Chapter One: Introduction

“Today is the expression of a wide felt, but so far unstated feeling that we need to do something…In my parents’ generation normal people got involved in war – horribly in many cases…We all knew the suffering of war. Then after WWII war became, once again, a professional activity for a small number of dedicated people, often far from the public eye and mind. Iraq & Afghanistan have changed that. Large numbers of British forces have become involved in ferocious struggles far from home...” – Help for Heroes, 2007b

“Sometimes they said: I support the troops but not the war. Or: Do you think we should be over there? Which is such a dumb question, Tanner, the Army captain, would think. Soldiers don't make those decisions…They bitch and moan, sure. But when the call comes, they pack their bags and go, knowing they may not come back. But Tanner doesn't say all that. Instead, he responds this way: ‘Oh, so you were over there? Because you said, “We.” Because, I mean, I know I was over there.’” – Washington Post, 2006

“Love the Troops, Hate the War”– CodePink, 2010

During the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, citizens of the invading states regularly thanked military personnel for serving in wars the citizens opposed. And almost no one thought it was odd.

One million people marched in London on 15 February 2003 to oppose the impending invasion of Iraq by the United States and coalition forces (BBC 2003). Anti-war rallies were held in at

least 150 US cities the same day (Chan 2003). In the United Kingdom, majority support for the war lasted for only about a year; approval for military action fell below 50 per cent in July 2005 and never recovered (Dahlgreen 2015). On the day of the invasion, US support for the war in Iraq was 72 per cent; it fell to 48 per cent by November 2004 (Gallup 2010). By August 2005, a narrow majority of Americans consistently reported a belief that the invasion of Iraq had been a mistake (Gallup 2010). By 2014, 56 per cent of UK citizens felt the war in Afghanistan "had not been worthwhile" (Chambers 2014). In the US, at the end of 2011, surveys found that though only 36 per cent of Americans approved of the war in Iraq, while 41 percent approved of the war in Afghanistan (Peter 2016).

That same survey found that 76 percent of Americans reported thanking military personnel for their service (Ibid). This meant that "up to about a third of Americans thanked members of the military [specifically] for volunteering to fight wars that they opposed" (Ibid). A later survey estimated that 90 per cent of Americans had thanked active or retired members of the military for their service (Haddad 2019). Similar results hold in the UK. Though the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were highly unpopular, nine in ten surveyed Britons voiced their support for the military personnel who served on those deployments (Gribble et al. 2020). The most remarkable aspect of these figures – that some substantial portion of Americans and Britons thanked people for fighting a war they opposed – is that it was utterly unremarkable at the time. Professional sporting events included tributes to military personnel (Fischer 2014) uniformed military personnel were applauded on airplanes (Bacevich 2005), and "support the troops" (StT) yellow ribbons adorned everything from trees to license plates to credit cards (Stahl 2009).

Though popular valorisation of the military is strongly associated with the United States, the notion of "automatic" support for the troops is common elsewhere. Public commemorations of military sacrifice are increasingly visible in India (Parashar 2018). The formation of civil society organisations expressing solidarity with military personnel and their families (often with the yellow ribbon associated with the US armed forces) are emerging in Germany (Initiative Solidaritat 2018). Political discourses in Italy, France, and Denmark also increasingly frame civil-military relations in terms of support, obligation, and recognition owed to soldiers. Canada (Mirlees 2015; Richler 2012) and Australia (Soldier On Nd.; News.com.au 2015) fairly directly mirror the language and practice of supporting the troops. StT was a routinized component of British public discussions of Iraq and Afghanistan (Basham 2013; Dixon 2012). Many pro-military practices – such as "Armed Forces Day", an annual Military Awards, and the honouring of military personnel at sporting events – have become commonplace (Dixon 2012; Kelly 2012).

Even non-governmental peace organizations, activist networks, and social movements, such as Pax Christi and the Stop the War Coalition, adopted the language of "supporting the troops" as a means of communicating their broader opposition to war. State officials frequently reference the phrase in public statements and policy launches. Militaries have developed "partnerships" with non-governmental "support the troops" organizations, and engaged in active public relations campaigns encouraging communities to support "their military" (Whitehouse.gov 2012a; UK MoD 2012b).

Since its initial mass popularization in the United States during the First Gulf War, "supporting the troops" has become increasingly socially prevalent and transnationalised. In the US and UK, it was – and is – a broadly circulating form of common sense. Supporting the troops while

opposing "the war" appears not only patriotic and moral, but also logical.[i] Failing to support the troops, either through active opposition or a lack of overt supportive actions, is not only offensive, but potentially traitorous. It is obvious that, in the context of an unpopular war, people would, and should, support the troops.

Why?

Problematique

This book interrogates the political work performed by "support the troops" discourses and practices. It examines "supporting the troops" in the specific context of the US and UK during the early stages (2001-2010) of the so-called "global war on terror" and as a broader reflection of civil-military relations in contemporary liberal democracies.

What does it mean to "support the troops"? What do "support the troops" discourses and practices tell us about the relationship between the war, military service, and citizenship in liberal democracies? In other words: how is supporting the troops in a war you oppose produced as mandatory common-sense? What are the consequences of that for democratic dissent and the use of force?

I argue that the normative structure of civil-military relations in the US and UK, as well as Western liberal democracies more generally,[ii] is undergoing a process of transformation. Seemingly-stable understandings of the relationship between military service, citizenship and gender norms – particularly idealised notions of masculinity – are being unsettled by changes in the nature of warfare conducted by liberal democracies. This is producing a diffuse sense of

uneasiness about the meaning of what it means to be a "good" citizen, "good" man, and "good" person in a context where neither war nor military service easily align with existing cultural myths about wartime obligations and collective sacrifice. "Supporting the troops" is an attempt to grapple with the gendered civilian anxieties regarding "good" citizenship and "good" masculinity in an era characterised by professional armed forces and (for people in the US and UK) distant conflicts. The unthinkability of an alternative position, of not supporting the troops, is the heart of this book – and a central challenge of contemporary politics.

"Support the troops" discourses, I will demonstrate, articulate several multi-layered, ostensibly apolitical representations of society's implication in the collective use of force. StT shifts the locus of normative citizenship (and, with it, normative public masculinity) from the now un-common experience of military service to the mandatory and easily accessible practice of support for the troops. Support is naturalised as the *sine qua non* of normative masculinity and, with it, political membership. It is implicitly though powerfully produced as the both the foundational premise of the political community and its constitutive relational principle. To be in political community is to support the troops.

As a result, "supporting the troops" also serves to limit anti-war dissent that is recognised as socially intelligible and politically legitimate to the opposition of particular wars, rather than all wars or the underlying necessity of military support itself. In doing so, StT transforms wartime questions of political and normative legitimacy from the killing of distant others abroad to the maintenance of the appropriate structure of civil-military relations – and corresponding performance of gendered citizenship. In doing so, "supporting the troops" plays a distinct and important role in naturalising the violence of the liberal state and transnational liberal order.

Context

This section outlines the cultural, ideological and structural context – namely, a transformation in normative understandings of gender, citizenship, and liberal civil-military relations – that informs the analysis of the book. It is essential to understanding the politics and significance of "supporting the troops" and the argument outlined above.

Declining Military Service

"Supporting the troops" exists in a context where a small minority of the citizenry actively serves in the armed forces. In the United States, less than 0.5 per cent of the population is in the armed forces (Eikenberry and Kennedy 2013). In the United Kingdom, the percentage of serving military personnel as a proportion of the overall population is even lower – approximately 0.25 per cent (Office for National Statistics 2014; Library of the House of Commons 2014). The casualties of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan – over 7000 US and 600 UK military personnel (iCasualties.org) – are borne by a very small proportion of society. As a result, the public demonstrations of appreciation for the armed forces that typified the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan – and persist, though less visibly, in the US and UK to the present – are not necessarily grounded in an understanding of military practice or modern warfare (McCartney 2010). The surge in the social visibility and general popularity of the military comes at a time when distant "wars of choice" have reduced the collective experience of conflict.

This is not particularly unusual. Citizens of liberal democracies don't go to war anymore (see Blachford 2020). This is not to suggest that liberal democracies no longer go to war, there are many in recent memory.[iii] But in an era of professional militaries and geographically-distant conflicts, the vast majority of citizens of Western liberal democracies[iv] only indirectly interact with the military (Haltiner 2006). Of the 88 states qualified as "free" in the 2018 Freedom House report (an imperfect approximation of liberal democracy, to be sure) (Foweraker and Krzaric 2000), 66 lack conscription (World Factbook Nd.). Many former British colonies, in part due to the anti-conscription legacy of the English Civil War (Asal et al 2017), have imposed a draft only during wartime emergencies.

The end of the Cold War saw a sharp drop in conscription, particularly within Europe. National service remains in only ten democratic European states (Poutvaara and Wagener 2011; Sheehan 2009).[v] In most of these states, little of the eligible population is called for service, and even fewer of those conscripts participate in conflict. Military sociologists and policymakers often refer to this situation, with concern, as evidence of a growing "civil-military gap" (see Rahbek-Clemmenson 2012; Cornish 2012). Even Israel, which continues to employ conscription, has seen an increasing disconnect between the image of the heroic Israeli male combat soldier and the more mundane experiences that make up Israeli military service (Sasson-Levy 2008). In conventional national security terms, declining rates of military literacy and participation are a problem for strategic readiness and the rational institutional governance of the armed forces.

Military Service, Masculinity, and Citizenship

The decline of popular military service in wartime is also, however, a problem from the perspective of gendered notions of wartime obligation and ideals of normative citizenship.

Both policy concerns over a civil-military "gap" and the pervasive claims to "support the troops" convey a subtle sense that society – and particularly able-bodied men – might somehow be "letting down" the military (and through it, the nation-state). Citizens of the US and UK seem to be expressing a latent concern that they are doing something wrong. The impulse to "support the troops", therefore, should be read in the context of widely circulating and enduring Western cultural myths that teach us war is the preserve of all citizens and, if called, everyone ought to serve.

This is a central tenet of modern political membership: during wartime all "good" citizens – particularly "good" men – serve in the armed forces. Within liberal political traditions, this is often narrated in the idiom of obligation. In exchange for citizenship and its accompanying civil and political rights, and in accordance with the expectations of normative masculinity, citizens are obliged to serve in the armed forces during wartime. I refer to this general idea throughout the book as the "liberal military contract". The politics of this contract, and its fraught relationship to liberal democracy, are examined in Chapter Two.

For the moment, it is sufficient to observe that mass military service and (liberal) democracy "grew up together". "Supporting the troops" is a reaction to a slow transformation in an assemblage of gender norms, citizenship, and civil-military relations that dates to (at least) the mass "nation in arms" of the French Revolution. Marked by the *Lévee en masse* ("national" conscription), the Revolution saw a devolution of the burdens of warfare from professional long-service armies to society as a whole. This societal mobilization was based on nationalistic ideals and membership in the *patrie*; military service was exchanged for democratic citizenship and civil and political rights (Tilly 1995). The institutional structure of the mass army expanded across Europe throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, bringing with it the

ideology of nationalism and concessions of citizenship required to legitimise mass conscription.

The transformation of civil-military relations towards a "citizen" military culminated in the First World War, when across Europe, "hordes of eager young men…flocked to volunteer and 'do their bit' before the fighting ended" (Bond, 1998, 96). By WWII, military service had been firmly entrenched as a normative obligation of democratic citizenship. The onset of industrial-age "total war" involved all of society in war, through preparation, supply, or participation in battle (Overy 2005). Military service was "an experience shared by millions" (Sheehan 2008, 19-20). For the US and UK, the current state normative structure of civil-military relations stands in stark contrast to the mythical "good" wars of the past (see Adams 1994; 1998; Paris 2000), particularly World Wars One and Two, when "men were men", and society pulled together as a whole. The "appropriate" relationship between society and the armed forces is one of shared sacrifice. Non-serving civilians, in the contemporary model of decreased/ing military service, are implicitly presented as shirking their obligations of political membership.

These obligations are gendered and gendering. The (ostensibly) universal citizen-soldier does not describe any given member of the polity. Instead, as put by a UK Army Major in an article arguing for the social benefits of national service, the military makes spoiled "mummy's boys" into "strong men" (Brown 2015). The universalized citizen subject liable for military service was historically male, and, in contemporary political thought and discourse, is masculine. The development of the mass army ensured that the majority of the male population engaged in state-sanctioned violence (or, in the case of volunteer militaries, were liable for military service). Military service was the "sacred obligation" of the male citizen – and the "right to impose it was the main source and expression of the state's legitimacy" (Sheehan 2008, 179). The ability and willingness to perpetrate violence became a requirement of masculine

citizenship, wherein "the ultimate test of men's political obligation is his willingness to give up his life in defence of the state" (Sasson-Levy 2003, 322).

Women, in contrast, were assigned "support" roles, such as caretaking, reproduction of "the nation", symbolic potential victimhood etc. They are a femininized "Other" to militarized masculinity. These historical empirical regularities have been transformed into stereotypical cultural narratives – frequently blurred and contradicted in practice, but ideologically powerful all the same. This paternalistic, heteronormative conceptual relationship is captured by Jean Bethke Elshtain's heuristic imagines of "the 'Just Warrior', the male protector of home and hearth, and the 'Beautiful Soul', the female innocent whose purity is to be defended" (cited in Kinsella 2005, 253-4; original Elshtain 1987). Modern liberal states rest upon a gendered/ing civil-military divide, between a protective, masculine military and dependent, feminine civil society. Civilian status is framed in terms of feminised/ing tropes of dependence and vulnerability and cast as inferior to military service. Civilianness sits uneasily with claims or aspirations to normative public masculinity (Millar 2019b).

Disconnect Between Gendered Military Expectations and Contemporary Service

These normative heteronormative gender roles do important work in legitimating the liberal military contract. When examined critically, there is nothing particularly liberal, nor necessarily democratic, about an arrangement wherein citizens are obligated to kill and die for the state. The notion of a gendered/ing "military contract" is awkward. It exists in tension with liberal ideas of civic rights against arbitrary violence, non-violent conflict resolution, and individual autonomy.[vi] The masculinist (and heteronormative, middle class, White, cisnormative) constitution of the universal citizen-subject similarly belies liberal commitments to formal equality. Though the recourse to volunteer militaries has been posited by contemporary liberal thinkers – perhaps paired, in emergencies, with a conscript lottery – as

alleviating the immediate problem of state coercion of individuals (Forrester 2014; Walzer 1970), it does not address the underlying normative obligation of service (Basham 2018). Rather, the duty of military service – owed to the political community – is taken on by a small group of volunteers.

The make-up of this small group volunteers has also undergone changes relevant to understanding the politics of "supporting the troops". The decline in overall military participation must be understood in the context of moves toward more inclusive service. Throughout the twentieth century, military service – both in conscript and professional armed forces – became a crucial means for marginalised groups, including women and sexual and racial minorities, to demonstrate belonging in the political community, and demand recognition as citizens (Krebs 2006; Bristol Jr. and Stur 2017). The end of racial segregation in the US armed forces in 1948 is an important case in point. In the US, the contractual burden of military during the global war on terror was/is disproportionately borne by the working and middle classes, those from rural backgrounds and poorer areas, and (with year-to-year variation), Black Americans, particularly Black women (Chalabi 2017, Lutz 2008, Melin 2016). Consequently, with the increasing inclusion of women in combat roles (Bradner 2015; BBC 2016), and opening of military service to lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans*, and queer people in many liberal democracies (Sennott 2010), we can see this gendered, masculinized normative obligation of service further universalized and extended. The obligation to serve in the armed forces in war time now potentially ideologically implicates anyone who would seek to be identified as a "good [masculine] citizen". The duty of service remains masculine, but now (at least potentially) pertains to everyone.

The differential distribution of sacrifice along axes of gender, sexuality, class, race and, often, region and nation of origin (Kelly et al 2010; UK MoD 2014), violates democratic expectations

of equality (Pateman 2007). The move towards a volunteer military, at the same time, does not extinguish cultural, ideological, and affective investments in the obligation(s) of all citizens to defend the whole. Indeed, moves towards open and inclusive service – and explicitly diverse militaries – implicitly underlines the non-service in wartime of those who more closely approximate the White, cis, heteromasculine citizen/soldier ideal. In the UK, non-officer recruits are typically from working class backgrounds in disadvantaged areas explicitly targeted by the armed forces and are often under the age of 18. (Agerholm 2017). In 2012, one in ten UK military personnel were born overseas: 2,200 from Fiji, 3,680 Nepalese Gurkhas, and 8,505 soldiers from 38 different states (Beckford 2012).

In other words, the visible, voluntary military service of historically marginalised, minoritized, and/or feminised groups might be understood as making the non-service of those groups most proximate to the universal Western normative citizen, those with White masculine social privilege, somehow, ineffably, worse. "Supporting the troops" is thus articulated in a context of multi-layered and intersecting anxieties relating to, centrally, gender – but also race, ethnicity, sexuality, and the nature of the overall political community. Civilian anxieties are thus activated around the sense of doing something wrong – by not serving – but also around challenged privilege, in so far as a valorised institution (the military) and profession (soldiering) comes to look less, in its public representations and aspirations, like the implicitly normative (and hegemonic) White heteromasculine citizen.

Overall, "supporting the troops" is produced in a context of disconnect between the idealized, mass-participatory liberal democratic military contract and the contemporary experience of volunteer service, distant wars, and quotidian normality at "home". This disconnect is characterised by a generalized, gendered "civilian anxiety" of non-service in wartime (Millar 2019b) – and the failure to live up to cultural myths. StT speaks to a broader set of questions

regarding contemporary liberal democratic civil-military relations left radically uninterrogated by popular political discourse and academic inquiry. What happens when "we" no longer serve?[vii] What does it mean to be a good citizen – and, indeed, good man and/or masculine subject – absent military service and/or war participation? How do "we" relate to the collective violence of the whole?

These questions, and the conditions that give rise to them, are crucial to understanding the compulsory and obvious nature of "supporting the troops" even – or particularly – in the context of a war one might oppose. I read "supporting the troops" as both an exigent political discourse of the US and UK experiences of the early "global war on terror" and as a lens upon the broader, underlying relationship between gender, citizenship and violence within liberalism. As I argue throughout the book (and in Chapter Two in particular), "supporting the troops" goes beyond what we might typically think of as militarism (i.e. the undesirable valorisation of the military and military values within broader society). Rather, it actively constitutes normative citizenship, the boundaries of the political, and the socially intelligible. In so doing, "supporting the troops", as a form of solidaristic martiality, makes the (liberal) political community.

The following section gives a brief overview of the logic of inquiry that I use to interrogate and interpret the politics of "supporting the troops" throughout the book. Those more interested in the substance of StT may wish to skip to the plan of the book, which signposts the development of my analysis and argument in more detail.[viii]

Logic of Inquiry

This section outlines the logic of inquiry that underpins this book. It covers the broad conceptualisation of "supporting the troops" as a social phenomenon, questions of method and sourcing, and the selection of the US and UK as the central sites of empirical analysis.

Point of Departure

I understand "supporting the troops" as a series of productive and pervasive discourses. Discourse not only provides a means of conveying knowledge and interpreting social reality – such as the liberal civil-military divide – but also actively *creates* it (Milliken 1999; Foucault 1984) through regularized patterns of communication, such as language, symbols, social practice, etc (Edkins 1999; Foucault 1976a). It is an expression and working of power: diffuse, de-centralized, and "productive of meanings, subject identities, their interrelationships, and a range of imaginable conduct" (Doty 1993, 229). Discourse constitutes broadly circulating notions of what is real (e.g. the state), legitimate (e.g. state-authorised warfare), and socially intelligible (e.g. heroic masculine sacrifice). It conditions social possibility not by rendering certain actions, such as standing at an intersection with a sign reading "Don't Support the Troops", materially impossible, but by rendering them incommensurate with the current bounds of tasteful and recognisably political actions.

I pay particular attention to the ways in which these discourses are gendered. They communicate important, implicit understandings of normative gender roles – particularly masculinity – and their relationship to violence. As with most complex social phenomenon, "supporting the troops" is not uniformly gendered, nor does gender account for all of its political effects. While I employ feminist, gendered analysis throughout the book, gender (and sexuality, and race, class, etc.) appears empirically only when most salient to the argument.

I take StT seriously as affective, sincere, and often very personal expressions of concern for, and solidarity with, serving military personnel. For many people, particularly those with friends and loved ones in the military, StT practices are deeply meaningful (Wegner 2021; Marsical 1991). In this study, however, I do not examine the individual intentionality of specific exhortations and practices of StT (i.e. what a person "really means"). Instead, I examine the way StT overall, as a discursive formation, serves to circulate, and contest normative understandings of gendered citizenship and civil-military relations. Similarly, I attend less to the "intended" meaning of silences, or failures to explicitly articulate support for the troops, than the contextual meanings discursively projected onto such silences. In this way, I conceptualise "supporting the troops" broadly, as a form of martial discourse that (re)produces and negotiates the role of force in making the political community.

Method

To get at the politics of StT empirically, I employ a thematically-organised discourse analysis of "support the troops" discourses in the United States and the United Kingdom across the initial phases of the "global war on terror" (GWoT) in Iraq and Afghanistan (2001-2010). The method allows for the consideration of a large volume of texts – and the identification of broad discursive patterns – within which to contextualize more specific interpretive claims (see Taylor and Ussher 2001). [ix]

In total, I examined an original corpus of approximately 9000 pages of text, and 3258 paragraph units. The assembled documents are texts produced for public dissemination by national "support the troops" organizations (five pro-military charities per country case); peace and anti-

war organizations (five NGOs per country case); the mass media; politicians; and government and military officials.[x] The texts were selected in accordance with the general principle (Hansen 2006; Weldes 2006) that robust and critical discourse analysis should be broadened beyond officially "authoritative" texts likely to participate in dominant discourses (e.g. policy documents and major newspapers). Consequently, the anti-war groups were included to avoid painting a falsely homogenous picture of the "support the troops" discursive formation and ensure potential contestation of the politics of "the troops" is captured within the analysis. While the inclusion of a different organization in any particular category would slightly alter the findings, the selected sources selected provide a useful snapshot of the discursive formation by representing the "public culture" of supporting the troops.

As with all discourse analysis, and appropriate to the my interpretive argument, the selected materials do not capture all possible forms of resistance to the dominant politics of StT. Instead, they capture the politically salient and socially pervasive themes and patterns of meaning articulated within the discursive formation. Given the tendency of marginal voices and positions to be "reappropriated, ignored, and subverted…[within] the eventual hegemony of particular tropes" (Rao 2014, 202), it is reasonable to believe these texts convey the most significant contestations of StT that existed at the time.

"Support the troops" discourse had not, until this study, been the subject of a large thematic discourse analysis. It was instead examined in a more ad hoc and illustrative (though still insightful) manner (see, for instance, Stahl 2009). I assembled my large textual corpus to address this gap, identify overarching themes within the discursive formation as a whole and, in so doing, offer a "proof of concept" for the complex and political nature of StT. Given this volume of documents, working solely from the "bottom up", in the manner of grounded theory,

was impractical and risked missing key patterns. Deductive analysis alone, conversely, similar to content analysis, is limited in its ability to account for more implicit meanings and contestations. Using iterative, thematically-organised discourse analysis enabled me to examine a large corpus of texts with an attentiveness to more contingent, complex, and subtle meanings at work in specific discursive articulations (see Taylor and Ussher 2001). The application of this method to two country-cases (the US and UK) over a ten-year period (2001-2010) covering an array of social actors (media, government, and civil society) makes my work the most comprehensive treatment of "support the troops" discourses to date.

In practical terms, I first analysed the texts according to a system of descriptive themes capturing more explicit (i.e. literal) uses of "support the troops" discourse. These first-cut themes were derived from my initial curiosities, informed by the literature, regarding broad patterns within the discursive formation. I "interrogated" the texts following a journalistic logic, asking: Who supports the troops? Why? Against what threats or dangers? How? The "answers" to these questions (e.g. people support the troops out of a sense of obligation, or to support the war, or to end the war) were derived from the texts themselves. I therefore moved from the initial organising themes to more inductively derived categories requiring interpretation. For instance, identifying the reasons provided for supporting the troops typically requires reading the specific exhortation in the context of both the broader document and an awareness of specific tropes common to StT. The initial thematic interrogation of the text, organised using the qualitative analysis software NVivo, gave the empirics a rudimentary structure.

Next, I used the patterns revealed by my first-cut analysis of explicit questions to see key, more implicit sub-themes – such as the persistence of liberal notions of soldiering obligation, and an

absence of calls for conscription – that undergird the complex politics of StT. These themes were pulled out for more detailed, substantive interpretation, supported by a close-reading of key texts. The specific quotations analysed throughout the book are exemplars of the overall, socially circulating discourse(s), conveying patterns of meaning often left implicit.

Paying attention to implicit meanings enables us to move from considering only the literal content of a text to its representation of underlying assumptions, normative structures, and significant silences. Given that the common-sensical nature of "support the troops" is the central question, even paradox, of the book, close analysis of implicit meanings, and their constitution of social and political reality, is essential. It is not possible to see, let alone interrogate, the politics of supporting the troops without it.

Cases

The United States and the United Kingdom during the initial phases of the global war on terror (2001-2010)[xi] were selected as the cases for the examination of the politics of StT on the basis of "political pregnancy" (Hansen 2006). This principle holds that for critical, interpretive work, cases should be selected on the basis of their essentiality (which may be analytical or political) to the project according to "questions of (discursively constituted) influence" (Ibid, 76). The cases are meant to be so influential the project would make no sense without them, but also possess substantial political stakes. The US and UK "highlight more general characteristics of the [issue] in question" (Flyvbjerg 2006, 232): the relationship between "supporting the troops" and the underlying transformation in the gendered structure of liberal civil-military relations. They are empirically paradigmatic cases (see Della Porta 2012, 208 and 216). The US and the UK were also selected on the basis of their (geo)political/critical importance: the conditions of political possibility for war within these states is of global significance.

The inclusion of the UK also sidesteps the US-centrism of a good deal of contemporary scholarship on Western civil-military relations. This US-centric work has an implicit tendency to posit the US as exceptional – as exceptionally "bad", exceptionally "militaristic", or simply exceptionally powerful – in a manner that belies the entanglement of these "exceptional" practices with liberalism and the production of political community itself. The pairing also highlights transnational aspects of the StT, particularly with respect to what McCartney (2010, 426) calls the "transatlantic gaze": a tendency in the United Kingdom to explicitly refer to the United States as a model for relations between society and the armed forces.

The US and UK offer clear manifestations of "supporting the troops", situated in a context of declining military participation, gendered anxieties, and distant conflicts shared by a variety of liberal democracies. The material and cultural power of Anglosphere militaries, globally and within recent coalition warfare, have led to a transnational diffusion of the Anglo-European "warrior" model of heroic masculine soldier-citizenship across contexts (Enloe 2007; Duncanson 2013, x). This suggests that though the explicit politics (and visibility) of "supporting the troops" vary from context to context, the insights generated by examining the transformation of gendered civil-military relations in the US and UK, as particularly influential empirical sites, are analytically generalisable.

Plan of the Book

The book begins with the primary conceptual chapter (Ch. 2). It provides a critical account of the relationship between gender, violence, and liberalism. I outline liberalism's "innocent" account of itself, as pacific, rational, universal, etc. and the role the corresponding concept of "militarism" plays in legitimating and upholding that story. I also introduce the notion of the liberal military contract: all good men should defend the liberal state in war time. I then unpack the paradox of this contract – that to guarantee the protection of the liberal state one must kill

or die for the state – and the ways a binary account of gender and sexuality helps to "smooth" this over. The balance of the chapter introduces the book's central analytic – a discursive conception of the military that enables me to connect the gendered obligation to commit violence (i.e. the contract) with the making of liberal political community. This approach brings together the "politics" of military violence (i.e. war) enacted and contested in the formal public sphere with the bounding of the "political" (i.e. the underlying social and political order) via solidaristic violence. As the balance of the book demonstrates, "supporting the troops" operates at the intersection of politics and the political. It simultaneously reinforces and contests the nexus of masculinity, citizenship, and violence within liberal order.

Chapter Three places the emergence of "the troops" in the historical context of US and UK civil-military relations. The "troops" first emerged in the context of the US invasion of Vietnam. StT was an attempt to generate support for the war effort at a time when conventional narratives of mass participation or heroic masculine soldiering were neither plausible nor resonant. "The troops" then became a staple of US discourse – though one that was relatively unchallenging through the First Gulf War, due to the limited and relatively popular nature of the intervening conflicts. In the UK, the military declined as an institution of popular veneration after WWII. The end of national service and the controversial martial violence in Northern Ireland lowered the social status of soldering. The Falklands/Malvinas conflict, however, followed by the First Gulf War, was characterised by an upswell in the social visibility and popularity of the military. It marked the emergence of "the troops" in the UK lexicon. Across the twentieth century, US and UK civil-military relations shifted from a suspicion of standing armed forces to the veneration of military service as a key component of citizenship and masculinity. This produced an expectation of apoliticised "support for the troops", seen in the First Gulf War, that was then reinforced and challenged by the contested politics of the "global war on terror".

Chapter Four picks up with a detailed empirical examination of "support the troops" discourses and practices in the US and UK from 2001-2010. I examine constructions of: a) who is expected to support the troops; b) why people are meant to support the troops; c) how people express their support for the troops; and d) the primary factors that cause the troops to need support. The dominant US narrative encourages "everyone" to support the troops out of a sense of obligation (underscored by strong support for the war) against, alternatively, the government or the uncontrollable social outcomes of war. Support is typified by, conversely, a contestation of conflict or the provision of material goods. The UK narrative is characterised by an expectation that "everyone" is obligated to support the troops against the government, expressed by calls for an end to war. Each element of these narratives, however, is subject to contestation by a range of social actors. The "typical" narratives – reflecting some key aspects of gendered notions of liberal martial obligation – do not reflect a stable consensus, but rather an on-going process of negotiation and fragmentation of the meaning of supporting the troops.

Chapter Five begins my detailed examination of the "politics" of supporting the troops. It looks at the meanings attributed to "the troops" as a distinct cultural figure. "The troops" are predominantly characterised by their collective nature, which precludes "them" from being reduced to existing, related figures of war such as the military, veteran, or soldier. This "groupness" means they may take on, or refuse, the meanings typically associated with the soldier (e.g. masculine bravery), the veteran (e.g. vulnerability) through discursive associations or contrast. The troops' groupness also enables them to incorporate all possible substantive identities (e.g. gender, sexuality, race, class, etc) political orientations within the social relations of support. "The troops", moreover, are not figured as actively involved in the violence of war. Instead, they are constructed as dependent upon society for their wellbeing. As a result, support for the troops, rather than conflict legitimacy, becomes the central normative concern of war.

Chapter Six continues with the "politics" of supporting the troops, shifting slightly to examine contestation over the meaning of "support". I find that dominant contractual, stereotypically liberal notions of support for the troops – i.e. individuals "owe" the troops support – fail to reconcile cultural myths and expectations of masculine martial service with the contemporary experience of conflict. Liberal StT discourses demonstrate a clear "gendered civilian anxiety": a sense that non-serving civilians are doing something wrong. The balance of the chapter identifies two alternative logics of support within broader StT discourse. The first reflects a communitarian logic of martial obligation, characterised by fidelity to a holistic form of political community and war participation shared by all. The second reflects an altruistic logic of apoliticised obligation, wherein (ostensibly) private individuals support the troops as a form of charity, discursively divorced from the context of conflict. In both cases, the alternative supportive logics work to (re)masculine supportive civilians through a gendered process of contrast and association with both "the troops" and the hypermasculine combat soldier. Together, these three logics do not supplant the mythical martial contract but amend it. Support, not military service, is now constituted as the hallmark of normative masculinity and, with it, citizenship.

Chapter Seven examines the relationship between "supporting the troops" and "the political" – the foundations of social order. When the basis of normative citizenship has shifted, how does the polity hang together? I argue social relations of gendered, violent solidarity are as important to making up the political community as externally-oriented dynamics of exclusion and enmity. Masculinised martial solidarity bounds the liberal polity and, when executed "correctly", redeem the normative status of the liberal polity. The chapter also examines the implications of StT for the warfighting of liberal polities abroad. I demonstrate that the gendered, political obligation of solidarity transcends the territorial boundaries of the nation-state: "support" can be projected or imposed as a continuity of affinity and/or imperialism. I read transnational

martial solidarity across the "West" as expressing not only "liberal" but also, colonial, frequently White solidarity in the context of the global war on terror. "Support" is also demanded from civilians abroad, but on unequal terms. For those whose racialisation as "Other" equates to a presumption of suspicion or enmity, support is expected, but even actual martial service is not always sufficient for the reciprocal recognition of rights and political belonging. Support covers up the continued reliance of transnational liberal order on racialised martial sacrifice.

Chapter Eight brings together the two components of discursive martiality – the articulation of formal politics and constitution of the political – to examine what "supporting the troops" means for dissent. I examine the use of StT discourse by a variety of US and UK anti-war and peace NGOs. The chapter works through a variety of ways the idea of "politics" is empirically related to the expectation to StT. StT itself is represented as "apolitical", or "beyond politics". "Politics" in turn, is attached to attempts to debate or contest the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, whereas war support is naturalised as moral/obvious. Meaningful democratic debate is foreclosed, while unreflective support is lauded as an obligation of normative, gendered political membership. StT transfers the masculinised soldier's obligation to refrain from politics to the masculinised supportive citizen. As a result, pragmatic anti-war invocations of "support the troops, bring them home", though logical in attempting to get a fair hearing for their message, end up reifying the idea that the troops must be supported. Instances of resistance – confrontations of the naturalised assumption that one must/does support the troops – are written off as offensive instances of apolitical bad taste. Socially intelligible opposition to the use of force is constrained, as martial obligation makes it possible to contest one war, on behalf of the troops, but not the practice of war itself.

Finally, in the Conclusion, I make the case that a politics committed to opposing liberal wars abroad – and martial forms of liberal violence "at home" – must refuse to support the troops. This is not about denying material support or empathy for individual members of the armed forces, but rather about confronting the assumption that, no matter what, "we" must support the troops. StT discourses obscure the complicity of liberal society in racialised, neo-imperial wars abroad by shifting moral concern to a matter of internal loyalty and solidarity.

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[i] When I began this study in 2011, practitioners and academic challenged its premise on these grounds. There was little interesting about "supporting the troops" from their perspective. It was simply an epiphenomenon of the unpopularity of the war in Iraq. What else, they implied, did I expect? What else were people supposed to do? Great question.

[ii] The term/category of "the West" is imbued in Othering racialised colonial power dynamics and hierarchies. I use it here to denote the connections between liberalism and the civilisational claims to superiority at work in liberal imaginaries and for its typical association with a particular constellation of states (i.e. the "White Dominions" of the British Empire and Europe).

[iii] The situation isn't limited to liberal democratic and/or Western societies. In wars with conscription there have generally been more people outside the armed forces than in (Feaver and Gelpi 2011).

[iv] The terms "liberal" and "democracy" are contested. For the purposes of this project, I use the term "liberal democracy" to refer to states with democratic elections, the rule of law, and individual rights. The critiques made herein apply to these societies as they are, rather than an "ideally" liberal society as it may be.

[v] Austria, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Lithuania, Finland, Greece, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland.

[vi] This is not to say that no strain of liberal thought could ever account for military service – particularly voluntary service. Rather, if we accept this reading of the obligation of military service, it is difficult to reconcile with the ideological commitments of those states generally considered to be practicing, if imperfect, liberal democracies (Jahn 2011).

[vii] Liberalism is a universalising (and colonising) ideology that "calls" to, and projects itself upon, all modern subjects. I use "we" to provide an experience of how "supporting the troops" may interpolate the reader. It also reflects my positionality as a White settler citizen, highly privileged within the liberal international order. I recognise this use of a shared "we" may also be experienced as alienating by readers from communities against whom liberal violences are directed and/or whose identities are not valued/recognised within the racialised heteropatriarchal structures of liberalism. Thank you for engaging with the book anyway. I hope you will yet find something of value.

[viii] See Appendixes One and Two for details on methodology, sourcing, and data collection.

[ix] Thanks to Eleanor Knott for her guidance for this section.

[x] The specific documents were identified by the use of the phrase "support the troops" or variations (e.g. "support our boys") and/or language similarly commenting on the normative civil-military relationship.

[xi] This period includes the initial invasion of Iraq and the majority of heavy operations in Afghanistan. It captures the "peak" political salience of StT discourse and its initial decline within the US and the ascendance of StT discourse in the UK as attention turned from Iraq to Afghanistan.