- Norway, Britain and the Arctic Convoys to the USSR - The Transatlantic Alliance: Deeper, then Widen - Comic-Book Representations Of The Holocaust - Review: The Road to Rocroi - American Cinema and Conflict - Private Military Security Contractors
Editors:
Pablo de Orellana
pablo.de_orellana@kcl.ac.uk
Alistair Wedderburn
aliwedderburn@gmail.com

Assistant editor:
Nikolai Gourof
nikolaos.gourof@kcl.ac.uk

Subeditor
Claire Gilbert
claire.gilbert@kcl.ac.uk

Editorial Assistants
Tally de Orellana

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Pablo de Orellana and Alistair Wedderburn
Department of War Studies
King’s College London
Strand, London, WC2R 2LS

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Foreword

Much has changed in the six months between Issue 1 of Strife Journal and the present issue. A new academic year has begun and with it an inevitable cycle of personnel at Strife. Both the journal and strifeblog.org have new editorial teams (though thanks must go to Pablo De Orellana for providing continuity between last year’s committee and this), and both are moving forward with confidence and style. We have had writers interviewed on Chinese radio, reposts, and are averaging hundreds of visitors to our website every day.

Of course, despite the changes, the goals at Strife’s core remain the same. We still want to provide a platform from which the breadth of possible conceptual and analytical avenues for exploring conflict can be themselves explored. Issue 2 of Strife Journal is representative of this ambition, but our inclusion of the Private Military and Security Companies series from strifeblog.org illustrates that it is one which is shared and embodied by the whole Strife project.

On top of the PMSC articles, we also have film critic Mike McCahill’s piece ‘Action! On The Correlation between American Cinema and Conflict’. Following Sontag, McCahill notes that the language of image-making overlaps curiously with that of violence and conflict. He goes on to ask whether film inherently glamorises the conflicts it seeks to depict. Alister Wedderburn is also concerned with the visualisation of war, and in ‘A Different Approach: Comic-Book Representations of the Holocaust’ he explores the apparent dissonance between medium and subject, arguing – in defiance of figures such as Elie Wiesel – that it is not despite but because of the comic book’s irreverence and distortion that it can be a suitable form for the depiction of the European genocide. Zachary Ginsburg’s ‘The Transatlantic Alliance: Deepen, and Widen’ uses constructivist theory to analyse the roles of Turkey, Hungary, Greece and Ukraine within NATO. Ginsburg convincingly demonstrates that these four states provide evidence of the need for wider institutional reform – reform upon which the cohesion of the organisation as a whole could potentially depend. Matthew Knowles provides a survey and reassessment of the role played during WWII by Iceland and Norway in the transport of material and provisions to the USSR through the Arctic Convoys to Northern Russia. Finally, Nikolai Gourof launches Strife Journal’s book reviews with a commentary on Fernando González de León’s The Road to Rocroi: Class, Culture and Command in the Spanish Army of Flanders, 1567-1659. Issue 3 will see the expansion of the reviews section under his coordination.

Many thanks are due to the department of War Studies at King’s College London, which has provided unceasing support. Special thanks are due to Dr Christine Cheng, Prof. Vivienne Jabri, Dr Oisin Tansey, Prof. Mats Berdal and Dr Kieran Mitton, all of whom have provided funding for the Strife venture. Thanks are of course owed to all the contributors to this issue, who have handled our editorial demands with grace and rapidity. For this issue we have moved to a peer-review model which will continue for Issue 3 and beyond. We would like to take this opportunity and thank all our reviewers. Finally, thanks must go to last year’s committee, who built an impressively robust foundation from which Strife has been able, and will continue, to move forward.

We are always on the lookout for interesting perspectives on conflict for both the journal and the blog. Anyone interested in contributing is encouraged to submit an idea or simply declare interest via email.

Pablo De Orellana
Alister Wedderburn
Editors, Issue II Strife Journal
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A Different Approach: Comic-Book Representations of the Holocaust

Alister Wedderburn

‘Then for the first time we became aware that our language lacks words to express this offence’

Primo Levi, If This is a Man (1947)

Primo Levi’s experiences during his eleven months in Monowitz were, he believed, of too great a magnitude to be articulated using conventional language. This generates a paradoxical tension between the compulsion to bear witness and the impossibility of doing so within which Levi himself sat at the centre, a writer attempting to do precisely that.

The importance or even necessity of bearing witness to events of enormity is of course not solely felt by survivors of the European death camps. Nevertheless, it is an impulse explicitly recognised and even legislated within Jewish culture by the Torah:

And if any one sin, in that he heareth the voice of adjuration, he being a witness, whether he hath seen or known, if he do not utter it, then he shall bear his iniquity.

Would-be witnesses to the Shoah are thus caught within Levi’s paradox – how can one fulfil the obligation of testimony if ‘uttering’ what one has ‘seen or known’ is impossible?5

In this essay I will explore one way – namely the comic strip – in which visual artists have attempted to bear witness to the Holocaust, both during and after the event. In Levi’s wake, it is tempting to see visual representation as an alternative way of testifying to the experience of the genocide without recourse to an insufficient verbal language. However, as we shall see, such representation has its own limits and insufficiencies, is often aware of them, and frequently integrates written description or narration into its presentation.

There is a common train of thought which suggests that artistically representing an event like the Holocaust at all is at best a folly and at worst an unethical trivialisation and insult. Theodor Adorno,6 Beryl Lang7 and Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi8 have all made this argument to varying extents, and it is also visible within a more popular discourse in the controversy surrounding Roberto Beglini’s 1997 comic film La Vita è Bella.9 Yet these claims frequently fail to acknowledge that many men and women caught up in the genocide themselves felt an obligation, an ‘overwhelming desire’, in the words of Terezin and Auschwitz survivor and

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5. This is a tension recognised throughout discourse surrounding Holocaust testimony, for example in T. Tresize, ‘Unspeakable’, The Yale Journal of Criticism, Vol. 14, No. 1, pp. 39-66.
6. ‘Genocide, when it is made into a cultural possession…makes it easier to continue playing with the culture that gave it birth’. Quoted in Ziva Amishai-Maisels, ‘Art Confronts the Holocaust’, in M. Bohm-Duchen (ed.) in After Auschwitz: Responses To The Holocaust In Contemporary Art (Sunderland: Northern Centre For Contemporary Art, 1995), p. 49.
7. ‘Certain limits based on a combination of historical and ethical constraints impinge on representations or images of the Holocaust’. Berel Lang, Holocaust Representation: Art Within the Limits of History and Ethics (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 2000), p. ix.
8. ‘To relate ‘art’ to the Holocaust is frivolous, heartless, aesthetically stupid…the extremes of human experience can hardly be contained within the delicate frames of art’. Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi, By Words Alone (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1980), p. x-2.
artist Alfred Kantor, to visually record the nature of the events they were living through; to ‘put down every detail of this unfathomable place’. For these artists, visual representation was a crucial act of witness, a vital response to the Lager. To pronounce their artistic endeavour trivial by comparison to the scale of the event is impossible when that endeavour is bound up with and inextricable from direct involvement. Declaring such images frivolous would be to do the same with the artists’ experience of the genocide itself.

Nevertheless, this is not to say that artistically representing the Holocaust is unproblematic. If we take the commonplace – if dogmatic – view that the Final Solution is an event without analogy in human history, then in relation to artistic representation it seems fair to side with Elie Wiesel when he says that:

…it imposes certain limits. There are techniques that one may not use, even if they are commercially effective. In order not to betray the dead and humiliate the living, this particular subject demands a special sensibility, a different approach, a rigour, strengthened by respect and reverence, above all faithfulness to memory.

Even if we deny this singularity and declare with Saul Friedländer that ‘the extermination of the Jews of Europe is accessible to both representation and interpretation as any other historical event’, it remains difficult to deny his subsequent caveat that ‘we are dealing with an event which tests our traditional, conceptual and representational categories, an ‘event at the limits.’

Both Wiesel and Friedländer, despite their differing views on the Holocaust’s place in history, agree that representing it pictorially – as Levi argued in relation to language – requires ‘a different approach’, a rethinking of conventional representational techniques.

The comic strip, of course, has its own traditions and idioms even in relation to war and atrocity. It is possible, for example, to see Jacques Callot’s *Les Grandes Misères de la Guerre* (1633) and Francisco Goya’s *Los Desastres de la Guerra* (c.1810-20) as precursors of the comic strip: combinations of image and text in a series of panels that were printed in order, as a set and conceptually designed so as to present a consistent whole. One imagines such works display the sort of rigour and ‘special sensibility’ which Wiesel argues is essential to any representational project involving the Holocaust. However, the comic strips I will examine succeed in achieving a different approach precisely because they ignore this tradition. Instead these strips place themselves within the context of the twentieth century commercial cartoon, alert to the lack of representational accuracy that such categorisation implies, and indeed self-consciously embracing it. I will argue that any success they have in representing the Holocaust is not in spite of this lack of concern for artistic realism, but because of it.

*Mickey au Camp de Gurs: Publié Sans Authorisation de Walt Disney* (1942) is an example of such a work. It is one of three extant captioned comic strips drawn by Horst Rosenthal, an inmate of French internment camp Gurs who was later to die in Auschwitz. Rosenthal’s as yet unpublished strips describe

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14 The strips are held in Paris, in the library of Le Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine. I have been unable to look at the works themselves for this essay, but the strips are available in piecemeal form in several essays, journals and books, in particular Rosenberg (2002), from which all images in this essay have been taken. By compiling together the images from this article and from Baskind, S. and Omer-Sherman, R.
the nature of the camp’s routine and some of its characters in a light and breezy manner, with a black sense of humour and irony veiling a fiercely condemnatory message. Rosenthal’s other two surviving strips, *La Journée d’un Hébergé: Camp de Gurs 1942*, and *Petit Guide à Travers le Camp de Gurs 1942*, portray the camp from the point of view of an anonymous *hébergé* or resident, but is unique and arresting by virtue of having as its protagonist Walt Disney’s Mickey Mouse.

![Figure 1: Mickey Au Camp De Gurs (1942), front cover](image)

Mickey’s presence ironically acknowledges and challenges the supposed frivolity of the comics medium Rosenthal is working with. On the cover Mickey’s smiling face is imposed upon a barrack hut, later described in the strip as a ‘dog kennel’, situated inside an electric fence; a bathetic juxtaposition of imprisonment and suffering with a child’s cartoon that appears brashly inappropriate.

In the twelve panels that follow, Mickey explores the camp, its routines and its characters, many of whom are presented with a sense of both humour and absurdity. In one panel, the camp clerk is engulfed by his paperwork, his head poking ludicrously out of the top of the huge stack of sheets, whilst in another ‘Volcano Man’, the fattest man in the camp, walks about in a suit smoking a cigar, his head bizarrely replaced with a white ball like the head of a cotton plant. In a third, Mickey squints in disapproval at his bread ration through a magnifying glass.

![Figure 2: Horst Rosenthal: Mickey Au Camp De Gurs (1942), panel 4](image)

Yet Mickey’s presence in the camp, though surreal – and funny – is by no means crass or thoughtless. In contrast to Rosenthal’s other two strips, Mickey as the central character is not a prisoner or resident, but rather an outsider. He is not angered or horrified by what he encounters but baffled. He is able to approach the camp with a childlike naivety, possessing no knowledge of its true nature. In his dialogue with the clerk (Fig. 3) he is asked about his ethnicity. The text reads:

—Are you a Jew?
—What?
—I asked if you were a Jew!!
Shamefully, I professed my complete ignorance on the subject.

In the accompanying picture, Mickey gazes up at the clerk, wide-eyed and with a question mark in a speech bubble above his head, understanding neither the content nor the context of the question.

It is Mickey’s outsider status that generates much of the strip’s humour, but it also represents an extraordinary sense of detachment on Rosenthal’s part that is a singular exception to much camp inmate artwork. The drawings and paintings of prisoner-artists such as Alfred Kantor, Mieczylaw Koscielniak, Waldemar Nowakowski or August Favier are documents...
of witness, aiming to be faithful to ‘every
detail’ of the internal reality of the camps,
drawn as though from the viewpoint of the
artist’s eye.

Rosenthal, in contrast, detaches his art from his
own perspective and thereby excuses himself
from the role of witness, a role instead given by
proxy to Mickey. This has two effects: firstly, to
establish Mickey as a *tabula rasa* upon which
an impartial impression of Gurs can be
imposed, and secondly to highlight the
unfathomability of the camp system and its
incomprehensible detachment from humanity –
an effect intensified by Mickey’s own inhuman
anthropomorphism.

We might assume that works such as *Mickey au
Camp de Gurs*, are precisely the sort of
representational technique Wiesel is arguing
should be prohibited, as it disregards
‘reverence’ and ‘faithfulness to memory’ by
virtue of its wit and surrealism. Yet, while the
appearance of the strip may sit uncomfortably
with established ideas of Holocaust
representation, its effect is one of extraordinary
pathos and tragedy equivalent to that of any
prisoner artwork. The final panel is one of
judgement, in which Mickey realises that,
whatever Gurs may be, it does not suit him:

*Therefore, since I am nothing more than
a cartoon, I removed myself with a stroke
of the eraser. And hey presto! The police*

Mickey has become aware of the moral
bankruptcy of the camps and their
incompatibility with the liberal French
revolutionary ideals supposedly at the
foundation of the society he is within. However,
he is also aware of his existence as a fictional
artistic and literary device. Although he may be
inside the camp he is not trapped inside the wire
as the real inmates are. Therefore he is able to
pursue the ideals that have died in the ‘dog
kennels’ of Gurs, and leave for greener pastures
where such standards endure.

Rosenthal’s representational liberties may
counter the ‘reverence’ that Wiesel sees as
essential to any artistic project concerning the
Holocaust. However, here we see that it is
precisely the disparity between Rosenthal’s
fantastic representation and the reality of the
camp that creates the intended effect. Mickey is
able to leave; Rosenthal himself is not. The
dream-bubble in the final panel, in which sit the
American skyscrapers that represent liberty, is
ostensibly Mickey’s but it may as well be the
artist’s. *Mickey au Camp de Gurs* is in some
ways a witness to the Holocaust but it is also an
attempt at an escape from it. The implied
corollary of Mickey’s freedom is the lack of
freedom endured by the real camp inmates; the
flipside of his self-aware non-existence outside
the frame of the comic strip the very real,
continued existence of Gurs itself.

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16 Kantor, *The Book of Alfred Kantor*, pages not
numbered.
The precise reasons for Rosenthal’s decision to use Mickey Mouse as the protagonist of his tale are unknown. However, it resonates with the common use of anthropomorphic rodents to represent Jews, not only by Jews themselves but also by their persecutors. Franz Kafka’s short story *Josephine The Singer, Or The Mouse-Folk* (1924) is one such example from within the Jewish canon, whilst German cartoonist Philipp Rupprecht (better known by his pen-name ‘Fips’) drew verminous caricatures of Jews for the Nazi Tabloid *Der Stürmer* in the 1930s and 1940s17 (fig. 5). Within cinema, Nazi propaganda film *Der Ewige Jude* (*The Eternal Jew*, 1940) intersperses shots of Jews in Polish ghettos with swarming rats. Rosenthal’s appropriation of this trope acknowledges and satirises the success of the dehumanisation project, assuming Nazi techniques of representation but coating them with a barbed irony. Here Mickey is not a greasy, clawed rat but rather a blithe *flâneur*.

Art Spiegelman’s *Maus: A Survivor’s Tale* is another comic strip that departs from representational realism to depict the Holocaust, and like *Mickey au Camp de Gurs* it represents its central characters as mice. However, unlike Rosenthal, Spiegelman was never himself an inmate in the European camps. He was born in 1948 to two Polish survivors of Auschwitz, Vladek and Anja, whose first child Richieu had died in Hungary in 1943.

*Maus: A Survivor’s Tale* represents his attempt to tell his parents’ stories, but their 1940s narrative is interspersed with an account of Art himself attempting to extract the story from Vladek in the 1970s. In both narratives the characters are given hybrid anthropomorphic identities based upon race – Jews are drawn with the heads of mice, Germans with the heads of cats, Poles with the heads of pigs and Americans with the heads of dogs. This is a device that mirrors Rosenthal in ironically adopting Nazi characterisation for the purposes of reflecting the ‘dehumanisation… at the very heart of the killing project’.18 Spiegelman boldly extends the metaphor to include the Germans themselves, creating a ‘food chain’19 between the German cats and the Jewish mice that echoes the predatory experience of Anja and Vladek in Poland as they are, after all, being hunted. However, figure 620 shows a scene within in which Spiegelman self-reflexively addresses his anxiety about representing his parents’ experiences, declaring the impossibility of doing so: ‘Reality is too complex for comics’.


19 Ibid., p. 129.

The mouse mask is thus a way of both escaping from and entering into Vladek and Anja’s experiences. Escape because it allows Spiegelman to de-personalise his parents and the genocide they survived, and entry in providing a way to visualise the historical events without concern for an inaccessible and impossible aesthetic verisimilitude:

Paradoxically, while the mice allowed for a distancing from the horrors described, they simultaneously allowed me and others to get further inside the material in a way that would have been difficult with more realistic representation, where one could constantly question my choices. ‘Is that what that guy looked like?’ And you know, I actually have no idea.  

Maus: A Survivor’s Tale was published in two instalments with the first in 1986 and the second in 1991. However, the process of research, retrieval, compilation and creation was one which occupied Spiegelman for almost two decades, and though he commenced work on Maus: A Survivor’s Tale, as it eventually appeared in 1978, an early attempt to address similar issues had appeared in a short, three-page strip, called simply Maus, in 1972. The differences between this strip and what would finally appear in 1986 and 1991 illustrate a development in Spiegelman’s approach of representing the Holocaust.

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21 Spiegelman, MetaMaus, p. 149.
22 This can be found in Robert Crumb (ed.), Funny Animals [sic] (San Francisco: Apex Novelties, 1972); reprinted in Spiegelman, MetaMaus, pp. 105-107.
this panel is not a wholly personal response but rather one filtered through a mediating well of first-hand images that provide a vicarious visualisation of camp imprisonment.

Figure 8: Margaret Bourke-White: Buchenwald, 1945

The mice in the *Maus* of 1972 also differ representationally from the mice that populate the final 1986 and 1991 versions of the strip. Most obviously, their faces have wide eyes and visible mouths as opposed to dots for eyes and no mouth at all. The 1972 mice are expressive, individualised, capable of expressing visible emotion and thus essentially human, defeating the purpose of the mouse metaphor by failing to sufficiently dehumanise the characters they represent. However, the mouse heads in the final work are blank, neutral, reductive masks that conceal the true individualising face of the human beings beneath. The 1972 mice therefore reveal too much, an effect heightened by the clinical drawing style. As a result the drawings contain an unsustainable level of detail that precludes the reader or viewer from playing an active interpretive role. This was not Spiegelman’s aim:

Some of these projects [other graphic novels concerned with the Holocaust] strike me as if they were trying to set my [1986/1991] work right by smoothing down the rough edges, by making a more didactic, more sentimental, more slickly drawn Holocaust comic book. It reminds me of a quote by Picasso talking about his paintings, saying he doesn’t have time to make it pretty. He has to cut to the bone… I think it’s those animal masks that allowed me to approach otherwise unsayable things.24

Spiegelman is talking about others’ Holocaust strips, but his words also apply to his own early effort – didactic, sentimental, slickly drawn. The closest to an equivalent panel in *A Survivor’s Tale* is the title panel to the chapter ‘Mauschwitz’:25

Figure 9: Detail from *The Complete Maus*, p.169

The clean lines and wide, syrupy eyes of the 1972 panel have gone. Here, Spiegelman is not reproducing a photograph. This is instead a line drawing, reminiscent of the work of Auschwitz artist Mieczysław Koscielniak, and a far less prescriptive image than its 1972 equivalent. The mouse is unidentifiable save for his number and inscrutable except for the bag under his dot-eye signified by a single line. The reader/viewer must fill in the blanks and contextualise the ‘Mauschwitz’ joke, taking an active role in the

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representative issues at play.

At the heart of questions concerning artistic representation of the Holocaust are further concerning representation more generally. Art, as the word suggests, is by its very nature artifice: a refraction of reality that will inevitably fall short of true representation, regardless of subject. This is a self-evidence that has troubled aesthetic enquiry since Plato’s *The Republic*, but representation of an event like the Holocaust adds a supplementary problem by virtue of the ethical and political issues that arise if that representation is seen to be inappropriate or inaccurate.

Spiegelman himself caustically recognised the matter of historical inaccuracy by submitting an entry to the 2006 International Holocaust Cartoon Contest held by Iranian newspaper *Hamashahri* in the wake of the controversy surrounding Danish cartoons of Mohammed. In it a striped inmate laughs wildly as he walks in a hunched column past piles of corpses towards the gas chambers. The caption reads: ‘Ha ha ha! What’s really hilarious is that none of this is actually happening!’

This is the bind that artists aiming to represent the Holocaust find themselves in: to aim for realism and/or perfect historical accuracy is to inevitably fall short, but to pursue an alternative path, regardless of intent, is to risk opprobrium or anger. Indeed, Spiegelman’s project caused offence to some Jewish groups due to its depiction of mice, and he even tells a story of a historian disputing the accuracy of his illustration of the Auschwitz latrines.

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27 ‘T[he] event becomes so historically sacred that recreating it….can be psychologically perceived as hubris’. Robert J. Lifton, *Death in Life: Survivors of Hiroshima* (London: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), p. 473. There are also numerous successful comic strips concerned with the Japanese nuclear devastations of 1945, such as Keiji Nakazawa’s *Barefoot Gen* series.


29 Ibid., p. 58. The scene in question is on page 227 of Spiegelman, *The Complete Maus*. 
The comic strip, as an artistic medium traditionally unconcerned with questions of realism through its reductive use of caricature and cartoon, offers a path out of this conflict: ‘a quest for ersatz verisimilitude might have pulled me further away from essential actuality as I tried to reconstruct it’. Though historical accuracy clearly remains important to Spiegelman – witness for example his architectural diagrams of the crematoria (Fig. 11) – he is aware of the impossibility of absolute exactitude. He makes this point in a dialogue between Art and Vladek (Fig. 12).

Spiegelman recognises the difficulty or even impossibility of his historical endeavour but also restates his desire to present events accurately. It is the combination of this desire with the aesthetic liberty intrinsic to the comic strip that is crucial to his artistic project, as well as that of Rosenthal. Though representing the precise historical truth of the Holocaust may be impossible, its essence must nevertheless be conveyed. Rather than transmitting the historical reality through dilute representational approximation, Spiegelman and Rosenthal each create an imagined representational vessel for the historical truth they seek to convey. The cold instruction manual-like diagrams that pepper *Maus* provide a flash of representational objectivity to remind the reader/viewer of the cold reality of the event.

It is here that we see how both *Mickey au Camp de Gurs* and *Maus: A Survivor’s Tale* can be seen to represent a potential ‘different approach’ to representing the Holocaust. Symbol and metaphor replace a futile struggle for realism, and the reader/viewer is deliberately left with an active role to play in establishing the relationship of the image to the event. Perhaps this is a truism applicable to all art although the comic strip, by virtue of its inherent, self-reflexive artifice, is able to lay this role unsettlingly bare. The buck is passed as the fundamental problems surrounding war, the Holocaust and representation become problems of interpretation: they are ours now.

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32 Ibid., p. 228.  
The Transatlantic Alliance: Deepen, and Widen
Zachary Ginsburg

November was supposed to be a triumphant month for the West. The European Union’s (EU) Eastern Partnership, a Poland and Sweden-founded, Eastern-EU led program aimed at expanding liberal democratic values among the EU’s eastern neighbours, had led the EU to the precipice of signing an unprecedented Association Agreement with Ukraine that would have likely paved the way for its eventual EU accession.

The West had been courting Ukraine to join the two foundational transatlantic institutions for many years, including in one post-Orange Revolution attempt that also came somewhat close to reaching an accord that would allow Ukraine to eventually join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). This was all despite Russia – whose gas and oil pipelines (by most measures the main conduits of Russian power) mostly run through Ukraine, which maintains close links to the pro-Russian faction of Ukraine that elected current President Viktor Yanukovich, whose Black Sea Fleet is still stationed on the Crimean Peninsula, and, perhaps most importantly, whose civilization has its origins in Kiev – which promised dire consequences for any Ukrainian move to strengthen relations with the EU.

Nevertheless, after the EU cleared the final hurdle in the negotiations by agreeing among its members to postpone demands that Ukraine release former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko from prison, the EU readied to defy the odds in Vilnius, where EU leaders and President Yanukovich would sign into effect one of the biggest shifts in post-Soviet European history. Then, one week before the November summit, Yanukovich abruptly turned the other way.

Since then, a brave protest movement has gripped several Ukrainian cities, a movement which has withstood apparent police brutality and bitter cold temperatures, and EU negotiations continue with Georgia and Moldova. Despite these encouraging developments, the November episode surely ranks among the most disappointing in the history of the ‘transatlantic alliance’, the post-Second World War bloc of (mostly) liberal democracies manifested in NATO and the EU. Yet, so far, observers have paid little attention to the context of Yanukovich’s about-face in the history of the transatlantic institutions. While they rapidly expanded in the immediate post-Cold War period as former Warsaw Pact states sought security assurances to secure the development of independent, liberal polities, the transatlantic alliance has seen its share of difficulties, some of the more recent ones stemming from the institutions’ newer members.

Indeed, through their histories, the two most common refrains about these institutions have been, first, that they are in crisis and, second, that they are consolidated by common values. Re the former, while I need not remind the reader of the apparently-existential ‘Euro crisis’, only three years ago – amid the Libya campaign that helped oust Moammar Ghaddafi – did U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates warn of NATO becoming a hollow ‘two-tiered alliance’, with one ally capable of bona fide military endeavour, Canada, and a continent of free-riders. The campaign required far-reaching American support to what was supposed to be a modest and mostly European operation and, coinciding with the beginning of the global austerity craze, it elicited bipartisan American ire. Now, only three years after many raised the prospect of NATO’s de facto demise, this controversy has disappeared from

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1 Zachary Ginsburg graduated with Distinction from the MA programme in International Relations, Department of War Studies, King’s College London. His MA dissertation, exploring NATO’s endurance and International Relations theory is available online for download at http://www.academia.edu/attachments/31812849/download file.


3 We are referring here to the 2008 Bucharest Summit, wherein Ukraine was not granted a ‘Membership Action Plan’.

4 Though Russia is constructing the ‘South Stream’ pipeline through the Black Sea in order to gain assurances against Ukrainian actions that could affect Moscow’s abilities to use the gas flows to its maximal advantage.

5 ‘Parliamentary Chaos as Ukraine Ratifies Fleet Deal,’ BBC News (27 April 2010).

6 Where she is being held under what the EU has rather kindly labeled ‘selective justice’.


public consciousness entirely; yet, almost nothing changed save that aforementioned ‘free-riders’ almost certainly contribute less today than when Gates made his speech. Some might reasonably ask: if crises arise so frequently in NATO that they slip from memory still unresolved in less than three years, how can the alliance remain functional while adding even more members?

Gates’ genuine alarm over the state of NATO was not unprecedented. Pessimism over the future of NATO spans back nearly to the alliance’s 1949 founding, and it has sometimes matched EU pessimism even at the height of the ‘Euro crisis’. Indeed, while the EU seems to be slowly exiting its first major ‘crisis’, NATO has faced down so many that the most comprehensive study of NATO studies calls such claims ‘cliché’. Enter the second refrain of the transatlantic institutions: NATO and the EU are consolidated by shared values, norms, ideologies and identities. Arising in the early 90s due to NATO’s Cold War transcendence, the second refrain is a response to the first. It purports to explain how transatlantic integrations, namely NATO, might endure or actually deepen even when this would seem to contradict Western states’ strategic self-interests.

It corresponds with the rise of International Relations constructivism, which became an alternative orthodoxy to neo-realism following the latter’s failure to predict the Cold War’s end and the events surrounding it. Whereas neo-realism is a structuralist and rationalist theory that predicts that states will band together in power-balancing dyads due to the inherent instability of the ‘international system,’ constructivism (with a few notable exceptions) predicts that states with like-minded populaces – with shared values, similar cultures, familiarities built by overlapping histories, etc. – will form transnational associations, driving closer political integration and even friendship. Western states, with their shared political and cultural traditions, provided fruitful case studies for constructivists, particularly NATO and the EU. According to constructivists and the organizations themselves, liberal democracy – a concept almost ubiquitous in the transatlantic area and a foundation of modern concepts of justice around the world – is the most important of such traditions.

If, as most constructivists believe, liberal democracy is the primary glue that holds transatlantic institutions together, one might see a silver lining in the November setback to integrate Ukraine – with its former Prime Minister still in prison and its other undelivered promises on human rights and democratization – into the transatlantic alliance. This year has already seen a dangerous trend in the state of transatlantic democracy: The rise of major, majoritarian political movements in EU and NATO states, particularly Turkey, Hungary, and Greece. While the year has also seen its share of other political tension (such as the Snowden affair), majoritarianism is fundamentally more threatening toward NATO and the EU, as, according to the constructivist rationale, it challenges their very raisons d’être. Crucially as well, member-states in NATO and the EU can also partake in ‘hostage taking’ due to member-states’ extensive veto capacities in both institutions.

This essay will focus on Turkey, Hungary, Greece, and Ukraine as case studies as to why the

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10 As in the proper use of that term: the international entity created by the 1992 Treaty on European Union, or ‘Maastricht Treaty’.
11 Wallace J. Thies, Why NATO Endures (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009). Some examples from my 2011 Masters dissertation: ‘The Atlantic alliance, which has been the cornerstone of American foreign policy during three administrations, has begun to founder under the impact of Europe’s new nationalism and the apparent decline of the Russian military threat’ (Ronald Steel in The End of an Alliance, 1964); ‘Nuclear weapons have made nonsense of the whole alliance business’ (James Avery Joyce, 1968); ‘NATO and the Warsaw Pact [would] dissolve in the event of the Cold War’s end; they may persist on paper, but each [will cease] to function as an alliance,’ (John Mearsheimer’s ‘Back to the Future’ in Summer 1990’s International Security, which also predicted European ‘hyper-balkanization.’ U.S. troop withdrawal from Germany, and World War III); ‘But we must wonder how long NATO will last as an effective organization. As is often said, organizations are created by their enemies. Alliances are organized against a perceived threat. We know from balance-of-power theory as well as from history that war-winning coalitions collapse on the morrow of victory, the more surely if it is a decisive one,’ (Kenneth Waltz, 1993).

12 As in the International Relations’ theory.
13 And probably the most popular framework for scholars who study those organizations themselves.
transatlantic alliance might consider institutional reforms and perhaps even more stringent membership or association criteria. While much of the particular episodes surrounding these states have either fizzled or have been ameliorated in some way, member-states’ reactions to each could still produce damaging externalities. On one hand, weak action could threaten Brussels’ legitimacy by showing that the organizations will tacitly accept anti-liberal behaviour among member-states when contravening would threaten other objectives. On the other, overbearing action could render them ineffective by creating a ‘Trojan Horse’ scenario via an ideological/political stalemate where nothing is able to pass a body where all members have veto power, something akin to the United Nations Security Council during the Cold War.

While Eastern Partnership states currently under consideration for EU Association Agreements have made much progress toward meeting the EU’s *acquis communautaire* in the areas of democracy and governance, they have not done so completely, and recent history shows the danger of admitting states into organizations, particularly the EU, when they do not fully meet the membership criteria. Section one discusses liberal democracy’s meaning to NATO and the EU according to International Relations literature. Section two documents current and historical non-democratic EU member-states and strategic partners. Section three discusses the effects of non-liberal democratic member-states and partners. Section four concludes and advocates for structural changes in NATO and the EU. This essay concludes that structural reforms are necessary to ensure the longevity of the transatlantic alliance’s internal cohesion.

Liberal Democracy in International Relations: From Epiphenomenal to Fundamental

Since the Cold War, constructivism has displaced neo-realism as the predominant theory of NATO and EU studies largely because of constructivism’s ability to view ideologies like liberal democracy as impetuses for action, paradigms to interpret the material world, and paradigms to interpret others’ actions and communication. According to Alexander Wendt, who is often described as constructivism’s foremost theorist, constructivism is properly understood as a method by which the material and ideological can be analytically interpreted. However, constructivism has proceeded with a marked bias toward ideological explanation. This is understandable in the context of ‘ideal-type debates.’ Neo-realism and neo-liberalism – the former’s also-structuralist sister that sees the world in terms of ‘positive-sum games’ rather than ‘zero-sum games’ – are predicated on unitary states’ material self-interests. Constructivism, popularized when this structuralism failed to explain a major turn in world history, did not so much become an antithesis to neo-realism but to structuralism generally. It was largely because liberal democracy – respect for individual rights, representative government, relatively free markets, etc. – was the obvious ideological linkage of the West that it became the predominant subject of a research agenda that had to explain why (and how) structuralism is a flawed paradigm.

Necessarily, constructivism has incorporated sub-state units like private corporations, government bureaucracies, and civil society in its study of transatlantic integration because these entities can associate (relatively) freely across borders unlike, say, those in the former USSR. Culture (including politics) and its institutions matter for constructivists because they are part of the dialectics that determine how national actors interpret and execute action. In Wendt’s constructivism, ideologies are the dominant powers of ‘international society’ in highly-civilized world order, or ‘the Kantian sphere;’ however, ideologies are supplanted by existential considerations in ‘the Hobbesian sphere,’ wherein states view each other as ‘enemies’ as in classical realism, and in ‘the Lockean sphere,’ the most

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14 Indeed, the International Studies Association named his *Social Theory of International Politics* the ‘Book of the Decade’.
18 In IR, this means that the state is considered as a complete ‘unit’. Civil society, government bureaucracies, private corporations, and other ‘sub-state’ entities are ignored.
closely associated with structuralism wherein states view each other as potential ‘rivals’. Though Wendt is describing (problematically) ‘international anarchy’ itself and not international associations that exist within it, constructivists should describe NATO and the EU as best captured in a ‘Kantian’ tradition.  

Constructivist literature on NATO’s cohesion portrays an alliance coalesced by values since its inception, liberal democracy the most prominent among them. Besides that the North Atlantic Treaty’s preamble highlights liberal democratic values and that Article II calls for ‘strengthening member-states’ free institutions’, constructivists demonstrate that NATO has often pulled itself from internal crises by uniting around its common values. In at least three instances – the 1956 Suez Crisis, the 1966 French withdrawal from integrated military command, and the Soviet dissolution – constructivists note that the alliance specifically called upon its values to bring it back from brink. Thomas Risse dedicates a chapter in his 1995 Cooperation among Democracies: The European Influence on U.S. Foreign Policy to the ‘Three Wise Men’ solution to the Suez Crisis, in which France, the United Kingdom, and Israel invaded Egypt to recapture the Suez Canal nationalized by Nasser after a joint campaign to mislead Washington about the imminent invasion.  

The Three Wise Men’ called for greater ‘political’ and even ‘cultural co-operation’ in the ‘Atlantic Community’. Following the French withdrawal from NATO’s integrated military command, Andreas Wenger (2007) writes that the solution was ‘the multilateralization of détente’, wherein the Johnson Administration and NATO’s military and political leadership, rather than trying to order the alliance top-down, allowed member-states to make NATO a ‘clearing house’ for common ideas on transatlantic order in the so-called ‘Harmel Exercise’.  

Finally, Frank Schimmelfennig (1999) writes that member-states’ desire to further a liberal democratic world order after the Soviet dissolution not only kept the alliance alive after, but enabled it to expand. While I do not have room here to conduct a complete literature review on constructivist explanations on NATO’s endurance, it suffices to say that constructivists see member-states’ common values as foundational, and liberal democracy as their most foundational.  

Constructivist work on the EU, as one might expect, is more extensive. While a constructivist analysis of EU internal cohesion like the one above is made more difficult by the Union and its predecessors’ many permutations, constructivist analyses of the Union since the Maastricht Treaty that created the modern EU are sufficiently numerous and diverse that Checkel (2007) cleaves them into three schools: ‘conventional’, ‘interpretive’, and ‘critical/radical’. Norms are essential in all three in different ways; in the first, ideologies provide a ‘value-rational’ basis for cooperation, while in the latter two, they constitute part of a regional identity reconstructed on European values. Additionally, the most important EU documents themselves almost always explicitly cite values as a motivator for action. In short, while many scholars and observers have questioned how norms and values interact in and with the EU, few question their centrality.

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20 North Atlantic Treaty (1949), Article II.  
23 This, most simply put, was caused by the confluence of Gaullism and détente.  
26 Beginning with the 1954 European Coal and Steel Community.  
28 Per Checkel (ibid), the difference between the second and third is that ‘critical/radical constructivists maintain the linguistic focus, but add an explicitly normative dimension by probing a researcher’s own implication in the reproduction of the identities and world he/she is studying.’  
29 For example, the first line of the most recent major treaty, the 2007 Lisbon Treaty, amended the Maastricht Treaty’s preamble thusly: ‘Drawing inspiration from the cultural, religious and humanist inheritance of Europe, from which have developed the universal values of the inviolable and inalienable rights of the human person, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law.’
**Democratic Deficits in the Transatlantic Area, Past and Present**

While constructivists, policymakers, and others often assert the cohesive power of liberal democracy for NATO and the EU, they commonly overlook that not all member-states have shared these values – or at least in the governance of their own societies. Without any controversy whatsoever, one can name two NATO member-states that were categorically nondemocratic in the alliance’s early days: 1) Portugal, a founding member, ruled by a quasi-fascist authoritarian government until the 1974 ‘Carnation Revolution’; and 2) Greece, ruled by a military junta from 1967 to the 1974 *Metapolitefsi*. NATO also maintained defence integration with Spain from 1953, then under Franco, until its eventual full-membership under a delicate democracy in 1981.⁴₀ Often forgotten as well, NATO’s member-states, during most of their histories, ruled over territories as colonial overlords, including without controversy the United Kingdom, Portugal, France, and Belgium; the United States, in the earlier years of NATO, permitted legal segregation based on race, including significant barriers to political enfranchisement; and, Albania, one NATO’s newest member-states, continues to receive some of the lowest scores in international democracy indices in Europe, sometimes behind only authoritarian Belarus.⁴¹

While it would have seemed that such anti-liberalism belonged to a bygone era, current events threaten to reverse this trend. At least two NATO member-states – Hungary and Turkey – and one EU member-state, Hungary, have this year engaged in explicitly anti-liberal and/or undemocratic practices. In Hungary, the ruling far-right/far-far-right coalition has attempted to neuter the constitutional court,²² paid tribute to Hungarian allies of Hitler,³³ and punished dissenting intellectuals with bans from public funding.³⁴ This year, a member of ‘Jobbik’, the quasi-neo-Nazi party that comprises the right-wing of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán’s government, publically called for a national registry of Jews,³⁵ attacks against Roma go seemingly uninvestigated,³⁶ and last year’s constitutional amendments even removed ‘Republic’ from the country’s official title.³⁷

Meanwhile, Turkey’s Taksim Square protests became a global discussion following the Erdoğan administration’s brutal crackdown, which has included rampant police brutality, arrests of lawyers and medics treating protestors,³⁸ and petulant retorts to international condemnation.³⁹ (Turkey before the crackdown was already the world-leader in jailing journalists).⁴⁰ Recently, the European Council delayed Turkey’s EU accession talks for four months following pressure from Berlin,⁴¹ but even setting aside the Cyprus dilemma and other barriers to membership,⁴² it is difficult to see how member-states could accept an Erdoğan-led government any time soon following

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³⁰ Spain had suffered a coup attempt earlier that year.
³⁴ Ibid., Kirchick (2012)
³⁵ Ibid.
³⁶ Ellis, ‘Hungary’.
⁴⁰ ‘Germany Seeks to Put Turkey’s EU Membership Talks on Hold,’ *EurActiv* (June 2013), ‘On Heels Of Protest Crackdown, EU Delays Turkey Membership Talks,’ *International Business Times* (June 2013).
⁴¹ We mean here the diplomatic struggle over Cyprus between perennial rivals Greece and Turkey. Greece, an EU member-state, has veto power over candidate countries’ bids for membership. (Turkey has been a candidate for EU membership since 1999). Turkey, meanwhile, has vetoed any NATO relations with Cyprus, creating a ‘hostage game’ between the two organizations.
recent events. Turkey has been, however, a member of NATO since 1952, and the alliance recently deployed Patriot missile-interceptors to Turkey’s southern border to help insulate it from the Syrian civil war.\(^{43}\)

Perhaps equally worrying is the situation in Greece, where the fascist Golden Dawn movement controls eighteen seats in the Greek Parliament\(^{44}\) (though this is less than in the last set of parliamentary elections) and apparently the streets in several Athens neighbourhoods.\(^{45}\) Though the Golden Dawn is a fringe party, many have drawn allusions to the genus of fascism in intra-War Europe.\(^{46}\) In Germany, for instance, Nazi party leaders also exploited a ruinously bad economy by making scapegoats of the political, ethnic, and other minorities. Soon after, they quickly rose to power and declared a state of emergency that suspended democracy, paving the way for their infamous crimes. While the Greek economy is probably better than that of intra-War Germany,\(^{47}\) the resemblance to the situation that gave rise to the Nazi party is certainly troubling, and if – though it seems unlikely unless a new economic crisis were to arise – the Golden Dawn were to control Greece’s representation to NATO or the EU, the repercussions would certainly be dire if the organizations were unable to suspend or terminate Greece’s participatory competencies.

‘Trojan Horse’ Danger

While the new rise of majoritarianism in the transatlantic area should constitute a doomsday scenario for the organizations according to most constructivism, constructivism’s emphasis on liberal democracy has obfuscated organizational aspects that should allow NATO and the EU to survive even following a breakdown over ideology. Alternative logics of cooperation would still keep the organizations together either nominally or in pursuit of some sort of rational self-interest. For example, my 2011 dissertation finds four modes of interaction in NATO’s then-62 year existence: 1) balance-of-power (against external enemies as predicted by neo-realists); 2) institutionalized interests; 3) inculcated alienation (the corollary to liberal constructivism, in which culture and history drive erstwhile cooperators apart); 4) and normative consolidation (i.e. that which is the subject of this essay). While a breakdown of ‘normative consolidation’ has slowed the tempo of NATO cooperation from time to time, it has never convinced states to quit the alliance entirely. This likely owes to two reasons: First, the diplomatic and real capital costs of quitting NATO\(^{48}\) and re-nationalizing security capacities would be huge for almost any of its members. Second, NATO’s cultural interaction as in the ‘inculcated alienation’ and the ‘normative consolidation’ modes has ebbed and flowed, but ‘real security threats’ usually steer member-states away from ordinary politics. For example, the Korean War stirred fear of marching global communism, helping assuage impasses to create NATO’s modern military structure, and NATO largely stayed out of the Russo-Georgian War, declining to come to the aid of a democratic ally – one even considered a candidate for NATO enlargement in 2008 – due to its more fundamental interests \textit{viz}. Moscow. Present foreign powers may not be compelling enough to consolidate a Waltzian ‘alliance through fear’, but NATO’s recent moves to combat terrorism and piracy \textit{inter alia} demonstrate the alliance’s ‘securitizing’\(^{49}\) of ‘non-traditional’ types of threats.\(^{50}\)

\(^{43}\) NATO: ‘NATO Support to Turkey’ (2013)

\(^{44}\) Out of 300.


\(^{47}\) Which, under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, had no international institutions or fellow countries coming to its aid.

\(^{48}\) I call these ‘institutional costs’ in my dissertation.

\(^{49}\) Ole Waever, \textit{Securitization and Desecuritization} (Kbh.: Center for Freds- og Konfliktforskning, 1993).

\(^{50}\) Ginsburg, ‘Eppur Si Muove’
to leave the Eurozone, the costs of Greece, for instance, leaving the EU entirely would probably include the periodic German bailouts that have kept its economy afloat as well as structural funds and much more. Any EU quitter would also find its diplomatic capital across Europe – excepting Moscow and its allies – severely diminished and, if the State Department’s message to Prime Minister Cameron on his anti-EU proposals is any indicator, their diplomatic capital in Washington as well.\footnote{Orban (2013), 'Orban Compares EU to Soviet Union,' \textit{The Financial Times} (2013).}

This should not be seen as evidence that fundamental disparities in political principles in the transatlantic area will not have consequences for the EU or NATO. Far from the contrary, majoritarianism could direly threaten their credibility and efficacy even if they do not do so existentially. First, it may threaten the organizations’ abilities to conduct business because of member-states’ veto capacities. While the rise of the European majoritarian does not necessarily mean that they will use their veto powers excessively in international assemblies against liberal democracies, those pushing such movements, notably populist, reactionary political parties, are predominately anti-American and -EU. Hungary’s Prime Minister Orbán, for example, has publically compared the EU to the Soviet Union.\footnote{Orban (2013), 'Orban Compares EU to Soviet Union,' \textit{The Financial Times} (2013).} Hungary’s Parliament has been equally combative toward Brussels, railing against the EU’s supposed colonial intents even following rather tepid criticism from European Parliament, which opted to adopt a report criticizing Hungary’s constitutional changes rather than pass a resolution doing the same.\footnote{Committee to Protect Journalists (2012), Reporters Without Borders (2012).} In an escalation, Hungary could do damage appealing to domestic constituents by playing David to Brussels’ Goliath. It could sow discord among EU institutions, continue to flaunt the fundamental values set forth in the ‘Copenhagen criteria,’\footnote{Parliament Divided over Hungary’s Democratic Record,’ \textit{EurActiv} (2013), ‘Hungary Resolution Slams European Parliament Criticism’ \textit{The Wall Street Journal} (2013).} and effectively halt any fundamental changes to the EU by vetoing any new treaties unless other member-states were able to suspend Hungary’s voting privileges under the Maastricht Treaty’s Article VII (which would require broad consultation among European institutions and Hungary’s civil society and a qualified-majority vote from the European Council).\footnote{I.e. a majority of points from the Council’s weighted voting system, which is somewhat but not completely correlated to national population (‘Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on Article 7 of the Treaty on European Union - Respect for and promotion of the values on which the Union is based’ (2003)).} Perhaps worse yet, NATO – which has no formal mechanism to suspend memberships or voting privileges – could become a hostage-by-proxy. NATO, whose North Atlantic Council passes motions only by unanimous decision, would be rendered ineffective to make any major decisions, including any emergency actions under the Article V ‘self-defense’ clause.

Second, the rise of new European majoritarianism could threaten NATO and the EUs’ credibility on issues such as democracy and human rights. While central parts of these organizations’ \textit{raisons d’etre}, potential new members such as Ukraine may not interpret liberal democracy as prerequisite to transatlantic integration if existing member-states do not appear to take their own espoused principles seriously. Moreover, organizations like NATO have a credibility problem in criticizing, for example, the Putin regime’s silencing of free media when Turkey jails more journalists every year than any other country in the world.\footnote{Committee to Protect Journalists (2012).} Even if a Brussels-led intervention via NATO or even greater EU oversight over member-states wouldn’t produce results, it would still demonstrate their commitments to their own principles.

\textit{Ensuring NATO and the EUs’ Efficacies}

The EU and NATO’s organization around principles of liberal democracy are clearly inherent in their internal logic and their abilities to wield regional and global influence. The majoritarian member-states do not set good examples for new potential member-states to one or both organizations such as Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Albania. The EU particularly has seen the dangers of admitting member-states who cannot meet key sections of the \textit{acquis communautaire} in the recent Euro crisis, and admitting states who would
add to the organizations’ democratic deficits could increase the danger of legislative hostage taking that is already present, partially demonstrated by the recent episodes in Hungary, Turkey, and Greece.

Ukraine is an example of the potential for such danger. Much as long-established EU member-states courted some of the newer ones by easing entry criteria relating to economies, the EU evidently offered similar flexibility to Ukraine regarding democracy and the rule of law. Specifically, the EU first demanded that former Prime Minister Tymoshenko be released from prison as a precondition to the Association Agreement, then, facing resistance from President Yanukovich, the EU negotiators claimed that the EU would accept an amnesty for Tymoshenko that would allow her to exit Ukraine on humanitarian grounds and extended the timeline for negotiations, and finally, the EU negotiators apparently dropped all preconditions relating to Tymoshenko when it appeared that Yanukovich might walk from the deal. While Estonian President Anders Ansip commented that the fate of the negotiations should not be decided ‘by the fate of one woman,’ Tymoshenko’s continued imprisonment is indicative of a broader state of affairs in Ukraine. As evidenced even by the treatment of protestors this week in Kiev, Ukraine would have much ground to make up during any Association Agreement. While these Agreements should be designed as the first incentives to move candidate member-states toward transatlantic norms, the existing EU member-states would have to be patient in ensuring that Ukraine actually does meet the standards set forth in the *acquis communautaire* relating to the rule of law and democracy. Else, the EU could inadvertently admit a member-state that does not share fundamental values, or even worse yet, Ukraine could disastrously turn toward Russia as an EU member-state, enabling Moscow to use Ukraine as a proxy to wreak havoc in Brussels.

It is equally crucial, however, that the transatlantic alliance continues to engage its neighbours with constructive dialogue and incentives, including the potential for membership in the transatlantic institutions. The EU and NATO should be willing to accept states that do not fully meet membership criteria into pre-membership arrangements such as the Association Agreements and NATO’s Membership Action Plans. More importantly, however, considering the dangers posed by individual member-states’ veto powers in these increasingly large institutions, NATO and the EU should be transformed into true international democratic bodies, wherein a small minority cannot override the will of the vast majority when that majority is acting in accordance with the fundamental rules of the institutions. Much of the potential danger posed by democratic backsliding or admitting new member-states such as Ukraine could be greatly mitigated by reducing veto powers in the European and North Atlantic Councils and other EU and NATO entities, perhaps by adding a supermajority veto override or some similar measure. While this may seem a modest proposal, it would in effect be one of the most radical challenges to traditional notions of sovereignty even considering the EU’s recent history, as, in the case of the EU, it would permit a supermajority of member-states to alter treaties without the consent sovereign states that have signed them. A more feasible option to this supra-national construction may be simply to be more careful in ensuring that entrants into NATO and the EU in fact meet their membership criteria.

Returning to International Relations theory, while constructivism may create the false impression that only liberal values coalesce NATO and the EU, constructivists are certainly correct about liberal democracy’s role in constituting the organizations’ most important functions in the post-Soviet era. From the anti-genocidal interventions in the former Yugoslavia to the billions of Euros of structural funds and common markets that have assisted former Soviet states and colonies to escape from cyclical poverty, Brussels has headquartered (even though it has not led) one of the greatest transformations in transatlantic history, one that has resulted in an unprecedented diffusion of individual rights, opportunities, and enfranchisement across Europe. Today, the transatlantic alliance faces difficult choices over whether to admit member-states that could weaken its cohesion, or perhaps lose them

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57 ‘EU makes new bid on Ukraine’s jailed Tymoshenko,’ *Reuters* (2013).
to a rival, regional power. The allies now need to assess institutional reforms to improve transnational governance (especially mitigating veto powers), ones that would allow potential future allies to be admitted into our institutions safely and effectively. While this might delay some countries’ accession to the NATO and the EU in the short-term, such prudence would ensure the continued efficacy of these institutions for a new generation of integrated polities.
Norway, Britain and the Arctic Convoys to the Soviet Union 1941-1945
Matthew Knowles

During the Second World War the Allies were able to successfully supply the Soviet Union with military aid by naval convoys travelling from Britain via Iceland and through the Arctic Seas north of Scandinavia to Russia. The margin between success and disaster for these convoys was narrow. Crews had to endure mountainous waves, temperatures of -40 degrees which froze their equipment, and all the other physical problems this caused. In addition to these hardships, German U-boats patrolled those waters, and Arctic convoys were also threatened by Luftwaffe attacking from bases in occupied Norway and the Kriegsmarine surface fleet, much of which was stationed in Norwegian fjords throughout the war.

The role of Britain and the USA in winning the Battle of the Atlantic is well documented, as is the dispatch of Arctic convoys to Russia. However, the role of the Norwegian armed forces and Iceland in this theatre has received much less attention. As this part of history begins to fade from living memory it is important that these experiences are recorded for posterity. In most cases little is known of the individuals involved in this campaign. This article aims to provide an overview of the part played by Iceland and Norway as important gateways through which the Arctic convoys could move from the Western ports to those of Arctic Russia, usually without incurring disaster.

This paper will examine how and why, despite enormous obstacles, most of the convoys successfully delivered their vital cargoes of weapons, food, shelter and other essential supplies for the Soviet war effort from 1941 onwards. It will also explore the situation in part by drawing on the experiences and reminiscences of a Royal Navy veteran of the Arctic Convoys and additionally through historical analysis of this campaign’s influence on the eventual outcome of the war.

The Allies’ response to the invasion of the Soviet Union

When Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, the Russians seemed to be unprepared for the speed and strength of the German invasion:

‘Staff work was poor, communications primitive, cooperation between the various branches inadequate, the chain of command cumbersome.’

As a result the Soviet Union lost thousands of square miles of territory in just a few weeks, much of it rich farm land or areas laden with important minerals such as coal. Hundreds of thousands of Soviet troops were either captured or killed. In addition, millions of Soviet citizens were subjected to a brutal Nazi occupation in which some 20 million of them died in the course of the following four years.

By autumn 1941 the German army was at the gates of the Soviet Union’s two principle cities, Moscow and Leningrad. It was realised in London and Washington that unless something was done quickly to assist the Soviet armed forces there was a significant danger that Hitler would win the war in the East and then turn the full weight of his new empire on Britain and eventually the United States:

‘If Russian forces could be destroyed in 1941, Germany would then, in control of all the resources of continental Europe, face the Anglo-American coalition with confidence.’

It had become clear that the outcome of the Second World War would be decided on the battlefields of western Russia more than anywhere else.

The British War Cabinet concluded that the best way to help the Soviet Union was to send armed convoys to the Soviet Arctic ports of Murmansk, Pechenga and Archangel. Later on in the war additional supply routes would be opened up via the Persian route and Alaska. In 1941 and 1942 the Arctic was one of only two major passages,

2 Ibid., p. 281.
3 Ibid., p. 61.
the other being from the US via the Pacific and across Siberia constituting a lengthy and expensive journey. The perils of this route were then greatly added to by the onset of war between the United States and Japan in December 1941.

In the late summer and autumn of 1941 most of the convoys reached their destination without incident and successfully delivered vital military equipment, food and medical supplies to the Red Army. This was in part due to Hitler’s belief that an eight to twelve week campaign was all that was needed to destroy the Soviet Union and that any Allied aid would presumably come too little and too late to save it. Hitler had reason to be confident. Both during the Red Army’s unexpected struggle against the Finns in 1939-40, and during the German defeat of Belgium, Holland, Denmark and Norway help from Britain arrived too little and too late.

Leningrad was a key strategic objective for the Wehrmacht in 1941 as a vital port and a major industrial and communications centre. To this must be added the prestige attached to the city by the Soviet authorities, it bearing Lenin’s name and the birthplace of the Bolshevik Revolution and the Soviet state that sprang from it. Tanks, other armoured vehicles, aircraft and guns were delivered helping the Red Army to launch a counter-offensive outside Moscow in December 1941 that drove the German Army back some 160 miles in places, effectively pushing the German army back to the start point for its attack on Moscow. Later in the war the convoys also provided much of the material and technological means for the pivotal Soviet victories over the German Sixth Army at Stalingrad and at Kursk in 1943. At Kursk in particular, the timely arrival of hundreds of modern American transports from Murmansk shortly before the battle allowed the Red Army greater mobility both on the battlefield and behind the frontlines. Such mobility was by this time comparatively lacking in the Wehrmacht.

**Norway’s role in the Arctic convoys**

In addition to appalling weather conditions, the convoys had to skirt the coast of occupied Norway in order to reach the Soviet Arctic ports, perhaps the most precarious part of the journey as most of the **Kriegsmarine**’s surface fleet was stationed there, as were Luftwaffe Condor squadrons, converted from civilian use for long range anti-shipping activity. Norwegians, both those in occupied Norway and those in the exiled armed and merchant services abroad, played an important role in disrupting German plans to intercept and destroy the convoys. An underground army, which would become known as Milorg, kept the Admiralty well informed of German shipping and aircraft movements so that the convoys could avoid interception or at least have air support when needed.

Royal Norwegian Navy vessels and their Norwegian crews, as well as Norwegian merchant ships, took part in the convoys from their inception. Norwegian squadrons within the Royal Air Force, stationed in Iceland, also played an important role in providing air support and reconnaissance, both for the protection of the convoys and for attacks on German installations along the Norwegian coast. The RAF’s 330 Squadron, formed in April 1941 from the remnants of pre-war Norwegian air units and manned by newly trained Norwegian pilots, was stationed at Reykjavik and Akureyi in Iceland from June 1941 to June 1943. The squadron was first equipped with Northrop N-3PB Torpedo boats. However, these were soon replaced with the faster and better equipped Catalina flying boats with a flying range of over 1,500 miles.

Norway had a very small, under equipped and under-trained military at the outset of war in 1939. There was no standing army, a navy made up largely of pre-First World War vessels and air units operating as part of the army and navy whose aircraft were almost entirely obsolete. With the occupation in 1940 thousands of Norwegian service personnel, as well as civilians, fled the Nazi regime and went to Britain. Here they formed the nucleus of what would eventually become a thoroughly modern military force: a new Royal Norwegian Navy, an army brigade of some 4,000 men, based in Scotland, and four fighter aircraft squadrons serving by the end of the

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6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
war within the RAF.9

The Norwegian government was in a more fortunate position than many of its fellow governments-in-exile in London. Its members had escaped Norway just ahead of the Wehrmacht advance, along with the King and the country’s gold reserves. More importantly, much of the country’s large merchant navy also managed to successfully make its way to Allied or neutral ports before it could be captured. In 1939, Norway’s merchant fleet was the fourth largest in the world. The fact that it escaped largely intact ahead of the German invasion allowed the Norwegian government to accumulate funds through continued foreign trade and thus finance the redevelopment of its armed forces largely independently.

As a result, by late 1943 the Royal Norwegian Navy included a new submarine, the Ulla, and a destroyer, the Stord. Both vessels played a key role in Allied naval operations off the Norwegian coast, the Ulla being the most successful Allied submarine of the Second World War in terms of enemy tonnage sunk.10 This included a U-974, sunk off the coast of Stavanger in southwest Norway on 19 April 1944.11 By 1945 the Royal Norwegian Navy consisted of a total of 51 combat vessels, and naval personnel of 7,500.12 Additionally, there were 850 Norwegian merchant ships in the service of the Allies from November 1940, when its full capacity was put under Allied control. Many of these vessels were later used for the Arctic convoys.13

Such was the brutality of the Nazi occupation regime in Norway that tens of thousands more of civilian refugees fled Norway over the course of the war, mostly to Sweden and Britain. From these people were drawn many of the men and women needed for the new Norwegian armed forces. From late 1943, a Royal Navy escort vessel, HMS Oxlip, took part in several convoys from Britain to the Soviet Union. Able Seaman Albert Boucher was one of the crew. His first convoy sailed from Greenock in 1944, firstly to the Royal Navy base at Scapa Flow in the Orkneys, where it was joined by several Royal Navy destroyers, and from there north to Iceland, the usual gathering point before the journey to Russia. From here the merchant ships could have air cover for a large part of their journey.

Iceland’s importance in launching naval operations

Iceland, part of the Danish kingdom until 1944, was both a vital stepping stone and a staging post for naval operations in the North Atlantic. Positioned roughly half way between North America and Britain, it was a vital platform for the air support of convoys. The British occupied Iceland on 10 May 1940, landing 746 Royal Marines to secure the island from a possible German attempt to seize it. A week later this force was increased by 4,000 British Army troops which helped secure the island’s key ports and potential airborne landing grounds. With the Low Countries and France being at the same time rapidly overrun by the German Army, this British commitment demonstrates the importance of remote Iceland as a base for its operations.

Although the British aircraft stationed on the island were not the most modern (initially Supermarine Walruses and Fairey Battle Bombers) they provided, even if only as a deterrent, an effective defensive shield for Iceland at a time when Britain itself was under direct threat of invasion and devastated by bombing. Repeated requests by the Norwegian government throughout the winter of 1939-40 for the Royal Navy to patrol Norwegian territorial waters and by so doing hamper or prevent German iron-ore shipments from Narvik had been consistently refused.14 Unrealistic Anglo-French plans for military intervention in Scandinavia and prevarication allowed the Germans to pre-empt British action by launching a successful invasion on 9 April. The British were not going to risk a similar disaster in Iceland. The first port of call for Allied convoys in Iceland was usually the capital, Reykjavik. Often it was referred to as ‘Cold Comfort Harbour’ by Allied seamen, as many

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9 Ibid., p. 92.
10 See http://www.historisches-marinearchiv.de/projekte/asa/ausgabe.php?where_value=1046 (last accessed on 3 December 2013)
11 Ibid.
12 Salmon, Britain and Norway, p.82
13 Ibid., p.57
14 Ibid., p. 4.
Icelanders resented any foreign military presence on their territory.

The destruction wrought by the German Army and the Luftwaffe on Poland had been well publicised by the Nazis as a warning to the Nordic countries not to resist a German military occupation. Some Icelanders had reason to be grateful to the Germans. German engineers had built the country’s road network and other infrastructural projects in the 1930s. However, during the summer of 1938 dozens of German ‘tourists’ had arrived on the island, showing great interest in the plateaued areas of the interior which could have been used to easily land gliders and parachutists. This had caused considerable alarm in the Icelandic government and upon the outbreak of war in September 1939 most German citizens were expelled. Up until this time, German U-boats and ‘civilian’ glider teams had been frequent visitors to Iceland and commercial trade between the two countries was rapidly growing.

The British were fully aware of Hitler’s intention to eventually attack the Soviet Union. When Russia became an ally, it was recognised that Iceland’s strategic significance as a supply link between the Allies would grow. Although supplying and defending the Arctic convoys stretched the resources of an already shortage-stricken country, its success in providing some of the means by which the USSR could resist the German invasion reduced much of the immediate danger to Britain, particularly from air raids which had been nightly in the first four months of 1941. The main focus of the Luftwaffe necessarily shifted to the East to support the German Army’s advance into Russia and with them went some of the U-boats that were taking an unsustainable toll on Allied shipping in the Atlantic.

Shortly after the initial landings by the Royal Marines, the Royal Navy’s Fleet Air Arm 701 Squadron, comprising six Supermarine Walrus amphibious biplanes, arrived in Iceland. These aircraft were to be used mainly as reconnaissance aircraft to spot U-boats and thus warn convoys, and were not suited to anti-submarine operations. Although they may have served as a deterrent to German plans for invasion and to enemy aircraft and shipping these first British aircraft on Iceland were neither well-equipped, nor numerous enough to provide adequate reconnaissance for convoys leaving Iceland or for the defence of the island itself in the event of a full-scale invasion. When this became clear, they were swiftly replaced by the 98 Squadron in July 1940. This squadron comprised eighteen Fairey Battle bombers, aircraft which had first entered service with the RAF in 1936 and one of which was credited with the first aerial combat victory of the Second World War. The squadron was later reinforced with Hawker Hurricane fighters. The Fairey Battle, although superior to the Walrus, carried a three man crew and large bomb payload, making them ungainly and vulnerable to attack. While the most advanced aircraft were being used for the defence of Britain itself the squadrons based on Iceland served a useful purpose through a critical period.

With the German invasion of the USSR in June 1941, Iceland’s strategic importance grew as the British appear to have foreseen. 98 Squadron was replaced by 1423 Squadron, comprising entirely Hurricane fighter aircraft, thus providing a higher level of protection for the convoys at the initial stages of their voyage to Russia. These were then replaced by units of United States air forces later that year. The US 33rd Pursuit Group comprised faster fighter aircraft such as the Curtis P-39 Air Cobra and the P-40 Warhawk, demonstrating also US recognition of the island’s importance. By July 1941 there were also some 25,000 British and Commonwealth troops on the island representing a significant commitment at a time when the Allies were on the defensive in every theatre.

The journey to Russia was extremely dangerous. Freezing sea temperatures meant death in less than ten minutes once men were in the water. On Mr Boucher’s first convoy in August 1944 there were many U-boat alerts, including one in which the frigate HMS Kite was attacked and sunk. Of the 217 crew only 60 were saved and only 14 pulled alive from the water. This was a fairly typical outcome when ships were sunk in Arctic waters.

As this convoy reached the Barents Sea, it was shadowed by a Luftwaffe Condor aircraft from nearby German-occupied Norway. Around fourteen U-boats were reportedly lying in wait for


it as it approached Murmansk but thanks to the German cipher code ENIGMA having been broken, unbeknownst to the Nazi leadership, the convoy’s commanding officer knew of the U-boats’ precise locations and was able to manoeuvre around them. In addition, ‘ship-watchers’ on the coast of Norway would often report the departure of U-boats and aircraft to the Allies via radio. This was to prove an important part of Milorg’s intelligence gathering activities as, although the breaking of ENIGMA’s importance cannot be over-estimated, the actions of individual air and sea commanders sometimes differed from their orders from the German Command.

Due to shortfalls in Soviet airpower, the RAF had been allowed to establish a base at Murmansk from which Spitfires provided air cover for the final leg of the convoys’ journeys to Kola Bay. These were piloted for the most part by British crews, but more Soviet pilots were being trained to fly them. A Soviet Catalina flying boat would provide additional cover during the final stages of the journey. There was also a Soviet naval base at Murmansk at which were stationed two destroyers and a number of smaller vessels, none of these ships, however, assisted in ensuring safe arrival of the convoys.

The fact that Stalin allowed an RAF base to operate on Soviet territory again demonstrates the significance of the convoys to the Soviet war effort. The Soviet authorities deeply mistrusted the British. Stalin in particular had a pathological fear that the British would use the first opportunity to establish permanent bases in northern Russia and would switch sides and ally with Nazi Germany against him when they felt it was expedient to do so. Much of this paranoia stemmed from the Russian Civil War of 1918-21, when Britain and other foreign powers had intervened to assist the White Russian armies opposing the Bolsheviks.

A British Expeditionary Force had landed at Murmansk in 1918 and operated a base there until 1920.17 There had also been discussion in diplomatic circles of re-installing the deposed Tsar Nicholas II there as a focus for opposition against the Bolshevik regime in Moscow.18 During the Second World War, however, the British had no intention to establish a permanent presence in Russia. Churchill only wished to give the Soviet Union enough aid to dissuade Stalin from making a separate peace with Hitler.

In any case, the welcome the British received at Murmansk was even colder than in Iceland. During the early convoys of 1941-42 Stalin would not even allow the British crews to leave their ships whilst cargoes were unloaded. Only when Churchill demanded that crews be allowed off the boats or there would be no more convoys did Stalin relent. However, crews were only allowed to walk up and down the dockside where they would see little of Stalin’s Russia. Nonetheless, many still glimpsed the horror and cruelty of his regime. Little contact was allowed with Russian civilians. Most of those that Mr Boucher and his crewmates encountered were military personnel, many of them women. In addition the dock workers were often slave labourers. Mr Boucher heard of one being shot dead on the spot by his guard for simply dropping a piece of bread. The true savagery of this regime cannot be underestimated, nor is it likely that the true scale of the crimes of the Soviet state will ever be known. Yet Churchill summed up the practicalities of the situation, saying in the House of Commons shortly after hearing of Hitler’s attack on the Soviet Union in 1941:

‘If Hitler invaded hell I would make at least a favourable reference to the devil in the House of Commons.’19

Thirty thousand British merchant seamen died throughout the course of the war and the service lost over half of its 1939 tonnage capacity to enemy attacks, some 11.7 million tons of shipping amounting to around 2,000 ships. Consequently, at one stage the Home Office even began issuing free pardons to criminals in return for service on a merchant ship. With the onset of the war in the Far East the Norwegian contribution to the Arctic convoys and their naval and air protection became ever more important. From late 1941 the convoys

17 For more information see www.naval-history.net.
had the benefit of more air cover throughout their journeys, not just at the beginning and the end. Small aircraft carriers were increasingly assigned to them.

The arrival of several dozen additional US fighter aircraft to the bases in Iceland in December also relieved some of the pressure. In particular the British Fairey Swordfish biplane played a very important role, carrying depth charges and rockets which were highly effective against U-boats. These planes were able to fly from the smaller escort carriers and also merchant aircraft carriers known as ‘banana boats’. On these ships the Swordfish were fitted with a ‘Rocket Assisted Take Off’ mechanism. After completing their mission they could return to the launching ships or to the nearest base if they had enough fuel. These aircraft had entered service with the Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS) in 1934 and continued with anti-shipping operations until 1945. At the outset of war they appeared to be obsolete with their awkward looking frame and First World War style design, yet they had an advantage over most other types of aircraft for the kind of work they were tasked with: they were nicknamed ‘string bags’ because they could adjust its shape in line with their payload. Also, despite their maximum speed being only 139mph (less than half that of the Spitfire), they had excellent manoeuvrability. They also demonstrated considerable resilience under fire and could carry machine guns as well as torpedoes. One bullet in any part of the engine of a Spitfire would usually down it; not so the Swordfish. Mr Boucher describes the Swordfish pilots as ‘the bravest of the brave’.

The British Royal and Merchant Navies undertook 78 Arctic convoys between August 1941 and May 1945. Of the 1,400 merchant ships that took part, 85 were lost, usually with most of their crews. The Royal Navy lost 16 vessels, also usually with most of their crews. The Germans lost 30 U-boats, 16 cruisers, three destroyers and many aircraft. As well as providing vital aid to keeping the Soviet Union fighting Nazi Germany, the Arctic Convoys also tied down dozens of U-boats close to their Norwegian bases. Without these restrictions they would have been freed up for the Kriegsmarine to use in attacking and possibly cutting the Atlantic sea routes. Without this route Britain itself could not have survived.

In addition sabotage operations by Milorg against railways, roads, bridges and military installations often delayed the arrival of new equipment and personnel to airfields and ports on the Norwegian coast. HMS Oxlip was involved in the last naval engagement in history between battleships at North Cape off Norway in December 1943, a battle in which the Norwegian destroyer Stord also took part. The Allied victory there was completed with the sinking of the Scharnhorst, a German battleship which had threatened the continuance of the convoys for two years. It is a testament to the cruelty of war that of her crew of nearly 2,000 only 36 were pulled alive from the water by HMS Scorpion and HMS Matchless.

Conclusions

When the remnants of the Norwegian armed forces arrived in Britain in June 1940 there was at first little thought given by the British government to how they could form effective fighting units alongside Britain’s armed forces. Most of their equipment had been lost and what they had brought with them was incompatible with British designs. In addition, the Royal Norwegian Navy was primarily made up of obsolete warships, some of which dated from the nineteenth century. The impetus to become a useful addition to the Allied war effort came from these exiled Norwegians. The Norwegian government in London was at first slow to co-operate with the British fully, but many of those it represented in Britain were not. After the resignation of the Foreign Minister, Halvdan Koht, whose activities before and during the German invasion of Norway cast doubt on his loyalties, relations improved and Norwegian pilots began to be trained with the RAF from November 1940.

Eventually, forming three squadrons within the RAF, by 1942 the Norwegian air units had the highest rates of success against enemy aircraft of all the RAF squadrons throughout the war, and therefore, they can be said to have made a significant contribution on the strength of this alone. The fact that one of them, 333 Squadron, 21 ‘Rear Admiral Russen Larssen, Commander in Chief, Royal Norwegian Air Force, to C.L. Paus, former head of Norwegian Commercial Foreign Office’, letter dated 19 October 1942 (Collections, Imperial War Museum, London)
was based in Iceland with the role of convoy protection demonstrates the value placed upon it by British commanders. This squadron, based in Iceland, played a crucial role in protecting Allied convoys as they left the island for the Soviet Arctic ports between June 1941 and June 1943. The increasing use by the Luftwaffe of the Focke-Wolfe Condor from bases in occupied Norway, to which U-boats were added from 1942, made the convoys’ journey ever more hazardous. The protection of the Norwegian-crewed Catalinas became increasingly important. The speed, manoeuvrability and armaments of the Condors meant that ships could do little to evade them or protect themselves. Losses were high as a result, despite protection from the Catalinas for much of the journey.

The effort of Norwegian merchant ships in the Arctic convoys and in the newly built Royal Norwegian Navy destroyers and submarines for both the observation of the Norwegian coast and the protection of the convoys was significant in disrupting and limiting German operations to counter them. As has been discussed, Britain suffered a chronic shortage of resources for its merchant fleet, particularly in manpower, and the Norwegian Merchant Fleet, being the fourth largest in the world, played a significant role in filling some of these gaps in British capability. The role of the Norwegian Resistance or Milorg cannot be underestimated either. Equipped with British radios, Milorg agents, at high risk of being captured by the German occupation authorities, reported the positions and movements of German shipping and aircraft, undoubtedly saving many merchantmen and Allied naval vessels from destruction. By 1944, there were some 300,000 German military personnel in Norway, a country with a population of only around three million at the time, making armed opposition and intelligence gathering highly hazardous.

The use of explosives and other weapons to destroy German military installations and communications caused the occupation of Norway to be an enormous burden to the German authorities. In addition to the Nazi regime’s failure to stop the Milorg’s activities in providing vital information about attempts by the Germans to intercept the convoys as well as much other military activity.

Ultimately the role played by Norway in the Arctic convoys was one which relied heavily upon the support of its allies, particularly Britain and later the United States, while Iceland played an important role as a ‘stepping stone’ from which to provide material support for Russia. However, the investment into regenerating the Norwegian armed forces provided a handsome return in terms of the contribution the Norwegian forces made. The Arctic convoy route was a precarious and tenuous supply link between the West and the Soviet Union. The disaster of convoy PQ17 in July 1942, which led to the temporary suspension of the operations proves this. Without the Norwegian Milorg’s espionage and sabotage operations it appears likely that more such incidents would have taken place. Also the use of the high-achieving 330 Squadron to protect convoys heading for Russia limited losses. Finally the use of a new and well trained, if small, Royal Norwegian Navy, particularly from 1943 onwards, provided a useful addition to the protection that could be afforded the convoys, as well as for the anti-submarine operations that accompanied these off the Norwegian coast.

Without the contribution of the Norwegian armed forces, Norway’s merchant fleet and the militarization of Iceland by the Allies it seems likely that the rate of loss for the Allies in the Arctic would have been considerably higher. In turn, this would have required reinforcement from theatres where resources were already stretched to the limit. It may even have led to the abandonment of the convoys for the sake of keeping open the Atlantic approaches to Britain. Such a situation may well have led to greater losses in other theatres and a consequent lengthening of a war which by 1945 had become one in which Nazi Germany was moving dangerously close to developing weapons of mass destruction and an unassailable technological lead, particularly in aircraft technology.

Nikolai Gourof

Reading this work constantly brings to mind that famous proverbial quote variously attributed to Alexander the Great, George Washington or Napoleon:

> ‘An army of sheep led by a lion is better than an army of lions led by a sheep.’

Military commentators of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, like Bernardino de Mendoza, François de la Noue and Sir Roger Williams, have considered the person of the commander to be an element of paramount if not decisive importance for the effective deployment and performance of an army and for the successful outcome of tactical and strategic activity. In contemporary historiography, which tends to treat the value of an individual’s influence in and over historical events with scepticism, Fernando González de León’s study of the evolution of command structures of the Spanish Army of Flanders puts the individual commander back to his rightful, leading place.

The author begins his analysis in the 1560s to 1580s, the years when the Spanish Army of Flanders was commanded by the Great Duke of Alba and officers springing from what the author terms ‘the school of Alba’. In those decades, the Duke’s organisational and administrative vision, as well as his meritocratic approach to promotions in general and high command appointments in particular, was of central importance for maintaining discipline, operational precision and the combat effectiveness which made the Army of Flanders the supreme military force of the day. The author concludes his narrative in an era when the Spanish high command had transformed from a military *élite* to a ‘demoralised and increasingly incompetent group’ which led the Army of Flanders to disaster and defeat.

González de León ably illustrates the gradual perceived transformation of the commander’s and officer’s roles, taking into account what he terms ‘the social and intellectual dimensions of this process of military deterioration’. He observes the attitudes of administrative institutions, of the nobility, the usual retainers of positions of authority, and of the supreme commanders themselves, often critical of the deterioration in standards of the officer corps but nonetheless unable to prevent it. He also introduces interesting aspects relating to the peculiarities of this largely unique army, what we can term its managed national hierarchy, and the problems created through attempts to preserve traditions of balance between Spaniards and the *naciones* which formed it.

The final part, before the author’s concluding remarks, is occupied by an analysis of the 1643 battle of Rocroi, an analysis much more careful, detailed and vivid than the only other dedicated treatment of this event in contemporary historiography.¹ The heavy Spanish defeat at Rocroi did not signify the destruction of Spanish military capability. Indeed, the Spanish continued to fight on for decades, fielding, equipping and transporting thousands of men around numerous sectors of operations. It would also be problematic to attribute the loss of the battle to incompetence of command. Such simplifications are of little help in unravelling any meaningful significance of this major blow to the Spanish army’s aura of invincibility. However, Rocroi does prove an excellent choice by the historian to illustrate the regressive path in style of command and standards of leadership, a path symptomatic of decline in army organisation, which in its turn led ultimately to defeat and withdrawal. Brave, sometimes excessively so, generally competent in strategy, in selecting goals and objectives, the Spanish *cabos* became less and less able to respond to tactical, organisational and strategic challenges before them, because of a gradually systematic and systemic inexperience and a perception of warfare as pageantry, as a sequence of grand gestures far removed from the austere and pragmatic approach of the Alba school.

Minor points of critique can be put forward. How far can the mutinies in the Army of Flanders in the early period of the Dutch revolt be reconciled with the supposed organisational and administrative merits of the Alba school? Another interesting point requiring further analysis is the level of the

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Alba system’s imperviousness to pressures from the court, to faction rivalries, to local pressures and the government’s will to give in to these by promoting members of the local élites, a tactic which became regular following Alba’s recall to Spain. It would also be fair to explore other possible factors which influenced the Army of Flanders’ effectiveness, for instance traditional bonds of camaraderie among the tercios’ rank and file, which would place the significance of able command within a proper context.

Despite these minor objections, *The Road to Rocroi* remains an exceptional and interesting piece of scholarly research and a long missing and thus especially welcome addition to the very few dedicated works on the army of the Spanish Hapsburgs in English.
Action! On the Correlation Between American Cinema and Conflict
Mike McCahill

Shoot. Cut. Action. An idea of violence has been encoded in the language of film ever since the medium’s earliest days. The link between combat and cinema has troubled many observers, who have asked whether depicting bloodshed and atrocity on a big screen, using sexy stars and expensive firepower, only endorses it in some way. Certainly, there have been at least as many rousing propaganda pictures as there have been punishing anti-war tracts, and audiences have rallied around the former as much as they have shied away from the tough-sell latter. In this history of the American war movie we will consider whether a filmmaker’s urge to call the shots inherently ratifies, justifies and glamorises conflict – or are their aims are more complex and ambiguous?

Early cinematic depictions of war offered romantic spectacle, tinged with nagging self-doubt. When the first Academy Awards were held in May 1929, the Best Picture prize went to William Wellman’s WWI fighter-pilot epic Wings, released two years earlier, setting up a correlation between conflict and awards-season silverware that remains in place today. Wellman’s film was championed for its striking aerial combat sequences but remains at heart an old-fashioned love triangle – like the later Pearl Harbor (2001) – resolved when one of the fighters duelling for our heroine’s hand is shot down and killed. That sometimes happens in war, the film concludes; but cinemagoers came out less perturbed than stirred by two-plus hours of swoops and swoons.

Wings sparked multiple imitators, Howard Hawks’ early talkie The Dawn Patrol (1930) among them, yet increasingly the anti-war sentiment it rather hesitantly ventured pushed its way into the very forefront of mainstream thinking. The toast of 1930s awards season would be Lewis Milestone’s affecting All Quiet on the Western Front, from the Erich Maria Remarque novel. By the end of the decade, the none-more-romantic Gone with the Wind (Victor Fleming, 1939) could achieve one of its most memorable effects by craning back to show Vivien Leigh’s Scarlett O’Hara adrift amid the multitudinous wounded of the Battle of Atlanta.1

However, it was World War Two which became the first truly cinematic conflict. The sudden availability of relatively lightweight cameras allowed the action to be recorded as never before. Indeed, the camera itself became a valuable weapon in both sides’ arsenals, whether attached to snipers’ rifles to enable precision targeting, or free-floating as an extension of the propaganda machine. The theorist Paul Virilio has ventured that Hitler’s grand design for Germany required the ‘transformation of Europe into a cinema screen’2 upon which the war could be projected ‘as an epic’;3 such awareness of scale and spectacle is evident in 1934’s Triumph of the Will, Leni Riefenstahl’s skewed record of the Nuremberg Rallies.4

The Triumph of the Will’s existence suggests that the cinema suddenly became central to the ideology of conflict, a battleground in itself. The romantic portrayal of previous wars – handsome young men going off to fight for noble causes, snapshots of their sweetheart in pocket – would now come to be challenged by a new and sometimes problematic realism. War was no longer an abstract concept, unfolding in some faraway field, but taking place in the very heart of cities and towns, and the movies adapted accordingly. Three distinct cinematic subgenres would become identifiable in the years between 1939 and 1945, summarising the experiences of soldiers and civilians alike: patriotic ‘flagwavers’, reportage/newsreel/propaganda, and eventually the homecoming drama.

To address the first of these, we might consider one of the most beloved American films of all time: 1942’s Casablanca. Here was a major Hollywood studio (Warner Bros.), mere months after the attack on Pearl Harbour, rushing into production a film in which an isolationist hero (Humphrey Bogart) is finally roused into action to save the foreign girl that he loves. This was the romance of war, elevated to new levels of

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1 A clip can be found here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qSEVyzKmlyU.
3 Ibid., p. 54
4 I have written more extensively about the documentary’s decidedly theatrical staging here: http://cinesthesiac.blogspot.co.uk/2011/08/1001-films-triumph-of-willtriumph-des.html.
sophistication. If audiences can’t fall for Ingrid Bergman in a beret, the filmmakers reasoned, we might all surrender to the Fascists. ‘We’ll always have Paris,’ Rick reminds Ilsa at the film’s denouement, an utterance made all the more bittersweet by the knowledge that the French capital was, at that moment, very much up for grabs.

In such films war was portrayed unequivocally as the good fight, and it is clear Hollywood and the military authorities enjoyed a close relationship over this period. Stars such as Henry Fonda, Clark Gable and James Stewart signed up for combat, others went on tours to promote war bonds or boost troop morale. Cinemas were flooded with such titles as Captains of the Clouds (Michael Curtiz, 1942), Action in the North Atlantic (Lloyd Bacon, 1943) and eventually Days of Glory (Jacques Tourneur, 1944). Hitler found himself with high-profile adversaries: Charlie Chaplin (in 1940’s The Great Dictator) and Donald Duck (in 1942’s ‘Der Fuhrer’s Face’ [sic]).

Story-wise, the flagwavers were, in the main, very much Hollywood confections: a first-act setback followed by consolidation and a concluding triumph over adversity. A more grounded approach to the combat could be found in the period’s newsreels, weekly missives meeting the urgent need for reportage on loved ones, while briefing cinemagoers in dogfighting tactics and new medical treatments. Notable American directors were assigned to record images of the causes and consequences of conflict: Frank Capra (It’s a Wonderful Life, 1939) embarked upon the Why We Fight series (1942-45), while George Stevens (Gunga Din, 1939) was among the first let into Dachau upon its liberation in 1945.

The masterpiece of American wartime documentary is John Huston’s 1945 film The

5 A comprehensive list: http://www.jodavidsmeyer.com/combat/military/actors_in_wwii.html

6 Footage can be seen here: http://www.criticalpast.com/video/65675065998_war-bond-rally_Henry-Morgenthau_Greer-Garson_movie-stars

7 One such newsreel, spoofed by Orson Welles in 1941’s Citizen Kane, went under the title ‘The March of Time’; these, along with a remarkable archive of American, British, Soviet, French and German newsreels, can be found on YouTube.

Battle of San Pietro, which goes some distance beyond the standard reportage remit. Having followed 1941’s The Maltese Falcon with the sub-Casablanca flagwaver Across the Pacific (1942), Huston was tapped by the U.S. Army to film the action unfolding in an Italian valley crucial to the Allied advance. We could view it as an early example of embedded journalism, were it not that Huston’s crew were apparently free to roam far and wide, both to give in dispatches a sense of the region’s geography and climate, and to show in close-up the bodies of American troops being bagged and tagged. What is striking now is how much the documentary adheres to the three-act structure beloved of conventional studio product. The Allies’ initial attack was repelled, incurring heavy casualties; only when ground troops were reinforced with the deployment of aerial, tank and parachute divisions, the film’s never-more-valuable supporting players, could a fight back begin. San Pietro suggests how the line between Hollywood and reality had become blurred, if not removed entirely. Such documentaries, like the newsreels, would unree on cinema screens before and between the flagwavers and, in doing so, press the idea of a just and noble war upon the general public. Fact and fiction had become part of the same package.

But how might screenwriters tie up this carnage into a satisfying ending? By 1946, American servicemen were returning equally bruised and buoyed by the Allied triumph, and the movies responded with a series of homecoming dramas, of which the best-regarded remains The Best Years of Our Lives (William Wyler, 1946). This potent three-hour national catharsis charts the attempts of three veterans, Dana Andrews, Fredric March and real-life serviceman and amputee Harold Russell, to return to civilian life. Unapologetic in its melodrama, it includes such immortal scenes as that in which Andrews’ aviator tours an airplane graveyard, the ghostly fuselages coming to stand both for fallen comrades, and the survivors’ rusting post-War prospects. The film was rewarded with seven Oscars. The most controversial documentary of the era went even further in describing the trauma suffered by US servicemen, and received a Government

8 A clip can be found here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tU0d3DVcKoY
suppression order for its troubles. *Let There Be Light* (1946), again directed by John Huston, was commissioned as an official record of army aftercare, undertaking a survey of 70 or so soldiers sequestered at Edgewood State Hospital in Long Island, New York. Lengthy, uninteresting takes reveal the full extent of the traumas incurred and attempt to delineate the process of treatment, as the stuttering, shambling or otherwise shell-shocked patients submit to punishing sessions of physical and psychological therapy.

For the first time here, one senses an American-operated camera really looking long and hard at what combat might do to the average GI, which explains the authorities’ reluctance to release it. Cited as damaging to recruitment prospects and troop morale, the film was seized by the military police shortly after production, and only entered into general circulation in the early 1980s. Yet, despite the suppression, even a document as challenging as this cannot ultimately resist a kind of endorsing Hollywood tidiness as in the climactic PE sequence, the once-stumbling soldiers are shown stepping up to the plate to hit a succession of home runs. Triumph over adversity, as expressed through baseball. What could possibly be more American?

For some, then, World War Two could be packaged as a neat victory, confirming the received wisdom that good will always defeat evil. But even a cursory study of the period’s films reveals loose ends and unresolved issues, and as American eyes turned towards Asia, dissenting voices began to make themselves heard. Filmmakers Robert Aldrich (*Attack*, 1956) and Sam Fuller (*Merrill’s Marauders*, 1962) served as the avant-garde of a wider questioning of authority, and its application in military situations. Within a year of the Cuban Missile Crisis, the movies had responded with *Dr Strangelove*, Kubrick’s great satirical vision of nuclear annihilation, and *Fail-Safe*, Sidney Lumet’s sober rendition of a similar scenario, which had President Henry Fonda pondering whether he can bring himself to push the button.

Whether mouthy or merely quizzical, such films would have been unthinkable a decade before, when America was still congratulating itself for World War Two. By the mid-60s, with US combat units heading out to Vietnam, it was clear a schism was opening up both socially and cinematically. On one side sat Old Hollywood, pandering to an ageing audience with laboured Roman epics and creaky adaptations of stage musicals – the officer class, as it were. On the other, there stood the New Hollywood, represented by those young cinéastes who had grown up in the Aldrich-Fuller-Kubrick era, and been compelled to question what their forefathers were telling them – representatives of the rank and file who were expected to do the fighting, but were objecting in unprecedented numbers.

There were still plenty of films around that were, like a veteran holding forth in a bar, trotting out the same old war stories, many now international co-productions. *The Longest Day* (Annakin/Marton/Wicki/Oswald, 1962) reached out to German filmmakers to achieve greater authenticity in its re-enactment of the Normandy landings. 1970s *Tora! Tora! Tora!*, co-directed by the American Richard Fleischer and Japan’s Toshio Masuda and Kinji Fukasaku, attempted a more balanced retelling of the Pearl Harbor attack between *Wings*-style aerial sequences. However, little nuance could be discerned in 1968’s *The Green Berets*, a Tet-era relic initiated by co-director John Wayne to counter growing anti-war feeling. It nevertheless became a box-office hit providing some evidence of the extent to which America had become divided.

Two films bearing the signature of the emergent ‘moviebrat’ Francis Ford Coppola – 1970’s *Patton* (written by Coppola and directed by Franklin J. Schaffner) and 1979’s *Apocalypse Now* (co-written and directed by Coppola) – bookended the 1970s, and illustrate the marked shift in attitudes towards the military during this period. The first, a lengthy demonstration of the legendary general’s tactical nous, was evidently Old Hollywood: produced by Fox, directed by a studio mainstay, as Schaffner had had a big 1968 hit with *Planet of the Apes*, and the eventual recipient of seven Oscars. The second, an extraordinary riff on Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* completed as Vietnam smouldered, was something new: an independent production obliged to loan its helicopters not from the US Army, who shunned the project, but from the Filipino president Ferdinand Marcos.

*Patton* wasn’t blind to its subject’s egomania, but treated him with some deference. The guy got the job done in World War Two, after all. In contrast
Apocalypse Now’s Colonel Kurtz is a stone-cold murderer and tyrant, utterly corrupted by his mission and hell-bent on doing his own thing. One of Coppola’s co-writers on this turbulent project was the notably right-leaning John Milius (later to direct 1984’s hysterically anti-Communist Red Dawn) and one senses that even this gun nut was, through the character of Kurtz, expressing dissatisfaction with those in positions of power.\(^9\)

From affording military office a degree of respect, the movies had become, momentarily, openly critical. Apocalypse Now, which used the imagery of war to damn the horrors of war, has come to stand as the defining cinematic monument to the spectacular mess of the Vietnam misadventure. Coppola’s grand folly was built on the shoulders of many other endeavours, and it’s noticeable that those cinematic forms established during WW2 – the flagwaver, the newsreel/reportage film, and the homecoming drama – all took a turn for the critical over this period. Ever since the success of Easy Rider (Dennis Hopper, 1969), now a countercultural landmark, then a touchstone for disaffected young audiences, the studios were rushing to court any long-hair who would rather stage sit-ins than ship out. If there was money to be made in fighting the power, Hollywood wanted its share. Material that might once have made peppy, acquiescing flagwavers suddenly became overt interrogations of men in military uniform.

Robert Altman’s M*A*S*H (1970), which opened almost simultaneously with Patton, respects the skill of its protagonists – boozy, womanising surgeons working in a military hospital during the Korean War but, like them, wryly wonders whether all this blood loss and time-killing was really necessary in the first place. The Last Detail (Hal Ashby, 1973) feels like a sour update of the celebratory post-World War Two musical On the Town (Stanley Donen and Gene Kelly, 1949). Two petty officers (Jack Nicholson and Otis Young) allow the young sailor they’ve been ordered to escort to the brig a few last days of freedom, but their fun runs out in chilly Portsmouth, New Hampshire, where they’re confronted by institutionalised brutality and incompetence.

Three decades of technological developments, and the emergence of cinéma vérité and independent production cooperatives, meant the documentary was in a very different place to where John Huston left it at the end of World War Two. Peter Davis’s 1975 film Hearts & Minds, a masterpiece of dissent, makes the strongest imaginable case that the hearts and minds the US authorities were keenest on winning during Vietnam were not those of the Vietnamese, considered at the highest levels of government to be a minor concern, but those of the good folks back home who had to be indoctrinated if this neo-colonialist project was to be completed.

One word that recurs within its critical mass of testimony and which still resonates today, in our age of remote-controlled combat, is ‘clean’. Davis notes how pilots on bombing raids were kept at a remove from the carnage they created, and shows how this idea had been exported back to those watching in the American heartlands. For Davis, Vietnam had been presented as the latest evolution in the ongoing war between clean-cut American capitalism represented by well-scrubbed soldiers, and leaders you can trust, like Nixon, and corrupting communism portrayed by dark-skinned peasants, hiding their weapons in muddy paddy fields. Davis’s backers in Old Hollywood – Columbia Pictures – refused to distribute this incendiary film. Subsequently it was issued independently and went on to win the Best Documentary Oscar.

If flagwavers were becoming few and far between, and documentary was developing more sophisticated lines of attack then the homecoming drama, positioned at the very heart of the mainstream, was getting bleaker with every passing year. The frontrunners for 1979’s Best Picture Oscar were Michael Cimino’s nightmarish The Deer Hunter depicting Russian-American steelworkers’ return from Vietnam as walking dead men and Hal Ashby’s scarcely more optimistic Coming Home where military wife Jane Fonda is torn between her Marine Corps husband and the paraplegic veteran she takes for a lover.

Where once Hollywood had wholeheartedly endorsed military activity, it now rewarded dissent. Proud Quartermaster Henry Fonda had

\(^9\) Milius’s marginal place within Hollywood merits closer study, and there’s a good overview here: http://redroom.com/member/steven-robert-travers/blog/john-milius-conservative-film-impresario.
been eclipsed by his Oscar-winning daughter 'Hanoi Jane'. It is impossible to understate how Vietnam affected American movies. You can glean some idea of the war’s impact from the prolonged spell of cinematic self-analysis that followed in the next decade. *The Big Red One* (1980) picked over combat scars incurred during WW2, and gave the veteran Sam Fuller his late masterpiece. *Southern Comfort* (Walter Hill, 1981) was an appreciably pulpy shocker that spun a parallel 'Nam narrative around blundering reservists in the Louisiana swamps. *Full Metal Jacket* (1987), presented Kubrick’s chilly analysis of war cause-and-effect. Furthermore, the heavy-hitting double bill of *Platoon* (1986) and *Born on the Fourth of July* (1989) dug deep into the combat experiences of Oliver Stone and those of soldier-turned-activist Ron Kovic.

And yet already the tide was turning. After the election of Ronald Reagan in 1981, a new popular conservatism came to grip and reassure the American nation that that year’s signature film would be Mark Rydell’s gentle/inert *On Golden Pond*, which reunited the Fonda’, and pretended Vietnam, and its generational divides, simply had not happened. The eighties would be a decade where Hollywood studios bought into this dominant ideology wholesale. If that meant making movies that in their glossy aesthetic, expensive bits of kit and subtly, or not so subtly, subjugating tone, resembled recruitment promos more than they did actual entertainments, then so be it.

After two decades of social unrest and with Cold War tensions mounting once again it turned out there was an audience for these films, hungry to see fresh-faced young American men reasserting authority over the world’s chaos in three acts. Not all soldiers or airmen looked as good in uniform as Richard Gere did in *An Officer and a Gentleman* (Taylor Hackford, 1982) or Tom Cruise in *Top Gun* (Tony Scott, 1986) but otherwise these films had a calculated degree of authenticity on their side. They would deploy considerable Army and Navy resources to sell combat to a generation too young to have received their papers for Vietnam.

*Top Gun*, in particular, was practically an in-barracks production, such that when the film emerged on video, studio Paramount’s offer of placing a Navy recruitment commercial among the trailers was turned down by the Pentagon. No need, said the powers-that-be, the film itself was commercial enough. No surprise, given that emergent mega-producers Don Simpson and Jerry Bruckheimer had previously turned over the script to naval chiefs for significant revisions, and received in return several F-14 aircraft for use in the film’s aerial combat sequences. The deal paid off. The film became one of the decade’s pre-eminent box-office hits, and reportedly boosted US aviator recruitment by as much as 500 per cent.\(^{10}\)

More sombre assessments of military history would emerge before the millennium, as in Ed Zwick’s respectable Civil War drama *Glory* (1989) and Steven Spielberg’s elegiac *Saving Private Ryan* (1998). But dissent was mostly shunned. Keith Gordon’s *A Midnight Clear* (1992), a haunting take on William Wharton’s off-message WW2 novel, went largely unseen, while Terrence Malick’s *The Thin Red Line* (1998) split audiences with its oblique narrative strategies, and its idiosyncratic insistence that war is bad because it stamps down the long grass.

*Top Gun*’s ultra-commercial combo of hardware and hard bodies swaggered into the 90s action movie, with its pumped-up Special Ops heroes. The romance had crept back into combat as America reasserted its dominance in the Middle East and the Balkans. In retrospect, it seems apt this particular strand of American cinema should come to a halt in summer 2001, with the Bruckheimer-produced, Michael Bay-directed *Pearl Harbor*. An attempt to top not just *Top Gun* but *Titanic*, this prodigiously expensive, mostly insufferable epic returned to the *Wings* line of war-as-spectacle, dividing its characters up into graspable good/bad factions, and deeming even *Tora! Tora! Tora!*’s cursory rhetorical balance to be beyond its reach. When they eventually buzz in after days’ worth of on-the-ground soap opera, the Japanese pilots are regarded in the same way as the aliens in *Independence Day* or *Mars Attacks!*: as inscrutable annoyances separating all-American square-jaws from their sweethearts.

Only a few months later, though, another aerial

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\(^{10}\) A fuller account of *Top Gun*’s production can be found in Robb, *Operation Hollywood: How the Pentagon Shapes and Censors the Movies*, (Prometheus Books, 2004), pp. 180-182.
assault would throw all the cinema’s certainties about combat up into the air where they have remained ever since. One of the first and most common responses to the events of 11 September, 2001 was that they somehow resembled a movie. A pyrotechnic payback for the decades of carnage American filmmakers had blithely inflicted upon the rest of the planet. Just as 9/11 served to undermine confidence in US national security, so the medium’s primacy as a means of representation would come under attack over the fractious next decade. Presented with such overwhelming real-life trauma and spectacle, who now needed cinema? This attack would take place across several fronts. From cable TV which backed the Spielberg-produced Band of Brothers, a 2001 miniseries that expanded on the themes of Saving Private Ryan, newly sophisticated console games like the Call of Duty series, which debuted in 2003, soldiers’ own YouTube postings, and still photography as in the pictures of prisoner abuse from Abu Ghraib, which told their own stories. The wry Gulf War One movie Three Kings (David O. Russell, 1999) had opened with a question ‘Are we shooting?’ posed by an American soldier (Mark Wahlberg) to his brothers-in-arms, and something of its representational uncertainty would haunt those American cameras following the troops into Gulf War Two. Are we shooting? If so, what are we shooting?

For all that the Stars and Stripes were defiantly raised outside public buildings in 9/11’s wake, few filmmakers wanted to be seen waving flags. There was an immediate post-9/11 hit in the Bruckheimer-produced Black Hawk Down (Ridley Scott, 2001) which turned a 1993 failure in Mogadishu into a heartland-rousing triumph by making martyrs of its handsome Army Rangers, and monsters of the Somali locals. However, conventional patriotism was thereafter limited to such reliably conservative figureheads as Mel Gibson (We Were Soldiers, 2002) and even Clint Eastwood’s WW2 diptych of Flags of My Fathers and Letters from Iwo Jima (both 2006) displayed a sobriety and equanimity missing from, say, The Green Berets.

With the mainstream media unsure how to cover the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts documentary stepped in to fill the vacuum, though even here there seemed to be as much lefty handwringing as there was effective rabble-rousing. Michael Moore seemed to catch the nation’s mood with his smash-hit polemic Fahrenheit 9/11 (2004), but then the target of its ire, George W. Bush, was re-elected only a few months later. More substantial analysis of American militarism was offered by Errol Morris in The Fog of War (2003) and Charles Ferguson in No End in Sight (2007). As if to underline the sense of history repeating itself, Eugene Jarecki recycled the title of Frank Capra’s WW2 series for his considered Why We Fight (2005).

The mainstream was lost in profitable fantasy in re-launching Spider-Man in 2002, and announcing Batman Begins in 2005 so multiplex treatments of the war were rare, and rarely successful. The gimmicky Redacted (Brian de Palma, 2007) was a Blair Witch-derived found-footage gag on the notion of embedded cameras, shrill and hectoring in its rhetoric. Stop-Loss (Kimberly Pierce, 2008), sparked by the increasingly under-resourced Army’s policy of returning battle-wearied troops to the frontline, got bogged down in shouting and roughhousing, and somehow encapsulated all the noisily flailing, ineffectual anti-war protests of its decade.

More creatively valuable has been the third wave of homecoming dramas, now very much composed along character-driven, indie-ish 70s lines. Ryan Redford’s Oliver Sherman (2010) is a quietly gripping thriller about two old friends, reunited after several years apart. One (Garret Dillahunt) became a trained killer in Iraq, while the other (Donal Logue) started a family in a small all-American berg. Liza Johnson’s Return (2011) is unusual in focusing on a female combatant (Linda Cardellini) struggling to adjust to her previous existence as a small-town wife and mother. In both films, the home front and the battlefront are presented as irreconcilable.

Such modestly-budgeted films perhaps owe their existence to The Hurt Locker, Kathryn Bigelow’s 2010 Best Picture winner. This is also partly a homecoming film, updating The Best Years of Our Lives’ airplane graveyard in the scene which leaves its soldier hero (Jeremy Renner) stricken amid the banality of a supermarket’s cereal aisle. But it is also a detached action movie, in which Bigelow seeks to milk the tension inherent in
bomb disposal while offering a critical perspective on the collateral psychological damage incurred by American troops in Iraq. Unlike Avatar, its closest rival at the 2010 Oscars, which advanced a more integrationist line of foreign policy, The Hurt Locker remained stand-offish, and in doing so illustrated how badly America had been burnt by the preceding decade of conflict.

Some of that standoffishness carried over into Bigelow’s most recent project, 2013’s Zero Dark Thirty, the film which may best summarise the current confused state of play in the relationship between combat and cinema. In outline form, ZDT Zero Dark Thirty resembles a flagwaver, dramatising the lead-up to the killing of Osama bin Laden by Navy SEALs in May 2011. It was attacked as such by critics Michael Atkinson and Slavoj Žižek,11 who speculated on the close links Bigelow and writer Mark Boal reportedly enjoyed with US intelligence.12 The film’s vicariously thrilling first-person action scenes, a gift to Call of Duty fans, and its endorsing narrative trajectory which suggested that the events of scene one, the torture of an Al-Qaeda operative by the CIA, led necessarily to scene 220, Osama’s last stand. To these critics, Zero Dark Thirty was a pre-emptive commemoration of recent history, a clear example of the camera jumping the gun – a film as questionable as that ‘Mission Accomplished’ banner Dubya unfurled back in 2003. And yet the film is shot through with an ambivalence and distance befitting an age where Obama drones can be piloted from afar by graduates of the Top Gun academy. With the film’s final image of homecoming, its heroine breaking down aboard an aircraft carrier, Bigelow oversees the American war movie’s latest transition, from the romantic to the authentically conflicted, the action-packed to the consequence-chastened. We’re light years from The Dawn Patrol and Zero Dark Thirty, the epitome of bleeding-edge Hollywood, amply illuminates those complexities facing the modern

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THE PRIVATE MILITARY SECURITY CONTRACTORS SERIES

Introduction

Contracting for military and security services is an extremely old phenomenon, emerging many centuries previous to the latest generation of contemporary Private Military and Security Companies (PMSCs). However, the modern phenomenon has reached unprecedented breadth, given the extent to which contracting for military and security services has grown, covering military and security training, armed guards, intelligence and combat support logistics. Even anyone not having a major interest in the industry cannot help but take note of the many forms in which PMSCs support government and private clients alike, for example in anti-piracy operations.

Since the early 1990s, there have been hundreds of scholarly and journalistic publications on PMSCs. This trend continues as publications about the industry are on the rise – unfortunately with many arguments repeated time and again. This is why the authors in this series have been challenged to take an angle as yet lacking from debates about private contracting. Framed by a new look at contracting experiences from Machiavelli’s times at the beginning of the series and an examination of current and future regulatory options for private contractors at the end, the series also touches on the US experience of logistics outsourcing, as well as the perspective of individual contractors.

Many concerns about PMSCs are either related to money or the morality of their services. A central argument for contracting PMSCs, made by both clients and the industry, is their cost-efficiency, especially when compared to having soldiers or own employees provide security services for government or private clients respectively. At the same time, one line of argumentation against outsourcing is that certain services should not be provided by private companies but by states only.

Also, overbilling has reportedly been a problem with some companies in Iraq and Afghanistan. Related to money is also why PMSCs, or more precisely their employees, do the work they do. In an often implicit critique especially armed services for money are considered as morally inferior to armed service for a country (although many PMSC employees have served in the military previous to becoming contractors). Authors in the Strife blog series wrote about some of most prevalent concerns about the industry and challenged existing explanations for industry dynamics.

The first installment in the series brings us back to an age long past. Pablo de Orellana takes a new look at Machiavelli’s views on mercenaries and will argue that his reservations against contracted forces can best be explained by their impact on Renaissance state-building and governance. In the second part, Jill Russell explores the practical ramifications of logistical contracting in the US armed forces and will argue that contractors are not sufficient for the critical roles they are often assigned. In the third part the focus is on individual contractors. Alison Hawks argues that the money motive is not a sufficient explanation as to why individuals become security contractors. The final post of the Private Military and Security Contractors Series examines the current state of PMSC regulation, with special attention to the recently launched International Code of Conduct Association.

Dr. Birthe Anders
Strife PMSCs Series Editor

Part I: The politics of condottieri arms in Renaissance Italy, or why Machiavelli loathed mercenaries
Pablo de Orellana

In 1512, the Florentine native military contingent so ardently advocated by Machiavelli in his major works, *The Art of War, The Prince* and *Discourses*, was disastrously defeated, bringing about the downfall of the Florentine Republic, the return of the Medici to power and Machiavelli’s
own dismissal from government, torture, and exile. Yet in *The Prince*, written the following year, exactly five centuries ago, he continues to make constant reference to mercenary forces being ‘useless and dangerous’.

This article outlines the main reasons as to this position, concluding that Machiavelli’s loathing of mercenaries was not animated by the tired, old, moral analogy of mercenarism and unpatriotic prostitution or even by pragmatic tactical reasons, as it appears from *The Prince*. No debate on Private Military Security Companies (PMSCs) can omit reference to Machiavelli; however, he is still often poorly understood beyond the omnipresent quote of ‘useless and dangerous’. Returning to the original Machiavelli texts, I argue that his concerns about mercenaries were due to the challenge of renaissance mercenary practices to the politics of state-building and governance.

The historical background to the practice as it was during the Renaissance is essential in discussing Machiavelli’s position on the employment of mercenaries. The practice of hiring military forces by feudal lords and cities probably originated in the constant feuds of the eleventh century. ‘[T]here were in Italy at that time many soldiers, English, German and Bretons, brought over by those princes [...] it was with these that all Italian princes made their wars.’

Feudal lords and republics hired men from the *masnadas*, bands of soldiers demobilised after the crusades and the Sicilian Vespers; the relationship was determined by a *condotta*, a contract or agreement between the hiring authorities and the *condottiere*, the leader of the mercenary force. However, the practice brought about the downfall of many clients. Due to dependence of entire states upon their services, *condottieri* were able to dictate terms to clients, betraying them and in some cases even replacing them. The most notable in this regard were Francesco Sforza (1401-1466), who took over Milan from his clients the Visconti, and Andrea Doria, a Genoese admiral who fought for Charles V of the Austrian/Spanish House of Habsburg.

Machiavelli recounts some of these treacherous actions by mercenaries, but most often (as in *The Prince*) he chooses to engage with the issue on the basis of their tactical disadvantages: their dubious loyalty, the feasibility of training more loyal native militias to their professional level instead, their prohibitive cost, even their occasional willingness to be paid off by mercenaries employed by an enemy city to the detriment of both their employers. What worried Machiavelli most about mercenaries, however, was the political power and short-term coercive leverage they were able to wield against their own clients. *Condottieri* were problematic by virtue of limited contractual loyalty based on pay, but even more so because of their capacity to radically upset domestic constitutional order. They were able to blackmail clients and move to the pay of a rival like Federico da Montefeltro, or as Francesco Sforza proved, take over their states. The 1494 French invasion of Italy, for instance, was partly made possible by the defection to France of Milan’s *condottiere* Gian Giacomo Trivulzio. That invasion, however, not only made clear to Machiavelli the unreliability of mercenary forces, but also proved beyond doubt that national armies with a mix of levies and professionals under the leadership of a skilled and inspiring prince were vastly superior to mercenary forces. This was, Machiavelli explains, due to the relationship between them, which was based on vassalage, loyalty, duty and law.

Even more problematic than mercenary loyalty for constitution and governance, however, was the constitutive effect on the institutions of government, especially the military. In Machiavelli’s view, contracting mercenaries had the effect of destabilising and weakening your own forces. The misguided son of King Charles VII of France made this mistake: ‘having given reputation to the Swiss [mercenaries], he dispirited his own arms [as] they did not think it was possible to win without them’. This was a twofold political problem in terms of strategic defence: the arms of the state had little morale, confidence and experience; in the longer term this could make defence of a principality entirely dependent on outside forces. Furthermore, this institutional vicious circle made training your own native forces more difficult, slower and less expedient in the short term than hiring mercenaries, further undermining or delaying the

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1 Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, chapter XII. (All translations here are my own, unless otherwise indicated.)
2 Niccolò Machiavelli, *Istorie Fiorentine*, Chapters I, XXXIV.
3 Machiavelli, *The Prince*, chapter XX.
4 Ibid., chapter XIII.
establishment of a reliable native force.

Having an unstable and untrustworthy defence force has dramatic effects on governance, Machiavelli argues. He sees a crucial relationship between governance and defence as the main engine of state-building and governance: ‘the principal fundamentals that link all states, those new, old or mixed, are good laws and good arms: [...] there cannot be good laws without good arms.’

This is due to the risk of remaining undefended, which destabilises the state: ‘among the reasons that bring you harm, being unarmed makes you contemptible’. Clearly, for Machiavelli there cannot be a stable practice of governance without the assurance of a dependable defence force to protect the territory, its people and governors against the ambitions of ‘the barbarians’ or foreign invaders, other lords, other states and transnational factions. The latter were particularly problematic, as they were both external and internal to any single city-state in Renaissance Italy.

Guelphs (supporters of Papal supremacy) and Ghibellines (supporters of the supremacy of the Holy Roman Empire) had fought over control of many Northern Italian city-states for the three centuries preceding Machiavelli, routinely taking over power and exiling each other from their native states. Notably, Guelphs and Ghibellines were domestic factions in each city, and were able to appeal to the help of successful members of their faction in other cities. Additionally, as is evident from the Discourses, mercenary forces are to Machiavelli the employees of their client, not the state directly, which has a distinct political effect among subjects: ‘when you disarm [the people] you are starting to offend them: you are showing that you distrust them either for cowardice or little faith, and either of these opinions generates hatred against you.’ Thus the immediate political effect is to suggest among citizens a sense of occupation and repression, which has repercussions for how a government or a lord comes to be appreciated by their subjects, and subsequently for their loyalty. This aspect of how mercenary forces come to be perceived has a reverse corollary: whilst the people come to see their prince as dependant on foreign forces and distrusting his subjects, the former becomes more and more dependent upon the condottiere, the mercenary leader, which has the direct effect of undermining his sovereignty and that of the state. This was not only true of autocratic rulers; it also greatly affected republican regimes such as in Machiavelli’s own Florence during his time as segretario of the Republic.

Machiavelli’s work remains extremely influential and iconic in a number of fields, including the study of PMSCs. This paper has offered an exploration of Machiavelli’s historical and political context before marking a return to his original texts, advancing the argument that Machiavelli’s consideration of mercenaries was not only the view that they were ‘useless and dangerous’, or the ramblings of an amateur tactician complaining about unreliable troops, but rather that the use of mercenary troops posed very serious political challenges. What follows from the argument I have made here is that Machiavelli saw the extensive use of, and indeed dependence upon, mercenaries as a roadblock to state-building and to the consolidation of stable sovereign rule. Good governance was directly challenged by the use of hired forces: they did not provide a stable, loyal or reliable line of defence, they rendered the organisation of a native force more unlikely and challenging, and finally, and most problematically, they created political strife by placing all military power in the hands of the prince or an official, rather than making it a collective defence duty that could, additionally, unify the population and inspire loyalty. The prince or official were in turn dependent on the leadership of the mercenaries, the condottiere, which vastly eroded their independence.

Hiring mercenaries, we might conclude, was a dual political bind in the Italian Renaissance. They rendered more difficult the creation of an alternative defence force, making the state dependent upon them. They also undermined governance itself by undermining the domestic political value of defence, stable defence itself, as well as the independence of the ruler, thus making ‘good laws’ or governance more difficult. The use of mercenaries and security contractors was to change in the following centuries, and it is of
interest to enquire as to how the political bind posed by the employment of mercenaries, problematised by Machiavelli and explored here, was addressed by successive rulers and governments.

Part II: Overpriced or Out of Sight: What subsistence history teaches us about contractors and tactical logistics at war
Jill S. Russell

Without much fanfare the American armed forces have over the last several decades shifted responsibility for increasing portions of operational and tactical logistics to private contractors. Focussing specifically upon subsistence, and furthermore on the preparation and delivery of food to the front lines, little concern has emerged over the ramifications of this change in practice. Especially at the tactical level this is a dangerous oversight,\(^8\) for, as I will argue here, American experience, both distant and recent, demonstrates that contractors are not sufficient to the critical task of feeding troops at war.

The unreliability of the private sector in tactical logistics was one of the first lessons of American military history. The experience diverged from historical practice as civilians had long played a part in the delivery of provisions whether as labour, involuntarily with impressments of goods, or enterprise in the food and drink on offer by the local sutler. Considering only the latter for the purposes of this discussion, Continental Army leaders might have been able to expect that this character would serve the Revolutionary cause and fill the subsistence gaps the infant army could not handle.

Bordering on catastrophic, Revolutionary War subsistence logistics nearly proved the undoing of the Patriot cause. Suffering no lack of provisions extant in the Colonies, plaguing the army's inability to feed its soldiers were deficiencies rooted entirely in its logistics, from inadequate manpower to a complete lack of professional knowledge and practices. Even still, sutlers could have been the army’s salvation. Unfortunately, in that war, while their propensity to fleece the troops was entirely reliable, their presence where and when necessary could not be guaranteed, largely because the Continental dollars did not interest. However, as the goods were present in the country, it was the want of money in the government coffers that guaranteed the struggle, for were the last not an issue then entrepreneurship would at least have eased many of the logistics challenges.

Thus, weak in the Revolutionary War for reasons of profit, this experience taught that especially at the tactical level, successful logistics could only be guaranteed by the armed forces themselves. The Americans might have been the first to learn this lesson, but the European powers would realise this truth as well over the course of nineteenth century warfare. More than a century would pass before this capability was fully developed. The Civil War, for example, was marked by their presence, as sutlers remained an imperfect stopgap when necessary. However, they were never meant to fully serve the logistical needs of the front lines. The long nineteenth century was a slow march to the military capabilities necessary to manage logistics. Strategic logistics, especially in manufacture and internal transportation, were, and remain, areas in which the private sector outperformed the armed forces.

Cresting in the Second World War, finally triumphant over most of the challenges, it seemed that the demands of logistics at war had finally been equalled and could soon be mastered. This was not to be the case, and before the lessons of that war’s logistics could be fully learned the apparatus was slowly dismantled. I suspect it was part of the rise of the preference for private sector wisdom regarding what constituted best practices. After all, if America’s businesses could thrive and dominate the global economy then they must have something valuable to teach the armed forces.\(^9\) Except cost savings and efficiency fail war when effectiveness is contested by a determined enemy

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\(^8\) There are many ways, depending on the service questioned, to refer to the tasks I consider within the sphere of tactical logistics. The Marine Corps, for example, uses combat service support. For the purposes of this essay tactical logistics refers to the final delivery and/or preparation of goods or services to manoeuvre units for their use.

\(^9\) Of course, if one stops to consider that most of the private sector experience in logistics had been gained in war, that the armed forces had been the trailblazers in such areas, then its presumed superiority must be questioned.
or the ruthlessness of chance. What works for Wal-Mart does not necessarily serve the Marine Corps.

Unlike in the Revolutionary War, the matters of resources and expertise have not harmed the private sector’s performance in logistics since WWISS. Rather, the altered terms of warfare define the weakness of private contractors in logistics, their failure to adequately serve is caused by risk. By the twentieth century the increasing lethality of war meant that unlike the finite and constrained battles of the past, now combat raged night and day, death reigned, but still soldiers needed to be fed. Although durable, portable and ready to eat field rations would be developed, even their delivery to the front lines could be contested. Nor was it the case that these rations could serve for the long term to good fighting effect. That is, no one would starve if there were unlimited C-Rats, but that is not the same as sustaining fighting skill. Accordingly, field rations would never preclude the need for some amount of fresh, or near fresh, provisions to be delivered and prepared for front line personnel.

This significant growth in risk means that even given the premiums paid to contractors, there are levels of personal peril which cannot be mitigated by money alone. Uniformed military personnel accept risk, but they are trained and indoctrinated to do so as part of a group to which they have bonded. In fact, I might argue that it is the matter of risk which defines and separates military personnel from others, and perhaps is their inspiration as well. Absent this trained acceptance, there is a limit beyond which it will remain exceedingly difficult to get contractors to operate effectively.

And yet, by voluntarily choosing the private sector to handle an increasing burden of tactical logistics, by the twenty-first century’s first wars it has been ‘forward into the past’ with a return to modern day sutlers and civilians who do the cooking. One might assume that this would mean success all around as there is no real lack of resources within the nation or government. This has not been the case.

Second chances are always written with new twists, and so this time around it is the government rather than the soldiery that is likely getting fleeced.\(^{10}\) I suppose that is some consolation. Or it would be except for the unholy gap that has been created at the very front lines and for the smallest units. Coping with this gap, the forces have most often returned to the ‘old ways’. In OIF and OEF, where the FOB feeding paradigm left small, far forward-deployed units unserved, the answer to the feeding gap has been to send a soldier or Marine to do the cooking. And as American defence budgets are reduced, back in garrison, the days of freedom from KP duty may be coming to an end.\(^{11}\)

Which raises the question, why has the US returned to a mode of tactical logistics that relied upon the private sector? Logistics loving ingenuity. In the private sector this ingenuity improves efficiency and cuts costs. However, in war it simply worries the problem until the job is done. Rather than a private contractor, the guy who will live and die with the quality of the logistics is likely to produce the best results. At least at the tactical level logistics needs to be returned to the forces. It is part of the fight and needs to be treated as such.

Part III: Why becoming a Private Security Contractor cannot be explained by motivation
Alison Hawks

Motive is often used in an effort to explain who an individual is and why they do what they do. Private security contractors have not been immune to this application, and popular discourse about the individual security contractor often revolves around what ‘motivates’ these individuals. The question is fair. The money is pretty good. But to understand individuals about whom little is known, working in an industry often described as opaque, the individual’s motivation gives little

\(^{10}\) Attempting to unravel the complexity which is the accounting for recent military operations is well-nigh impossible. What is clear is that private contractors have not provided the significant cost savings that were promised, nor have they been found to take particular care of the public funds with which they have been entrusted.

insight. This post will explore the ubiquitous explanation of ‘money motivator’ of military veterans-turned-private security contractors by looking at past studies and drawing on interviews.

Private security contractors are often mistaken for ‘mercenaries.’ The Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions put forth six conditions, including the individual’s ‘motivation’, required for the ‘mercenary’ assignation. As Krahmann pointed out, it is not only problematic to prove all six conditions simultaneously, as is required by the Protocol, but proving an individual’s personal motivation virtually impossible in determining if they are a mercenary or not. What is interesting is that motivation was included at all in the Protocol. Motive is not only difficult to prove, it is also somewhat useless in understanding a population of which little is known.

Most private security contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan are not Westerners, but either local nationals (LN) or third country nationals (TCN). Of those that are Western private security contractors, most have either prior military or law enforcement service, and most are men. They are the focus of this post. While many people assume these individuals are motivated by money, and even adventure, we do not really know what influences them to become contractors.

Security contractors do get paid well, for the length of their contract. As one security contractor pointed out to me during an interview, ‘there is no security in security.’ Security contracting is dependent on conflicts that by their circumstance create a market for outsourcing. It is not a one fits all approach. Making $150,000 for one year as a contractor does not equate to being an active duty soldier making $40,000 per year for 10, 15 or 20 years. Security contractors do not receive from their employer life insurance, long-term savings plans, housing, health insurance, or benefits extended to spouses or children.

Security contracting can also be adventurous. Yet recent numbers show that security contractors are 4.5 times more likely to die than soldiers. In fact, by 2010 more contractors had died than soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan. Like their armed forces counterparts, security contractors have reported similar rates for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), mild traumatic brain injury (mTBI), alcohol abuse, depression, suicidal ideation and suicide. Further, they suffer disabilities as a result of their work like amputated limbs, blindness, and deafness among others as a result of being exposed to IEDs, ambushes, mortar attacks, kidnappings and incoming artillery fire. When their contracts are over, unlike active duty service personnel or veterans, contractors have little recourse to address their mental or physical health and well-being. Those contractors who are military veterans often encounter the bureaucratic snag that the government and public veteran service providers will often turn contractors away as they cannot prove their symptoms are something they incurred while

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13 A. Hawks, Interview (October 2013).
17 See Table 1 in Messenger, ‘Experiences’, p. 861, where the following were ranked highest by contractor surveyed: ‘thought might be killed or seriously wounded’, ‘came under small arms fire’, ‘came under enemy sniper fire’, ‘saw UK/allied forces killed or wounded’, ‘discharged weapon at enemy’, ‘encountered hostile or aggressive reactions from civilians’ and ‘handled or uncovered human remains’. See also Kevin Powers, ‘A Soldier’s Story: Returning Home from Iraq’, Parade Magazine (October, 2012), available at: http://www.parade.com/news/2012/10/21-iraq-veteran-kevin-powers-interview-the-yellow-birds.html (last accessed on 6 November 2013).
serving in the armed forces, leaving the individual to advocate for themselves while trying to secure care for their issues.\textsuperscript{19}

If we focus on Western private security contractors we know that the majority have served in their state’s military. Often, this experience is required for a job. Prior military experience situated with discourse on the individual’s ‘motive’ for becoming a security contractor is somewhat of a paradigm shift. For one, the individuals serving in the military are not normally defined by economic motivation. Surveyed US enlistment propensities show that many individuals initially join the military in an effort of social mobility across four broad categories: institutional (desire to serve, be patriotic, be adventurous, be challenged, and be a soldier); future-oriented (desire for a military career and money for college); occupational (need to support family and best choice available; and pecuniary benefits (desire to repay college loans and receive bonus money).\textsuperscript{20} A second study has shown similar results and private gain did not top the list of why the individual stated they became a security contractor.\textsuperscript{21} It is natural, as a result of compensation in the military, for the individual to be attracted to the earnings of a security contractor. But will this disparity in earnings explain who the individual is? Or why they decide to become a contractor? No. A look at what ‘motive’ is helps to understand why this is so.

Motives, as the sociologist C. Wright Mills wrote,

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.


are fluid and flexible, influenced by the individual’s environment. If the environment changes, Mills argues, the individual’s motives will as well. Inversely, if the environment remains unchanged, motives also remain unchanged.\textsuperscript{22} He writes, motives ‘are words...they do not denote any elements ‘in’ individuals. They stand for anticipating situational consequences of questioned conduct,’\textsuperscript{23} meaning that motivation is contextual and rational. In contrast to intrinsic and extrinsic motivations in efforts to understand the individual, Mills examines motivation by way of vocabulary. He writes that ‘conversations may be concerned with the factual features of a situation as they are seen and believed to be or it may seek to integrate and promote a set of diverse social actions with reference to the situation and its \textit{normative patterns of expectations}’.\textsuperscript{24} The italics, emphasis not in the original, highlight the influence of institutions on situations and how they will subsequently engender a particular narrative constructing not only the individual’s motives but also what is expected by others for the individual’s motives to be.

In regards to the above ‘money motivator’, the normative social construct existing today regarding security contractors restricts the individual to being driven solely by economic gain. For Mills, this explanation of money as a sole motive would be far too reductive in considering these individuals. Verbalising ‘money’ as a motive is not copasetic to the military institution – the military institution is one that embeds, reinforces and nurtures the individual’s role in the Social Contract, emphasising the service the individual provides. Motives, therefore, are an accepted part of understanding, but are not definitive. They can describe the effects of the individual’s environment, but will not necessarily describe the individual.

I argue that to understand military veterans-turned-private security contractors, two things are more important than motive alone. The first is the ‘environmental continuity’ security contracting provides by way of operational environment,
language and similar experience of peers; and the experience the individual seeks by way of becoming a security contractor. These two things are better situated within military institutionalisation, and military – civilian transition, not motivation. While Western armed security contractors are a small group, they are an important population to understand. Motives generalise these individuals, often unfairly. I propose more inquiry into what influences the individual, when and where, to become security contractors and the attraction of the security contracting environment, as those will provide a pragmatism in scholarship that motives do not. After all one can be motivated to do something, and never do it. Shall we let that define these individuals carrying arms in high-risk environments? I should think not.

Part IV: There’s a new sheriff in town – but can he keep the peace?
Birthe Anders

One of the main concerns about Private Military and Security Companies (PMSCs) is that their employees carry weapons in volatile situations and are not as well regulated as state forces. While armed guarding is only one part of the industry it is arguably the one that raises the biggest concerns over the effective control of potentially deadly force. However, with the recent launch of the International Code of Conduct Association, PMSCs have never been as well-regulated as right now – but is this enough?

In September 2013, a new regulatory body for PMSCs was established: the International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers Association (ICoCA). The ICoCA is a non-profit organisation based in Geneva and is supposed to certify companies and monitor their compliance with the Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers (ICoC). The code contains provisions on company management, governance and the conduct of personnel, including on the use of force. As of early November, 708 companies had signed up. Thus monitoring its implementation is no small task. While some commentators have welcomed the ICoCA and others condemned it as a poor attempt to legitimise PMSC’s work, overall the launch of the ICoCA has not generated much discussion so far. Why is this? It might be due to confusion and uncertainty if this is an achievement worth celebrating. Even for long-standing followers of PMSC regulation efforts it is not yet clear what effect the ICoCA will have.

Recently Anton Katz, chair of the UN Working Group on Mercenaries warned of regulatory gaps created by differing national regulations that could lead to human rights violations. The Montreux Document and the ICoC were valuable, but they were not enough as ‘these initiatives are not legally binding and cannot be considered as complete solutions for the problems concerning PMSCs’. While it is always good to keep an ideal situation in mind (i.e. a legally-binding, international convention on PMSCs’ rights and obligations especially in war zones complemented by national legislation, all of them well-monitored and enforced of course), it is worth examining what we have right now. While not the same as a law, the ICoCA will monitor compliance with the ICoC for those PMSCs that signed up to it. So what we have right now is for the first time an oversight mechanism that is supported by companies, governments and advocacy groups at

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26 For an overview of where signatory companies are headquartered, see http://www.icoc-psp.org/Home_Page.html. With 208 the UK is the country with the most signatory companies. (Last accessed on 12 November 2013.)


30 Available at http://www.icrc.org/eng/assets/files/other/icrc_002_0996.pdf. (Last accessed on 12 November 2013.)

the same time.

For anyone not familiar with PMSC regulation, a brief overview is in order. In a nutshell, many laws and regulations apply to PMSCs and their employees, but few were specifically created for them. This can be problematic as even the best laws need monitoring and enforcement – inherently difficult in many contexts PMSCs operate in. On the national level, few states have addressed the issue. Exceptions are South Africa, the US and most recently Switzerland. On the international level, the UN Working Group on Mercenaries has published a Possible Draft Convention on PMSCs, while the most prominent efforts are those initiated by the Swiss government: the Montreux process and the ICoC. The Montreux Document is aimed at states and, in a legally non-binding way, signatories acknowledge their obligations under human rights and international humanitarian law. In contrast, the ICoC is directed at companies. A central aspect of PMSCs regulation is its implementation. *Nulla actore nullus iudex* – if no one brings a claim forward there will be no investigation. Without adequate oversight and enforcement, the best regulation is useless.

This brings us back to the ICoCA. Once it is up and running, companies that signed up to the ICoC can, among other things, expect to have their performance monitored by the ICoCA. As one observer commented, the Association will institutionalise ‘the relationship between stakeholders’ as well as ensure ‘that PMSCs that sign on the ICoC actually conduct themselves accordingly’. This has a lot to do with money. If the Association is not properly funded, oversight tools such as field visits will not take place. Companies pay according to their size, with small companies paying US$ 2,500, medium companies US$ 5000 and big companies US$ 9000 in the first year of membership, which increases slightly in the following year. One member of the Steering Committee stepped down in summer 2013 and among his criticisms were company dues being set too low to allow the association to carry out independent monitoring of company behaviour. However, both the UK and the US have welcomed the ICoCA. The State Department might incorporate ICOCA as requirement into the bidding process, as well as to the ANSI-PSC 1 standard, while the UK has announced that a national certification system will be created to measure companies’ implementation of the ICOC. These announcements are significant as both countries are important PMSC clients.

Industry representatives were – together with government and civil society representatives – involved in the creation of the ICoCA, yet it goes beyond previous attempts at industry self-regulation. That is a big step. Arguably, we can now only judge the ICoCA by what is on paper. The Association is currently looking for an executive director so it will be some time before it is up and running. How robust its monitoring and complaints procedures are remains to be seen until the first cases of misconduct are reported. We all remember that Blackwater simply withdrew from the US industry association ISOA and its code of conduct in light of an impending

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32 Available at http://psm.du.edu/media/documents/international_regulation/united_nations/human_rights_council_and_ga/open_ended_wg/session_1/un_open_ended_wg_session_1_draft_of-a-possible-convention.pdf. (Last accessed on 12 November 2013.)

33 For those interested in further reading, information about PMSC regulation is as good as never before, largely due to the Private Security Monitor, a project of the University of Denver in association with DCAF. It provides an extensive, annotated library of national and international laws, conventions and other instruments somehow related to the regulation of PMSCs. This includes a detailed list of national regulation for PMSCs for most countries around the world. Having said that, hardly any country has laws specifically applying to PMSCs. Instead, laws focus on domestic security provision, mercenaries or the enlistment of a country’s citizens in foreign armed forces. http://psm.du.edu/. (Last accessed on 12 November 2013.)

34 See http://psm.du.edu/commentary/index.html. (Last accessed on 12 November 2013.)


38 If you have seven or more years of work experience in the private security sector along with a number of other skills you can apply until 18th November. http://www.icoc-psp.org/uploads/ICOCA_Executive_Director.pdf. (Last accessed on 12 November 2013.)
misconduct investigation a few years ago.

So the answer to the introductory question depends on whether you are a glass half-full or half-empty kind of person. Yes, the success of the ICoCA remains to be seen. Yes, it applies only to companies that signed up to it and yes, it does not eliminate the need for individual states to regulate companies within their jurisdiction. It may be a small step but it is a critical move towards a more comprehensive regulation of the industry, especially by differentiating between companies that committed to the ICoC and those that did not.
About the contributors

**Alister Wedderburn** is a first year PhD student at the Department of War Studies, King’s College London. His research focuses on visual representations of warfare.

**Zachary Ginsburg** is a Master’s graduate of the Department of War Studies, King’s College London. He recently concluded a Fulbright research award at the Centre for European Studies at Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Poland.

**Matthew Knowles** is a PhD student at the Department of War Studies, King's College London. He holds a BA (Hons) in History and English Literature from Essex University and completed his Master's degree with the Open University in 2008. He has had articles published in the *Anglo-Norse Journal* and other periodicals. He specialises in the military co-operation between Britain and Norway during the Second World War.

**Nikolai Gourof** is a historian and a Doctoral researcher at the Department of War Studies, King’s College London. Formerly a lawyer and a corporate consultant, he decided to follow the historian’s path and build a career in the academia. His main field of interest and expertise is early modern Europe, its history and culture. He is currently researching the evolution of the culture and practice of war in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, with Hapsburg Spain as his main geographical focus.

**Mike McCahill** writes on film for *The Guardian, The Sunday Telegraph, The Scotsman* and *Metro*, and is the chief film critic for *MovieMail*. He has contributed to Radio 4’s Today programme, and made regular appearances on the Press TV show *Cinepolitics*. His reviews can be found in The DVD Guide (Canongate, 2006; second edition 2007), *Halliwell’s The Movies that Matter* (HarperCollins, 2008) and online at http://cinesthesiac.blogspot.co.uk. He’s a lover, not a fighter.

**Birthe Anders PhD** studied political science, law and peace and conflict studies at the universities of Marburg (Germany) and Victoria (Canada) and has recently completed her PhD at King’s College London, on Private Military Security Contractors, focusing on their relationship to NGOs and regulation.