

# A School for the Nation?

Ronald R. Krebs

## How Military Service Does Not Build Nations, and How It Might

Theodore Roosevelt and his fellow Progressives hoped that universal military training would “Americanize” the mass of newcomers who had recently landed on America’s shores. Leonid Brezhnev similarly believed that widespread service in the Red Army would forge a unified Soviet citizenry committed to “the Socialist Motherland,” internationalism, and “the friendship of the peoples.”<sup>1</sup> Like many leaders before and after them, Roosevelt and Brezhnev turned to the armed forces and the policy of universal military service at least in part to help build cohesive national communities out of their countries’ multinational jumbles.

This view of the military as a key institution for the labeling and transmission of social values has roots stretching back to ancient Greece,<sup>2</sup> but the armed forces first achieved great popularity as a nation builder toward the end of the nineteenth century. At that time, the military was widely hailed across Europe as a “school for the nation,” and its apparent success was emulated as far away as czarist Russia and Meiji Japan. As countries across Africa and Asia won independence in the decades following World War II, they charged their armies with weaving a national fabric rent by communal rifts. Throughout the twentieth century, countries across the ideological spectrum have turned to the armed forces in the quest for national integration.<sup>3</sup>

---

Ronald R. Krebs is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities.

---

The author is grateful to Aaron Belkin, Richard Betts, David Edelstein, Robert Jervis, Martin Kifer, Christopher Parker, Jason Steck, and the anonymous reviewers for useful comments and criticisms on earlier drafts of this article. Thanks are also due to the various institutions that supported the larger project from which this article is drawn: the John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies, Harvard University; the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard University; and the United States Institute of Peace. So many individuals have provided helpful comments on that larger project that they cannot be identified here individually.

---

1. Theodore Roosevelt, *Fear God and Take Your Own Part* (New York: George H. Doran, 1916); Brezhnev quoted in Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone, “‘Brotherhood in Arms’: The Ethnic Factor in the Soviet Armed Forces,” in N.F. Dreisziger, ed., *Ethnic Armies: Polyethnic Armed Forces from the Time of the Habsburgs to the Age of the Superpowers* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1990), p. 146.
2. See Maury Feld, *The Structure of Violence: Armed Forces as Social Systems* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage, 1977); and Barton C. Hacker, “Military Institutions and Social Order: Transformations of Western Thought since the Enlightenment,” *War & Society*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (October 1993), pp. 1–23.
3. On Europe, see Geoffrey Best, “The Militarization of European Society, 1870–1914,” in John R. Gillis, ed., *The Militarization of the Western World* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1989), pp. 13–29; Brian Bond, *War and Society in Europe, 1870–1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 1–10.

---

*International Security*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (Spring 2004), pp. 85–124

© 2004 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

This faith in the armed forces as a potential nation builder is unjustified, for the proposition, and especially the theories underlying it, have received insufficient sustained scholarly attention.<sup>4</sup> Over the decades, sociologists, historians, and political scientists have usually paralleled national leaders in asserting the armed forces' capacity to either shore up or undermine the national construct, but their comments have usually been merely suggestive.<sup>5</sup> Modernization theorists notably hailed the military as the model modern organization dedicated to sweeping change in the newly formed states of Africa and Asia.<sup>6</sup> Others, observing that military rulers were often corrupt, played ethnic and sectional politics, and overall exhibited more traditional than modern characteristics, concluded that military service generally did not lead to new inclusive identities, but rather highlighted and reinforced existing cleavages.<sup>7</sup> Few,

---

Press, 1986); and V.G. Kiernan, "Conscription and Society in Europe before the War of 1914–18," in M.R.D. Foot, ed., *War and Society: Historical Essays in Honour and Memory of J.R. Western, 1928–1971* (London: Paul Elek, 1973), pp. 141–158. On czarist Russia, see Joshua A. Sanborn, *Drafting the Russian Nation: Military Conscription, Total War, and Mass Politics, 1905–1925* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2002). On Meiji Japan, see Harold Hakwon Sunoo, *Japanese Militarism: Past and Present* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1975). On developing nations, see Dewitt C. Ellinwood and Cynthia H. Enloe, eds., *Ethnicity and the Military in Asia* (Buffalo: State University of New York Press, 1979); and John J. Johnson, ed., *The Role of the Military in Underdeveloped Countries* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1962).

4. The antimilitarist tradition does not challenge the conventional wisdom about the social and ideological effects of military service. Its adherents have opposed relying on the military for such nation-building purposes precisely because they believe that those who pass through the armed forces are necessarily deeply shaped by its norms, that such norms are both dangerous and alluring, and that they diffuse easily and smoothly throughout civilian society. In short, they believe that the military can effectively shape the surrounding society and politics, and it is that potential that they find so frightening.

5. See Daniella Ashkenazy, ed., *The Military in the Service of Society and Democracy* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1994); M.R.D. Foot, *Men in Uniform* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1961), p. 34; Alon Peled, *A Question of Loyalty: Military Manpower Policy in Multiethnic States* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1998), p. 26; Barry R. Posen, "Nationalism, the Mass Army, and Military Power," *International Security*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (Fall 1993), pp. 80–124; and Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870–1914* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1976), p. 302.

6. For representative works, see Davis B. Bobrow, "Soldiers and the Nation State," in Karl von Vorys, ed., *New Nations: The Problem of Political Development*, special issue, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 358 (March 1965), pp. 65–76; John J. Johnson, *The Military and Society in Latin America* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1964); Johnson, *Role of the Military in Underdeveloped Countries*; Ernest Lefever, *Spear and Sceptre: Army, Police, and Politics in Tropical Africa* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1970); Daniel Lerner and Richard D. Robinson, "Swords and Ploughshares: The Turkish Army as a Modernizing Force," *World Politics*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (October 1960), pp. 19–44; and Marion R. Levy, *Modernization and the Structure of Societies* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1966).

7. See Cynthia H. Enloe, *Ethnic Soldiers: State Security in Divided Societies* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1980); and Ali A. Mazrui, "Soldiers as Traditionalizers: Military Rule and the Re-Africanization of Africa," *World Politics*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (January 1976), pp. 246–272. For a good

however, doubted that the armed forces would dramatically reshape society, for good or for ill.<sup>8</sup> And even fewer analyzed and assessed the underlying causal logic and evaluated these claims in light of available evidence.

Three seemingly plausible mechanisms linking military service and the construction of cohesive national communities—socialization, contact, and elite transformation—may be teased out of the existing literature. First, the armed forces may socialize soldiers to national norms embedded in the military's manpower policy, which determines who serves, at what level, and in what capacity. Second, the armed forces may bring together individuals of various ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds in common cause and in a collaborative spirit, providing a suitable environment in which to break down communal barriers, as the "contact hypothesis" would suggest. Third, whether through socialization or intense contact, the military may alter the views of future leaders who later use their positions of influence to spread their revised definition of the nation. All three mechanisms suggest that, under certain conditions, military service leads individuals to reconsider their identity, their attachments, and the definition of their political community, bringing these into accord with their personal experiences and hence with military policy.<sup>9</sup> Once

---

review, see Henry Bienen, "The Background to Contemporary Study of Militaries and Modernization," in Bienen, ed., *The Military and Modernization* (Chicago: Aldine, Atherton, 1971), pp. 1–33.

8. Skeptics argue that the military can hardly reshape society because it is more likely to reflect social cleavages. This is implied in, among others, Henry Dietz, Jerrold Elkin, and Maurice Roumani, eds., *Ethnicity, Integration, and the Military* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1991); Gwyn Harries-Jenkins and Charles Moskos, "Armed Forces and Society," *Current Sociology*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (Winter 1981), p. 70; Stephen P. Rosen, *Societies and Military Power: India and Its Armies* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996); and Alfred Vagts, *A History of Militarism: Civilian and Military*, rev. ed. (New York: Free Press, 1967 [1959]), p. 35. See also Eliot A. Cohen, *Citizens and Soldiers: The Dilemmas of Military Service* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 128–129.

9. In recent years, important contributions have amplified Otto Hintze's insight that war (more precisely, war mobilization) has served as an impetus to the creation and development of states—that is, in the Weberian tradition, hierarchical organizations with a (relative) monopoly on the legitimate use of force within their territorial boundaries. While state building evokes the routes through which governmental authorities in possession of substantial extractive capacity arise, nation building refers to the processes through which large-scale populations come to recognize their commonality. These two processes have often been conflated, but they are analytically distinguishable. If wars have a "ratchet effect" on national sentiment—paralleling the finding that states shrink after wars but fail to revert fully to their prewar size—it is not clear how it would operate outside of the three mechanisms identified here. For key works in this large literature, see Hintze, "Military Organization and the Organization of the State," in Felix Gilbert, ed., *The Historical Essays of Otto Hintze* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 178–215; Richard Bean, "War and the Birth of the Nation-State," *Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (March 1973), pp. 203–221; Charles Tilly, ed., *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975); Brian M. Downing, *The Military Revolution and Political Change: Origins of Democracy and Autocracy in Early Modern Europe* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992);

officers and soldiers have internalized the military's national norms, they diffuse this new vision throughout civilian society. If these mechanisms linking military service and nationhood prove unsustainable, then scholars must conclude either that the two variables are independent of each other or that some other mechanism, heretofore unexamined, governs this relationship. In either case, such a claim would challenge the conventional wisdom on this question.

This article argues that all three mechanisms are unsustainable. When available, the empirical evidence for the military's power as a socializing agent or as an institution conducive to meaningful contact is, at best, mixed. Improved specification of the mechanisms, a larger number of rigorous panel studies, greater cross-national research, and the examination of veteran effects outside the Vietnam era would all be welcome. But such steps could not address deeper theoretical problems.

The aforementioned mechanisms suffer from two general theoretical flaws. First, neither socialization nor the contact hypothesis can explain the armed forces' alleged ability to rework, permanently and broadly, the identities of the soldiers and officers who pass through their training camps, garrisons, and trenches.<sup>10</sup> One reason is that they implicitly conceive of identity as a property of individuals, when it is more usefully conceptualized as a property of social relationships. Identity is not subjective and universal, but rather intersubjective and hence contextual. This fundamental insight limits the scope and permanence of the military's potential impact.

Second, even if one were to adopt a subjective view of identity and concede that these mechanisms can explain changes in individual consciousness, they cannot, separately or together, capture the imagined community that is the nation. Implicit in these mechanisms is an apolitical image of nation building as the aggregation of individual mentalities. But nations are collective, not aggregate, entities, and the stakes of inclusion and exclusion are high. They are the product of processes of political contestation and negotiation, not the sum of

---

Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, A.D. 990–1992* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992); and Bruce D. Porter, *War and the Rise of the State: The Military Foundations of Modern Politics* (New York: Free Press, 1994). Experts on regions beyond Europe have drawn on or debated this approach in explaining why state building in their regions of interest diverged from the European experience. See Jeffrey Herbst, *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000); Miguel Centeno, *Blood and Debt: War and the Nation-State in Latin America* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002); and Victoria Tin-Bor Hui, *War and State Formation in Ancient China and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

10. The elite-transformation hypothesis is, therefore, necessarily unsatisfactory in that its claims rest on the plausibility of either socialization or the contact hypothesis.

individuals' mental images of their political communities. In short, psychological mechanisms such as socialization and contact, even if arguably persuasive on a micro level, cannot ultimately account for the boundaries of nationality.

Consequently, while military service undoubtedly has effects—in the short run as well as in the long run, in times of peace as well as in times of war—on individuals' personalities, capacities, and prospects that well-designed empirical studies could capture, one cannot unravel this mystery by conducting more, or more sophisticated, tests alone. Rather, one must rethink the theoretical foundations. The military's manpower policies can indeed have implications for national identity: "Who serves" may matter to "who we are." But the theories advanced to explain this must be as fundamentally strategic and political as nation building itself. Psychological mechanisms fall short of that standard.

Militaries are undeniably social as well as functional institutions, shaped by but also shaping social structures and values. Debates over who serves continue to arouse passion in part because the military's manpower policies are widely viewed as having important implications for citizenship and national identity—arguably a polity's most central questions. At the heart of the debate over gays and lesbians serving in the U.S. military, for example, lies less some careful calculus of costs and benefits to the effectiveness of U.S. fighting forces, than fears and hopes regarding what military inclusion and exclusion would mean for the status of homosexuals in the larger society. Similarly, contemporary U.S. advocates of a military draft—or, barring that, national service—have argued that it would dispel the supposed perils of multiculturalism and large-scale immigration, reinvigorate the civic-mindedness that they believe characterized earlier generations, foster equality, and reinstall the sense of shared national mission and community that is at present allegedly absent. It would, in short, remake the American nation.<sup>11</sup> Scholars and political leaders alike

---

11. See, for example, Gary Hart, *The Minuteman: Restoring an Army of the People* (New York: Free Press, 1998); Mickey Kaus, *The End of Equality* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), pp. 79–85; Charles Moskos, *A Call to Civil Service: National Service for Country and Community* (New York: Macmillan, 1988); and Thomas Ricks, *Making the Corps: Sixty-one Men Came to Parris Island to Become Marines, Not All of Them Made It* (New York: Scribner, 1997). For more recent installments, see Steven Lee Meyers, "A Wisp of a Draft," *New York Times*, February 7, 1999; Charles Moskos and Paul Glastris, "This Time, A Draft for the Home Front, Too," *Washington Post*, November 4, 2001; Charles Moskos and Lawrence Korb, "Time to Bring Back the Draft?" *American Enterprise*, December 2001, pp. 16–17; Charles Moskos, "Reviving the Citizen-Soldier," *Public Interest*, No. 147 (Spring 2002), pp. 76–85; and Charles B. Rangel, "Bring Back the Draft," *New York Times*, December 31, 2002. The issue has also featured in the debates between communitarians and their critics. See Michael Sandel, "What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets," The Tanner Lectures on Human Values,

have often claimed the existence of a relationship between the design of the military and the definition of the nation, but they have done so without adequate theoretical grounding or empirical evidence. By clearing away the theoretical underbrush and sketching several alternative mechanisms, this article begins to build a more solid theoretical foundation, to plug a gap in our understanding of the relationship between the armed forces, the state, and society, and thereby to illuminate contemporary debates over military service.

The first four major sections of the article constitute a critical theoretical and empirical evaluation of the mechanisms described briefly above—socialization, contact, and elite transformation. I examine each in turn, first reconstructing the implicit logical claims, then identifying the flaws in these arguments, and then appraising the available empirical evidence. The conclusion presents an agenda for future research and briefly lays out three mechanisms that, whatever their logical flaws or empirical failings, rest on a more stable theoretical footing.

### *Military Socialization and Its Limits*

One way militaries might shape their surrounding societies is by socializing the rank and file and the officers to military norms of conduct. Governments have often sought to mold the minds of soldiers, and veterans have regularly asserted that their military experience changed them forever. But these articles of faith do not withstand theoretical and empirical scrutiny.

#### THE CASE FOR MILITARY SOCIALIZATION

The military may be an unusually powerful agent of socialization because it often is—or at least is assumed to be—a “total institution,” which alienates the individual from society at large, controls the information to which he is exposed, monitors his behavior, and offers material inducements to guide him toward desired behavior.<sup>12</sup> Such total institutions are “the forcing houses for

---

delivered at Brasenose College, Oxford, United Kingdom, May 1998; and Richard A. Posner, “An Army of the Willing,” *New Republic*, May 19, 2003, pp. 27–29. See also Morris Janowitz, *The Reconstruction of Patriotism: Education for Civic Consciousness* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983); and Barry Strauss, “Reflections on the Citizen-Soldier,” *Parameters*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (Summer 2003), pp. 66–77.

12. John P. Lovell and Judith Hicks Stiehm, “Military Service and Political Socialization,” in Roberta S. Sigel, ed., *Political Learning in Adulthood* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), pp. 176–178.

changing persons . . . a natural experiment on what can be done to the self.”<sup>13</sup> Socialization effects may be particularly pronounced in the military because individuals typically enter it in their “impressionable” years, and the definition of the nation would appear to be the kind of “symbolic” political attitude laden with affective content that some, notably David Sears, have suggested is quite stable over the life course.<sup>14</sup> Arriving at basic training with relatively unformed or at least highly unstable political opinions, inductees (whether conscripts or volunteers) may be nearly blank slates on which the military can inscribe values, both great and small. While military socialization undoubtedly penetrates more deeply the longer one serves, the more one’s long-term fortunes depend on one’s performance, and the closer one comes to actual combat, even the relatively brief periods of service typical of mass recruitment systems may be sufficiently long to shape conscripts’ basic attitudes and allegiances.<sup>15</sup> Nearly a century ago, a Brazilian proponent of the draft put it well, albeit in terms offensive to modern ears: “The cities are full of unshod vagrants and ragamuffins. . . . For these dregs of society, the barracks would be a salvation. The barracks are an admirable filter in which men cleanse and purify themselves: they emerge conscientious and dignified Brazilians.”<sup>16</sup>

---

13. Erving Goffman, “On the Characteristics of Total Institutions,” in Goffman, *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor, 1961), p. 12. On techniques of socialization, see P.E. Freedman and Anne Freedman, “Political Learning,” in Samuel L. Long, ed., *The Handbook of Political Behavior*, Vol. 1 (New York: Plenum, 1981), pp. 255–303.

14. On the stability and persistence of “symbolic” attitudes—notably party identification, political ideology, and race/group-related attitudes—and on the “impressionable years” hypothesis, see Duane F. Alwin and Jon A. Krosnick, “Aging, Cohorts, and the Stability of Sociopolitical Orientations over the Life Span,” *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 97, No. 1 (July 1991), pp. 169–195; David O. Sears, “Whither Political Socialization Research? The Question of Persistence,” in Orit Ichilov, ed., *Political Socialization, Citizenship Education, and Democracy* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1990), pp. 69–97; David O. Sears and Carolyn L. Funk, “Evidence of the Long-Term Persistence of Adults’ Political Predispositions,” *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 61, No. 1 (February 1999), pp. 1–28; and Penny S. Visser and Jon A. Krosnick, “Development of Attitude Strength over the Life Cycle: Surge and Decline,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 75, No. 6 (December 1998), pp. 1389–1410. On formative experiences and political predispositions, see David O. Sears and Nicholas A. Valentino, “Politics Matters: Political Events as Catalysts for Pre-adult Socialization,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 91, No. 1 (March 1997), pp. 45–65; and David O. Sears, “Long-Term Psychological Consequences of Political Events,” in Kristen Renwick Monroe, ed., *Political Psychology* (Mahwah, N.J.: Erlbaum, 2001), pp. 249–269.

15. See Morris Janowitz, “Basic Education and Youth Socialization in the Armed Forces,” in Roger W. Little, ed., *Handbook of Military Institutions* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage, 1971), pp. 167–210. For a more skeptical view, see Theodore Zeldin, *France, 1848–1945*, Vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 905; and István Deák, *Beyond Nationalism: A Social and Political History of the Habsburg Officer Corps, 1848–1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 4.

16. Quoted in Peter M. Beattie, *The Tribute of Blood: Army, Honor, Race, and Nation in Brazil, 1864–1945* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2001), pp. 230–231.

In line with this view of the military as an instrument of socialization, governments have often sought to employ their militaries to indoctrinate the populace. In the late nineteenth century, imperial Germany charged the army with promoting a conservative political agenda and forestalling Social Democracy. The German mass army, like many of its counterparts in the age of nationalism, was designed to serve as “a great national school in which the officer would be an educator in the grand style, a shaper of the people’s mind.”<sup>17</sup> During the following century, all manner of regimes pinned their hopes for national cohesion on military educational programs, as they called their indoctrination efforts. The Red Army was asked to create “the new Soviet man,” the Yugoslav People’s Army to nurture an “all-Yugoslav” identity. Through extensive *hasbarah* (literally, “explanation”), the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) still seeks to instill in its soldiers a Zionist fervor on the grounds that Zionism constitutes the “unequivocal national consensus.”<sup>18</sup> Even the United States has at times unleashed ideological projects on its soldiers.<sup>19</sup>

The only limit to indoctrination, according to advocates of such programs, is that it cannot be recognized for what it is: Indoctrination is doomed to fail when its targets identify its true nature, and they must instead be persuaded that what is being communicated are facts, not ideology.<sup>20</sup> As the IDF understood early on, “The most important and effective explanation is perhaps that which is given outside any official framework and without being obviously

---

17. Gerhard Ritter, *The Sword and the Scepter: The Problem of Militarism in Germany*, Vol. 1: *The Prussian Tradition, 1740–1890*, trans. Heinz Norden (Coral Gables, Fla.: University of Miami Press, 1969), p. 118. See also Kiernan, “Conscription and Society in Europe before the War of 1914–18”; and Posen, “Nationalism, the Mass Army, and Military Power.”

18. Natan Eitan, “The *Hasbarah* Branch of the IDF Educational Corps,” in Ashkenazy, *The Military in the Service of Society and Democracy*, pp. 69–70.

19. See Stephen D. Wesbrook, *Political Training in the United States Army: A Reconsideration*, Mershon Center Position Papers in the Policy Sciences, No. 3 (Columbus: Mershon Center, Ohio State University, March 1979).

20. Such programs are typically far more popular among politicians than among professional officers, who recognize that they are not properly trained for the task and who are reluctant to devote time to missions they perceive as peripheral. For such views among Italian officers, see John Gooch, *Army, State, and Society in Italy, 1870–1915* (London: Macmillan, 1989); among Israeli officers, see Yehiel Klar, “The Role of the Officer as Educator and the Status of the Educational System in the Unit and in the Army,” in *Educational Instruction in the IDF: A Revised Perspective*, Vol. 2 (Education Corps, IDF, April 1994) [Hebrew]; among American officers, see Samuel A. Stouffer, Edward A. Suchman, Leland C. DeVinney, Shirley A. Star, and Robin M. Williams Jr., *The American Soldier: Adjustment during Army Life*, Vol. 1 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1949), pp. 470–471; and among German officers, see Ralf Zoll, “The German Armed Forces,” in Morris Janowitz and Stephen D. Wesbrook, eds., *The Political Education of Soldiers* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage, 1983), p. 227.

'*hasbaratit*.'"<sup>21</sup> The Soviet Union learned this lesson too late, and it came to see the Red Army's educational program as a missed opportunity. The propagandistic slogans were repeated so often and mechanically and they were so crudely and obviously constructed that they detracted from the program's efficacy.<sup>22</sup> The problem, as the sociologist Morris Janowitz recognized, is how to distinguish between indoctrination and education. Janowitz defined the former as the "one-sided inculcation of basic principles," and he argued that the latter involved "exposing students to the central and enduring political traditions of the nation, . . . teaching essential knowledge about the organization and operation of contemporary governmental institutions, and . . . fashioning essential identifications and moral sentiments required for performance as effective citizens."<sup>23</sup>

Proponents of the socialization mechanism conclude that the military can, through a variety of techniques, bring its members' beliefs regarding the boundaries of the national community into accord with the institution's norms. Its policies regarding personnel implicitly declare certain attitudes and behaviors acceptable, and these are reinforced by explicit pronouncements and informal practices. Such embedded norms become the standard to which soldiers and officers gradually adjust. When they leave the armed forces, it is argued, they are new men (and, increasingly, new women), and they spread their revised national visions through familial and civilian social networks.<sup>24</sup>

---

21. *Hasbarah* Branch, IDF, "Education in the Army," July 1953, IDF Archives (Giv'atayim, Israel) 56/9/92 [Hebrew].

22. Michael J. Deane, "The Soviet Armed Forces," in Janowitz and Westbrook, *The Political Education of Soldiers*, pp. 188–189.

23. Quoted in "Civic Consciousness and Military Performance," in *ibid.*, p. 10.

24. Research on the U.S. civil-military gap appears to suggest that the military is indeed a powerful force for long-term socialization. However, this conclusion is not warranted. First, even though there is much evidence that members of the U.S. military express different views from civilians, both elites and masses, this is likely the product of self-selection and the corresponding overrepresentation of Southerners. Second, evidence that veterans have different views from nonveterans may also reflect such selection effects. Third, the fact that these gaps exist and are even growing is *prima facie* evidence that the ease with which veterans can diffuse military norms throughout civilian society is overstated. See, among others, Peter D. Feaver and Richard H. Kohn, eds., *Soldiers and Civilians: The Civil-Military Gap and American National Security* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001); Christopher Gelpi and Peter D. Feaver, "Speak Softly and Carry a Big Stick? Veterans in the Political Elite and the American Use of Force," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 96, No. 4 (December 2002), pp. 779–793; and Ole R. Holsti, "A Widening Gap between the U.S. Military and Civilian Society? Some Evidence, 1976–96," *International Security*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (Winter 1998/99), pp. 5–42.

## THE LIMITS OF MILITARY SOCIALIZATION

The military's capacity for mass socialization has been widely endorsed—not just by state leaders desperate to bring cohesion to divided societies, but also by veterans, by those who (think they) know how they have been transformed by their experience in uniform, especially within the crucible of war. A German World War I veteran, for example, vividly depicted the war as “a gash [that] goes through all our lives. . . . With a brutal hand, it has torn our lives in two. . . . Behind everything is the war. We will never be free of it.”<sup>25</sup> Indeed, military service, particularly in wartime, has often exerted profound effects on veterans' employment prospects, psychological well-being, and personal relationships.<sup>26</sup> The armed forces have also at times exposed soldiers to new ideas, technologies, political tactics, and forms of social and economic organization.<sup>27</sup>

Self-evaluation, however, is a notoriously poor guide: Individuals routinely overstate the extent to which experiences and events change their beliefs and behavior.<sup>28</sup> Although veterans' reports that they were never the same after seeing what they had seen and doing what they had done cannot be casually dismissed, one can in good conscience approach such claims with skepticism, particularly in light of the availability heuristic and the imperative to reduce cognitive dissonance. Despite politicians' and veterans' embrace of military socialization, the logic of the argument is unconvincing, and empirical evidence suggests that its efficacy has been exaggerated.

First, research on political socialization should give pause to those who would tout the military's potency as a socializing force. For example, the most effective institutions of socialization are total—that is, all aspects of life are

---

25. Quoted in Robert Weldon Whalen, *Bitter Wounds: German Victims of the Great War, 1914–1939* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1984), pp. 181–182. See also Eric J. Leed, *No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

26. See, for example, the voluminous literature cited in Norman M. Camp, Robert H. Stretch, and William C. Marshall, eds., *Stress, Strain, and Vietnam: An Annotated Bibliography of Two Decades of Psychiatric and Social Sciences Literature Reflecting the Effect of the War on the American Soldier* (New York: Greenwood, 1988).

27. Some have argued, for example, that the African colonial soldier returned home from World War II impressed by Gandhian civil disobedience and inspired by the Indian and Burmese independence movements. See G.O. Olusanya, “The Role of Ex-Servicemen in Nigerian Politics,” *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (August 1968), pp. 221–232; and Adrienne M. Israel, “Measuring the War Experience: Ghanaian Soldiers in World War II,” *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (March 1987), pp. 159–168.

28. The seminal statement focuses on whether people accurately report the reasons for their feelings and evaluations. See Richard E. Nisbett and Timothy D. Wilson, “Telling More Than We Can Know: Verbal Reports on Mental Processes,” *Psychological Review*, Vol. 84, No. 3 (May 1977), pp. 231–259. A substantial follow-on literature has challenged aspects of this claim, but the larger point has withstood attack.

conducted in the same place and under the same authority, all daily activity is performed in the immediate company of others who are treated exactly alike, time is highly structured with required activities imposed from above, and contact with outsiders is limited.<sup>29</sup> One reason the military's powers of socialization have been acclaimed is its supposedly total nature. But this assumption is not warranted. Even basic training is often not characterized by that degree of isolation and central control. After the French decided to imitate Prussian practices toward the end of the nineteenth century, conscripts resided not in barracks but among the humbler ranks of urban society and remained entrenched in the civilian world. Israeli draftees and U.S. volunteers today return home regularly, and their access to modern entertainment and communications technologies further breaks down the walls between the military and society. In contrast, the nineteenth-century Russian army, which relied on peasant manpower, severed ties to home villages, and required long periods of service, more closely approximated the ideal.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, most soldiers do not harbor ambitions for a long military career and hence are not subject to its incentive structure. There are notable exceptions, such as Israel and nineteenth-century Germany, in which service and performance in the armed forces and reserves have been the key to professional success outside the military.<sup>31</sup> But more commonly, whether soldiers internalize military norms matters little to their subsequent fate, economic or otherwise.

That there is little evidence of military socialization should not be overly surprising. Other likely agents of socialization—family, peer groups, school, and mass media—have similarly been found wanting. Parents have proven to be far less important than originally thought in shaping their children's political orientations: The latter may be reflections of the former, but "they are pale reflections, especially beyond the realm of partisanship and voting."<sup>32</sup> The schools have also been advertised as potentially effective socializers because

---

29. Goffman, "On the Characteristics of Total Institutions."

30. On France and Prussia, see William H. McNeill, *The Pursuit of Power: Technology, Armed Force, and Society since A.D. 1000* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 189; and Bond, *War and Society in Europe, 1870–1970*, p. 23. On the IDF, see E.O. Schild, "On the Meaning of Military Service in Israel," in Michael Curtis and Mordecai S. Chertoff, eds., *Israel: Social Structure and Change* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 1973), pp. 419–432.

31. On Germany, see Kiernan, "Conscription and Society in Europe before the War of 1914–18"; and Martin Kitchen, *The German Officer Corps, 1890–1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968). On Israel, see Reuven Gal, *A Portrait of the Israeli Soldier* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1986).

32. Richard G. Niemi and Barbara I. Sobieszek, "Political Socialization," *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 3 (1977), p. 218. See also Virginia Sapiro, "Not Your Parents' Political Socialization: Introduction for a New Generation," *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 7 (forthcoming).

they possess authority and credibility, because they have access to their targets for long periods, and because academic performance often brings outside accolades and success in the marketplace. This intuition, however, has not generally found much support, at least not until very recently. To explain these findings, students of political socialization have pointed to the fact that schools are less-than-total institutions: "Another factor that may dampen the influence of schools during the adolescent years is the fact that young people are still at home."<sup>33</sup>

This is not to suggest that families, schools, and the armed forces have no impact; rather, whatever impact they do have seems to be modest. Even such modest effects have been elusive, however, for at least two reasons. First, individuals' political attitudes and practices are likely the amalgam of numerous institutional and other influences, not the straightforward reflection of any one socializing agent. Second, these effects may be limited and unpredictable because individuals are capable of independent learning, regardless of what agents hope to teach.<sup>34</sup> Although these findings are highly suggestive, definitive conclusions are not warranted. Nearly all past research on political socialization has focused on a single sociopolitical context, the United States, but different agents are likely to have different effects on people's basic political orientations and practices in different ways and to different degrees in other countries.<sup>35</sup>

Second, the distinction between indoctrination and education is not sustainable.<sup>36</sup> What is for the dominant group "a central and enduring political tradition" is for the minority an oppressive narrative. The "essential identifications" necessary for "effective citizenship" threaten dissenters' efforts to maintain their grasp on an alternative identity and loyalty. To those who fall within the

---

33. Niemi and Sobieszek, "Political Socialization," p. 221. See also Anders Westholm, Arne Lindquist, and Richard G. Niemi, "Education and the Making of the Informed Citizen: Political Literacy and the Outside World," in Ichilov, *Political Socialization, Citizenship Education, and Democracy*, pp. 177–204. Some recent research has suggested that schools can effectively socialize students to good citizenship, though these findings remain contested. See William A. Galston, "Political Knowledge, Political Engagement, and Civic Education," *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 4 (2001), pp. 217–234.

34. See Paul Allen Beck, "The Role of Agents in Political Socialization," in Stanley A. Renshon, ed., *Handbook of Political Socialization: Theory and Research* (New York: Free Press, 1977), pp. 115–141, at p. 140; and Timothy E. Cook, "The Bear Market in Political Socialization and the Costs of Misunderstood Psychological Theories," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 79, No. 4 (December 1985), p. 1089.

35. Sapiro, "Not Your Parents' Political Socialization."

36. Charles E. Lindblom, "Another State of Mind," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 76, No. 1 (March 1982), pp. 18–19.

national “consensus,” such sessions seemingly communicate mere information. To those who fall outside, civic education and attempted indoctrination are one and the same. Thus non-Slav soldiers, recognizing how central Russia was to Soviet identity, discounted the talk of national brotherhood and derided their educational training as transparent propaganda.<sup>37</sup> These limits inhere in educational programs, no matter how skillfully crafted.

Third, the socialization model problematically conceives of soldiers as passive receivers who lack the capacity for reflection, but cultural systems always contain enough contradictory material so that individuals can challenge hegemonic projects.<sup>38</sup> This passive model of man was prevalent in early socialization theory, but partly in response to empirical failures, scholars embraced a vision of the learner as creative—thus injecting both agency and contingency into their analyses.<sup>39</sup> It is then not surprising that military “educational” programs typically fail, for soldiers rarely learn the lessons the military wants. Consistent with this, military sociologists have concluded that “much of what appears to be the product of the training environment is, more accurately, a function of what the trainee himself brought into that environment.”<sup>40</sup> Thus the U.S. Army found during World War II that, despite measurable effects on factual knowledge, its various informational programs had minimal impact on soldiers’ attitudes toward the war, their personal stake in it, and their more general opinions.<sup>41</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville would have anticipated this outcome: He noted that nonprofessional soldiers never “more than half share the passions which that [military] mode of life engenders. They perform their duty as soldiers, but their minds are still on the interests and hopes which filled them in civilian life. They are therefore not colored by the military spirit but

---

37. Rakowska-Harmstone, “Brotherhood in Arms,” pp. 149–150; and Deborah Yarsike Ball, “Ethnic Conflict, Unit Performance, and the Soviet *Armed Forces*,” *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (Winter 1994), pp. 239–258.

38. See James Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1985).

39. See Cook, “The Bear Market in Political Socialization and the Costs of Misunderstood Psychological Theories”; Jeylan T. Mortimer and Roberta G. Simmons, “Adult Socialization,” *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 4 (1978), pp. 429–431; and Stanley A. Renshon, “Assumptive Frameworks in Political Socialization Theory,” in Renshon, *Handbook of Political Socialization*, pp. 3–44.

40. Peter Karsten, *Soldiers and Society: The Effects of Military Service and War on American Life* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1978), p. 21.

41. If military educational programs have little impact on soldiers’ views with regard to matters so central to the war effort, a fortiori they cannot exert much influence on soldiers’ attitudes with regard to seemingly more peripheral matters such as the definition of the nation. See Stouffer et al., *The American Soldier*, Vol. 1, pp. 458–485.

rather carry their civilian frame of mind with them into the army and never lose it."<sup>42</sup>

Finally, occasional empirical studies have suggested that militaries' capacity for socialization is weak. One review concluded that "contrary to the anxieties of those who believe that they [soldiers] will become automatons, and contrary to the supposition of enthusiasts who imagine military service will effect a virtuous remolding of character, most veterans of military service emerge with preexisting values and beliefs largely intact."<sup>43</sup> Suggestive work on military service and national identity supports this conclusion. One survey of Israeli university students found similar political views among those Druze Arabs who had served in the IDF and those who had not.<sup>44</sup> In the United States, among both officers and the enlisted, self-selection in general seems to be far more powerful than socialization. For example, despite West Point's highly structured environment, cadets showed only slight differences in patriotism scores across the classes.<sup>45</sup> A study of the West and East German militaries concluded that both "were relatively unsuccessful in their attempts at building, or contributing to, their respective political communities [despite] . . . the conscious efforts and apparent commitment on the part of the leadership to the use of the military institution to do so."<sup>46</sup>

Still more revealing, however, is an IDF classified study in which conscripts were themselves asked to assess the impact of their military experiences.<sup>47</sup> Pre-

42. Quoted in *Democracy in America*, trans. George Lawrence (New York: HarperCollins, 1969), p. 652.

43. Lovell and Stiehm, "Military Service and Political Socialization," p. 192. See also Charles C. Moskos Jr., "The Military," *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 2 (1976), pp. 64–65.

44. Gabriel Ben Dor, *The Druze in Israel* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1979), p. 140.

45. On the officer corps, see Volker C. Franke, "Duty, Honor, Country: The Social Identity of West Point Cadets," *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (Winter 2000), pp. 175–202; Volker C. Franke, "Warriors for Peace: The Next Generation of Military Leaders," *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (Winter 1997), pp. 33–59; and John P. Lovell, "The Professional Socialization of the West Point Cadet," in Morris Janowitz, ed., *The New Military: Changing Patterns of Organization* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1964), pp. 119–157. For evidence across the ranks, see Jerald G. Bachman, Lee Sigelman, and Greg Diamond, "Self-Selection, Socialization, and Distinctive Military Values," *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (Winter 1987), pp. 169–187; and Jerald G. Bachman, Peter Freedman Doan, and David R. Segal, "Distinctive Military Attitudes among U.S. Enlistees, 1976–1997: Self-Selection versus Socialization," *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol. 26, No. 4 (Summer 2000), pp. 561–585.

46. Mark N. Gose, "The Role of the Military in Building Political Community: The Case of the Two German States," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Colorado, 1995, p. 236.

47. Although Israelis firmly believe that the IDF is an important agent of socialization, no systematic empirical evidence supports this claim. See Micha Popper, "The Israeli Defense Forces as a Socializing Agent," in Daniel Bar-Tal, Dan Jacobson, and Aharon Klieman, eds., *Security Concerns: Insights from the Israeli Experience* (Stamford, Conn.: JAI, 1998), pp. 167–180.

dictably, they tended to exaggerate the IDF's influence, and they were more likely to claim positive effects than admit to negative ones. More surprisingly, although conscripts were, during their years in uniform, increasingly likely to attribute changes to military service, their more specific answers (e.g., had they grown closer to or more knowledgeable about Israel and its people?) displayed few differences across the three draft cohorts. The IDF study also challenged the hypothesis, rooted in theories of socialization, that a more isolated unit would exhibit stronger military effects. Although soldiers in combat units were more likely to report that they had learned the value of camaraderie, deepened their understanding of Israeli society, and heightened their link to the land, the differences among types of units were substantively small. Moreover, as many "closed" units are selective and composed of volunteers, self-selection and rigorous psychological testing probably account for these minor differences—especially because raw recruits in combat units were as likely as third-year troops to hail the importance of military service.<sup>48</sup> Given the methodological weaknesses of these particular studies, they are at most suggestive regarding the socialization model's empirical shortcomings, but they complement an already imposing theoretical case.

### *Communication and Contact in the Military*

The contact hypothesis, which can be traced back as far as Montesquieu, suggests that intense interaction among individuals of varied backgrounds will eliminate prejudicial attitudes and behavior and ultimately perhaps even erase consciousness of difference. Liberals have long looked to the armed forces as an institution particularly conducive to meaningful contact and thus as a cauldron of nationality. Despite decades of active research, however, the contact hypothesis continues to suffer from serious theoretical and empirical problems, and the results have been mixed at best in the armed forces.

#### THE CASE FOR THE CONTACT HYPOTHESIS

The layman's version of the contact hypothesis asserts that even "casual contact" can have substantial effects, but the psychologist Gordon Allport, con-

---

48. Yehiel Klar, Nira Lieberman, and Hadas Lis, "Research on Soldiers during Obligatory Service: Experiences of Military Service and Educational Needs," in *Educational Instruction in the IDF: A Revised Perspective*, Vol. 3 (Education Corps, IDF, October 1993) [Hebrew]. The author is grateful to an anonymous source for providing him with access to this report.

cerned with race relations in the United States, advanced a more sophisticated formulation in the 1940s. Suggesting that only “true acquaintance” could promote eventual racial harmony, Allport argued that the barriers to meaningful communication would fall away under four conditions: when group status was equal, at least within the context of the interaction; when groups were engaged in a cooperative endeavor and shared common goals; when the surrounding social climate (authorities, law, custom) supported extensive intergroup contact; and when the contact generated sufficient “acquaintance potential” (operationalized in terms of the frequency, duration, and closeness of contact).<sup>49</sup> Karl Deutsch similarly suggested that national communities are defined through networks of communication. Like Allport, Deutsch did not have in mind mere transactions, such as that reflected in the exchange of goods and services, but rather the true exchange of experience from which mutual identification flows. Although people typically come together already conscious of belonging to a community, Deutsch argued that intense communication would remake those bonds.<sup>50</sup>

The military, in peace and especially in war, would seem to be an institutional setting well suited to increasing what Deutsch called “communicative effectiveness” and thus to breaking down dividing lines based on race, ethnicity, religion, or class. Required to perform common tasks in a highly structured environment and in close quarters, individuals from diverse backgrounds would not just interact but would learn how truly to communicate with each other.<sup>51</sup> With these tasks of vital importance to national security, one could

---

49. Gordon W. Allport and Bernard M. Kramer, “Some Roots of Prejudice,” *Journal of Psychology*, Vol. 22 (1946), pp. 9–39; and Gordon W. Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1954). See also Robin M. Williams Jr., *The Reduction of Intergroup Tensions: A Survey of Research on Problems of Ethnic, Racial, and Religious Group Relations* (New York: Social Science Research Council, 1947). For recent reviews, see Marilyn B. Brewer and Rupert J. Brown, “Intergroup Relations,” in Daniel T. Gilbert, Susan T. Fiske, and Gardner Lindzey, eds., *The Handbook of Social Psychology*, 4th ed., Vol. 2 (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 1998), pp. 576–583; and Thomas F. Pettigrew, “Intergroup Contact Theory,” *Annual Review of Psychology*, Vol. 49 (1998), pp. 65–85.

50. Karl W. Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication: An Inquiry into the Foundations of Nationality* (New York: John Wiley, 1953).

51. The contact hypothesis may help explain when military units are (socially) cohesive. In their seminal work, Edward A. Shils and Morris Janowitz suggested, based on their study of the German army on the western front during World War II, that the soldier was, in part, likely to continue fighting “as long as he gave affection to and received affection from the other members of his squad and platoon”—his primary group. They failed, however, to explain adequately the conditions under which such affection would be forthcoming. The contact hypothesis and its ancillary propositions may provide part of the answer to why soldiers’ “spontaneous loyalties are to [the unit’s] immediate members whom he sees daily and with whom he develops a high degree of intimacy.” If this is correct, cohesion would then be more an implication of the contact hypothesis than

count on a supportive normative milieu, enforced by orders down the chain of command.<sup>52</sup> Greater communicative capacity in a nurturing environment would reshape perceptions of the Other, laying the groundwork for a more cohesive community. Through military service, individuals would escape the strictures of parochial commitments, and they would emerge cognizant that they were constitutive pieces of a larger project.<sup>53</sup>

This logic underpins the contention, not infrequently heard in the United States, that the military can serve (and has served) as a national melting pot. Thus American Progressives who advocated universal military training before, during, and after World War I applauded it as an instrument of “Americanization.” When immigrants and native-born Americans would rub “elbows in a common service to a common Fatherland,” one-time Assistant Secretary of War Henry Breckinridge maintained, “out comes the hyphen—up goes the Stars and Stripes and in a generation the melting pot will have melted. Universal military service will be the elder brother of the public school in fusing this American race.”<sup>54</sup> Although these dreams inspired but ultimately frustrated U.S. military planners during World War I, World War II has been widely acclaimed as having brought them to fruition. After the war, Jews and Catholics were no longer suspect, and white Americans of European descent melded into a single mass. The war, one historian argues, “expose[d] men to a much greater range of individuals and groups than most had ever known, and did so in circumstances of extreme vulnerability where they had no choice but, if they

---

yet another potential source of postservice effects. It is also possible that cohesion is more a product of success on the battlefield than it is its cause. See Shils and Janowitz, “Cohesion and Disintegration in the Wehrmacht in World War II,” *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (Summer 1948), pp. 280–315; and, for a persuasive critique, see Elizabeth Kier, “Homosexuals in the U.S. Military: Open Integration and Combat Effectiveness,” *International Security*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (Fall 1998), pp. 5–39.

52. The match between Allport’s conditions and military service is good, but it should not be exaggerated. Despite common goals, members of the armed forces routinely compete with each other, not least for promotions and plum assignments. The armed forces is also a highly hierarchical and formal environment. Finally, especially during a national crisis, the military’s leaders may be willing to ignore violations of norms, as long as they do not interfere excessively with performance.

53. See John Sibley Butler and Kenneth L. Wilson, “The American Soldier Revisited: Race Relations and the Military,” *Social Science Quarterly*, Vol. 59, No. 3 (December 1978), pp. 451–467; Janowitz, “Basic Education and Youth Socialization in the Armed Forces,” p. 207; and Charles Moskos, “From Citizens’ Army to Social Laboratory,” *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Winter 1993), pp. 83–94, at p. 87.

54. Henry Breckinridge, “Universal Service as the Basis of National Unity and National Defense,” in William L. Ransom, ed., “Military Training: Compulsory or Volunteer,” *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science in the City of New York*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (July 1916), p. 16. See also David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).

wished to survive, to trust each other. In the process, individuals' conceptions of who belonged in their American community expanded enormously."<sup>55</sup> In short, the contact hypothesis.

Americans found this militarized version of the contact hypothesis attractive, and they were not alone. Italian military reform efforts beginning in 1860 consciously broke with the Prussian system of territorial recruitment; they believed that only by combining troops from different regions in single units could the military foster *Italianità*. Brazilian politicians early in the twentieth century, conscious of their country's deep ethnic, regional, and class divisions, hoped that the draft would, by bringing together men of different backgrounds, overcome such challenges; practical considerations led to localized recruitment, but the army nonetheless clung to its reputation as the "agent of national integration." The historian John Keegan has even sought to explain the post-Great War transformation in British middle-class attitudes toward the impoverished (and in turn the eventual creation of modern social welfare) by noting the large-scale exposure of middle-class amateur officers to their working-class charges and the consequent "process of discovery" that produced "affection and concern" and even empathy.<sup>56</sup> Again, the contact hypothesis.

#### THE WEAKNESSES OF THE CONTACT HYPOTHESIS

The contact hypothesis suffers from several theoretical flaws.<sup>57</sup> First, while it seems plausible, it is theoretically indeterminate. Meaningful contact with others may foster friendship, harmony, and a sense of common destiny, but familiarity also may, as the adage goes, breed contempt. As the journalist Andrew Sullivan has observed, "It is one of the most foolish clichés of our time that prejudice is always rooted in ignorance, and can usually be overcome by familiarity with the objects of our loathing."<sup>58</sup> True understanding of others may

55. Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 220–237, at p. 227.

56. Gooch, *Army, State, and Society in Italy, 1870–1915*, pp. 1–35; Beattie, *The Tribute of Blood*, pp. 228–237, 270–271; and John Keegan, *The Face of Battle: A Study of Agincourt, Waterloo, and the Somme* (London: Penguin, 1976), pp. 224–225.

57. This discussion of the contact hypothesis draws freely on Hugh D. Forbes, *Ethnic Conflict: Commerce, Culture, and the Contact Hypothesis* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1997); Walter G. Stephan, "The Contact Hypothesis in Intergroup Relations," in Clyde Hendrick, ed., *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations* (Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage, 1987), pp. 13–40; and Walter G. Stephan, "Intergroup Relations," in Gardner Lindzey and Elliot Aronson, eds., *Handbook of Social Psychology*, 3d ed., Vol. 2 (New York: Random House, 1985), pp. 599–658.

58. Andrew Sullivan, "What's So Bad About Hate," in Alan Lightman, ed., *The Best American Es-*

just as easily contribute to deadlock and the recognition of incompatibility as to commonality.<sup>59</sup> The prospect of extensive contact may even promote anxiety and suspicion, and thereby lower the likelihood of intergroup cooperation and good feeling.<sup>60</sup> Alternatively, contact may have next to no impact on prejudicial attitudes, whether for good or for ill. On the one hand, like other beliefs, stereotypes are highly resistant to change, and individuals generally weigh more heavily information consistent with their prior beliefs, discounting discrepant information. On the other hand, these stereotypes may not be causes of discrimination, as the contact hypothesis's logic suggests; rather they may result from attempts to justify discriminatory behavior.<sup>61</sup>

Countless examples across time and space sustain this view of contact's indeterminacy. Racist attitudes toward African Americans were perhaps most entrenched among Southerners, who generally had far more intimate relationships with blacks than did Northerners. Nevertheless, for decades, African American leaders attributed racism to "ignorance and inexperience." But in the midst of the Great Depression, W.E.B. Du Bois confessed his frustration: "Today there can be no doubt that Americans know the facts; and yet they remain for the most part indifferent and unmoved."<sup>62</sup> Toward the end of World War II, more than 60 percent of Americans believed that postwar race relations would be worse than or the same as before; among the nearly 40 percent who thought relations would deteriorate, the largest number cited increasing inti-

---

says, 2000 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000), p. 189. First published in *New York Times Magazine*, September 26, 1999.

59. The contact hypothesis has much in common with a particular version of liberal thought on international relations, which holds that the spread of technologies of communication enhances the prospects for peace by countering ignorance and misinformation. This form of liberalism was particularly popular before World War I, and advocates of globalization today advance similar arguments when they foresee the emergence of supranational identities as a consequence of the vastly increased capacity for cross-border contact. For a classic exposition and critique, see Geoffrey Blainey, *The Causes of War*, 3d ed. (New York: Free Press, 1988 [1973]), pp. 18–32; for a more sympathetic (yet still, on the whole, skeptical) review, see David Welch, "Internationalism: Contacts, Trade, and Institutions," in Joseph S. Nye Jr., Graham T. Allison, and Albert Carnesale, eds., *Fateful Visions: Avoiding Nuclear Catastrophe* (Cambridge, Mass.: Ballinger, 1988), pp. 173–178. For analyses of this aspect of globalization, see David Held, Anthony G. McGrew, David Goldblatt, and Jonathan Perraton, *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics, and Culture* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999), pp. 327–375; and Jan Aart Scholte, *Globalization: A Critical Introduction* (Basingstoke, U.K.: Palgrave, 2000), pp. 159–183.

60. Walter G. Stephan and Cookie W. Stephan, "Intergroup Anxiety," *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (Fall 1985), pp. 157–175.

61. See Diane M. Mackie and Eliot R. Smith, "Intergroup Relations: Insights from a Theoretically Integrative Approach," *Psychological Review*, Vol. 105, No. 3 (July 1998), pp. 500–506.

62. "A Negro Nation within the Nation," in Andrew G. Paschal, ed., *A W.E.B. Du Bois Reader* (New York: Macmillan, 1971), p. 71.

macy between the races as the primary reason.<sup>63</sup> Rather than blur the differences among peoples, contact may even foster consciousness of difference. Until they collided with French society early in the twentieth century, Bretons had little understanding not only of how they differed from other residents of France but also of how much they had in common with each other.<sup>64</sup>

Defenders of the contact hypothesis would respond that such a critique applies only to the simplistic layman's version, not to the sophisticated contact hypothesis they espouse. They would not be surprised to learn that contact has no effect (or even a negative impact) when Allport's four conditions are not in evidence. They would point out that, given the requirement of common goals and a cooperative endeavor, deadlock is simply ruled out. However, this line of defense begs the question: Under what conditions, and how commonly, do groups come to share common goals? The contact hypothesis assumes that intergroup conflict is rooted in prejudice and that prejudice is fundamentally a problem of ignorance. But intergroup hostility is often caused by factors other than a lack of knowledge or inaccurate perceptions.<sup>65</sup> As social identity theory suggests, group membership itself has prejudicial implications that additional knowledge, even if acquired during cooperative episodes, cannot overcome.<sup>66</sup> When pressed in this fashion, many have expanded the list of necessary conditions,<sup>67</sup> thus compounding the difficulty of falsifying the hypothesis and frustrating even those sympathetic to its claims.<sup>68</sup> Finally, the layman's version is itself making a comeback among some experts. A recent meta-analysis found that Allport's conditions are not necessary (though they do in concert have a large multiplicative effect) and that *any* contact facilitates the reduction of prej-

---

63. National Opinion Research Center poll, May 1944, in Hadley Cantril, ed., *Public Opinion, 1935-1946* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1951), p. 989, n. 24.

64. Suzanne Berger, "Bretons, Basques, Scots, and Other European Nations," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Summer 1972), pp. 170-171.

65. Miles Hewstone and Rupert Brown, "Contact Is Not Enough: An Intergroup Perspective on the 'Contact Hypothesis,'" in Hewstone and Brown, eds., *Contact and Conflict in Intergroup Encounters* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), pp. 10-12.

66. On social identity theory, see Henri Tajfel and John C. Turner, "The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behavior," in Stephen Worchel and William G. Austin, eds., *Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, 2d ed. (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1986), pp. 7-24. For an application to international relations, see Jonathan Mercer, "Anarchy and Identity," *International Organization*, Vol. 49, No. 2 (Spring 1995), pp. 229-252.

67. Research on the contact hypothesis displays many of the characteristics of a degenerative research program. See Imre Lakatos, "Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes," in Lakatos and Alan Musgrave, eds., *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 91-196.

68. See Thomas F. Pettigrew, "The Intergroup Contact Hypothesis Reconsidered," in Hewstone and Brown, *Contact and Conflict in Intergroup Encounters*, pp. 179-180; and Pettigrew, "Intergroup Contact Theory."

udicial attitudes.<sup>69</sup> Thus the problem of theoretical indeterminacy continues to loom large.

Second, despite an active research program that has flourished for decades, the causal claim of the contact hypothesis remains unverified.<sup>70</sup> Numerous studies have reported a positive correlation between interaction with out-group members and friendly attitudes toward that group, but it remains possible that these positive views are the underlying reason for high levels of interaction rather than the consequence.<sup>71</sup> Proponents have admitted that prior individual attitudes and experiences, as well as the history of intergroup relations, influence whether people seek or avoid contact in the first place and thus affect the consequences of contact; at most, contact is a multiplier, magnifying processes already under way.<sup>72</sup>

Third, the contact hypothesis erroneously assumes that interpersonal attraction translates smoothly into intergroup harmony, but intergroup conflicts and out-group stereotypes often persist despite friendships across group lines.<sup>73</sup> White bigots can often in good conscience declare that some of their best friends are black. Increased contact and the flowering of individual relationships do not necessarily erode group boundaries or forge intergroup bonds.

Fourth, the contact hypothesis does not take adequate account of the likeli-

---

69. Thomas F. Pettigrew and Linda R. Tropp, "A Meta-Analytic Test and Reformulation of Intergroup Contact Theory," paper presented at the Political Psychology and Behavior Workshop, Center for Basic Research in the Social Sciences, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, November 2002.

70. In their widely cited article published nearly fifty years after Allport's seminal work, Lee Sigelman and Susan Welch acknowledge this weakness in their work; see Sigelman and Welch, "The Contact Hypothesis Revisited: Black-White Interaction and Positive Racial Attitudes," *Social Forces*, Vol. 71, No. 3 (March 1993), pp. 781-795. Two more recent studies employing sophisticated statistical techniques have claimed to have established that contact has a statistically significant effect, but both take cross-group friendship as the independent variable. As this level of acquaintance greatly exceeds even Allport's standards, these studies cannot be taken as evidence of the contact hypothesis's validity. See Thomas F. Pettigrew, "Generalized Intergroup Contact Effects on Prejudice," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (February 1997), pp. 173-185; and Daniel A. Powers and Christopher G. Ellison, "Interracial Contact and Black Racial Attitudes: The Contact Hypothesis and Selectivity Bias," *Social Forces*, Vol. 74, No. 1 (September 1995), pp. 205-226.

71. Thus Butler and Wilson find that the level of interracial contact prior to entry into military service is the "single most important" variable in their model predicting the level of racial contact during military service. See their "American Soldier Revisited," p. 465.

72. Pettigrew, "Intergroup Contact Theory," pp. 77-78. But see also John Brehm and Wendy Rahn, "Individual-Level Evidence for the Causes and Consequences of Social Capital," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (July 1997), pp. 999-1023.

73. See Hewstone and Brown, "Contact Is Not Enough," pp. 13-20; Pettigrew, "Intergroup Contact Theory," pp. 74-75; and David A. Wilder, "Intergroup Contact: The Typical Member and the Exception to the Rule," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (March 1984), pp. 177-194.

hood of misperception. Even when individuals are well intentioned, others may not perceive them as such. This is compounded by the tendency of people, despite the best of intentions, to suffer from social anxiety when they are unsure how to behave; such anxiety often manifests itself in the sort of physical cues consistent with high levels of prejudice, thus laying the groundwork for tragic miscommunication. The result, two critics of the contact hypothesis have persuasively argued, is that the “conditions assumed to be necessary to promote positive intergroup relations are difficult, if not impossible, to achieve in most real-world settings.”<sup>74</sup>

Finally, the contact hypothesis’s potential explanatory power is necessarily limited. The hypothesis suggests that inclusive military manpower policies can help break down cleavages of various kinds but that exclusive policies will have little impact of any sort: They represent at most an opportunity forgone. Unlike the socialization model, which proposes that officers and soldiers eventually come to adopt whatever national norms—whether inclusive or exclusive—are embedded in the military’s participation policies, the contact hypothesis sees the military’s effects flowing in only one direction. This theoretical flaw is not fatal, as it is certainly conceivable that multiple causal mechanisms might operate. But it would place the contact hypothesis at a disadvantage in a three-cornered test.

Apart from the contact hypothesis’s theoretical problems, its record in the military context in times of both peace and war is not promising. When militaries have introduced such mixing in the ranks, it has rarely led to a sense of shared fate and certainly not to the fraternal sentiments that might survive the return to civilian society. The common baptism of fire notwithstanding, comradeship on the battlefield has been the stuff of myth. Class tensions, for example, were rife in the German military of World War I, and the experience proved “disillusioning for those who expected to find in war . . . a community joined by the organic bonds of nationality.” One historian who has carefully studied French veterans after the Great War concludes, “To believe that the war altered souls was no doubt an illusion.”<sup>75</sup> The shared horrors of war did not promote harmony, let alone reevaluation of the nation.

Ethnic, racial, and regional cleavages have been equally resistant to such ex-

---

74. Patricia G. Devine and Kristin A. Vasquez, “The Rocky Road to Positive Intergroup Relations,” in Jennifer L. Eberhard and Susan T. Fiske, eds., *Confronting Racism: The Problem and the Response* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 1998), pp. 234–262, at p. 243.

75. Leed, *No Man’s Land*, pp. 93–94; Antoine Prost, *In the Wake of War: ‘Les Anciens Combattants’ and French Society* (Providence: Berg, 1992), p. 22.

periments. In 1884, while a group of northern Italians cracked jokes at the expense of the southerners in their unit, a soldier from the southernmost reaches of the peninsula seized his rifle and killed seven of his northern comrades: Italy's armed forces, this incident suggested, could not bridge the country's deep fissures. Modernization theorists expected army service in developing countries to render irrelevant traditional loyalties and rivalries, but older patterns stubbornly persisted. Initially the IDF, for example, had thought that all Druze could serve together in its Minorities Unit, but officers soon discovered that soldiers from hostile clans had to be assigned to different platoons. Similarly, common military service failed to alleviate ethnic disputes in the Gold Coast Regiment and perhaps made men only more sensitive to cultural and ethnic differences.<sup>76</sup>

Finally, evidence from the United States—seemingly the strongest case for the military melting pot—also cannot sustain the contact hypothesis. Hollywood's portrayal during World War II of the ethnically mixed yet cohesive squad bore little resemblance to the reality of military life, in which anti-Semitism prevailed. Although Jews served throughout the armed forces, they were widely considered draft-dodgers, and their fellow soldiers attributed to Jews the cruel parody: "Onward Christian Soldiers, we'll make the uniforms." Although upper-tier officers condemned bigotry, soldiers were, compared to the general population, more likely to accuse Jews of not bearing their fair share of the burden.<sup>77</sup>

Outside the armed forces, the alleged unifying effects of military service are equally difficult to discern. World War II did not lead to the disappearance of religiously restrictive residential covenants or of the hiring bias against Jews. In early 1942, public opinion polls placed Jews third after Japanese Americans and German Americans as groups posing the greatest internal threat; two years later, even as the war still raged, Jews had overtaken both, outpolling the former nearly three to one and the latter four to one. Anti-Jewish sentiment was more widespread after the war than before: Whereas some 13 percent of Americans in both 1943 and 1945 said Jews wielded too much power, a late

---

76. Gooch, *Army, State, and Society in Italy, 1870–1915*, p. 63; Ben Dor, *The Druzes in Israel*, pp. 215–218; and David Killingray, "Soldiers, Ex-Servicemen, and Politics in the Gold Coast, 1939–50," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (September 1983), p. 528.

77. Samuel A. Stouffer, Arthur A. Lumsdaine, Marion Harper Lumsdaine, Robin M. Williams Jr., M. Brewster Smith, Irving L. Janis, Shirley A. Star, and Leonard S. Cottrell Jr., *The American Soldier: Combat and Its Aftermath*, Vol. 2 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1949), pp. 613, 619–620; and Leonard Dinnerstein, *Anti-Semitism in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 128–149.

1947 poll found that many more Americans believed that Jews exerted excessive economic and political influence—36 percent and 21 percent respectively. The number of Americans reporting having heard criticism of Jews climbed steadily between 1940 and 1946, before dropping in the decade's closing years.<sup>78</sup> At war's end, Britain's ambassador observed that "the United States is so strongly anti-Semitic that anti-Semitism at home is an ever present problem for every American Jew."<sup>79</sup>

### *Flaws Common to the Socialization and Contact Mechanisms*

For all their differences, the first two mechanisms share a number of premises and consequently suffer from five common flaws. First, even if the military were an effective inculcator of values, the messages absorbed within one social context are not necessarily portable. In modern societies, individuals have multiple identities, and there is nothing given about which will seem most appropriate. Field studies of U.S. race relations thus found that workers of different races cooperated effectively in the coal mine and on the factory floor, but at the end of the day returned home to segregated areas and even actively sought to maintain their neighborhoods' racial purity.<sup>80</sup> Because identity is highly contextual, one should not be surprised to see soldiers thinking in national terms while in uniform, but then adopting regional, class, gendered, religious, or ethnic perspectives at other times. In the words of one East German veteran, "When we were in public [in uniform], we knew that some day we would be back in 'real' society, but we were also constantly reminded by our total immersion into military things that we were for the time being *military* East Germans."<sup>81</sup> Individuals may well behave as the military desires as long as they are subject to the strictures of military life—as long as they are members of the armed forces, are in uniform, and are on base. But variation in the environment—such as being off base, being out of uniform, and returning to civilian

---

78. Dinnerstein, *Anti-Semitism in America*, pp. 131–132; *Fortune* public opinion poll, in *Opinion News*, February 15, 1948, pp. 3–4; and Opinion Research Corporation poll, reported in Hazel Gaudet Erskine, "The Polls: Religious Prejudice, Part 2: Anti-Semitism," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (Winter 1965–66), p. 651.

79. Quoted in Leonard Dinnerstein, *Uneasy at Home: Anti-Semitism and the American Jewish Experience* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), p. 179.

80. See Ralph D. Minard, "Race Relations in the Pocahontas Coal Field," *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (1952), pp. 29–44; and Dietrich C. Reitzes, "The Role of Organizational Structures: Union vs. Neighborhood in a Tense Situation," *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (1953), pp. 37–44.

81. Quoted in Gose, "The Role of the Military in Building Political Community," p. 202 (emphasis in original).

life—leads to behavior inconsistent with those norms, whether because individuals failed to internalize the norms and do not obey them in the absence of enforcement or because the new environment cues a different identity.<sup>82</sup>

The American experience with the racial desegregation of the armed forces, often portrayed as an unadulterated success story, illustrates this point. Social learning certainly took place: Black soldiers earned their white counterparts' respect and admiration for their bravery and effectiveness on the battlefield. But such learning was of a highly bounded nature, for social barriers remained unaffected. As one white serviceman declared during the Korean War,

I'm not going to have a colored guy up to my house to meet my sister any more than I would have before the War, just because the guy was in the damned Army. Of course if he's wearing a—Division shoulder patch I'd consider him my buddy, same as any other guy from the—Division.

[How about this colored boy in the tent here?] Oh, that's different. He's just like any of the other boys. I'd take him home. I wouldn't think of treating him any different. He's a buddy of mine.<sup>83</sup>

Although thousands of young, white Americans had served alongside blacks in World War II and Korea, nearly all whites in the late 1950s continued to disapprove of interracial marriages, and many remained reluctant to dismantle residential segregation.<sup>84</sup> The U.S. military has justifiably been acclaimed for its efforts, and it is today arguably the least racist institution in American society, even though many African Americans in the armed forces continue to feel acutely that they are the victims of discrimination.<sup>85</sup> Nevertheless, the military's achievements have largely been limited to the workplace. "As a rule of thumb," Charles Moskos and John Sibley Butler conclude, "the more military the environment, the more complete the integration."<sup>86</sup> After hours, blacks and whites have generally returned to civilian norms of association.<sup>87</sup>

---

82. Critics of the contact hypothesis have similarly questioned the extent of generalization across contexts. See Hewstone and Brown, "Contact Is Not Enough," pp. 16–20.

83. Quoted in Leo Bogart, ed., *Project Clear: Social Research and the Desegregation of the U.S. Army* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 1992 [1969]), p. 125.

84. *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion, 1935–1971*, September 24–29, 1958 (New York: Random House, 1972), p. 1573.

85. See Jacquelyn Scarville, Scott B. Button, Jack E. Edwards, Anita R. Lancaster, and Timothy W. Elig, *Armed Forces Equal Opportunity Survey*, Defense Manpower Data Center Report No. 97-027 (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, November 1999).

86. Charles C. Moskos and John Sibley Butler, *All That We Can Be: Black Leadership and Racial Integration the Army Way* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), p. 2.

87. This finding dates to the U.S. Army's earliest experiments with racial integration and has been a constant theme ever since. See Stouffer et al., *The American Soldier*, Vol. 1, pp. 586–595; and Charles C. Moskos Jr., "Racial Integration in the Armed Forces," *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 72, No. 2 (September 1966), pp. 142–143.

Second, even if military service could powerfully influence individuals' fundamental identity commitments across social contexts, that influence need not prove long-lasting. The socialization and contact mechanisms suggest that military service is particularly likely to shape conscripts' and volunteers' visions of their nation because they are "impressionable" during the years of late adolescence and early adulthood; furthermore, the mechanisms presume that these newly formed attitudes will prove stable, in part because national identity falls into the category of "symbolic" attitudes.<sup>88</sup> Although there is accumulating evidence that a subset of attitudes, notably partisanship, is increasingly stable at least through middle age, it is unclear whether one can extrapolate to the beliefs of concern here.<sup>89</sup> Partisanship may be the focus of so much research not because it is the most important or revealing of political attitudes but because it has proved the easiest to study quantitatively and because the U.S. political system has remained relatively stable over the last half century. It is revealing that few studies have been conducted on the question of socialization and national identity, and almost all of these are from outside the United States.<sup>90</sup>

More important, attitudes persist not because human beings are biologically programmed against attitudinal change beyond early adulthood but because most individuals (at least in the past) have settled down, geographically but more crucially socially, by their mid-thirties. They typically surround themselves with people with whom they are compatible, ideologically and otherwise. When social networks are stable, attitudes are stable, but when social networks are disrupted, change is likely because beliefs will be exposed to challenge.<sup>91</sup> The implication is not just that learning occurs across the life span,

---

88. See Sears, "Whither Political Socialization Research"; Sears and Funk, "Evidence of the Long-Term Persistence of Adult Political Predispositions"; and David O. Sears, "The Persistence of Early Political Predispositions: The Roles of Attitude Object and Life Stage," *Review of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 4 (1983), pp. 79–116.

89. The stability of partisanship has been the subject of great debate. For contrary views, see Morris P. Fiorina, *Retrospective Voting in American National Elections* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1981); Morris P. Fiorina, "The Electorate at the Polls in the 1990s," in L. Sandy Meisel, ed., *The Parties Respond: Changes in American Parties and Campaigns* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1996); Charles H. Franklin, "Issue Preferences, Socialization, and the Evolution of Party Identification," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (August 1984), pp. 459–478; and Charles H. Franklin and John E. Jackson, "The Dynamics of Party Identification," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 77, No. 4 (December 1983), pp. 957–973.

90. See Sapiro, "Not Your Parents' Political Socialization"; and Roberta S. Sigel and Marilyn Brookes Hoskin, "Perspectives on Adult Socialization—Areas of Research," in Renshon, *Handbook of Political Socialization*, pp. 269–270.

91. See Theodore M. Newcomb, Kathryn E. Koenig, Richard Flacks, and Donald P. Warwick, *Persistence and Change: Bennington College and Its Students after Twenty-five Years* (New York: Wiley, 1967); and Duane F. Alwin, Ronald L. Cohen, and Theodore M. Newcomb, *Political Attitudes over*

but that the impact of military service critically depends on a social environment consistent with those military norms—which is by no means guaranteed.<sup>92</sup> Most soldiers leave the service well before their mid-thirties, while their social networks (and thus their attitudes) are still far from stable. The military's effects on identity do not endure because veterans typically are not surrounded exclusively or even mostly by their own kind upon discharge. Re-entering largely nonveteran social networks, they face strong pressures to leave their military past behind and adapt to civilian norms. Some veterans, both the highly self-assured and the highly alienated, will cling stubbornly to military norms and networks, but they are the exception rather than the rule: Most veterans, like most people, lack similar strength of will.<sup>93</sup>

This logic is consistent with the findings of several studies of veterans. Among U.S. soldiers who had experienced combat—that is, among those for whom the military experience would presumably have been most salient—views on numerous matters, such as attitudes toward adversaries and allies and the possibility of camaraderie across race lines, reverted upon discharge toward the preservice norm.<sup>94</sup> A similar dynamic has been observed among African veterans of both world wars as well.<sup>95</sup> Thus the antimilitarist fear—

*the Life Span: The Bennington Women after Fifty Years* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991). For other factors affecting susceptibility to attitude change across the life span, see Visser and Krosnick, "Development of Attitude Strength over the Life Cycle," pp. 1403–1405.

92. Although Visser and Krosnick ("Attitude Strength," pp. 1402–1403) find that susceptibility to attitude change is highest among younger and older adults, they also find evidence of considerable attitude change among even the least susceptible age groups. For key works in the "lifelong openness" approach, see Orville G. Brim and Jerome Kagan, eds., *Constancy and Change in Human Development* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980); and Richard M. Lerner, *On the Nature of Human Plasticity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984). See also Cook, "The Bear Market in Political Socialization and the Costs of Misunderstood Psychological Theories"; and Virginia Sapiro, "Political Socialization during Adulthood: Clarifying the Political Time of Our Lives," *Research in Micropolitics*, Vol. 4 (1994), pp. 197–223.

93. Alternatively, the military may not be capable of molding individuals' basic group identities because, as developmental psychologists have suggested, people may develop stable group identities in early childhood. Indeed, there is evidence that children barely out of nursery school effectively engage in social group categorization. For a review of this literature, see Sapiro, "Not Your Parents' Political Socialization."

94. See Karsten, *Soldiers and Society*, p. 31; Stouffer et al., *The American Soldier*, Vol. 2, pp. 637–638; Adam Yarmolinsky, *The Military Establishment: Its Impacts on American Society* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), pp. 348–350; and George H. Lawrence and Thomas D. Kane, "Military Service and Racial Attitudes of White Veterans," *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (Winter 1995/96), pp. 235–255. But, for suggestive findings to the contrary, see Gelpi and Feaver, "Speak Softly and Carry a Big Stick?"; and Peter D. Feaver and Christopher Gelpi, *Choosing Your Battles: American Civil-Military Relations and the Use of Force* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003).

95. See Lewis J. Greenstein, "The Impact of Military Service in World War I on Africans: The Nandi of Kenya," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (September 1978), pp. 495–507; Killingray, "Soldiers," pp. 524–525, 529–530; and Anne Summers and R.W. Johnson, "World War I Conscription and Social Change in Guinea," *Journal of African History*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (1978), p. 33.

that although “a civilian can be licked into shape as a soldier by the manual of arms and a drillmaster, . . . no manual has ever been written for changing him back into a civilian”—is overblown.<sup>96</sup> These effects of reintegration into civilian life are reinforced by the fact that military service is often an unwelcome intrusion, at least for conscripts. Even in the “good war” of World War II, U.S. soldiers generally perceived their years of service as “a vast detour made from the main course of life in order to get back to that main (civilian) course again.”<sup>97</sup>

One apparent exception to this rule is U.S. veterans of World War II, acclaimed as “the greatest generation” for their unparalleled civic engagement.<sup>98</sup> Glen Elder has demonstrated the enormous long-term impact that the war had on many veterans’ personalities and socioeconomic possibilities, benefiting especially those who entered early and experienced the least serious disruption to the “life course.”<sup>99</sup> But the critical factor in explaining this unusually high and sustained level of political activity was not military service per se, but a contingent and historically unprecedented concomitant: the G.I. Bill. By boosting the political resources on which veterans could draw and enhancing their predisposition for involvement, the G.I. Bill, more than the war itself, profoundly shaped a generation of civic joiners and doers.<sup>100</sup>

Third, neither mechanism fully explains how those who do not serve in the armed forces acquire a definition of the nation in line with military norms. These individualist accounts lack a well-specified theory, at most alluding to vague processes of diffusion. But this assumes that diffusion is essentially unidirectional, that veterans’ beliefs spread to society at large (at the very least) far

96. Quoted in Richard Severo and Lewis Milford, *The Wages of War: When America’s Soldiers Came Home—From Valley Forge to Vietnam* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), p. 292.

97. Stouffer et al., *The American Soldier*, Vol. 1, p. 449. See also M. Kent Jennings and Gregory B. Markus, “The Effects of Military Service on Political Attitudes: A Panel Study,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 71, No. 1 (March 1977), pp. 131–147.

98. See Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000), pp. 247–276. Putnam, however, suggests (*ibid.*, p. 485, n. 41) that veterans are no more civically engaged than others of their generation.

99. See, from a far larger corpus, Glen H. Elder Jr., “War Mobilization and the Life Course: A Cohort of World War II Veterans,” *Sociological Forum*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (Summer 1987), pp. 449–472. For a critique, see John Modell and Timothy Haggerty, “The Social Impact of War,” *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 17 (1991), pp. 218–219.

100. Suzanne Mettler, “Bringing the State Back In to Civic Engagement: Policy Feedback Effects of the G.I. Bill for World War II Veterans,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 96, No. 2 (June 2002), pp. 351–365. On the importance of the G.I. Bill, see also Robert J. Sampson and John H. Laub, “Socioeconomic Achievement in the Life Course of Disadvantaged Men: Military Service as a Turning Point, circa 1940–1965,” *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 61, No. 3 (June 1996), pp. 347–367.

more than civilian society's norms spread among the population of veterans. As the above discussion suggests, however, it seems more plausible to conclude that even though charismatic veterans might succeed in partly militarizing society, the vast majority would melt back in without reshaping society's ideological or behavioral contours.

Fourth, both mechanisms' unstated logic appears to presume near-universal military service. But even at the height of the military's popularity as a nation-building device, talk of universal conscription was just that.<sup>101</sup> Before World War I, France was unusual in subjecting more than four-fifths of its manpower to military training. Other European powers fell short of that mark, drafting between one-fifth and one-half of each cohort.<sup>102</sup> Their reasons for turning away from a more universal form of conscription were various. Narrow ruling classes saw it as threatening their control over a restive society. Ethnic groups feared that it would undermine their national aspirations. Finally, maintaining large armies has always been very expensive, often impossible in peacetime.<sup>103</sup> After World War II, Israel and the Soviet Union were notable exceptions in that they matched their rhetoric with deeds, drafting the vast majority of each eligible cohort; in contrast, while the major European powers have in principle embraced universal conscription, they have in reality easily granted exemptions and imposed exceedingly short terms of service.

In a sense, this critique does not strike to the heart of the case in favor of the military's potential as a nation shaper, for it is always conceivable that a system approaching universal service might be instituted. But the very fact that universal service has often been endorsed but rarely implemented has two implications. If it is true that militaries can have a profound impact on society only under conditions of (nearly) universal service, one might then fairly conclude that, no matter what its theoretical capacity, the military has historically had but a negligible impact. In other words, the empirical scope of these hypotheses is highly limited, preventing evaluation of their claims. Moreover, if the reasons for the past gap between rhetoric and policy continue to hold—and for the most part, they do—then there would be little reason to devote much

---

101. Skepticism regarding the military's capacity to build nations has been rooted primarily in doubts about the feasibility of universal military service. See Morris Janowitz, *The Military in the Political Development of New Nations: An Essay in Comparative Analysis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964).

102. On France and Germany, see Bond, *War and Society in Europe, 1870–1970*, pp. 65–67; on Austria-Hungary, see Deák, *Beyond Nationalism*; and on Italy, see Gooch, *Army, State, and Society in Italy, 1870–1915*.

103. Best, "The Militarization of European Society, 1870–1914," p. 15.

energy to considering the question. The conclusion, however, suggests ways of thinking about this relationship that do not depend on universal service and therefore have greater relevance to both past and future.

Fifth, these mechanisms' shared conception of nation building is deeply problematic. Both suggest that the boundaries of nationality are drawn and redrawn as individuals' attitudes change in the military crucible. The definition of the nation, they imply, can be apprehended by aggregating individual beliefs as to who is in and who is out. From this perspective, identity (both personal and national) is cognitive and subjective: It is a matter of individual consciousness and, in the case of the nation, numerous individual consciousnesses added together. However, identity is necessarily social, not the property of given agents; it is intersubjective, not subjective.<sup>104</sup> Moreover, a cognitive approach to identity raises a thorny methodological problem: What goes on inside people's heads is difficult, if not impossible, to grasp. What is required instead is a more social and more concrete conceptualization of identity as a particular configuration of social ties. As Craig Calhoun has noted, "Imagined communities of even large scale are not simply arbitrary creatures of the imagination but depend upon indirect social relationships both to link their members and to define the fields of power within which their identities are relevant."<sup>105</sup> Consequently, to examine the relationship between military service and nation building is not to consider how the military experience might directly shape and reshape individuals' mental horizons. It is rather to explore whether, how, and under what conditions the military's manpower policies mold relations among the polity's constituent groups.

Relatedly, both mechanisms' implicit vision of nation building is ultimately apolitical. They contend that individuals' beliefs change because they are subjected to intense socialization to military norms or intense interaction within a military environment. Notably nothing hinges on the political implications of exclusion or inclusion—regardless of whether one conceives of politics as in-

---

104. For related arguments, see Marc Howard Ross, "Culture and Identity in Comparative Political Analysis," in Mark Lichbach and Alan Zuckerman, eds., *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, and Structure* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 42–80; and Ronald Jepperson, Alexander Wendt, and Peter Katzenstein, "Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security," in Peter Katzenstein, ed., *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), pp. 33–75.

105. Craig Calhoun, "Indirect Relationships and Imagined Communities: Large-Scale Social Integration and the Transformation of Everyday Life," in Pierre Bourdieu and James S. Coleman, eds., *Social Theory for a Changing Society* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1991), p. 108. See also Charles Tilly, "International Communities, Secure or Otherwise," in Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett, eds., *Security Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 400–401.

volving questions of distribution, coercion, or meaning-creation. Nationhood, as Benedict Anderson's well-known formulation suggests, is a creature of the imagination,<sup>106</sup> but it would be a mistake to conflate the nature of nationality with the process through which the nation is formed and transformed. The nation is defined not by isolated individuals reconsidering their attachments, but through political contest. Acutely aware of what is at stake in different national configurations, actors passionately defend their preferred position. Any satisfying account of the relationship between military institutions and nationhood must bring the politics of nation building, more than its psychology, front and center.

### *The Elite-Transformation Hypothesis*

If nation building is the product of political competition, the winners of such contests are particularly well positioned to set the boundaries of nationality. Through the passage of legislation, the creation and alteration of institutions, political agitation, and rhetorical appeals, these elites can shape the social categories through which the populace apprehends their national world. The elite-transformation hypothesis suggests that veterans are particularly likely to assume such positions of leadership and that they advance a conception of the nation in accord with military norms. For this argument to prove generally applicable and persuasive, however, it must explain why veterans would assume prominent roles in political institutions, interest groups, or social movements. Unfortunately, the pathways linking veterans and leadership have not received sufficient systematic attention, and the discussion that follows is necessarily speculative.

#### THE CASE FOR THE ELITE-TRANSFORMATION HYPOTHESIS

This way of thinking about the relationship between military service and the definition of the nation has a number of virtues. It presumes that the armed forces can broadly and permanently rework individuals' identities, but it is agnostic as to whether this transformation is driven by socialization or contact. It does not depend on a historically rare military recruitment system (near-universal service). It explains how those who do not serve in the armed forces acquire a definition of the nation in line with military norms. And although it

---

106. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1983).

still relies on a subjective and cognitive conceptualization of identity, it integrates that problematic conceptualization with a vision of the nation-building process laced with politics and bargaining.

Two arguments, particularly when taken together, buttress the logic of the elite-transformation hypothesis. First, some have argued that the military experience, in peace as well as in war, politicizes soldiers.<sup>107</sup> French veterans of the American Revolution were in the vanguard of their own revolution a decade later, and African veterans of World War II were allegedly central to their countries' anticolonialist struggles.<sup>108</sup> Minority veterans in particular may be more sensitive to the political milieu, more fluent in the dominant political rhetoric, and more likely to demand the redress of inequity.<sup>109</sup> Thus black American veterans of World War II, infuriated by their ill-treatment stateside, supposedly took the lead in pressing for voting and employment rights in the immediate postwar period.<sup>110</sup> By some accounts black American veterans more rarely endorsed separatist views and were far more likely to engage in (at least "high-initiative") political activity in the second half of the twentieth century.<sup>111</sup> Military service may also help veterans overcome collective action problems by making possible social networks that undergird political associations of national scope.<sup>112</sup> The military experience may increase veterans' moti-

107. Janowitz, *The Reconstruction of Patriotism*.

108. On France, see Forrest McDonald, "The Relation of the French Peasant Veterans of the American Revolution to the Fall of Feudalism in France, 1789–1792," in Peter Karsten, ed., *The Military-State-Society Symbiosis* (New York: Garland, 1998), pp. 337–347. Ghana is the strongest possible case in Africa, but the counterarguments have been persuasive. See Killingray, "Soldiers"; and Adrienne M. Israel, "Ex-Servicemen at the Crossroads: Protest and Politics in Post-War Ghana," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (June 1992), pp. 359–368.

109. Enloe, *Ethnic Soldiers*, pp. 199–209. See also David L. Leal, "The Multicultural Military: Military Service and the Acculturation of Latinos and Anglos," *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (Winter 2003), pp. 205–226.

110. See Philip A. Klinkner with Rogers M. Smith, *The Unsteady March: The Rise and Decline of Racial Equality in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), pp. 201–203, 205, 233–234. Veterans figure prominently in local studies of postwar civil rights; see, among others, Jennifer E. Brooks, "Winning the Peace: Georgia Veterans and the Struggle to Define the Political Legacy of World War II," *Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 66, No. 3 (August 2000), pp. 563–604; and Charles M. Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 24–25, 30–31, 47, 56–57.

111. See Christopher G. Ellison, "Military Background, Racial Orientations, and Political Participation among Black Adult Males," *Social Science Quarterly*, Vol. 73, No. 2 (June 1992), pp. 360–378; Christopher S. Parker, "Race and the Sociopolitical Effects of Military Service in the Civil Rights South," University of California, Santa Barbara, February 2003; and Christopher S. Parker, "War, What Is It Good For: Race, Military Service, and Social Change, 1945–1995," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 2001.

112. See Theda Skocpol, Marshall Ganz, and Ziad Munson, "A Nation of Organizers: The Institutional Origins of Civic Voluntarism in the United States," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 94,

vation and capacity to engage in political activity, which is why veterans may seek positions from which they can spread the military's image of the national community.

Second, military service, especially when distinguished, has often been a useful asset in political campaigns.<sup>113</sup> Senior officers may retire with honed skills—from expertise in crafting rousing speeches to ease with public displays to unflappability during crisis—that serve them well in the political arena. More generally, veteran status may suggest a candidate's devotion to civic duty and may thus reassure the public as to his incorruptibility. Cognizant of this, veterans aspiring to political office have exploited their military records. Nathaniel Hawthorne reasonably feared in 1862 that with the U.S. Civil War's end "one bullet-headed general will succeed another in the Presidential chair; and veterans will hold offices at home and abroad and sit in Congress and the State legislatures, and fill in all the avenues of public life."<sup>114</sup>

#### WEAKNESSES OF THE ELITE-TRANSFORMATION HYPOTHESIS

This hypothesis demands more careful evaluation than at present available in the literature, but even a cursory analysis suggests reasons for skepticism. First, a hypothesis is only as strong as its weakest link, and this one depends implicitly on claims—regarding the capacity of the military to reshape individuals' fundamental allegiance—that have already been shown to be suspect. Furthermore, its plausibility turns on questionable empirical assertions. Is military service a common, if not ubiquitous, feature of the politician's résumé?

---

No. 3 (September 2000), pp. 534, 538; and Theda Skocpol, Ziad Munson, Andrew Karch, and Bayliss Camp, "Patriotic Partnerships: Why Great Wars Nourished American Civic Voluntarism," in Ira Katznelson and Martin Shefter, eds., *Shaped by War and Trade: International Influences on American Political Development* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002), pp. 134–180. See also the enormous literature on veterans' associations.

113. Decreasing numbers of U.S. politicians have military experience—veterans, once over-represented in Congress, are today underrepresented—but military service nevertheless continues to feature in U.S. political campaigns. The Democratic field in the 2004 presidential campaign had two candidates with highly distinguished service records, Sen. John Kerry and former Gen. Wesley Clark, and both, while on the campaign trail, regularly drew attention to their service in Vietnam and elsewhere. See, for example, David M. Halbfinger, "Eyes on the White House, Kerry Keeps Focus on Vietnam," *New York Times*, August 26, 2003; Robin Toner, "Still the Question: What Did You Do in the War?" *New York Times*, February 15, 2004; and Jake Tapper, "The Medals Don't Matter," *New York Times*, February 16, 2004. On veterans in Congress, see William T. Bianco and Jamie Markham, "Vanishing Veterans: The Decline of Military Experience in the U.S. Congress," in Feaver and Kohn, *Soldiers and Civilians*, pp. 275–287. On retired generals and Israeli politics, see Yoram Peri, *Between Battles and Ballots: Israeli Military in Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

114. Quoted in Severo and Milford, *The Wages of War*, p. 123.

Veterans competing for public office have often highlighted their history of service. But this does not mean that prospective politicians can exploit their veteran status without cost. For example, in Australia, whose national identity has been intertwined with the heroism of the Anzac forces, would-be veteran-politicians were heckled after World War I for playing on their military records.<sup>115</sup> Viewed over the long run and cross-nationally, it is possible (if not probable) that as many have lacked the military's imprimatur as could claim it. Military service can matter to the outcome of political contest, but it is neither necessary nor sufficient for political success.

Does the military experience spark political engagement and social activism? Although the above examples suggest that it may, numerous studies have concluded that military service, even during wartime, has left veterans politically unmoved or even alienated. Southerners in general became less "civic" after the Civil War, joining federally organized national associations more slowly than before. Peruvian miners who had been forced into military service were, if anything, less likely to participate in strikes and demonstrations. Nandi veterans in Kenya had many grievances after World War I, but they largely abstained from political activity, quietly reintegrating into their villages. Finally, rigorous panel studies found that American veterans of the Vietnam War were not markedly different from their nonveteran contemporaries when it came to either most political attitudes or most forms of political participation.<sup>116</sup>

While this might be expected of those defeated in war, oppressed miners, or rural African tribesmen, political apathy and even bitterness can be amply found among the victors and in the industrialized world as well. Civil War veterans in Iowa, for example, were left almost unchanged by their wartime service or were, at the margins, more tolerant of gradual change and limited gains. World War I veterans from all combatants had difficulty channeling their anger and frustration into the pursuit of any political agenda. "They had

---

115. Stephen Garton, *The Cost of War: Australians Return* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 10–11.

116. Skocpol et al., "Patriotic Partnerships"; Kenneth P. Langton, "The Influence of Military Service on Social Consciousness and Protest Behavior: A Study of Peruvian Mine Workers," *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (January 1984), pp. 479–504; Greenstein, "The Impact of Military Service in World War I on Africans"; Jennings and Markus, "The Effects of Military Service on Political Attitudes"; and M. Kent Jennings and Gregory B. Markus, "Political Participation and Vietnam War Veterans: A Longitudinal Study," in Nancy L. Goldman and David R. Segal, eds., *The Social Psychology of Military Service* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage, 1976), pp. 175–200. See also Jerald G. Bachman and M. Kent Jennings, "The Impact of Vietnam on Trust in Government," *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (Fall 1975), pp. 141–155.

only one wish," said the chairman of the German Fourth Army's Soldiers' Council in 1918: "peace and work." Samuel Stouffer similarly noted American soldiers' lack of interest in social action at the end of World War II: "The soldier did not come home to reform America."<sup>117</sup>

Surprisingly, the same appears to have been generally true among African American veterans of World War II.<sup>118</sup> "The hopes of some, and dire warnings of others," writes one historian, "that a New Negro will return from the war, willing to fight and die rather than accept the traditional structure of white dominance in southern society, proved premature." Southern African American veterans did not stay home and fight for their rights: They typically either left the South or reenlisted.<sup>119</sup> While military service inspired black men to new heights of individual ambition, it apparently dampened their devotion to the collective cause. World War II veterans were many years later overrepresented among black businessmen and general black elites and greatly underrepresented among community leaders and civil rights activists.<sup>120</sup> More focused research is needed before these questions can be answered with confidence, but this initial foray through the arguments and data casts some doubt on these common claims.

## Conclusion

For centuries, state leaders have turned to the military to remake the surrounding society in its image. The armed forces would be a "school for the nation"—a disciplined environment in which citizens would learn portable skills, the

---

117. Russell L. Johnson, "The Civil War Generation: Military Service and Mobility in Dubuque, Iowa, 1860–1870," *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (Summer 1999), pp. 791–820; Leed, *No Man's Land*, pp. 7, 200–204; and Stouffer et al., *The American Soldier*, Vol. 2, p. 597.

118. Although anecdotal evidence points to black veterans' prominence in postwar civil rights activity, it is not clear that they were overrepresented—given that costly agitation (as opposed to conventional political participation) is typically undertaken by the young and given the high proportion of young blacks who served in the wartime military. On the lack of systematic study, see Payne, *I've Got the Light*, p. 447, n. 33.

119. Harvard Sitkoff, "African American Militancy in the World War II South: Another Perspective," in Neil R. McMillen, ed., *Remaking Dixie: The Impact of World War II on the American South* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1997), p. 92. See also Gail Williams O'Brien, *The Color of the Law: Race, Violence, and Justice in the Post-World War II South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), pp. 249–250.

120. John Modell, Marc Goulden, and Sigurdur Magnusson, "World War II in the Lives of Black Americans: Some Findings and an Interpretation," *Journal of American History*, Vol. 76, No. 3 (December 1989), p. 848. This evidence is, however, at best suggestive because the data, drawn from *Who's Who among Black Americans, 1977–1978*, is likely biased.

value of social engagement, and the importance of self-sacrifice. Most important, looking around them and internalizing the military's norms, they would learn who their fellow nationals were and gain an appreciation of the larger project of which they were a small but critical part. More critical scholars have suggested that this rarely occurs, that the armed forces are often divisive rather than unifying. This serious substantive difference, however, masks a deeper agreement that the military's design possesses great ramifications for societal patterns and that it can, if properly devised, serve as a nation builder.

This article argues that this vision of the military as potential nation builder is in large part misguided. The mechanisms that constitute the conventional wisdom are, like other individualist accounts of large-scale social processes, well suited to capturing aggregation. But nations are collectives, and processes of "collectivization" (as opposed to aggregation) are necessarily political, as groups negotiate and continually renegotiate the boundaries of their community.<sup>121</sup> First and foremost the product of intergroup contest, the nation does not spring whole from individual decisions with regard to affiliation.<sup>122</sup> The internal structures of militaries can exert a profound impact on their surrounding society and politics and even on the definition of the national political community, but not through apolitical and individualist mechanisms such as formal socialization and informal collaboration and communication. Whether the military can remake individuals' fundamental identity commitments is a questionable proposition on its own terms, but such mechanisms are inadequate as explanations for the construction and reconstruction of political communities.

Scholars have gone down the wrong path in focusing on such dependent variables as "national integration" and in adopting research strategies that seek to identify the correlates of individual attitudes in the military experience. This common approach has not been productive, nor is it theoretically sound. Future research on the relationship between the design of militaries and the boundaries of nationality cannot merely tinker at the edges, suggesting a different operationalization here, relying on a new database there. More, and more rigorous, empirical research is undoubtedly needed, but renewed attention to this long-standing question must be preceded by the development of

---

121. See Charles Tilly, "Lullaby, Chorale, or Hurdy-Gurdy Tune?" in Roger V. Gould, ed., *The Rational Choice Controversy in Historical Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

122. In contrast, David Laitin asserts that nations are primarily cultural, not political, constructs and that they do spring from individual decisions. See Laitin, *Identity in Formation: The Russian-Speaking Populations in the Near Abroad* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1998), p. 244, n. 4.

a theoretical framework better suited to capturing the political and collective nature of nationality.

#### AN AGENDA FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

A more satisfactory theoretical approach would begin by recognizing that national identities, while necessarily imagined, take shape and are continually shaped anew through processes of political contestation. Historically the deep politics of national identity have often been most obviously manifest in debates over citizenship.<sup>123</sup> The boundaries of citizenship have been the sites of intense political struggle, for, as Charles Tilly notes, modern citizenship, in content and in membership, reflects “the historical accumulation of continual negotiation.”<sup>124</sup> The citizenship campaigns of minorities in particular may be most consequential for national identity, because, as liminal groups, they provide the occasion for those unambiguously within the nation to reflect on and give meaning to their identity; they are signposts indicating the boundaries of the nation.<sup>125</sup> For those interested in the nexus of militaries and nations, this conceptual move—associating nations with citizenship—may be particularly productive, for, at least since the time of the republican city-states of ancient Greece, the history of citizenship in the West has been intertwined with military service.<sup>126</sup> It suggests a new, potentially rich set of research questions regarding the relationship between the policies of militaries and the struggle of social groups for citizenship (both formal and effective).

There are at least three ways military service might be linked to the political processes through which minorities struggle for greater effective citizenship.

---

123. Sociologists have long argued that citizenship is “inevitably bound up with nationhood and national identity, membership of the state with membership of the nation.” See Rogers Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 182. See also, among many others, J.M. Barbalet, *Citizenship: Rights, Struggle, and Class Inequality* (Milton Keynes, U.K.: Open University Press, 1988); and Bryan S. Turner, “Outline of a Theory of Citizenship,” *Sociology*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (May 1990), pp. 189–217.

124. Charles Tilly, “The Emergence of Citizenship in France and Elsewhere,” in Tilly, ed., *Citizenship, Identity, and Social History*, special issue, *International Review of Social History*, Vol. 40, Supp. 3 (1995), pp. 223–236, at p. 227. This understanding of citizenship stands in stark contrast to the classic statement of T.H. Marshall, which implied that citizenship smoothly and inexorably broadened from civil to political to social rights. See Marshall, *Citizenship and Social Class* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950).

125. Anne Norton, *Reflections on Political Identity* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993 [1988]).

126. See Peter Riesenbergh, *Citizenship in the Western Tradition: Plato to Rousseau* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); and Morris Janowitz, “Military Institutions and Citizenship in Western Societies,” *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (February 1976), pp. 185–204.

First, especially during periods of intense war mobilization, minorities could attempt to extract concessions by exploiting the state's dependence on their human capital.<sup>127</sup> For instance, even before the United States officially joined World War II, A. Philip Randolph and other African American leaders bargained hard with the Roosevelt administration, threatening noncompliance and even massive disruption unless substantial progress was made in combating discrimination in civilian employment, the arms industries, and the armed forces.<sup>128</sup>

Second, especially after war but at other times as well, minorities might effectively deploy their military record as a rhetorical device, contrasting their people's loyalty and sacrifice to the reality of entrenched political and social inequity. To invoke military service in this fashion is to exploit a widely recognized norm to raise moral consciousness, draw attention to an imbalance in the equation of rights and obligations, and trap state leaders in their own rhetorical commitments—even in the postwar period, even after the window of bargaining has closed.<sup>129</sup> Across early nineteenth-century America, property requirements for suffrage collapsed before an onslaught of propertyless veterans demanding the vote; as a Virginia reformer argued, "If landless citizens have been ignominiously driven from the polls in time of peace, they have at least been generously summoned, in war, to the battlefield. Nor have they disobeyed the summons, or, less profusely than others, poured out their blood in defense of their country."<sup>130</sup>

Third, the military's manpower policies, in times of war but particularly in times of peace, may serve as a strong signal of how the state would respond to minority demands for rights and therefore shape the objectives for which the minority strives, the strategy the minority pursues, and the timing of the minority's mobilization—key elements in any process of political contestation. For example, in 1956 the IDF began to conscript the country's Druze Arabs, and it subsequently adopted increasingly liberal policies with regard to their use and treatment in the army. This shift may help explain why this small,

---

127. Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, A.D. 990–1992*, pp. 96–126; and Richard M. Titmuss, "War and Social Policy," in Titmuss, *Essays on "the Welfare State"* (Boston: Beacon, 1963 [1959]), pp. 75–87.

128. See, among many others, Daniel T. Kryder, *Divided Arsenal: Race and the American State during World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

129. On a related form of contention, see Kevin J. O'Brien, "Rightful Resistance," *World Politics*, Vol. 49, No. 1 (October 1996), pp. 31–55.

130. Quoted in Judith N. Shklar, *American Citizenship: The Quest for Inclusion* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), p. 48.

poorly educated, and impoverished religious and ethnic minority mobilized about a decade earlier than the larger, more educated, and comparatively wealthy Christian and Muslim Arab communities; why, rather than ally themselves with the quest for Arab autonomy within Israel, the Druze pursued integration; and why the Druze typically played within the rules of the Israeli political game instead of threatening to disrupt the social and political order.<sup>131</sup>

Further research would flesh out these mechanisms' logic and expectations, identify their theoretical implications and applicable scope, and establish their relative explanatory power.<sup>132</sup> As they likely do not exhaust the possibilities, it would also expand the universe of mechanisms. All three, no matter what their individual strengths and weaknesses, represent the kind of research question that a new focus on militaries and the politics of citizenship would open up.

#### IMPLICATIONS

The field of civil-military relations is far richer than the classic matter of who guards the guardians, and it should properly be understood as encompassing a wider range of questions about the relationship between the armed forces, the polity, and the populace. Political scientists, however, have typically failed to bring their perspective to bear on this broader set of issues, allowing narrower sociological studies to predominate. That is unfortunate, both because political scientists have much to contribute to such discussions and because these broader questions about the relationship between the armed forces and society have much to contribute to the study of politics and to our understanding of contemporary affairs.

The military is the key hinge institution sitting astride and mediating between domestic and international politics.<sup>133</sup> The performance of militaries affects the state's standing and even survival in the international arena, and the armed forces can have a distinct impact on domestic political outcomes. The traditional literature on civil-military relations has long grappled with the armed forces as an actor on the domestic scene and in particular with their role

---

131. For alternative explanations, see Kais M. Firro, *The Druzes in the Jewish State* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1999); Jacob M. Landau, *The Arab Minority in Israel, 1967–1991: Political Aspects* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993); and Ian Lustick, *Arabs in the Jewish State: Israel's Control of a National Minority* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1980).

132. For a thorough discussion and evaluation of all three mechanisms, see Ronald R. Krebs, "Rights and Gun Sights: Military Service and the Politics of Citizenship," Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 2003.

133. See Ira Katznelson, "Flexible Capacity: The Military and Early American Statebuilding," in Katznelson and Shefter, *Shaped by War and Trade*, pp. 82–110.

in determining who rules. But an equally ancient tradition asserts the military's potential role in defining the boundaries of the political community. In the absence of identity and the (at least temporary) stability that it brings, political strategizing and action become impossible: Identity is the foundation of politics. Insofar as the configuration of the armed forces shapes the political contestation through which identities are negotiated and renegotiated, the military demands entry into the heart of scholarly analyses—not as an actor but as an institution. Studying the consequences of military service may then elucidate the most basic of political questions.

The mass army is today on the run, but who serves remains a question of importance. The United States abandoned even a selective draft in 1973; the major European powers, ideologically committed to mass conscription for its allegedly beneficial social effects, have since the end of the Cold War dramatically shrunk the size of each inducted class or abandoned conscription entirely, and even Israel is drafting a declining percentage of each cohort.<sup>134</sup> For many, this is a troubling development that will socially and politically marginalize the military, at least in the West. That conclusion, however, is warranted only if one arbitrarily draws the conceptual line at individualist models. Whether as a potent signal or as the basis for a claims frame, the military's manpower policies may continue to shape the politics of citizenship, the definition of the political community, and thus the boundaries of nationality.<sup>135</sup> Whether the mass army is permanently obsolete no one can say with certainty. Mercenaries, today making a comeback in the form of privatized security forces, were the norm until the "nation in arms" proved its superiority during the Wars of German Unification and the Franco-Prussian War; as technology, doctrine, and social structure change, the mass army may become dominant again. What one can say with greater confidence is that rumors of the military's social and political irrelevance are greatly exaggerated.

---

134. Charles C. Moskos, John Allen Williams, and David R. Segal, eds., *The Postmodern Military: Armed Forces after the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). See also Jacques van Doorn, "The Decline of the Mass Army in the West," *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Winter 1975), pp. 147–157; and Karl W. Haltiner, "The Definite End of the Mass Army in Western Europe," *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (Fall 1998), pp. 7–36.

135. See James Burk, "The Military Obligation of Citizens Since Vietnam," *Parameters*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (Summer 2001), pp. 48–60. In contrast, Eliot Cohen argues that this link between citizenship and military service is all but obsolete in the United States and nearly all other developed countries. See Cohen, "Twilight of the Citizen-Soldier," *Parameters*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (Summer 2001), pp. 23–28.