

Soldiers' Private Digital Communications as a Factor Disturbing Military Operations Abroad

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Advances in information and communications technology (ICT) in the last half-century have gradually transformed societies as much as they have often more abruptly (combined with changes in geopolitics) reshaped the military (Bondy, 2004, p.31). Due to its economic, sociological and cultural implications, ICT has exceeded the promises of the “Revolution in military affairs” as identified and portrayed in the 1980s and 1990s, and has become an important part of a *military-social* revolution.¹

The purpose of this article is to examine the impact of social media on the battlefield effectiveness of military personnel, using two Slovenian case studies to test some of the hypotheses suggested by recent experience and the literature. Before coming to the heart of the (methodological, empirical) matter, however, it will succinctly seek to place the salient facts as regards the influence of social media on society and the armed forces.

Social Media and Society

Social media employ mobile and web-based technologies that use interactive platforms to create, share, discuss, and modify user-generated content among individuals in private and public venues. These technologies support a host of evolving, real-time and near-real time communications software applications and services such as communication sites (e.g., Skype and Twitter), blogs (e.g., Blogge), social networking sites (e.g., Facebook), content communities (e.g., YouTube) and virtual worlds (e.g., Second Life).²

Social complexity, drastically increased by ICT usage, has led to a ‘network society’ where crucial elements of the State’s structural and ideological apparatus, such as religion, the school system, family, legality, politics, trade unions, information, culture and, of course, national security (not least the military) are all open to question. Public authority, spending priorities, and professional military autonomy have come in for increased scrutiny and doubt. According to Scharre (2012), “*smart phones and social media have enabled groups of like-minded individuals to share information, spread their messages, and upend traditional relationships between the public and authorities*”.³ Over the past two decades, respect for the

¹ The word “revolution” often recurs in the title of books on the impact of ICT : Manuel W. Wik’s *Revolution in Information Affairs* (2001) and Lawrence Freedman’s *Revolution in Strategic Affairs* (1998) are cases in point. The latter ascribed the Cold War’s abrupt end to the major strategic advantage the United States acquired through information and other technologies over the Soviet Union, hastening its demise.

² Cf. Kaplan & Haenlein in Matthews-Juarez *et al.*, 2013, p.770.

³ Cases mentioned by Scharre (2012) include: Tunisia, Cairo, Sanaa, Bahrain, Benghazi, Damascus, London, Wall Street, Berkeley, and the University of California, Davis. 2011 was the year of the social media revolution.

courts, the schools, the press, Congress, organized religion, big business, and virtually every other contemporary institution has plummeted (Fallows, 2015). These developments are part of a continuing trend in the democratization of information which, combined with increased access to destructive technology and tactics, has generated small groups and individuals better able to counter traditional security forces in hybrid and irregular conflicts where force-on-force military engagements may be blended with other operations aimed at influencing key populations.⁴

Social Media and the Military

Militaries have also come under pressure from cross-border nongovernmental organizations, and felt the impact of shifts in civil-military relations, as well as a growing reluctance to accept military service as an unlimited liability (Bondy, 2004, p.32).

Social institutions such as the military have for decades been described as *greedy* institutions, placing extensive demands and high expectations on their members, and impacting their lives in multiple domains such as work, family and social relationships outside duty hours.⁵ As an institution, the military is structured to achieve the development of a strong identity derived from a degree of internal group cohesion that will sustain a force capable of engaging in war – the ultimate purpose of any armed force – and the individual motivation to fight. This is achieved by instilling distinct cultural traditions and rituals, by affirming the primacy of the group and institution over their members through an open-ended liability for service, and by providing them in return with institutional support and care.⁶ This level of institutionalism is further enhanced by what Coser (1974) identified as an important characteristic of greedy institutions, namely that they rely on voluntary compliance and exert pressure on members to break ties with other institutions or individuals who might make conflicting demands.

For the military institution, the use of ICT and digital social media by military personnel presents a major challenge on operations. Post-modern concepts of culture offer an interpretation of such challenges. Donna Winslow (2000) presented a three-tiered framework for comprehending military culture, which blends (1) an organizational “integration” perspective that views military culture as unified, consistent, and homogeneous, excluding ambiguity, at the macro-level, (2) a process of organizational “differentiation”, whereby subordinate units

⁴ Herein lies a paradox. The main impetus for the overall interest in information technologies came from Western States and major companies that were keen to develop new, more effective infrastructures and production forces as crucial factors in guaranteeing their security and maintaining their international competitiveness. Yet, the long-term consequences of State-sponsored ICT development were empowered individuals and non-State groups, as well as evolutionary social changes with a focus on universalism, structure, and objectivity which soon led to the rise of post-modernity and its emphasis on constructivism, complexity, and contextuality (Sookermany, 2011, p.471).

⁵ Coser, 1974 ; Dandeker *et al.*, Segal & Harris as cited in Hatch *et al.*, 2013, p.1047.

⁶ Moskos, 1986 ; Moskos & Wood (eds.), 1988.

form idiocultures that serve as “*islands of clarity in a sea of ambiguity*” based on group consensus at the meso-level, and (3) a post-modern process of organizational “fragmentation” at the micro-level, where the scene is dominated by a “*multiplicity of views with no consensus*”, a “*focus on ambiguity*”, “*misinformation*”, all born of complexity, uncertainty, tensions, and exacting mission requirements.

Hajjar (2014) emphasizes the impact of the information age on the culture of the US armed forces. The information age has helped change how the military views the world. While the rise of the network-centric warfare concept in military doctrine has strong technological connotations, it also betrays social preoccupations, such as the importance of understanding and effectively influencing a variety of people networks. The US military recently hired thousands of civilian experts in the use of new sophisticated systems, and active-duty military members are being taught new information skills. Thus, for these reasons and many others, the information age has substantially changed the organization and has contributed to an emergent post-modern military culture (Hajjar, 2014, p.125).

The debate over the extent to which the military should incorporate rapidly expanding and changing ICT signals another disputed aspect of military culture.⁷ That debate has spread to social network issues, too. Over the past 5 years, the use of social media by US military personnel has gone from being banned to being openly embraced, used, and promoted by DoD officials. In 2007, the Pentagon blocked its computer networks from accessing sites, including YouTube and MySpace, in an attempt to keep a tight rein on information about troop activities. Official documents at the time cited not only threats to safety but also the heavy burden it placed on bandwidth. In August 2009, the US Marine Corps issued a ban on the use of social networking sites, expressing concern about the possibility of security risks. Marines were informed that they could no longer use such sites as Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter due to the possibility that enemy groups might use to their advantage the information they carry (*cf.* Social Media@DoD; Chalmers, 2011; Paganini, 2013). Although these bans were lifted, the Pentagon monitors the flow of information through its launch of TroopTube – a military-sponsored version of YouTube that allows serving personnel to share videos with their friends and family members only.⁸ This type of social media can be accessed with approval from the Department of Defence. In 2010, US Deputy Defence Secretary William Lynn ordered a review of the military’s social networking policies to weigh the benefits and drawbacks of allowing members of the armed forces to use social media. Later that year, the Pentagon announced it had authorized the use of Twitter, Facebook, and other Web 2.0 sites

⁷ It would not have been extraordinary for two 19-year-old American soldiers in Baghdad, Iraq, to be sharing a 10-foot by 12-foot room in a trailer. They might have a satellite dish with high-speed Internet access, two laptops, Skype cameras, an Xbox, cell-phone technology, a Blackberry, a Bluetooth, and a webcam; they might run a blog, and utilize a music sound system board to produce their own hip-hop mixes (Ender, 2009, p.103).

⁸ Social media also help military members as they return home. A number of sites geared towards helping serving members connect with mental health services and fellow veterans have been launched in recent years, such as RallyPoint, Hire a Hero, VetFriends, Together We Served (Essner, 2012).

across the US military, arguing that the benefits of social media outweighed security concerns. Since 2010, the Pentagon has actively supported the use of social media in many of its efforts. While restrictions still exist, they do not significantly differ from those in place at any major private company (Matthews-Juarez *et al.*, 2013, p.769). Although the use of ICT for personal communication first appeared during the American deployment in Somalia,⁹ it became a massive phenomenon among American soldiers during the war in Iraq (Ender, 2009, pp.111-112). In 2011, the US Army published its *Social Media Handbook* and posted it online.¹⁰ How can one account for such a complete policy reversal?

For one thing, the Army has recognized that social media have become an important tool for its messaging and outreach. Soldiers have always been its most effective messengers. Every time a soldier joins the Army social media, it increases its capacity for timely and transparent dissemination of information. It ensures that the Army's story is shared directly with Americans wherever they are and whenever they want to read or hear it. In other words, social media allow the Army to connect with its members, and America with its Army. To boot, social media come cheap, they are effective, and their effects can be measured.¹¹

For another thing, and even more importantly, it is a fairly well-documented fact that communication between field and home is most highly valued by soldiers when deployed overseas (Applewhite & Segal, 1990 ; Ender, 2009). However, it is a double-edged sword. Instant interactive communication (conversations, photo sharing, text messages on Skype, Instagram, or Facebook) with family members across an electronic divide – especially to and from war zones – can be simultaneously comforting and stressful. The same social media that allow families to share intimate moments and events can also heighten emotions and alter behaviour when used to alert a soldier to a death in the family, discuss paying bills, address child-rearing problems or mental health issues, including substance abuse and domestic violence. It is also through social media that depression, longing, loneliness, and other feelings of deprivation are voiced and shared (Dao, 2011). On the other hand, the use of social media can minimize boredom among the deployed soldiers, long a central feature of the military through under-utilization, cultural deprivation, lack of privacy, isolation in time and space (Ender, 2009, pp.14-15).

⁹ In Somalia in 1993, US Army soldiers desired to use communication media, but none was not readily available (Gifford as cited in Ender, 2009, p.111). Limited telephone use overcame the lack of telephony in and around Somalia and alleviated the stress for soldiers and their families. Problems with communication between the front line and home precipitated an innovative email program that pleased many spouses by ultimately providing the speed, relative privacy, decentralization and personal communication desired (Ender, 2009, p.111).

¹⁰ Yet, for once, the Army was a little late getting to the front lines : this is what a comparison with civilian organizations suggests. An Operations Inc. & Performance Solutions Group survey of some 100 civilian firms showed that more than half of the businesses surveyed had a social media policy in place, and among those 7 out of 10 allowed employees to access Facebook at work (with one-third mentioning that they had experienced some kind of issue with an improper use of Facebook by an employee) : *cf.* Soule, 2011, p.9.

¹¹ *Cf.* *The United States Army Social Media Handbook*, 2013.

The question thus becomes: how can social media be used to maintain an equilibrium and create resiliency among military personnel as they deal with these challenges and issues? While in recent years social scientists have paid increasing attention to how social networks influence military family life (Matthews-Juarez, 2013, p. 771), the dilemma as to whether the use of ICT and digital social media should be allowed in the armed forces has not been entirely resolved. The military's use of social media has been widely discussed, often on the basis of aspects of military culture that militate against its use. Yet, Jones and Baines (2013) explored how military commanders attempt to control it, considering how social outcomes might still be pursued if the military concedes slight conceptual and organizational adjustments. Typically, this has culminated in recommendations for the delegation of blogging to the lowest possible level, trading risk for relevance and responsiveness. Lists of factors to be considered in making communication via social media a success have emerged across the Internet along with tips for 'new media literacy' and authoring.

However, the problem remains as to how social media use can be incorporated into military planning to achieve specific outcomes in the field with regard to opponents or the civilian population. Some military objectives lend themselves to public engagement more than others. For example, at the tactical level of deployed troops, a message that the local population should stay at home whilst troops are deployed into a combat zone may meet a short-term planning need. This was the case in the 2003 invasion of Iraq, when British troops entering the country needed to have clear roads and avoid civilian casualties as they engaged the Iraqi military. But little has been done in the way of study into how social media traffic on the opposing side or among the local populace can be monitored in order to obtain better targeting data (Jones & Baines, 2013, pp.75, 77).

Digital Communication and the Slovenian Military: Research Design

The research findings on private information sharing as a disturbing factor for military operations in missions abroad among the members of the Slovenian Armed Forces (SAF) are based on two separate research projects, both undertaken by a research group at the Defence Research Centre within the University of Ljubljana's Faculty of the Social Sciences. The first was a research venture conducted as the local leg¹² of a larger international research project on the experiences of armed forces in asymmetric warfare led by Italian military sociologist Dr. Giuseppe Caforio.¹³ The research population included SAF members who were deployed to Afghanistan at least once during their career. The second was a small-scale research on members of the SAF's Special Forces Unit while deployed to Afghanistan.¹⁴

¹² The group responsible for it was made up of Drs. Uroš Svete, Jelena Juvan, Rok Zupančič and Klemen Grošelj.

¹³ Results from the larger research project were published in a volume edited by Giuseppe Caforio: *Soldiers Without Frontiers: The View from the Ground* (Rome, Bonnano Editore, 2013).

¹⁴ It was conducted by Drs. Janja Vuga Beršnak and Uroš Svete.

The findings presented below are based on data on the use of Internet and other means of communication collected on the occasion of those two research projects.

The first started when a request for permission to conduct interviews was sent to the Office of the Defence Minister of the Republic of Slovenia. The request specified the structure of the required sample in terms of rank : see Table 1 below. Altogether, 52 qualitative interviews were conducted in September 2010 and March 2011 with forty-five servicemen and seven servicewomen (of whom eleven had been deployed to a single PSO and the other forty-one to at least two). All interviewees came from the Territorial Army, since Slovenia does not have a navy or air force. As far as rank is concerned, a bare majority of the interviewees were rank and file soldiers, with cadres not far behind in numbers (15 officers, 9 NCOs). The sample approximately reflects the structure of the SAF (Vuga & Zupančič, 2013, p.325). Interviews lasted 45 minutes on average. With permission from each interviewee, the interviews were recorded, and later transcribed. Our analysis was based on the interview transcripts.

Table 1 : Breakdown of respondents by rank category and affiliation.

	Officers	NCOs	Rank & File	Total
Army	14	6	28	48
<i>of which</i> Special Forces	1	3	0	4
Total	15	9	28	52

Throughout the larger international research of which our project formed part, standardized qualitative interviews were used for each participating country. However, for the purpose of gathering more detailed information on the deployed SAF members, the Slovenian research team appended several additional questions, including a question on Internet usage. For the purposes of this article, analysis included interviewees’ answers to the questions : “During the deployment, were you able to use mobile phones and PCs on a daily basis ?” ; “Were there any restrictions imposed on the use of Internet and mobile phones?”.

The second research project targeted members of the Army’s Special Forces Unit, and followed the same procedure for securing permission to interview them, and record respondents’ answers. Our goal was to include each member of the SAF’s 20th ISAF contingent which had been deployed to Afghanistan from September 2013 until May 2014. Altogether, we interviewed all 18 members of the Special Forces Unit. The sample was comprised of one officer, seven NCOs and ten rank and file soldiers, all of them male. For the purposes of this article, analysis included answers to these questions : “During deployment, did you follow Slovenian media?” ; “If yes, which?” ; “How much time did you spend using the Internet¹⁵ on a daily basis?”. All interviews were subsequently transcribed. Our analysis was performed on the transcripts of the interviews, which on average lasted one hour each.

¹⁵ Use of the Internet for a variety of purposes, not only communication.

Before presenting our research findings, it is important to state that the SAF does not have any specific regulations regarding the use of personal mobile phones, personal laptops, or restrictions on access to the Internet for deployed personnel. The research findings show that the only factors which restrict the amount of time soldiers spent on the Internet are their tasks and the amount of free time they enjoy during the deployment. There is no control over how much time they spend communicating via the Internet, with whom they communicate, nor on what type of information they share. This can be particularly sensitive in the case of soldiers involved in high-risk and combat operations. In effect, it was left to the individual soldier to evaluate what is appropriate information to share with family, friends or through social networks like Facebook or Twitter.

Figure 1: Spreading ‘military culture’ through the Facebook social network



Source: Soldier's Facebook profile

Of course, as already mentioned, the free and accessible use of the Internet to communicate with families¹⁶ at home can be a positive thing. Several studies have shown the importance for deployed soldiers of day-to-day communication with their families. “*Optimal information sharing helps families to reduce anxiety due to ignorance and establishes a good relationship with the soldiers’ unit and commander*” (Bartone, 2005). Matthews and

¹⁶ For communication with their families and friends they mainly used Skype and Messenger. Soldiers also reported using their own mobile phones for staying in touch with their families. No restrictions were imposed on the use of mobile phones either. Mostly, they used mobile phones for SMS messages, since roaming costs in Afghanistan are high. All of them reported having the possibility to purchase a local SIM card ; however, some of them mentioned having been warned about the possibility of hacking and eavesdropping on their conversations, so they decided not to use this option. For emergencies, they had access to a satellite telephone.

colleagues (2013, p.773) have determined that social networks can have a special positive effect for the deployed service member, whose level of stress is then reduced, as well for families. However, too much information can also be problematic. Families at home are actually being ‘bombarded’ on a day-to-day-basis with all types of information from the area of deployment. Thanks to ICT, information can circle the globe in a matter of seconds. It cannot be said with any certainty whether easy access to a means of communication is more of an advantage or a disadvantage for the soldiers (Bell *et al.*, 1999, p.510). Applewhite and Segal (1990, p.125) called this a “*mixed blessing*”. Regular contact with the family and being well-informed of problems back at home without having the ability to contribute or help can lower the morale of deployed soldiers and affect their level of concentration on the battlefield (Applewhite & Segal, 1990, p.119; Bell *et al.*, 1999, p.510). Improved communications with their family can actually magnify the isolation felt by soldiers from their families rather than reduce it (Ender, 2009, p.16). Serious family and marital problems cannot possibly be solved over the phone, which can contribute to a feeling of helplessness among deployed soldiers: “*Uncontrolled telephone communications can have the opposite effects depending on the position/location of the soldier*” (Applewhite & Segal, 1999, p.120).

Another less than positive factor is that regular communication with families at home can be costly, imposing an additional financial burden on the soldier, with (as reported by deployed SAF members in Afghanistan) monthly telephone bills of up to €400. This was the case several years ago with the first Slovenian ISAF contingents : in the early years of Slovenia’s presence in Afghanistan access to the Internet was not provided automatically, and soldiers were forced to pay for access through local Internet providers. Since then the situation has been remedied, and by contrast all of the soldiers included in our analysis reported having regular access provided by the SAF and funded by the Slovenian State. However, soldiers did report serious problems with the ‘official’ Internet, which proved unreliable with not enough capacity for all soldiers in the base (which often limited their communication with their homes to written messages). Therefore, in order to obtain a faster and more reliable Internet connection, some of them paid for access out of their own pockets.

Mostly they used Internet to keep up with the events in Slovenia, spending the majority of their time reading Slovenian online media. In a contemporary circumstances, enjoying free and uncontrolled access to online news while being deployed to a crisis area can be dangerous. Soldiers were reading articles about their deployment which in the initial phase were not verified. One of the cases which caused a disturbance among the SAF soldiers in Afghanistan was an incident when one of the soldiers was shot in the leg (MMC RTV SLO/STA, 2014). According to the initial news report (tweeted by the Slovenian Minister of Defence), a soldier was injured performing regular duties. But this minimal description begged the question among military authorities as well as the general public, of how the incident had occurred: was it an accident or was the soldier wounded in action? The subsequent statements by the Chief of General Staff, the Minister of Defence and the Prime Minister were more precise, but it

never was actually confirmed whether the soldier had been wounded by enemy fire, and doubt among the deployed military personnel remained. However, some of the soldiers in the theatre knew the truth and felt frustrated that the Slovenian public were being misled. Even today, it remains unclear how the deceptive information was published. It is important to note that the Slovenian public did not strongly support Slovenia's deployment to ISAF in the first place, and that a "*strong risk aversion*" soon manifested itself (Vuga, 2014, p.374). Such a low tolerance for sacrifice and injury on missions abroad on the part of the Slovenian public may explain why misinformation was intentionally broadcast ; however, this remains mere speculation.

Further proof that the media at home need to be careful about what they publish and also that the SAF as an institution has to exercise caution when dealing with the media came with a case reported by one of the soldiers. The Slovenian media published news that fifteen ISAF soldiers had been killed around Herat. No specific information regarding the nationalities of the soldiers was offered. Since at that time the majority of Slovenian soldiers were stationed in Herat, their families at home began to worry and started calling them to get in touch. It is clear that the Army was inordinately slow in informing the families of the deployed soldiers regarding the event, which alarmed the families and consequently burdened the deployed soldiers thousands of kilometres away. This represents an example of how not to communicate with the public.

Some of the soldiers also reported negative experiences with comments following the articles published online regarding their deployment to Afghanistan. The majority of the comments were negative, opposed to their presence there, Slovenia's involvement in ISAF and even its membership in NATO. These comments influenced deployed soldiers in two ways. Some of them felt sad and disappointed after reading these comments. Some felt angry and became more determined to prove "*all those negative people*" that they were wrong.

Another potential risk resides in a misreading of the in-theatre situation by people at home. Such a case occurred after, in September 2013, a Special Operations Forces (SOF) unit was deployed to Afghanistan. This was not the first time the Slovenian SOF had carried out a counterinsurgency assignment or engaged in asymmetric warfare, but it was the first and the only real combat operation in which the primary mission was to provide military assistance to local troops in a hostile environment. The term 'military assistance' needs to be understood broadly : in NATO SOF terminology, it translates into 'Train, Assist and Advise' – even in combat actions. This much was clear to the Army (at least to the Special Forces command), but not so clear to Slovenian politicians and the general public, among whom it triggered a fresh wave of dissent against the idea of Slovenian participation in a foreign combat mission. Therefore it was particularly interesting to probe whether private communication and information sharing through Skype and other social networks such as Facebook had affected their motivation during a combat mission – especially after media reports [came in](#) of the first SOF member being wounded in action. Apparently not, one way or the other.

Some of the deployed soldiers also reported that they had participated in military online forums, sharing their deployment experiences with other fellow soldiers. They were aware of the security risks of Internet communication since some of them had heard that the accounts of US soldiers had previously been hacked and their families later blackmailed.

Conclusion

ICT and digital social media and communication are now an integral part of operations undertaken by all post-modern military organisations. There are, however, variations in how particular armed forces attempt to deal, regulate or even control those activities. The US Army decided to join the majority of Western civilian companies which allow employees to access Facebook, and at the same time perceived social media as a tool strengthening military family ties, unit cohesion, and institutional promotion for sustaining civil-military relations. Although the digital communication activities of military personnel can bring operational risks, these are outweighed by the advantages for both the institution and for the individuals concerned. By contrast, Israel's armed forces views instant messaging applications as a growing threat – both to battlefield secrecy and to the privacy of women soldiers. The Israeli military's chief censor, Brigadier-General Sima Vaknin-Gil, said WhatsApp messaging about the Gaza war in July and August 2014 was a challenge to operational security that prompted the most discussion in meetings she held at the time with her staff. Although the Israeli military has disciplined troops for posting allegedly racist comments on Facebook, and in the case of a group of women soldiers, for posting photos of themselves in underwear and combat gear, Vaknin-Gil said effectively monitoring social media activity in Israel for breaches of military law would be impossible: *“The military's response appears to be mainly cautionary, for now, by playing up social media cases that lead to the stockade”* (Williams, 2015).

The Slovenian Armed Forces do not have any special regulations in place for the use of personal mobile phones, personal laptops, or restrictions regarding access to the Internet when deployed. But Slovenian soldiers have used digital communication technology since the very beginning of international operations and missions. And the military pays for this whenever it is not logistically in a position to ensure Internet access. Otherwise soldiers would complain, the authority of the field commander would decrease and motivation would fall.

But digital social media and an awareness of what is going at home can also be disturbing factors. The case of the soldier serving in Afghanistan who was shot in the leg was reported as having occurred during the performance of regular duties, while it was insinuated that the soldier had shot himself by accident. This threw the Special Forces' military skills and professionalism into question. Soldiers in Afghanistan were unable to understand how such imprecise information was fed to the Slovenian public. Reading domestic comments on forums and other social media, some soldiers felt sad and disappointed, and some felt angry. This further confirmed the increasing discrepancy between the expectations of the Slovenian public and the military's values, with on one side pacifist public opinion and mainstream

politics, on the other the values and statements of several thousand fully professional military personnel. There is an inverse correlation between political and public support for missions abroad and the level of hostility of the theatre of conflict. And in this sense, digital communication tools make these differences all the more apparent, and sometimes exacerbate them.

So the real problem seems to reside in the lack of awareness of the organizational, personal, social and cultural consequences of digital communication in general. As Schachtner (2015) argues, social media carry cultural flows of values, social rules, worldviews and patterns of behaviour that are becoming increasingly dissociated from their national base. They are articulated, passed on, qualified, rejected or transformed into something else in online discourse. The idea of culture as a ‘self-contained sphere’ has become obsolete in the digital media age. Terms such as transculturality and transnationality reflect socio-cultural developments that are closely linked to the changes affecting, and generated by, social media. At the moment, the only transcultural and transnational military organizations are private military companies and ‘brothers in arms’ serving in international operations and missions.

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