
Trump Remakes the Military by Recentering Masculinity within National Security

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ABSTRACT

Since 2025, the Trump Administration has worked to undo socially progressive narratives and policy efforts, while recentering a privileged notion of White male “warriors” within social discourses and policies surrounding the United States armed forces. The Trump administration’s actions, and those of similar far-right actors across the globe, increasingly recenter the role of men and masculinity within International Relations (IR) and security narratives. The anti-DEI crusade, which domestically devalues the contributions of minority groups to the nation and workplace, is also being internationalized as far-right actors reframe security, diplomacy, and global affairs around an idealized notion of men and toxic masculinity. Renaming the “Department of Defense,” firing women and people of color from military leadership, emphasizing a bodily aesthetic of macho fitness for soldiers, and other similar actions reaffirm a male-centered and politically violent vision of the armed forces and IR. Overall, this transformation discredits previous efforts by scholars, activists, and policy practitioners to include women, queer, and other subjects within nationalist narratives, and re-legitimizes patriarchal violence within both domestic and foreign politics. Likewise, these efforts also push back on scholarly work in IR and Security Studies over recent decades, which has focused on decentering the role of men and masculinity within theoretical and policy debates to instead shed light on the experiences of other historically marginalized actors.

TAGS:

Armed Forces, Militarization, Security, Gender, Masculinity, Trump

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Examining the actions of Donald Trump's administration since 2025, and other illiberal far-right actors across the world, one notices their efforts to *recenter the role of men and masculinity* within both theoretical and practical policy applications of International Relations (IR) and Security Studies. More specifically, not only men, but habitually White, able-bodied, heterosexual, cis-gendered, conventionally attractive, men – which hearkens back to a White nationalist imagery of the “ideal” protector of the nation-state. Secondly, a more toxic form of hegemonic masculinity is being recentered; one tied to stereotypical gender roles, violent endeavors, emotionless action, and allegiance to conservative social hierarchies. Put differently, Trump and other similar illiberal actors are pushing back on decades of efforts within IR and Security Studies to *decenter the role of men and masculinity* and instead shed light on the experiences of women, people of color, disabled bodies, queer subjects, and other groups vis-à-vis international politics. Likewise, considerable recent policy and practitioner work in the field has emphasized the unique security needs of actors not traditionally centered within security narratives, including: civilians via Responsibility to Protect/While Protecting (R2P/RWP), migrant and refugee vulnerabilities, and the women, peace, and security agenda – efforts which Trump and other like-minded actors are currently working to erode.

The anti-Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI) crusade led domestically by Trump and his followers devalues and delegitimizes the contributions and experiences of women, people of color, disabled bodies, queer subjects, among other groups, to the nation and workplace, and their efforts have increasingly been internationalized. However, the domestic anti-DEI crusade – now brought to an international political scale – has been utilized by these actors to re-frame security debates, diplomacy, and global political affairs around the experiences and contributions of men. This essay examines this process, using the Trump administration as a case study to highlight how illiberal far-right actors are moving to recenter and reposition the image of a White, heterosexual, able-bodied, man as the “correct” provider of security for the nation-state.

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This process helps co-constitute and re-legitimize 1) patriarchal and other tropes in domestic and international politics and 2) real-world security decisions that make possible an escalating cycle of domestic and international political violence. Lastly, and crucially, this recentering of idealized male figures and hegemonic masculinity is not intended to benefit *all* men, or men as a social class, but only a particular narrow reading of “men” as a conventional patriarchal archetype.

Searching Beyond Male Subjects in International Politics

Two of the central contributions of feminist thought within IR scholarship since the 1980s and 1990s contend that 1) women’s experiences matter for, and are intrinsically part of, international politics and 2) looking at the world through the lens of those experiences shifts how we perceive and interpret international politics (Enloe 2000, 2014; Sylvester 2012; Tickner 1992, 2001). For instance, women are not just background actors within diplomatic circles. Even when most were historically cast in the role of ambassador’s wife or secretary within embassies, they employed society’s stereotypical perception of women to pass imperceptibly through diplomatic meetings and gatherings and impact political decision-making (Enloe 2014). Women have been present and actively contributed to peace negotiation processes, the formation of the United Nations system, and so forth, having an impact on international law, security norms, and international political theory (Enloe 2014; Adami 2018; Siegel 2020). Moreover, scholars have found that the presence and inclusion of women, especially female ex-combatants, within peace negotiation and peacebuilding processes are more likely to lead to durable peace outcomes (Brannon 2023, 2025; Thomas 2024). Furthermore, despite the stereotypical IR framing of “*womenandchildren*” as actors in need of protection and salvation by the state and male soldiers/guardians, women are also capable of wartime violence and atrocities, and have played important roles not just on the sidelines or in supply chain production roles during wartime, but also as combatants, leaders, and fighters (Enloe 1993; Gentry and Sjoberg 2015; Turner 2021). Ironically, while many wars are fought in the name of women – whether literally for the protection of *womenandchildren*, or figuratively for the defense of the “motherland” – women and other civilians often suffer the worst of war’s violence: sexual violence, starvation, bombing campaigns, forced displacement, and high casualty rates (Enloe 1993, 2000; Sjoberg 2013; Sjoberg and Thies 2023).

These theoretical points in no way minimize the violence and trauma suffered by frontline (male) soldiers during moments of inter-state or intra-state political violence and war or diminish the role of the armed forces in protecting civilians from invaders, aggressors, and insecurity. The point, though, is that terms such as “soldier” and “combatant” have been historically shaped in the West as inherently male/masculine identities, while the terms “civilian” and “non-combatant” have been shaped in the West as inherently female/feminine identities (Kinsella 2005). This binary leads to a process

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whereby female soldiers and women in positions of military leadership, as well as men labelled as “vulnerable” during wartime (or able-bodied men refusing to go to the frontline), each disrupt social expectations, in different ways, about the relationship between gender/violence/IR (Butler 1993, 2004; Freedman 2010; Turner 2021; Wilcox 2015). These processes were also racialized, and compounded by social norms regarding sexuality and class, thereby setting social expectations regarding who in society should “rightfully” be protected from harm, who should “rightfully” be protectors, and who should “rightfully” suffer the violence of the war and conflict (Butler 2004, 2009; Khalili 2011; Weber 1998, 2016). Within many Western societies, for instance, the nation is often imaged or represented as a maiden-like young woman (i.e., Lady Liberty, Britannia, or Marianne) and soldiers as muscular (often white or blonde) male or fatherly protectors standing ready to heroically die for the nation.

Although perhaps seemingly trivial on the surface, these social motifs and images constitute social expectations vis-à-vis who in society is vulnerable, who is not, and who is worthy of life/death and everything in between (Puar 2007, 2017; Butler 2009; Mbembe 2003). Part of the labor that critical IR, feminist, and other scholars working in this vein of thought have done is disrupt these preconceived notions of what “protecting the nation-state” means to include the experiences of women and other historically excluded subjects (Sylvester 2012). Likewise, patriarchal structures and social narratives do not benefit *all* men, or even benefit all men equally, as some men engage in practices of resistance against the patriarchy (either consciously or not), becoming “marked” by their nonconventional, resistant, or ambivalent masculinities for discipline, harm, and social exclusion. However, conservative backlash against progressive social causes has increasingly sought to repress or divert critical, feminist, and other theoretical scholarship/policy efforts and return to past stereotypes and notions of “male” and “female” gender roles, as evidenced by growing “book bans,” curriculum changes, and censorship of academic research and coursework across the United States (US) and other parts of the world.

Furthermore, conservative forces increasingly view progressive social causes, like gender equality, racial equality, and even climate change as an attack not only on their worldview and social privilege, but also on their very notion of masculinity. This has, in turn, led to growing interconnections between seemingly disparate socially conservative forces that call for a return to a mythical “past,” as is the case of “petro-masculinity,” which Cara Daggett (2018) describes as the lethal combination of: climate denial, racism, and misogyny. For Daggett (2018, 31), Trump’s message of “Make America Great Again” (MAGA) is a specific form of nostalgia for a mid-20th century (or perhaps even earlier) US society where White, able-bodied men allegedly ruled undisturbed over their households, workplaces, and domestic/international politics. Efforts to reject climate change, emission standards, and electric vehicles in exchange for coal mining, gas guzzlers, and environmental destruction are not only a set of economic choices then, but also a concerted effort to recenter a particular vision of hegemonic

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masculinity which is allegedly threatened within society (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Daggett 2018).

The Trump Administration's actions during 2025 and 2026, as detailed below, signal an understanding of these processes, and, most importantly, a concerted effort to pull society in a new direction by recentering the role and prominence of a particular cohort of men within nationalist/national security narratives. MAGA's desired return to a mythical past of military prowess and glory, led by White-able-bodied-muscular-heteronormative-men, then partially functions to foreclose doors on other groups within society that seek social inclusion and valorization, while simultaneously rationalizing and co-constituting new and ever-growing acts of violence both domestically and internationally. What follows is a preliminary attempt to make sense of this ongoing political process. This essay analyzes symbolic power, legitimization processes, and social discourses, rather than addressing possible comprehensive institutional capture or bureaucratic adherence/resistance to these efforts. Its analytic scope is limited to discursive-political moves and the political violence they help animate and mobilize, rather than the organizational capacity or long-term effectiveness of the administration's moves.

Trump Remakes the Military

Since 2025, the Trump Administration has worked to undo socially progressive narratives and recenter a privileged notion of White male protectors/saviors/warriors (in short, White Nationalist notions) within social discourses surrounding the US armed forces. For instance, without Congressional approval, the administration relabeled the "Department of Defense" to the "Department of War," to shift the perception of this bureaucratic entity from the feminized position of "defense" to the more seemingly masculine posture of "offense" and Spartan "war" readiness. In February 2025, Trump also fired the first African-American Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Charles Brown Jr., despite a decorated military record, as well as three women in military command roles with impressive resumes: Admiral Lisa Franchetti of the Navy, Admiral Linda Fagan of the Coast Guard, and Rear Admiral Shoshana Chatfield of the Navy. All four were replaced by White men. The administration subsequently ordered military academies to eliminate race-conscious admissions policies; flagged images promoting diversity and minority milestones within the armed forces for removal from websites; and keywords like "diversity," "gender," and "racism" among others, were used to search for and censor military academy libraries, leading to the removal of about 381 books from the Naval Academy library alone (Robinson 2025). The administration partially justified these decisions as efforts to undo "woke DEI" policies within the armed forces, which they claimed negatively impacted battle readiness. However, military observers and scholars have habitually stated that women are able to effectively perform in combat roles and that more diverse military leadership is an asset and not a detriment to battle readiness (King 2013): women now comprise about 18% of

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all active-duty servicemembers and about 31% of some Naval Academy cohorts as of January 2025 (Robinson 2025). In effect, these moves served to symbolically reaffirm society's preconceived notion of *who* should be seen in leadership positions.

We see this process play out, more broadly, across the other aesthetic and staffing choices of the second Trump Administration. For instance, Trump picked J.D. Vance as his Vice-President, remarking on his beautiful blue eyes and long eyelashes, and TV-ready looks, as one of the main reasons for his choice (Caputo and Miller 2024). Vance is also a Marine Corps veteran, having served in Iraq, who is habitually shown doing training exercises and running with service members at military bases, serving to perform a “macho” image of physical fitness and preparedness. Trump selected as his “Secretary of War” Pete Hegseth, an Army National Guard veteran who was deployed to Guantanamo Bay, Iraq, and Afghanistan, and who most recently served as a FOX News host. Hegseth also exudes a made-for-tv male appearance, coupled with a habitually performative masculine, tattooed, soldier aesthetic. And Hegseth, like Vance and other administration officials, has also demonstrated a penchant for taking photos and recording videos of himself exercising with soldiers, among other stereotypically “macho” activities.

The role of “Secretary of War” (as well as other executive branch positions) is a *bureaucratic* role that requires supply-chain management, personnel management, budget management, and strategic planning skills. “Good looks” that follow a Western racialized notion of attractiveness, physical stature, or body mass index are not inherent to any of these skills. Trump and his advisors, however, seem to believe otherwise. For them, leadership roles (military leadership in particular), seem to require a certain physical aesthetic appeal that remits to male movie stars like John Wayne, Rock Hudson, Tab Hunter, or Cary Grant. The US military – in their world view – cannot merely have advanced tactical weapons and first-rate strategic planners, it must also have muscular and handsome servicemembers and officers that appear ready for a close-up, exuding a 1950s movie era racial vision of the allegedly “average” US male citizen.

For example, a video of Hegseth¹ posted to X/twitter in February 2026 allegedly showing him bench pressing 315 lbs. surrounded by throngs of predominantly young White servicemen sparked debates online as to the legitimacy of the video, due to the very high weight the Secretary of War claimed to be lifting. Whether the video is fabricated or not is beyond the point, instead, the fact that the Secretary of War views producing this type of social media content as the best use of his time, and that he and his assistants felt a need for the weight to not be a more reasonable 135 lbs. or even 225 lbs., but rather a shocking 315 lbs. reveals the discursive importance this administration places on re-centering a particular aesthetic of masculinity and physical prowess within the armed forces. The shift from the elder overweight glasses-wearing African-American bureaucrat Lloyd Austin (Secretary of Defense under Biden) to the younger muscular White TV host Pete Hegseth (now marshalled as Secretary of War

¹ Video available at: <https://x.com/clashreport/status/2025160872184729737>

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under Trump) conveys not only a shift in tone and policy, but also an altered visual identity for the armed forces, centered on what are conventionally read as sexually and physically “desirable” male bodies.

Case-in-point, during a June 2025 visit to Fort Bragg in North Carolina for the Army’s 250th anniversary, leaked messages among event organizers stated that “no fat soldiers” should be picked to stand behind or around President Trump during his photo-op moment, resulting in an image from the event of Trump surrounded by predominantly White, fit-looking, male servicemembers (McCann Ramirez and Bort 2025). This episode is precisely the kind of militarized cultural production that Enloe (2000) emphasizes as central for the transformation of soldiers’ bodies into sites of political performance, whereby physical fitness standards are less so about operational efficiency, and more so about disciplining society’s understanding of what masculinity and military power should look and act like. In October 2025, Hegseth put out a statement criticizing the Netflix series *Boots*, which portrays the experiences of a group of young gay and straight servicemembers undergoing basic training for the Marine Corps in the early 1990s. In his statement, Hegseth decries the Netflix show for presenting a “weak” vision of the US armed forces, claiming: “Under President Trump and Secretary Hegseth, the US military is getting back to restoring the warrior ethos. Our standards across the board are elite, uniform, and sex neutral because the weight of a rucksack or a human being doesn’t care if you’re a man, a woman, gay, or straight (Moreau 2025).” The Trump Administration is intent on excluding any female, minority, or overweight soldiers from their aesthetic imagery of the armed forces because that would detract from the administration’s preferred symbolic representation of itself and its policies as powerful, virile, and working to give opportunities to White men who were “sidelined” by DEI initiatives. White men are Trump’s most loyal voting bloc, therefore, reaffirming them within his visual representations and leadership hierarchy of the armed forces, also serves to affirm their status as a priority group for the administration. These various episodes collectively help recenter men within security narratives as the “rightful” protectors of the nation, pushing back on previous efforts to include women, queer, minority, and other subjects within nationalist narratives as potential “warriors” for the nation-state.

Moreover, this recentering of certain male figures within military narratives also pushes back on previous efforts for certain groups to gain social capital. As Jasbir Puar explains through her concept of “homonationalism,” queer individuals in the West have moved to make social citizenship claims, and “normalize” their place within society by signing up to serve in the armed forces, proving their “value” to the nation-state (Puar 2007). In the aftermath of 9/11, numerous queer men enlisted in the armed forces as a way of challenging social stigmatization and claiming political power (i.e., Pete Buttigieg), by distancing themselves from the racial ethnic “others” they were sent to fight overseas, and positioning themselves as closer to the idealized image of the domestic White soldier/savior (Puar 2007; see also Weber 2008). This also recalls an earlier debate in US society whereby W.E.B. DuBois argued, at the time controversially,

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African-American men (despite being treated as second-class citizens) needed to “close ranks” and enlist in World War I to prove their manhood. Military service, in DuBois’ view, would better position them to demand civil rights and equality after the war due to their earned status of defenders of the nation-state (Du Bois 1918). And indeed, the contributions of African-American soldiers in both World Wars and Vietnam, and LGBTQ soldiers in Afghanistan and Iraq, among other examples, have helped pave the way for these marginalized groups to legitimize their calls for social change. Military service since World War II has also been a route (and for many the only route) for marginalized groups to obtain resources for college education, mortgage offerings, small business loans, and even US citizenship, among other services.

To an extent, the Trump Administration realizes the social capital which military service carries within US society, and moves to remake the military by undoing DEI practices. This process allows the administration to siphon off economic, social, and leadership opportunities from women, racial minorities, queer, and other groups, redirecting them towards the administration’s largest voting bloc of White male supporters. However, it is important to note that women, people of color, queer individuals, and overweight/obese bodies are *still* an active part of the armed forces and play a crucial role in both combat and support roles. Based on most recent publicly available data, about 18% of all active-duty servicemembers are women (Robinson 2025); approximately 19.5% identify as Hispanic/Latino, 17.6% as African-American, and 4% as Asian (DOD 2024), collectively comprising almost half of the armed forces; around 6.3% identify as LGBTQ (Meadows et al. 2021a); and about 50% are classified as overweight and 14.4% as obese (Meadows et al. 2021b). Ironically enough, this recent data finds that female and LGBT servicemembers are less likely to be obese (and more likely to meet military fitness standards) when compared to male and non-LGBT servicemembers (Meadows et al. 2021b: 145, 77). The administration is attempting to erase or exclude minority actors from their photo opportunities, posters, and campaign ads, thereby relegating their service and presence to the background of military aesthetic narratives, even as they remain an important part of the armed forces labor pool. Most recently, Hegseth reportedly removed two women and two African-American men from a list of individuals being considered for high-ranking military promotions (Walker 2026).

Domestic and International Violence and Patriarchy Re-Legitimized

After the Cold War, many IR theoretical debates have revolved around the need to “deepen and broaden” the Security Studies policy and research agenda, and the possible drawbacks this could have on society (see Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998; Hansen 2006). However, since 2025 the Trump Administration has recentered a specific vision of men and masculinity to re-legitimize patriarchal practices and their accompanying political violence within both domestic and global political practice. For instance, shortly

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after declaring an end to “woke” culture and demoting or firing numerous women and people of color from positions of leadership, Hegseth announced new physical fitness standards for the armed forces centered on “gender-natural” and “male-level” notions of military capacity (Finley and Toropin 2025). Hegseth then summoned about 800 generals, admirals, and other officers from combat zones to Quantico in September 2025 for a speech on the “evils” of race and gender equality, before announcing new and loosened disciplinary rules and hazing protocols for the armed forces (Finley, Toropin, and Vucci 2025). Finally, Trump signed a series of executive orders to change how DEI training is conducted within the armed forces, prohibiting the “promotion of divisive concepts,” such as teaching that “founding documents are racist or sexist,” and even moving to exclude transgender servicemembers from the armed forces (Bowman 2025). All of this was announced around the same time as policy changes to use troops in an unprecedented manner, stationing them throughout US cities as “training grounds” for military readiness. Trump subsequently utilized various Democratic Party urban strongholds that have historically stood up to him as military training opportunities, sending troops to Washington, D.C., Minneapolis, Portland, Chicago, and elsewhere, which partially militarized those cities. Redefined roles for the armed forces, however, make it difficult for society and activists to resist the administration’s power moves because the ethical standpoint from which to criticize these moves erodes as the administration reinforces patriarchal narratives one executive order at a time.

Some of the administration’s most controversial policy moves during 2025 revolved around heightened ICE presence and militarized policing in major cities that led to unprecedented civil rights and civil liberties violations, unlawful arrests, and even the death of US citizens and migrants. However, the administration’s response to these violent actions and their backlash (carried out predominantly by masked anonymous men) was that these officials were just enforcing the law, defending the nation and its borders, and should be obeyed as federal law enforcement agents. Trump’s moves to undo DEI within the armed forces and recenter a muscular, White, male protector image have subsequently been extended to and help co-constitute a greater militarization of US society as other male protector figures engage in domestic policing terror. The trivial videos of Vance and Hegseth running with the troops, or the now-deposed Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem playing cowgirl sheriff with ICE officers, collectively function to rebrand and normalize patriarchal norms and violence as simply an “anti-woke” social posture. Moreover, this process highlights how the binary between protection/violence increasingly collapses under the weight of the far-right’s patriarchal reemergence, as the “protected” oftentimes also bear the brunt of the violence allegedly reserved for the “others,” as exemplified in Minneapolis. The administration is now attempting to normalize the presence and interference of ICE officers within airports and even polling stations, aiming for an ever-growing violent militarization of domestic society. Privileging the role of men within national security narratives reinforces a system of wider social violence, militarization, and securitization.

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This re-legitimization of violence via a rebranding of the armed forces and adjacent policing forces, does not end with domestic boundaries, and has been extended by the Trump Administration to international politics. For instance, real-world security decisions and acts of violence such as boat strikes in the Caribbean against alleged criminal drug traffickers (most of whom ended up being innocent fishermen), the kidnapping of Venezuela's president, military strikes on Iran, and so forth, all become easier to justify when they are conducted by the alleged "rightful" male protectors of the nation, which are constantly glorified by the administration. Ironically, despite billing himself as an "America First" Peace President, Trump has ordered air strikes in Caribbean/Latin American territorial waters, Nigeria, Iran, Iraq, Somalia, Syria, Venezuela, and Yemen during 2025 and 2026. Trump has now ordered military strikes against more countries than any other modern president (Basu 2026). In 2025, Trump unleashed an unprecedented level of political violence for a president not engaged in any Congressionally declared war or conflict with another country, ordering about 600 military strikes (more during 2025 alone than Biden ordered during his four years in office), across three continents, and killing more than 1,000 individuals (McCartney 2026). Scholars estimate that during his eight years in office Obama's air and drone strikes killed about 3,800 individuals (combatants and civilians combined), during Biden's four years in office between 1,500-1,700, and Trump over a 1,000 during 2025 alone, not counting his first term (Zenko 2017).

These military strikes are discursively and symbolically rendered as "appropriate" and "justifiable" because they are carried out in the name of protection, and the male soldiers that participate in these acts are then glorified, furthering the legitimization/normalization of patriarchal violence and a martial society. As is typically the case in these matters, these acts of violence are committed in the name of *womenandchildren* to save them from despotic, religious fanatic, and other similar type figures, yet *womenandchildren* are often the first to suffer from the worst consequences of this violence. For instance, during Trump's initial attack on Iran some of the first casualties were about 165 schoolgirls and their teachers when a bomb accidentally hit their school. Normalizing patriarchal violence is vital to rationalize the bombing of Iran to keep the world safe and "free" Iranian *womenandchildren*, who are also the first to die during the bombing. The ongoing efforts, led by the Trump Administration, to recenter men within national security efforts are not an innocent process or one without casualties, rather they are a project of symbolic social redefinition that gradually opens the door towards a new and increasingly violent chapter in the Forever War chronicles of US global 21st century history.

Conclusions

Since the racial desegregation of troops in 1948, followed by the gradual acceptance of female soldiers across leadership roles previously reserved only for men, the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" in 2011, and efforts to address sexual violence and misconduct,

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the US armed forces seemed to be making slow progress towards reforming as an institution. However, the US armed forces are inherently an institution of power geared towards the conduct of violence, and having women, people of color, or queer individuals in positions of power does not necessarily mean a more “humane” outlook on how that labor is conducted. Nevertheless, the armed forces are also, in theory, an institution geared towards protecting the constitutional order, civil liberties, and the rule of law, all of which can be weakened as the armed forces are reimagined more so as a propaganda arm for a particular idealized image of the nation (i.e., masculine, muscular, and White), coupled with a violent mission of domestic and international repression. What is unfolding now, however, is a deliberate reversal of previous efforts and norms: the types of military transformations ushered in by fascist leaders across Germany, Italy, and Spain in the buildup to World War II.

Even more troubling though is that these present actions and narrative ways of conducting and legitimizing violence are not limited to Trump, rather they inspire and are inspired by the actions of other illiberal actors: Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, Nayib Bukele in El Salvador, Javier Milei in Argentina, Daniel Noboa in Ecuador, Victor Orbán in Hungary, and various others. For instance, Milei has targeted and eliminated the Ministry of Women, Genders, and Diversity among other social rights-centered initiatives, defunded services for survivors of domestic and sexual violence, and converted the “Hall of Women” within the presidential palace into the “Hall of Heroes,” which exclusively features men. Former South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol (before his impeachment after a failed effort to unlawfully declare martial law) attempted to tap into the frustrations of young men as an electoral strategy, claiming they were the ones in society now facing social discrimination, and even tried to shift gender-focused budgets to defense expenditure and soldiers’ pay. In El Salvador, Bukele has appointed a military officer as Minister of Education, and recently moved to limit which haircuts young men can have in public schools to present a “tidier,” more “respectful,” appearance, further from the aesthetics allegedly associated with gang members, urban poverty, and marginalized communities. These various actors work, in their respective states, to recenter men as the rightful protectors and defenders of society, thereby also legitimizing reduced civil liberties, women’s and LGBT rights, and progressive civic activism – all in the name of nation-state, security, and *womenandchildren*.

Put differently, what we are witnessing is the growing co-constitution and interlocking symbiosis between hegemonic masculinity tropes, domestic reshaping of civil society, and international order reconstruction. Scholars, activists, and policy practitioners must continue to examine how the emerging illiberal far-right remakes its armed forces, local police forces, border patrol forces, and other public safety institutions, to better counter and resist these efforts. However, it appears the coming years will be ones of heightened offensive violence, in the name of national and social defense, all masqueraded under an ethos of masculine, fatherly, warrior protection, as the emerging illiberal far-right global order continues to take shape. Armed forces around the world though have always relied on masculine narratives for recruitment purposes, and efforts

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to militarize society have been widespread across history. The emerging illiberal far-right global order is attempting to re-legitimize patriarchal, racialized, homophobic, and other tropes, whose role in sustaining national identity and national security discourses was, for a time at least, challenged and decentered.

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