

## Warfare without Warriors?

*Changes in Contemporary Warfare  
and the Demise of the Citizen-Soldier*

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We appear to be in the midst of a momentous transformation in human affairs. The period when mass armies fought over territories to control their population and resources is fading in the developed world and becoming a phenomenon of the world's poorer precincts. Fighting at the behest of the world's wealthiest countries is shifting dramatically toward forms that require few citizen-soldiers—what one might call warfare without warriors. At least in the rich world, combat between mass armies is being replaced by cyber-warfare, pilotless aircraft, special operations commandos in out-of-the-way hot spots, and even robots as the predominant forms of military operations. *Multinational* private military and security contractors (PMSCs) conduct operations in support of *national* security interests. Battlefields are harder to discern, and the line between warfare and police work has grown murky. The world's affluent countries have become increasingly unwilling to involve their own armies in combat, and warfare has become a scourge concentrated geographically in what one might call the global ghetto.

Consider the distance that has been traveled from the Battle of the Somme one hundred years ago, when aristocratic officers led a generation of young men to its death for a few miles of land in the

heart of Europe. World War I took place at the high tide of European nationalism, and the association between citizen and state was seen as embodied in the willingness of nationals to die for their country. Indeed, the citizen-soldier has long been held to be the backbone of the modern nation-state, demonstrating in the most profound way the interlocking of warfare, state, and nation.<sup>1</sup> Yet recent developments that marginalize the military in the affluent world raise crucial questions: To what degree has the citizen-soldier actually been an empirical historical reality? And will the citizen-soldier endure given the changing character of warfare?

We argue that the veneration of the citizen-soldier ideal reflects a historical anomaly and that the citizen-soldier phenomenon in the globe's more affluent regions is on its way out. The period during which citizenries were the chief source of the soldiery is relatively circumscribed historically, extending over a couple of hundred years at most. Some argue that we are observing a return to a pattern that existed before the rise of the nation-state, when European rulers hired military contractors to fight their battles and the notion of the citizen-soldier had little relevance. While we agree with that basic view, we argue that the disappearance of the citizen-soldier is a result of more complicated processes than merely the general trend toward the privatization of the state's functions associated with neoliberalism, including through military contracting. It is necessary to consider important technological developments and military recruitment, as well as the emergence of social norms in the world's more affluent countries that challenge the very legitimacy of war and render problematic the activity of soldiering.

At the same time, we note a countervailing trend that has revalued participation in the military: while soldiering has grown less and less significant and prestigious as an obligation of citizenship in affluent democracies, previously excluded groups—blacks, gays and lesbians, and women—have in recent decades made recognition of their participation in military activities a major aspect of their quest for full inclusion in the body politic. This in itself also reflects the “taming” of the warrior, however, and renders participation in the military an aspect of the ordinary give-and-take of democratic politics in the developed world. Meanwhile, in many countries from the poorer parts of the world, membership in the armed forces is often a

major source of prestige, political advantage, and income and hence a matter over which various groups struggle for access and control. The relationship between citizenship and military service is thus complex and varied according to time and place.

In what follows, we explore the participation of soldiers in the modern nation-state and the increasing use of impersonal forms of warfare among affluent states. We survey participation in warfare, on behalf of various states and according to several possible categories of combatants—citizens, mercenaries, colonial soldiers, professional soldiers, PMSCs, and others—and how these have changed over time. We document the shift in Western European and American society from (occasional uses of) conscription to professional armies in the context of a relatively pacific period in their histories. We conclude by examining the changing nature of warfare today and its impact on the citizen-soldier ideal.

### Before the Citizen-Soldier

The characteristic pattern of European warfare until at least the waning days of the eighteenth-century ancien régime, and in some contexts well into the nineteenth century, was for military affairs to be organized on the basis of private contracts, whether these were for the recruitment and maintenance of fighting soldiers, for the provision of military hardware and munitions, or for military support systems. Typically, there were “varying forms of *private-public partnership*, in which very substantial elements of private contracting, finance and administration” prevailed in systems that might still have had “a core of state-raised or state-maintained troops.”<sup>2</sup>

Needless to say, the permanent garrisoning of troops is costly for rulers. Fiscal constraints on raising an army—the difficulties of acquiring revenue without satisfactory systems of taxation—were a major reason behind the preference for public-private partnerships. As Michael Mann has noted, “Agrarian states [that is, all states before the nineteenth century at the earliest] could not even know the worth of their subjects, let alone tax them accurately. . . . [T]oday the American and British states can both tax my own income and wealth ‘at source’ . . . and extract their cut without my even laying hands on it.”<sup>3</sup> Advances in taxation under centralizing nation-states

made it possible to raise revenues that could support larger military forces. “Embracing” male citizens to make them available for military service was another aspect of modern states’ growing infrastructural power, the most essential enhancement of their capabilities compared to earlier states.

After the American Revolution, however, with its glorification of republican principles, the norm against using mercenaries gathered force in Europe and the United States. Consistent with republican conceptions of virtue, the notion of soldiering for hire acquired an increasingly foul odor among those imbued with the ideal of self-government, and the use of mercenaries declined. By the mid-nineteenth century, late-adopter Britain finally fell in line with the “anti-mercenary norm” that had grown in strength over the preceding decades, and mercenaries largely disappeared from battle after the Crimean War.<sup>4</sup> Soon thereafter, Britain adopted the Foreign Enlistment Act, which prohibited its subjects from participating in warfare on behalf of any state with which Britain itself was at peace. In the interim, many countries have adopted similar laws forbidding their citizens from going to war on behalf of another state. The 1989 International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries defined a mercenary as a combatant recruited abroad who “is motivated . . . essentially by the desire for private gain.”<sup>5</sup> Such motivation had come to be regarded as incompatible with the selflessness associated with patriotic duty.

Reversing the position of laws that constrain immigration while taking a generally laissez-faire view of emigration, the national laws seeking to outlaw the soldier of fortune seem mainly concerned to deter nationals from departing to fight on behalf of other nations. In contrast, foreigners wishing—or forced—to fight on a nation’s behalf have been viewed considerably more charitably. It has therefore not been the case that only citizens participated in modern warfare on behalf of their own states, even in the age of the democratic nation-state inaugurated by the American and French Revolutions. This was in part because overseas colonization was often spearheaded first not by states but by joint-stock companies (authorized by European sovereigns) seeking to make a profit for themselves and their investors, such as the British East India Company and the Dutch East

India Company. At the beginning of the modern colonial period, troops in European overseas possessions were recruited predominantly from the home army of the country concerned, but locally raised native troops were soon mustered as well. The latter normally served in separate units, at first under their own leaders and later under European officers.

The sepoys of the British East India Company were a major early example. By the mid-eighteenth century, these troops were beginning to be directly recruited and officered by the company. Some of the sepoys rebelled against the company during the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, leading to the end of the British East India Company's rule in India. After the British Raj took control in 1858, the sepoys formed the famous regiments of the British Indian Army, some of which survive to the present day in the national armies of Pakistan and India. Meanwhile, the French Foreign Legion was specifically created in 1831 to recruit foreign nationals wishing to fight on behalf of France. The Royal Netherlands Indian Army (referring to the Dutch East Indies, now Indonesia) was created in 1830, a year before the French Foreign Legion, and had a similar recruitment policy. It stopped being an army of foreigners around 1900 when recruitment was restricted to Dutch citizens and to the indigenous peoples of the Dutch East Indies.

In the larger colonial possessions, the garrison was likely to consist of both locally recruited and white European troops. The latter might be from the home or metropolitan army, from settlers doing their military service, or occasionally from mercenaries recruited outside the territories of the colonial power concerned. The Dutch had a mix of locally recruited and metropolitan troops making up their garrison in the East Indies. While the Sikhs, Punjabis, Jats, Baluchis, and other "martial races" making up the bulk of the Indian Army were recruited from British subjects, the ten regiments of Gurkha Rifles were recruited from outside British territory. Some of these groups would come to be regarded as martial races, their martial qualities propagandized, and their communities rewarded with special status. Given the proportions involved, however, the colonial power using these arrangements might find itself confronted with a dilemma: when military developments made numbers a priority, it

had to either trust the majority, and so risk loss of control, or rely on minorities combined with large numbers of expensive European or other nonlocal troops.

By the twentieth century, colonial troops were often being used outside the boundaries of their territories of origin. Troops from France's North African colonies served in the trenches during World War I in France itself. Italy employed Dubats from Somaliland, together with Eritrean and Libyan units, in the conquest of Ethiopia during 1936. France also made extensive use of African troops in World War II and during the subsequent Indochina and Algerian Wars. Indian troops served in Europe in large numbers during both world wars, as well as in the Middle East, Malaya, Burma, and North Africa in World War II. The Nazi SS made extensive use of foreigners before and during World War II, and Japan recruited levies from Korea and Taiwan during colonial rule in both countries. In sum, modern nation-states putatively committed to the norm of the citizen-soldier were also happy to include foreigners among their troops when doing so served their purposes.

### The Citizen-Soldier Ideal

The impact of the citizen-soldier ideal on civil-military relations in the United States has been manifest from the country's birth in 1776. The influence of the ideal is apparent in the Constitution's Second Amendment as well as in the Militia Act of 1792. The Second Amendment asserted that a "well regulated Militia" was "necessary for the security of a free state," and hence the "right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed." Soon after the Bill of Rights was ratified by Congress in late 1791, the Militia Act required the service of every able-bodied, white, male citizen between the ages of eighteen and forty-five in his state's militia.<sup>6</sup> In addition to these temporary soldiers, however, full-time troops supplemented part-time local militias. This force was staffed by citizen volunteers and subordinated to civilian control—two safeguards intended to prevent the emergence of an autonomous military class disconnected from civil society and capable of overthrowing democratic government.

Over the course of American history, the military importance of the citizens' militia eroded, yet the conceptual connection between

military service and citizenship at its core persisted. As the United States moved from a confederation of individual states to become a centralized nation-state after the Civil War (1861–1865), the 1903 Militia Act put the National Guard under closer federal supervision. The Selective Service Act of 1917 authorized the president to conscript soldiers for combat in World War I, but it was rescinded in 1920 after the war ended. Selective service was reinstated in 1940 on the eve of U.S. engagement in World War II, but it ended after the conflict concluded. Drafts were reinstated for the Korean War and the Vietnam War. Despite its episodic nature in American history, compulsory military service was generally viewed as an important civic duty for men.<sup>7</sup> At least until Bill Clinton was elected president in 1992, military service was regarded as a crucial requirement for high public office in the United States. That norm began to subside in subsequent years, in tandem with the military's decline in significance in American life more generally.

In Europe, meanwhile, militaries recruited by conscription up to World War I inculcated in the broader society the virtues of discipline, patriotism, and self-sacrifice.<sup>8</sup> Peasants became Frenchmen by attending schools and through their participation in the armed forces, just as armies are today often the backbone of common nationhood. Even in postrevolutionary France, armies were led by officer corps drawn heavily from among the aristocracy, and military service was frequently portrayed as gallant and noble; this was a prominent element of what Arno Mayer calls the “persistence of the old regime.”<sup>9</sup> However much military service might have been glamorized for the officer corps, ordinary soldiers were typically those unlucky enough to not escape the military recruiter or too poor to purchase substitutes. The martial virtues were on display in such influential literary works as Ernst Jünger's *Storm of Steel*.<sup>10</sup>

The mass death occasioned by World War I helped undermine the enthusiasm for armed combat, as evidenced in Robert Graves's 1929 memoir *Good-bye to All That* and Sigmund Freud's discovery of a “death-instinct.”<sup>11</sup> The cataclysm of World War II further took the bloom off the militarist rose and was followed by the so-called long peace that saw the geographic boundaries of Europe frozen in place on either side of the Iron Curtain. During that forty-year period, Europeans also grew more devoted to peace and human rights.

The unraveling of Yugoslavia and the attendant warfare, especially in Bosnia, came as a shock to what had become, by comparison to European sensibilities before the end of World War II, a peace-loving conscience. Indeed, wars among the great powers have become seemingly a thing of the past, and interstate wars—the kind that arrayed the massed citizens of one country against those of another—declined in frequency, while the world witnessed the relative rise of intrastate wars, almost exclusively in the global South.<sup>12</sup>

### Professional Forces and the Fate of the Citizen-Soldier

Attitudes concerning military force changed dramatically in the post-World War II period in Western Europe and North America. The mass army based on conscription with extensive reserves was gradually phased out of existence in Western countries. Such armies were replaced by professional or volunteer armed forces and by militaries in which conscripts chose military duty rather than readily available alternative-service positions, such as in Austria and Germany, where they typically staffed group residential facilities, performed varieties of social work, and the like. Britain adopted a professional army in 1960. The United States shifted to an all-volunteer force in 1973 as the Vietnam War wound down amid much protest and social conflict. The end of the Cold War brought a fresh movement toward professionalized military forces. The Dutch ended compulsory military service in the 1990s. France abandoned conscription in 2001. Germany eliminated the draft in 2011. In an apparent exception to the trend, Austrians voted in early 2013 to maintain conscription, but in reality they did so mainly to ensure that they would continue to have the large pool of cheap labor that performs civil service (*Zivildienst*) in the country's old-age homes, hospitals, and youth centers.<sup>13</sup>

These professional forces were quite different from conscripted military forces. After 1945, Western European armies were increasingly influenced by the values and habits of civilian institutions.<sup>14</sup> Accordingly, the expectation that the leaders of Western nation-states could call on citizens to make the greatest sacrifice was in decline. David Segal concludes that military service in the United States has been redefined “from being an obligation of citizenship in a community to being an obligation of national citizenship and, most recently,



to being a job.”<sup>15</sup> In the early twenty-first century, compulsory military service exists in only a relatively small number of countries in the world.

Many argue that the elimination of the draft in North America and Europe has severed the link between military service and citizenship. Elliot Abrams and Andrew Bacevich assert that “the mythic tradition of the citizen-soldier is dead.” Similarly Daniel Moran notes that “the legend of the *levée en masse* has, to all appearances, lost its grip upon the Western imagination.” James Burk writes that, with the end of the draft, the United States “abandon[ed] the ideal of the citizen soldier, conscripted into the mass army.”<sup>16</sup> For these authors, the demise of the citizen-soldier tradition is also associated with a host of ills: a corrosive and conflict-ridden culture of rights, national disunity, and an unstable social system in which the burden of defense is not borne equally by all segments of the society.

But these conclusions may not follow if the premise is faulty. For example, with regard to the American case, Ronald Krebs argues that the role of the citizen-soldier as the backbone of the U.S. military has been exaggerated and therefore should not be used as a baseline to assess the place of the military in American life.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, the lionization of the so-called greatest generation, which fought in World War II, has distorted people’s perceptions of the importance of the citizen-soldier in American life. Krebs also objects to the expectation in the republican tradition that citizens must put their lives on the line to merit full membership in the polity.<sup>18</sup> Given that such service has historically been largely restricted to men, his objection has considerable force. In all events, recent developments in the nature of warfare have made the citizen-soldier seem increasingly irrelevant to the tasks of war making and security.

### Warfare without Warriors, and Remote-Control Dominance

Since the end of World War II, the world’s wealthier countries have become increasingly unwilling to involve their own armies in combat. Indeed, a repeat of that massive conflagration involving major Western European states borders on the inconceivable. In part because of the overwhelming significance of nuclear weapons, the prospect of mass armies of conscripts fighting over pieces of European

territory has faded in importance; as a security matter, Europeans today are mainly concerned about Islamist terrorists, not enemy states. In short, twenty-first-century warfare looks very different from that which characterized the period before 1945 or even 1989, when the Cold War pitted the massed armies and nuclear stockpiles of the Soviet bloc and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), led by the United States.

In contrast to their earlier reliance on mass armies of conscripts, affluent countries now tend to rely on enlisted forces drawn from among the poorer and less-educated segments of their societies. The size of the armed forces of wealthy countries has generally declined in recent years.<sup>19</sup> The ranks of the U.S. military have decreased since the spike of the Vietnam War years and the shift to a nonconscript force; the Iraq and Afghanistan wars were fought with roughly the same number of soldiers as were under arms at the end of the Clinton administration, which had sharply cut military budgets as a proportion of gross domestic product.<sup>20</sup> Karl Marx once noted that, ironically, in contrast to the military, which was stronger if it had more men under arms, the goal of the capitalist was to eliminate workers from the industrial army. Increasingly in the wealthy world, however, the military has fallen in line with the pattern Marx associated with capitalist enterprises: the number of people under arms steadily shrinks as a proportion of population, mirroring the downsizing of the industrial labor force.

The reductions in combat personnel are in part a product of budget cuts, in part a result of shifting patterns of war fighting. The citizen-soldier of yore is increasingly being replaced by advanced technology, elite special forces, or PMSCs of indeterminate nationality. More than half the personnel deployed by the United States in Iraq and Afghanistan since 2003 were employees of PMSCs—modern-day mercenaries, raised by perfectly legal contracting businesses rather than by the enterprising warlords one finds in other settings.<sup>21</sup> In the process, the U.S. military looks more and more like the mixed forces of regulars and mercenaries that fought for multinational empires of the past and before the establishment of the norm against mercenaries in the nineteenth century.

Special operations forces—small numbers of highly trained and expensively outfitted troops—are surgically inserted into specialized

capture-or-kill missions rather than deployed to slog it out with the enemy over an extended period. The norm of the citizen-soldier as the source of military protection in nation-states—insofar as it ever existed—has thus been sharply attenuated and indeed is growing obsolete. From the point of view of the average soldier, the armed forces of rich countries have shifted away from destroying and toward building—schools, hospitals, nations. Their activities have often become as much humanitarian or quasi-diplomatic as military. Meanwhile, counterinsurgency tactics are deployed simultaneously in Central Asia and East Harlem.<sup>22</sup> Armed forces still kill other people, of course, but their activities have grown rather more diverse than that age-old endeavor.

This is to a considerable extent because most warfare today takes the form of civil wars and insurgencies in the globe's poorer parts, and the building activities are intended to stem instability and terrorism. These conflicts involve by definition not only a country's official armed forces—more or less well trained and equipped—but a variety of other combatants as well. The worldwide recruitment of the soldiery from among the poor is further evident in United Nations-sponsored peacekeeping missions, in which the blue helmets are drawn predominantly from the populations of an array of countries in the global South and their service is paid for by the wealthy benefactors of the UN. Relying on the poor and disenfranchised may make it easier for countries to commit themselves to military conflict, knowing that the children of elites will be shielded from the consequences of their decisions. This was, of course, one of the main arguments in favor of the citizen-soldier model.

Yet with changes in the very conduct of warfare, soldiers from the global North are less and less likely to be sent into battle in the first place. The operators of unmanned aerial vehicles, better known as drones, can strike a supposed enemy combatant from thousands of miles away. These warriors by remote control may do their jobs from nine to five and then leave for a Parent-Teacher Association meeting at the end of the day. That drone technology has been used to kill a small number of U.S. citizens has been cause for special concern among the American public. These citizens were not necessarily charged with any crime, not about to perpetrate an act of war, and not in a position to do any direct damage to the United States.

These situations raise major questions of due process and executive authority. However, they make up only a tiny minority of drone attacks, which are mainly targeted at Al Qaeda and other militants in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Yemen, and elsewhere. The number of civilians in those countries killed by drones has also caused much debate. Yet Pakistan—which long professed official outrage about the drone attacks on its territory—subsequently made clear that it acquiesced in many of the attacks and, after long objecting to the civilian casualties, substantially lowered their death count.<sup>23</sup> In an effort to wind down the war on terror and reduce the risks of killing innocent bystanders, President Barack Obama proposed stricter guidelines on drone attacks and the transfer of responsibility for carrying them out from the Central Intelligence Agency to the Department of Defense. That plan, however, encountered unexpected opposition in Congress from those who think the CIA may actually do a better job of avoiding “collateral damage.”<sup>24</sup>

Meanwhile, we are increasingly learning that drones are a fast-developing technology for policing purposes in many jurisdictions within the United States, prompting civil liberties concerns.<sup>25</sup> The deployment of drones is an excellent example of the blurring line between internal and external when it comes to contemporary uses of violence. Indeed, we may be witnessing the resuturing of police and military forces that had divided functionally in North Atlantic countries in the nineteenth century.

Notwithstanding the vigorous debate about the possible illegal uses of drones, it may be that we actually have more to fear from cyber-attack. Cyber-warfare involves many possibilities: hampering research and development, undermining the integrity of banking systems, knocking out air traffic control systems and thus threatening potentially thousands of passengers, disabling regional power grids, and more. The potential damage is nearly incalculable, yet a cyber-attack would bear little similarity to warfare understood as a face-to-face activity. Sabotage is old and familiar, of course, but until recently it has normally involved the physical presence of the attackers. That is clearly unnecessary in the case of cyber-warfare, even if the attackers also seek to remain anonymous and undetected. In the annual threat assessment presented by American intelligence officials to the Senate Intelligence Committee in early 2013, the director

of national intelligence argued that a major cyber-attack is a greater immediate threat to the country than international terrorism—the first time any other threat has been ranked more highly than terrorism since 9/11.<sup>26</sup> Cyber-attacks are known to have been carried out by the Israelis and Americans against Iran (Stuxnet), while a new cold war has emerged between the United States and China as a result of cyber-warfare.<sup>27</sup> Recent attacks have indicated that the perpetrators may be at least as interested in destroying computer systems as they are in stealing data.<sup>28</sup> In early 2014, it was revealed that American cyber-warriors have implanted software in some hundred thousand computers worldwide that allows them to spy on those computers and conduct cyber-attacks.<sup>29</sup> Despite a broader climate of defense budget cutting, cyber-warfare is also one of the few areas where spending is likely to grow in the years to come.<sup>30</sup>

Finally, in the ultimate futuristic development, robots are assuming an ever-larger role in the conduct of military operations, locating improvised explosive devices (IEDs), assessing threats, and identifying targets. Commentators have begun to worry that we may soon have robots shooting targets without human intervention in the process at all.<sup>31</sup> The prospect of having robots fight our wars for us raises the threat of “riskless warfare”<sup>32</sup> even more sharply than does the use of drones.

With the implosion of the Soviet Union, the imbalance of power between the United States and the rest of the world became unprecedented, even though American defense spending as a percentage of gross domestic product fell dramatically during the Clinton years.<sup>33</sup> The terrorist attacks reversed those cuts, and the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan led to unprecedented military expenditures, higher than anything ever seen before. As the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have wound down, the American economy continues to face extraordinary pressures, especially in the aftermath of the early 2013 budget sequester and its automatic cuts to government outlays. With the Tea Party pushing the Republicans to the right, defense budget cuts—long regarded as anathema in conservative circles—began to be viewed as acceptable among Republicans.<sup>34</sup> The pressures to reduce the heft of the military in American life have become extraordinary.

In this context, the calls for a changing American way of warfare—including more use of warrior-free technology—became increasingly

loud. The United States will now seek increasingly to achieve its military and foreign policy objectives “by, with, and through” partners and allies rather than by itself.<sup>35</sup> Under the Obama administration, this has also involved a shift (back) to greater support for international institutions such as the International Criminal Court. According to Harold Hongju Koh, legal adviser to the State Department, international criminal justice institutions “can help increase stability and thus decrease the need for more costly military interventions in the future.”<sup>36</sup> Finally, the Pentagon has come to view social science research as increasingly central to its operations. A former director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, Lieutenant General Michael Flynn, recently wrote that, because “the perceptions of populations are increasingly the center of gravity of all conflicts,” sociocultural research is crucial “to preventing the onset of conflict, to effectively prosecuting conflict if it comes, and to ensuring attainment of political goals and sustainable peace after the end of conflict.”<sup>37</sup> One of the Army’s “flashiest new concepts” is the deployment of “regionalized brigades,” whose soldiers would receive cultural and language training appropriate to their mission.<sup>38</sup>

The shift to what one might call remote-control dominance by the United States can be illuminated by the approach to recent crises in Libya and Mali. This approach has been referred to as the Obama doctrine, but that is because he is simply the first to have been forced to operate under the conditions of austerity and foreign policy caution created by the misadventures of the George W. Bush presidency. In Libya, the Obama administration sought to enact its recently announced commitment to “atrocities prevention”<sup>39</sup> by intervening on the side of the Libyan rebels. Amid considerable uncertainty about who those rebels were and wariness about getting involved in another ground conflict in a predominantly Muslim country, the Obama administration promised only very limited engagement, with no American boots on the ground. Some dismissed the intervention as neocolonial, but the Arab League officially requested outside intervention, and anti-Gaddafi Libyans indicated considerable gratitude after the fact. The United States was best equipped to provide logistical and intelligence support to the rebels, but command and control remained in the hands of NATO, which has been in search of a mission since the end of the Cold War, when it was famously meant to

keep the Americans in, the Russians out, and the Germans down. In general, the European Union continues to be unable to mount a serious “foreign and security policy,” which many have hoped for a long time that they would do.<sup>40</sup> Obama sought to do something positive with American power but shrank from leading the charge.

The Mali crisis of 2013 further reveals the limits and reticence of American foreign policy in the post-Bush era. The Sahara has traditionally been the province of European imperial endeavors, not American ones, although the presence of oil in the region unavoidably drew in American activity. In 2012, however, the democratically elected president of Mali was toppled by a military coup involving, among others, soldiers trained by the United States as part of various American initiatives to forestall the development of terrorism in the area.<sup>41</sup> The northern part of the country was unsettled by conflict between Islamists and Touareg independence forces, seeking greater autonomy from the capital, Bamako. But when Islamist militants began imposing a strict version of sharia law in the north, Mali suddenly got on the map for reasons other than its fabled musicians (e.g., Ali Farka Touré and Salif Keita) and its Saharan version of the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival.<sup>42</sup> The conflict greatly escalated when the French president responded to an urgent request from the head of Mali’s government to intervene. The former colonial power in the country sent in several hundred troops, who were expected to stiffen the resolve of the unreliable Malian army, whose soldiers had a tendency to cut and run rather than stand and fight. Yet the French troops quickly found themselves in a firefight with Islamists. The United States had little interest in such a boots-on-the-ground intervention and had assumed it could rely on the Malians and other West African troops mobilized by the Economic Community of West African States. The Islamist insurgents then perpetrated an unexpected attack on an oil facility far to the northwest in Algeria, taking European and American hostages and drawing the Algerians into the fight. The Algerians have a long history of dealing brutally with Islamists, and they responded without coordination with the United States or Europe. Suddenly Washington’s desire to maintain calm in the region by way of such mechanisms as the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership looked unpersuasive. Whether prudently or not, France has been far more inclined to intervene directly in

the region than has the United States. As in the case of Libya, the United States has been more inclined to rely on regional military partnerships and a network of bases it has established to conduct surveillance—which is in fact largely being carried out by private contractors.<sup>43</sup> All of this is far from the sort of aggressive imperialism one associates with European colonialism or with the United States' earlier interventions in, say, the Dominican Republic in the 1950s, Vietnam in the 1960s, or Iraq and Afghanistan in the 2000s.

### Conclusion

The citizen-soldier is an increasingly scarce phenomenon in a post-Cold War world in which the use of massed military force has become less central to global dominance than it had been previously. Today's conflicts and threats in the rich world do not involve land wars requiring millions of conscripted soldiers; rather, they mainly involve threats to which the chief responses are technological and sociological, not military in the traditional sense. Violence has increasingly migrated to the world's poorer areas. Accordingly, warfare involving wealthy countries will increasingly require few personnel and much sophisticated technology. American dominance, to the extent that it persists, will be maintained more by remote-control attacks on armed combatants and supportive civilian institutions rather than by direct confrontation with enemy soldiers. In the meantime, while the country has signed on to a UN effort to tie the sale of arms to human rights considerations, it can scarcely regulate arms sales within its own borders to achieve reductions in gun-related deaths.<sup>44</sup> The ideal of the citizen-soldier, never as great an empirical reality in the United States as it was a norm in the republican mind, is likely to recede further as professional militaries, special operations forces, cyber-warriors, and robots increasingly do the work of war carried out by the world's wealthier countries.

### Notes

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