Are Post-Cold War Militaries Postmodern?

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The theoretical perspective of postmodernism has become commonplace in sociology. Not surprisingly, military sociologists have begun to apply the description to the forms of military organization emerging after the end of the Cold War in Europe, and to military personnel themselves.[1] However, while it is well documented that post-Cold War militaries in the West are experiencing substantial changes in missions, size, and organizational structure, it is less clear that these changes can be accurately described as "postmodern." There is, in fact, little agreement, even among those theorists who have introduced the term into the sociological vocabulary, as to whether a "condition of postmodernity" exists, let alone what might constitute a distinctively postmodern form of organization. Thus we argue in this article that the application of the concept to contemporary military forces should not be made too hastily.

We attempt to ground the discussion of the so-called "postmodern military" by considering recent organizational changes in military

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forces in terms of discrete strands of postmodern social theory. By so doing, it becomes clear that military sociology ought not to simply equate postmodern with post-Cold War.[2] The argument developed here is twofold. First, contemporary armed forces are increasingly confronted by a world exhibiting several distinctly postmodern characteristics. In the terms favored by social theorists, the military is increasingly asked to operate in a condition of postmodernity. Rather than inducing a postmodern military, however, these very transformations of the military environment have spurred or facilitated organizational changes in the armed forces of a distinctly modern nature. Ironically, therefore, we argue that postmodern conditions have precipitated a form of organizational military modernism crystallized since the end of the Cold War.

The point of departure for this argument lies in the proposition that while the organizational changes focused upon by military sociologists echo postmodern themes, they are in fact the cumulative products of historical processes not simply identifiable as postmodern. What is more, these trajectories of change are temporally clustered and largely consolidated by the end of the Cold War itself, a critical conjuncture whose very impact is explicitly discounted by postmodernists. Based on this foundation, the contemporary military defies characterization as "postmodern," displaying instead those qualities distinctive of modernism: rational, calculated structural adaptation to environmental change.

Second, in arguing that it is important to exercise caution in the application of the term postmodern to the military, it is useful to take one additional step. Not only must we consider military analysts' orientations to the postmodern, as we have done; we must also examine postmodernists' orientations to the military. Only in this way can we see what characteristics of the military capture the attention of postmodern thinkers. And only in this way can we appreciate the dimensions of change to which their work sensitizes us. As a step toward such a synthesis, we briefly incorporate some of observations of the French sociologist Jean Baudrillard,[3] widely considered a postmodern social theorist (though not by Baudrillard himself), written during the war in the Persian Gulf in 1990-91. Drawing on examples from this and other works in the postmodern tradition, we suggest some alternative criteria by which to judge whether the military has indeed become postmodern.

Post-Cold War versus Postmodern

The end of the Cold War in Europe has been conceived of as a "watershed" period, both in a historical sense and more specifically in

the realm of military affairs.[4] Historically, the end of the Cold War in Europe has signaled the demise of communism in Russia and Eastern Europe and the apparent victory of industrialized democratic states with market economies over their ideological foes.[5] Militarily, the end of the Cold War in Europe has meant that the armed forces of both sides in the 45-year standoff between NATO and the Warsaw Pact nations have undergone significant demobilizing efforts, resulting in substantial reorganization and restructuring in order to tailor forces to the new, post-Cold War tasks beginning to emerge.[6] These new missions include peacekeeping, humanitarian efforts, and collective military responses to various regional conflicts that are no longer held in check by either Soviet influence or bipolar tensions. The end of the Cold War and the subsequent effects on military organization, structure, and missions have led some sociologists to theorize that the armed forces of the early twenty-first century will be sufficiently different in form and function from their predecessors that they should be characterized as "postmodern."[7]

The postmodern perspective has been employed most recently and perhaps most sweepingly in *The Postmodern Military,* a cross-national set of case studies of contemporary armed forces.[8] This edited volume may be taken as an exemplar, not simply for the richness of its range of cases, but because of the volume's self-conscious attempt to frame its analyses explicitly in terms of postmodern forms of military organization. In this volume, it is argued that the postmodern military may be identified by five fundamental organizational characteristics: 1) The interpenetration of civilian and military spheres; 2) a decreasing emphasis on differences in service, rank, and combat versus support specialties; 3) a change in mission, from war fighting to lower-intensity humanitarian and/or constabulary missions; 4) the tendency for missions to be carried out in a multilateral rather than unilateral context, through a coalition of forces acting under international auspices, and 5) the internationalization of military forces themselves.[9]

What makes these organizational changes postmodern in nature? For Moskos and Burk, these characteristics of the new military result from the need to adapt to several large-scale changes in the social order. These shifts include the declining importance of the nation-state and national markets and the subsequent growth of global and subnational social organizations, dramatic change in cultural attitudes and opinions, and a general uncertainty "about the meaning or purpose of central roles and institutions."[10] These themes, all common to the literature on

postmodernism, are the driving forces behind the organizational changes we are witnessing in today's militaries. Paradoxically, the end of the Cold War in Europe can be seen as both a result of and contributor to these profound social changes.

Use of the notion postmodern military," however, places a singular burden upon the analyst. Moskos et al. concur, noting:

> The term "postmodern" as applied to the armed forces must imply some significant departure from 'modern' forms of organization. Otherwise, "postmodern" is just another misapplication of an overworked adjective.[11]

But we can be somewhat more precise than this. Simply put, the characterization of the military as postmodern is useful only to the extent that it draws on the larger body of postmodern social theory to help us understand changes we are witnessing in contemporary armed forces. Using the term "postmodern military" implies, therefore, three distinct claims: (1) observed changes in the organization of the armed forces accord with or correspond to central patterns of organizational change specified in postmodern social theory; (2) these changes can adequately be said to have been caused by a process specified as distinctly postmodern by postmodern social theory; and (3) the changes are more adequately captured by postmodern social theory than by some other alternative.

Such analytic rigor not only helps us to identify the appropriate use of concepts developed in other fields of endeavor, it also helps us to come to grips with the pragmatic concerns raised by research into contemporary change. There is always the temptation to see ongoing change as fundamental and unprecedented. While few would argue that we find ourselves in "New Times,"[12] nonetheless it is open for question whether those New Times require or even invite entirely new tools of analysis. The kind of conceptual clarification we propose shifts the burden onto the analyst to specify precisely how and in what sense the change under way may best be made sense of in new terms. Moreover, it is also open for question whether the use of new concepts imparts a more fundamental character to such change than is perhaps warranted. In this, we are reminded that when Moskos[13] first published his conceptualization of the institutional and occupational models of military organization, Janowitz[14] chided him for simply attaching new labels to a continuing conceptual concern of military sociology: the military as a profession. It may be that if the "occupational military" was

primarily a repackaging of issues that Janowitz[15] and others had been addressing since before the Vietnam War, then the "postmodern military" is largely another repackaging to rekindle interest in comparable issues.

Postmodernism and Postmodernity

Before discussing how postmodern social theory might be relevant to the study of change in military organizations, it would be helpful to specify what is meant by postmodernism. As a number of authors have stressed, this is a daunting task because a definition of postmodernism would imply that consensus exists as to its meaning.[16] Since a key characteristic of postmodern theory is the rejection of any ultimate system of knowledge, definitions of postmodernism are many, varied, and sometimes contradictory. This characteristic alone raises the possibility that applying the concept to the military might obfuscate, rather than clarify, processes of change.

A useful distinction, however, can and has been made between postmodernism and postmodernity. The latter term most often refers to a particular epoch or era in history, which is seen as following modernity, or the "modes of social life or organization which emerged in Europe from about the seventeenth century onward and which subsequently became more or less worldwide in their influence."[17] At the risk of oversimplification, social theorists who believe we now find ourselves in a "condition of postmodernity" claim that we have left the modern age behind, and supplanted modernity's confidence in social progress through science and rationality with a postmodern relativism that sees all knowledge as conditional and without foundation, and that embraces "indeterminacy rather than determinism, diversity rather than unity, difference rather than synthesis, complexity rather than simplification."[18]

Such a viewpoint is not universally accepted, however. Other scholars, such as Dennis Smith, use the concept of postmodernity to refer to "changes in the 'big picture' of modernity during the last three decades of the twentieth century"—changes including the declining role of the nation-state and the growing awareness of risk.[19] For the Polish social theorist Zygmunt Bauman, postmodernity simultaneously represents a critical and reflective quality of mind, and a kind of "fully-developed modernity," able to take into account its own achievements, unintended consequences, and limitations.[20]

Postmodernism, by contrast, does not generally refer to a historical period, but is instead a reference to contemporary culture and its

products, which are seen as radically different from modern cultural forms.[21] In the same way that modern art, literature, and architecture often strive to capture the fundamental themes of Enlightenment thought—such as progress or the existence of universal truths—examples of postmodern culture tend to exhibit "...'contrived depthlessness,' collage, fragmentation," and "intense distrust of all universal or 'totalizing' discourses...."[22] While our attempt at defining the terms postmodernity and postmodernism admittedly de-emphasizes the interchangeability with which these terms are often used in the literature, for our purposes, we embrace the *historical* conception of the term postmodernity, and conceptualize postmodernism as a *mode of discourse*. For the French literary critic Jean-Francois Lyotard, a simplifying definition of postmodernism becomes "incredulity toward metanarratives."[23]

Cultural incredulity or fragmentation, however, do little to help us pin down what may be distinctly postmodern about the military in the terms employed by Moskos and his colleagues. In general, such incredulity does little to specify patterns of organizational change. In particular, when the political ideologies of modern nation-states are understood as metanarratives, it is clear that many contemporary militaries can be counted among the staunchest defenders of totalizing discourse. Insofar as the sworn defense of the nation-state and its ideological symbols remains the formal raison d'être of post-Cold War armed forces, these militaries continue in the tradition of modernity. As this observation underscores, what promise postmodern theory holds for military analysis lies not in postmodernism per se but in the notion of postmodernity, precisely because the latter formulation draws attention to historical process, sequence, and change.

Contemporary Trends: Postindustrialism, Post-Fordism, and Globalization

Within the literature on postmodernity, the theories of postindustrialism, post-Fordism, and globalization provide an especially useful set of conceptual lenses and analytic tools. Each of these theories can be understood as constitutive of, but not necessarily contingent upon, an emerging condition of postmodernity. Each specifies a clear logic of change over time with definite implications for the structure of military institutions. And each corresponds to a major dimension of change specified by Moskos et al.[24] Postindustrialism is an argument about the interpenetration of realms; post-Fordism an

argument about declining differences; and globalization an argument about multinationalism in its several forms. Only mission shift remains unaccounted for in the Moskos, et al. postmodern panoply—and this will prove crucial below. As a group, these three theories may be used to clarify what can be taken to be *distinctly* postmodern about a set of organizational changes observed generally, and in the armed forces in particular.

The notion of the postindustrial society was first introduced by Daniel Bell.[25] Bell argues that while industrial societies are characterized by large-scale manufacturing and the production of goods, in postindustrial societies the service sector is the backbone of the economy. Professional and technical employees replace the factory workers and managers of industrial society at the core of economic life. Bell's notion of postindustrialism is built around the proposition that all of society comes increasingly to be regulated by algorithms—formulae reliant upon and making use of huge quantities of information—the importance of which makes information a valued resource, places a premium on the development of information technology, and reorients formal organization around information management.

The effects of postindustrialism on military forces are numerous. For example, one of the first arenas in which new information and communication technologies are applied is national defense, where "information warfare" is seen as the new generation of military conflict. The military's symbiotic relationship with civilian contractors is well-documented—in the United States, outlays to the top 100 defense contractors in 1996 totaled over $70 billion.[26] The increasing complexity and importance of information technologies (innovations that have in large measure been the fruit of this relationship) necessitate the convergence of civilian and military spheres that Moskos and his colleagues argue is characteristic of the postmodern military. It would be difficult, however, to call this transformation postmodern, since it has been going on for decades.[27] Moreover, in the same way in which factory workers have been displaced over time in the economic sector through emergent postindustrialism, the roles of the homogeneous, unspecialized ground soldier and his heroic officer leader have been gradually displaced by the highly trained enlisted specialist and officers whose expertise lies in management. While the soldier-scholar and soldier-statesman represent, according to Moskos et al., the currently ascendant models of the military professional, the managerial role of the officer—the dominant model of the military professional of the late modern period, before the end of the Cold War—still remains crucial to military organization.

Post-Fordism has also emerged prominently in the discourse on New Times, for some theorists providing the driving forces behind a condition of postmodernity.[28] Like postindustrialism, at its core post-Fordism is a question of economic production. As its name suggests, however, what is at issue here is the organizational structure of capital accumulation. Fordist capital accumulation can be characterized by large-scale, mass production of goods for relatively stable, predictable, and internally undifferentiated markets. Post-Fordism, by contrast, involves the reorganization of productive enterprise in response to the inflexibility of Fordist capital accumulation processes, frequently including the de-divisionalization of enterprises and the formation of networks among (now) independent organizations that are designed to meet the demands of increasing market uncertainty often associated with differentiation.[29] While the discussion of post-Fordism extends to many facets of economic and social life, such as patterns of consumption, labor processes, and the provision of financial services,[30] the link between post-Fordism and organizational structure in general is clear. In volatile, unpredictable, and uncertain circumstances, a more flexible, streamlined organizational structure is called for. For contemporary armed forces, operating in an era where future missions are unknown and unpredictable, this means a transition from the hierarchy and rigidity of the modern mass-army model toward the model labeled postmodern by Moskos and his colleagues, where differences based on rank, branch, and service are deemphasized.[31]

However, concerns over new missions and the responsiveness of armed forces to a changing world are not new, nor is concern over declining emphasis on differences in rank, branch, and service. Segal and Segal, for example, focused on precisely this variety of reorganization in the late modern military, well before the formation of any so-called postmodern armed force.[32] Harvey himself echoes Segal's perspective, finding more continuity than change in emerging organizational forms as well as in the dynamic of "creative destruction," which drives the historical shift toward new organizational forms.[33] For both, what organizational innovation we observe is a response to long-term shifts in the demands placed upon organizations by their environments.

We need not be content simply with these observations. Within formal organization theory, the need for flexible organizational structures in the face of rapid change was identified as early as the 1960s by Burns and Stalker, who observed that firms with less hierarchy, more horizontal communication, and less emphasis on formal procedures were more likely to survive in rapidly changing environments.[34] This

and other early organizational studies in the structural contingency tradition predate most of the discussion of postmodernism in the social sciences by fifteen to twenty years or so, and provide what is in many ways a more concrete explanation of recent organizational change in armed forces than the appeal to a questionable, newly emerging postmodern social order. Indeed, if a recent review of the British case[35] is any indication as to the direction of structural change in armed forces, one may need go no further than an examination of the organizational structure of leading business firms.

Globalization is the third concept that can be viewed as a characteristic of a coming era of postmodernity. For Anthony Giddens, globalization is "the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events many miles away, and vice versa."[36] Spurred on by continuing innovations in communications and transportation, as well as the inherent tendency within capitalism to exhaust old markets and seek new ones, globalization processes have arguably reduced the significance of the modern nation-state in world affairs, and increased the sphere of influence of the multinational corporation, supranational entities such as the United Nations and the European Community, and subnational organizations based on racial or ethnic-group affiliation. In the words of Daniel Bell, as trends toward globalization have increased, nation-states have become "too small for the big problems of life, and too big for the small problems of life."[37]

By undermining the hegemony of the nation-state form, globalization processes have shaped contemporary military forces by radically limiting the circumstances under which nations can legitimately deploy and engage their militaries unilaterally.[38] The norm for Western military deployments is now to participate with the armed forces of other nations in coalitions whenever possible, in order to promote public support and display the unity of the international community. More striking still is the emergence of pressures—resisted by some segments of the body politic within countries such as the United States—to subordinate national armed forces to the direction of international organizations like the United Nations. For Moskos et al., these outcomes of globalization encompass two of the five hallmarks of the postmodern military. In postmodern societies, where public support for military missions is perhaps more crucial than ever (hence the emergence of the media-savvy soldier-statesman), legitimacy has been shown in many cases to be contingent on multilateral participation.[39]

But globalization is as much a component of modernity as it is of postmodernity. The two major military conflicts of the twentieth century were World Wars, waged by multinational coalitions. The Cold War in Europe, for a half-century, pitted two major coalitions (NATO and the Warsaw Pact) against each other. Nearly fifty years ago, the Korean War was fought by allies fighting under the United Nations flag. Peacekeeping as a military activity has been multinational since the days of the League of Nations, and the United States was a participant in some of the very first United Nations peacekeeping operations. [40]

Modernity, as Giddens claims, is "inherently globalizing."[41] The spread of capitalism, democracy, the nation-state system, and the mass-army military system are all global consequences of modernity. So while new forms of social, economic, and military organization are clearly emerging in concert with the diminishing role of the nation-state, these new forms need not be considered harbingers of an era of postmodernity. For Giddens, rather than living in a postmodern world, we are experiencing instead a high or "radicalized" modernity in which modern forms of social organization, such as capitalism (which has never been contained by national boundaries), still dominate, albeit in different forms and with more universal consequences. His concept of a postmodern world is a postscarcity, demilitarized world system radically different than what we are witnessing at the start of the twenty-first century.[42]

Taken together, then, the theories of postindustrialism, post-Fordism and globalization make clear that the growing interpenetration of realms, the declining salience of differences in rank, branch, and service, and the growing prominence of multinationalism specified by Moskos et al. as characteristic of the postmodern military correspond closely with postmodern themes. These organizational changes echo both the nature and direction of change laid out quite faithfully by postmodern social theorists. However, as sets of historical developments, these three organizational shifts predate the post-Cold War moment, which is taken by Moskos et al. as "the major thrust to move the military to the Postmodern model,"[43] and therefore cannot simply be identified as postmodern. Furthermore, as processes of change over time, these organizational transitions did not take the form of a clear shift to a new type or form, but rather emerged in a gradual, cumulative, and even evolutionary fashion, certainly making questionable the appropriateness of labeling them either exclusively or intrinsically postmodern.

To this point, we have not discussed the third dimension of military organizational change in the armed forces considered by Moskos et. al.

to be postmodern—the transformation of military missions towards peacekeeping and other more constabulary modes of operation—and for good reason. There is no strand of postmodern theory to which it corresponds. This should not be overinterpreted, if for no other reason than that mission shift might be taken as inherently a military question and therefore outside the purview of postmodern theory generally. The issue of mission shift, however, raises a deeper question about the causal logic undergirding changes in the organizational structure of armed forces, with powerful implications.

The shift in missions undertaken by the armed forces is most certainly an issue of the structure of political institutions, public support for the armed forces, economic conditions, and a host of other national considerations. However, mission shift is just as much a question of the international environment, not only in the ways geopolitical competition and alliance formation may play a role in shaping the demands to which the armed forces must respond, but also in the ways these factors influence domestic politics. Geopolitics and the states system play almost as great a role in causal analysis of the interpenetration of military and civilian realms, declining differences of rank and branch, and expansion of multinationalism over time. Few if any adherents of the postmodern military thesis would reject these claims. What is more, for Moskos, et al., the end of the Cold War in Europe serves as a critical conjuncture, consolidating the pattern of military change, foreclosing some aspects and advancing others. In many ways, this moment defines the historical turning point from modern to postmodern on their account.[44] Yet geopolitical competition and the impact of shifts in the pattern of such competition over time are neither distinctly nor even remotely postmodern. Competition is, after all, perhaps the greatest disciplinarian of modernity. Based upon the direction and type of change suggested by postindustrialism, post-Fordism, and globalization, geopolitics might even be considered anti-postmodern.[45]

As a consequence, any explanation for the pattern of organizational change specified as postmodern by Moskos et al. must either incorporate central elements of causal logic that are themselves not postmodern in order to be robust, or simply offer an inadequate causal account. And any historical periodization of these organizational shifts must either acknowledge its roots in the modern, or be rendered hollow. Either way, the centrality of geopolitics to the causal logic of military organizational change makes abundantly clear how tenuous is the claim that such change can be adequately explained in exclusively postmodern terms.

The Military's Continuities with Modernity

If military sociologists would be well served to display caution before applying the label postmodern to the contemporary military, being explicit about the kinds of claims these theories can and cannot support while drawing on their acknowledged strengths, then how should they make sense of the pattern of organizational transformation to which Moskos et. al.[46] and others have drawn our attention? We suggest that many of the changes observed in contemporary militaries are best understood if we reconsider the idea of a postmodern military and instead conceptualize today's armed forces as institutions of a late modernity. In this, we are not simply taking a reactionary stance. Rather, we suggest it is the environment surrounding the military that has become increasingly postmodern, that is, characterized by the interpenetration of realms, the declining salience of some lines of difference, and the growth of multinationalism. Confronted by this condition of postmodernity, the armed forces take on new organizational characteristics consistent with the postmodern condition. They do so, however, in a distinctly modern fashion: through rational, calculated structural adaptation, and without ever losing sight of their origins as the rationalized embodiment of the state's claim to the monopoly over force within its territory.[47] This pattern of rational adaptation to environment establishes the enduring modernity of the military as an institution, as can be seen quite clearly in the American military over the last few decades.

The clear point of departure is the organizational principle according to which the armed forces are structured. Bureaucracy is the model of modern organizations, and the military was literally Max Weber's prototype for bureaucratic organization.[48] Though trends in many formal organizations, including the military, are towards smaller, more flexible structures that deemphasize hierarchy and rigid adherence to formal procedures, militaries still recruit, train, deploy, and operate on a day-to-day basis with as much bureaucratic regularity as any organization one could possibly imagine. The system of rank and promotion in the American military has remained essentially the same for decades, tying members' compensation and benefits to a periodically updated formal pay scale where, within individual officer and enlisted grades, one size fits all. And it remains a system in which one's status in the organization is formally declared by one's uniform, a clear aesthetic representation of the highly formal, hierarchically structured organizations to which all service members belong.

Second, there is the military's distinctly modern stance toward diversity. While the postmodern celebrates the diverse and the ephemeral, the socialization of military members aims to eradicate individual difference, and to imbue a sense of tradition and the importance of commitment to the unit, to the nation, and to national symbols. And at least in the American case, there can be little argument that the military has displayed a long-standing and open intolerance diversity. Indeed, studies in military culture point out that military socialization norms often incorporate openly hostile or disparaging views about those of different gender or sexual orientation as a method to facilitate bonding and hypermasculinity in military units.[49]

We conceive of the ongoing changes in military policies towards the integration of women and homosexuals as a stage in an ongoing citizenship revolution, which began with the birth of the first democratic nation-states in Europe and America. National citizenship, as Moskos and Burk[50] note, is a modern institution, the basis of which continues to be the collective ideology of democratic participation, or perhaps in postmodern language, the metanarrative of liberalism. Postmodernism, of course, rejects the legitimacy of this or any other metanarrative, and refers to the growth of social movements based on gender, racial, ethnic, or sexual orientation differences as examples of "identity politics," in which the disenfranchised are seen as not benefiting from, and not having the opportunity to alter, the dominant institutions of society.

It is interesting to observe that the Moskos and Burk [51] model of the transition from early to postmodern military organizations includes dimensions for both women's roles and homosexual integration, but not a dimension regarding racial integration, which has clearly changed over the last fifty years as well. The explanation may be that the issue is not as germane to other cultures as it has been for the United States, although other developed nations do have racial (or ethnic) minorities whose integration in the armed forces has been problematic.[52] Alternatively, Moskos and Burk might conceptualize the process of racial integration as fundamentally different from the postmodern forces at work in the case of gender and sexual orientation. In fact, Moskos and Butler [53] have argued that racial integration of the military is fundamentally different from gender integration, sexual orientation integration, or the integration of other minority ethnic groups. This position is not universally accepted,[54] nor would such a difference render the issue of race irrelevant to consideration of the postmodern transformation. In either case, we argue that the desire for full citizenship as represented by the right to serve in the military has been the primary motivation

behind the political efforts of all three previously excluded groups to integrate the services. (And, of course, in the case of homosexuals, they remain barred from openly serving in the U.S.). Thus, we would assert that the primary factors underlying change in military personnel policies are essentially modern in nature, as is the idiom in which pressure to alter these policies is presented.

Finally, it should not go unsaid that, although the end of the Cold War in Europe has ushered in a new period of uncertainty regarding future military missions, and led to a public reappraisal of defense needs and military budgets, the chief purpose and rationale for the existence of national military forces remains the defense of the nation-state in times of war.[55] In America, this distinctly modern goal is reflected in the oath sworn by every new soldier to defend the Constitution. And despite the growing divide between policy and practice reflected in the list of post-Cold War missions, our own armed forces have not yet ceased to appeal to tradition and patriotic sentiments in their recruitment of new personnel, nor in their appeals for popular support for military deployments. Further, both opinion polls and Congressional debates reveal that there exists substantial public resistance to the idea that U.S. forces would serve under non-U.S. command, or serve in a theater while wearing insignia of an international agency[56] suggesting a determined opposition to subordinate American military units to the authority of other nation-states or supranational bodies, irrespective of political pressures to act in concert with them.

The arguments presented to this point have served to illustrate some of the conceptual and definitional problems inherent in applying the label of postmodern to armed forces operating in the post Cold War environment. We have tried to show that the trends identified in this emerging "developmental construct"[57] are perhaps best explained by some of the less ambiguously defined theories present in the literature addressing the condition of postmodernity. These theories include postindustrialism, post-Fordism, and globalization. Additionally, we have argued that the military has, ironically, been spurred by these large-scale social changes and by the dynamics of geopolitics to finally become modern, rather than postmodern. By this we mean that recent changes in military organizations in Western democracies increasingly reflect concern with two fundamental characteristics associated with *modernity* rather than postmodernity: 1) responsiveness to commonly held social values concerning equality of opportunity and the rights of citizenship, and 2) rational, purposive adaptation to environmental change.[58] Part of our contention with the thesis of the postmodern

military is that, at its core, postmodernism is not a developmental construct, but is essentially a *mode of discourse*, a notion that should have important implications for the appropriation of the term by military sociologists. We now turn to the second goal of this article, which is to explore the opportunities that this mode of discourse might have for understanding military organization after the Cold War.

Alternative Conceptions of a Postmodern Military

Postmodernism offers us alternative perspectives on the nature of social organization, by way of methods that run counter to those employed by positivist social scientists. In much of what is referred to as postmodernism, traditional methods that seek to uncover cause and effect relationships and to root the subject and object in a clearly-defined empirical reality are abandoned in favor of methods that serve to deconstruct our basic assumptions. These methods include irony, metaphor, colorful imagery, exaggeration, collage, and the like. We suggest that a true postmodern treatment of the military in the early twenty-first century would draw upon these and other methods of discourse in order to provide alternative perspectives to those provided by empirically oriented social science. Two questions emerge: First, what would a postmodern treatment of the military look like? Second, if today's military organizations remain essentially modern in character, as we have argued, then what would a postmodern military look like?

Although other examples are being formulated,[59] the work of Jean Baudrillard on the Persian Gulf War of 1991 would seem to be a reasonable exemplar of a postmodern analysis of war and the contemporary military.[60] In a series of essays written during the unfolding of the Gulf Crisis, Baudrillard questions not the legitimacy of the conflict in the Gulf, but the very reality of the event itself. By asserting that the Gulf War did not take place, Baudrilliard prompts us to question whether modern conceptions of military conflict and the central role warfare has played in geopolitics during the modern era have any credibility in a security environment characterized by deterrence, culturally imposed military restraint, instantaneous media transmission, and adversaries with profound disparities in their military capabilities.[61]

Several postmodern themes emerge in Baudrillard's essays, themes that are also present in his other works.[62] Together, they address the myriad ways in which worlds beyond the observer are represented and interpreted in contemporary culture; a culture in which all action and perception is mediated by constructs. In his writings on the Gulf War,

three of Baudrillard's themes emerge as particularly provocative: the notion of the "hyperreal," the persistent manipulation and deployment of symbolic imagery (particularly by the mass media), and "simulacra." These themes, and their relationship to contemporary military operations such as the Gulf War and to the structure, roles, and self-identity of the military organization are briefly discussed in turn.

As Paul Patton points out in his introduction to Baudrillard's essays, the title *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place* is not an assertion that nothing occurred in Iraq and Kuwait during the winter of 1990-91, but a testament that what did happen there was hardly a war in the modern sense, despite the extraordinary efforts of the mass media to convince us otherwise.[63] For Baudrillard, the actual events that occurred in the Gulf during these months are largely opaque for everyone except those who experienced them directly. Instead, our understanding of the war was constructed and mediated by a continuous series of symbolic images and "virtual media events"—simulacra that are not real, but instead "stand in for the real."[64] Baudrillard recalls the image of the oil-soaked seabird that was shown with some frequency during the crisis, an image that also accompanied the Exxon Valdez disaster, and will no doubt accompany reports of environmental catastrophe in the future. While virtual media images such as these convey significant symbolic meaning to the observer, they may have little or nothing to do with the actual events, if any, occurring among actors. Virtual symbols such as the helpless bird, the colorful graphics and maps, the endless parade of strategic experts, the military file-footage, etc., merged with the unfolding of actual events to form a "hyperreality" that represented a fusion of the two. The West's most profound error during the crisis, for Baudrillard, was the ease with which the public—the mass consumers of the symbols and imagery that the media generate—accepted as real the presentation of the crisis we received through our T.V. sets: "The real victory of the simulators of war is to have drawn everyone into this rotten simulation."[65]

For Baudrillard, the possibility of real war is dead, replaced at this stage in history by the bizarre logic of deterrence, the aim of which is "non-engagement or avoidance of direct encounter by the parties involved."[66] The events in the Gulf for Baudrillard do not constitute a war, but a "simulacrum of war, a virtual event which is less the representation of real war than a spectacle which serves a variety of political and strategic purposes on all sides."[67] Of course, one can argue that war has always been "spectacular" in nature, employing propaganda, nationalism, myth, parades, and other celebratory displays of martial power in

order to generate public support for conflict. But the Gulf War marks a unique turning point in the history of war as spectacle, for it was the first armed conflict in which coverage of events from the field were available in real time to anyone with access to CNN, including military commanders in other areas of operations, the information-hungry public, and even the Iraqis themselves.

Two crucial developments arise from this phenomenon that can be considered distinctly postmodern in nature: The first is that the transmission of real-time media from the battlefield creates a continuous feedback loop in post-Cold War military operations in which the public, whose support forms the bedrock of any successful long-term military engagement, can be directly influenced in a more or less predictable fashion depending on the content selected for transmission.[68] To the degree that the military is unable to control what is presented to the public, in the postmodern age, the role of the soldier-statesman will become crucial in courting the media for the purpose of retaining some element of that control.[69]

Interestingly, the same trend can be observed in the armed forces at the micro level, as the proliferation of high-tech telecommunications devices such as laptop computers and cellular phones can allow for instantaneous transmission of information between forward deployed personnel and members of their families back home.[70] Such a scenario, unprecedented before the 1990s, raises concerns ranging from information security to the morale of personnel who could theoretically be in constant contact with family members.

Secondly, as Paul Patton notes, "it becomes possible to employ the media directly as a conduit for disinformation."[71] Several divisions of Iraqi troops were kept in defensive positions along the Saudi border with Kuwait because Saddam Hussein was convinced, by false media reports and by marines maneuvering offshore, that an amphibious landing was about to take place. Strategies of deception such as this are not uniquely postmodern, of course; the Allies used a similar ruse in order to keep German forces anchored at the Pas de Calais prior to the invasion of Normandy in 1944.[72] It is, rather, the marriage of military strategy with the real-time transmission capabilities of an ostensibly independent global mass media that invites comparison with the postmodern.

For postmodernists like Baudrillard and Richard Harvey Brown, the military has embraced the postmodern logic of simulation. Though simulation of the combat environment has always been a part of military training, postmodern forms of simulation can be argued to involve the

substitution of the real by the virtual. Military personnel from aviators to tank crews train in increasingly realistic virtual environments, in which nearly every element of any tactical situation can be manipulated to produce a range of both likely and unlikely combat scenarios. Further, these same virtual-reality technologies can be integrated into operational weapons systems, "...filtering the real scene and presenting...a more readable world."[73] Perhaps the real criterion on which to judge whether the military is becoming postmodern is the degree to which today's soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines make war not upon real adversaries, but upon virtually-enhanced representations of them, or simulacra. We are reminded that during the war in the Persian Gulf, the majority of actual face-to-face contacts with Iraqi troops occurred when the enemy surrendered. The observations of postmodernists are echoed in a comment made by an American soldier, who, after serving on peacekeeping duty in the Sinai, reported that "the training for this mission was more real than the mission itself."[74]

The Military's Marginalization: Towards Postmodernity

The model of the postmodern military offered by Moskos and Burk provides an illuminating framework for understanding the ongoing changes we are witnessing in the armed forces since the end of the Cold War. A few of these changes are radical and historically unprecedented, while most represent general efforts at readapting existing force structures to new contingencies, something militaries and other organizations have always done during the modern age. Structural adaptation is inseparable from the notion of progress, which is perhaps the hallmark of modernity.

Whether the post-Cold War military can be considered postmodern, however, is ultimately up to the observer, since the description rarely means the same thing to everyone. It should be recalled that the postmodern perspective generally calls for rejection of ultimate authorities on knowledge, and casts doubt on the validity and usefulness of the type of categorical schemata provided by Moskos and colleagues, their caveats against its misuse notwithstanding. The postmodern perspective would also reject the positivistic application of a standard conceptualization to be held up to empirical scrutiny across nations—the basis for the Moskos et al. volume. In the end, while it may accurately characterize current organizational developments in armed forces, the thesis of the postmodern military is not at all postmodern, but instead a distinctly modern effort at theory con-

struction, undertaken to capture a host of structural adaptations to environmental change.

One general trend in Western cultures to which Moskos et al. and others have drawn our attention, and that may indeed portend the arrival of an era of postmodernity, is the marginalization of the military within their host societies.[75] There are a number of reasons why the military is becoming less salient in the thoughts and minds of Western citizens. The end of the Cold War in Europe has had profound consequences for national militaries; defense budgets have been slashed as a result of the view that global war is unlikely in a world with one remaining superpower. Much more likely is the chance of military involvement in constabulary affairs, which, while hardly being innocuous for the personnel involved, does not capture public attention to the degree that large-scale conflicts can.

Because today's military missions do not require standing forces of the size of those that characterized the Cold War, we are witnessing what Karl Haltiner and others have called "the decline of the mass army."[76] In the developed nations of the West, militaries are becoming smaller and more professional in character, relying less on the mass citizen participation that, for many of these nations, formed a bond between the people and the military. The abandonment of conscription in the West and the general trend towards smaller, professional forces has meant that more and more citizens, and perhaps more importantly, more representatives in government, will not have had direct contact with the military.[77] At the level of the individual, the end of the Cold War has imbued a degree of indifference toward military affairs that, for most European nations, is probably quite novel, and perhaps even postmodern. However, for the United States, it is the condition that has prevailed historically in military structure and in civil-military relations in all interwar periods up until World War II.[78]

The marginalization of the military in Western culture is an ongoing phenomenon. And though continuous military deployments remind us that the threat of conflict has anything but disappeared, its character has changed significantly. It remains to be seen whether the diminished threat of global war will be replaced by a permanent state of interregional conflict and civil unrest, or whether challenges such as these can be overcome as well. To the degree that they can, an absence of the need for military solutions to human problems would probably represent the emergence of a postmodern social order. As Giddens notes, "growing interdependence on a global level increases the range of situations in which similar interests are shared by all states. To envision a world

without war is clearly utopian, but is by no means wholly lacking in realism."[79] If one believes that the condition of postmodernity implies real, qualitative social change, a "postmodern military" might mean no military at all.

Notes

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1. Charles C. Moskos, John Allen Williams and David R. Segal, eds. *The Postmodern Military* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). See also: Charles C. Moskos and James Burk. "The Postmodern Military" in *The Military in New Times*, ed. James Burk (Boulder, CO.: Westview Press, 1994) 141-62; Fabrizio Battistelli, "Peacekeeping and the Postmodern Soldier," *Armed Forces & Society* 23 (1997) 467-484, and Jan van der Meulen, "Post-modern Societies and Future Support for Military Missions" in *The Clausewitzian Dictum and the Future of Western Military Strategy,* ed. Gert de Nooy (The Hague, The Netherlands. Kluwer Law International. 1997). Though Battistelli and van der Meulen also refer to the postmodern, our critique focuses exclusively on the developmental construct first outlined by Moskos and Burk (1994) and further developed in Moskos et al. (2000). The essential arguments in the two pieces are quite similar, and both are referenced in this paper as exemplars of the "postmodern military" thesis.

2. While Moskos, Williams, and Segal point out that many of the changes in military organization discussed in their volume pre-date the end of the Cold War, they emphasize that the end of the Cold War "provided the major thrust to move the military toward the Postmodern model" (Moskos, et al., *The Postmodern Military* 2000:2). On a related note, it has become commonplace to refer generically to the post-Cold War era since the demise of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact. However, belligerent acts by North Korea and concerns about the export to China of technologies with potential military applications reflect the fact that the Cold War is not yet over in Asia, and that the transformation is only regional.

3. Jean Baudrillard, *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place* (Bloomington, IN.: Indiana University Press. 1995).

4. Christopher Dandeker, "New Times for the Military: Some Sociological Remarks on the Changing Role and Structure of the Armed Forces in Advanced Societies," *British Journal of Sociology* 45 (1994): 637-54; Moskos et al., *The Postmodern Military*.

5. David R. Segal, "From Convergence to Chaos: Theoretical Perspectives on the Transformation of Industrial Societies." *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change* 14 (1992): 1-11.

6. These reductions in force size are in fact worldwide trends that transcend the European theater and the Atlantic region. See David R. Segal and Nehama E. Babin, "Institutional Change in Armed Forces at the Beginning of the Twenty-First Century," in *Sociology: Advances and Challenges in the 1990s,* ed. Stella Quah and Arnaud Sales (London: Sage, 2000).

7. Moskos and Burk, "The Postmodern Military"; Battistelli, "Peacekeeping and the Postmodern Soldier."

8. Moskos et al., *The Postmodern Military.*

9. Ibid, 2.

10. Moskos and Burk, "The Postmodern Military," 145.

11. Moskos, et al., *The Postmodern Military,* 1.

12. Christopher Dandeker, "New Times and New Structures: Armed Forces for the Twenty-first Century. A View from the United Kingdom," in *The Western European Military Establishment: A Re-Assessment,* ed. Gwyn Harries-Jenkins (London. European Research Office of the U.S. Army, 1996).

13. Charles C. Moskos, "From Institution to Occupation: Trends in Military Organization," *Armed Forces & Society* 4 (1977): 41-50.

14. Morris Janowitz, "From Institutional to Occupational: The Need for Conceptual Continuity," *Armed Forces & Society* 4 (1977): 51-54.

15. Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1960).

16. George Ritzer, *Postmodern Social Theory* (New York: McGraw-Hill. 1997); David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Cambridge, Blackwell Publishers, 1989); Dennis Smith, *Zygmunt Bauman: Prophet of Postmodernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999).

17. Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford, CA. Stanford University Press, 1990), 1.

18. Pauline Marie Rosenau, *Post-Modernism and the Social Sciences: Insights, Inroads and Intrusions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 8, cited in Ritzer, *Postmodern Social Theory,* 9.

19. Dennis Smith, *Zygmunt Bauman: Prophet of Postmodernity,* 9.

20. Zygmunt Bauman, *Intimations of Postmodernity* (London: Routledge, 1992), 187.

21. Ritzer, *Postmodern Social Theory.*

22. Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity,* 9.

23. Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), xxiv.

24. Moskos et al., *The Postmodern Military.*

25. Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Postindustrial Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1973); Daniel Bell, "The Axial Age of Technology." Foreword in *The Coming of*

Postindustrial Society. Special anniversary edition (New York: Basic Books, 1999) ix-lxxxv.

26. *Defense Almanac* (Alexandria, VA: Armed Forces Information Services, 1997).
27. David R. Segal, John Blair, Frank Newport, and Susan Stephens, "Convergence, Isomorphism and Interdependence at the Civil-Military Interface," *Journal of Political and Military Sociology* 2 (1974): 157-172.
28. Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity.*
29. Michael J. Piore and Charles F. Sabel, *The Second Industrial Divide: Possibilities for Prosperity* (New York: Basic Books, 1984).
30. Ritzer, *Postmodern Social Theory.*
31. Moskos et al., *The Postmodern Military.*
32. David R. Segal and Mady Wechsler Segal, "Change in Military Organization," *Annual Review of Sociology* 9 (1983): 151-170.
33. Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity.*
34. Tom Burns and G. M. Stalker, *The Management of Innovation*, 2nd ed. (London: Tavistock, 1968).
35. Dandeker, "New Times and New Structures."
36. Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity,* 64.
37. Daniel Bell, "The World and the United States in 2013," *Daedalus* 116 (Summer, 1987): 1-31; 13-14. Cited in Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity,* 65.
38. Moskos et al., *The Postmodern Military.*
39. Steven Kull and I. M. Destler, *An Emerging Consensus: A Study of American Public Attitudes on America's Role in the World-Summary of Findings (*College Park, MD: Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland, 1996).
40. David R. Segal, "Five Phases of United Nations Peacekeeping: An Evolutionary Typology," *Journal of Political and Military Sociology* 25 (1995): 65-79.
41. Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity,* 63.
42. Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity.*
43. Moskos et al., *The Postmodern Military,* 2.
44. Moskos et al., *The Postmodern Military.*
45. Martin Shaw, *Post-Military Society: Militarism, Demilitarization and War at the End of the Twentieth Century* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991); Giddens, *The* Consequences of Modernity.
46. Moskos et al., *The Postmodern Military.*
47. Max Weber, *Economy and Society,* ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkely and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978).
48. Max Weber, *Economy and Society.*

49. Mary Katzenstein and Judith Reppy, *Beyond Zero Tolerance: Discrimination in Military Culture* (Lanham, MD. Rowman and Littlefield: 1999). Karen O. Dunivin, "Military Culture: Change and Continuity," *Armed Forces & Society* (Summer, 1994): 531-47. William Arkin and Lynne R. Dobrofsky. "Military Socialization and Masculinity," in *Making War/Making Peace: The Foundations of Social Conflict*, ed. Francesca M. Cancian and William James Gibson (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1990).

50. Moskos and Burk, "The Postmodern Military".

51. Ibid.

52. For example, see *Ethnicity, Integration, and the Military: IUS Special Editions on Armed Forces and Society,* No. 3, ed. Henry Dietz, Jerrold Elkin, and Maurice Roumani (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991).

53. Charles C. Moskos and John Sibley Butler, *All That We Can Be* (New York: Basic Books, 1996).

54. David R. Segal, "Diversity in the American Military," *Sociological Forum* 14 (1999): 531-539.

55. John Hillen, *Future Visions for U.S. Defense Policy* (Washington: Council on Foreign Relations, 1998).

56. Kull and Destler, *An Emerging Consensus.*

57. Moskos et al., *The Postmodern Military*, 14.

58. Of course, the need for the military organization to reflect the values of its host culture in order to maintain public support represents an environmental contingency in itself. Maintaining a structural balance between operational and cultural imperatives requires that contemporary militaries become "Janus-faced organizations." Christopher Dandeker, "New Times and New Structures."

59. Richard Harvey Brown, "War as Spectacle." Forthcoming.

60. Baudrillard, *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place.*

61. Paul Patton, "Introduction," *The Gulf War did not Take Place,* 1-21.

62. Ritzer, *Postmodern Social Theory.*

63. Patton, "Introduction."

64. Ibid, 10.

65. Baudrillard, *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place,* 59.

66. Patton, "Introduction," 8.

67. Ibid, 10.

68. Patton, "Introduction." The fact that the military had substantial success in the selection and control of information is evidenced by the ratio of images that suggested a clean, "surgical" war carried out by pinpoint delivery of smart weapons, to those few that displayed the tens or maybe hundreds of thousands of Iraqi casualties that

resulted from allied bombing. Indeed, the graphic display of human suffering caused by the conflict was not deployed until late in the crisis, at which point leaders feared public support would wane, and thus the war was brought to a quick ending.

69. Moskos et al., *The Postmodern Military.*

70. Morten Ender and David R. Segal, "V(E) Mail from the Foxhole: Soldier Isolation, (Tele)Communication and Force-Projection Operations," *Journal of Political and Military Sociology* 24 (Summer 1995): 83-104.

71. Patton, "Introduction," 13.

72. Allan Millett and Perter Maslowski, *For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States of America* (New York: The Free Press, 1984).

73. Patton, "Introduction," 4; Michael Heim, *The Metaphysics of Virtual Reality* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), cited in Patton, "Introduction."

74. David R. Segal and Mady Weschler Segal, *Peacekeepers and Their Wives* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press; 1993).

75. Moskos et al., *The Postmodern Military;* van der Meulen, "Postmodern Societies and Future Support for Military Missions"; Shaw, *Post-Military Society.*

76. Karl Haltiner, "The Definite End of The Mass Army in Western Europe?" *Armed Forces & Society*: 25 (1999): 7-36.

77. Interestingly, however, at the time of this writing, a popular candidate for the Republican Party's nomination for the U.S. Presidency is a former Naval aviator and was a prisoner of war during the war in Vietnam—facts that are clearly contributing to the candidate's popularity.

78. David Segal, *Recruiting for Uncle Sam: Citizenship and Military Manpower Policy* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas 1989).

79. Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity,* 169.