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Resisting Racial Militarism: War, Policing and the Black Panther Party

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The US Black Panther Party (BPP) has long been an inspiration and intellectual touchstone for anti-racist and anti-fascist movements around the globe. Thanks to their promotion of community self-defence and survival programmes, their role in developing an aesthetics of Black pride and rebellion, and their accompanying critiques of police, state and carceral violence, racial and capitalist exploitation, and global imperialism, the Party's place as one of the most significant revolutionary movements of the 20th century is assured. In the 21st century, against a backdrop of mounting racial oppression and economic stratification, and specifically in the aftermath of the brutal police murder of George Floyd in May 2020 and the worldwide protests that erupted in response, the Party is perhaps more relevant than ever, with its tactics and analyses forming an integral component of the genealogy of contemporary Black radicalism. In this paper we show how the BPP developed a radical and valuable account of the politics of militarism. By reflecting on their participation in the anti-Vietnam War movement, on their analysis of the ghetto as a colonised and occupied space, and through an excavation of Panther leader Huey P. Newton's theory of 'intercommunalism', we outline an account of militarism that foregrounds the politics of race and coloniality. This account emphasises the interactions of racial capitalism, the privatisation of warfare, violent practices of un/bordering, and police power, allowing both for a substantive account of present-day militarism as well as radical inhabitations of anti-militarism.

Within International Relations (IR), scholarship on militarism has seen a considerable resurgence in recent years. A key concept during the Cold War, militarism was pushed to the margins of academic inquiry by a combination of liberal triumphalism and security hegemony (Stavrianakis and Selby 2012; Stavrianakis and Stern 2018). Few beyond feminist scholars paid serious attention to developing and using the concept (Enloe 2000; Cockburn 2012). More recently, there has been a renewed interest in concept of militarism as a way of making sense of the embeddedness of war-like relations in contemporary 'liberal' societies, and of accounting for how the social, political and economic contours of those same societies are implicated in the legitimisation and organisation of political violence (Basham 2013; Rossdale 2019; Stavrianakis and Selby 2012). Building on the insights generated by this important body of work, this article seeks to spotlight race and racism in contemporary militarism. It departs from much of the literature, however, by arguing that

racism and coloniality are not epiphenomenal or merely ‘facets’ of militarism but are in fact integral to its functioning.

By highlighting a persistent shortcoming in IR scholarship on militarism – that is, the limited account of race and coloniality – we do not mean to imply that these categories are completely absent. Rather our claim is that race, racism and empire are frequently positioned as secondary to what are considered more fundamental features through which political violence is entrenched and made possible. This absence, or more accurately, subsumption of race and coloniality severely limits the concept of militarism. More problematically, it produces analyses which normalise or overlook the violence to and through which racialised subjects are targeted, subjected and enlisted. It produces accounts of militarism and its associated hierarchies (war/peace, normal/exception, violence/nonviolence) that reproduce the very foundations through which racialised violence is made possible. In contrast, and writing alongside others who view racism as foundational to militarism (Howell 2018, Khalid 2015; Parashar 2018; Stuurman 2020), in this article we put forward an account of contemporary militarism that is intrinsically concerned with the politics of both race and colonialism.

We develop our argument through a sustained encounter with the Black Panther Party (BPP), a Black radical organisation active across the US and internationally between 1966-1974. From its origins in Oakland, California, the BPP grew quickly, electrifying Black radical politics by combining a potent analysis of racial and capitalist exploitation with practical organising and a new aesthetics of pride and rebellion (Heath 1973). At its peak the BPP was one of the dominant revolutionary forces within the US, with 68 chapters in cities across the country alongside an international section headquartered in Algeria and close relationships with political organisations throughout Asia, Africa and across Europe. (Bloom and Martin 2013: 2-3). The Panthers were taken seriously enough that the US state directed a massive programme of violent repression against them. They were notable for their use of armed self-defence against agents of the state, for their extensive community survival projects which included the provision of free medical care, legal support, and a massive breakfasts for children programme, and for an internationalism which drew intimate connections between the experience of the ghetto and global anti-colonial struggle.

In the paper we show how the particular analysis developed by BPP members, manifested both in the accounts of key figures – especially Newton - and the embodied politics of movement, offers an important reading of the politics of contemporary militarism. In the initial section of the paper we show how the Panthers’ often-uneasy participation in the anti-Vietnam War peace movement demonstrated the limitations of conceptualisations of militarism which overlook or subordinate policing and racialised state violence. We then examine how the BPP challenged the spatial and statist contours through which militarism is often understood by offering a sustained critique grounded in their analysis of the ghetto as a colonized space and their understanding of the police as an army of occupation. This account urges a

rethinking of conventional distinctions between war and peace, international and domestic, and sets up an understanding of militarism that begins with racist exploitation and policing. The second half of the paper develops this account further by engaging the concept of ‘intercommunalism’, introduced by Newton in 1970 to theorise the declining importance of nation states and corresponding emergence of neoliberal racial capitalism. We submit that intercommunalism, as a re-orientation of prominent understandings of imperialism away from the state and towards a political economy of imperial extraction and power projection, grounds a formidable account of militarism. This intercommunal theory of militarism is constitutively attentive to the interactions of racial capitalism, police power, and the uneven, albeit simultaneous, withering away and intensification of state practices. We expound on this first through Newton’s speeches and writing on the subject, and subsequently through a case study of martial relations between the US and Israel. This was a relationship that was of some interest to the Panthers, both because it represented particularly violent practices of empire, and important possibilities for resistance and solidarity. We show how an intercommunal account of militarism calls attention to the operations of racial capitalism, violent practices of un/bordering, and police power in this relationship, as well as some potential routes for international solidarity and a radical anti-militarist politics.

Vietnam

The Panther’s rapid growth between 1966 and 1970 coincided with both the escalation of the war in Vietnam and the development of an anti-war movement which, in 1969 would involve the largest public protests to-date in US history. Newton, Eldridge Cleaver and other Panther leaders paid careful attention to this emerging crisis in US military power, not least because it provided opportunities to weave together apparently disparate struggles and build new coalitions in opposition to empire. It was on the basis of a shared opposition to imperial intervention that the Panthers cautiously supported the anti-war movement. However, the Panthers also criticised the peace movement for its failures to fully contend with the continuities between the war in Vietnam and the treatment of Black people within the US. Their ambiguous relationship with this movement highlights both the critical potential of a BPP account of militarism, and the limitations of approaches to militarism which fail to attend to the intimacies of racism and militarism.

The war in Vietnam emerged as an important reference point for the Panthers. They insisted on a fundamental equivalence between the experience of peasants in Vietnam and Black people in the US, both subjected to a violent American state. They also refused to differentiate between the agents of this state, Newton recalling that ‘[w]e...viewed the local police, the National Guard, and the regular military as one huge armed group that opposed the will of the people’ (2009: 118). Elsewhere, he expanded:

Black people desire to determine their own destiny. As a result, they are constantly inflicted with brutality from the occupying army, embodied in the police department. There is a great similarity between the occupying army in Southeast Asia and the occupation of our communities by the racist police. The armies are there not to protect the people of South Vietnam, but to brutalize and oppress them in the interests of imperial powers (Newton 2019: 161).

These equivalences grounded an analysis which situated the relationship between the US state and Black people as both war-like and colonial, with the ghetto subjected to military occupation by the police. This analysis also set the terms for international solidarities through which US imperialism might be overthrown. Reflecting on the violent suppression of the Watts uprising in 1965, Cleaver wrote that the 'blacks in Watts and all over America could now see the Viet Cong's point: both were on the receiving end of what the armed forces were dishing out'. He further reflects on 'what all those dead bodies, on two fronts, implied. Those corpses spoke eloquently of potential allies and alliances' (1968: 159). The Vietnam War also presented new possibilities for alliances within the domestic United States. Notably the Panthers argued that the forceful conscription of over two million American citizens, and the violent repression of anti-war activists, meant that White radicals were finally experiencing the imperial violence that was the normal condition of Black life in the ghetto (Bloom and Martin 2013: 110-1).

Newton argued that the Vietnam war differed in important ways from previous US colonial conflicts. Whereas these involved the installation of military bases and Americans in leadership positions, the war in Vietnam was being fought in behalf of those seeking to enhance their power and position *within* the US. On largely Leninist terms, Newton maintained that the US's imperial wars functioned to drive the capitalist economy, and in particular the interests of a small number of 'super-capitalists'. In 1969 he argued that the peace movement was therefore 'one of the important movements that's going on', because peace in Vietnam 'would force a re-evaluation and a revolution in the basic economic composition of the country' (1970: 67). As such, 'if the peace movement is successful, then the revolution will be successful' (1970: 70). On these terms the Panthers played a tentative but significant role in the burgeoning anti-war movement.

Nevertheless, the Panthers were also deeply critical of the anti-war movement, primarily for its failure to contend with racialised violence within the US. If the violence directed against Black people in the US was indistinguishable from that directed against the Vietcong, if both are sites of armed occupation, then why should anti-war politics focus on one and not the other? Why call for the withdrawal of troops from Vietnam, and not from Detroit or Newark? It was on such terms that in February 1968 Panther leader Bobby Seale told an anti-war audience that 'you white people...can get 65,000 people to march against the war in Vietnam. Well, you better get 65,000 to march against the war against black people in your own backyard. We're not going to march, we're going to be defending ourselves' (cited in Wilson 2006: 203). These challenges were influential in pushing significant elements of the peace movement to recognise the

interweaving of anti-racist and anti-militarist struggle (Bloom and Martin 2013: 111). They also demand a reconceptualization of militarism. Insofar as the anti-war movement focused its attentions solely on the war in Vietnam, it operated with an account of militarism that maintained boundaries between the domestic and the international, and between sites of war and peace, which both normalised racialised violence within the US and obscured the imperial continuities which rendered both Vietnamese and Black American lives disposable.

For their part, elements of the White-dominated anti-war movement sought to respond to the Panther's challenge.¹ In response, and distinguishing themselves from other Black radical organisations of the time, the Panthers engaged in a series of tentative alliances with White-majority organisations. While these relationships stand as important examples of how apparent tensions between anti-racist and anti-war organising can be navigated, their shortcomings also demonstrate the ease with which critical perspectives on militarism fail to contend with the intimacies and specificities through which war and racism intersect, both bracketing off and reproducing racism. They highlight the processes through which the concerns and interests of whiteness are rendered synonymous with militarism in a way that detracts from militarism's cardinal predication on a racist violence and colonial dispossession.

The first such relationship was formed between the BPP and the Peace and Freedom Party (PFP), a predominantly White anti-war and anti-racist organisation (Wilson 2006). At Cleaver's urging, the two organisations reached an agreement in late-1967, whereby the Panthers would provide registered supporters and anti-racist credibility to the PFP, while the PFP would help the Panthers to raise funds in the wake of Newton's recent arrest on murder charges. Key Panther figures would run for electoral positions under the PFP banner, with Cleaver as party candidate for US President (Bloom and Martin 2013: 107-11). The alliance was rife with tensions from the start. While there were many reasons for this, a principle issue was that many within the PFP were uncomfortable allying themselves with Black militancy. These 'pragmatists' favoured a strategy for ending the Vietnam war which involved harnessing the anti-war attitudes of middle-class whites – those most likely to vote. While ostensibly committed to Black liberation, they felt that racism 'could only be confronted after anti-war sentiment pulled middle-class whites leftward' (Wilson 2006: 209). By tying the PFP to the violent image of the Panthers, the alliance endangered this strategy.

The second close relationship the Panthers formed was with the burgeoning anti-war organisation Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). The SDS was a more radical organisation than the PFP and proclaimed its

¹ We focus here on tensions between the Panthers and White-majority groups who dominated anti-war politics, but the movement was broad and heterogeneous, notably including emergent Asian American radical groups who built close relations with the Panthers, understood the inseparability of anti-racist and anti-militarist struggle, and so criticised the mainstream peace movement on similar grounds to those outlined here (Maeda 2009: 73-126).

support for the Panther platform with little reservation. In March 1969 the SDS national council meeting passed a resolution in which they declared the Panthers the vanguard of the Black revolution:

Within the Black liberation movement the vanguard force is the Black Panther party. Their development of an essentially correct programme for the Black community and their ability to organize Black people around this programme have brought them to this leadership. An especially important part of the Panther programme is the Black People's Army—a military force to be used not only in the defence of the Black community but also for its liberation (Students for a Democratic Society 1969).

Statements like these enabled the SDS to demonstrate their revolutionary and anti-racist credentials. However, they failed to translate into substantive support for the Panther programme; as David Barber demonstrates, the SDS frequently ignored specific Panther requests for solidarity, revealing a contradiction 'between the Panthers as real representatives of the black community...and the Panthers as vanguard representatives in the imagination of young white leftists' (Barber 2006: 238). The role and imaginaries surrounding Panther militancy is central here. The statement above and others like it emphasises the BPP military programme and their militancy precisely at a point where, in the face of brutal state repression, the Party were trying to deemphasise these and bring focus onto their community programmes. As 1969 progressed the dominant factions within the SDS – most notably the Weathermen – quietly ceased championing the Panthers as vanguard. Tracing emerging splits within the BPP, these SDS splinters took inspiration and guidance from minority Black radical groups which continued to encourage militant action (Hale 2011: 219).

In both the relationships with the PFP and the SDS, we see attitudes on the part of established anti-war politics which positions the relationship between anti-militarism and anti-racism as contingent, as crowded out by the White left's romanticised (read racialised) images of militancy. The PFP revealed those tendencies within the anti-war movement which saw anti-war and anti-racist organising as separable, the latter as optional and potentially inconvenient. The SDS ostensibly embraced the BPP programme, but struggled to see the Panthers other than through particular and racialised images of militancy; the Party was developing new tactics to respond to the war on the ghetto, but these appeared ill-equipped to match the fantasies projected onto the Panthers by many young white leftists (Hale 2011: 221). Across these two examples we see how the BPP's unsettling of the conventional terms of militarism was blunted, first by relegating racialised, domestic, peacetime violence to a subordinate or optional domain, and then through racialised imaginaries which reduced the BPP account of social warfare to an image of Black militancy. These breakdowns are made possible by and reveal the violences that inhere in accounts of militarism which subordinate an analysis of racism and coloniality; that these can be bracketed out or so starkly reproduced signals a certain methodological whiteness in the terms through which militarism has been positioned in

these cases. As Bhambra (2017) argues ‘methodological whiteness’ is predicated on the common-sense assumption that ‘Whiteness’ is the default position when it comes to knowledge generation and production. This universalizing of the ‘white’ perspective as *the* perspective elides the role played by race and racism in the very structuring of the world this perspective seeks to – ostensibly objectively – describe. Our argument is that the Panthers can help to develop conceptions of militarism which work against these dynamics. The following section outlines how such a conception emerges from the BPP analysis.

The War Analogy

The Panthers’ attitude towards the Vietnam War and peace movement was grounded in a broader analysis through which they made sense of the abject conditions of Black life in the US. This analysis drew heavily on both Black nationalism and anticolonial internationalism, connecting racist violence in the ghetto to global systems of extraction and exploitation. There are two conceptual moves in particular that we argue are pertinent for thinking about militarism from the perspective of the BPP.

The first of these, which drew on Black American figures like Malcolm X and Harold Cruse as well as Third World anticolonial writers including Frantz Fanon, was to recognise Black Americans as a *colonized* people, subjected to racist and economic violence by a totalitarian capitalist power (Abu-Jamal 2019; Malloy 2017: 18-45). Thus, rather than looking to the state apparatus or the liberal civil rights movement, the Panthers would aim to ‘make a coalition with every people in the world who has been fucked over by another people’ (Clever, cited in Malloy 2017: 70), and insisted in their 10-point programme that ‘[w]e will not fight and kill other people of color in the world who, like black people, are being victimized by the white racist government of America’ (Black Panther Party 1970: 3). The second move the Panthers made here was to recognize the police as an occupying force within Black communities, a principle agent of that colonization, ‘the foot-soldiers in the trenches of the ghetto’ (Clever 1968: 164).

Newton made sense of this colonial occupation as a condition of war. Drawing from Mao Tse-Tung, he wrote that ‘[p]olitics is war without bloodshed. War is politics with bloodshed’ (2019: 159). Just as it was waging war against the Viet Cong in Vietnam, the American state was waging war on Black people in the ghetto. In response to police brutality, racist criminalisation and incarceration, political disenfranchisement, and government aided and abetted poverty, the Panthers developed a raft of strategies. They started by conducting armed patrols of the police, in an effort to both limit police aggression and empower the Black community to defend itself against state violence (Newton 2009: 120-35). Over time their attention turned towards establishing community survival programmes, including free healthcare, breakfasts for children, prison transport, legal advice and even medical research (Bloom and Martin 2016: 179-198; Nelson 2013).

In a state of war, these strategies were seen as a necessary but insufficient means of surviving occupation, and ultimately for creating the conditions and social consciousness necessary for revolution and the overthrow of the colonial system. As aforementioned the Panthers also sought alliances with other oppressed groups, including indigenous and Latinx movements, in recognition of common struggle against the racist, colonial, capitalist system (Malloy, 2017)

The Panthers' colonial war analogy has significant purchase for contemporary theorising on militarism, focusing attention on the relationship between liberal politics and the multiple modalities of (racialised) violence they deploy. First and foremost, it targets and unsettles a series of conceptual relationships through which the violence of liberal societies is normalised and perpetuated. The most straightforward of these is the distinction between war and peace. The BPP were at pains to demonstrate how what is conventionally understood as a condition of peace, the normal functioning of domestic life within the US state, is in reality a condition of perpetual warfare. That quotidian police violence, mass incarceration, and deep economic exploitation and poverty are presented as conditions of peacetime reveals the inadequacy of the idea of peace as an opposition to declared war between states. In the words of Panther member George Jackson, 'Politics and war are inseparable in a fascist state' (cited in Heiner 2008: 313). This challenges other hierarchies that are constitutive of our understandings of war and peace. For instance, war is conventionally positioned as a site of *exception*, the departure from the *normal* conduct of political life, and as the concern of *international* life, as distinct from the *domestic*. The Panthers revealed how the apparent conditions of peace, normalcy and domesticity within the US are rooted in and reliant on racial violence.

This challenge is most clear in the BPP's refusal of distinctions between imperial troops abroad and police at home, distinctions which help subordinate the racist policing of Black Americans. If militarism as a concept is supposed to elucidate the social relations which make possible organised political violence (Rossdale 2019: 3-5), then from a BPP perspective it must centre the exploitation and repression in the ghetto, instances *par excellence* of systemic political violence. To bracket out the experience of the state sanctioned oppression of people of colour occludes racial violence, indeed makes it workings possible and even seamless. Above we demonstrated that such elisions could be found within the peace movements of the sixties (and continue today, see Rossdale 2019: 199-200), but they are also present in academic work on militarism which overlooks or marginalises racialised violence and police martiality (Mann 1987; Stavrianakis and Selby 2012).

Nevertheless, the Panthers' critique shares some affinities with poststructural and feminist accounts of militarism. These too have critiqued the ways violence is folded into and out of particular politicised distinctions between war and peace, normal and exceptional, domestic and international, revealing the martiality of supposedly non-martial politics (Basham 2013; Der Derian 2009; Enloe 2000). However, while they do not absent race and colonialism *per se*, these are frequently relegated to secondary features rather

than organizing structures. Feminist work often (but not always) foregrounds gender hierarchy as the principle determinant of militarism, thus earning bell hooks' pointed retort that 'imperialism, not patriarchy, is the core foundation of militarism' (1995: 61). Poststructuralist and especially Foucauldian work, even if not explicitly expressed through the lexicon of militarism, encompasses similar concerns about the social ordering of political violence (Dillon 2008; Neal 2008; Evans 2010). However, it betrays a curious absent presence with regard to race, coloniality and the Panthers. On the one hand, a recurrent critique of this work is to argue that while Foucauldian thought does foreground race in relation to war, the account of race on which it is premised is a thin one, divorced from its origins in colonial violence, instead 'a sorting process *after* the fact of the establishment of biopower' (Howell and Richter-Montpetit 2019: 5, emphasis in original). As such, while poststructural accounts offer important insights into liberal violence, they struggle to engage racism and coloniality as foundational to this violence (Mbembe 2003, Weheliye 2014). On the other hand, as Brady Heiner demonstrates, Foucault's thought on state violence and disciplinary power was heavily influenced by Panther figures George Jackson and Angela Davis and their writings on social warfare and carceral politics (2008). In a pamphlet written after state assassination of Jackson, Foucault writes: 'Jackson has already said it: What is happening in the prisons is war, a war having other fronts in the black ghettos, the arms, and the courts' (Foucault et al. 2007: 140). The elision of substantive accounts of race and colonialism in Foucauldian work is thus accented by their quiet but foundational role in his theoretical project. Alexander Weheliye argues that this move signals how 'white supremacy and coloniality still form the glue for the institutional and intellectual disciplinarity of western critical thought'. He continues:

Since the idea of the BPP are limited to concerns with ethnic racism elsewhere, they do not register as thought qua thought, and can thus be exploited by and elevated to universality only in the hands of European thinkers such as Foucault, albeit without receiving any credit (2014: 63).

The affinities between Foucauldian and Panther approaches to militarism are in this sense not a coincidence, but signal a common foundation obscured by an epistemic injustice, or a willful amnesia, in that Foucauldian work has been formulated through, and shaped by the dynamics of racism and anti-Blackness, but these have either been obfuscated or canalised into one of many 'subsets' that animate the European project. In recognizing Panther struggle as a space for theorizing militarism here, then, we are returning to foundations on which disciplinary obscurations have proceeded.

In contrast to much of the feminist and poststructural work on militarism, then, what the Panthers do is underscore and foreground the imperial nature and racist contours of those martial hierarchies, which conceal or subordinate state violence against marginalised subjects. They also, however, go a step further to demonstrate how these very hierarchies are produced through and predicated on this normalised violence. This is most fully fleshed out in their comparison of the war on Vietnam and against Black people

at home in the US. But they extend it to analyses of seemingly distant cases including the criminal justice system in the US, the subjugation of indigenous resistance by Portuguese colonial forces in Mozambique, the use of imperial aggression in Cuba, and the creation of a global *lumpenproletariat*, that ‘underclass’ of people – often racialised – uninterested in political organisation and without revolutionary consciousness (Mokhtefi 2018; Stallybrass 1990) In all these instances, by spotlighting a diverse array of seemingly unconnected violent manifestations, the Panthers chip away at the distinction between the liberal, peaceful, domestic norm(al) and the warlike, international exception(al). The Panthers and scholars thinking with them show how such distinctions are rooted in and parasitic on anti-Blackness and capitalist exploitation (Davis 1971, Wang 2018).

The Panthers thus impel us to read militarism through-and-as the processes by which liberal capitalist society is structured by warlike relations *and* as the strategies through which these relations are concealed, obscured or naturalised. Those processes of naturalisation are at the same time a story of the operations of race, qua the violent ideological-material work of organising and naturalising difference/hierarchy (Lowe 2016). Militarism in this account is intimately related to, and ultimately constitutive of, the racial liberal capitalist order. However, while this attention to how race structures distinctions between war and peace is crucial, it is not where we locate the substantive Panther account of militarism. Rather, it makes possible a series of moves through which the Panthers identify and contend with emergent forms of militarism. These involve the interactions of racial capitalism, new dynamics of internationalism, and the dominance of police power. While these interactions are anticipated in early Panther analyses of internal colonization, they find fuller expression in Huey Newton’s theory of Intercommunalism, first articulated in 1970. Here we find an important account of contemporary global militarism.

Intercommunalism

From late-1969 onwards, significant divisions begin to emerge within the BPP. While these splits were variously created and stoked by the FBI and other forces, they also traced important political differences. From exile in Cuba and then Algeria, Cleaver remained unrelenting in his advocacy of armed insurrection from within the imperial centre. Back in the US, Newton began to conceptualise a new direction. In response to the intensifying state repression of the organisation, but also recognising the failures of the Party’s existing strategies to foment revolution, he insisted that a new theoretical understanding of capitalism and the state was needed. The theory of intercommunalism was born, first outlined in detail during a speech at Boston college in 1970 (Newton 2019: 173-188). In the second half of this paper we argue that Newton’s account of intercommunalism, directly informed by the racial politics of the Vietnam era albeit with a change in emphasis, represents an essential contribution to debates on anti-militarism and the possibility of liberation and solidarity in a world structured through empire. Furthermore, we argue that

intercommunalism provides valuable tools for understanding the nature of contemporary militarism, especially insofar as it directs attention to the interactions of racial capitalism, the shifting nature of the state and bordering practices, and the role of police power. We first introduce Newton's theory, before setting out how intercommunalism frames these three dimensions. In the last pages we demonstrate how an intercommunal theory of militarism works in the context of US-Israel relations, just as the Vietnam experienced shaped the colonial war analogy, and outline how intercommunalism also urges a turn towards insurgent practices of radical solidarity.

In 1967 Newton was arrested and charged with murder of a police officer. Although his subsequent conviction of voluntary manslaughter would later be overturned, this was not before he had spent two years in prison. During this time he reflected on how evolving strategic and political conditions were inhibiting the BPP's revolutionary project. In spite of mass mobilisations and bold promises, the material conditions for those in the ghetto remained broadly unchanged, while the state appeared more determined than ever to treat Black people like enemy combatants, now employing tactics first trialled in Vietnam (Tullis 1999). Meanwhile, it seemed that the revolutionary credentials of the Panthers' allies in the Third World were warping as they became ensnared in Cold War geopolitics. Some, especially those who aspired to state power themselves, became notably more wary of allying themselves with a revolutionary organisation that posed a direct challenge to the US government (Malloy 2017: 203-7). It was in this context that Newton theorised a new stage in global, imperial relations of capitalist production: intercommunalism.

Newton argued that the United States is better understood not as a state, but as an empire, which, owing to an unparalleled concentration of military might, economic wealth and political power had 'transformed itself into a power controlling *all* the world's lands and people' (Newton 2019: 199, emphasis in original). The aggressive spread of production and consumption chains was embedding capitalism across the world, shifting 'the practice of imperial rule from the occupation of land and native populations to the spread of technology, markets and potential consumers' (Narayan 2019: 63). These networks and technologies superseded and undermined state boundaries, such that for Newton the nation state had ceased to function as a reference point for politics: 'because of the fact that the United States is no longer a nation but an empire, nations could not exist, for they did not have the criteria for nationhood... These transformations and phenomena require us to call ourselves "intercommunalists" *because nations have been transformed into communities of the world*' (Newton 2019: 183, emphasis in original). In this new environment, decolonisation no longer made sense; the countries that had gained formal independence from their European overlords remained subject to US-backed capitalist control. As John Narayan argues, this account portends contemporary debates about the politics of neoliberal globalization (2017; 2019). It also has significant implications for how we think about both militarism and international solidarity.

This new perspective on global power relations had a profound effect on how Newton theorised revolution. Wary of the dangers of nostalgia for New Deal liberalism and its imperial foundations, and suspicious of

revolutionary nationalism's racialised divisions in the face of empire, Newton urged a move towards 'revolutionary intercommunalism': 'It is true that the world is one community, but we are not satisfied with the concentration of its power. We want the power for the people' (2019: 187). The retreat of the state must therefore be met with the cultivation of new forms of community, and new forms of relations with other communities subject to empire, *en route* to 'a place where people will be happy, wars will end, the state itself will no longer exist, and we will have communism' (Newton 2019: 188). A revolutionary organization should focus on revealing the fiction of state power as a route to liberation, and generate 'alternative ways of life, both institutionally and ideologically, to the racially divisive, class exploitative and gendered structures of capitalist society' (Narayan 2017: 13).

Intercommunalism and Militarism

The first half of this paper set out how the BPP called attention to the war-like nature of liberal capitalist society, so highlighting the racialised violence concealed through accounts of militarism that maintain boundaries between domestic and international, war and peace. Newton's theory of intercommunalism allows us to develop this account further. There are three interlinked moves we find particularly productive. The first, to ground understandings of militarism in terms of racial capitalism. The second, as the state's role recedes, to look for both the privatisation of martial politics, and violent practices of bordering and unbordering. And third, an account which centres policing as a cardinal practice of global militarism.

Racial Capitalism:

The BPP always paid attention to the mutually constitutive nature of capitalism and White-supremacy, with Newton stating in 1969 that the 'white racist oppresses Black people for reasons not only related to racism, but also...[because]...it is economically profitable to do so' (2019: 160). Intercommunalism pushes these accounts of racial capitalism further by anticipating the probable effects of the globalisation of production alongside the decreasing importance of state borders. As a single imperial logic draws new places and subjects into capitalist markets, and expands through the use of technology rather than labour power, Newton anticipates a weakened proletariat and sharp rise in labour precarity. These changes are likely to be accompanied by an intensification of racial division (especially as White working classes in the global north experience the precarity from which they had been largely protected in the post-war settlement), and violence in the service of those expanding market imperatives and their contradictions (Narayan 2017; Newton 2019: 271-81). Narayan frames Newton's argument here as an account of racial capitalism, a concept which compels reflection both on the ways capitalist formations are always shaped by, reliant on and generative of racialised difference, and on how racialised difference is provoked by and yet constitutive of capitalist relations (Narayan 2017; see also Robinson 1983).

The Panthers demonstrated that organised political violence is carried out globally in the service of empire, from Cuba to Algeria, from Detroit to Palestine, from the ghetto to Vietnam. While there are differences in the particular capitalist imperatives and racialised logics in play across these spaces, they are linked through their co-implication in a global system of racial capitalism. It is here that militarism and racial capitalism appear as deeply interlinked. Racial capitalism both authorises and demands a plethora of violences, both formal and informal, public and private, quotidian and spectacular. The legitimisation of such violence is rarely free from a double investment in logics of both race and capital, although the mix may vary. Racial capitalism is also produced through such violence, which makes and naturalises raced difference, enlists and gratifies whiteness, and makes possible the expropriation, exploitation, and expulsion on which accumulation is reliant (Bhattacharyya 2018). Militarism is co-constitutive with racial capitalism, shaped through and productive of racialised difference and capitalist formations.

An account of militarism alongside racial capitalism folds in a wide array of sites and practices. And so, we might look to both private and public violence wielded in the service of extraction and expulsion in neoliberal and settler colonial practices in South America (Veltmeyer 2013). And at hi-tech arms production in the EU, which makes possible particular military interventions and a racial compact with particular sections of the working class domestically (Stavrianakis 2016). And, of course, martial policing and racist carceral violence within the US as a solution to labour precarity and unrest (Davis 1971; Jackson 1971; Kelley 2016). Across all of these examples, racial capitalism both compels and is remade by particular formations of militarism. The point therefore is not to argue that there is a single logic of racial capitalism that obtains everywhere (Bhattacharyya 2018: 8), and so a universal politics of militarism. Rather to acknowledge that particular logics of race and capital emerge from and remake their (and other) context(s), and so that militarism cannot be thought outside of particular constellations of racial capitalism.

The State:

Intercommunalism is predicated on the idea that the nation state is no longer a stable referent for political analysis or liberation; the integration of global imperial relations mean that particular nations no longer have meaningful autonomy – if indeed they ever did. Newton conceived of this as a process of both smoothing and fracturing (2019: 271-81). The integration of global technologies and production chains was dissolving boundaries between states, and between political domains of public and private. However, that centripetal, coming together of empire also fractures communities, intensifies racialised difference and breaks down solidarities. For powerful elites, the state and its borders have ceased to function as the sovereign centre of politics, while persisting as concentrations of power and sites of violent governance. In Newton's words 'there is a class among the plurality of competing interest groups which enjoys a predominance of power and can establish its own outlook as a prevailing ideology and [...] these interests

are expansionist, anti-revolutionary, and tending to be militarist by nature' (2018). Practices of bordering and unbordering emerge not as the assertion or recession of naturalised entities, but as contingent exercises of power by transnational elites in the service of racial capitalism.

Within the context of contemporary militarism, these uneven transformations in the modalities of relation between state-spaces, and between states and capital, are fundamental. The organisation of imperial political violence is an intensely transnational (or intercommunal) phenomenon, formed through cross-border partnerships in training, research & development, and military interventions (Stavrianakis and Selby 2012: 15). Emerging technologies including drones facilitate new practices of surveillance and warfare which subvert, transform or straightforwardly ignore conventional state borders, furthering colonial practices that enforce racialised hierarchies of capacity, knowledge and sovereignty (Agius 2017: 371-5, see also Graham 2018). And martial practices lie increasingly out of the hands of states, subcontracted to private police forces, security consultants, border guards and armies for an expanding array of tasks previously regarded as exclusively within the purview of states (Abrahamsen and Williams 2010). Nevertheless, at the same time as the state's role and its borders seem to recede, we also see an intensification of bordering practices, which govern and limit the movement of populations, frequently in a manner which exemplifies racial capitalism's drive towards abjection. Bordering is a central practice of contemporary militarism and racial capitalism; the vulnerability or desirability of particular borders (and the subjects they include and exclude) a principle incitement to violence, the martial governance of borders – both at delineated border zones and throughout society – a concerted practice of both public and private actors (Torres 2015). Gargi Bhattacharyya points out that the ongoing acceleration in bordering practices actually signifies the weakness, rather than strength, of contemporary states (2018: 128-9). Sites and relations of (un)bordering thereby provide fecund terrain for *inter alia* an enquiry into the limits of the state vis-à-vis intercommunalism, as well as being host to some of the most violent imbrications of colonialism and capitalism (Walia 2017).

Policing:

Newton's account of intercommunalism was grounded in the analysis of the police and policing that characterised earlier Panther understandings. In the Boston speech he reiterated that position, arguing that '[t]he "police" are everywhere and they all wear the same uniform and use the same tools, and have the same purpose: the protection of the ruling circle here in North America' (2019: 187). However, he develops this point by noting that '[t]he ruling circle no longer even acknowledges wars; they call them "police actions". They call the riots of the Vietnamese people "domestic disturbance."' (2019: 186). In so doing he recognises the centrality of policing to this new phase of empire. Here we suggest that the Panther account of policing should be integral to an intercommunal theory of militarism.

Alison Howell's important critique of the literature on 'militarisation' points out that accounts of police militarisation which imply prior histories of non-militarised police are both ahistorical and in danger of eliding violence against marginalised subjects. The original formation of police forces in imperial metropolises was a boomerang effect of violent colonial governance, and police forces have always been implicated in 'war-like relations with Indigenous, racialized, disabled, poor and other communities' (2018). The Panthers were firmly aware that US police forces engaged in war-like relations with Black Americans, as the earlier parts of this article outlined. Certainly, accounts of militarism that do not pay sufficient attention to the martial politics of the police are complicit in erasing the kinds of violence towards which marginalised subjects are likely to be subjected. But there is a broader reason why an account of policing may be so important to our account of militarism and intercommunalism.

It is possible that policing is a more integral concept for contemporary militarism than war. This is not to suggest that wars of many types are not ongoing, but that their function is more effectively captured through the processes and imperatives of policing. To make this argument we follow Mark Neocleous in moving beyond the analysis of those such as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri who have argued that war has become 'banalized' or 'reduced' to the status of police action, and rather to recognise global martial politics as concerned with a series of technologies and practices directed towards producing and maintaining capitalist order, pacifying unruly, disobedient and criminalised subjects (Neocleous 2014: 10-11; Hardt and Negri 2003: 12-13). This is not only a matter of *the* police, but a 'whole range of technologies [that] form the social order' (Neocleous 2014: 14). Across collapsing boundaries between state and private actors, between war and peace, between domestic and international, police power remains the central means by which social and structural violence is administered and maintained. This paper opened by outlining how the Panthers recognised the continuities between the use of force in Vietnam and in the ghetto; it is insofar as intercommunalism further dissolves the distinctions between policing at home and war abroad, and places emphasis on the role of new technologies in the service of neoliberal globalization, that they chart new global relations of police power, placing these at the heart of militarism.

Much as we wish to avoid methodologically nationalist accounts, our intention here is also not towards a singular global theory of militarism. Rather we want to suggest that a Panther-informed, intercommunal theory of militarism should pay attention to the interactions of racial capital, state bordering and unbordering, and the operations of police power. Their interplay offers a route to understanding militarism that recognises the centrality of racial capitalism. This account of the intercommunal politics of contemporary militarism is strongly evinced in the relationship between the US and Israel. In the final section we introduce key examples which highlight the interaction of racial capitalism, un/bordering and police power in this context, before concluding by outlining how such a framing makes space for intercommunal forms of anti-militarist resistance.

Intercommunal Militarism in the Israel-US Relationship

The US-supported Israeli victory in the Six-Day War of 1967 and the subsequent occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip led many American Black radicals to view the Palestinian struggle as intimately related to their own. Through Cleaver's international section, the BPP built a positive relationship with the PLO, with Cleaver on one occasion sharing a stage with Yasser Arafat and proclaiming that the 'Black Panther Party unequivocally supports the Palestinian people and their Vanguard forces in their struggle against the Zionist aggressor' (cited in Malloy 2017: 146). In September 1970 Newton issued a statement in which he insisted that the Panthers 'support the Palestinian's just struggle for liberation one hundred percent' (Newton 1972: 196).

The support that emerged from Cleaver's circles was more in-tune with the Party's established rhetoric. When international section member Donald Cox was invited by Fatah to address a Palestine student conference, he proclaimed: 'The young fedayeen being trained in the camps, on the battlefields, held captive, these are our revolutionary brothers. The young brothers in the ghettos of the US are our fedayeen' (cited in Malloy 2017: 146). While Newton would not necessarily disavow this frame, his statement on Palestine also showcases how a theory of intercommunalism recognises the paradoxical need for, and limits of, nationalist politics. He claimed that the Panthers must embrace the struggle for Palestinian nationalism, but this was necessarily a strategic rather than an unequivocal embrace:

Self-determination and national independence cannot really exist while United States imperialism is alive. That is why we don't support nationalism as our goal. In some instances we might support nationalism as a strategy; we call this revolutionary nationalism. The motives are internationalist because the revolutionaries are attempting to secure liberated territory in order to choke imperialism by cutting them off from the countryside (1972: 195).

In an intercommunal world where US empire renders national liberation a chimera, the importance of 'liberated territory' becomes paramount, and a way to recognise the importance of land without capitulating to a nationalist framework. Newton therefore sought to pivot the revolutionary struggle away from a narrow focus on the nation-state and towards communities under siege from empire (Narayan, 2020). The US' relationship to and support for Israel was therefore already indicative of the need for something different to, and more radical than, the creation of an independent nation-state in Palestine.²

Contemporary relations between the US and Israel can be read through an intercommunal theory of militarism, tracing the three strands identified in the previous section. First, we see the dissolving of state

² For a detailed account of how the BPP related to Palestinian struggle, see Fischbach (2019: 111-29).

boundaries for powerful actors including arms companies and police forces, alongside ever-more violent bordering practices directed against racialised others. Second, the function of police and policing as tactics of martial governance within a transnational or intercommunal environment. The police take on the mantle of a force without borders, engaging in war-like relations with those deemed a threat to social order. And third, both police power and un/bordering operate within a racial capitalist context, which simultaneously impels and is continually remade by these forces. Two examples illustrate these dynamics.

The Israeli arms company Elbit Systems' association with the US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agency demonstrates the imbrication of public and private actors and new technologies in the martial and racist policing of US border spaces. As Stephen Graham shows, the Department of Homeland Security 'routinely refers to the US-Mexico border in the same language that the US military uses to describe its war zones: a limitless "battlespace" encompassing a world where civilian life camouflages "targets" and where drones and other high-tech surveillance systems are the key to "persistent situational awareness" achieved through "network centric operations"' (Graham 2018). A 2019 report at *The Intercept* looks at surveillance systems installed on the Tohono O'odham Nation's reservation in Arizona, one mile away from the Mexico border. It demonstrates how the CBP has worked closely with Elbit Systems to construct ten 160-foot surveillance towers across the reservation, each capable of monitoring all people and vehicles within a 7.5 mile radius. The towers 'will be outfitted with high-definition cameras with night vision, thermal sensors, and ground-sweeping radar, all of which will feed real-time data to Border Patrol agents at a central operating station in Ajo, Arizona'. In addition, the towers will contain an archive with the ability to track and rewind each individuals' movement across time and space, a function ominously known as 'wide-area persistent surveillance' (Parrish 2019).

The project is valued at \$26m, and is only one amongst many such endeavours. The US branch of Elbit Systems has already built fifty-five integrated towers in southern Arizona, and has also deployed 368 smaller surveillances towers across the country from the south of San Diego to the Rio Grande Valle and along the US-Canadian border. The logic for choosing an Israeli company headquartered in Haifa is clear. Founded in 1967, Elbit boasts over 40 years of 'field proven operational experience', and is a 'world leader in border defense and control management systems' (Elbit Systems 2016). While the surveillance system is framed within the technocratic and neutral vernacular of smart borders, the result is a violent and coercive practice that not only targets those attempting to cross the border, but also indigenous people on the reservation and others deemed a threat to social order. Elbit's role is central here. It is a key node of the border militarism industry, having perfected its lethal technologies in Palestine ready for export to the rest of the world. The Palestinian territories and US borderlands both operate as 'laboratories for new systems of enforcement and control', where advancements in bordering and policing practices and technologies are developed and circulated globally (Parrish 2019). They are also sites where a 'homeland-industrial security complex', of which Elbit is one of many examples, harnesses racist rhetoric to promote high-tech fantasies

of social order, weaponised pacification through and in defence of racial capitalism (Graham 2018: 67-94). Here we see martial bordering practices shaped through while further entrenching transnational, colonial and racial capitalist networks; it is precisely such dynamics to which an intercommunal theory of militarism calls attention.

A second but linked example are relationships between Israeli actors and US police forces. The US' enabling and shaping of the occupation of Palestine was never only a one-way street; technologies and techniques developed through occupation also structure US policing. Since 2001, US government agencies, together with non-profit groups like the Anti-Defamation League, have sponsored police seminars for American police officers to learn from and build on Israeli expertise. Hundreds of law enforcement officials from across the US have travelled to Israel for training in 'effective counterterrorism techniques', while thousands of others have attended conferences with Israeli experts within the US (Pomerantz 2020; see also Amnesty 2016). Through these extensive programmes, Israeli expertise has shaped the policing of racialised communities within and beyond the US, informing new tactics in counter-insurgency, urban warfare, crowd control, interrogation, surveillance and more (Halper 2015: 250-63). US police forces have also bought 'battle-tested' weaponry from Israeli firms, such as the putrid smelling 'skunk' liquid, developed through collaboration between Israeli police and the scent-based weapons company Odortec, widely deployed and refined through use against Palestinians, and then stockpiled by the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department in the wake of the 2014 uprisings in Ferguson that followed the police killing of Michael Brown (Tucker 2015). These and other connections lead Graham to observe that 'the emerging security-military-industrial complexes of the two nations are becoming umbilically connected, so much so that it might now be reasonable to consider them as a single diversified, transnational entity' (Graham 2010: 259). This is precisely Newton's observation in laying out his theory of intercommunalism, the emergence of capitalist imperial formations which supplant the state form. The martial and racial projects of occupation and policing are co-implicated even as they impose distinct logics of violence and disposability.

These mutually reinforcing relations of racial capitalism and militarism are by no means unique to the US-Israel relationship. Both states are embedded in networks of circulation through which martial technologies, hardware and expertise proliferate across the world. The Israeli military has trained police forces from Brazil, the United Kingdom, and Saudi Arabia (Gross 2015; Machold 2016). Only recently, the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi received 'tips' from his counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu on how to quell dissent in Kashmir after his Hindu nationalist party, the Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) revoked Kashmir's special status and staged a military occupation (The Wire 2019). Meanwhile the US has long supplied the world with military technology, trained police and armed forces, and has been at the forefront of blurring boundaries between military and police action (Howell 2018; Schrader 2019).

Conclusion

Intercommunalism has purchase as a concept not only insofar as it accounts for relations of power and the constraints of the system, but because it provides fertile ground for resistance. As Angela Davis argues, contemporary relations between Black activists in the US and Palestinian resistance see the forging of transnational anti-racist and anti-colonial solidarities (2016). Faced with the decline of nation states and the emergence of a global ‘reactionary’ intercommunalism, Newton conceptualised ‘revolutionary intercommunalism’, the cultivation of new forms of community and solidarity, built on the edifice of liberated territory, which subverted and transcended the nation state. Locally for the Party this turn entailed an intensified focus on its survival programmes, designed to protect and nurture communities away from the frame of the nation-state. And while in the face of massive state repression and internal splits the Party never fully explored the global possibilities of revolutionary intercommunalism, it is a concept that offers much for thinking about anti-militarist formations.

In 2014, after the shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Israel’s fifty-day war in the Gaza Strip became a call to arms for the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. Activists highlighted the similarities between the mass incarceration and police killing of Black populations within the US and Gaza’s situation as an open-air prison. Protesters across the US chanted ‘from Ferguson to Palestine, occupation is a crime’ and stressed the connection between the two struggles (Bailey 2015). For their part Palestinians reacted to the violent policing of activists in Ferguson by Tweeting advice for minimising injuries in the face of police deployment of tear gas, demonstrating that technologies developed within an intercommunal world can be adapted in the service of revolution (Baker 2014). Noura Erakat observes that this ‘Ferguson-Gaza moment’ has developed into a sustained movement, featuring ‘delegations to the region, knowledge production, cultural work, and joint protest targeting the exchange of military and carceral technologies between the United States and Israel’, and culminating ‘in the summer of 2016, when the [BLM] movement endorsed Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) as part of its policy Platform for Black Lives’ (2020: 473). Erakat notes that there is nothing inevitable or natural about this solidarity, which she indicates is often inhibited by anti-Blackness within the Palestinian freedom struggle, but nonetheless argues that practical experiences of collaboration in-and-against white supremacy have served to generate transnational and anti-imperial relationships.

It is important to acknowledge that such relations and connections are often tenuous, difficult to institutionalise, and have a propensity to be overstated. These are not obviously the starting points of a new global revolution. In his extensive study of BPP internationalism, Sean L. Malloy shows that the Panthers constantly struggled to find a workable balance of practical local politics and global solidarity, even as they adopted one of the most radical and successful internationalist platforms of the era (2018). And yet, as Narayan argues, it is insofar as contemporary movements are able to generate solidarities and subjectivities that transcend state and nation that the possibilities for new worlds emerge (2017). These solidarities open

up avenues for challenging militarism. Movements that are intensely cognisant of the continuities in global violence and the operations of racial capitalism are on the rise. These movements recognise and are indeed a response to the fact that social warfare structures ‘liberal’ societies, and that 21st century militarism is a distinctly intercommunal phenomenon. Perhaps today more than ever, then, the Panthers’ relentless focus on and radical response to the imbrications of capitalist, racist and imperial violence serve as a powerful guide for understanding global relations of power and insurgent spaces of possibility.

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