ethical and methodological problems and challenges of

Creative in Manchester for allowing me to publish some of the work she designed for New Sciences of Protection back in 2007.

researching the often “everyday” aspects of life, suffering, trauma and death (Das 2006; Mookherjee 2015). Broadly speaking, the International Relations (IR) or Security Studies scholar is often more methodologically “distanced” from the “realities” of global politics and economy in a discipline that is often more focused on the strategic, historical, and the conceptual (Debrix 2016).

In the discipline of IR, there has been a growing number of initiatives to explore other “methods” for researching “the international” *creatively*—the use of documentary film (Der Derian and Gara 2020), the exploration of art and museums (Sylvester 2008), the use of ethnography in the work at the intersection of security studies and social anthropology (Andersson 2014; Khalili 2021), the use of design to explore global politics, security and economy (Austin and Leander 2020). But at the same time, there is also an increasing focus on the problems of “creativity” in the research of academics and groups emerging primarily in the military or policy worlds (Öberg 2018; Danielson 2020).

In “Warfare as design: Transgressive creativity and reductive operational planning,” Dan Öberg examines the emergence of the “military design” movement in 2010s in the United States and its allies. For Öberg, since Clausewitz warfare has been viewed in terms of a tension between creativity and “linear” planning, the military design movement argues that the American experience of war, in particular, since Vietnam shows clearly the need to disrupt the organizational thinking and bureaucratic mentality that stifles creativity, innovation and imaginative thinking in times of war. Military designers have emerged inspired by figures like the US Secretary of Defence James Mattis and General Shimon Naveh from the IDF, military thinkers who have pushed for creativity to be viewed as a key and vital characteristic of warfare (Zweibelson 2023). Öberg suggests that the contemporary interest in creativity and the “disruptive” military designer is framed in terms of a tension found in the “creative industries” between the “predictable analytical planners” and the “creative novel thinkers” (Öberg 2018: 2); in other words, the difference between the orderly and disciplined bureaucrat or leader versus the radical, creative and unpredictable Steve Jobs or Elon Musk, the designers and “thought leaders” who are not simply managing or coping with uncertainty but are both mastering and shaping uncertainty and complexity, the destroyers and creators of worlds.

In his rich and detailed overview and analysis, Öberg is concerned that the impact of the military designer is giving a legitimacy to what he views as tactics of *transgressive creativity*, innovation for new tactics of creative destruction, violence, and control understood (at least to the designers) as acts of artistry that normalize the “transgression” they produce: “Recent Western wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have had severe consequences for targeted populations—for example, in the way they have normalised exceptional practices of what to target and how” (Ibid: 3). Placing the emergence of the military design movement in a broader historical context, Öberg suggests the movement emerges partly as a reaction to an approach to warfare exemplified by the Vietnam War, warfare that produced a “military imaginary centering on a simplified universe based on computerised models” (Ibid: 4). The Vietnam War used rigid operational planning based on quantitative data in a manner that resulted in unnecessary missions and, according to Öberg, the “statistical imperative for dead bodies” (Ibid).

Military design explores creative and “disruptive” approaches—often drawn from the “innovative” re-

search and design techniques of American capitalism—to counter these traditional bureaucratic and “quantitative” approaches to warfare and planning. But for Öberg, there are clear ethico-political dangers with this trend that focuses on the innovative and creative worlds of design (and problematic intellectual moves in using thinkers like Gilles Deleuze to justify creativity in war). Simply put, Öberg is suggesting that these emerging trends risk to legitimate (or *re*-legitimate) the military as the vital and essential actor that is uniquely able to provide order and control around the planet in a time of complex global challenges. But also, given the emerging tools and techniques of military design, to possibly generate new types of order, control and violence through innovations that emerge from transgressive creativity; in other words, the military (re) designs itself through its focus on design, perpetuating the role of the “war-machine” in a world that is, at root, fundamentally and inescapably understood as a “realist” geopolitical zone of “recurrence and repetition,” inescapable and unavoidable chaos and disorder that can only be controlled or managed by military means.

Öberg’s concern about transgressive creativity clearly poses an important ethico-political note of caution for those who work with the military on “creative” projects, and in this essay, I want to introduce two key sites where this anxiety over transgressive creativity can play out in relation to a broad range of security and war issues and challenges: “critical design” and “military design.” The essay provides reflections on my encounters with these two very different worlds—and with different attempts at creating events, processes and “products,” of exploring methodological and theoretical possibilities beyond the conventional approaches and methods of IR and Security Studies. I suggest that these encounters with both the critical design and the military design communities show how the dangers of “transgressive creativity” are important concerns for those working in these different spaces: for the critical designer, the anxiety is concerned with their research creating harmful events or technologies; for the military designer, the concern is perhaps more that a *lack* of transgressive creativity will result in harm. But while I think Öberg’s questions about design are essential and need to remain in the “frame” for all our thinking and engagement with military design, I also think we need to continue to engage with and understand the complexity and diversity of this movement and community; the issue of “harm” often gets lost in the controversies over military design and needs to be examined in more depth in future research and analysis.

What I want to also suggest here is that while both groups are dealing with the problems of transgressive creativity in different ways, there is also a question that emerges from my encounters that points to a broader issue—how we need to begin to understand more fully the impact of “creativity” is having both in the academic world and the policy world. Are we talking about “minor” groups having a limited impact or do these movements reflect a broader trend in academic and policy worlds?

Many of the insights and reflections from these processes of collaboration could have been arrived at through reading the works of critical design or military design. But the conclusion I begin to sketch here is this: these encounters and collaborations, encounters that had Öberg’s questions and concerns in the background (although initially not articulated through this framing developed by Öberg), often resulted in conversations, interactions, and insights that challenge many of my assumptions about security, war and a

“militaristic” worldview (along with new ideas and insights into the transformation of war in the twenty-first century). However, these events are “unstructured” encounters, reflections, and observations that might filter into research, writing, and teaching. There is an unstructured, fragmented nature to these encounters that is not easily quantifiable as *research*, insights from the process of collaboration and “mundane” encounters in often creative processes: some of the thoughts and observations might be too provocative or controversial for either “worlds” and would not be written up in the formal space of an academic journal article or monograph; other thoughts might be too vague, instincts or senses and suspicions that will be thought about but possibly never concretely articulated.

But what this all possibly points towards is the need in our research on the spaces of creativity for a more structured “research agenda” of ethnographic work, research that sets out to understand more fully and deeply the various emerging spaces where creative methods on security and war are being developed and experimented with. There is also a broader question on what the disciplinary implications are for these emerging approaches to security and war: do the complex/hybrid problems of security and war in the twenty-first century now require new explorations in collaboration outside of disciplinary “camps” (Sylvester 2007)?

The essay begins with insights that emerged from the process of working with “critical design” on a project titled *New Sciences of Protection* in 2007/2008 in the then Institute of Advanced Studies at Lancaster University; this section is followed by reflections on working with military or security designers on the development of a game titled *Breakthrough*, a process that began in 2021 after a number of years of involvement with the network or community. I suggest that the concern with what Öberg terms transgressive creativity is an ethico-political concern that is viewed as a problem to both critical design and military design, albeit in very different—and often surprising—ways. But while this concern with transgressive creativity is understood as an important concern in the ethico-political imaginations of both sets of design thinkers, there is far more work that needs to be developed on the various ethico-political, strategic and tactical questions that emerge in these groups and networks.

Security and Design

New Sciences of Protection

In 2007/8, Cynthia Weber and I developed a yearlong series of events through our Institute of Advanced Studies at Lancaster University; the aim was to bring together in collaboration and dialogue designers/design theorists and scholars from the social sciences (primarily in IR and Sociology). *New Sciences of Protection: Designing Safe Living* (NSOP) was designed to bring different communities together to explore what felt at the time like a dramatic and dangerous new age where all aspects of everyday life were being transformed by the Global War on Terror and the new technological possibilities of “connectivity” and the “network society” that seemed to be creating (or intensifying) new types of surveillance and societal control across the planet. This interdisciplinary approach continued a process that we had begun with Michael Dillon in a conference held at Lancaster University—*Security Bytes*—in 2004 where the aim had been to explore both the digital and the biological (and the transformative possibilities and new “combinations” of these “codes”) in terms of emerging security challenges and

to bring in scholars from film studies/cultural studies into conversations about the future of technology, security and war.

From my perspective, I had been interested in the work exhibited in an exhibition called *Safe: Design Takes on Risk* at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York in 2006 (Lacy 2008); *Safe* presented work on how designers were exploring new ways to make people “safe” across all aspects of life—but also to raise questions about how designers might be working (often unintentionally) to create (and legitimate) everyday practices of security that might make people insecure or vulnerable in a variety of new (and old) ways, to make different groups insecure in different ways, the production of the uneven distribution of security in societies. What particularly interested me was the way designers could make objects or practices of security appear attractive, comforting or seductive—or at the same time, to make certain objects or spaces deliberately unpleasant or repulsive (Savičić and Savić 2012). But this interest in design that *Safe* reflected also stemmed from the way that threats and insecurities appeared to be both “everyday,” involving the “weaponisation of everything” (to use the title of Mark Galeotti’s book), but also transformed by new technological possibilities of combination and hybridity (for example, the connectivity between the smart phone and the smart city). In this view, the sense was that to understand the complexity of insecurity in the twenty-first century, we needed to reach out and collaborate with new communities and researchers.

So what we were interested in doing with NSOP was seeing what working with designers might reveal about the dangers on the horizon in terms of the “securitization” of all aspects of life, from our bodies, our borders, our economies and politics, our desires and fears—what might be on the horizon that we wouldn’t find reading Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, Giorgio Agamben or Paul Virilio (and the scholars using their work to examine the post 9/11 world) (Dauphinee and Masters 2007).

We were also interested in seeing what designers might reveal about transforming or resisting what felt like bleak times in global politics, how designers might help social scientists or political philosophers imagine (and create and *build*) alternative futures. Here, we had been interested in bringing in the work of groups such as Architecture for Humanity and attempts to use design in response to humanitarian crises (Architecture for Humanity 2006).

Both Cynthia and I were influenced by creative attempts to think about the various ways that new technologies of security and the Global War on Terror might transform everyday life into the type of dystopian future envisaged by the film *Minority Report*, with its great attention to technological and architectural detail that resulted from collaboration between the filmmakers and designers, futurists and technologists. *Minority Report* played an important role in the argument Cynthia developed in her book *Imagining America at War* (Weber 2006); and our discussions of the film really put us in a place where we wanted to explore the longer-term implications of the post 9/11 world in a time of geopolitical change and technological acceleration.

Bringing in “critical designers” Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby was central to the development of NSOP (Sterling 2019, Lacy 2023a); examples of their past and present critical design work can be found at <http://dunneandraby.co.uk/content/projects>. Along with their students—who they brought along to assist the process of collaboration and creativity—the involvement of Dunne and Raby was important in terms of seeing how critical designers approached social, political and technological

problems, showing us how the focus on both the technical and aesthetic expanded our “social imaginations”; and seeing the range of problems they explored was also inspiring in taking us beyond a focus on security that was profoundly shaped by 9/11, the securitization of everyday life and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Topics such as the future of food or robotics showed us how we could go increasingly “micro” but also increasingly “long term” in work that often felt like heading into Science Fiction: this was the space we wanted to be “playing” in, a space that took us beyond what we found (at the time) in IR and security studies. There were signs of emerging work on security studies and design after 9/11 exemplified by the publication of Stephan Trüby’s *Exit-Architecture: Design Between War and Peace* (Trüby, 2008) and his edited collection with Gerd De Bruyn and Daniel Hundsdorfer, *5 Codes: Architecture, Paranoia and Risk in Times of Terror* (Brun, Hundsdorfer and Trüby, 2006); these books drew, in places, on the work of Dunne and Raby to explore design, security and war but appear to have remained on the margins of security studies and the debates that were unfolding after 9/11, overshadowed by the focus on biopolitics/biopower or states of exception and emergency.

But for all the “Science Fiction” in the approach and concerns of Dunne and Raby, what we also saw was an insight into their methods; the approach was not speculative or science fiction (or *design fiction*) emerging from solely imaginative processes. Their process involves collaboration with experts in the areas they explored, seeing what might be possible in the future (and what might be extreme, or “worst case scenarios” beyond corporate or government positions and planning), but in a way that was shaped by scientific and technical “realities.” We developed a workshop project with Dunne and Raby and their students that was focused on questions on a future London, a process designed to give us all some insight into their processes.

In various workshops, roundtables, and conversations during the year of NSOP, we saw how designers focused in on the technical or material aspects in all aspects of life, in the material aspects of life that many of us would ignore, the invisible infrastructures and materials of everyday life (Mars, Roman and Kohlstedt 2020) (figure 1 shows an outline of the years’ events): thinking about design and security takes us into a realm where a streetlight or a park bench comes a technology of security and control (Lacy 2023b). I remember travelling on a bus in Lancaster with the design students and one of them took a picture of the seat material; one got the sense they noticed so much we would ignore, a focus on the detail of everyday life that made us social scientists feel like the “grand theorists” we may previously have criticised! While it was not unusual for security studies to be exploring questions on “critical infrastructures,” the designers took it further into questions of aesthetics—and questions/methods on futures.

One of the students told me that the approach they took was to go “feral” in the way they looked for ideas and inspiration; to go off the conventional routes or paths in order to explore the messiness and complexity of the world. And central to the work of Dunne and Raby was the point that the products of designers do not always work as designed or planned (Dunne and Raby 2014)—there are unintended consequences and accidents: the work of the critical designer is to explore what those consequences or accidents might be, accidents that might not be imagined by the more technocratic planners and designers (a point that resonates with the work of military designers discussed later in the essay).

The focus on “material things” has been an interesting and important development in the 2010s in IR, Security Studies and Political Geography, highlighted by Mark Salter’s collections *Making Things International 1: Circuits and Motion* and *Making Things International 2: Catalysts and Reactions* (Salter 2015). What these researchers in IR tend to focus on is the broader geopolitical, economic, legal, and ethical aspects of a variety of objects, infrastructures, processes, and practices that produce international politics. Designers tend to focus more on the aesthetic and technical dimensions, with actually making “things” or provocative installations, while also using design processes to explore the futures that might result from the use, circulation or intensification of an object, system or policy. To be sure, there are points of convergence—points when designers like Dunne and Raby engage with political, economic and ethical debates—and points when security scholars delve into the material and technical aspects. There are moments where these two worlds can converge in creative and transformative ways; the essays in this special issue provide many examples.

Researchers in IR can examine realities “on the ground” through the eyes of the designer or anthropologist in ways that may come to inform work that is developing ethical reflection on global politics or examining the (unintended) consequences of a policy. Working with designers might also produce a window to see the dark possibilities of a technology or policy that might be invisible in more “technocratic” approaches to policy and planning, and there seem to be more and more uses of these methods in the social sciences (and beyond) (Davies 2018). Designers might derive insights into the broader geopolitical, political economy, and ethical complexities of the projects that they are working on. After NSOP, Cynthia went on to further collaboration and conversation with Dunne and Raby as they worked on their book *Speculative Everything: Design, Fiction and Social Dreaming*; she was working on various projects on “re-designing” citizenship (Dunne and Raby 2014). We attempted to capture our thinking after NSOP with an essay in *The Routledge Handbook of New Security Studies* edited by Peter Burgess and in an article in the *Review of International Studies* (Weber and Lacy 2010; Weber and Lacy 2011). I wrote a textbook chapter on security and design in *Security Studies: Critical Perspectives* (2023), edited by Xavier Guillaume and Kyle Grayson. My interest in design mutated into the work of Paul Virilio, the architect and philosopher of security and war (Lacy 2017).

So there can be moments of convergence when the two worlds come together, and in the sometimes difficult process of collaboration (as the more “materially” inclined and the more “theoretically” oriented began to understand the other ways of working), it certainly felt like the process was potentially creating a space that could broaden how IR scholars approached emerging and future problems, and the processes of “making” or creating during the year (primarily focused on working with the students of Dunne and Raby on their various design projects) certainly taught us how we might collaborate differently in the future. It might have also reaffirmed for some that these worlds are different, distinct and inescapably separate. Indeed, the separateness or “otherness” is possibly what makes the moments of convergence and collaboration meaningful and significant: separate and distinct worlds that come together temporarily and then return, transformed by these moments of interaction; what we were doing was making a different space for thinking and conversations to take place and emerge.

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 Institute for Advanced Studies, Lancaster University



New Sciences of Protection: Designing Safe Living

'THERE IS NOTHING CLOSER TO THE BIG BANG OF DESIGN, TO ITS PRIME REASON TO EXIST, THAN OBJECTS THAT DEAL WITH SELF-PRESERVATION'

PAOLA ANTONELLI,
 SAFE: DESIGN TAKES ON RISK, MoMA 2004

This research program investigates 'protection' at the intersections of security, sciences, technologies, markets and design. Protection is at the heart of all design. Design is at the heart of the creation of new services, products and relations. This research program investigates how design of objects, systems, places and services engender feelings of safety for individuals and groups. It particularly focuses on the intersection of design, and specific sciences and technologies. It asks, for example, if sciences like biogenetics are rendering our food, our bodies, our environments, and even our futures safe. It considers whether or not contemporary

technologies of protection — like high-pitched sounds designed to discourage teenagers from congregating in public spaces or on-line security practices designed to secure our data and our data doubles — actually protect 'us'. Do they merely commodify and/or multiply our fears and anxieties? A key aim of the research program is to think about design, protection and safe living in open-ended, conceptually and practically inventive ways. To this end, the workshop and conference processes bring together designers, artist-writers, policy makers and regulators, scientist-engineers, social scientists and humanist scholars.

WORKSHOPS:

**WORKSHOP 1:
 INTRODUCTION:
 DESIGN,
 SCIENCE, LIVING**
 DATES:
 4 – 5 Oct 2007

**WORKSHOP 2:
 CODES AND
 CONDUCT**
 DATES:
 19 – 20 Nov 2007

**WORKSHOP 3:
 PROXIMITIES**
 DATES:
 6 – 7 Dec 2007

**WORKSHOP 4:
 PROTOCOLS AND
 PROCEDURES**
 DATES:
 31 JAN – 1 FEB 2008

**WORKSHOP 5:
 PRESENTATION,
 DOCUMENTATION,
 MEDIATION**
 DATES:
 13 – 14 Mar 2008

**WORKSHOP 6:
 FUTURES**
 DATES:
 8 – 9 May 2008

**CONFERENCE:
 INTERNATIONAL
 CONFERENCE
 'NEW SCIENCES
 OF PROTECTION:
 DESIGNING
 SAFE LIVING'**
 DATES:
 10 – 12 Jul 2008

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:

PROFESSOR SUSAN S. SILBEY
 Massachusetts Institute of Technology,
 Cambridge, USA

**PROFESSOR RICHARD
 BUCHANAN**
 Carnegie-Mellon University,
 Pittsburgh, USA

PROFESSOR LUCY SUCHMAN
 Lancaster University,
 Lancaster, UK

**PROFESSORS FIONA RABY
 AND ANTHONY DUNNE**
 Royal College of Art, London, UK



<http://www.lancs.ac.uk/ias/annualprogramme/protection/>

Figure 1. New Sciences of Protection poster designed by Nikie Marston of Hello Creative, Manchester.

NSOP concluded with a conference that included keynote speeches from researchers such as Lucy Suchman, Timothy Luke, and Benjamin Bratton, a conference that explored (and possibly exemplified) the risks of making such an interdisciplinary event, an event that possibly seemed un-

conventional to those outside it in the way it focused on design. And by the end of NSOP, the unsettling implications and provocative style of where this work took us were clear, exemplified by Bratton's provocative keynote—the kind of "design fiction" he went on to write in books such as *Dis-*

pute Plan to Prevent Future Luxury Constitution (Bratton 2015); there was possibly a tension between the “design fiction” of (possibly) imaginary maps and alternative histories of global politics and the ethico-political concern with the all too real violence by design unfolding around the planet.

Dunne and Raby pointed later to the ethico-political problems of working on design and “futures” in *Speculative Everything: Design, Fiction, and Social Dreaming*, raising a point that captures an unease about “critical design” in a reflection on their work on biotechnology:

Dangerous ideas can be conceived that open up possibilities best left unexplored, and once thought cannot be unthought. And these projects might prepare people for what is to come by unintentionally paving the way for a greater acceptance of biotechnology through desensitization. Despite this, however, we feel the benefits of this approach far outweigh the negatives. (Dunne and Raby 2014: 51)

Dunne and Raby are concerned here with the ideas in the projects they develop being an inspiration for students to go “rogue” and develop a dangerous new technology (although this may be a rather extreme dystopian “sci fi” possibility); or, more credibly, training students in methods that later will be used by business and government (or with corporations taking inspiration from their work).

During NSOP, there may have been attempts to include policymakers in government, but there was certainly no attempt to engage with military organizations; the year focused on questions of security and design and not really on issues of war and design; in the final conference, there were panels on emerging military technologies involving the work on Lucy Suchman and others, but it was emerging from a peace studies/Feminist security studies perspective. Looking back to those times, working with or engaging with the military was possibly an unspoken limit in the collaborative approach of NSOP. In light of the comment above from *Speculative Everything*, it seems probable that Dunne and Raby would be unlikely to collaborate on projects that produced creative new possibilities for future warfighting.

For Dunne and Raby, the aim of the critical design process might be to produce an object or installation to encourage people to think about the risks and dangers of a possible future technology or government policy. Dunne and Raby see the risk of making this type of thinking/aesthetic space as worth taking: the benefit for society of creating citizens who think about the negative consequences of design, in their view, is important in this time of technological and geopolitical transformation (and the corporate and political/governmental control of this transformation of society). The unspoken position (or *unthought*, certainly from us IR scholars) taken in NSOP was, I think, later articulated clearly and persuasively by Öberg in his essay on transgressive creativity.

So, problems of transgressive creativity were, looking back, a concern that would possibly be clearer to most involved in NSOP afterwards—if it wasn’t already at the time: this was a *security* or “protection sciences” project and not a *war* studies project. Looking back to the process of trying to create a new space for thinking and research, it is clear that we were possibly all creating limits on what was possible or permitted, a move that was essential if the collaboration was to work. To be sure, we could have pushed the boundaries further through engagement with technologists or policymakers working directly on war—but it is unclear whether either side in the process would feel comfortable with such a move (especially in the early stages of collaboration).

What we also failed to explore in NSOP were possibilities that were important in the early formulation and development of the project, the work of groups such as Architecture for Humanity (and other design work included in MoMA’s *SAFE* exhibition) who were using design to produce solutions to problems of insecurity and humanitarian crisis. In this sense, our focus on “thinking” and being “critical” limited the possibilities for *making* things; NSOP was an attempt to make sense of the work being done by critical design in terms of their warnings about the *dangers* of design, about the role of design in the technocratic projects of security and business. The next stage of NSOP could have begun to explore how designers might imagine and produce design solutions to the everyday problems of (in)security and the global problems of disaster and crisis around the planet, and to examine the political and bureaucratic challenges faced by designers who are imagining and “making” alternative worlds/responses through design and architecture. In the 2020s, there are signs that this work is now being developed in IR and Security Studies in projects such as Anna Leander and Jonathan Luke Austin’s Future of Humanitarian Design project based at the Geneva Graduate Institute—and in the work explored in many of the essays in this special issue.

The process of collaboration on NSOP was exciting and stimulating, opening up new possibilities for research and thinking on security and global politics. But the concern with what would later be termed transgressive creativity—and the concern or anxiety that was later articulated clearly by Dunne and Raby—did shape the process, producing some limits and borders to the project. In many ways, bringing together critical designers and researchers in social sciences, in particular those working in critical security studies, was about two different worlds. But while there are many points of difference in terms of methods and intellectual histories, there were shared ethical and political concerns; the designers were just better dressed!

So, while there was a difference in style in terms of how work is presented and how projects were researched, there was a sense of a shared political and moral imagination. But in the search for openness and creativity to understand emerging problems of security, technology, economy, politics, and society was there actually too much convergence and consensus? In the next section, I turn to my encounters with a group that is the primary object of Öberg’s concerns about transgressive creativity: the military design movement, a group where all the ethico-political concerns are taken to another level of intensity—and opening up challenging and often surprising insights and ethico-political problems.

War and Design

The Military Design Movement

At the same time as IR scholars were beginning to see how design thinking and processes could contribute to analysis and understanding of the post 9/11 world, another group was beginning to explore the possibilities of design in their organizations. While we were interested in how citizens and society were being transformed by “new sciences of protection,” this group or network was interested in examining (and transforming) security and war from the *inside*, professionals who worked as part of the “war-machine.”

What has become known as the “military design” or “security design” movement was an emerging network of primarily military scholars/practitioners that often saw themselves as “radical” or “critical” in the same way that scholars of “critical security studies” might understand themselves as being

in opposition to the traditional disciplinary approaches to security and war. But the opposition is grounded in ideas of transformation rather than resistance or opposition to all war. For many of the military design network, the critical or radical self-understanding/transformation resulted from experience during the Global War on Terror, in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (Zweibelson 2019; Zweibelson 2023).

To be sure, there is nothing unusual about a process of reflection on tactics and strategy after a period of war, a process of reflection on organizational and tactical failures, on the lessons to be learned for the future. But there was a sense of urgency and intensity in the way that this emerging and diverse (albeit a diversity from inside the military) network was articulating the importance of radical (what some in the network would describe as revolutionary) new ideas to reshape military education and organization. The focus of the movement or network was not simply concerned with learning from events since 9/11 to be able to do things differently (and “better”) in future wars; the concern was that it was not enough to learn from the mistakes of past wars; it was about transforming how the military approached problems for wars and conflicts unlike anything experienced before. There is also a sense that cultivating this “transgressive creativity” is understood as a tactic of deterrence, as a means to avoid war; and some military designers will argue that other states and militaries are more transgressively creative—and so the United States and its allies need to innovate in order to produce credible strategies of deterrence (Crabb 2022).

The urgency in the network stemmed from a concern that the future conflicts would be radically different from anything experienced in the past, a future where “classic” approaches to military education and training would not be sufficient when confronted with radical new terrains, technologies, tactics, and actors. There would be no “warm up” period or adequate military education in light of the technological and geopolitical pace of change. As Nolan Peterson notes in a comment in an essay on Project Galahad (what is viewed as an important process or experiment military design in Iraq and Afghanistan) and the closure of some creative/experimental initiatives in the military:

Some military experts have criticized these moves as shortsighted and part of a broader prioritization of Pentagon resources toward acquiring new technologies rather than researching how doctrine should evolve to combat modern threats.

Throughout history, US military-industrial dominance has permitted the luxury of warmup periods in its wars to arrive at a coherent strategic vision and develop workable tactics to achieve victory. Famously, US military forces honed their combat acumen on the North African front in World War II before embarking on the liberation of Europe.

In his Pulitzer Prize-winning account of the Allied North African campaign, *An Army at Dawn*, Rick Atkinson wrote: “Like the first battles in virtually every American war, this campaign revealed a nation and an army unready to fight and unsure of their martial skills, yet willful and inventive enough to prevail.”

However, against a near-peer adversary such as Russia or China, US military forces will have less time to hone their tactics and find their confidence in battle. The next war may be over before America’s armed forces learn how to fight it. Thus, one key goal of experimental programs like Project Galahad is to spur innova-

tions to combat future threats before meeting them for the first time while in a war (Peterson 2021).

On this view, this time of “disruptive change,” tactical surprise and technological innovation will be the inescapable condition confronted in future wars. And while the intellectual, ethical, and political concerns might differ from those in IR or critical security studies, the books and thinkers that influenced the military designers were similar; Foucault, Deleuze, Baudrillard, Virilio. From the perspective of the military designers, part of what was important in intellectuals like Michel Foucault was the idea that institutions such as the military created “societies of normalization” that used “regimes of truth” that worked to limit the ability of military personnel to think creatively and critically about the problems they were confronted with (Zweibelson 2023). In the intellectual space opened up by challenging military regimes of truth, design thinking and processes could be used to teach and train differently; classic works of military theory and history were not to be abandoned—but they would be supplemented by books such as *Frame Innovation: Create New Thinking in Design* (2015) by Kees Dorst. The education would also be supplemented by work by authors such as Robert Chia and Robin Holt from the more critical and innovative work in management schools; central to much military design thinking is the view that understanding and disrupting *your* organization/bureaucracy is as important as understanding and disrupting *your* enemy.

And for all the focus on “difficult” Continental Philosophy, the approach of many military designers is to get beyond military “theory” or doctrine, to recognise that theory or policies often have unintended consequences where theory and bureaucratic habit closes down alternative understandings of the problem “on the ground” (the view of many political/philosophical commentators on the Vietnam War like Hannah Arendt or Hans Morgenthau); just as a thinker like Paul Virilio often takes his theory to the level of “the street,” or the city or architecture, the military designer takes inspiration from design thinkers to find new ways to explore the “messiness” of events and environments in a manner that might be threatening or damaging to the bureaucratic/organizational culture in which they are embedded.

While there does not appear an interest in the work of critical designers like Dunne and Raby and their histories of design used to provoke and challenge (as far as I can tell through my involvement with key players in the network as a supervisor of doctoral projects by military designers and as an editor of a book series that is publishing books in this area), in many ways there is a shared concern (albeit articulated differently and for different ends, one project for national security, the other for a cosmopolitan view on a planetary security): to challenge the technocratic visions of the “planners” who could be too conservative and limited in their preparation for the future, futures that downplay the possibility of “wild card” events or “black swans” that possibly cannot be managed by the existing “problem solving” frameworks of military bureaucracy, education, and organization. Or to understand the problems of the present where traditional approaches limit creative exploration and interrogation of challenges that play out at a variety of scales, from the “mundane” and everyday to the global and strategic.

But one of the controversial aspects of the military design movement would be the importance of Shimon Naveh in the emergence of the network (Beaulieu-Brossard 2021). Naveh became widely known to a broader audience in critical security studies and beyond primarily due to his “role” in

(Eyal Weizman's 2006) influential book *Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation*. Put simply, Naveh was viewed as having introduced the thinking of Deleuze or Foucault into the IDF in a way that produced a new transgressive creativity in how the IDF approached problems, new approaches to urban policing and warfare that, for example, resulted in the now infamous "walking through walls" (Weizman 2007; Öberg 2018): in order to limit the dangers of being exposed in open urban space, the IDF moved through the inside of urban space, knocking through walls, a different way of understanding space and architecture or seeing the military possibilities of the urban environment.

The view of critics was that Deleuze or Foucault was being used to challenge regimes of military truth or convention to produce innovations in creative warfighting—and types of warfighting that thinkers like Foucault or Deleuze would view as a perverse use of their "critical" or radical political positions. But the view of Naveh turning the IDF into an army of Deleuze readers risks overstating his influence: his relationship with the military seems to have been problematic and conflictual—and possibly far less significant than his critics present (Feldman 2007).

Naveh has also made a comment on his work and influence that appears to explain some objectives of the military design movement that has emerged outside of the IDF. For Naveh, the approaches he has tried to produce have been about *minimizing* harm for all sides in the conflict (Feldman 2007). Indeed, this aim of the military design movement is exemplified by this passage from military thinkers, some of whom have played a key role in supporting the military design movement:

These unorthodox options will necessarily be interest-driven, housed within a strategy to establish desired conditions. Efforts should focus primarily on generating effects through non-kinetic methods, aiming at targets in the human domain, cyberspace, the information environment, and other non-physical arenas. In the information age, these slings and stones should strive to change population's minds and behavior rather than convert the living to the dead, to generate deception and miscalculation rather than mass destruction, to darken a city rather than to raze it. Precision kinetic strikes may be necessary on occasion but will generally be less desirable, given heightened associated risk of escalation and attribution, irreversibility and perception implications (Miller et al. 2019).

So, I think there are two objectives to the military design movement. First, the aim is to reduce harm in conflict for all sides during war; this might be understood in ethical terms, or it might be understood in instrumental terms (images of casualties of war that become a problem domestically and internationally). Second, the military design approach often suggests that there is a need for a different military education for future wars that will be unlike anything experienced in the textbooks of war studies: the techniques and processes of design can be useful in producing an "openness" and creativity in how people approach problems; underpinning all of this is a desire to deter war and conflict through the production of an image of a military cultivating transgressive creativity and innovation. Although the military or security design group is not focused on making "things" or designing technologies, there are interesting attempts at creative projects and collaborations—like the game *Breakthrough* that I will now discuss.

What is also interesting in terms of how this network is developing is that the focus is beginning to extend beyond

what we might view as the "traditional" problems of security and war toward questions of environmental (in)security and societal resilience in an age of disinformation (which possibly accounts for the use of the term "security design" possibly beginning to displace "military design"); there is also a focus on military issues such as recruitment, retention and the transition to post-military careers. I am now going to comment on what I experienced through my involvement in the creation of a role-playing game by the network of military/security designers now known as the Archipelago of Design (AOD) based in Canada but involving an international network of (primarily NATO) partners.

Project Albatross, Breakthrough and Military Design

In June 2021, Philippe Beaulieu-Brossard invited the Archipelago of Design network—primarily composed of military professionals/educators and university academics—to join him in "creating" during a workshop that was held over three days in the Danish Architecture Center in Copenhagen. Beaulieu-Brossard carried out doctoral work in IR at St. Andrews before moving on to teaching and research at the Canadian Forces College in Toronto; he played a vital role in the development and consolidation of the military or security design network through initiatives such as Innovation Methodologies for Defence Challenges (IMDC) and the AOD network that has become a vital space for disseminating new writings and cultivating new networks of collaboration, creativity, and dialogue.

The Project Albatross event that started in Copenhagen was intended to "crowdsource" the prototyping of game features that could be potentially "transformational" by putting the player in situations that would allow for the exploration of the "reflexivity-in-action" at the core of military design. Beaulieu-Brossard's vision suggested that games, a potentially "transformative" medium at the level of complex role-playing games, could surpass current dominant ways of learning (it is worth noting that personal transformation through the design courses and education is often viewed as being as important an objective as a focus on specific missions/events or broader organizational change).

Prior to what became a "hybrid" event, there was a process of online discussion in preparation for the three days in Copenhagen. Unable to attend in person in Copenhagen, I joined the online prototyping group the following week. The group I was involved in—composed of both retired and serving military personnel—quickly began to focus on how the game *Dungeons and Dragons* (D&D) could be adapted as a process for teaching core elements of military design that would previously have been taught in a more conventional fashion. Some of the initial ideas explored the possibility of players/students moving from level to level (levels that might take place in different locations or times), guided by the "design master" who would act as both educator/teacher and game manager/facilitator in a way similar to the *Dungeon Master* in D&D, a figure who would introduce players to the world(s) like Morpheus introducing Neo to the Matrix (there was even talk of including an AI element into the game). Other groups worked in Copenhagen with professional video game designers to create a range of different games that were the result of processes designed to generate creativity and openness to experimentation that might not be part of their "day jobs" (although most were involved in military design "work" in their organizations).

After the Copenhagen workshop, Beaulieu-Brossard returned to Toronto and created a team of young artists and game designers to develop the ideas that had emerged in



Figure 2. Cover art for *Breakthrough*.

the workshop. He and his team saw potential in the D&D military design game and set to work on creating and building it (see [figure 2](#) for the cover art for the game). In May 2022, participants in the Copenhagen workshop were invited to Toronto to “test” the game and see where it could be improved before it was going to be played with 30 students from the Canadian Forces College (for a short video overview, see *Archipelago of Design 2022*); by May 2023, somewhere between 100 and 150 students had played the game, including colonels and ministerial aids from the National Security Program. We spent one day playing and discussing the game, watching talks on games design, and talking with the artists who were working on the visual dimensions of the game. Indeed, in my group of players, we discussed how the game could become “immersive” using a mix of music and the art that was being produced, art that was projected on screens during the playing of the game (see [figure 3](#) for an example of the artwork designed to enhance the immersive experience).

Following this playtest day, much of what we discussed was focused on how to enable the Games Master or Design Master to create an “immersive” experience, possibly through the creation of more storytelling aspects that could be developed by a fantasy or “sci-fi” writer and that that could be “scaled up”: the ambition of Project Albatross was to create a process that could be used in a variety of countries/security and defence organizations and could be used as a system that could be adapted to different contexts and needs. The game that had been created in Toronto—*Breakthrough*—was focused on a mysterious event in the Arctic in 2034 that took players into a murky world of different actors and

problems that were both local and global, problems that some might (initially) see as a futuristic case study in hybrid war or the “gray zones” of international politics and environmental (in)security. One of the insights from these sessions in Toronto during May 2022 was on the need to develop a more active storytelling role for the “design master” in a way that involves more improvisation and more role-playing.

Discussion in our group often focused on the “mechanics” of the game, on how it felt to play, what could be done to keep the game moving, and what could be done to keep the game immersive. But we also returned to questions about the objectives of the game. Here, there were clearly different views that emerged from the different professional experiences and organizational locations of the players in the group. My questions were going to be different from those who worked in the military world and were involved in the training and education of students: like with the critical design collaboration, there was a sense of different worlds meeting, the creation of a temporary space for shared encounters between those who would always remain aware of their differences (in experience, organizational objectives). The questions raised by Öberg were never too far from my thinking; the questions of the others undoubtedly reflected different sets of concerns (how the game could be used efficiently and developed in their organizations). Oliver Jones—a researcher in AOD involved with the development and running of the game—told me that reactions to the scenarios in the game have often depended on the “backgrounds” of the players, with intelligence officers, for example, concerned with issues of disinformation or with



Figure 3. Artwork used in the game Breakthrough.

naval officers focused on the canal project and its strategic implications for ocean navigation; a group of officers from the same branch will converge on their insights, whereas a “mixed” group of civilians and military professionals will generate “weirder” insights.

Part of the “mission” of the game was to encourage innovative thinking by unlocking the potential of individuals and teams through the way that they were encouraged to explore the “sensemaking” in the ambiguous and uncertain situation they were confronted with—before jumping to solutions. In an email to the group after playing the game with students, Beaulieu-Brossard commented: “This game not only works at setting conditions for unlocking designer ways of thinking seamlessly in the form of sense making, problem framing and more, but also to give a transparent window onto how player-learners think about an unknown problem.” In order to progress through the game, players would need to keep an “open mind” and challenge their biases; indeed, playing the game pushed you into situations where you thought you had cleverly seen through the “fog” of this “hybrid” conflict in the Arctic—only to see *Breakthrough* had built in many points of misdirection for the player trying to crack the “code” of the game, to disrupt attempts to see the game as resting on a singular “key concept” such as Russia as an homogeneous enemy, a game in the “gray zone” or hybrid war. Due to the way the game can provide a window into players’ thinking, the design master can mobilize key observations, bringing the biases to the awareness of the players during a reflection period after the game; a structured “debrief” has been added to the game to encourage players to reflect on what the players have learned

about their decision-making processes and methods for sorting information.

Much of the more critical security studies writings point to the way that war can become a video game, preparation for global war based on the desire for territorial and social control made possible by new technologies or, as [Aggie Hirst, 2022](#) has argued, where “hyperreal” games become a means for organizational control and discipline or what she terms “warfighter subjectification.” But one of the aims of *Breakthrough* is something that surprised me when I heard it articulated in a bar after we played the game; someone made the point along the lines that many of the students that were being taught were trained to be the best, the sharpest, toughest, and smartest. *Breakthrough* was not a game of mastery, a game to train the next masters of the geopolitical universe; it was about sensemaking and humility, about placing students in situations where they would be confused, frustrated, confronted with the limits of their thinking and thrown into a zone of uncertainty and ambiguity. Oliver Jones told me in May 2023 that he sees *Breakthrough* as a process to show students that you cannot learn without humility and the willingness to question the limits of your training, experience, and knowledge; for Jones, this objective is needed for the complex “gray zone” challenges that security professionals confront, the need to be “comfortable with the uncomfortable” and for the students to see how their initial responses to the scenario/problem could actually result in harm if they become the basis for a response. After the workshop, I watched an interview between Beaulieu-Brossard and Robert Chia and Robin Holt that explored this focus on “humility” further.

In May 2023, the Archipelago of Design released a draft of a report titled *Breakaway: Reframing to Prevail* to members of the network: drawing on over 60 interviews with the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), the report gives vivid “real world” insights into the organizational problems and tendencies that require different processes of education and training that cultivate humility by showing the need to question the limits of training and knowledge. Both *Breakthrough* and *Breakaway* point to a trend in this design thinking that appears to transgress the framing of military or security design in terms of transgressive creativity. It will be important to see how the project unfolds in the years ahead, years that will undoubtedly see more of the “ambiguous war” challenges that the game begins to explore.

Concluding Remarks

So, the problem of “transgressive creativity” was a concern in both these encounters on projects with individuals and groups working outside the discipline I work in. For the critical designers, there was the anxiety that their creativity could result in some previously unimagined possibilities (and possibly accounts for the lack of a “military direction” in our collaboration on *New Sciences of Protection*, a year of events that were focused on a broad range of security problems). But the importance of producing dialogue and reflection on emerging trends on technology and society is vital for a vibrant and critical public sphere. For the military designers, the problem of a dangerous, irresponsible creativity is an accusation leveled against them. But for some in the military/security design community, transgressive creativity is viewed as a necessary form of disruption to generate change in traditional military institutions, to prepare them for future wars and to find new ways to minimize harm for all sides in a twenty-first century conflict (or to even deter conflict in the first place).

The conclusions arrived at in this essay are rather limited and fragmented, an overview of some of the encounters I have had while attempting to create events and groups beyond the confines of my disciplinary and university/institutional world; encounters that were interesting for me as an individual—and possibly interesting for others who participated in the various events—but processes that leave us a sense of uncertainty about the broader significance of the events. But I think what writing about these encounters points to is the need for more detailed and structured work and research—possibly both qualitatively and quantitatively—on these spaces where the problems of transgressive creativity are hard to escape. From the encounters outlined here, I think a number of questions begin to emerge:

One. Central to both military design and critical design is the awareness that disruption requires inclusion and encounters with people and perspectives that challenge the status quo, the dominant ways of thinking. But how diverse are these emerging communities of critical design or military design? And for all the focus on diversity of viewpoints, is there a dominance of one intellectual and methodological perspective? For example, in both “camps” explored in this essay is there a dominance of those with an arts and social science background over those with a STEM background? Are there significant differences between those from a STEM background in thinking about emerging and future global dangers and security challenges? Is the commitment to diversity understood too narrowly?

There is another aspect to this issue of diversity. While the military design network and organizations such as the AOD primarily involve NATO members, the design courses

are taught to military professionals around the world; while it could be argued that an emerging global network of military professionals is still a “homogenous” group, it would be interesting to understand how military or security design is impacting on military organizations outside of NATO—and, at the same time, whether the “globalising” of the project is transforming the design project. How are critical design projects being developed outside of “the West”? How are non-Western designers responding to Dunne and Raby (and others developing similar work)—or reworking and reimagining critical design? What are the different concerns and approaches on questions of (in)security, technology and economy being developed outside of the Euro-American world? Could this work have implications for how we think about security in IR/Security Studies?

Two. As we saw in the discussion of military design, central to this focus (and controversy) on transgressive creativity is the question of “harm.” But how is harm understood differently among these different groups (and groups within groups)? As Eyal Weizman’s book *The Least of All Possible Evils: Humanitarian violence from Arendt to Gaza* (2017) illustrates, there might be serious differences in how a civilian and a military professional understand what harm is. Is the broadening of focus in the military design network to include issues of environmental insecurity and societal resilience indicative of changing perspectives in military thinking on harm and security that requires further study? At the same time, do critical designers think about harm that goes far beyond both the military perspective and even those working on the critical edges of security studies? And for all groups of designers, are there emerging trends and events in this work (for example, a project that has had unintended consequences, either “positive” or “negative”) that are challenging how they think about the dangers of transgressive creativity? Simply put, are we able to collect examples that illustrate and show the need for critical design and military/security design approaches—and illustrate both risks but also potential to minimize harm on global security challenges? The AOD’s *Breakaway: Reframing to Prevail* gives an insight into how future work based on extensive interviews and analysis could begin to unfold.

Three. Do we have a useful “mapping” of all the different attempts to use new creative techniques being used both in the academic and artistic worlds (exemplified by critical design) and the worlds of policy, government and the military (exemplified by military design)? What other trends do we see—and how significant and impactful are these new directions in theory and practice? This is possibly the most important question in terms of the broader impact on worlds of policy and international politics: do these “minor” events and groups discussed in the essay reflect a broader change that is occurring in terms of “disruptive” and creative techniques being used to explore complex global challenges? Or are these groups a marginal concern both in the academic world and the policy world? In this sense, evaluating and understanding the response to projects such as Leander and Austin’s *The Future of Humanitarian Design* by policymakers and other actors could be insightful in understanding the potential impact and significance of design and creativity on security.

To conclude: Is there a broader disciplinary significance of these possibly “minor” emerging “camps” or trends discussed in this article for IR/Security Studies, in these “liminal” zones that could easily be ignored by academics in the “field”? On this point, I think these two minor camps and processes of collaboration in these “liminal” academic zones

do raise broader disciplinary questions about contemporary research on security and war.

First, can collaboration on emerging and future security challenges with actors and areas of study outside the discipline and subfields produce insights beyond what emerges inside the discipline (in conference panels, journal articles, research projects and monographs)? Indeed, are we at a point—reflected in the different ways security, war, and design are being explored and their focus on collaboration—where the complexity of emerging security problems inevitably and inescapably requires collaboration and methods beyond the discipline? For example, it would be useful to research how different “camps” (policymakers, NGOs, academics, security professionals) view the current state of play in the production of “security knowledge” in the discipline, for example, given the significance of research on emerging security challenges being produced across anthropology, psychology, computer/data science and management studies, what are the books and projects that are giving members of different camps the most useful insight into contemporary (and future) international politics? Do IR and Security Studies scholars actually need to collaborate outside the conventional field in order to remain (or even become) relevant and insightful in light of the complexity of security challenges that take us into new areas of research that confront us with a variety of disciplines, sciences, theories, and methods? Do researchers need to collaborate more on creative partnerships with actors outside the discipline to understand contemporary and future security challenges or should our role be to “research the researchers” (which is possibly the conclusion that Öberg’s essay points us to especially in relation to military actors)?

But there is more to this than the need for new types of research and collaboration. Are designers and new artistic approaches needed to articulate, visualize, and explain the knowledge that emerges from interdisciplinary security research? One of the useful insights from the exhibition on *Science Fiction: Voyage to the Edge of Imagination* held at the Science Museum in London in 2023 was on how explaining complex environmental challenges through vivid and creative stories or scenarios could bring to life the insights of research/knowledge that might otherwise feel distant or abstract (Morgan 2022); the work of climate fiction (or “cli fi”) produced by writers such as Kim Stanley Robinson in books like *Ministry for the Future* can make “real” and immediate the future challenges that are almost too overwhelming and complex to comprehend. Simply put, the complexity of emerging security challenges might require new tools of creativity and “craft” in order to produce alternative types of engagement with research in both the policy world and the public sphere. There is an interest in how Science Fiction can be used to explore future scenarios in security and global politics. But rather than using Science Fiction as a means to *predict* the future, the use of imagination and creativity is possibly being used more as a tool of communication and education on future challenges (for those who are more familiar with Science Fiction films than works of military theory and history); for example, *Strategy Strikes Back: How Star Wars Explains Modern Military Conflict* is an important example of creative attempt to use *Star Wars* not as a way of predicting the future but of teaching and explaining military and strategic concepts and history (Brooks et al. 2018). Beyond the specific approaches and concerns of critical design and military design, are there emerging possibilities in creatively explaining and presenting new research, ideas, and problem framing?

Second, do we have a clear sense of the different creative collaborations—such as the Future of Humanitarian Design project—that are underway across the discipline, collaborations that really push IR/security studies scholars into new directions, methods and approaches? Can we “map” these collaborations to gain a sense of how the discipline is changing in response to new challenges, collaborations, methods and areas of study? While we might inevitably focus on both the uniqueness or distinctiveness of the challenges we confront and new methods of understanding/researching emerging security challenges, are there examples or events in the history of IR and Security Studies that reveal moments where creativity and “making things” were explored? There are, for example, exhibitions such as the V&A’s *Cold War Modern: Design 1945–1970* that illustrated the different ways design was used in response to the military/security challenges that emerged during the Cold War but also in terms of how design was used as a way of shaping the symbols and images that produced the politics of representation and identity in the Cold War (Crowley and Pavitt 2008). But have there been moments of creativity and “making things” that are yet to be documented in the disciplinary histories of IR and Security Studies? Have there been “experiments” in creatively presenting research in the discipline that are not visible or well-known in disciplinary histories?

Third, are there sufficient “guidelines” (including ethical guidelines) on the problems and opportunities on how to develop research beyond the more conventional methods (for example, bringing games designers, academics and the military together)? For example, is there sufficient attention given in contemporary disciplinary/professional training and expertise on how to produce creative projects with actors outside the discipline/university? Do we need to think more about how to create the institutional processes that enable new thinking—and the new ways or crafts of presenting research creatively in worlds in “societies of the spectacle” overwhelmed and overloaded with images and information?

There are new possibilities emerging on how design can be used to develop alternative approaches to research in the discipline—and new “crafts” for presenting and explaining broader research on the problems of security and international relations. Just as critical design can reveal the hidden work of design in everyday life, hopefully, this special issue can make visible the possible uses of design in the creation and presentation of future research on security and international relations.

FILM

Archipelago of Design 2022, “How Might Wargaming Tear Down Barriers To Innovative Thinking in Defence and Security Cultures,” 13 July, viewed on October 26, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5A-WiOluxY4>

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