



Call for Papers

Special Issue: War and Fun

Journal: War and Society

Guest editors:

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Rationale

Fun has every shade of connotation, from the most joyful to the most sinister. The special issue “War and Fun” will use the category of “fun” and related concepts – pleasure, humour, joy – as an entry point to explore the experience of war from the perspective of those who fight. The special issue builds on an ongoing project funded by the European Research Council and entitled “War and Fun: Reconceptualizing Warfare and Its Experience”.

An understanding of the complexity of participation in war requires an epistemic change in conventional learning and debate. Amidst violence and gore, and despite – or sometimes because of – its horror and shock, war has always been marked by the assiduous presence of “fun” in manifold forms. In different wars from Afghanistan to Iraq and today in Ukraine there have been several documented cases of soldiers enjoying combat or killing, collecting pieces of human bodies as trophies and engaging in pranks, hazing and sexual harassment. Videos have also circulated of soldiers dancing, laughing or playing games like Pokemon in the heat of battle.

In a sporadic and anecdotal way, novels, films, music and, more recently, blogs and social media remind us that those involved directly in the horrors of war also experience fun, excitement, and pleasure. Sometimes in a dark manner, other times as a coping mechanism. Yet, the element of fun in war has rarely been the focus of systematic theorization and empirical scrutiny in the social sciences. Although recent studies have started to address the complex array of feelings and sensations in war, the questions related to the moral, strategic, psychological, emotional, and social implications of fun in war remain surprisingly unexplored in the social sciences. Indeed, it is important to focus on fun because, given that it is commonly understood as antithetical to war and beyond its scope, fun gives us the opportunity to expand the very meaning of what it means to be at war, thus rethinking the epistemology of war.

The suffering and hardships that humans endure within war cannot be stressed enough. It is precisely for this reason that we need more nuanced understandings of the experience of war. While exploring the relevance of fun in war may strike some people as trivializing human suffering, we invite contributions to show that an investigation of this kind is crucial if we want to unveil the

plurality of experiences and affective grammars that would otherwise be neglected by the exclusive focus on the normative aspects of war.

Deadlines

31 March 2023: submission of title, abstract (150 words), and bio.

16 June 2023: submission of full paper (max 8000 words).

Submissions should be sent to:

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Project info: <https://www.cmi.no/projects/2535-erc-war-and-fun>