# MILITARISM AND MODERN SOCIETY

by Charles Townshend

Un soldat de la liberté
Quand il est par elle exalté
Vaut mieux à lui seul que cent esclaves
—Theodore Rousseau, 1793

[A soldier of liberty, exalted by her, is worth more than a hundred slaves]

In 1793, Year I of the French Republic, the town of St. Quentin in Picardy changed the name of one of its streets from rue Ste. Catherine to rue Grenadier Malfuson. Malfuson was a "soldier of liberty," one of the volunteers of 1792, who had died in battle around Lille. To name a street after one of the *menu peuple*, the people of no importance, was in 18th-century France a truly astonishing, revolutionary gesture. Critics of the Revolution might contend that it was an empty one, but its symbolic force cannot be easily set aside. Alongside thousands of parallel happenings, local, national, and international, it gave form to a general sense of decisive transition. The mobilization of the people for war seemed to lie at the heart of this epochal change. It promised a wholly new relationship between armed
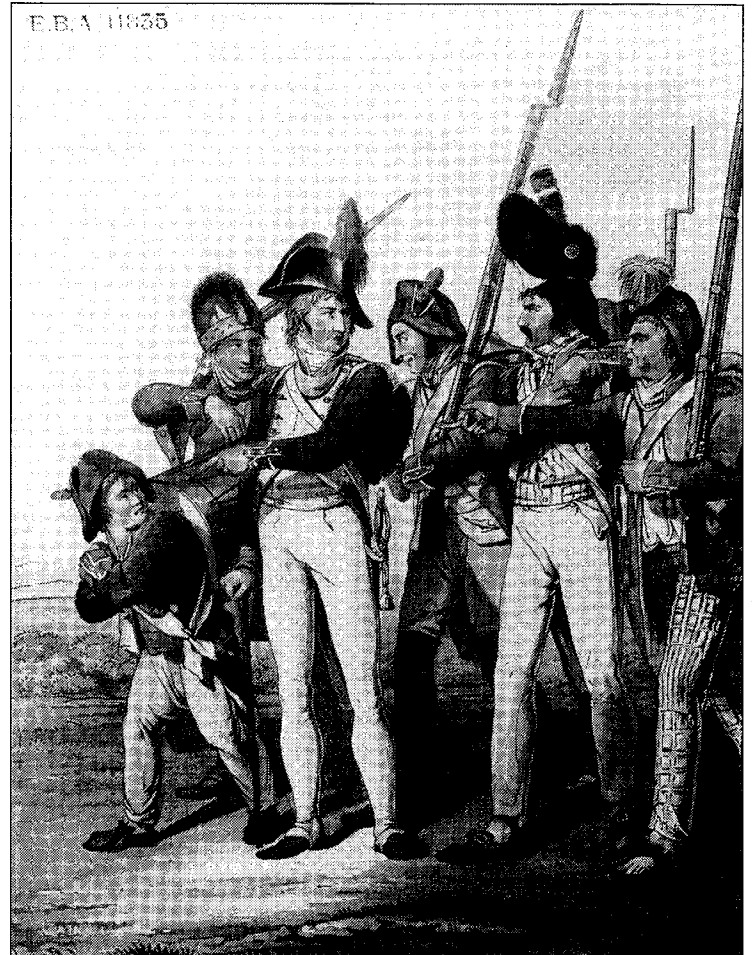
Infantrymen of the French republican army around 1793, when the order for mass conscription, the levée en masse, *was issued.*

forces and societies: "democracy in arms" in the shape of huge "citizen armies" raised by universal military service.

The link between modern society and large-scale armed forces has, since the French Revolution, seemed plain, but it has never been straightforward. Indeed, to many it has always seemed paradoxical, if not actually perverse. Modernization has been thought of as a comprehensive, final shift, driven by industrialization and signaled by the triumph of secularization, literacy, and democracy—in short, the civic culture. Amidst this progress, war was seen by most 19th-century liberals as a barbaric survival, doomed to eventual extinction. According to this view, democratizing the institutions of war, above all, armies, should have been a prelude to their fairly rapid disappearance. William Gladstone, who served as his nation's prime minister four times between 1868 and 1894, voiced the dominant English view tersely when he insisted that "a standing army can never be turned into a moral institution." His countryman, Richard Cobden, leading spirit of the 19th-century "Manchester School" of free-market economists, held that unless universal disarmament was achieved, military establishments would cripple the economy. There could be "no necessary or logical end to their increase, for the progress of scientific knowledge will lead to constant increase of expenditure. There is no limit but the limit of taxation."

In more optimistic moods, progressives hoped that the liberalization of political institutions would lay to rest the ancient specter of militarism. But Cobden's most pessimistic prediction was borne out. Armies simply grew larger and more expensive (and taxation went beyond any

limit Cobden could have imagined), while war became more comprehensive and destructive. And the phenomenon of Napoleon Bonaparte—"la révolution, c'est moi"—seemed to drive the stake of militarism into the heart of the liberal transformation. Napoleon's adventurism added a modern twist, "Bonapartism," to the ancient threat of military domination under classical labels such as praetorianism and Caesarism. Its impact—melodramatically etched by Beethoven furiously eliminating his dedication to Napoleon from the *Eroica* symphony—was all the greater because of the aesthetic power of the pristine myth of popular mobilization that preceded it. The sense of liberation generated by the early victories of the French revolutionary armies reached beyond France itself. The psychological turning point was the militarily indecisive engagement (often called a cannonade rather than a battle) at Valmy in September 1792, when the Austrian and Prussian armies, confronted by the massed French forces, abandoned their march on Paris and their attempt to restore the French monarchy. One of the civilian spectators, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe—not only the outstanding German writer of modern times but also the administrator of a small city-state—told his countrymen: "From this place and this time forth commences a new era in the history of the world."

Valmy was proof that ordinary people could make up in commitment what they lacked in experience. It was followed in 1793 by the transcendent emblem of the revolutionary struggle, the decree of the *levée en masse* (mass rising):

> From this moment until the enemy is
> driven from the territory of the Republic,
> all French people are permanently

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requisitioned for the service of the armies. The young men will go to battle; married men will forge arms and transport provisions; women will make tents and clothing, and serve in the hospitals; children will shred old linen for bandages; old men will be carried to public places to arouse the courage of the fighters [*guerriers*], and preach hatred of kings and the unity of the Republic.

Modern scholarship has established that this manifesto was rhetorical rather than programmatic. It did not bring in universal or compulsory military service, and it proved erratic in operation. But whether or not its actual result was to raise half a million troops—the figures have been long disputed—its moral effect was profound. It gave French generals, and their opponents, an awesome sense of the Revolution's strength and purpose. With the immense resources thus conjured up, war was prosecuted with frightening energy. It was not that the French armies won all their battles—they did not—but that they did not slow down between them. They harried their enemies with alarming relentlessness.

This energy was sensed at every level, from the skirmish line upward. Soldiers of liberty were not merely more numerous but could fight in free, fluid formations more dynamic than the drill-book patterns of the old despotism. Self-discipline and high morale did away with the need for brutal punishments and tight control. Indeed, the salient characteristic of the revolutionary troops was their self-respect, mirrored by the respect accorded to them by their communities and commemorated in countless popular festivals and songs. This luminous myth was further highlighted by the contrast between the natural forces unleashed by the *levée* and the artificial forces of the dynastic states. It was brought most sharply into focus in Prussia, where the disastrous military defeats of 1806 at Jena and Auerstädt by Napoleon's forces was

blamed on the failure of the rigid system perfected by Frederick the Great, the paragon of enlightened despots. Control of the Prussian army passed—temporarily at least—into the hands of reformers like General Gerhard von Scharnhorst and his assistant Karl von Clausewitz, a uniquely thoughtful writer on war, who insisted that however small a state might be, it must defend itself to the last ditch, "or one would conclude that its soul is dead."

What was thought to be happening in the revolutionary epoch was not quite a "military revolution" in the sense proposed by the historian Michael Roberts, who argued that military changes in 17th-century Europe catalyzed the emergence of the modern state. Other historians have suggested that while the general trend of professionalization was unmistakable, the changes identified by Roberts were too diffuse to be properly called a revolution. The growth in the size of armies, for instance, though impressive, was erratic; weapons remained simple and unchanged for generations through the time of Napoleon; even the formations adopted by the revolutionary armies have been shown to be less novel than was once thought. The truly revolutionary technical changes were to come later, in the 19th century. Ultimately, the creation of railways and the invention of smokeless explosives accompanied by quick-firing rifled guns transformed the entire face—and the cost—of war. But the depersonalization of combat, which gradually became a salient feature of modern war, undoubtedly began with the changes Roberts identified.

The ultimate transformation of war was accelerated by the deeper shift that the French Revolution triggered: a shift on the social, rather than the administrative, plane; a revolution of attitudes and expectations. European armies of the old regime,

Workers at a munitions factory. The widespread mobilization of industry and society to support the military effort marked the American Civil War as one of the first truly modern and "total" wars.

ment at the Battle of Fontenoy, "que Messieurs les ennemis tirent les premiers"—that his respected opponents should fire first. The soldiers whose bodies he gallantly offered as targets were drawn from the opposite end of society, coerced into enlistment either directly, or more often indirectly, by hardship, and kept in the ranks by iron discipline. For all the splendor of their clothing, war was not decorous for battle casualties and, far outnumbering these, victims of disease. It was grim enough, too, for those civilians who found themselves in the path of the armies. But those paths were restricted. In a crucial sense war remained limited in scope and aspiration. Rulers tried to avoid bankrupting themselves, and did not aim to overthrow one another or to liberate the subjects of their foes.

The Revolution removed these limits. It removed the aristocracy with tremendous public drama, and though the peasantry remained the backbone of the rank and file, the belief that armies should (and in some sense did) represent the whole of society became dominant. The Prussian reformers aimed above all to incorporate the middle class into the army, and did this through the creation of a short-service reserve, the *Landwehr*. In the expedient of the local-defense *Landsturm* they even—briefly—armed the people. The mass mobilization announced by the *levée*

however big they became, had operated on the margins of society. Their officer class drew its self-image directly from the role of the feudal nobility as the sole bearers of arms. Its code of honor derived from a notion of service to the crown under universal Christian laws of war. It was remarkably cosmopolitan. Perhaps the most vivid image of 18th-century war was the invitation issued by the commander of a French regi-

en masse brought forth a radical notion of war, identified by Clausewitz as "absolute war." The sheer scale of the new armies, and the participation that produced it, were both underpinned by ideology—the commitment to the complete overthrow of the enemy, without compromise, whatever the cost. As Lazare Carnot, the "organizer of victory" on the Committee of Public Safety in 1793, stridently insisted, "War is a violent condition. One should make it *à l'outrance* or go home .... We must exterminate, exterminate to the bitter end!" This was the mental armament for total war.

Such intensity was too strenuous to be sustained for very long. Writing his masterpiece *On War* in the 1820s, Clausewitz recognized that not all future wars would be so close to the absolute as those of his time, though he shrewdly pointed out that "once barriers—which in a sense consist only in man's ignorance of the possible—are torn down, they are not easily set up again." The myth of the risen people retained its electrifying potential. During the 19th century, population growth, urbanization, and industrialization ensured that the people bulked ever larger. But this evolution could prove conservative. Armies in particular showed a tendency to revert to type: The French volunteers of 1792–93 stayed on to become hardened professionals, the kind commemorated by Alfred de Vigny in his autobiographical tales *Servitude et Grandeur Militaires* (*The Military Condition*, 1835), whose elegiac tone resembles that of the most popular German soldier's song, "Ich hatt' ein Kamerad" ("I Had a Comrade").

In the end, the Napoleonic wars were won by professional armies, notwithstanding the efforts of Spanish guerrillas, Russian partisans, and the Prussian *Landwehr*. The soldiers who fought those wars were no longer called "warriors," except by rhet-

oricians or satirists; their modern title (*soldat*, literally "one who is paid") better expressed their relation to the state. At the same time the cosmic horizons of the first citizen armies shrank to the bounds of the "nation in arms." Once French soldiers had sung without hypocrisy, "Du salut de notre patrie/Depend celui de l'Univers" (upon the safety of our country depends that of the universe), and the German nationalists who mobilized against them did so in the cosmopolitan spirit of Herder and Goethe. But the xenophobic propensity of nationalism was to give a new shape and lease on life to militarism.

Was it possible, in fact, to have a great conscript army that was free of militarism? The answer depended on what militarism was taken to mean. A variety of formal meanings has been assigned to this protean concept since it was coined sometime in the early 19th century as a characterization of the Napoleonic system. It was given wide currency by the anarchist philosopher Pierre-Joseph Proudhon in the 1860s to describe the outlook which saw war as the most exalted human activity, and its impact was amplified by the sociologist Herbert Spencer in the 1880s under his more cumbersome label "the militant type of society." Such militancy involved the "close binding of society into a whole" and fostered a special kind of people, who "must have patriotism which regards the triumph of their society as the supreme end of action; they must possess the loyalty whence flows obedience to authority; and that they may be obedient they must have abundant faith." Though this looked like a vision of ancient Sparta—with a sideswipe at contemporary Prussia—it would come to seem all too relevant to the modern "Western" democracies in the century of total war. For though Spencer held that the "industrial" type of society would prove stronger than the "militant," he failed to foresee how

deeply industrial change would enlarge and entrench the military machine.

Seventy years later, in his striking work *Military Organization and Society*, the sociologist Stanislav Andreski listed six distinct usages of the word *militarism*. In a bid for analytical precision, he proposed several terms, such as *militancy, militarization, militocracy*, and *militolatry*, as separate components of militarism. But he had limited success, thanks in part to the ingrained public resistance to scholarly neologism. In this case, it may be that the special resonance of the term *militarism* depends on its imprecision. It represents a vague dread, the possibility that the violent side of human nature might at any time gain the ascendant. On this plane, militarism is not a structural arrangement, not even military intervention, or the "preponderance of the military in the state," to use Andreski's general formulation, but the spillage of military values into society at large. From the liberal point of view, such enlargement of influence is instinctively regarded as contamination, and the greatest danger arises when, as in Germany during World War I, it comes to be seen as healthy. ("Militarism implies that we do not just cherish and uphold our Army because we are impelled by rational calculations," declared the eminent German theologian Ernst Troeltsch in November 1914, "but also because we feel an irresistible compulsion within our hearts to love it.")

Ultimately, therefore, militarism remained a negative concept implying a sharp difference between military and civilian values. The great conscript armies of the 19th-century nation-states might accordingly be forces for good or evil, depending on whether they were animated by a civil or a military spirit. America was believed to have preserved itself from the dangers of militarism inherent in the vast mobilization of a war of national survival, but its situation was unique and transient. Germany, by contrast, felt itself to be under permanent siege, actual or potential: exactly the situation pinpointed in the Victorian political theorem that the level of liberty in any country is inversely proportional to the level of external threat. German liberals were only too aware of the way in which the history of Prussian militarism impinged on the present, and the constitutional crisis in Prussia after 1859, which brought Bismarck to power, was in essence a struggle for the soul of the state.

Although liberals accepted that Prussia needed a great army and an effective system of conscription, they resisted the royal demand that the period of service be increased from two to three years, believing that this extra year would bring a shift from liberalism to militarism, and turn Prussia into a "barracks state" even more rigid than that of Frederick the Great. The liberals lost that struggle, and the army went on to win Bismarck's wars, to increase its prestige and autonomy as a "state within the state," and eventually, in the latter part of World War I, to furnish the textbook example of full-blown militarism.

But even had the liberals succeeded in retaining the two-year service period, it is not clear that they could have kept militarism in check. In his study *Militarism* (1898), Guglielmo Ferrero noted that soldiers occupied the most important positions in the German official world: Civil ministries were directed by generals, even though officers on active service had no vote. "Bismarck was originally a doctor of law, who had only fulfilled the ordinary period of military service, and yet, when it was wished to consecrate his high position in the State, he had to be made a general; and in a general's uniform he was wont to make his appearances in the *Reichstag*."

The constitutional historian Otto Hintze remarked in 1906 that "militarism pervades our political system and public life today, generally in a very decisive way." He added the telling observation that "even Social Democracy, which in principle is against everything connected with militarism, not only owes to it the discipline on which its party organization largely rests, but also in its ideal for the future it has unconsciously adopted a good measure of the coercion of the individual by the community, which comes from the Prussian military state." The underlying reason, as the outbreak of war in 1914 would finally show, was the power of nationalism. Modern conscript armies were symbiotically linked with nationalism, whether as product or producer. Nationalism itself was a liberal cause in the early 19th century; its champions expected that free nations would live in peace (since all wars were, they believed, caused by the dynastic rivalries of oppressive monarchs). But even at the "springtide of nations," the failed revolutions of 1848, nationalism's authoritarian face was becoming visible. Germany, for instance, could only ensure its own security by denying self-determination to the Poles of the strategically vital Posen region. By the end of the century the paranoid nature of nationalism was increasingly marked; nations feared rather than loved. The liberal dream of international harmony was giving way to "social Darwinism," the belief that nations, like species, were involved in a struggle for survival—not against a hostile nature but against hostile neighbors. The nation-in-arms was thus an oppressive agenda. Historian Peter Paret has posed the question whether "a policy as coercive as conscription can express the enthusiasm of those to whom it is applied." As Paret insists, from the *levée en masse* onward, all systems of universal military service were managerial devices. Popular enthusiasm and spontaneity were outweighed by "the coercive and didactic features of conscription."

For this reason there was always something dubious in the rhetoric, heard most commonly in France but also in Italy and other countries, of the conscript army as "the school of the nation." This phrase first appeared in Paris in the summer of 1793, where its ideological meaning was very clear. It became a political agenda in many parts of Europe during the next century: The Hungarian *Honved*, for instance, was deliberately revived on an old model after the Austro-Hungarian compromise of 1867 to promote Magyar supremacy in the "crownlands of St. Stephen"; the newly unified Italian army of 1861 had the conscious mission of creating the sense of national unity (*Italianità*) that had proved so distressingly weak among the people at large. In the 1890s the idea became the vehicle by which France's most public military thinker, Marshal Louis-Hubert-Gonzalve Lyautey, established his intellectual reputation. In two articles in the leading French quarterly review, Lyautey asserted the capacity of the army to reconcile the political, social, and religious divisions of the nation. He argued that in the colonies, the army was actually the principal agent of civilization, and that it could play the same constructive part in domestic life—but for the manifest inadequacy of the military service system.

What appeared to Lyautey as inadequacy in fact represented the outcome of a long public debate about the nature of military obligation and reflected a persistent French reluctance to embrace the supposedly democratic principle of universality. The institution of the first-line reserve, the *Garde Mobile*, under the military service law of 1868 was emblematic of this: The spiritual descendant of the revolutionary National Guard was to provide 15 days'

A British recruitment poster from World War I.

training per year to all those Frenchmen— the great majority—who avoided service with the line army, but their training was guaranteed to be strictly segregated, to protect them from contact with the regular troops. For the army to have become a true school of the nation required the kind of superheated patriotism that emerged only in the tense years before the outbreak of war in 1914. This patriotism may have been democratic in its way, but what the army then recreated was far removed from its liberal origins, and it had a much narrower purpose. The real "school of the nation" that followed was the Battle of Verdun, that debilitating victory from which Marshal Pétain drew those deeply conservative conclusions about the French nation that were later to shape the Vichy regime.

The two world wars brought home the prodigious implications of the "nation in arms." The stupefying scale and protraction of the first sprang from the combina-

tion of almost limitless "manpower"—a distinctive modern coinage—with the technical advances of the late 19th century. Battles became unrecognizable, and unwinnable, as such. (At the 1914 version of Valmy, there were no civilian spectators, aside from involuntary victims; Goethe would by then have been a *Landwehr* officer.) Maneuver was replaced by attrition. The only possible adaptive response was "total war," in which formal military organizations melted into the cauldron of a society fighting for its life. Even states protected by traditions of deep-seated and deliberate resistance to military control—such as Britain—could not fully uphold the principle of civilian supremacy in such an emergency. Others, Germany above all, succumbed to a virtual military dictatorship that cast a shadow far beyond the formal cessation of international hostilities.

It was not so much the visible structures of military control, formidable though

these were in the wartime practice and postwar writings of Field-Marshal Erich von Ludendorff, as the invisible sense of community and purpose that animated the paramilitary movements that burgeoned in Germany after the war. While hundreds of thousands enlisted in militias (*Wehrver-bände*) of all political hues, the profoundly influential writings of Ernst Junger insisted that uniforms and marches were not the point; the real need was not for "warriors who sleep in bourgeois bedrooms," but to preserve and extend the *Schutzengrabenge-meinschaft* (community of the trenches) in peacetime. The result was a paramilitarism that, in the words of the modern German historian Volker Berghahn, "pervaded virtually all aspects of German political life." And though Germany was plainly an extreme case, the phenomenon has spread throughout the 20th-century world.

In the Western states too, the impact of total war went beyond the constitutional sphere of civil-military relations and the classical liberal problem of resisting military power. It largely dissolved the distinction between military and civilian values on which that resistance had been grounded. In a sense, the maintenance of civilian supremacy became an empty formula, even in a state with such a long-nurtured liberal self-image as Britain. Under the 1914 Defence of the Realm Act, the government took powers of a kind that had never been exercised except under martial law. From the classical liberal standpoint, the fact that these powers were wielded by civilians was immaterial—the powers were derived from military logic. The contours of that logic could be read in the barely concealed contempt of many military officers for party politics and the "frocks" who managed them, and even more startlingly on the Left, as in the assertion of the Fabian socialist R. H. Tawney that

The soldier at the front expects from the civilian and from the government a sense of obedience to duty and an enforcement of discipline as severe and as exacting as that to which he is himself accustomed. The call of duty should be imposed on all alike.

A parallel shift took place in America, where the Sedition Act of 1918 conferred a dizzying power of control over public utterance. (One conservative critic, Robert Nisbet, later charged that "the West's first real experience with totalitarianism—political absolutism extended into every possi-

"Through work to victory! Through victory to peace!" announces a German poster of 1917.

ble area of culture and society...with a kind of terror always waiting in the wings—came with the American war state under Woodrow Wilson.") The corrosive potential of such emergency powers was

quite obvious, and some traditionalists were puzzled by the absence of protest against them. While the leading academic study of the liberal states' adaptation to total war, Clinton Rossiter's *Constitutional Dictatorship* (1947), came to the conclusion that essential democratic values had come through unscathed, it is possible to doubt this. The overwhelming public enthusiasm for the "war effort" may rather have shifted the very standards by which constitutional propriety was judged. In British political culture, for instance, "liberty of the subject" lost its prominence in the vocabulary of self-definition.

The realization that modern militarism may be generically more complex than its simpler predecessors, and thus harder to identify or to control, was vividly brought forth by Alfred Vagts in his *History of Militarism: Civilian and Military* (1937). His most brilliant insight challenged the standard idea that militarism was simply an expression of war-mindedness (a view propounded in the first edition of the *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences* in 1930, and perpetuated, it must be noted, in the second edition 40 years later). For Vagts, the distinctive modern development was the relative autonomy of armies, which he labeled "narcissism." Modern mass armies, whose function bulks as large in peace as in war, "dream that they exist for themselves alone." They create a militarism which has no strict military purpose. Vagts distinguished armies "maintained in a military way," which is functionally straightforward and "scientific in its essential qualities," from those maintained in a "militaristic way." The latter generate "a vast array of customs, interests, prestige, actions and thought . . . transcending the true military purposes." Societies connived in this "militarism of moods and opinions" by coming to admire soldiers not merely in

wartime, which is reasonable enough, but in peacetime as well. Though his principal targets were Germany and Japan, Vagts thought that the Western democracies were no longer immune to such militarism.

He found its origins in the "resurgent emotionalism" of the Romantic period, which in his view smothered the old rational distaste for the soldier as a drilled murderer. Romanticization met the need to disguise the drabness of modernization of both war and society. Vagts added the fruitful perception that the attitude of the "modern masses" toward militarism was contradictory: As individuals they might dislike military service, but as a collectivity they came to love the sense of power that great armies generated. Though his masses were sociologically a rather crude aggregation, his qualitative judgment was echoed in Andreski's blunt linkage of "military participation ratio" (MPR) with "ferocity of warfare." Addressing the question whether conscription had, or could have, promoted democracy, Andreski also tried to establish a distinction between "bellicosity" and "ferocity," arguing that the extension of military service in itself neither blunted nor sharpened bellicosity—that is, the propensity toward war—but that it was definitely "conducive to greater ferocity in war" once begun.

Andreski's use of the word "ferocity" seems to contain both statistical scale and moral enormity, both of which have been all too much in evidence in this century. His implicit equation of the "cannibalistic feasts" of "tribes in arms" with, say, the strategic bombing campaign of World War II, may look rather extravagant; yet his view that "where war is the prerogative of nobles, we find it usually regulated by a code of honour" provides an important perspective. If we substitute a more neutral word like "intensity" for "ferocity," the ar-

gument about the consequences of the professionalization of armies comes into clearer focus. It was most sharply drawn by the Yale political scientist Harold Lasswell in 1941. Lasswell argued that "the military men who dominate a modern technical society will be very different from the officers of history and tradition." Their domination would follow precisely from the fact that total war compelled "those who direct the violence operations . . . to consider the entire gamut of problems that arise in living together under modern conditions." Thus modern military officers were developing "skills that we have traditionally accepted as part of civilian management." These would enable them to create what he called the "garrison state," of which the pioneering model was, of course, Germany. Writing at the time of the German invasion of Russia, Lasswell's outlook was pessimistic: He saw no necessary reason why militarism should succumb to civilianism, "the multivalued orientation of a society in which violent coercion is deglamorized as an end in itself, and is perceived as a regrettable concession to the persistence of variables whose magnitudes we have not yet been able to control without paying what appears to be an excessive cost in terms of such autonomy as is possible under the cloud of chronic peril."

This analysis rested, evidently, on the idea that there was something new about the nature of modern peril—"the socialization of danger." It was in his view, universal and chronic. Lasswell went so far as to suggest that the military elite would manufacture such peril if need be, though when he reconsidered his 1941 essay 20 years later he did not take the view that the Cold War was such an artifact. He was able to transfer the threat of the garrison state easily enough from Nazi Germany to the USSR. Robert Nisbet, in *The Twilight*

of Authority (1975), also took the "military socialism" of the Soviet Union and China to be one of the principal reasons for what he feared to be "the likelihood of militarization of Western countries" in the near future. The other was terrorism. It was, he warned, "impossible to conceive of liberal, representative democracy continuing," with its crippling endowment of due process, if terror increased in the next decade at the rate of the last.

Terrorism, certainly, represents a "socialization of danger" as absolute as total war, and though the urgency of these warnings may seem to have been blunted by the dissolution of military socialism and the apparent containment of terrorism, Nisbet's assault on militarism, from a classical conservative standpoint, provides a remarkable index of the change that had occurred during the century. He saw "the lure of military society" as a primary corrosive agent in the "twilight of authority." This was critical for the West, where "more sheer thought has been given to war and its values than anywhere else in world history." For "there is nothing so constrictive of freedom, of creativeness, and of genuine individuality as the military in its relation to culture . . . . As soon as the special character of military power begins to envelop a population, its functions, roles, and traditional authorities, a kind of suffocation of mind in the cultural sphere begins." The depth of Nisbet's pessimism was a result of his conviction that the root of modern societies' vulnerability to militarism lay in Roman law itself. The intensity of 20th-century total war was a comparatively superficial problem, though he bitterly indicted the American intelligentsia for succumbing so eagerly to what an English philosopher in 1915 called "the spiritual peace that war brings." For Nisbet, this psychic mobilization of the "home front" was worse than the simple longings of the soldiery—"I felt

more of a martial atmosphere, more pressure of war-values, while on the faculty at Berkeley from 1939 to 1942 than I was to feel during the next three years out in the Pacific as an enlisted soldier."

Such perceptions are still unorthodox in liberal democratic societies, whose military systems are normally perceived, as they were treated in Samuel Huntington's famous study of civil-military relations *The Soldier and the State* (1957), as professional organizations akin to medicine and the law. Indeed, one important school of thought concerning military organizations in the Third World regarded them as primary agents of progress. (Huntington argued arrestingly that "the middle class makes its debut on the political scene not in the frock of the merchant but in the epaulettes of the colonel.") Has the benign scenario in fact displaced the malign vision of modern militarism? The dramatic incidence of military intervention in politics charted in S. E. Finer's *The Man on Horseback*—an incidence that looked to be mounting between the first edition of that book in 1961 and its updating in 1975, just after the coup in Portugal—seems now to be falling. The public prestige of armed forces in the developed world, though transiently enhanced by spectacular enterprises like the wars against Argentina and Iraq, has been more routinely eroded by guerrilla quagmires, which have forced armies into quasi-policing roles in which they reap the maximum public odium for the minimum recognizable military achievement. Yet it is just here that the liberal states remain vulnerable to the blurring of civil and military functions. Nisbet's warning about the long-term effect of counterterrorist measures remains a forceful one because states have few options in responding to vi-

olence. Terrorist strategy is founded on the fact that terrorist violence can neither be ignored nor effectively countered by normal processes of law. It is a deliberate attempt to provoke a military response that will itself undermine the legitimacy of the state. The greatest danger is not that this strategy will work—in the sense intended by the revolutionaries—but that it will ultimately erode the traditional defenses against the establishment of a security state, producing the kind of vast enlargement of Kafka's *Castle* suggested in Heinrich Boll's novel of contemporary Germany, *The Safety Net* (1982).

We may, however, justifiably hope that the deep entrenchment in the plural democracies of the principles of civilianism, and of civilian control of the military, will ward off any threat of open military government. The potential of mass armies to act as beneficial social institutions remains important, even if it is likely to be viewed less optimistically than in the headier days of liberal enthusiasm. Rhetoric aside, the function of universal military service as an integrative experience is important; the problem has always been that only small neutral states, such as Switzerland, have ever been able to apply it consistently. The need for big field forces, rather than a local defense militia, is what makes most armies—in peacetime—burdensome and divisive. If there is to be a "peace dividend," it should perhaps be sought in civilianizing the principle of universal service. To do that, some end would need to be found to replace the "spiritual peace" of war and the glamor of combat, which, alas, has always guaranteed the ultimate prestige of the military life, however stultifying its daily routines. A different struggle for survival, perhaps that to save the planet, might just become such an end.